

GLOBAL TRENDS ON STEW, SOUPS AND SAUCES



FEATURING

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Whether it's soups, stews, sauces or any other side dish from small volumes up to big processing lines- we are your partner in finding the optimal solution! ProXES understands your needs and provides you with the tailored equipment.

1. Mickaël, could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your experience in the food processing market?

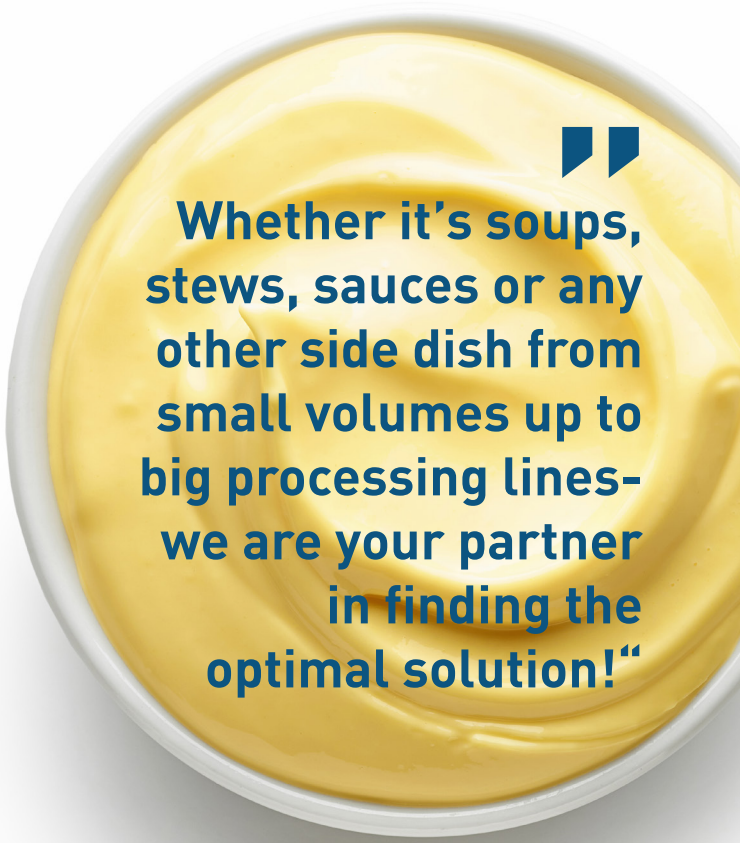
As a formal food science engineer, I started my career on the technical side of the food industry. During my 10-year career, I have managed new product development projects and optimized formulations as a research and development engineer, have analyzed and optimized processes as a production & process expert, as well as provided technical and methodological support while managing several projects as a process engineer. I am very passionate about food processing and love solving the challenges it brings to us. Additionally, I enjoy meeting new people and nurturing relationships, which is why – naturally- I ended up moving into sales 6 years ago. My technological background has proven to be an enormous advantage, because I am able to understand complex situations which allows me to earn the customer's trust.

2. Could you tell us more about what the application “soups, stews and sauces” entails?

Soups, Stews and Sauces are ready-to-eat applications, which we internally also refer to as ready meals. A ready meal is a prepared dish that can be bought ready to eat, meaning it is already prepared, flavored and cooked and simply needs to be reheated for a short amount of time. Those dishes are processed (frozen, chilled, or packed under vacuum) for preservation and generally packaged and labelled for resale. Ready meals are mainly marketed in large food stores, but industrialists also provide catering, especially collective catering.

3. How has the French market for ready-to-eat meals changed in the last 10 years?

The French market has long been active in the frozen and convenience products sector. During the last 10 years, those products have earned a bad reputation and are now perceived as ultra-processed products, which lack in quality and are therefore unhealthy. This image has also been fueled by food scandals in recent years. On the other side, there has been a tremendous increase of interest in fresh ready meals. With the desire to reduce the preparation time of meals and the rise of eating on the run, ready meals and soups perfectly meet the expectations of the French aiming to combine practicality with a healthy lifestyle. In France, the market is dominated by a few big names with a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises, some of which act as subcontractors. Several players share the bulk of the retail market: Fleury Michon, Marie, William Saurin, Findus, and Raynal & Roquelaure. They are often specialized by specific processes. Fleury Michon, Sodebo and Marie dominate the fresh prepared dishes segment, while Cofigeo dominates the market for convenience.



