

ADVANTAGE

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ISSUE THIRTEEN



RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

RMH and AEW Delford Systems

RMH Foods have become a 'state of the art', manufacturer of some of the world's best ready meals, thanks to foresight, hard work and some pretty clever portion control technology from AEW Delford Systems.

Much has been written about RMH Foods, the brainchild and 'dream coming true' of Jonathon Rocke. RMH Foods' rapid and continuing success is owed to the creation and ongo-

ing development of the Quick N' Easy range of 'heat and eat' ready meals which the company sells direct to retailers, food service outlets and, via mail order, to consumers across the USA. The award winning range includes dishes like Pork Roast – a cooked pork joint with gravy, Meat Loaf in gravy, Beef Roast with a bourbon sauce, and Chicken with tequila sauce.

Jon Rocke's grandfather, Jesse, founded Rocke's Cold

Storage in 1937 and built a fire-brick smokehouse, which is still in use today, to produce delicious hickory smoked hams, turkeys and bacon. Jon's father, Wayne, took over in 1960 and, with that same Rocke creativity, created and developed the unique retail store known as Rocke's Meating Haus. That creative gene has obviously passed down to Jon who, in the early

• Continues on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

R-T-E, RMH and AEW Delford Systems a recipe for success. P2 and 3

PolySlicer Plus – Cutting it for case ready. P3

BAR-S – WE WILL. P4

Stock Yards Packing Co. – The right cuts. P4

Independent Fisheries – Shaping for export. P5

Strathaird Salmon – A taste of the Highlands. P5

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NEW

SmartSlice Vision + Evolution for the revolution. P6



R-T-E, RMH and AEW Delford S A RECIPE FOR SUCCO



Jonathon Rocke

'90s identified the changing American lifestyle and the growing trend in ready meals. Rocke's Meating Haus then began its transformation from small, traditional meat processor to major Food Processor and in 2001, with a great deal of help from newly acquired parent and partner company, Smithfield Foods, moved into an all new, purpose built plant in the company's home town of Morton, Illinois.

From dream to reality

Having great ideas and a super, modern production plant is all very well, but if you're going to efficiently produce high quality product day in, day out, with minimal waste, you need the very best production systems and equipment. To produce portion controlled meals, complete with sauces or gravies, from non whole muscle raw material is quite a challenge but Jonathon turned to some old friends to help him turn his bold and ambitious production con-

cept into reality.

Enter Adrian Allcroft from Delford Sortaweigh's Russellville, Ar., office who, along with Ben Elbert, Operations Manager at RMH Foods and colleagues from AEW Delford Systems in Chicago and Harwich, England, designed, manufactured and installed the whole production system from scratch.

"It all started with Jonathon's and Ben's' concept of a complete ready meals production line with accurate weight control right the way through from slicing to packing. They asked us to come up with the goods and we did – inside 14 months," said Allcroft.

The main production area has two separate, self contained areas for raw and cooked product. The raw area features 3 production lines, one of which produces packs from pre-processed raw material, e.g. pre-graded chicken breast or meatloaf. The chicken breast is tumbled with spices and flavourings in a dry marinade before it's fed in twos into the weight control system. The meatloaf is made in-house and portioned through a fixed

weight extruder. The other two lines are also linked to the portion control system.

Primal to pack

Fresh Primals are prepared on a Delford Sortaweigh supplied trimming line prior to being continuously conveyed through an AEW Delford Systems **SmartSlice Vision** portion control slicer. The sliced weight controlled portions are tumbled in a dry marinade prior to grading (Sortaweigh **GS900**) and then checkweighed by a Sortaweigh **G2200** before being fed into the weight control system. Any offweights are reprocessed and fed back into the system to minimise wastage and giveaway.

Although both production lines are fed from a single source, they each have their own weight control system to ensure that overpacking is minimised and the final weight of the finished package containing meat, gravy or sauce is as declared on the label.

The meat portions are checkweighed by a **G2200** checkweigher to make sure they fall within correct, set weight limits. They are then tracked by the

checkweigher and, after being manually loaded into the packaging machine, arrive under the liquid dosing heads in the right sequence where the correct amount of sauce is added to the pouches to achieve a net weight pack.

As far as we know, this system, developed by RMH and AEW Delford Systems, is unique.

Cooked Product Area

Sealed packs are placed in racks and cooked before being held in a cold store from which they are brought into the "cooked" production area. The packs are then put into trays, checkweighed and passed through a Ceia metal detector prior to being manually inserted into sleeves for heat shrinking and trimming. A Delford **Concept 500** label applicator on the transfer conveyor applies any required additional "flash" information labels that may be required. The sleeved trays are then boxed in groups of four or eight.

