

CUSTOMER SUCCESS

CLIENT
COUNTRY MAID INC.

LOCATION
WEST BEND, IA



AUTOMATION INCREASES EFFICIENCIES FOR PASTRY FACTORY

Sometimes big things come in small packages. Country Maid Inc.'s Butter Braid brand pastries are a perfect example. The West Bend, IA company has been rolling out delicious dough products for the fundraising industry since 1991, and these tasty pastries have helped non-profit groups raise over \$200 million and counting. In order to keep up with demand, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations, Country Maid leaned on Van Meter Inc.'s automation expertise.



CHALLENGE

Country Maid has come a long way since doing everything by hand in founders Ken and Marlene Banwart's basement. When it grew into a state-of-the-art production facility, it was looking for a way to increase efficiency without losing product consistency. It also needed to remain in compliance with FDA regulations.

"A lot of the regulation that we are governed by is through the FDA," explained Country Maid Systems Engineer, Marc Banwart. "Several years ago they passed the Food Safety [Modernization] Act, and with that came a lot of need to be able to produce records of batch histories."

SOLUTION

Van Meter Automation Product Manager, Kirk Klaver, knew exactly which automation solutions would give Country Maid the results it was looking for. "I've been in this business for about 25 years," Klaver said, "and I've seen a lot of the applications and a lot of the processes that exist. I understand a variety of solutions and I can determine what the best fit is."

Over the years, Country Maid has worked with Klaver to automate multiple skids. After reaching a point where the infrastructure was in place, it was ready to up its level of efficiency by automating its recipes. "It not only helps them improve the efficiency of their facility and how they operate on a daily basis, but also helps them with their certifications and the FDA requirements," Klaver explained.

Klaver recommended Rockwell Automation recipe management software products FactoryTalk Batch, FactoryTalk Historian, and Studio 5000 and pulled in integration partner, Interstates Control Systems Inc., to help bring the system to life. "It's a suite of software packages that really makes up the recipe management portion of an operation," explained Klaver.

The software allows the equipment to work together so Country Maid can benefit from a continuous-flow process. Prior to the software, pieces of the process were still manual, such as measuring out recipe materials and keeping records of batches. But now the fully-automated system moves material over a scale and weighs it to determine just the right amount to add to a batch. This has allowed Country Maid to achieve an incredibly consistent product.



DID YOU KNOW?

VAN METER OFFERS A RANGE OF AUTOMATION SERVICES - FROM **WIRELESS SITE SURVEY AND NETWORK PHYSICAL LAYER DESIGN TO STANDARD ASSESSMENT, INSTALLED BASE EVALUATION, CUSTOMIZED PRODUCT TRAININGS** AND MORE. VAN METER'S TEAM CAN HELP YOU EVALUATE, MONITOR, MANAGE AND REPLACE YOUR ESSENTIAL AUTOMATION EQUIPMENT.

The system also creates an electronic record with detailed batch information, time and date stamping, and electronic signaturing. So, would a product ever need to be pulled off the shelf, Country Maid will have the information the FDA requires readily available. And the electronic record has cut routine FDA inspections from hours to minutes.

Without having to spend as much time on paperwork, the folks at Country Maid can focus on what they do best. “We do what we do, we make a dough product,” Banwart said, “and we were able to use our relationship with Van Meter as the experts in hardware and software and automation systems to bring all this together.”

THE RESULT

With the new software, Banwart has witnessed an increase in efficiency that he expects will only improve over time. “I think industry average is somewhere around 83 percent, and we’re sitting at about an average of 86 percent,” said Banwart. And being more efficient has triggered a substantial increase in production.

“When I first started at Country Maid 14 years ago, the average output of pastry production was around 6,800 pieces per day,” said Banwart. “Now, through increased automation, we’ve come to the point where we’re producing — with the same number of people over the same amount of time — 22,000 pieces per day.”

“Pretty much everything we used to do prior to the project was very manual intensive,” said Banwart. “We’ve been able to now focus on how our product performs rather than how we actually put it together. The automation has freed us up to actually be able to spend more time on the quality of the product.”

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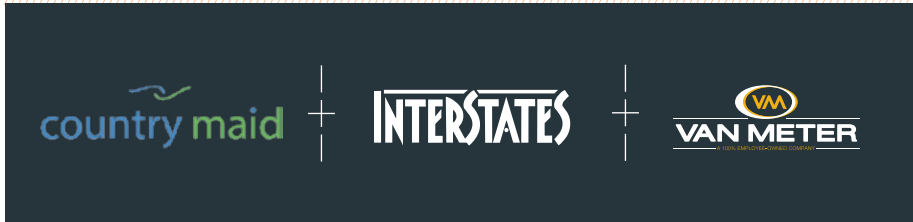
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Country Maid Inc. is 100 percent employee-owned. Its 60 full-time employee-owners help the company carry out its mission of "helping others help themselves."

Interstates Control Systems Inc.

Interstates Control Systems Inc. is a systems integrator that has been meeting its customer's automation needs for over 30 years with innovative, cost-effective solutions.

Van Meter Inc.

Van Meter Inc. is a 100-percent employee-owned distributor of electrical, automation, lighting, datacomm, power transmission, utility and clean energy supplies, services and solutions. Headquartered in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the company has 15 locations throughout the midwest. Van Meter is an authorized Rockwell Automation Allen-Bradley distributor.

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