

Modular conveyors ease transitions at Rhodes' plants

Rhodes International Inc., Salt Lake City, has a lot on its plate. Besides producing its traditional line of frozen bread loaves, dinner rolls, cinnamon rolls, and sweet rolls, the company recently launched an innovative line of microwaveable sweet rolls that thaw, rise and bake in about 60 seconds.

In addition to expanding its product line, the company's Idaho plant is undergoing major equipment installations. All of these factors have the potential to create significant headaches for Terry Leinberger, Rhodes' maintenance manager. However, he has avoided these headaches by installing modular conveyor systems that allow the bakery to expand and change without grinding production operations to a halt.

Frozen dough production

Rhodes manufactures an extensive line of frozen dough products under the Bake-N-Serv brand name. These products are found in the freezer section of supermarkets throughout the country. The company manufactures products in its Idaho and Wisconsin plants.

In 2000, Rhodes' growing capacity required the company to update its conveying system. Instead of purchasing standard conveyors, the company bought a variety of modular conveyors manufactured by Snap Lock Inc., Battlefield, Mo. Although more expensive at the onset, Leinberger says the decision to purchase modular conveyors has paid off in the long run. Since its first purchase order, Rhodes has continued to buy modular conveyors for its plants.

"The conveyors are like an erector set," Leinberger says. "You have all of these bits and pieces, and based on what you want to build, you grab the necessary pieces and build it."

At Rhodes, this flexibility is an enormous advantage. The company's ever-changing production flow and recent new equipment installation requires flexibility.

Recently, the company removed a 90-ft. conveyor section to make way for new equipment.

Rhodes' Bake-N-Serv rolls come in many varieties and are sold in supermarkets throughout the United States.



Rhodes International's Idaho plant uses various modular conveyors. These conveyors allow the company to rearrange and expand its production without additional capital investments.



Fortunately, the conveyor system was modular. Instead of scrapping the conveyor system, the company took apart the conveyor and stored it. "Now, I will be able to use those conveyors to build what I need when the equipment is installed," Leinberger says. "I don't have to buy a whole new conveying system."

Snap Lock manufactures an extensive line of modular conveyors. More importantly, bakers can customize these conveyors to fit production needs. Besides conveyor width and length, bakers can specify drive location (center or end), motor type (electric or hydraulic), and belting styles and type.

This customization keeps bakeries such as Rhodes coming back. "If I have a 12-in.-wide conveyor and I want to make it 24 ins., all I have to do is buy expander bars and put a new belt on," Leinberger says. "The other benefit is that there is no welding required; The conveyors are bolted together." ●