The boxes are sealed, checkweighed and then labelled with product information, batch codes, time, date and weight



Systems CESS



The new, purpose built plant in the company's home town of Morton, Illinois

details which are sourced from a central PC that operates Delford Sortaweigh's **UMACS** software – developed specifically for this purpose.

Other machines in the system



The 1937 firebrick smokehouse. Still used today!

are also linked to the central PC to enable full running analysis, monitoring and production management.

Very high standards of hygiene

It comes as no surprise to learn that the whole building is crammed with innovations, like stainless steel walls and ceilings, five standard microprocessor controlled steam box ovens and total segregation of cooked and raw processing operations.

There are separate locker rooms, entrances, lunch and rest rooms with no personnel access to the R-T-E (ready to eat) produc-

tion area other than through a gowning room where a full wash down is required. The whole R-T-E room has its own positive airflow system – just like any other clean room area – and visitors can only view processing from spacious second floor viewing windows.

Outstanding output – and that's just the start

Production levels of entrée meals at the new Morton plant already exceed expectations and all systems are very much go!

Onweight packs are, of course, the daily norm because giveaway is just not tolerated at a plant as advanced as this with a weekly capacity of 500,000lbs that's set to double in two years. Ben Elbert is the man responsible for maintaining these high standards for which he relies to a great extent on AEW Delford technology.

"Every day the system delivers low levels of overpack with a high percentage of on-weights to give us truly minimal giveaway. These are the two things that have contributed most towards payback on our investment," said Ben. This astounding productivity will soon be yet further improved with the pur-

chase of a Delford Sortaweigh **Optimiser** and **CT60 sleever**.

Performance like this from a 'virgin' plant is surely outstanding and a tribute to the RMH and AEW Delford teams. This is only the tip of a very large iceberg for the Mortonians who expend considerable energy on improving and refining their products as well as creating new ones that should help them increase their existing market share and take advantage of new opportunities like the growing, smaller private label market.

"I see a potential for something unusual, such as low volume, high margin exotic game or signature products for food service," said an enthusiastic Jonathon Roche.

Traditional RMH products like hams, steaks and sausage, will continue to be manufactured with the famous smokehouse continuing to play an important role in RMH's future which is looking very bright, thanks to a creative, dedicated and very able management team with whom we are very pleased to be involved.

Partners

The team sets about the continuing quest for perfection with creative flair, expertise and a total dedication to quality. We enjoy getting caught up in this too, as the technical challenges become correspondingly greater. As Ben Elbert so kindly puts it, "AEW Delford is always willing to go that extra mile to give us the service we demand. They're not just suppliers, they're partners."

Watch this space! •
www.ilovemeat.com



CUTTING IT for case ready

Fact: Supermarkets are pushing processors to provide them with net weight programmes for pork with beef quickly going the same way. **Fact:** Everyone is up against huge pressure on margins as the shortage of labour and its subsequent increases in cost continues. **Problem:** Everyone wants portions styled into trays but they don't want to pay for the high labour cost that this usually involves.

CASE READY HAS WELL AND TRULY ARRIVED!

If you want to produce mountains of superbly cut boneless pork chops or boneless beef cuts, automatically shingled and placed into trays at twice the speed of your current operation with half the labour, take a look at one of the great all rounders of the high speed Slicer world – the **PolySlicer Plus** from AEW Delford Systems. If you do this we think you will be pleasantly surprised by the increased speed of your production, the fast and easy hygiene, the higher volume of throughput, the huge improvements you'll make in labour efficiency, the quality of the product and above all, bigger profits.

AEW Delford Systems is the only company in the world that designs and manufactures a wide range of machines and systems for high speed slicing, portion control slicing and sawing, grading, batching and weigh price labelling – everything you need to be a successful processor of case ready products.

The sooner you cut along to us the sooner you'll be cutting it for case ready.





WE WILL



America's consumption of bacon and bacon products is, in common with many other parts of the world, showing an increase of considerable proportions.

This upward trend looks set to continue as changing lifestyles and the resultant demand for fast food dishes like BLT sandwiches, hamburgers and so many other dishes that include bacon as a 'condiment' or flavour enhancer, push annual production levels to around 2 billion pounds.

Now, it goes without saying that where there's demand there's a supplier and they don't come much bigger or better than Bar-S – a processor who, since being founded only 21 years ago, has become one of the top 40 meat processors in the USA. From its 3 Oklahoma based production plants plus a distribution facility, the company

markets over 100 processed meat products including franks, sliced luncheon meat, smoked sausage, specialty sausage and, of course sliced bacon.

