



Sitting in the front office of the 150,000-square-foot Oak Leaf Confections production facility in Toronto, general manager Ion Leoveanu shows some of the company's colorful Sixlets chocolate candy products, and the hyper-colorful Pearls, a hard-candy topping often used to adorn decorative cakes.

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF COLORS

Ontario candy and gum manufacturer steps up its production line efficiencies with top-flight equipment designed and built by a Canadian company

BY ANDREW JOSEPH, FEATURES EDITOR
PHOTOS BY NAOMI HILTZ

Human beings have been chewing gum in various forms for the past 100,000 years, and sampling the sweet taste of candy for some 2,600 years.

In contrast, the Toronto-based **Oak Leaf Confections Co.**, has only been manufacturing candy, mints and gum products since 1998, but despite the relative drop in the proverbial bucket timeline, its employees have been doing it correctly right out of the gates.

Nowadays, Oak Leaf Confections, together with its sister company **SweetWorks Confections LLC**, is part of a much larger conglomerate of candy and

confectionary manufacturers, all organized under the domain of **Chocolate Frey AG**, Switzerland's number one manufacturer of chocolate confectionery.

Founded in 1887, the company has long been an industry leader and a major contributor to Switzerland's well-earned reputation as a country of chocolate experts.

Today, Oak Leaf manufactures a wide variety of confections and chewing gum products under some of the strictest global guidelines for product safety and quality.

The Toronto facility is *HACCP* (*Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points*)-certified, **BRC** (**British Retail Council**)-certified, while its products are not only Halal- and Kosher-certified, but are also nut-

and gluten-free.

Oak Leaf general manager Ion Leoveanu told *Canadian Packaging* magazine during a recent visit to the very busy facility that they are always looking at ways it can work with colors, texture and shine of its products, noting that the business maintains the ability to develop new and exciting colored candy for the market.

While many a company tries to develop a niche, Leoveanu says Oak Leaf is "the best candy finisher in the world, in my opinion."

While Leoveanu says that the candy manufactured at the Oak Leaf facility appeals to all ages, he adds that the equipment used to manufacture it is all adult, with a nod towards what he considers the best manufacturing processes on the planet.



Oak Leaf installed a turnkey, all-in-one WeighPack Systems packaging line at its Toronto facility, including a PrimoCombi multihead weigher, Swifty 3600 bagger, and an incline infeed conveyor to move product up and inside the checkweigher.



Colorful gumballs meant to look like miniature real-life apples for the Celebration by Frey brand are ready to be dispensed into one of the WeighPack PrimoCombi weigher's multi-heads for dispersal into the Swifty 3600 bagger positioned directly below.



WeighPack Systems' Swifty 3600 bagger receives precision-weighted quantities of gumballs from the PrimoCombi checkweigher above and packs them at a high rate of speed.

"Equipment-wise, we are in the process of moving forward to ensure our packaging line equipment matches the high-end quality of our manufacturing processes," Leoveanu extols.

The newest capital investment on the production floor is an all-in-one set-up purchased from **WeighPack Systems**, a Montreal-headquartered designer and manufacturer of high-quality packaging equipment with facilities in Toronto, Las Vegas and Miami.

Purchased in December of 2015, the packaging solution includes a WeighPack **PrimoCombi** multihead weigher that uses a **Windows**-based **Primo 360** software that accurately weighs and dispenses product into a **Swifty 3600** bagger which automatically opens, fills and seals pre-made pouches.

Along with the 14-head **PrimoCombi** checkweigher and **Swifty 3600** bagger, Oak Leaf also purchased an incline infeed conveyor to transport product up into the hopper of the checkweigher.

According to WeighPack territory manager Derek Chandler, Oak Leaf approached them to discuss adding a new stand-up pouch with an option for a reclosable zipper to their already impressive range of products.

"Oak Leaf was looking for a system to automatically weigh and dispense gum and candies in all sizes and shapes into pre-made laminated doystyle pouches with the potential for a zipper closure," recalls Chandler.

Oak Leaf wanted a system capable of working at high rates of speed with

the ability to adjust to flexible pouch sizes, but Chandler says the full WeighPack system will more than meet the requirements.

"Oak Leaf was very involved in the entire process," says Chandler, "and I believe they were very impressed with our knowledge of the packaging equipment and industry and commitment to the project's success."

After discussing Oak Leaf's needs, WeighPack suggested the **Swifty 3600** bagging machine, with Leoveanu calling it a perfect fit for them based on current production needs—though modular enough for taking things to another level when the time arrives.

