

X-RAY SUPPORTS GROWING HEALTH FOOD MANUFACTURER



Mekitec X-Ray units ensure the integrity of Dash of Masala's Sassy Lassi health drinks, as the company expands from an Austin farmer's market to the shelves of Walmart and Sam's Club.

Jaya Shrivastava launched her business the same way many health food manufacturing startups do — with a blender, a grocery sack full of fresh ingredients, and some spare time in her own kitchen. She tinkered with recipes, recruited friends and family to serve as her taste-testers, and began peddling all-natural, handmade probiotic yogurt drinks at a local farmer's market in 2011.

Where Shrivastava differs from so many kitchen table CEOs is in the wild success she realized over the next 48 months. Today, Shrivastava leads

Austin TX-based Dash Of Masala, manufacturer of a full line of no-additive, no-preservative, and chemical-free Sassy Lassi yogurt drinks. Her products are now available on shelves at Central Market, Costco, H-E-B, Whole Foods, and most recently, thanks to a big win during the summer of 2015, Walmart and Sam's Club.

Dash of Masala's first wholesale distribution offer came from Whole Foods, and for its first two years its products were still being manufactured by hand. Shrivastava, whose professional training is in

information technology — not food manufacturing — admits that despite the learning curve, she engaged the company's initial growth spurt without fear. "I had so much to learn about sourcing ingredients in large quantities, packaging, and shelf life, that it might have been scary if I knew back then where the business was going," she quips. But there was no time for trepidation. Her self-funded foray into the food business was growing, her product was still handmade, her audience was rapidly expanding. Then Costco came calling.

Food Manufacturing 101: Introduction To Automation And Audits

Things changed dramatically for Shrivastava's fledgling company when Dash of Masala landed a deal with Costco. "Suddenly, we were faced with the need to automate some of our manufacturing processes, and because of the greater reach, we were subject to stringent third-party food safety audit require-

ments," explains Shrivastava. When it comes to food safety, big national grocery chains don't discriminate based on the size of the manufacturer. Whether General Mills or a self-funded startup the likes of Dash of Masala, the products that hit the shelves at Costco are subject to the same set of stringent safety requirements. "We recognized that to play with the big boys, we would need to ramp up to both meet demand and meet necessary audit requirements," says Shrivastava.

Protection from physical contaminants is a major part of that audit requirement. "When we were making the product entirely by hand, we had little concern about physical contamination,"

says Shrivastava. "Then we introduced some automated machinery that's not supervised by a human 24/7." Automated food manufacturing introduced the possibility — however small — that a nut, bolt, or sheared metal could find its way into finished products.

The Metal Detection Imperative

Costco's audit requirement caused Shrivastava to think long and hard about the measures Dash of Masala would need to take to avoid physical contamination of its product. She knew that wood and glass contaminants were highly unlikely — neither materials are used in the production of Sassy Lassi, nor are they allowed anywhere in her manufacturing facility. Metal, on the other hand, was not entirely avoidable in an automated environment comprised of stainless steel machinery. And, there's always that small possibility that a physical contaminant could be introduced via one of the com-



pany's raw materials suppliers.

Shrivastava spent several months learning about metal detection technology and evaluating the competitive metal detection vendor community in advance of her company's commitment to Costco. "We had three manufacturers of metal detection equipment visit us on site, each of which ran our product through their machines to demonstrate their efficacy on our product," she says. Ultimately, she chose the CombiMeki unit from Mekitec. Shrivastava's background in information technology came to bear in the selection process. "The Mekitec user interface stood out because of its simplicity, which is very important to training and adoption efficiency when a new system is introduced," she

says. At Dash Of Masala, three production-level employees have been trained on the CombiMeki unit. "I also like CombiMeki's small footprint, and the fact that once it's set up, you don't need someone constantly monitoring it. We can focus on production and let the unit do its job," says Shrivastava.

The CombiMeki at Dash Of Masala is set up at the end of the company's production line, where each flexible, BPA-free pouch the company packages is subject to inspection. At the end of the package filling process, the combination x-ray/checkweigher unit is set to detect physical contaminants while simultaneously weighing each package to ensure quality control based on pre-set

parameters for each flavor the company produces. As product runs through the CombiMeki on a conveyor, an air-powered rejection unit is calibrated to blow any contaminated, underweight, or overweight packages off the line without disruption to the manufacturing process. On the back end, Mekitec software produces a detailed report on the cause of rejection. The Mekitec x-ray units are precisely calibrated to detect foreign material, even through the foil-lined pouches in which Sassy Lassi products are packaged.

While Shrivastava says the company hasn't seen a single instance of physical contamination to date, she rests easy with the peace of mind that should a piece

About Sassy Lassi — Dash of Masala

Dash of Masala and its core products — Sassy Lassi, and Sassy Lassi Organic Kids yogurt — were founded with the belief that "back to nature" is best. The company's CEO and founder, Jaya Shrivastava, grew up enjoying the benefits and wonderful taste of hand-cultured yogurt. Upon realizing that the yogurt in today's grocery stores seem to have a lot of additives and thickening agents that simulate the real thing, rather than being the real thing, she decided to make her own yogurt. Jaya uses the time-tested Indian method to culture her yogurt — methods that have been used in India for over 2000 years. The result: Sensationally Authentic Taste, Clean Flavors, and the REAL Thing!

Sassy Lassi yogurt drinks contain no preservatives, no additives and are made with fresh, hormone-free milk. Sassy Lassi uses a slow-cultured yogurt made with heirloom cultures as its base. It

is then blended with real fruit or fruit juices and real cane sugar.

- No artificial ingredients.
- No compromises in manufacturing.
- No compromise in taste.

Now available at Central Market H-E-B, Costco, Whole Foods, and very soon at Walmart and Sam's Club.

Dash of Masala

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of machinery break or otherwise fail, precautions are in place to protect her consumers. “We have a responsibility not just to our retail partners and their audit requirements, but to our customers as well,” she says. “That’s not about business, it’s just good conscience.”

Satisfying Audit Requirements With Ease

Physical contamination audit requirements include hourly testing of the rejection unit at Dash Of Masala. To satisfy that requirement, line workers place 1 millimeter

contaminants on card materials that mimic the weight of the company’s Sassy Lassi drink products. “To prove no contaminants, we need to provide records of every single shipment out of our facility in those audits, which happen as often as two or three times per year,” says Shrivastava. “With our CombiMeki, I can simply download those reports to a jump drive and provide them to the retail partner requesting them.” While Shrivastava’s commitment to the quality of Dash Of Masala products is winning her company some big business, she has a

more altruistic take on her investment in x-ray technology. “If you ask me personally, this isn’t about business ROI,” she says. “I want our customers to be happy, healthy, and worry-free. That’s our ultimate corporate responsibility.”

About Mekitec



Mekitec has a combined experience of several decades in the development, industrialization and manufacturing of X-ray imaging systems, applied in medical, security and safety areas. This unique combination of in-depth knowledge of various industries has enabled the management to invest in long-term research and development especially for the food industry. The results of this focus and dedication are the state-of-the-art X-ray food safety systems that Mekitec supplies to its customers globally.

The product range is a high-performance, user-friendly and very space and cost competitive

X-ray technology system called MEKI. It is revolutionary as it provides 100% food quality control with high precision X-ray inspection that is designed to replace the simple metal detector with a similar investment. What’s more, MEKI with its small and compact footprint, easily fits in every production line, thereby saving useful space in the factory.

With the MEKI range, food producers finally have the choice: To enjoy a fully automated, high precision and small yet cost-effective X-ray food inspection system. The groundbreaking MEKI systems provide food quality control without compromise!