

ANOTHER CONVENTION IN THE BOOKS

The 82nd Pennsylvania Association of Meat Processors is now in the books - What a great convention!! Thank you to all who attended, speakers and suppliers who helped make it great. The educational sessions were well attended and we know you learned something beneficial. The showcase is always helpful to our members and we could not do it without all the support from our suppliers and those suppliers that sponsor this event each year. The product competition was also a success with 329 entries and class 7 being the top class to have product entered (Specialty Flavored Fresh Sausage/Uncooked). Again, we could not make this all happen without the help and support of so many!! THANK- YOU!!



Loni Stepniak Cuts the Ribbon at the Supplier Showcase



From Your NEW President...

Hello Fellow PAMP members. As President of PAMP I would like to not only thank you for this opportunity to serve you as president but for your continued support and membership to this one of a kind organization. As a fourth generation family business owner and a second generation President to PAMP I know the importance of not only living up to the expectations set before us by our fathers but also how important it is for the next generation to have the same or more opportunities for continued success. I know Summer is upon us now and we will all be very busy with our businesses and daily lives but lets not forget what we have in each other thru this organization. Continue to learn more from each other and work together so we can all continue to grow. Thank you all for a very memorable 2023 convention and lets make sure in 2024 we have yet another great year of success.

Mike Holland

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**MORE
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ON PAGE 13**

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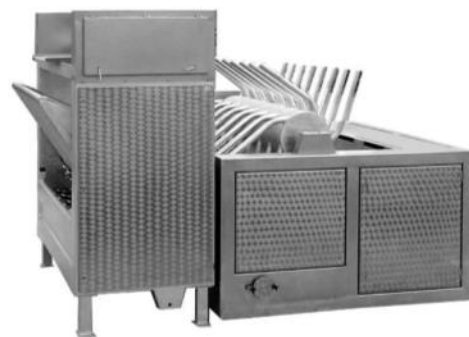
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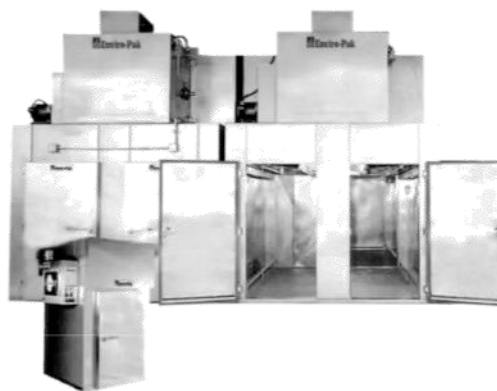
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Hints and Tips SAUERKRAUT

Few traditions are as widespread in Pennsylvania as celebrating the Pennsylvania Dutch tradition of having pork and sauerkraut on New Year's Day. Many small butcher shops across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania traditionally make fresh sauerkraut after the first frost each fall. It's usually ready for sale in late November or early December. But don't think that sauerkraut is only part of a one-and-done holiday meal. While my favorite pairing is fresh kraut with a natural casing hot dog, and of course ice-cold beer, there are literally hundreds of great recipes for sauerkraut beyond New Year's Day. Did you know that in addition to tasting great, sauerkraut is considered by many to be a SUPER food with numerous health benefits as it is a great source of vitamin c and is high in potassium.

The fermentation process that takes three to six weeks requires a HACCP Plan with a request for a Variance from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture when manufactured in retail operations and restaurants. Other states will likely require a HACCP Plan for fermented processes as the FOOD CODE requires a variance for all fermented products. Check with your local sanitarian if you have been making sauerkraut annually or you are interested starting. Please consider getting started on a HACCP Plan now instead of waiting until September.



Rodney Schaffer
Schaffer Label Consulting
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CONGRATULATIONS



AMSA HONORS JONATHAN CAMPBELL

The American Meat Science Association has named our friend and colleague Dr. Jonathan Campbell as its 2023 Distinguished Extension and Industry Service Award. Dr. Campbell has been a member of Penn State's faculty since 2013. Congratulations Jonathan!

PAMP MEMBER BREAKS WORLD RECORD!

There's bacon, there is extra-thick bacon, and then there's.....this. PAMP Member, Goodshall's Quality Meats broke a record for the longest piece of turkey bacon ever made. And as we all know, the best world records are the ones that also taste good. Congratulations, Goodshall's.



