

## THE RIGHT CHOICE

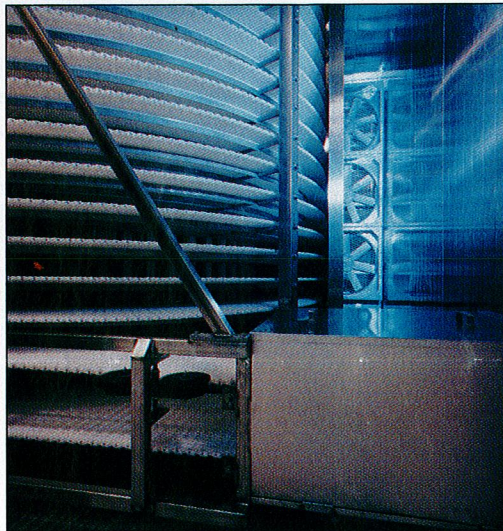
After studying the market, foodservice meats processor St. James Gourmet Inc. found a blast freezing partner in I.J. White Corp.

Larry Maples spent more than 365 days learning about freezing systems and available freezers. But it took fewer than 14 days for Mr. Maples, vice president and general manager at St. James Gourmet Inc., to begin appreciating the company's newly installed spiral blast freezing system from I.J. White Corp.

"We're already tripling our output with less labor and fewer hours," says Mr. Maples.

St. James Gourmet, Farmingdale, N.Y., processes portion-controlled beef, lamb, pork, veal and poultry meats for national distribution to foodservice operators. Up until late June, the company used a blast freezer requiring manual product input and retrieval.

St. James used the freezer for two purposes: to chill "primal" raw cuts of meat prior to trimming and to freeze finished product. Working 24 hours a day, employees manually loaded meat onto stainless steel carts and transferred the carts in and out of the freezer. Mr. Maples estimates finished product output from the freezer at 1,000 lbs. per hour.



I.J. White's BF3000 spiral blast freezer, which St. James started up last month, already handles an estimated 3,000 lbs. of product per hour. The stainless steel, USDA-approved system and structure is 22 ft. wide by 28 feet long and 20 ft. deep. The model BF3000 — custom designed by I.J. White for St. James — features a new coil design that reduces defrost time. Moreover, the freezer has two infeed areas handling product from two separate production lines.

Before I.J. White installed its BF3000, continuous traffic in and out of the manual freezer resulted in an overall loss of 15°F to 20°F in temperature. The new blast freezer, operating continuously, experiences only about 2°F of variation, Mr. Maples says.

St. James officials also appreciate the freezer's chilling capabilities. Operators can control the freezing time by product.

"The BF3000 chills primal meats so quickly and evenly that it produces excellent color in the meat," Mr. Maples says. "Before, the other freezer's warmer temperatures and fluctuations meant that the color wasn't as bright and we had to

wait three or four hours to determine how the color would finally come out. Now, it's only about a 20- to 30-minute wait and the color is great."

I.J. White says production flexibility is the key feature of the company's blast freezing systems. Meanwhile, each system is made with modular components, Variable Airflow (VAF) technology and CIP wash-down coils, says Peter White, vice president.

I.J. White's VAF technology enables operators to increase or decrease airflow by product. Not only does VAF improve product quality but it also saves energy costs, Mr. White says. Separately, I.J. White incorporates infeed and discharge vestibules in its blast freezers to dramatically reduce the frequency of defrost. This allows longer production runs and less downtime.

All I.J. White blast freezers, meanwhile, feature all stainless steel construction and an electrical control center complete with system diagnostics. The system may be upgraded with new PRO-MAX software.

It's no doubt true that any freezer would have been an improvement for St. James Gourmet. But Mr. Maples is confident that he didn't find just any freezer, but the right one.

"I spent nearly a year investigating different methods of freezing. In many cases, the competitors' freezers were not different at all. But then we talked to I.J. White, which listened to what we wanted and was flexible enough to give us just that."

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