

Not just lamb and kiwi fruit

NEW ZEALAND IS FAMOUS FOR ITS EXPORT OF LAMB AND KIWI FRUIT. THIS COULD ALL BE ABOUT TO CHANGE. DAD'S PIES FROM AUCKLAND HAVE UPGRADED RECENTLY AND ARE NOW INCREASINGLY LOOKING INTO THE EXPORT BUSINESS



++ figure 1

++ figure 1
Free tray serpentine oven by Auto-Bake

++ figure 2
Eddie Grooten,
owner of Dad's Pies

After a visit to Dad's Pies' main production facility in Auckland, the local economics newspaper, Auckland Today in its April/May issue, asked, in a slightly shocked way, "Who ate all the pies?" In fact, the former hourly capacity of 7,000 pies has now more than doubled to 16,000 per hour – a number that might frighten any non-bakery person. Not however, Eddie Grooten, the owner of Dad's Pies. He is happy that the expansion has finally been completed. "We formulated a plan to maximise our operations in 2001 and the last piece of that jigsaw was the installation of our new continuous oven. " It took just one weekend to set up the new line whose core is a three zone directly fired convection oven by Auto-Bake, Hornsby, Australia, featuring 70 sqm of baking area on 8 lineal meters.

Grooten, an automotive engineer, emigrated in 1981 from the Netherlands to New Zealand. Together with his wife Erika, he took

over a small bakery in Red Beach, north of Auckland. The bakery sold pies in its own shop and supplied three others. Seven years later, Eddie and Erika had acquired three more bakeries. Step by step, they became one of the most important suppliers of British-style savory snacks. In 2001, they moved into a new production facility in close-by Silverdale which has now been expanded to 6,500 sqm.

Positioned at the high end of the market, the company has specialized in making sausage rolls, savouries and a wide range of pies from minced meat and cheese to exotic variations such as Thai and Butter chicken.

They also have their own sales outlet directly in front of the production facility. However, the larger part of the production volume is sold directly or via wholesalers, to BP stations, catering and retail outlets. About half of the quantity produced by a staff of 45 is sold as fresh products; the other half is frozen.

When stored at 4 °C, the pies have a shelf life of 11 days and frozen pies have a shelf life of 12 months. The pies are packed in “new generation” cardboard cups or cello-wrap, and then boxed in multi-pack cardboard boxes.

The growth of the company is, last but not least, due to Grooten’s willingness to invest. Grooten explains, “The moment we stop investing, we will fall backwards and that’s probably the hardest bullet to bite, when the money is tight. You need a future plan that you will follow no matter if hell freezes over. Anyone who is not prepared for future technologies will not be sustainable, they will fall back and not be able to compete on the global market.”

The additional capacity of 14,000 daily pieces, achieved with the new line, is mainly aimed at the export business. Grooten is not only targeting former British colonies such as Canada, Hong Kong and Australia but also the UK itself, the Pacific Islands and the Near East, - namely all countries in which pies, pastries and sausage rolls are traditional snacks.

The new line was automated by Auto-Bake from end-to-end. The line operator controls all the equipment via a central touch screen panel. The free tray serpentine oven by Auto-Bake has a capacity of 97 carriers (457x1600 mm). The entire system including filling unit, depanning and return of the carriers is served by a total of 273 carriers. Eddie chooses to use locally produced flat trays on which the individual products are placed in their moulds. Forty eight standard pies with a weight of 200g each will fit onto one carrier. The baking time is 20 minutes. The baking oven is a convection type oven. The entire baking area adds up to 70 sqm in an oven with a footprint of 11 sqm. +++

++ figure 2



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