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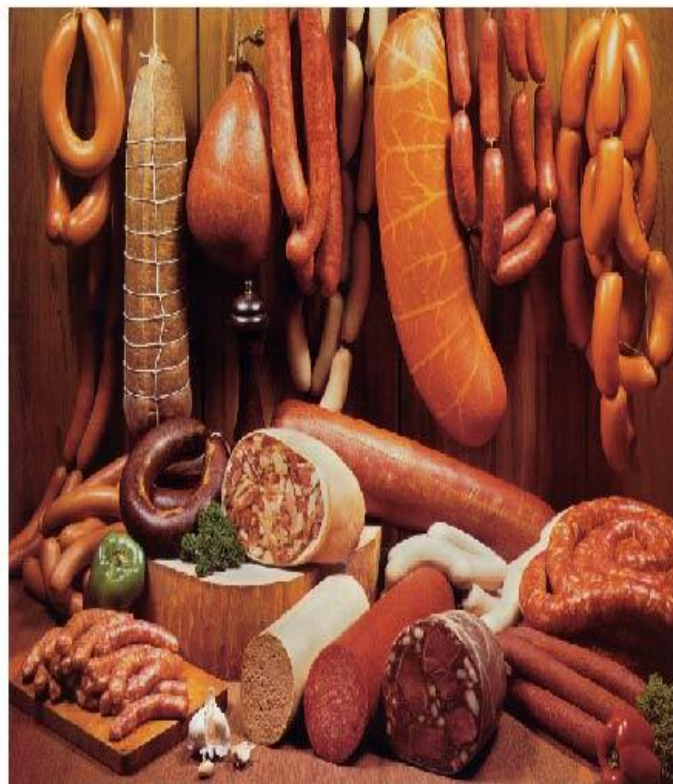
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OUR INDUSTRY NEEDS A GEORGE STRAIT



Have y'all seen the Paris Hilton commercial where she is promoting bringing pets to a Hilton hotel? It's a very pink, blingy, and you can't miss it, kind of a commercial. Honestly, I am not a fan of Paris Hilton, but I do stay at Hilton properties and when I first saw this commercial, I paused and started thinking about a vacation where I can

take my sweet Oakley Mabel (golden retriever). Even though I am not a fan of the commercial, it did make me think and it is making me talk about it here on a national blog. Commercials do work. When you have the right spokesperson, people listen, and it can be a great messaging tool.

At this point I think we all may be familiar with Taylor Swift (again not a fan) and her notion of decreasing egg prices by talking to her fanbase. The TikTok headline was "Taylor Swift's adoring and loyal fanbase have single-handedly caused the price drop of eggs by 13%." Her "there is nothing that they (my fans) can't accomplish" attitude has been given credit for this reduction in egg prices. The day after this announcement, egg prices dropped. We know this is coincidence but there are many believers out there, especially that

younger generation. They listen to their "heart throbs" just as we did when we were younger.

We (the poultry industry) have never been very good at promoting ourselves. We have had some amazing marketing campaigns, but in general we try and stay low key. I am not sure we can continue to be low key anymore. Since they have taken agriculture out of the classroom, consumers have no clue what we do or what happens between farm and table. We don't do a great job of promoting ourselves and educating consumers.

So, here is my thought: We need a hero, a "heart throb," a spokesperson for our industry. I would love to see George Strait but that may not fit the profile for a younger generation. Can you imagine George Strait talking about food safety and meat quality? He can be in his kitchen with a thermometer not washing his chicken and not cross contaminating while he makes his meals. I can picture it. If you can't picture it, then think about your favorite celebrity. Who would that be?

Whoever it is, we need to do something drastic. We need a spokesperson to dispel these myths and provide some good content that people will listen to and follow. We need someone that has influence and that can educate and promote. We are getting to a point that consumers are creating their own issues – have y'all even seen the prepping in the kitchen sink TikToks? They are cringe worthy!

I have shared my two cents about a spokesperson, but who do you want to see? Let's figure this out and make it happen. George Strait has my vote!

