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Yuhana Kizilbash,
Vice-President,
TWI Foods Inc.

TWI
FOODS

FLOUR POWER

Packaging finesse key ingredient in specialty baker's
brisk rise up the food chain in the
fast-growing flat breads market segment

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BREAKING BREAD

Ontario bakery turns up the heat in the Canadian baked-goods industry with a diverse product portfolio and cutting-edge packaging competence



Produced and packaged at TWI Foods' state-of-the-art production facilities in Toronto and Mississauga, Ont., the company's diverse product range comprises a wide variety of authentically-made flat breads and an expansive dessert offering of various types of cookies, biscuits, loafcakes, poundcakes, shortbreads and other high-quality sweet indulgences.



A roll of pre-printed plastic film wound through its places along the Multivac R 245 machine just prior to packing.



One of two high-performance Multivac R 245 packaging machines working side-by-side at the Mississauga plant.

**BY GEORGE GUIDONI, EDITOR
PHOTOS BY JOHN PACKMAN**

As home to one of the most multiculturally diverse population mixes in the world, the so-called GTA (Greater Toronto Area) region offers plenty of opportunities to specialty ethnic food producers to not only make a decent living

by introducing Canadians to exciting new tastes and flavors of the world cuisine, but also make their products an indelible part of the mainstream local food retail landscape.

Which is exactly what the Toronto-based **TWI Foods Inc.** has done remarkably swiftly with great style and much aplomb since appearing on the scene in 1997 as a fledgling specialty bread, pastries and baked goods producer aiming to serve the growing

South Asian ethnic segment in Ontario and, as it happily turned out, well beyond.

Founded by the husband-and-wife team of company president Ali Kizilbash and vice-president Yuhana Kizilbash, TWI Foods nowadays employs about 250 people at two busy, state-of-the-art production facilities in Toronto and Mississauga.

Over the years, the family-owned commercial bakery has achieved resounding success not just filling a void in the local ethnic markets for fresh-made South Asian- and Middle Eastern-style breads and pastries, but also riding the wave of the Canadian consumers' growing appetites for more adventurous and exotic world cuisine offerings to the point of having to run its production and packaging operations virtually flat-out to keep up with soaring demand.

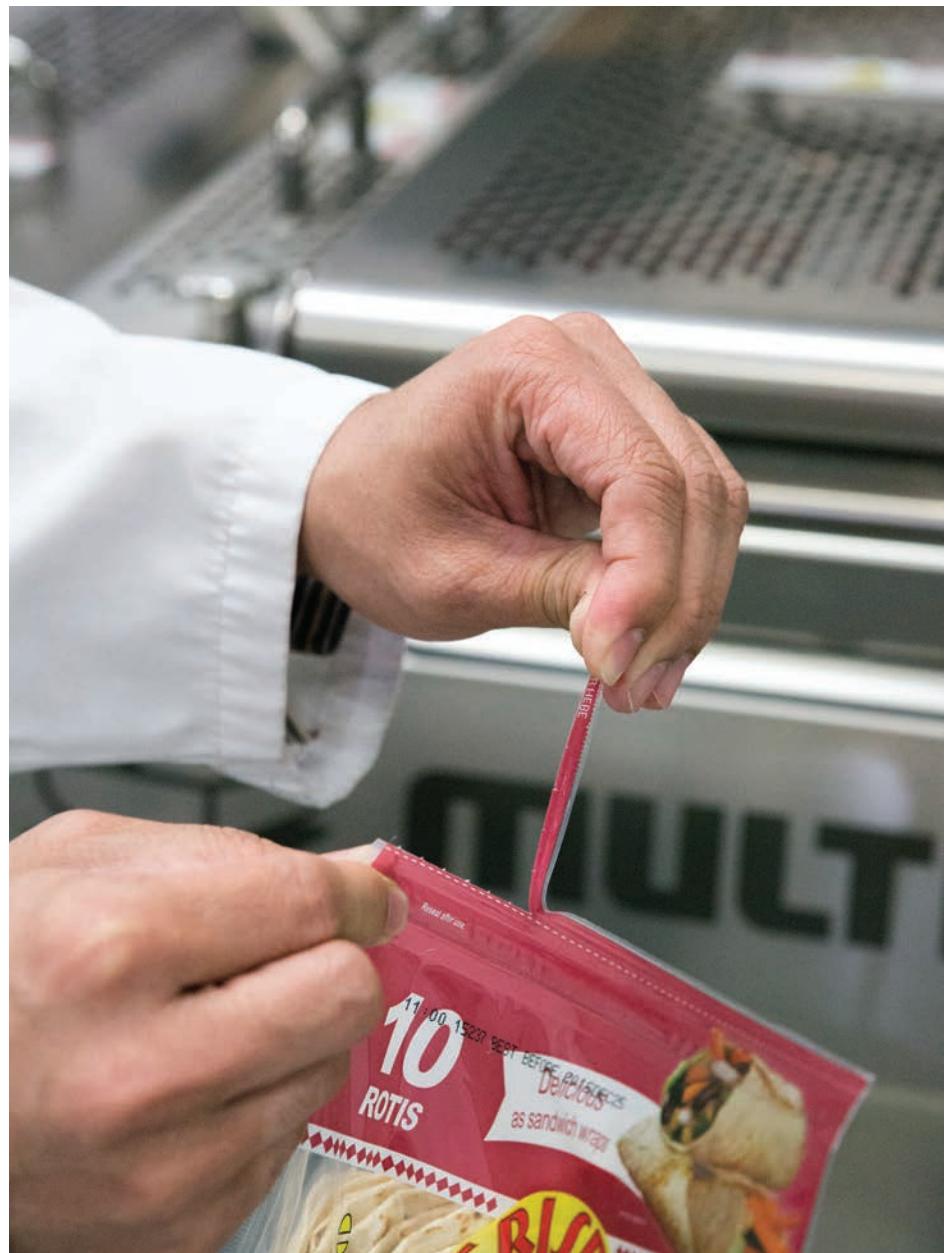
Already operating a total of eight lines at the two plants in multishift rotation that often swings into a 24/7 production mode at peak demand periods, the company's growing diverse product range comprises three main product lines—marketed under **Crispy**, **Sunrise** and **Crispy St.** brand labels—distributed to customers in the retail, foodservice, and private-label markets in more than 200 different SKUs (stock-keeping units).

