

AS SEEN IN

Refrigerated & Frozen Foods



Fill a need

The Pasta Mill automates to increase production speeds, decrease variance and keep a growing business ... growing.

Sometimes, you *literally* have to fill a need on the plant floor. And that's just what Steve Parsons discovered while growing his business, The Pasta Mill Ltd., in Canada's Edmonton, Alberta.

From its 1989 start with refrigerated pastas, this private label and contract processing company has grown to offer as many as 80 different kinds of refrigerated and frozen entrees for distribution throughout Canada and the United States. Pasta Mill products range from various lasagnas and cannelloni to Thai-, Szechwan- or Indian-style rice dishes.

Along the way, however, Parsons needed a hand.

"We process pasta and rice dishes and — at one point in production — we are depositing various cooked pastas, rice, vegetables and/or proteins into trays," he says. "We reached a point with our company when we needed to change how we handled that

depositing so we could increase line speeds and efficiencies and decrease product variance."

Parsons, the company's president, looked into the matter. He says he found combination scale-filling equipment too costly, too slow and also too time-consuming when it came to cleanup. Then he tried a volumetric pocket filler, the MPFMP-060, from Multi-Fill Inc., West Jordan, Utah. More specifically, The Pasta Mill purchased a semi-automated, dual-head unit to fill trays — two at a time — across the conveyor.

"Right from the beginning, it has worked well to handle our various cooked pastas, rice, vegetables and proteins," says Parsons. "Meanwhile, it has been flawless to not only meet — but exceed — the company's line speed fill rates. It's simple to operate, easy to clean up and easy to maintain."

Multi-Fill rates the MPFMP-060 for speeds up to 50 or 60 containers per minute, depending on the product, volume to fill, container, line configuration and operator. Product is loaded into the top pan and manually fed to the filling tube by an operator.

The head is designed with an adjustable volumetric pocket system equipped with a plate product separation device, sharp knife or needle assembly, depending on product. Discharge then is controlled precisely in synchronization with container flow.

A compartmentalized stainless steel enclosure (manufactured to NEMA 4X, IP66 standards) contains all pump components. To assist the product flow, Multi-Fill equips the unit with a liquid ring vacuum pump (growing in popularity) or an in-line air pump. The latter offering includes a small stainless-steel variable pneumatic line vacuum system with quick coupling fittings for pneumatic connections.

Speaking of quick, it takes only minutes to clean and move the semi-automatic filler — if needed — to a different production line. The unit is ready to use with few or no change parts.

For its part, meanwhile, The Pasta Mill keeps growing with Multi-Fill. Since its first order two years ago, The Pasta Mill has added another unit and has a third MPFMP-060 model on the way.

Notes Parsons, "We bought a fully automated Multi-Fill unit at an auction and— when we learned that it wasn't quite right for our us — they took it in trade for a new MPFMP-060 Model. Multi-Fill was quite helpful, unlike some other vendors. They have been very good to work with as a supplier, and we're very happy with their equipment."

For more information about The Pasta Mill, visit www.pastamill.com.

Multi-Fill also manufactures fillers for vertical form/fill/seal machines, as well as distribution systems that can be mounted over horizontal bagging units. Multi-Fill's distribution systems come in various patterns — from two-up to as many 12-up — for retail and food-service size packages currently used in the United States and Europe.

— Multi-Fill Inc.

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