Reprinted from Chistine Alvarado's Blog
"For The Birds" from meatingplace.com



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2023 INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY MEAT COMPETITION CHAMPIONS

Commercial Style Bone-In Ham		Weiners/Frankfurters		Fermented Semi-Dry Sausages	
Holland Brothers	Grand Champion	Cunningham Meats	Grand Champion	Bardine's Smokehouse	Grand Champion
Stoltzfus Meats	Res. Grand Champion	Naser Foods	Res. Grand Champion	Slate Belt Butchery	Res. Grand Champion
The Country Butcher (CT)	Champion	Bardine's Smokehouse	Champion	Cunningham Meats	Champion
Boneless Ham		Meat Snack Sticks			
Miller Charm	Grand Champion	The Country Butcher (CT)	Grand Champion		
The Country Butcher (CT)	Res. Grand Champion	Cunningham Meats	Res. Grand Champion		
Bardine's Smokehouse	Champion	Stoltzfus Meats	Champion		
Venison, Non-shelf Stable Product		Specialty Flavored Meat Snack Stick			
Hollenbaugh's	Grand Champion	Herb Brittner Smokehouse	Grand Champion		
Bryan's Meat Cutting	Res. Grand Champion	Cunningham Meats	Res. Grand Champion		
Stepniak Beef	Champion	Naser Foods	Champion		
Bacon		Beef Jerky, Whole Muscle			
Stoltzfus Meats	Grand Champion	Herb Brittner Smokehouse	Grand Champion		
Slate Belt Butchery	Res. Grand Champion	Bardine's Smokehouse	Res. Grand Champion		
Gaiss Market	Champion	O'Neil's Quality Foods	Champion		
Specialty Bacon		Beef Jerky, Formed			
Holland Brothers	Grand Champion	Stepniak Beef	Grand Champion		
Bringhurst Meats	Res. Grand Champion	Slate Belt Butchery	Res. Grand Champion		
The Country Butcher (CT)	Champion	The Country Butcher (CT)	Champion		
Fresh Sausage, Uncooked		Whole Muscle Poultry			
Bringhurst Meats	Grand Champion	Bardine's Smokehouse	Grand Champion		
The Country Butcher (CT)	Res. Grand Champion	Holland Brothers	Res. Grand Champion		
Gaiss Market	Champion	Slate Belt Butchery	Champion		
Specialty Flavored Fresh Sausage/Uncooked		Poultry Sausage Products (Smoked/Cooked)			
The Country Butcher (CT)	Grand Champion	Hollenbaugh's	Grand Champion		
Country Butcher (PA)	Res. Grand Champion	Bardine's Smokehouse	Res. Grand Champion		
Bringhurst Meats	Champion	Stepniak Beef	Champion		
Small Diameter Sausage/Smoked or Smoked/RTE		Venison Shelf Stable Product			
The Country Butcher (CT)	Grand Champion	Stepniak Beef	Grand Champion		
Holland Brothers	Res. Grand Champion	Hollenbaugh's	Res. Grand Champion		
Bardine's Smokehouse	Champion	Bardine's Smokehouse	Champion		
Specialty Flavored Small Diam. Sausage (Cooked)		Cured Specialty Meat Product, Whole Muscle			
Naser Foods	Grand Champion	O'Neil's Quality Foods	Grand Champion		
Bardine's Smokehouse	Res. Grand Champion	Bardine's Smokehouse	Res. Grand Champion		
Country Butcher (PA)	Champion	Naser Foods	Champion		
Ring Bologna		Cured Specialty Meat Product, Ground			
Naser Foods	Grand Champion	Smithmyer's Superette	Grand Champion		
Cunningham Meats	Res. Grand Champion	Slate Belt Butchery	Res. Grand Champion		
Hollenbaugh's	Champion	Nello's Specialty Meats	Champion		
Large Diameter Luncheon Meat, RTE		Course Ground Weiners/Franks			
Bardine's Smokehouse	Grand Champion	Bryan's Meat Cutting	Grand Champion		
Holland Brothers	Res. Grand Champion	Smithmyer's Superette	Res. Grand Champion		
O'Neil's Quality Foods	Champion	O'Neil's Quality Foods	Champion		
Roast Beef		Innovative or Developmental			
Breakaway Farms	Grand Champion	Breakaway Farms	Grand Champion		
The Buck Stop LLC	Res. Grand Champion	Stepniak Beef	Res. Grand Champion		
Stepniak Beef	Champion	Holland Brothers	Champion		

**2023
CONVENTION
PIGS!!**



**People's Choice Winner
Loni Stepniak - Stepniak Beef**



50/50 Winners:

Chuck Mullen - Met Speed Labels; Tom Bako - Equipment Processing Solutions (with the lucky little girl who pulled his winning ticket)



ADDITIONAL AWARD WINNERS:

- * **Helmet Wagner Award - Bardine's Country Smokehouse**
- * **Supplier Showcase Best Booth - Marco Sales**



CHILDREN ON THE NIGHT SHIFT? SHAME ON US!

