



# Case study

## Donkey Brands LLC

Tortilla manufacturer doubles production with FOODesign (a tna company)

### Overview

- Company:** Donkey Brands LLC
- Challenge:** Replace an out-of-date manual process with an efficient frying and seasoning system to increase production at a leading flour tortilla chips manufacturing plant.
- Solution:** The installation of FOODesign's immerso-cook® direct-fired continuous frying system alongside two stainless steel conveyors and a tortilla piston cutter enabled Donkey Brands LLC to double production volumes, while FOODesign's quik-coat® seasoning drum ensures uniform coating to safeguard continuous product quality.



Based in Carol Stream, Illinois, USA, privately-owned Donkey Brands LLC produces all-natural, high quality flour tortilla chips in salted and unsalted varieties. In a bid to optimise its production process to meet increased demand and boost growth, Donkey Brands was looking to replace an out-of-date manual process with an efficient automated system.

### Challenge 1: increase production levels

As a growing manufacturer and snack brand, Donkey Brands was looking to increase production levels with a frying system that optimised colour, texture and flavour. To protect their brand legacy for great tasting tortilla chips, Donkey Brands was confident that FOODesign's immerso-cook direct-fired continuous frying system was the right choice.

### The solution

The FOODesign immerso-cook features innovations like a state-of-the-art belt feed system. Customisable for a wide range of products including tortilla chips, this feature minimises the risk of product breakage while optimising throughput speeds. While breakage is minimised, any unpreventable waste that can result from delicate snack applications like tortilla chips, is continuously discharged from the fryer by the system's base-mounted mesh conveyor. This ensures the product quality is not compromised.

Through its innovative continuous oil filtration process, FOODesign's immerso-cook keeps oil clean with particulate removal and a fresh oil infeed system. This prevents oil from overheating and prevents harmful fatty acids and free radicals from forming, which contaminate oil and compromise the quality of the product. Increased capacity from the immerso-cook, along with its advanced oil filtration system, means Donkey Brands can produce more tortilla chips with significantly less downtime from changing oil.



"With demand growing for quantity and quality, we needed a flexible frying system to build on our capabilities and enhance production capacity," comments Robert Tisljar, partner at Donkey Brands. "Our previous line was predominantly manual and included a smaller fryer, as well as more conventional conveying systems. Looking for the best way to step into the world of automation, we saw the answer in FOODesign. The aim, quite simply, was to increase production output while at the same time improving the overall quality of our products."

Also commenting on the installation, Tim Reardon, group solutions manager – processing for the Americas, said: "Our immerso-cook range offers a heavy duty, highly efficient system that can be customised for a wide variety of applications and processing requirements. Together with our service-led approach, maintenance support and engineering knowledge, we were able to supply Donkey Brands with a reliable and high performance system that meets their exact specification – and which we're confident will continue to do so for many years to come."

## Challenge 2: consistent flavour coverage

Seasoning is vital to a product's overall taste, texture and appeal. Because each type of snack product has its own set of attributes, unique product structure, surface and topography, Donkey Brands needed a seasoning system that would ensure uniform coating on every single tortilla chip produced.

## The solution

The FOODesign quik-coat was designed with flexibility in mind and was a perfect fit for the Donkey Brands range of products. FOODesign's quik-coat system effectively seasons uneven surfaces and gently tumbles the product, evenly dispersing the right amount of seasoning so that all Donkey Brand tortilla chips have a consistent appearance and taste. As a manufacturer of tortilla chips, it was fundamental that the new seasoning system could handle coating irregular shaped products consistently and with ease.

Where there's a need to season products, there's a need to keep equipment clean. With Donkey Brands' goal to increase

productivity, along with their high standards of hygiene, they needed an easy-to-clean solution that also minimised downtime. As part of the FOODesign quik-coat installation, casters were adjoined to the system that can be pulled away from the production line – simplifying and accelerating the cleaning process.

"As a food manufacturer, consistent flavour profiles are naturally a top priority," comments Tisljar. "Without consistent quality in product flavour, consumers would lose trust in our brand. Fully equipped with FOODesign's expertise, we were able to find the right system to allow for great taste and optimum coverage every time, while maintaining global hygiene standards."

## Onwards and upwards

"Now that the new system is up and running, we are experiencing double the production volumes, consistent seasoning application, reduced product breakage and virtually no downtime," Tisljar adds. "The whole project ran extremely smoothly and we were especially impressed with FOODesign's exceptional level of service and flexibility in system design. We immediately saw the benefits of their cutting-edge manufacturing solutions which delivered the speed, performance and accuracy we were looking for, while still producing the quality tortilla chips Donkey Brands customers have come to expect."

Reardon comments: "We are delighted to partner with Donkey Brands to help develop a modern, automated system for their tortilla line. Our technical expertise and industry know-how equips us with the ability to create and supply innovative products to our customers worldwide, offering start-to-finish solutions for the entire production line."



For over 40 years, FOODesign (a **tna** company) has been a leading innovator in food processing equipment and solutions for the snacks, meat and poultry, prepared foods, confectionery and bakery industries. Headquartered in Oregon, U.S., the company designs and manufactures heavy-duty, precision-built cooking and processing systems, tailored to customers' needs. Its high performance products include cooking and baking equipment, fryers, ovens, cooling equipment, seasoning and coating machines, bulk handling conveyors, distribution and storage systems, as well as controls system technology. FOODesign also offers a range of added-value services, including project support and maintenance to ensure optimal performance and maximum return on investment.

**tna** is a leading global supplier of integrated food packaging and processing solutions with over 14,000 systems installed across more than 120 countries. The company provides a comprehensive range of products including materials handling, processing, coating, distribution, seasoning, weighing, packaging, cooling, freezing, metal detection and verification solutions. **tna** also offers a variety of production line controls integration & SCADA reporting options, project management and training. **tna**'s unique combination of innovative technologies, extensive project management experience and 24/7 global support ensures customers achieve faster, more reliable and flexible food products at the lowest cost of ownership.

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