

Focus on flexible ovens

BUILDING BIG OVENS CAN QUICKLY INVOLVE ORDERS WORTH SEVERAL MILLIONS, FOR WHICH THE RISK IS GLADLY SHIFTED ONTO THE PLANT CONSTRUCTOR'S SHOULDERS. MIWE MICHAEL WENZ GMBH IN ARNSTEIN, GERMANY, HAS NOW DECIDED NOT TO BUILD ANY MORE BIG OVENS IN FUTURE. CEO **SABINE MICHAELA WENZ** EXPLAINS TO BBI THE REASONS FOR THIS AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR MIWE, AND LEAVES A BACK DOOR OPEN

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Sabine Michaela Wenz, CEO of Miwe Michael Wenz GmbH

+ **bbi:** Mrs. Wenz, it means Miwe is ending its manufacture of large ovens. So how do you assess the overall future of the international large oven market, and why do you see no opportunities for Miwe in this market even in the long term?

+ Wenz: Almost nothing lasts very long in our industry nowadays. We cannot, therefore nor do we at all want to, exclude the possibility that one day we will return to the big oven business under different background conditions and possibly with entirely new concepts. At present, however, this market seems to us to be unattractive for several reasons.

Firstly and quite fundamentally, even in industrial production environments, there is a clear increase in the demand for more product range flexibility and for very strongly characterised products. Even with large batch volumes and continuous round-the-clock operation, both are easier to implement with Miwe's highly automatable, batch-oriented production systems than with the basic concept of rigid line designs. With wagon oven systems for rolling production, multi-deck oven systems with universal loading and transport robotics,

neatly integrated proofing and refrigeration technology and a holistic strategy to raising costly energy reserves (Miwe energy), we see ourselves as best positioned to participate in the further growth of these forms of production. We note with a certain satisfaction that numerous clients who were originally looking for a continuous oven now share this assessment, and have decided in favour of the much more flexible organisation of their bakery with Miwe batch systems.

There is also a second point. We have always been a rather small player at an international level in this world of highly industrialised baking, which is defined by crowding out and tough price wars. Nowadays we meet a strong competitive environment of specialised suppliers who can apply their full strength to these systems. We have always developed, built and serviced our continuous systems in parallel with our many other fields of activity. The basic costs for engineering, project planning, fabrication capacities and a service network are the same for a universalist who achieves only a fraction of his business with big ovens as for a specialist who can and must think in quite different production volumes. Big oven

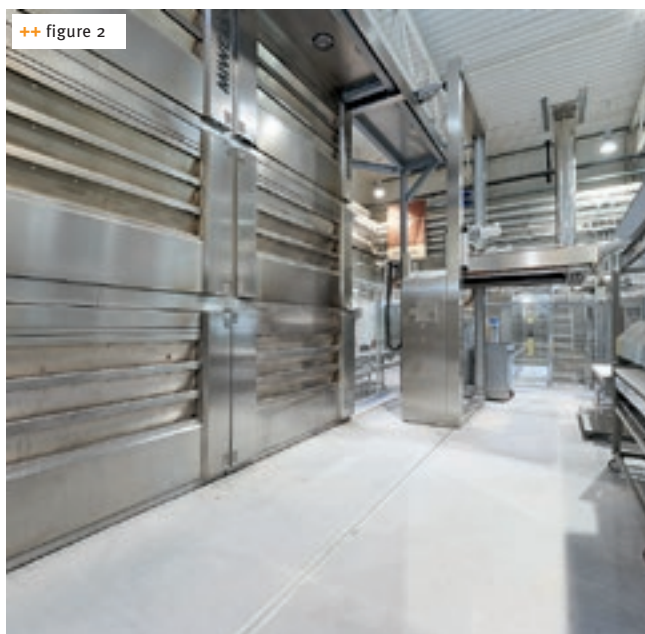
projects nowadays are calculated to such narrow margins that they need a critical mass to be economically viable. We are too small for this critical mass – or too big as far as our product range is concerned, since even now one cannot say our product range lacks width. All we can do now is to concentrate even better on doing what we are particularly good at ...

+ bbi: Will the departure from building large ovens have consequences for your company's employees?

+ Wenz: Unfortunately that is unavoidable.

+ bbi: Miwe traditionally manufactures multi-deck and rack ovens, in-store ovens and refrigeration plant. What will your product portfolio look like in the future?

+ Wenz: For many years we have covered the whole spectrum of air-conditioning processes, extending beyond baking: from proofing control and chilling to freezing, and we have done that all the way from the artisan bakery and industrial production to in-store baking. We are the bakers' system partners. We have continuously expanded our engineering team, which on request develops complete bakery design concepts. We develop entire combined heating and refrigeration systems for our clients. We are leaders in questions of energy efficiency. Our baking stations (BS) business division records considerable territorial gains on the international markets. And we see ourselves in the very best position with this portfolio and the strict focus on our growth markets.



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Furthermore, Miwe's production range also includes flexible rack and deck ovens, while continuous oven systems are now a thing of the past

+ bbi: What effects will withdrawal from the large oven market have on your export business?

+ Wenz: The answer is very simple: none.

+ bbi: Mrs. Wenz, thank you for the interview. +++

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