In this past Sunday's edition, 60 Minutes shed light on a shameful practice in the beef industry with its coverage of the unconscionable use of child labor in 13 meat packing plants across 8 states. Why, Why, Why!!! This isn't 1906 when Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, exposed the terrible working conditions in Chicago's meat packing plants which resulted in the Federal Meat Inspection Act. Just as appalling is using 13 and 14 year old children to clean up beef plants in 2023.

Who is at fault for these shocking child labor practices? Well, the accusing finger of blame is being pointed at Packer's Sanitation Service, Inc., (PSSI), a subsidiary of Blackstone who advertises themselves as the world's largest alternative asset manager, with \$991 billion of assets under management. PSSI contracts with many meat plants in our industry. The plant in the 60 Minutes exposé located in Grand Island, Neb., is owned by the largest meat company in the world, JBS.

According to the spokesperson interviewed in the 60 Minute piece, The US Department of Labor (DOL) estimated that they found over 100 children employed at the implicated plants. The DOL spokesperson stated that the number was probably much higher. Statements from both PSSI and Blackstone said they had the highest standards of checking the qualifications of those they put to work in the plants. However, PSSI has now signed a consent decree pledging not to employ children in the future. Blackstone also denied knowing that such practices were being used by PSSI. In some small form of retribution, PSSI has replaced its CEO.

The brush of shame for these egregious employment practices paints us all in the meat industry. Pictures taken within the JBS plant of children in clean up gear holding brooms donned with helmets clearly identifying them as PSSI employees are not just shameful but heart-breaking. How could anyone allow this to happen? Did JBS know of these small workers entering the plant during a nightly shift change as documented by DOL? It would seem based on their small stature alone to certainly raise questions about their age.

The DOL spokesperson mentioned that the plants experienced high labor turnover especially for their night shift cleanup crews. They needed labor to do the plant cleanup work and the majority of the children so employed were immigrants or from those families that had recently immigrated to the US.

What are we going to do now?

Here's what I think we should do ASAP. One of our country's most exasperating problems is the influx of immigrants across our southern border. And that is exacerbated with expiration of Title 42 United States Code today, which had allowed the US to send those

who crossed the border but could not qualify back into Mexico or other countries from whence they came. It is estimated that over 150,000 potential immigrants are waiting at our southern border for the rule to expire today so they can cross unfettered by Title 42.

The total meat industry including the processors and their affiliated trade organizations must work together to institute a program to help undocumented immigrants at our southern border gain documentation with the promise of a job. Why should we do that? It solves two problems that seemingly have no other solution from Congress or the president. The meat industry needs labor. Immigrants are a labor source. We must meld these two with all the attendant practices that will not just insure a labor supply but also guarantee a livable wage, job training and suitable living accommodations for meat industry employees of proper age, coupled with the ability to effectively clean our meat processing plants.

The industry must make a deep dive to both fill its employment needs and also prove to meat consumers that we are a conscientious industry that abhors the child labor practices recently exposed and are taking all the steps necessary to help those in need to qualify for admission into the US with the promise of a job with full training and a place to live.

Reprinted from Mack Grave's Blog
"Meat Your Markets" from meatingplace.com



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When good and not so good things happen, my wife often asks me whether I want the “good news” or the “bad news” first. I always ask her to start with the bad news, hoping that the good news which follows will offset whatever consterna-

tion is caused by the negative reporting. Perhaps, I softly equate the idea of anticipated good news with the availability of aspirin often used to cure a headache — i.e., “the bad news is that you have a headache, the good news is that, if you ask nicely, I have Tylenol.”