Bar-S owes its impressive success to a powerful 'WE WILL' philosophy that anyone can find on their website, www.bar-s.com. One of the most notable 'we wills' is number 5: WE WILL develop close partnerships with our customers and suppliers, with the attitude that "we succeed only when they succeed." By the way, we know full well that when Bar-S says they will, believe us, they do!

As if to underline this belief, every product pack carries an important message. It reads, 'Only the best is branded Bar-S.'

But, back to the bacon boom, which Bar-S are determined to take full advantage of with a quality product, excellent marketing and some equally impressive bacon slicing technology from AEW Delford Systems.

Bar-S has just installed an AEW Delford Systems automatic

bacon line comprising an **IBS 2000 Vision** high speed slicer linked to an automatic loading system. The system produces drafts of fixed weight slices and delivers them straight to a vacuum packing machine. If required, the slicer can be switched to produce drafts of fixed or variable numbers of slices but the norm is 12 oz. and 1lb. packs.

The **IBS 2000 Vision** is one of the world's fastest and most accurate, continuous feed, automatic bacon slicers. Thanks to its angled product bed and patented twin jump conveyor it consistently delivers high quality, shingles at high speed. The machine has a unique vision system that uses a high speed camera to scan the leading face of the product before slicing. It measures the product area and its lean/fat ratio then adjusts the thickness of the next slice. This provides minimum give-

away while maximizing the percentage of on weight portions to give the best possible yields with high throughput.

The whole system has a high level of automation which minimizes product handling and therefore makes the most of precious skilled labour time. Loading and programming are simple tasks too, thanks to easy to understand controls and straightforward, robust engineering. The system has also been designed for fast and easy cleaning and special cleaning trolleys were made for this purpose. All in all, a system designed to deliver a high percentage of quality packed product with a minimum of waste.

All this and, perhaps, our well deserved reputation for fast, comprehensive service and spares, is why Bar-S believed us when we said WE WILL. •

The right cuts

Have you been to a really good steakhouse lately, one that serves only USDA prime or choice beef? A quick look at the portion sizes on the menu will tell you that quantity is in, right up there with quality.

Many items are available in two or more sizes, like twenty eight ounce porterhouses or 16 ounce filets, so the challenge for the restaurant is to deliver on the menu's promise. Deviating from specified weights by more than the standard half-ounce in either direction can be expensive—generous cuts lose money, stingy cuts lose customers. So if the chef offers 9, 12 and 16 ounce filets, the portions have to be spot on.

This is easier said than done. Even very skilled operators make

costly errors when estimating portion sizes which is why Stock Yards Packing Co. installed an AEW Delford Systems **SmartSlice Vision** to ensure that output would consistently match customer's specifications.

Stock Yards Packing Co. supplies controlled-cut prime, certified Angus and choice Midwestern beef to some of the finest white-tablecloth restaurants in the world, so portion accuracy and quality of cut are extremely important.

"Fewer and fewer restaurants cut their own steaks in house," observes Stock Yards' President Matt Pollack. "It's a question of food safety, inventory and quality—we can do a better job."

"We wanted a machine to be more accurate and more user

friendly," says Pollack. "The **SmartSlice** delivers. It has allowed us to increase our throughput while maintaining the same level of quality in the product," he states.

SmartSlice Vision makes a full volumetric scan of each product, responding to the slightest irregularities. Preprogrammed parameters based on weight and thickness allow it to evaluate various slicing configurations in milliseconds and then execute the cut that will provide the highest yield.

The three-dimensional product profile can be divided into as many as four zones with differing options or preferences for each.

