A better butter pack

A new butter packaging and cheese inspection system are two products being introduced by Alpma

The conventional, envelope-like folding wrap is a classic, but with weaknesses. The traditional butter wrap is not sealed, not optimally protected, not secure from being tampered with, allows for loss of flavour, and allows for oxidation, reducing taste quality and shelf life. It also leads to the greasy, buttery fingers that people experience when opening the classic, decades-old, butter wrap.

FreshPack is the name of the patented packaging solution that equipment manufacturer Alpma has developed. It is the reinvention of a butter wrapping method that has remained unchanged for decades.

"We have heard time and again from our customers that they are looking for alternative packaging, to solve these old problems and give a new pack style and fresh experience," says Franz Glas, Alpma division manager for cutting and packaging technology. In contrast to the classic butter wrap, FreshPack offers all-round sealing, which creates protection against tampering – and creates confidence in the consumer. The seal also protects the butter from oxygen exchange. "As a result, the aroma is retained in the product much better," according to Glas. "When you open the packaging, you have a fragrance experience. You can smell and taste that the butter is fresher."

The package allows butter to develop its full flavour. And at the same time, it fulfils the promise of freshness that the packaging makes as soon as it is opened. The opening of the pack is also a new sensation, such as the jam jar that cracks on opening. The practical easy-open tabs make it possible to peel open the butter quickly and easily. Greasy fingers are a thing of the past due to easy opening.

Cheese handling

Alpma has also developed some products for the cheese sector. It now offers a new system that automatically inspects blocks of cheese, and detects every flaw, every piece of contamination and the presence of mould, even mould spores and growth that is not visible to the human eye. Using modern light systems and a combination of latest camera technologies and proprietary algorithms, the Alpma Eagle Eye inspection system can examine numerous cheese types and achieve a detection rate of over 99.9 per cent.

With cheese blocks weighing several kilograms in a cheese dairy, there is a fair amount of hard work, with many manual processes – for example, de-palletising, removal of the cheese from an outer cardboard box, removing the ripening film bag and heaving it onto the cutting machine infeed.

Alpma offers machines that unpack cheese blocks automatically from the pallet and remove the cardboard and film, but automation also brings new risks. With it, there is no-one to make the visual quality and safety checks of the cheese block prior to processing.

In the past, the employee had a view of any mould or contamination that stuck to the cheese after unpacking or was present from the ripening process. Today, this employee's eye is missing, and mould or contaminants can end up in production more easily. However, customers can now use an 'electronic eagle eye', which inspects all six sides of a block of cheese before processing, giving an even better quality control and risk reduction than was possible with human checks. DII

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