

Expansion in Andenne

IN LATE OCTOBER THE PURATOS GROUP FROM GROOT BIJGAARDEN NEAR BRUSSELS INAUGURATED THE LATEST EXPANSION OF THEIR COMPETENCE CENTRE FOR BIO-FERMENTATION IN BELGIUM

++ figure 1



+ The factory is just over an hour's drive south of Brussels in the heart of the Belgian sugar beet growing area and was founded in 1994 as a production site for enzymes, in whose manufacture sugar and molasses play a large part. In addition to enzyme production, Puratos also installed extensive research & development facilities in Andenne to work on various biotechnological processes. In 2000 the group enlarged the factory by adding a yeast production unit and a yeast extract production line. The latest addition deals with the production and drying of sourdoughs. A total of EUR 21m was invested for this purpose. The three-phase development represents a total investment of over EUR 100m. Starting with a staff of 20 in 1994, the number of personnel

now exceeds 130. The Andenne site is certified BRC, grade A – the highest in the category.

As Daniel Malcorps, CEO of the Puratos Group, explained to *baking+biscuit international* a few months ago, the background to the latest expansion of the product range in Andenne is the growing interest throughout the world in an 'authentic' bread taste. "Six years ago, with the help of a futurologist, we conducted a survey about the future of bread. She talked to many consumers in Europe and the US. The keynote of the survey results was 'the future of bread is its past'. Indeed, when she asked consumers what kind of bread they would like to have, most of the time they replied 'the good bread of the good old days'. Even young people said

++ figure 1

The new Puratos factory in Andenne houses both the production operation and the research & development laboratory

++ figure 2

Sourdough production in Andenne

++ figure 3

Roller drying of sourdough





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++ figure 5



++ figure 6

++ figure 4
Daniel Malcorps, CEO of the Puratos Group

++ figure 5
Philippe Rasquin, Site Manager of Puratos Andenne

++ figure 6
The Sapore and O-tentic sourdough brands are manufactured in Andenne

this! But what is this ‘good bread of the good old days’? We appointed a group of ethnologists to find out more exactly. They went back 2000 years and found Roman documents reporting that the best bread in the world came from the Puglia region in southern Italy. We sent people there and they came back with a selection of micro-organisms that might be responsible for the great flavour. At the time the taste was wonderful but the productivity was terrible. There was indeed no yeast, since this was only introduced in the 19th century. So we worked with these micro-organisms, with sensory analysis and bio-technology, and developed great breads with the great flavour of the good old days and today’s productivity. This is how we developed O-tentic. As you can see, we did not follow the classical innovation path, but one that derives from a passion for the product. The result is that artisan and industrial bakers as well as supermarkets all love this product.”

In Andenne Puratos manufactures dried sourdoughs of the “O-tentic” and “Sapore” brands (the latter meaning ‘flavour’ in Italian).

To produce the starter dough, the cereal flour is first mixed with water then with the special lactic acid bacteria that will lead to the desired result. This triggers fermentation. After a predetermined time, the leaven needs to be ‘refreshed’: more flour and water is added and the dough lightly kneaded. This process is repeated several times until the leaven has reached the desired maturity. For some types of sourdough, this process can continue for several days.

At Andenne, liquid leaven is dried on drums, often at temperatures of over 150 °C. It flows over the drum and forms a fine film which is scraped off with knives, then ground to obtain its final powder form. The drying process caramelises the sugars in the flour and gives the leaven a toasted flavour. These products have an exceptionally rich aroma. In addition to the usual manufacturing tests and controls, each new product is studied in one of the group’s sensory analysis laboratories. A panel of professional tasters ensures that the sourdough starters give bread the rich organoleptic qualities that bakers and consumers want.

The investment in Andenne complements the other Puratos group sourdough factories in Saint-Vith near the German border in Belgium, and in Cherry Hill near Philadelphia in the United States. Saint-Vith was the Puratos Group’s first sourdough production facility. Drum drying was also used

there until now. The start of production in the new factory has changed that. The new work in Andenne has not only a higher capacity but also more accurate control, thus allowing a greater and more precise distinction between the nuances of taste. In Saint-Vith the sourdough will be dried through spray towers in future. Puratos plans to achieve the capacity of sourdough production in Andenne and Saint Vith of 8,000 t by 2015.

All three production sites can access the Puratos sourdough library, which contains several hundred micro-organisms, allowing it to produce a variety of leavens unimaginable just a few years ago. +++

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