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4. How has the market changed globally?

Generally, the ready meals market is positively driven by the lonely consumption evolution, meaning that more and more people live alone, or take lunch or dinner alone, and the fact that we reduce our lunch hour, as we tend to use the time to do other activities such as sports. The constant search for time savings pushes consumers to move towards practical products, which can be consumed quickly and easily. The consumer's perception of ready meals has a direct impact on the volumes, which is why producers have been putting effort into easing the consumer's fears against highly processed products with potentially hidden unhealthy ingredients. For example, in France, a nutrition label named Nutri-score was selected in 2017 to be displayed on food products and even though it is optional, more and more products are labeled with it.

5. What are some of the global trends on convenient and ready-to-eat foods?

The existing global interest in organic products and quality labeling remains unchanged. Additionally, there has been a large increase in plant based products, making the market as innovative as ever.

6. Does "clean label" play a role in ready to eat meals consumption and processing?

Not for every category of consumers, but the trend for years has been to limit the number of additives in the raw material list. My feeling is that it can prove to promote sales in cases where clean labelling is on the packaging. Regarding processing, it can bring difficulties depending of the product and the raw materials variability. Nevertheless, any features allowing to process without additives can be beneficial, as for example it allows to preserve natural tastes.

7. How did ProXES react to these trends and what processing solutions does it offer?

Each ProXES brand offers strong solutions for the gentle and yet effective processing of foods. The pillow plate double jacket of the Stephan CI and VMC allows to reach high pressure and thus high contact temperature. This leads to the reproduction of the so-called 'home made' effects during process. We can thus develop natural flavors without adding additives. FrymaKoruma machines offer the opportunity to create efficient emulsions, adding only necessary levels of additives. In salad sauce, the size of the micelles allows to maintain stability of the sauce for a sufficient amount of time to dose in small flasks. With the Terlotherm and the strong experience of our people, we can precisely control the temperature of a product, which is especially important with products that are traditionally hard to process because of their high viscosity, such as high-fat cream applications. More generally, we have the power to propose turnkey solutions bringing efficiency and flexibility to our customers by combining the strengths of our brands, but also the creativity of our people.



8. When interested in processing ready-to-eat products what would you recommend to a start-up, to a mid-size company trying to enter the market and a global player who wants to enhance productivity and output?

For start-up companies, I would recommend a range of smaller-sized machines which are perfect for small batch sizes, such as our Universal Machine, Mills or Microcuts. Mid-size companies are served perfectly with our industrial sized machine profile of cutters and vacuum processing units such as our Universal Machines, CI401, VMC401, MaxxD200 or MaxxD700. Global players are most happy with our industrial scaled machines and complete process line solutions that include machinery such as the VMC801, CI801, CT800, MaxxD700 and the Terlotherm.

9. How can ProXES support these companies in the process?

It is key to understand the needs of the customers and how our materials can bring them added value and ultimately the solution that they are looking for. This added value can be approached from different levels. Firstly, ProXES can offer customers the opportunity to reach a new level of quality that they cannot reach with their current equipment. Secondly, ProXES solutions can help to increase productivity, either in capacity or in efficiency. Thirdly, ProXES solutions can provide more flexibility: either in combining several process steps, offering machinery with a wide set of features, or in batch size opportunity. Our expertise can also be useful during commissioning. We often offer the customer to have the support of an experienced technologist during their test phase. This allows companies to save a lot of time and is especially attractive for small-sized companies who do not have the R&D manpower.



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10. How has COVID-19 impacted the global market?

Lock down measures around the world have completely disrupted household eating habits, leading to an increase of the demand of long shelf life products, a sharp increase in consumed meals at home, but also a certain craze for homemade meals made from scratch. These behaviors have changed the sales dynamics of appetized, frozen and fresh dishes in the stores. In the meantime, the economic situation and the strong pressures on household purchasing power can have a direct impact on the market in the coming months.

11. How and with whom do I get in touch if I want to know more about the food processing possibilities that ProXES offers?

Through our new website, finding the right contact person for food processing matters and applications is very easy and fast. In the contact section, customers are simply asked to select their country of interest and our database will do the rest.