Processing in Person: A Cut Above the Rest (Part III)

Krystal Gabert, Editor

***Chem.Info*'s recurring Processing in Person feature highlights a processing company that stands about above the rest for the implementation of strategic processing techniques and the production of high quality goods. This week, we're focusing on Daniele, Inc., a deli meat processing company in Pascoag, R.I.**

Cured!

Daniele, Inc. salami is produced according to traditional methods. After ground meat is blended with the appropriate spices and stuffed into casings, it is transported to large, temperature-controlled rooms where it begins the fermentation process.

During this stage, the lactic acid starter cultures enhance the flavor of the meat and kill off any harmful pathogens that may be present. DeCesare calls this stage “a period of rapid reduction of pH in the product to help eliminate pathogens.”

Once this process is complete, the sausage enters the drying stage where water is removed from the product. Low water activity means lower bacteria count, so this drying process — in combination with the salt and active cultures — help create a very safe product.

Dry-curing requires a fluctuation between warm airflow and a relaxation stage. The former helps dry the product, while the latter allows water to come to the surface. As these stages are repeated — draw out moisture, dry it out, draw out moisture, dry it out — the inside of the product gets drier over time.

DeCesare says the process must be gradual. “You can’t dry it out too quickly or you form a crust, and then the water can’t get out. It has to happen slowly. It’s a delicate balance of airflow and balance.”

Toward the end of the curing process — about three weeks — the salami should be covered in a layer of mold. The mold will help raise the pH of the product and counteract the bitterness that will develop during fermentation. It also aids in the drying process.

After the curing process is complete, the mold is cleansed from the sausage, and the product is ready to be sliced and packaged. Daniele produces sausage in partial-logs, full logs and sliced packages. “The sliced market has grown exponentially,” says DeCesare, “because people like the convenience of having something ready to go.”

All products are vacuum packed before being run through a metal detector and boxed.

Day 1… Where it all began *[1]*

Yesterday… Daniele's commitment to food safety *[2]*

Tomorrow… Buy local

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