



# Case Study

## LOMA'S X-RAY UNIT TAKES QUALITY TO A NEW LEVEL FOR CANADIAN DESSERT MANUFACTURER

**Quebec City, Quebec, Canada** rich in history and culture, is home to Martin Dessert, a company that has been producing fine quality frozen gourmet desserts since 1989. Approximately 90% of Martin Dessert's products are targeted for institutional operations—predominantly restaurants—with some finding their way into school cafeterias and hospitals, explains Denis Martin, director, Martin Dessert.

One of the company's largest customers is St. Hubert's, a well-known Quebec province, family-style, restaurant chain which features barbecue chicken. (For those not familiar with St. Hubert's, Martin describes the chain as similar to a chicken version of Outback Steakhouse.) In addition to providing desserts to a large number of St. Hubert's restaurants, Martin Dessert, also owns a handful of the franchises. And through it all, Denis Martin has always kept a watchful eye on the quality aspect of his operation.

About a year ago, the company was in the process of preparing for HACCP certification and decided it was time to become even more stringent in its pursuit of quality. As can happen in any food manufacturing operation, on rare occasion, foreign objects can find their way into the product. "This wasn't a common problem," Martin explains, "but you never want your customer to find anything in your product that doesn't belong there." It was at that point that Martin began evaluating alternatives.

"Using a metal detector was not an option since 25% of our desserts are in metal [aluminum] trays or plates," Martin says. The company decided that it was going to raise the excellence bar and evaluate X-ray inspection equipment which can detect a broader variety of foreign objects and can accommodate different packaging materials. (In addition to aluminum trays/plates, Martin Dessert also uses paperboard-based primary packaging containers.)

"We started by selecting three different X-ray equipment manufacturers. It was important for us to examine the equipment, review the specifications and make a decision based on performance," Martin says. After a stringent review process, Martin Dessert settled on Loma System's X<sup>3</sup> conveyor model, X-ray inspection system. The unit can detect a wide variety of contaminants (such as gravel, glass, stones) that metal detectors cannot, as well as easily and accurately find small pieces of metal within a metallic or aluminum trays.



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What differentiates Loma's X<sup>3</sup> units from other X-ray inspection machines is its flexible software that automatically searches for anomalies within a set of live data. Once that data is analyzed, it is discarded and the process is repeated providing consistent and accurate sensitivity while eliminating false rejects. The new generation offers Loma's AutoTrack Technology, which enables multiple, upgraded X-ray inspection capabilities at a cost reduction of up to 40 percent when compared to previous versions and competitive models.

The dual Pentium, Windows NT-based X<sup>3</sup> takes X-ray inspection to new levels of analyses. In addition to finding contaminants, the X<sup>3</sup> can analyze data at higher speeds, than ever before. (The conveyor version also can detect missing or broken items and incorrectly filled packages.)

"Because we have 80 different products packed in boxes with varying unit counts, it is important for the X-ray machine to also tell us if a portion is missing," Martin says.

And with standard Ethernet connection, modem diagnostics, one-touch help screens and improved operator interface features, system performance is maximized and product quality is assured and documented.

"The modem diagnostic feature was another important feature for us. This gives Loma the capability to work on the machine from a remote location," Martin explains.

Further, the unit features a large monitor with a live X-ray image, which displays detected contaminants in color. Also standard are QA reports, batch reports, fault reports, rejected image capture facility and optional communication connections.

Additionally, the unit features Intralox conveyor belting. Because Intralox belts have varying degrees of density, some competitive units cannot be calibrated properly to adjust for the variances. Loma's software has been programmed to cope with the variances and not lose sensitivity.

Martin Desserts relies on Loma's X<sup>3</sup> inspection unit for its full line of cakes, pies, crumbles, cheesecakes, puff pastries, etc. Depending on the product being packaged, the box count varies from between 12 to 40 portions and there are two to four boxes per case.

On the production line, the individual units are loaded into a box and then put through a shrink wrap tunnel before being conveyed into the X-ray unit.

The Loma X<sup>3</sup> unit has been operating in Martin Dessert's plant since last September and has given the company the ability to raise its quality game.

"Now, when our customers come into our plant, we always give them a demonstration of our X-ray machine. It is an excellent example of our company's dedication to quality," Martin says.

It also gives Martin the opportunity to "back with action" the credo St. Hubert's proudly displays on its website:

"Our simple recipe has three main ingredients: QSC, which stands for Quality, Service and Cleanliness. We make no compromise: providing the best value is the only way to achieve success. To uphold our excellent quality and satisfy our customers, we at

St-Hubert remains true to a long tradition of innovation and keep our finger on the pulse of our customers by being at the cutting edge of new trends."

"At Martin Dessert, we know that innovation is the key to production growth. Our young and dynamic team is exclusively devoted to the research and development of new products and to ensuring quality control," Martin says.

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