

PRESS RELEASE

Safe, attractive, and resource-saving packaging solutions in the cheese industry: Swiss and Portuguese manufacturers celebrate success with SEALPAC packaging technology

Whether it concerns a technical improvement of the packaging process at an artisan Swiss cheese factory, which gives its valuable skilled workers more time for cheese production, or global branding at a Portuguese cheese manufacturer that wants to significantly boost its export business, the high-tech traysealers and thermoformers from packaging specialist SEALPAC support the goals of these companies. Here are two success stories from the world of dairy.

The European Union has the world's largest annual consumption of cheese (source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/868231/global-annual-consumption-of-cheese-by-country/>). Manufacturers are competing for the hand of the consumer with their own specialty products. Regardless of whether it is a small craft company with a regional customer base or a large-scale cheese producer for export markets: to ensure the quality of cheese specialties on their way to the end user, and to offer such products in an attractive and eye-catching manner to stand out from the competition, suitable and innovative packaging is required. The solutions here are just as diverse as the product offerings on the shelves of any dairy section at retail.

A true specialist in this area is the packaging expert SEALPAC. With its renowned traysealers and thermoformers, the company has adapted to the needs of the dairy segment and offers producers innovative applications that combine optimal product protection with efficient production, as well as simplified logistics and an attractive presentation whilst using less consumables. Two examples from Switzerland and Portugal show how SEALPAC supports cheese manufacturers throughout Europe and beyond with the right packaging solutions in distributing and marketing their products.

Material-saving thermoformer packaging at artisanal Swiss company

Wildberg Käserei (<https://www.wildbergkaese.ch/>), based in the Swiss canton of Zürich, positions itself in the luxury segment with handcrafted cheeses in around 25 different varieties. The company primarily produces in smaller quantities for local customers, including specialist retailers and delis. The products are delivered in volumes ranging from small portions to complete cheeses. Buyers are primarily consumers that value conscious nutrition, prefer handmade products, and appreciate added value over price. When the company wanted to improve product appearance by enhancing the packaging, Wildberg chose a PRO thermoformer from SEALPAC.

This compact thermoformer is tailored to small and medium-sized companies, such as Wildberg with its 16 employees, as it offers maximum flexibility and performance on a small footprint. The space-saving PRO, which uses consumables and energy extremely economically, has a modular design. The basic PRO machine is suitable to run flexible and rigid film, both for vacuum packaging and sealing only applications. Depending on the customer's wishes, various modules can be added to run other packaging solutions, such as MAP, skin, or shrink packaging.

CEO Roland Rüegg at Wildberg Käserei describes the improvements achieved:

“Previously, we sold our cheese in pre-formed vacuum bags. The packaging did not look very professional and required a lot of plastic. We wanted a more attractive, material-saving solution and at the same time a more efficient packaging process.”

With the new PRO thermoformer, the pieces of cheese are now packaged from a reel of highly transparent bottom film using Rapid Air Forming. The machine reliably manages particularly thin film that is easy to print, for example with product information, an organic label, or a brand logo. Today, various products of Wildberg Käserei are presented in an attractive and appetizing manner. The excellent peelability of the packs also offers the end consumer more convenience.

The PRO thermoformer is equipped with an innovative tooling quick exchange system, which reduces changeover times. This is perfect for the artisan cheese factory, which now produces two or three different formats every day in quick rotation on the new machine. In general, time is one of the decisive advantages for Roland Rüegg's business: "Our processes, which are still predominantly manual, have become faster thanks to the technical improvement. We used to require five people, each working four hours, to package 1,000 pieces of cheese. Now, only two employees can achieve the same amount in just one hour. Packaging has therefore become a secondary job and we can use our valuable specialist staff primarily for the cheese production." What he also appreciates about his new thermoformer is the consistent high quality of each individual pack and the progress in terms of sustainability: in contrast to the previous bag solution, significantly thinner films are now used, which saves a large amount of plastic and reduces the space required for material storage.

The operator-friendly PRO thermoformer, with which Wildberg was able to run just one week after delivery thanks to SEALPAC's comprehensive support, has been in operation since June 2023. The response from retailers regarding the new packaging of the various Wildberg cheeses has been extremely positive. As owner Roland Rüegg confirms: "Our artisanal products are produced with maximum care. The packaging must adequately represent the value of our products and make that tangible. We have achieved this with the new machine. The change has attracted attention in the market and the even more appealing presentation of our products has noticeably increased the sales of our high-quality cheeses. As such, the commitments and our subsequent expectations for this project were completely fulfilled by SEALPAC!"

