

Smoking the Rest

Eddy Packing incorporates new technology to streamline its processes while looking to increase its business in private-label products. **By Janice Hoppe**



>> Eddy Packing processes sausages, portion-controlled beef and smoked and marinated meat products.

company profile

Eddy Packing

www.eddypacking.com

Headquarters: Yoakum, Texas

Specialty: Barbecue meat processing

Pete Ryholt, president: "There is a strong trend in the industry for private-label/owned brand products that typically have a higher consumer value and are controlled by the customer."

tomers. It also offers private-label products to major retailers and foodservice distributors.

Adjusting to Change

President Pete Ryholt says one of the company's biggest challenges has been the volatile protein market over the past two years. "The market prices have been at never-before-seen highs," he adds.

Meat prices fluctuate because of a variety of factors, and CFO Ed Smith says the market is influenced today by historically low cattle herds and an increase in consumer demand for protein products. "These factors have resulted in significant increases in product pricing," he adds. "One way to overcome this challenge is by making sure as a good supplier we are being responsible in managing labor cost to minimize the ultimate impact to our customer."

To streamline its process and reduce cost, Eddy Packing recently automated the blending and packaging operations in its 300,000-square-foot manufacturing plant, Ryholt says. "That was all manual, so we

For more than 60 years, Eddy Packing has specialized in manufacturing Texas-style barbecue and smoked meats marinated in its signature blend of savory sauces and exotic spices. The company developed the Yoakum Ranch brand dedicated to its roots in Yoakum, Texas, a small town established in 1835 that was originally used as a gathering ground for cattle.

"Yoakum's small town spirit gives our premium meats a traditional Southwest attitude with a downhome flavor," the company says. "The company was founded with a commit-

ment to producing consistent quality products [that are] 'made with family pride,' and that commitment still holds true 61 years later."

E.R. (Eddy) Mayrant founded Eddy Packing in 1953 with a total of six production employees. Today, the company staffs about 500 employees and was family owned and operated until 2011, when it was acquired by Mason Wells, a Milwaukee, Wis.-based private equity investment firm.

Eddy Packing processes sausages, portion-controlled beef and smoked and marinated meat products to meet the needs of its cus-



>> One of Eddy Packing's own brands is Eddy Foods. With its 60-year history, Eddy Foods offers premium barbecue beef, chicken, pork and turkey.

removed about 16 persons and reassigned them to other tasks in the facility,” he adds. “We are working to stay competitive through automation.”

Eddy Packing also uses a high-pressure pasteurization system to ensure it is achieving the highest level of food safety available. “There are always opportunities we are working on that will increase efficiency in our product line,” Smith says.

Brand Development

Eddy Packing produces and sells seven of its own brands: Eddy, Morales, Carl’s, Southern Maid, James, Yoakum Ranch and Eddy Foods. Eddy Foods celebrates the company’s rich 60-year history and offers premium barbecue beef, chicken, pork and turkey meats. Its Yoakum Ranch products are dedicated to the company’s roots and embody the Southwestern culture.

The company partnered with Harley-Davidson to develop the Harley-Davidson Roadhouse Customs brand. Eddy Packing launched 13 meat products in 2014 under the Harley-Davidson Roadhouse Customs brand in Walmart stores. “They are the highest-quality items we make,” Smith attests. “We use the finest cuts of meat and unique flavor profiles that were developed in conjunction with Harley-Davidson. It’s a more robust flavor profile than you would normally find. The meats are tailored toward the demographic that’s typical for Harley-Davidson – a more robust demographic.”

“It’s a more robust flavor profile than you would normally find.” – Ed Smith

Eddy Packing puts in the time and effort to understand what its customers are looking for and customer intimacy is one of its strengths and competitive advantages, Ryholt says. Moving forward, the company will work to develop stronger relationships with its customers and more private-label brands. “There is a strong trend in the industry for private-label brands that have a higher consumer value and are controlled by the customer,” he explains. “We want to work with customers to develop private-label brands to really become a vehicle for them in developing their business and building more of a true partnership.” **FD**

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