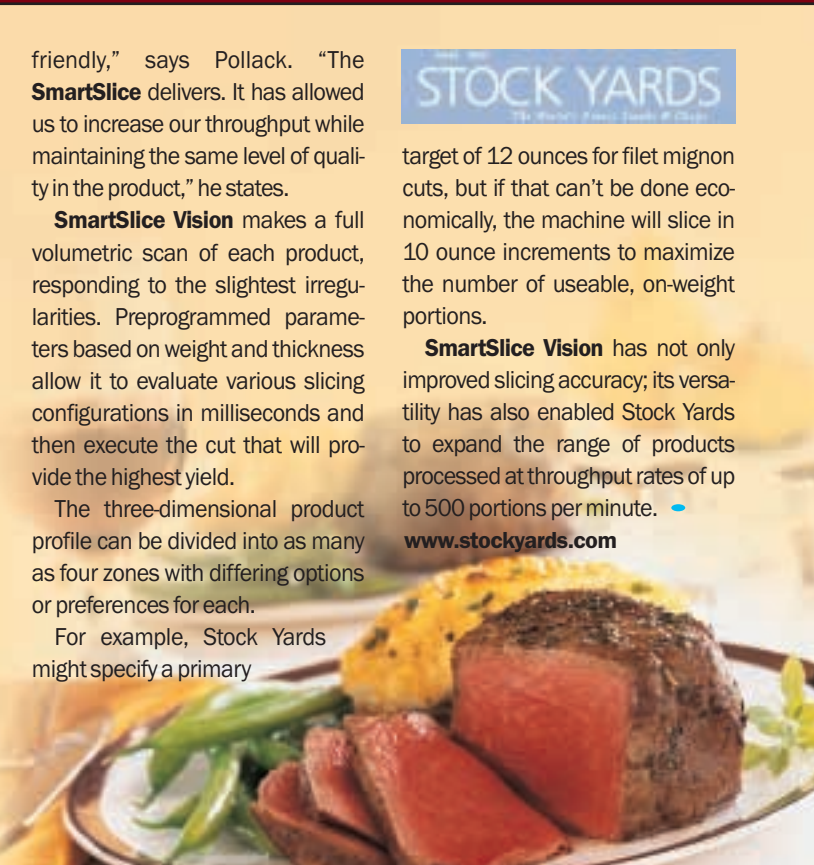
For example, Stock Yards might specify a primary



target of 12 ounces for filet mignon cuts, but if that can't be done economically, the machine will slice in 10 ounce increments to maximize the number of useable, on-weight portions.

SmartSlice Vision has not only improved slicing accuracy; its versatility has also enabled Stock Yards to expand the range of products processed at throughput rates of up to 500 portions per minute. •

www.stockyards.com





SHAPING FOR EXPORT

We have often written about developments in fish processing and shaping as processors throughout the world respond to the increasing consumer demand for fish and fish products. That demand continues to grow and, in turn, advances much needed technology from companies like ours that helps fish processors explore creative and innovative ways of satisfying it.

A prime example of this is in New Zealand where our long standing friends and customer, Independent Fisheries, have developed a substantial and flourishing

business that, in 1956, the late Howard Shadbolt began as a small fish and chip shop in the Christchurch suburb of Linwood.

From these humble beginnings, the company has become a major player in New Zealand's growing fishing industry which is now one of the world's largest with more than 1,000 species of marine fish occupying some 1.2 million square miles of the beautiful, pure, clean waters of the great southern oceans.

Independent's fleet of modern trawlers, which includes a state-of-the art factory freezer vessel, harvests a

variety of species from squid to hoki to southern blue whiting, much of which is filleted and frozen at sea to retain that all important freshness and quality. Processing, production and distribution takes place at Woolston, a 5 hectare site that boasts highly sophisticated and well equipped filleting, squid processing and added value lines. It's from here and the nearby port of Lyttelton that the company exports more than 70% of its high quality products mainly to Australia, the USA, South America, Canada, UK, Europe, Iran, Indonesia, China and Asia. Value added products form a

major part of Independent's business with 3 modern lines producing an average daily output of 50 metric tonnes of superior product, manufactured from either fillet, frozen at sea mince or squid.

An AEW Delford Systems PP530, 5 station fish shaping system makes a major contribution to this comprehensive facility by producing high volumes of shaped, frozen portions – including fillets and fish bites – for further processing. The process has been very successful, so much so, that Independent have decided to significantly increase pro-

duction of existing – and create new – investing in Delford System **Compact.** "The PP530 system uses to serve us new **ShapeLine** will give us the we need for existing the ability to create products, too," says Director, Charles. The new, advanced capacity single ShapeLine number of better predecessor. For a start it takes less floor space considerably faster

A TASTE OF THE HIGHLANDS



Mention Scotland and chances are you'll think of whisky first and salmon second. Maybe you'd be intrigued to discover that the two are linked, thanks to Strathaird Salmon, a member of the Macrae Group and one of Scotland's leading producers of ready-to-eat fish products.

Strathaird's smoked salmon is of the highest quality because it's Scottish – enough said. They produce the best for the best – including J Sainsbury's 'Taste the difference' Isle of Skye farmed smoked salmon which earlier

this year was awarded 5 stars by the Daily Telegraph newspaper's tasting panel of world renowned chefs and gourmets.

