Printing in the Food Industry

Case Study

What is the best way to print on gourmet popcorn?

THE BACKGROUND

Back in 2010, the world of popcorn was languishing in the doldrums. The market place had very little choice and was ruled over by one brand with no innovation or variants. The emphasis was on the word dull.
However, all that was to change in a dramatic way….

THE STORY

Joseph Sopher had previously visited the States and had brought back gifts of delicious popcorn for his circle of family and friends.

In a light-bulb moment, he decided to make his own popcorn. The popcorn was radically different from what was currently on the market – the emphasis was on using 100% natural ingredients and a unique cooking process, that locked in the flavours, allowing each ingredient to be savoured separately on the palate, giving an unrivalled tasting experience.

After several trials – involving both burnt pans and late nights, Joseph (aided and abetted by his wife, Jackie and son, Adam) launched his revolutionary popcorn at a food show and promptly sold out after two days.

Now firmly established as the major best-known gourmet popcorn in the country, the Joe and Seph range boasts a choice of over 50 flavours and has won an incredible 35 Great Taste Awards, as well as other accolades.

Not only are there such great flavour combinations as Gin and Tonic or Blue Cheese with Walnut and Celery, but there has also been a successful collaboration with Michel and Alain Roux, which has led to limited editions of gourmet popcorn. The company has also expanded its product range, such as delicious caramel sauces and also offers a popcorn subscription service for all die-hard popcorn fans!

THE PROBLEM

With a growing export market and a home market that included major retailers such as Waitrose, Harrods and Debenhams, the business needed a reliable printer system that could print data codes directly onto the pouches. This was also a requirement due to the stringent legislation needed for the company's Middle East export markets.

The printer also had to work with the Joe and Seph Popcorn packaging. The packaging is central to the product branding and has been carefully designed. The popcorn pouches are transparent, so the product is visible and each packet sports a witty and inspirational logo.

As the company expanded, enlarged packing facilities and more employees joining the team meant the printer needed to be reliable, resilient and easy to operate.

THE SOLUTION

Joseph visited the Allen Coding stand at the PPMA Show on a quest to find the perfect printer and saw the Hitachi RX printer which immediately fitted the bill.

The Hitachi CIJ printer system offers many benefits to the customer:

- **High speed printing** – Up to 3 lines
- **Superior quality** – can easily print barcodes, numbers and text
- **User friendly** – very simple to operate from its touch screen control panel
- **Robust and reliable** – the stainless-steel cabinet withstands challenging environments
- **Easy to maintain** – its printheads are automatically cleaned at the end of each cycle

THE OUTCOME

Following a successful trial, the company purchased the Hitachi RX CIJ printer from Allen Coding.

Joseph comments: *"The RX was easy to install and operate. It does what it says on the tin and easily kept pace with our bag sealer. The service from Allen Coding has been great so we were happy to go ahead with the investment."*

As the range of Joe and Seph's popcorn has expanded, the company has acquired another RX printer, to keep up with the demands of popcorn packing.

Quality, innovation and attention to detail are the hallmarks of Joe and Seph's Popcorn. They are also deeply embedded in both Allen Coding and Hitachi's ethos which is why altogether, they create a great team.