

Food Processing

Smooth solutions

New mixer makes process easy for J. Lieb Foods.

by Steve Ennen, Editor

J. Lieb Foods has varied needs. The Forest Grove, Ore.-based company is a co-packer of ice creams, jams, Tazo Teas, Jones Juices and Annie's salad dressings (to name a few) in everything from eight-ounce bottles to 2,500-pound tubs. Like any operation, though, it's impractical to build a line for the specific needs of each product. Recently the company installed a new Rotosolver Model 112RS88SS from Admix, Manchester, N.H., in its 60,000-square-foot facility. With the new model working in concert with two other Admix machines, J. Lieb Foods now has the range and flexibility for its varied product line and can handle greater quantities and cleanup more easily.

"I don't know how I ever got through my first 20 years of business without them," says Jim Lieb, president and founder of the company, about his team of mixers. "I don't know how people can process without them."

J. Lieb previously purchased two rotor/stator Rostat Model 100XP81 mixers. First the company installed a 5-hp model, then a 7.5-hp model, and the latest addition is a 10-hp. It has converted one so far to a Rotosolver to allow for more flexibility in low- and small-batch production.

"We use them for everything," says Lieb, who cites chopping fruit to folding in cocoa as chores he can accomplish with the machines. "A primary use is for putting gum in the solution without getting fisheyes."

Herein lies one of the challenges J. Lieb faced with the older models. Although dependable, rotor/stator high-shear mixers cannot be run dry or at low liquid levels.

With a rotor/stator high-shear mixer, the minimum mix is very limited.



Food processors attempting salad dressings, for example, must start the gum/water phases of their mixes with as little as 10 percent of the finished volume. This can be a problem for processors, especially with the reduced-fat and no-fat formulations they must produce for a full line.

"For salad dressings, mixing is critical," says Lieb.

The new model, made completely of stainless steel, including the motor, has helped the co-packer to overcome low batch levels that the earlier rotor/stator mixers cannot handle as efficiently.

"We can run a lot of different products now," says Lieb.

The design of the Rotosolver provides more flexibility for processors, allowing them to hydrate and disperse gums in smaller volumes.

In addition to offering variety, the new model offers some MRO advantages. The older models have bushings that need to be changed every couple of months. It's no great expense, but the absence of that need saves time and money.

"Now there are no changeovers," says Lieb. "It has made a lot of things easier. Particle sizes aren't a problem. We do a lot of chocolate and cocoa mixes too, and they mix right in."

Lieb adds that the latest model has offered several advances in the process.

"It is truly CIP-able now," says Lieb.

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