With the first full quarter of 2023 behind us, the same appears to be true with this year’s recall statistics. While there is some not so great information with respect to recalls this year, there is a lot of news to be excited about. So, I’ll start by giving some background, and then sharing the “news,” both good and bad.

Background: When we look at recall statistics over the last 10 years, there has been an average of about 613 recalls of USDA and FDA regulated products each year. In turn, every year, there are approximately 303 recalls for undeclared allergens (representing approx. 49% of all recalls), 159 recalls for the presence of harmful pathogens (representing approx. 26% of all recalls), and 73 recalls for foreign materials (representing approx. 12% of all recalls). Notably, these numbers remain relatively consistent year-to-year, which is to say that there are relatively few anomalies.

The bad news: The bad news is that, so far this year, we continue to struggle with allergen control in food products. Historically, the presence of undeclared allergens remains the leading cause of food product recalls and, unfortunately, the trends so far in 2023 remain consistent with previous years. In 2023, there have already been 76 recalls of food products for undeclared allergens. This means that industry is on track for 304 recalls this year for undeclared allergens, which is one more than the historical annual average of 303. Thus, industry should strive this year to do a better job.

The good news: Here’s where it gets exciting. So far in 2023, the food industry has a lot to be proud of. Notwithstanding industry’s mediocre performance in the undeclared allergens category, there have been only 102 total recalls this year, which puts the food industry on a trajectory this year of only 408 total recalls. When compared against the yearly average of 613, this could be a near-record setting year.

The news is equally impressive with respect to pathogen control. So far in 2023, there have only been 15 recalls announced for the presence of harmful pathogens. This potentially puts industry on track for only 60 recalls this year because of unwanted bacteria; when compared against the historical averages of 159, the current trend is stunning. Thus, industry should congratulate itself for a job well done!

Even with respect to foreign materials, industry appears to be doing very well. Compared to an annual average of 73 recalls per year for foreign materials, industry is currently on track this year to have only 52.

So, while not all news in the first quarter of 2023 is fabulous, most of the news is. In most years, seemingly unrelenting and unending food safety issues give industry migraines which are nearly impossible to escape. With that said, if industry can keep up the great work accomplished so far this year, I would hasten to bet that, at least in 2023, industry could likely soon put the aspirin away.

Reprinted from Shawn Steven’s Blog
“Legally Speaking” from meatingplace.com



CHICKEN PROCESSING AT ITS BEST

Recently, I saw a YouTube video of a new state-of-the-art 411,500-square-foot chicken harvesting facility located in Fredericksburg, Pa., that upends nearly everything the chicken industry has held sacrosanct and which will set the standard for future plants until a better one comes along. Bell & Evans chicken company opened its new plant after spending \$360 million on improving and reinventing nearly every part of the old chicken processing routine.

I am sure that other chicken companies will have to keep up with the new B&E plant standard if they want to continue to capture their fair share of the consumers’ stomachs.

In my old chicken days, we kept up with competition by analyzing not competitor plants but the chicken products those plants produced. I can vividly remember during my days at an Eastern Shore chicken company trying to keep the owner satisfied that we were producing the market’s finest chicken by measuring our chicken products against the competition’s. Every few months we would ask our in-market representatives to go out and buy both our competitor’s chickens including whole birds, parts and everything in between as well as ours to make a comparison of what the consumer sees. And, what competitive chicken did we buy? We started with Bell & Evans, of course. All of this “store bought” product was then brought into our main office, analyzed by our quality control crew and compared to ours. We wanted to know what our competitors did to make their chickens better than ours.

As an example, was it small little feathers that we couldn’t find on our competitor’s chickens but somehow were resident on ours? What was it about the competitor’s chickens that was identifiable by consumers that made our chickens look deficient? Of more importance, what needed to be changed in our processing plants to make our chicken better than our competitors? Then we did it.

From viewing the B&E video, it sure seems to me that they didn’t just start the new plant planning by first trying to make chicken processing more efficient. No, they started with the idea of how to make their chickens better in every way from grow out to final product packaging and just what needed to be done in the plant to accomplish that. What a novel concept! Make it better, not just cheaper.

Sure, there are still those in any consumer product marketing game who want to “price it cheap and sell a heap.” And, they do. But, there is always someone who can make something cheaper. And, for a while, the cheap competitor sells more. But, it doesn’t last. In today’s world, consumers are just too smart to put up with “cheap” without quality.