The all important smoking takes place in traditional kilns where the fish hangs for 24 hours in smoke produced from the shavings of old whisky barrels to give that wonderful, unique flavour. The fish is then processed and packaged in various ways to satisfy the demands of the UK's supermarkets who, for some time, have seen strong growth in the sale of ready to eat fish products – especially smoked salmon. Convenience, speed

of preparation and good packaging of most food products is vital for success and Strathaird have done all they can to ensure that their smoked salmon is very easy

to buy and even easier to use – thanks to imaginative management, a great workforce and a very accurate, high speed slicer, an AEW Delford Systems **Polyslicer Plus.**

Strathaird identified the growing ready-to-eat market some time ago and they decided to invest in production capacity that would enable them to serve their retail and food service customers with the right volumes of the right, high quality products.

One such product is a 4 inch square, wafer thin salmon slice – perfect for use in sandwiches or as a delicious starter. Mild smoked, (in oak and beech shavings) skinless fillets are stacked and then pressed into square 'loaves' before being frozen down to between -7 and -9 degrees centigrade. The frozen loaves are loaded into the gripper feed of the **Polyslicer Plus** which, thanks to its fast, precise action and an integral interleaver, produces

superb, thin (1.65mm) slices of smoked salmon at a slice rate of up to 450 per minute in stacks of 6 or 8 – all interleaved and ready for packing.

AEW Delford Systems engineering team worked closely with their colleagues at Strathaird to find the right 'slicing formula' – a combination of product preparation, temperature and consistency and, as a result, the **Polyslicer Plus** performs with precise, reliable consistency; day in, day out.

The benefits are obvious. Firstly, the workforce that used to do all this work by hand is happier because they are employed on a wider and more interesting variety of tasks. Secondly, the company has the production capacity it needs to take on more new business as well as satisfying existing customers' ever increasing demands. But thirdly and most importantly, more of us can enjoy that wonderful taste of the highlands. **Cheers!**





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40 cycles or 120 portions per minute (depending on the type of product) – the equivalent of an output of around 500kgs per hour. Low cost tooling aids flexibility and shape variety and magazine loading means that multiple, three dimensional portions can be produced in one cycle. The machine produces superbly presented product from frozen, natural fillet, whole muscle or comminuted product with no need for thawing, grinding or further processing. It can even produce cavity portions for sauces or fillings and there are ten product programme

memories to aid fast product change-over. Charles Shadbolt is certain that his new **ShapeLine Compact** will substantially enhance Independent's already impressive output and innovative product portfolio. "We looked around, of course, but at the end of the day the **ShapeLine Compact** won on outright performance. Anyway, after all these years we just know we can rely on AEW Delford Systems to deliver the goods," he said. Log on to www.indfish.co.nz to get the full story on Independent Fisheries and

Independent's delicious fish bites are produced by ShapeLine Compact

see for yourself just how good this company really is. When you've done that, why not find out more about **ShapeLine Compact** by calling us or logging on to our website. Seems we're both in great shape for the future. •

Our dedicated people in the USA, UK and France, working with a worldwide network of distributors, can help you maximise production and processing efficiency – from slicing through to final packing – with the fast, accurate, innovative and reliable technology that is so vital to maximising yields, throughput and, of course, profitability.

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NEW SmartSlice Vision+

Evolution for the revolution

Having designed and made one of the world's most successful fresh meat portioning machines, we could probably be forgiven for thinking our work was done, but we all know the world isn't like that – especially our world – where processors are constantly looking for ways to keep up with the fast moving, continuing revolution in portion control.

That's why we're introducing the *evolutionary SmartSlice Vision +*, the latest version of SmartSlice Vision, our high capacity, automatic portioner for fresh, boneless meat or fish. **SSV+** promises to deliver even higher percentages of on-weight portions than its predecessor, thanks to its further enhanced, unique ability to see the whole product before cutting. This part of the evolutionary package also contains further cutting programmes

that enable the machine to cut a given number of portions, or a specified percentage of the product – particularly useful for maximising prime yield.

Other engineering innovations include a new blade guide for improved blade control and hence, more accurate, higher quality cuts. Hygiene has always been easy with the SmartSlice family but a new swing out discharge conveyor significantly improves access to the blade area to aid faster cleaning.

Other improvements include modem access for remote diagnostics and ethernet capability for easy linking into a production or processing system like UMACS.

It goes without saying that all the other

well known attributes of **SmartSlice Vision** remain, like the operator friendly controls, enhanced programming options, end piece optimisation, smartweight cutting patterns, not to mention the high throughput with maximum yields – but then you knew all that already, didn't you? If you need reminding please call us or log onto our website.

Whatever you decide, make sure you keep up with the progress of the revolution. •



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