

When purchasing equipment means better business

Here are case studies of several bakers that have recently purchased equipment, either to increase operating efficiency or to expand the mix of products offered.

By Margaret Littman, Contributing Editor

In the life of every manufacturing plant there comes a time to upgrade, rearrange or add new machinery to a new facility. That task may never seem more daunting than when it's motivated by the addition of a new product line. Retrofitting existing space and equipment to accommodate a new line is complex enough for operations, but when R&D and marketing add their demands, simple headaches soon become migraines.

However, bakers add new equipment successfully and regularly, with or without bricks and mortar, often with a transition.

Here are three case studies from a cross-section of wholesale bakers who retrofitted existing equipment. Their needs varied and they're in different stages of development, but all three have survived.

■ Orlando Baking Co. Cleveland, Ohio

Fifteen months ago, Orlando Baking decided to try something it believed no other baker had successfully done—at least not in the United States—automate the production of toasted onion ciabatta bread and rolls. For the last decade, Orlando has made the specialty Italian breads by hand, adding some specialized machinery to ease the process, whenever possible.

While the new developments made parts of the process semi-automated, the line was still a slow, labor-intensive production.

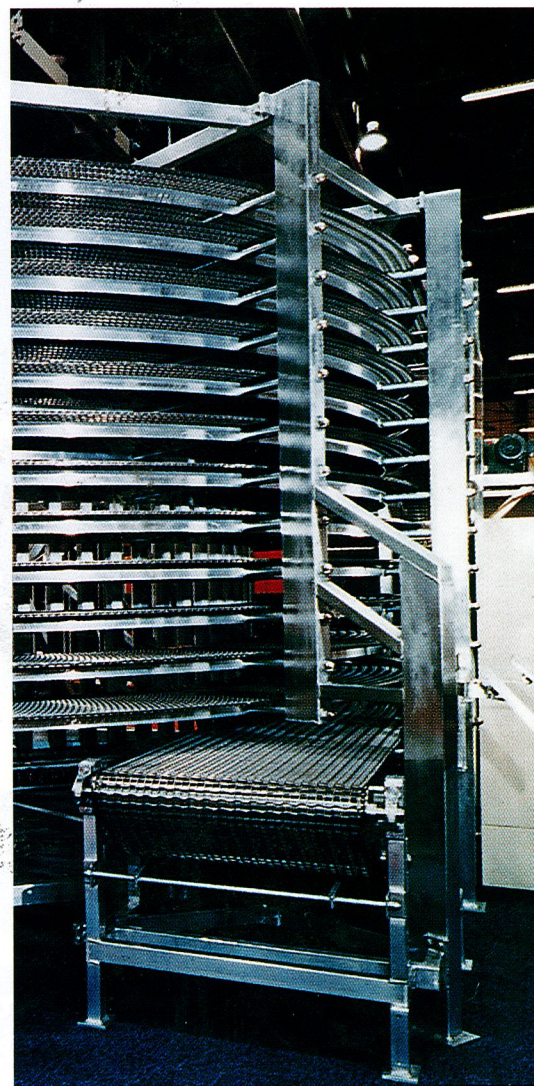
"We were the first ones to bring ciabatta bread to this country 10 years ago," says John C. Orlando, vice president of produc-

tion at the bakery. "As equipment was developed [abroad], we watched as it grew."

Soon, Orlando's demand for ciabatta—from customers purchasing frozen, par-baked and fresh breads and rolls for a variety of outlets—convinced the bakery it needed to develop full automation to keep it going. Recent year ciabatta sales had been topping 15% to 20% growth annually. As a result, last year Orlando installed the fourth automated ciabatta line ever installed in the world, and the first ever in this country. The line, manufactured by an Italian company, was discovered by Orlando personnel attending European trade shows:

Orlando discovered that there were three companies developing this type of line. At that time, the technology was in the stage where certain manufacturers were willing to take Orlando's ideas and experience into account. Orlando worked on finishing the line with the manufacturer, providing feedback on how it gently handled the fragile dough, as well as the ease with which the machine could be cleaned.

In order to accommodate the line, the bakery built a 55,000-sq.-ft. addition, which Orlando hopes will accommodate future growth. The ciabatta line currently occupies about 25% of the addition. New hearth



Goglian Bakeries is installing a spiral cooling conveyor similar to this one, equipped with a spiral system belt designed for high volume and high speed processing.

ovens, proofers and conveyors were added. The finished line bakes 1,600 loaves per hour, compared with the 800 Orlando could produce manually.