Portuguese cheese specialties, attractively packaged in FlatSkin®

Family company Queijos Santiago (<https://queijossantiago.pt/>), founded in 1918 and headquartered in Malveira, just 33 kilometres from Lisboa in Portugal, is run by João Santiago as fourth-generation manager. It produces Portuguese cheese specialties, categorized as fresh, cured / dried, or sliced / shredded, at three production sites, all of which have high-level certification according to the IFS standard. This underlines the company's focus on sustainability in production, ranging from animal welfare to reduced plastic content and minimizing food waste. It is also clearly mirrored in the company's slogan: *saber que sabe bem* (to know what tastes good).

The Portalegre site, which was opened in 2022 and employs around 130 people, produces regional specialties made from goat or sheep milk under the Queijos Santiago umbrella brand. Recently, the Portuguese company chose SEALPAC's innovative FlatSkin® solution to highlight an important product range of cured cheeses. With this packaging system, a highly transparent barrier skin film fixates the cheese directly onto the flat cardboard carrier, which is coated with a polymeric protective layer. A peel tab simplifies the opening of the skin pack. After taking out the product, the thin polymeric layer is easily removed from the cardboard to allow for separate disposal. FlatSkin® combines extended shelf life and an attractive product presentation with a significant reduction in plastics. It also offers excellent branding opportunities, because the cardboard carrier can be fully printed on both sides.

It all started in 2021, when Queijos Santiago had the opportunity to package its actual products at an open doors event in Barcelona, organized by EMO S.A., SEALPAC's exclusive distributor in Spain and Portugal. Excited about the results, EMO offered Queijos Santiago a SEALPAC A4 traysealer on a one-year trial period to start the production of this innovative packaging solution. As such, the company became the first ever worldwide user of FlatSkin® for dairy products. The machine was delivered in December 2022 with production already starting in January 2023. João Santiago remembers: "Just four months later, we had to contact Pablo Kerner at EMO. Our products in the new packaging were so successfully received by retailers that we needed to quickly double capacity. Already in May, we placed an order to switch to a SEALPAC A6 traysealer with higher capacity. This machine was delivered in October."



The traysealer now packages three selections of traditional, regional cheese products. Each selection consists of three different types of cheese in quantities of 100g, which are carefully placed on the cardboard carrier and reliably sealed by the SEALPAC A6 traysealer using the FlatSkin® process. Queijos Santiago started with two selections of round cheeses, but now also uses FlatSkin® for a selection of cheese wedges. João Santiago likes the sustainable impact of the new packs: “Due to the tight skin film, it even seems as if there is no plastic around the product at all!”

The lifting system of the A6 traysealer is servo driven, which ensures particularly smooth production runs and a consistently high output. In addition, the traysealer is particularly low wear, because it is operated completely without lubrication. This ensures low service and maintenance costs at Queijos Santiago. In addition, the SEALPAC A6 traysealer is characterized by a particularly efficient use of energy. It is currently used at Queijos Santiago to produce FlatSkin® packaging, but offers the possibility to add other applications in the future. João Santiago: “We are considering adding a new tool for a whole new range of snack products.”

João Santiago is highly satisfied with the new solution for his top-quality range of Portuguese cheese specialties. “Our brand image stems from our premium products that require a long maturation period and are treated with particular care by us, but we also emphasize this with the packaging that we selected. The special FlatSkin® solution preserves the aroma and sensory properties of the cheese, hence extending its shelf life. In addition, the packaging is a true eye-catcher. We designed the product carriers of the current cheese selections with typical Portuguese tile prints, which have attracted a lot of attention at retail. We also use the fully printable cardboard carriers for detailed product information about our cheese specialties.”



Queijos Santiago supports its sales with eye-catching displays and tastings at retail, as well as the use of influencers on social media. The company is extremely optimistic that it will be able to further boost the export business by means of these FlatSkin® products. They are currently not only available at leading food retailers, but are also sold at all Portuguese airports. Safe and attractive packaging has therefore become a popular souvenir from Portugal, which helps grow the cheese manufacturer's business. After launching the FlatSkin® products, Queijos Santiago has seen an increase in turnover every month. In the festive December period of 2023, sales figures even went up by an impressive 20 percent compared to the previous month. João Santiago concludes: "It has exceeded even our most optimistic expectations!"

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Pictures:



Picture 1. Roland Rüegg, CEO at Wildberg Käseerei in Switzerland.



Picture 2a / 2b. Wildberg Käseerei produces handcrafted cheeses in around 25 different varieties.



Picture 3. The excellent peelability of the new packs offers the end consumer more convenience.



Picture 4. The PRO thermoformer provides a consistent high quality of each individual pack whilst using significantly thinner films.

Pictures (continued):



Picture 5. João Santiago, CEO at Queijos Santiago in Portugal.



Picture 6. Queijos Santiago uses FlatSkin® both for round cheeses and cheese wedges.



Picture 7. Pablo Kerner, Key Account Manager at EMO S.A.



Picture 8a / 8b. The SEALPAC A6 traysealer produces striking FlatSkin® packs based on product carriers with typical Portuguese tile prints.