

MaMa Rosa's Expands Product Line During its First Year under New Ownership

MaMa Rosa's makes and markets the number one branded refrigerated pizza in the United States. In October of 2006, the company was purchased from Con Agra by Plaza Belmont Management Group who owns a variety of food manufacturing businesses. "During our first full year of operation under the MaMa Rosa's banner, we have been able to strengthen the brand within our traditional markets, while expanding into additional markets with new products," notes Bill Mackin, company president. His report follows:

MaMa Rosa's employs approximately 200 people, with some associates having been with the company for more than 20 years. This dedication has made MaMa Rosa's a strong company in the community. In April, 2007, the company hired Vince Jolly as Vice President of Operations. Vince, who had previously worked for Interstate Bakeries Corporation as a director of manufacturing overseeing operations at a half-dozen plants in the Midwest, brought a great deal of process production experience to the company.

The MaMa Rosa's plant is a double-pressed pizza operation, and operates six processing lines, three bakery lines for producing the pizza shells and three topping/finishing rooms. The products are then packaged on the back end of the topping lines after the pizzas have been flash frozen in spiral freezers on each line. The facility has more than 20,000 sq. ft. of cold storage to stage ingredients and products before they are shipped. The pizzas are packaged using a shrink wrap with a sticker placed on the packaging; many of its products are sold as multi-packs.

During 2006, the company eliminated all off-site cold storage facilities and went to a "one touch supply chain". By doing so, MaMa Rosa's was able to efficiently get the product to retailers with substantially less cost.

In an effort to strengthen the MaMa Rosa's brand, the company introduced eight new product SKUs to its production mix. An accomplishment of this magnitude has never occurred before within the company. In September, the company took an equity position with a new company, Street Smart Cuisine, LLC, of New Lexington, Ohio and introduced the Lean Lifestyle brand of health-conscious frozen pizzas. In September, production began for low-fat cheese, turkey pepperoni and fire-roasted vegetable offerings in the new line. While MaMa Rosa's is a value oriented brand sold mostly in value retail chains, Lean Lifestyles is a higher end product that should give it access to more upscale supermarkets.

The company invested capital in 2007 to improve its packaging capabilities. With the new equipment, single-serve pizzas can be packaged in a pouch-style bag with a special card insert for microwave cooking. In addition, the company retro-fitted existing machines to place a cardboard sleeve around its new Nacho and Nacho Beef Pizzas, as well as the Lean Lifestyle products.

During the course of the year, MaMa Rosa's formed partnerships with several local businesses including Creative Marketing Strategies and SMS Protech. CMS works closely with the company's management team in the development of new products while SMS provides valued technical services support.

The first year under the new ownership has been a busy and exciting one. In the years ahead, MaMa Rosa's looks to widen its brand appeal across a broader segment of the consumers. The company's national sales team has been revitalized with new products to offer, and the company is listening closely to retailers with an effort to match its product offerings to meet those requests.



Dough travels by conveyor on Mama Rosa's newest mini pizza production line that makes 500 pizzas a minute.