And not just within Canada, mind you, but also in the U.S. and other growing offshore export markets in the U.K., Germany, Australia, Middle East and Singapore, with Japan expected to follow suit soon.

Little wonder, then, that TWI Foods was a 2013



Inline zipper applicators place press-to-close resealable closures at top of every bag.



The film strip above the zipper easily peels off to expose the resealable bag closure.

and 2014 finalist in the *Ontario Food Exporter Awards* competition, with two consecutive annual rankings on the *Canada's 500 Fastest Growing Companies* list of the **Profit** magazine and the finalist award from the financial services giant **Deloitte** in its annual *Canada's Best Managed Companies* rankings.

Coming during some very challenging times for the baked goods industry in general, such fast growth provides compelling testament to the company's core values of impeccably high product quality, exemplary customer service, keen product innovation, and continuous investment in automated processing and packaging equipment to retain a key competitive edge.

"We work in a very tough and extremely price-sensitive industry," production manager Hyder Hasan told **Canadian Packaging** on a recent visit to the company's smaller, 36,000-square-foot Mississauga facility dedicated exclusively to the production of the round-shaped naan and roti/wrap flat breads, each offered in several different flavor varieties and ingredient formulations.

"It is quite difficult to survive in this industry," Ali Kizilbash expands, "and since we bake a lot of different varieties of bread, pastries, cookies and so on, we have a lot of serious competitors out there."

"However, we have been able to sustain our growth in the market in large part because our efficient buying practices and continuous improvement," Kizilbash reveals.

"The biggest challenge in the food industry nowadays is to maintain affordable prices and to maintain high quality standards, which can only be done by efficient management of resources and achieving favorable economies of scale."

According to Kizilbash, TWI Foods spares no ex-

pense and effort "to deliver our promise of quality to all our customers."

Says Kizilbash: "We provide comprehensive first-hand quality assurance trainings for our employees, and our in-house laboratory is equipped with state-of-the-art testing equipment and run by a dedicated staff of qualified and fully-trained professionals 24/7.

"We strongly believe in, and have implemented, root cause analysis of QC (quality control) data for

continuous improvement," Kizilbash reveals, citing the company's internationally-recognized SQF Level II certification for food safety and implementation of HACCP (*Hazardous Analysis Critical Control Points*)-based quality assurance system in line with the recently-unveiled *Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)*.