The current set-up on the **Swifty 3600** is unique to the system, according to Chandler. "WeighPack integrated a bag magazine to the system and also added a print-and-apply label applicator so Oak Leaf is now capable of printing various product labels on-demand—they have many SKUs (stock-keeping units) and wanted to have the ultimate in packaging flexibility."

Leoveanu says the machine's modularity was a key factor in their purchasing decision.

"Right now we are using pre-made pouches, that we place into the magazine of the Swifty 3600," acknowledges Leoveanu. "However, we will have an option to upgrade the WeighPack's R2B 3600 to form the pouches itself, then fill and seal."

He says that while the company could indeed have spent more money and bought a larger or faster



Colorful examples of the Celebration by Frey brand gumballs, whose outershell coatings are colored to resemble orchard-fresh fruit.



As part of the Oak Leaf safety program, the company uses a high performance Thermo Scientific metal detection system on its confections and chewing gum products.

Oak Leaf utilizes the printing accuracy of a Domino alphanumeric valve jet case-coder to apply lot code data onto corrugated shipping cases.

packaging system, it's often better to be more conservative.

Leoveanu says that along with its ability to work with Oak Leaf's production now and in the future, the small footprint the *Swiftly 3600* occupies on the limited floorspace available was as important as its ease-of-operation.

Adds Chandler: "The robust *Swiftly Bagger* is engineered to be easy to service, faster to clean, and reliable.

"The *Swiftly Bagger* can operate on a variety of bag styles, including pillow, stand-up, gusseted and quad bags, with a zipper enclosure or a carry handle."

TRUE TEST

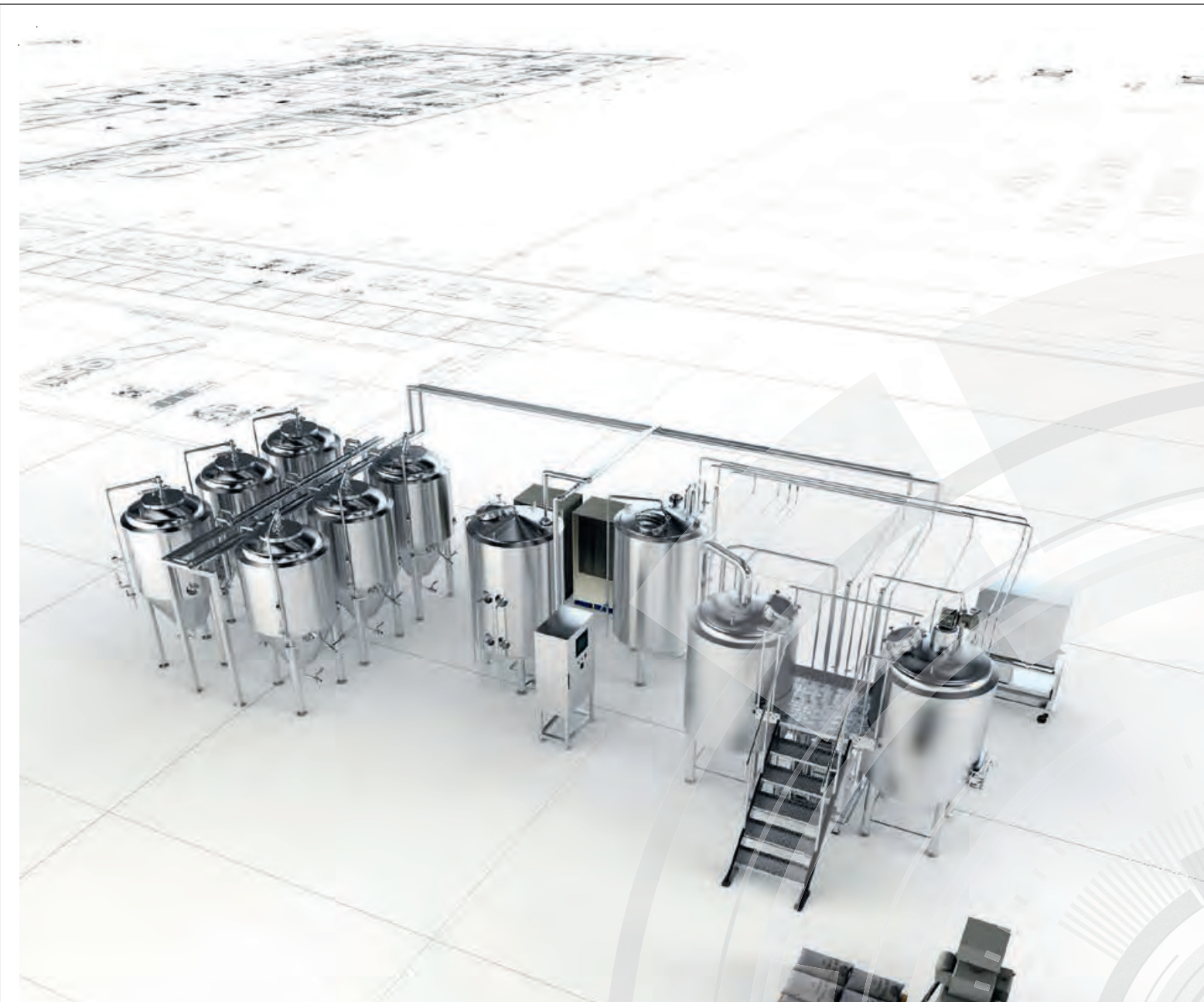
Although initial testing of the bagger was only recently completed at the time of *Canadian Packaging* magazine's visit to the facility, Leoveanu says they are quite pleased at the speed with which the machine is running.

