

MACHINE CASE STUDY | JUNE 30, 2014

Semiautomatic labeling is perfectly suitable

Efficiently and economically fits the needs of incubator start-ups and other small-volume packaging operations.

By Judy Rice, Contributing Editor

Hanley's Foods, Inc., Prairieville, LA, produces unique, Louisiana-inspired Sensation™ salad dressing. CEO/Founder Richard Hanley notes, "I started up this company in September 2012, and I was on the hunt to find a place to produce our hand-made, hand-packed dressings. I knew that I needed an FDA-approved facility. Through research, I discovered Edible Enterprises in Norco, LA. I was there and up and running within a month, and we had product on the shelf by October 2012. Now we (me and 7 or 8 family members and friends) are producing the Sensation salad dressings at Louisiana State University's new Food Incubator in Baton Rouge."

Says Richard Hanley, "Everything basically is done by hand. I use a Model TG-1000 single-piston semi-automatic hydraulic filler from Cleveland Equipment to fill the bottles. My wife Kate and other family and friends manually apply the plastic twist caps."

The company also had been manually applying labels to the dressing containers. But increasing demand for the dressings compelled Hanley's Foods to consider an upgrade of its labeling operations. Notes Hanley, "We were peeling and sticking printable labels from my home printer. That got old really quick."

After evaluating various small-scale labeling equipment options, Hanley's decided to install two Model ZL5 label applicators manufactured by Zap Labeler. Hanley's selected these units based on favorable cost comparisons to other label applicators and the consistency of label application performance that enabled labeling operations time savings.

Richard Hanley explains, "The Zap labeler is very compact to fit into our operations. It also accommodates our bottle shape and cost requirements. It's simple to operate, so we didn't need much installation and start-up help beyond the very informative on-line video instructions. We installed the first unit in March 2013, then a second in April 2013. Then in 2014, we added two more Zap labelers. These systems have helped us triple our packaging production speeds."

Now the filled, capped bottles go down to the four semiautomatic labeling machines—two for front labels and two for back labels. The 8-oz glass bottles and plastic twist caps are supplied by SKS Industries. Pressure-sensitive front and back labels and shrink neck bands are from Labels Dallas. Richard Hanley says, "We did a lot of research to choose the labels, and these polypropylene-based labels work well against oil and water."

Then tamper-evident neck sleeves, also supplied by SKS Industries, are manually applied and heat-shrunk to the bottles via high-speed blow-drying. Finished bottles are hand-packed into shipping cases, and then the cases are taped shut and loaded onto a pick-up truck. Hanley's also is offering 1-gal containers of product for restaurant and foodservice customers

Hanley says, "We drive the truck to our distributor, Associated Grocers, and sit in line, surrounded by semi-trucks in the middle of the night, waiting to make delivery of our product. It's definitely a grass roots operation, a family affair."

Currently, Hanley's Foods is producing and hand-packing about 1,500 glass bottles of dressing per week. Distribution is in about 150 stores, primarily in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama. Product also is available on-line and ships nationwide.

The company's flagship dressing, Sensation™, is described as a "ranch meets Italian" dressing with a distinct Louisiana accent. Once a year, Hanley's also is offering a seasonal Strawberry Vinaigrette. The company has many other dressing formulations under development. Among new flavors in the works and exclusively announced to Packaging World Magazine is a Bourbon Balsamic Dressing.

Watch a video related to this article at pwgo.to/820.

Companies in this article:

SUPPLIERS:

- »Edible Enterprises
- »Louisiana State University
- »Cleveland Equipment
- »Zap Labeler
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