



## Applied Technology

# Cheese Company's Success Leads to Automated Packaging Line

Lamagna Cheese is a family-owned and operated business with a rich history dating back to 1928. Located in Verona, Pa., about 15 miles east of Pittsburgh, Lamagna is a market leader in the ricotta cheese business. In addition to producing ricotta, the company shreds and bags other cheeses at its facility. As a top producer of ricotta cheese, Lamagna focuses on using high-quality ingredients and a well-controlled process.

The company's success and growing demand was putting added stress on its hand-packing operation. President Mike Lamagna was in search of a way to solve his case packing dilemma: how to trim labor costs and solve the high employee turnover rates he was experiencing. Faced with myriad choices in the case-packing arena, he realized he needed to find a supplier with experience in the dairy and cheese industry. On the recommendation of a friend from Biazzo Cheese, he visited the Delkor exhibit at the International Cheese Technology Expo in Madison, Wis. This decision resulted in Lamagna installing its first fully-automatic case packaging line, built by Delkor.

As the leaders of a third-generation family business, Lamagna and his two brothers have a lot of experience in the cheese-making process. Mike's educational background in food science lends him an in-depth understanding of the cheese-making process from start to finish. Mike's two brothers, Chris and Rudy, work closely with him to manage all aspects of the business.

With a customer base ranging from Wal-Mart to small local establishments, they cater to a wide variety of customer needs. When it comes to automating their packaging line, they felt they needed to find a vendor that can provide them with the features and flexibility they need.



Delkor Systems, a Minneapolis-area end-of-line packaging equipment manufacturer, entered the case loading market with its Model 500 Flex Loader.

Lamagna needed a machine that could be run in the filler room, necessitating a machine with washdown construction. It is clear that Delkor's loader is designed for this environment, as it is built from stainless steel and offers good access for washdown—a result of Delkor's experience with the dairy and beverage industry. "This gave them an edge," Mike Lamagna says. "It's made for being in a dairy and it shows. It is very hose-friendly."

Lamagna Cheese also needed a machine that would be simple to set up and run, as there are frequent changeovers. The Flex Loader is set up with hand-cranked and Siko counters on nearly all of the adjustment points, which makes for a very simple, tool-free changeover.

"Delkor's software engineers have done a great job on the operator interface," Lamagna says. "The product selections and machine parameter adjustments are very clear and easy to access. The screen is very user friendly."

Lamagna closely evaluated six different companies during the research portion of his project and kept coming back to the

same conclusion: Delkor was clearly the market leader for loading tapered cups. "Their attention to detail during the up-front analysis, and their ability to come in measure the plant, lay in the equipment and then have it all come together exactly as planned is a testament to their dedication," he says.

During installation of the project, plant engineer Pete Bonarotti had firsthand experience with Delkor's service technician and also with their up-front attention to detail.

"The equipment dropped into position exactly as planned, and it fit into the room perfectly," he says. "Never in my 22 years of experience have I seen a piece of equipment run a full day's production on the first day of the installation. The Delkor crew was very professional and great to work with."

With Lamagna's packaging dilemma now solved, the company is back to focusing on what it does best – producing one of the best ricotta cheeses in the industry. **DFR**

*To find out more about the Delkor 500 Flex-Loader and other Delkor products, visit [www.delkorsystems.com](http://www.delkorsystems.com) or call (800) 328-5558.*