

GLOBAL TRENDS ON PROCESSED CHEESE



FEATURING

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From plain to spicy, from nacho cheddar sauce to mozzarella strings – processed cheese is a true jack of all trades. The product's high flexibility lets it be easily adapted to regional tastes and the different demands of international markets.

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

I started my career in Food processing as a Sales Engineer at Sympak Group for Asia Pacific region in 2008, managing the sales of turn-key solutions for processed cheese from processing to packaging. Since 2014, I am the Managing Director for ProXES Asia Pacific.

2. What is processed cheese and what types are there?

"Classic" dairy processed cheese is real cheese cut with other, non-cheese ingredients. Those extra ingredients can include salt, food dyes, preservatives if needed, extra dairy, emulsifiers, or other ingredients such as flavors. These ingredients are added to melted, pasteurized cheese, which is then converted to either Block cheese, individually Wrapped Slice cheese (IWS), Slice-on-Slice (SOS) or Spreadable cheese. By the time the extra ingredients are added, the actual cheese in the mix has changed significantly in terms of both flavor and texture.

Process cheeses are used in nearly every application where natural cheeses are used, including cheese snacks, soups and sauces, baked goods, cheese stuffed entrées, sandwiches, vegetables in cheese sauce, meats, microwaveable foods, and casseroles. Reduced- or fat-free types of process cheeses are ideal in processed food applications such as fat-free soups, sauces, appetizers, baked and microwaveable entrées.

3. How has the global market changed in the last ten years?

Processed cheese has been a major part of western cuisine, and lately, with the popularization of fast food in developed countries, processed cheese is now an essential part of food culture worldwide. This is largely because of the flavor profile of processed cheese which can be coupled with food products from almost all cuisines.

Processed cheese has been one of the most dynamically growing segments of the food industry. There has been a rapid increase in processed cheese manufacturing, consumption and trade over the last decade. This is attributed to the attractive flavor profile and versatility that processed cheese offers at a much more economical price point than other types of cheeses present in the market. According to IndustryResearch.biz, the global Processed Cheese market size is projected to reach USD 12.1 billion by 2026, from USD 10.6 billion in 2020, at a CAGR of 2.3% during 2021-2026.



4. What are some of the global trends on processed cheese?

There is a continuing trend in favor of snackable cheese options. Many cheese processors, therefore, have been introducing cheese products designed for grab-and-go snacking. Today's shoppers desire high-protein and low-carb snacks made with premium, simple ingredients. Within the cheese space, the snacking trend also is mingling with another trend: that toward flavor adventure and variety. As an example, cream cheese spreads nowadays come in many flavors such as Original, Aged Cheddar, Seriously Strawberry and Very Veggie varieties.

Due to its smooth texture and mild taste, processed cheese generally has a strong appeal to children. Additionally, some younger consumers are turning away from natural cheese and toward dairy-free options. The growth in the plant-based movement overall can be attributed largely to consumers who identify as flexitarians. Such consumers are trying to consume fewer animal products, not attempting to eliminate them completely. Made using cultured legumes and oats, processed cheese alternatives that are even nut-free can now be found in selected stores.

5. What processing solutions does ProXES offer?

From the small cooker to the complex UHT system, ProXES supplies you with state-of-the-art machines as well as downstream and upstream equipment. Start-up towards mid-size companies should have a look into our batch systems. The all-in-one machines handle mixing, heating and cooling in a single unit and stand out due to their minimal maintenance and operation requirements and a quick, efficient CIP.

For larger companies that might be looking for continuous production solutions, our UHT systems should be of great interest. Our UHT systems are designed for continuous UHT-sterilization treatment to increase shelf life of all kinds of processed cheese. Bigger batches allow you to produce great volumes at lower costs.

6. What are the main points to take into consideration when producing processed cheese? What does one need to pay special attention to?

In the aspect of product quality and food safety, the machinery needs to be designed according to hygienic design criteria and should be equipped with Direct Steam Injection (DSI) heating in order to reduce the Maillard reactions and burn on to a minimum level as well as a proper mixing of the different phases which usually are not mixable with each other.

With batch production you need to consider batch to batch variations which can be caused by the nature of natural cheese (i.e. ripening etc.) to achieve a repeatable, desired product quality. Last not least, machine safety should never be in doubt. All provided safety interlocks should be according to safety regulations and certified with appropriate safety certifications.



7. When interested in processing processed cheese, 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?

I'd say that in general, looking into market demands from both B2B and B2C would be an essential initiative in terms of new product launchings. For example, now also due to the pandemic, consumers tend to follow a healthy diet for protecting themselves and their immune systems. Therefore, functional processed cheese with low-sodium and high calcium content that is specifically aimed to serve children and senior citizens might be an angle, besides looking into vegan options for processed cheese alternatives.

In addition, maximizing yields by enhancing productions and product output is most likely an essential topic for many companies. There are many aspects worth discussing such as the level of automation, reducing operators/manpower, lower energy consumption, the enhancing of down-time for cleaning and so on. At ProXES, we take the perspective of our customers. As a reliable partner who thinks along with and ahead, we help our customers to success.

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

Next to our standard services such as commissioning, installation and maintenance, we provide customers with start-up support during the first product run, for example by defining set points for optimal production results or arranging training for operators. Moreover, our team of ProXES technologists supports customers with processing guidance via product trials at our test centers. Even during the pandemic, we were able to provide product trials via webinar or live-streaming events.

9. How and with whom do I get in touch if I want to know more about the processed cheese solutions that ProXES offers?

ProXES has branches and liaison offices in many countries around the world. Through our website www.proxes.com, visitors can easily contact sales or customer service contact persons for their region.

**CONTACT US
TODAY!**