"We take all customer complaints seriously, with our higher management personally taking-charge of all the complaints to make sure we fully address the issue and ensure that any repetition of



Mississauga plant's packaging room employees in full protective clothing placing freshly-made naan flat breads inside the cavities of the Multivac R 245 thermoform packaging machine to be packaged in high-barrier plastic film bags.



A row of freshly-prepared naan breads making its way out of the cooking ovens inside the packaging room.



Balls of mixed and blended dough are placed onto food-grade conveyor belting and transferred to be pressed flat into shape before being sent on through the ovens for baking and ultimately into the adjacent packaging room for bagging.

such things happening again is optimally mitigated,” Kizilbash states, stressing the importance of keeping all customers happy at all times.

“Our customers love our product and for the most part they are very brand loyal,” he relates.

“We have been able to retain our customer base over the years primarily because of the quality assurance systems we put in place and by delivering consistent high-quality product to them over and over again.”

This core competence is continually reinforced

and fine-tuned with the company’s proactive capital investment strategy, according to Kizilbash, with its emphasis on automating as much of the more tedious and manual production and processing functions as possible.



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SAY HELLO TO OUR VETERAN ASSEMBLER,

Emanuel Frantz - "Manny"

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Every gearbox and motor that leaves the SEW-Eurodrive Brampton assembly plant is, in fact, hand-assembled and is meticulously inspected and tested by one of our highly trained assemblers, such as Manny.

Manny came to Canada from Malta in the mid-1970s and brought with him a passion for German cars—driving them, fixing them, and enjoying them. He felt that it would only make sense to join a company that was as obsessed with German engineering and performance as he was.

Manny joined the SEW team in 1980, and according to SEW Human Resources, "He made it an easy choice." Even though he is well-known for his antics and his candidness around the plant, he shifts quickly into work mode and applies his mechanical skills to produce quality products that are nothing short of perfection.

We asked Manny what he would do if he had millions of dollars sitting in the bank? His response... "I would work only three days a week."

Manny can assemble more than 20 units per day, and he is ready and available to put in some overtime at a moment's notice. With his work ethic and passion, it was evident that SEW had become his second home.

SEW-Eurodrive would like to thank Manny for 34 years of fantastic work and for his positive attitude in the workplace, which is infectious. From all of us at SEW-Eurodrive, "we look forward to many more years with you, and we thank you for making it SEW!"

Emanuel Frantz - "Manny"

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Stacks of freshly-baked flat bread manually inserted into their proper spots on the Multivac R 245 thermoformer before wrapping and sealing.

"We work with a very 'lean' production process by eliminating any unnecessary steps and optimizing all of our lines," says Hasan, noting that one of the company's cookie lines at its much bigger, 145,000-square-foot Toronto facility is capable of processing one ton of cookies per hour when running at full capacity.

"Automation is a given, considering our emphasis on keeping labor costs to a minimum," says Kizilbash, "so we make it a priority to continue to invest in new machinery that increases our throughputs and overall capabilities on the production and packaging lines."

At the Mississauga facility, this proactive capital investment activity is emphatically underscored with the recent arrival of two state-of-the-art, high-performance **Multivac R 245** thermoform packaging machines built by renowned German packaging equipment manufacturer **Multivac Sepp Hagenmüller GmbH & Co. KG.**

Installed virtually side-by-side in the Mississauga plant's highly sanitized and ultra-clean packaging room, one of the two *Multivac R 245* systems is dedicated to high-speed packaging of the **Crispy 100% Roti** brand ultra-thin wraps 10 to a bag, with the second unit used to bag the more lumpy, pita-style **Crispy** brand naan bread, which is packed five to six pieces to a bag, depending on the flavor and recipe.

Each of the *Multivac* machines has been custom-fitted with the application-specific tooling, gas-flushing options and inline zipper applicators to create perfectly-filled and zippered doy pack bags of product boasting six- to seven-week shelf-life, with the resealable PTC (press-to-close) zippers helping to keep the product's freshness and aroma in the bag well after it's been opened.

Filling the bags at robust steady rates of six cycles per minute, the two rollstock *Multivac* machines offer superior hygienic design with full washdown capability inside and out, with easy-access side panels offering plenty of space to perform the required maintenance and cleaning.

