

Taking the Heat

Despite overcooking, Calumet's pork tastes just fine

Idiot-proof pork has arrived on the scene. Developed by Jerry Klein, president of Calumet Diversified Meats, Kenosha, WI, the new pork chops and loins remain tender and moist despite almost any degree of overcooking.

Pork is typically overcooked throughout the industry because of a "better-safe-than-sorry" attitude towards trichinosis. Too frequently, the result is dry, tasteless pork that customers are sorry they ordered.

Four years ago, a food-service distributor challenged Klein to come up with pork products that could stand fire and still taste good. Klein developed a solution of water, salt, tripolyphosphate, and lemon juice. The solution was injected into loin roasts, and the roasts were frozen. The product was severely tested (cooked) and met the distributor's requirements.

As part of Calumet's agreement with the distributor, the injected product was produced on an exclusive, private label basis for several years. Calumet's Stan Tokarz, director of operations, continued refining the product, eventually bringing the sodium content down to an average of 0.05%, a real plus for hospital accounts. As the agreement drew to a close, Calumet geared up and began producing injected pork roasts and chops under its own label.

Moving up

Earlier this year, Calumet moved to a new state-of-the-art facility that has allowed the company to expand production of injected product. Separate injecting and mixing rooms were built especially for the new product. A Reiser Fomaco injector was installed, along with a \$75,000 filtering system to insure consistent, high-quality product.



Stan Tokarz, shown here in the injecting room, is responsible for refining the pork product and bringing down its sodium content, a real plus for hospital accounts.



Jerry Klein, left, and Larry Becker show off the product.

Today, pork loin roasts are trimmed, netted, injected, vacuum packed, and flash frozen. For chops, loins are injected, polywrapped, flash frozen, sliced on an AEW APC unit, and either boxed or vacuum packed.

Calumet management is convinced the injected products are the answer to

the food industry's problems with pork. "No matter what we, or distributors do, pork is going to be overcooked until it's white as snow," says Larry Becker, executive vice president. "But now it can still be tasty and moist."

Calumet now supplies several well-known foodservice distributors with injected product. Becker says these customers are steadily switching over from non-injected to injected product. This, he says, is because of ease of handling—it goes directly from the freezer to the frying or oven—and normal-to-better yields.

Klein makes a point about price. "The average price today is \$1.90/lb. The injected product's price is \$1.70/lb. We're in the business of delivering a quality product, not selling water."

How does the product appeal to the public? Klein provides the following anecdote. "My wife of 20 years would never serve a pork roast or chops. My daughter wouldn't eat any either. I was lucky if I could get my daughter to eat anything but a salad or steamed vegetables. When I came up with the formula 4 years ago, I came home and convinced my wife to cook it. Now their favorite dinner is 'seasoned' pork roast and chops."

In addition to supplying regular foodservice customers, Calumet has been moving significant quantities out of a small retail store attached to the plant. The store was installed primarily as a consumer laboratory, but Klein says that sampling has proven very effective in moving the product at retail. □