Filling candy into the *Swiftly Bagger* is the *PrimoCombi* multi-head weighing system, designed by WeighPack for high performance, speed and accuracy.

According to WeighPack, the *PrimoCombi* is the first open-frame combination scale with an electrical enclosure that can be conveniently located away from the scale.

"This design eliminates potential washdown hazards as well as provides significant convenience as the electronics can be located at floor level," explains Chandler.

The *PrimoCombi* comes standard with single discharge chutes for increased production output, a single hopper assembly which allows the operator to adjust product inflow and rotates out of the way for product changeover and sanitation, as well as an *IP-65* digital camera with mounting for total visibility.



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A state-of-the-art inline vertical conveying system from WeighPack gently but quickly moves vast quantities of tasty gumballs from a holding hopper up into a PrimoCombi multihead weighing system where it will be dropped in measured amounts down into a Swiftly 3600 bagging system and sealed in stand-up pouches.



Oak Leaf utilizes a Weber Marking System label application system to apply permanent adhesive labels onto its corrugated shipping cartons.



Flats of corrugated cases converted by Norampac, a division of Cascades Canada, will be used by Oak Leaf workers to pack and ship finished gums, chocolates and pressed candies to customers all over the globe.

Please see the online video of Oak Leaf discussing the pluses of their WeighPack Systems packaging solution on Canadian Packaging TV at www.canadianpackaging.com

The *PrimoCombi* is PC-operated, and comes standard with an intuitive 15-inch color touchscreen with a Windows operating system that is easily configurable to any common ERP/MRP (Enterprise Resource Planning/Material Requirements Planning) system and includes features like *Skype*, remote access, production reporting, scheduling, customizable languages and much more.

Chandler says the entire WeighPack system was delivered to the Oak Leaf plant in December of last year, and was installed in late January 2016.

“We constantly check in with Leoveanu at Oak Leaf, and so far things are running smoothly,” relates Chandler. “We look forward to a long-lasting partnership with them.”

As for why Leoveanu initially sought out WeighPack, he smiles and simply notes that the equipment manufacturer had a very good reputation for quality versus the price ratio.

“We also learned firsthand that WeighPack’s service level is impeccable,” offers Leoveanu. “We found them to be very helpful, very engaged, very flexible and always willing to work with us.”

“WeighPack didn’t just sell a machine; they also offered an excellent after-sales service.

“I found WeighPack to have very competent people with a no nonsense attitude who got right to the heart of the issue,” he enthuses. “I love that.”

After the installation of the packaging system,

WeighPack ensured that the Oak Leaf employees fully understood how to best operate it for optimum performance for each of their products and packaging options.

“I also liked the fact that WeighPack is a Canadian company with a new office right here in Toronto,” he adds. “I don’t need downtime.”

“Having good local support is important,” relates Leoveanu. “For any company interested in making a capital investment—whether small or large—one should always worry about the service afterwards.”

Leoveanu says the finished stand-up pouches look spectacular with accurate product weights constantly being filled.

“The bags we ordered for our products have a clear window to show off the beautiful color of our candy and gum products,” Leoveanu explains.

Summing up, Leoveanu praises the new WeighPack packaging solution saying, “It provides us with excellent packaging options for the present and for the long-term future. We are proud to have a partnership with WeighPack.”

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