

CASE STUDY

Making Quality Artisan Snacks



COMPANY PROFILE

Kettle Foods

A Division of Diamond Foods

Salem, Oregon

\$680M Food Manufacturer

"Before, we worked to specs. Now with NWA, we work to statistical limits and understand our process capability, reduce our variability, and increase our profits."

*David Johnson
Corporate Director of Quality*

Overview

Kettle Foods (Salem, Oregon) has built its reputation on batch-made gourmet potato chips. Kettle Brand® Potato Chips are the number one salt snack brand (52.2% market share) in natural supermarkets. Kettle Foods also took the challenge to expand its presence in mainline supermarkets and to compete with the big mass-production chips. To cover the increased demand in the upper Midwest and East Coast, Kettle Foods built a new plant in Beloit, Wisconsin and expanded the original Salem plant.

SPC Enables Expansion

How does the artisan chip survive? How do you successfully combine batch cooking, carefully tended by experienced chip fryers, with high-volume production? How do you evolve from a local, specialty, wholesome snack maker to the number-one salt snack in natural-foods markets, and scale up to be a player in mainline grocery sales?

A major part of the answer lies with the whole-hearted adoption of SPC methods and the practice of Continuous Process Improvement. SPC enables the high-capability stable system characteristic of a master artisan. An associated move to manage this expansion as a world-class manufacturer is expanding the SPC use from a point-monitoring system on the production line to larger-scale-process corporate management following the Manufacturing Analytics model.

Kettle Foods has implemented SPC with a combination of NWA Quality Monitor for data collection at the production line and NWA Quality Analyst for supervisory and management analytics and reporting. Kettle uses the software for incoming inspection of raw materials (potatoes, oil, and seasonings) and handling process data at the fryers, the color sorter, seasoning, and packaging.

Easy to use. Easy to save.

The results have been establishing control over all process steps and significant savings such as reducing overfill, reducing destructive testing by 50%, and reducing rework and scrap by at least 25%. All staff levels now use SPC more actively. Quality Analyst is easy to use for everyone from plant-floor operators to the Technical Director—just a few clicks get the job done. Not only are the SPC results more useful, Kettle Foods has eliminated tons of paperwork.

Engineering and management now use the data more actively. For example, engineering easily uses all of the data to improve the process and considers the data when specifying new equipment. Previously, production had worked to specification limits and now works to statistical limits, understands process capability, and focuses on reducing variability.

SPC Saves Time



One cook per pair of fryers keeps the artisan touch.

The NWA software has simplified the monthly analysis and reporting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The task used to take one to two days, but now takes just minutes. It is now easier to spend more time and mindshare to analyze and improve enterprise processes. NWA software has enabled Kettle Foods to move to a Manufacturing Analytics model and apply process management throughout enterprise functions.

The system aggregates the data from all production-management systems—IFS (ERP), Rockwell (SCADA), and NWA (quality)—to produce role-specific analytics and visualization for everyone, and give an enterprise-wide view of what is happening in the entire process. This makes all data actionable and changes the perspective from looking behind to looking ahead. This mindset allows ongoing expansion while maintaining artisan quality levels.

For more information, call 888.NWA.SOFT or visit us at Nwasoft.com

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