But the increase in production was not without its trials. It took almost a full year to retrain employees accustomed to handworking the dough to use the new line. While Orlando expects the line to pay dividends for years to come, it will take two years for the company to pay off the expense of the new line. However, Orlando says the full automation will now allow the bakery to explore new varieties of ciabatta, such as walnut and

raisin, an impossibility when it was furiously keeping up with demand.

■ Uncle B's Bakery

Des Moines, Iowa

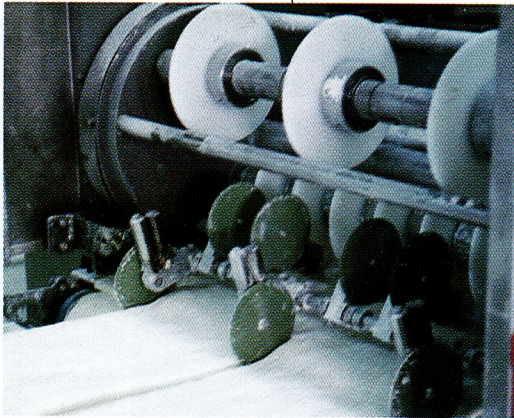
Uncle B's, the leading refrigerated bagel, has prided itself for years on its "Never Frozen" tagline, which has helped the brand distinguish itself from *Lender's* and other

frozen bagel powerhouses sharing space in the refrigerated dairy case. But Bill Rose Jr., Uncle B's CEO, thought he could increase the Des Moines plant's efficiency and the company's bottom line by adding frozen bagels to the mix. Consumers still only see the *Uncle B's* on the refrigerated product, but last year the company began making private label frozen bagels.

Having never frozen a bagel before, Rose needed a new freezing system, and he wanted the final product to be as cutting-edge as his refrigerated bagels had been when they hit the market. While ammonia-based freezing is the most commonplace and economical, Rose thought he could find something that better freezes the bagel crust by working at a temperature lower than the typical 40° to 60° below zero. His solution was a cryogenic system that freezes the popular baked goods at 85° below freezing.

The addition of the cryogenic equipment—using that same space-age technology that movie characters use to preserve themselves in the afterlife—was part of an overall \$7 million expansion of and addition to the Uncle B's plant. The facility expansion took three months, but the training of employees

Orlando Baking Co. bought equipment to automate its production of ciabatta bread and rolls.



in the use of the cryogenic equipment was no more complicated than it would have been to introduce any new type of freezer, Rose says.

Because Rose expects to see a "major contribution to sales and revenues" thanks to the frozen bagel line, it won't be long before the new equipment has paid for itself.

■ **Goglanian Bakeries Inc.**
Santa Ana, Calif.

Before Goglanian was founded as a bakery in 1967, it had been known as a bakery equipment maker for the previous six years. So, the bakery was "very well-versed in manufacturing," says George Goglanian, the company president.

When the bakery needed to add higher speed cooling conveyors to increase the speed of its flat bread, pizza crust and pita bread product lines by two-and-a-half times, Goglanian had the equipment background to know exactly what sort of problems he was up against. He wanted to be able to run the conveyors at 170 ft. per minute, far surpassing the 100 ft. to 120 ft. per minute rates on the market.

While Goglanian Bakeries had experience manufacturing straight-line conveyors, it

didn't have expertise with spiral racks, and Goglanian didn't want the company to spend the time to "reinvent the wheel," he says. Goglanian began courting several manufacturers that made the conveyors the bakery was using before the upgrade. While the manufacturer selected couldn't promise the 170 ft. per minute rate that Goglanian wanted, with its use of a particular spiral system belt designed for high volume and high speed processing, it could promise a minimum of 125 ft. per minute.

Goglanian was impressed with the width and design of the belt, and with the type of retrofitting this manufacturer had helped the bakery with in the past.

Just 30 days after beginning to compare notes, Goglanian ordered the conveyor.

The spiral cooling conveyor with the belt is in the process of being installed and Goglanian expects to be running tests by the end of November. While there is no guarantee the 170 ft. per minute speed will be attained, Goglanian thinks it is a distinct possibility, and is excited that his bakery will be the first to test the belt.

"We'll start testing it in the field and push it to its maximum," he says.