Controlled and monitored via an operator-friendly, intuitive touchscreen control panel, the fully-automatic, stainless-steel *R 245* thermoformers are also easily integrated with all the peripheral product coding, labeling, weighing and product inspection systems to provide a highly reliable turnkey bagging solution for the Mississauga operation.

"The addition of *Multivac* equipment on the



Manufactured by the Toronto-based Fortress Technologies Inc., the Phantom series metal detector plays a central role in helping the Mississauga packaging lines meet their stringent quality assurance standards.

naan and roti/wrap lines side has done wonders for us with both local and export customers," Kizilbash extols.

"Both products are doing extremely well in the market, and the main Big Box chains just can't seem to get enough of it—keeping our operation busy week-in and week-out."

Kizilbash says he's highly impressed by the quality, appearance and shelf impact of the doy pack bags processed by the two *R 245* machines.

"Packaging plays a very vital role in selling our product," says Kizilbash, praising the quality of resealable zippers applied to the plastic film bags inline.

"In terms of packaging, we are always focusing on what the consumer wants and how they want it, and convenience is always on the top of our list because of the consumers' increasingly busy lifestyle."

"All of our investments in packaging are based on responding to the changing trends in the market," he

adds, "and resealability is a big part of the convenience today's consumers expect from their packaging."

Kizilbash notes that the outstanding packaging results the plant has achieved with its new *Multivac* workhorses has prompted further investments in zipper applying and FFS (form/fill/seal) technologies for the Toronto facility, which is gearing up for installation of new production lines in the near future.

"We have recently relaunched our poundcake with new, more upbeat packaging and overall look that has been received very well by our customers and consumers," Kizilbash relates, "and we have some very exciting new initiatives in the works."

With its stringent hygienic demands and uncompromising stance on product quality excellence, Hasan says TWI Foods only works with well-vetted and trusted suppliers of packaging machinery and materials both in Canada and globally.



Intuitive touchscreen control panels help to ensure user-friendly operation of the *Multivac R 245* machines.



Touchscreen panel of the Videojet 1610 inkjet coder used to apply variable product information onto the bags.



A heavy-duty SEW-Eurodrive electric motor is a common feature on the Mississauga plant's production machinery.



Packed 10 wraps to a bag, the Crispy brand roti breads have become a popular sandwich option for many Canadians.



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"We have a full system for vendor approval in which the vendor's capabilities, certifications, quality, service and technical assistance is carefully measured prior to the approval," he states.

"Only vendors who qualify the vigorous screening process are awarded our business," Kizilbash points out, "which is to say that we typically work with the biggest and the best around the world."

Some of the other packaging machinery and technologies helping the Mutivac packaging lines at the Mississauga facility keep humming at top performance include:

- **Videojet 1610** continuous inkjet (CIJ) printer from **Videojet Technologies Inc.**, used to apply the product codes, graphics and key variable product information onto the rollstock film web, as well as a **Videojet Unicorn II** case-coder for large-character printing onto the corrugated shipping boxes;

- **Phantom** series metal detection system, manufactured by the Toronto-based **Fortress Technologies, Inc.**, to provide high-speed, high-sensitivity final inspection of all finished packages prior to being placed into the corrugated shipping cases;

- Semi-automatic **Fox C1 plus** model turntable stretchwrapper from **Fox Packaging Services**, along with a fully-automatic stretchwrapping machine from **Orion Packaging Systems, LLC** for securing the faster-moving full pallets of 40 shipping cartons;

- A high-performance, fully-automatic boxformer from the **iPak Machinery** division of **Pro Mach, Inc.**, to shape corrugated blanks into ready-to-load shipping carriers to be loaded with the 500-gram bags of bread, 18 bags to a box, and placed onto the pallets, which are whisked away for stretchwrapping via **Blue Giant** powered lift-trucks.

All in all, Kizilbash says that the plant's vastly enhanced packaging capabilities achieved with the Mutivac equipment installation will help TWI Foods attract additional business well into the future.

"We definitely see many Big Box stores focusing more and more on ethnic food products to draw more consumers to their stores, so we see good future growth ahead of us," Kizilbash sums up.

"In addition to that, we are also working with developing key strategic partnerships that will help us grow our business even further." *

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