The thing that encourages me is that I am starting to see other meat and poultry companies upgrade their plants. They are viewing the consumer through the correct lens of the binoculars, not the wrong minimizing end. Such a consumer focus as any true marketer will tell you is the correct one. But, I know that trying to stay competitive in a cut-throat consumer marketplace is not for the weak. It is for the strong. Too many times price becomes a barrier to growth. Quality, however, should be the fundamental of any growth model.

Our poultry marketplace is not for the faint of heart. To underscore, please understand that weekly over 150 million chickens, give or take, are processed for human consumption. That makes for a competitive battle that can only be truly won by quality. The seduction a cheap price offers lasts only a short time and then it is gone, forever. Let’s keep the plant improvements going, as they are evidence that we are really listening to our consumers.

As far as the owner of the chicken company I worked for was concerned, Bell & Evans set the quality standard back in the day, and they are still doing it today. I applaud them!

Reprinted from Mack Grave’s Blog
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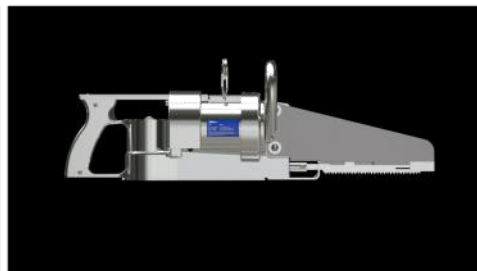
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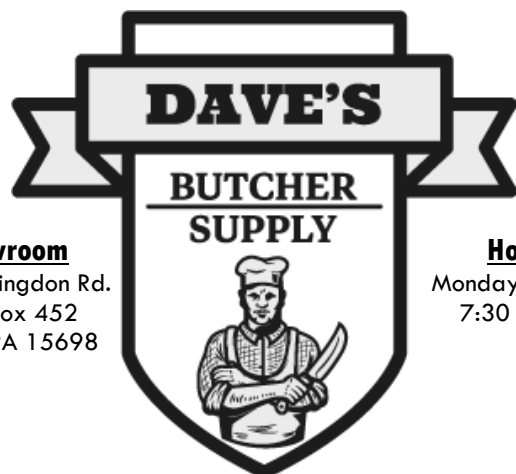
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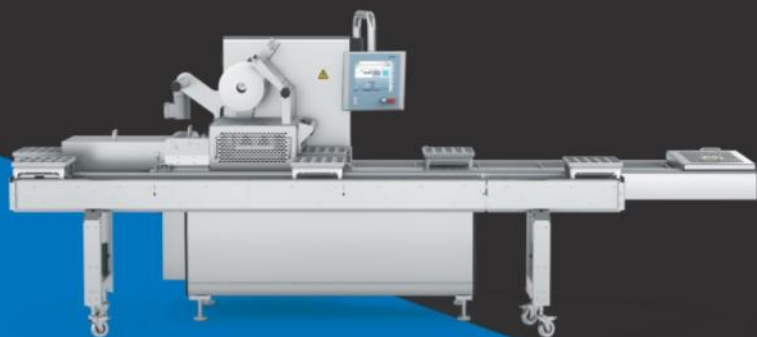
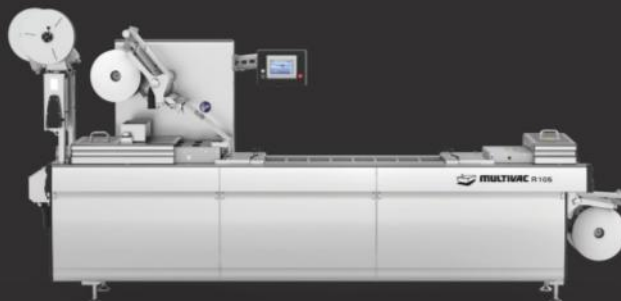
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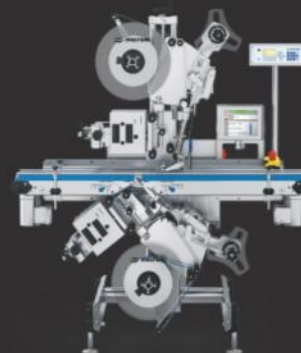
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