Allied Blending Receives Patent For Method For Producing A Package Of Cheese Shreds

Provisur Gets Slicing Machine Patent

Washington—The US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) this week awarded a patent for a method for producing a package of cheese shreds.

The inventor is Andrea Stange. The patent was awarded to Allied Blending LP, Keokuk, IA.

Shredded and diced cheeses have a propensity to clump together during storage, especially high moisture or high fat cheeses, making them difficult to handle, the patent description noted. Anticaking agents are often added to shredded and diced cheese to prevent sticking and to preserve freshness.

An inert gas flush, typically nitrogen and/or carbon dioxide, purges the packages of oxygen to preserve freshness. A significant amount of cheese and anticake accumulate below the gas flush point of the production lines. Often the cheese clogs package seals and the bags cannot seal properly due to the powerful blasts of gas flush, the description stated. The cheese also blows onto the floor or jams equipment, causing sanitation problems, delays for clean up, and frequent maintenance.

The oxygen scavenging system of a reducing sugar, such as dextrose, and glucose oxidase has been used in the cheese industry to remove residual oxygen after gas flush, but it was not capable of replacing the gas flush step, the patent summary noted. To the contrary, when an anticaking agent comprising oxygen scavenging system disclosed in this patent removes the oxygen in well-sealed packaged cheese, the gas flush step is entirely unnecessary. To achieve this, the oxygen scavenging system is significantly more powerful than previously described in the art. Moreover, this system has not been previously described with a salt component, such as sodium chloride, which accelerates the rate of oxygen drawn down in sealed package.

In Allied Blending's invention, cheese shreds and anticaking agent are mixed to form anticake-coated cheese shreds. The anticake-coated cheese shreds are then sealed into a package without modifying the atmosphere in the package or using an inert gas flush.

For more information, visit *www.alliedblending.com*.

Also this week, the USPTO awarded a patent for a high speed slicing machine. Inventors are Scott A. Lindee, James E. Pasek, David Hancock and Thomas C. Wolcott. The patent was awarded to Provisur Technologies, Inc.

The invention provides a mechanism and method for slicing multiple food articles with independency of feed rate and the ability to weigh each product group from each food article respectively to achieve optimal weight control and yield of each food article. The invention provides a high-speed slicing apparatus and a weighing and classifying conveyor combination that provides plural advantages in machine cost, productivity, food hygiene, and operation, the patent summary noted.

For more information, visit *www.provisur.com*.

Vivolac Expands Operations; Doubles Freezer Capacity, Quickens Service

Vivolac Cultures Corporation held a ribbon-cutting ceremony inn March to officially open the expanded operations at its headquarters in Greenfield, IN. The above photo from left to right are: John Brown, Dynamic Engineering Design, and Phil Knickerehm, E&H Industrial Services who designed and constructed the facility; Brad Breeden, engineering and maintenance facility manager at Vivolac; Wesley Sing, CEO of Vivolac Cultures Corporation; and Francine Sing, Lyoferm services manager.

Greenfield, IN—Vivolac Cultures Corporation, a leader in starter culture, media and bioprotection cultures, has recently completed an expansion to its freezer capacity, warehousing, and its shipping operations.

The total expansion of the headquarters was roughy 15,000 square feet, but Ian Bodkin, chief technology officer at Vivolac Cultures, said the highlight of the expansion was the addition of 8,000 square feet of its freezer capacity.

"This expansion marks our continued investment in the dairy industry," Bodkin said. "It's an investment in research and development, the latest in equipment and technology, and speed and quality of service."

Vivolac's expansion was needed due to the company's growth over the past five years, Bodkin continued.

"Our growth has come in the hard cheese market. We've made great inroads there and we're growing in other cultures like thermophilics and specialty cultures, as well as probiotics," Bodkin said. "We've always been a leader in the Grade A market."

Over the past year, the company has also diversified into the DVS industry, Bodkin said.

"This is as much growth as we've seen in recent years," Bodkin said. "To service that and to grow in the DVS segment of the cheese industry, the expansion was well needed. We had tons of manufacturing capacity but freezer space was the bottleneck. It was a good time to expand everything."

The expansion virtually doubled the freezer capacity at the facility to 13,000 square feet.

In addition, the expansion enabled the company to speed up the operations and delivery of product.

Carl Melms, operations manager at Vivolac, said the expansion improves the company's entire process, from production to delievery.

"Production-wise, we are really set in terms of capacity. We still have room to grow there. In terms of freezer space, if we manage things right, we'll be good for a while," Melms said. "We've really improved and are better able to do more 'just in time' manufacturing to provide the freshest product as possible."

"Just in time" is characterized as product that doesn't sit too long in the freezer.

"We do a lot of customized products with our customers," Melms said. "We want to work with our customers to fill their needs, yet we don't want them waiting on orders. The expanded freezer capacity allow us to the freshest ready-made product possible."

"We make all of our products here in the United States," Bodkin said. "We take a customized approach to help manufacturers select their cultures. We listen closely to what the company wants and find the best cultures to fit those production and formulation needs."

For more information on Vivolac Cultures Corporation, visit *www.vivolac.com*