

# western Food Processor

The magazine for food professionals & processors

# CHEEMO®

Premium

Joe Makowcki, president, Heritage Frozen Foods

## Creating a Canadian Staple

*Cheemo dominates perogy market.*



Courtesy of Shutterstock

### Buying Labels

By Robin Brunet



## Stick it to 'em

*Effective labels depend as much on communication as on technology.*

Cut the most luscious steak in half, package one half with a generic label and the other with a slightly more eye-catching label, and guess which half sells first?

Even fledgling food processors appreciate that labeling — whether it's a sticker, a flexible packet, a shrink sleeve, or something else — is integral to marketing. As such, labelling is constantly evolving to match food trends. According to Domino, the

international printing technologies specialist, emerging trends include artisanal labels (textured and raised print, varnish, foils); personalized labels (rendered cost-effective due to the penetration of digital ink jet colour label presses into traditional flexo printing businesses); and eco-friendly labels.

Given the advances in printing technology, opportunities to attract consumers via labeling are endless. But too often a crucial element in the label application can be over-

looked by a customer, which can impact effective label development, says Alex Hansen, partner, vice-president of sales & marketing, for Sunwest Print Corporation in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia.

He explains, "Unless a client gives a manufacturer like us as much information as possible about the application of the label trouble can easily result; a good case in point would be using paper labels for clamshell labeling and then having those clamshells subjected to water misters in grocery stores. Without using the proper coating or lamination the label will degrade impacting the overall look of the package; using a synthetic label is also a great option.

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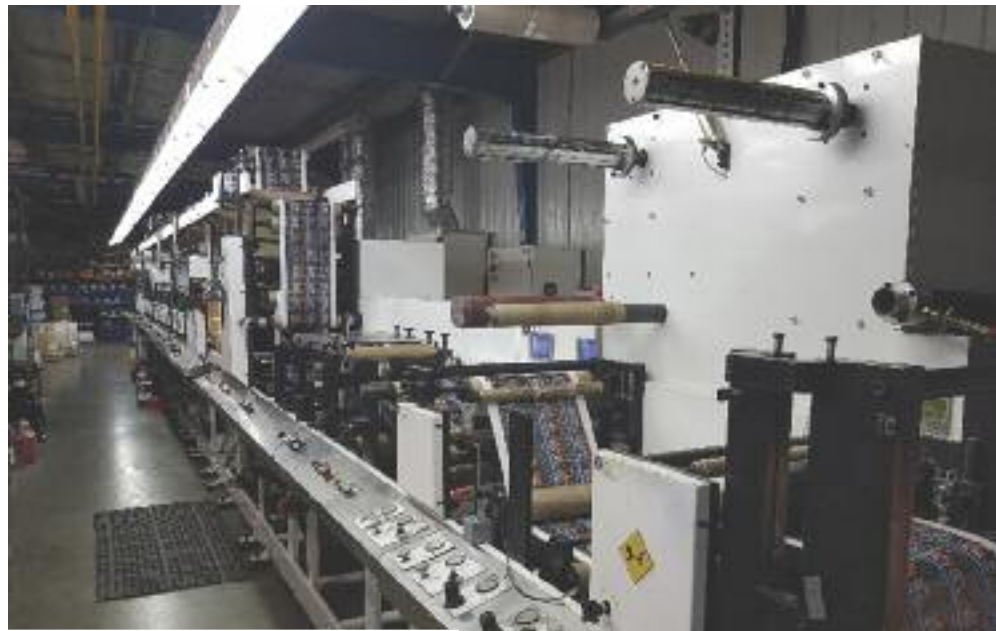
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"Also due to lack of information, you can have labels that don't meet Canadian Food and Inspection Agency regulations for direct and indirect food labeling. The most obvious example would be labels attached directly to most fruits and vegetables — they have to be made with a specific direct food contact adhesive in order to be food safe."

Not surprisingly, Hansen and his crew at Sunwest, a vertically integrated pressure sensitive label and tag manufacturer, undertake extensive consultation with clients long before the presses kick in, and while labelling design is usually worked out in advance by third parties, the services of an in-house design team are available upon request.

Arguably, the acumen of labeling manufacturers is as important as the equipment they use. Larry Chartrand, general manager of Labels Unlimited in Winnipeg, has spent 31 years building a client base that includes Maple Leaf Foods as well as an equipment inventory of digital and flexo printers, and his longevity is a boon to start-up businesses. "People new to the game can rest assured we know all about the obscure and complicated regulations pertaining to label manufacturing as well as the information on the label," he says.

*Labels Unlimited has been building a client base, which includes Maple Leaf Foods for the past 31 years.*

That's not to belittle the enormous benefit technology continues to provide to the food processing sector. "Certainly, printing costs have gone down thanks to the rise of digital, and we're at a point in technological development where it's wise to have a combination of digital and flexo: the former for short to medium manufacturing runs, and the latter for longer runs," says Chartrand.

Darrell Friesen, president and CEO of Jet Label & Packaging Ltd. of Edmonton, Alberta, agrees. "Clients such as Target Canada helped make digital a mainstream label-making medium, but there's still huge room for improvement in terms of colour processing and speed," he says. "Therefore, flexo is still invaluable and something we use 75 per cent of the time."

Jet Label's 55,000 square foot plant is outfitted with two digital and 12 flexo printers, a set-up that Friesen describes as

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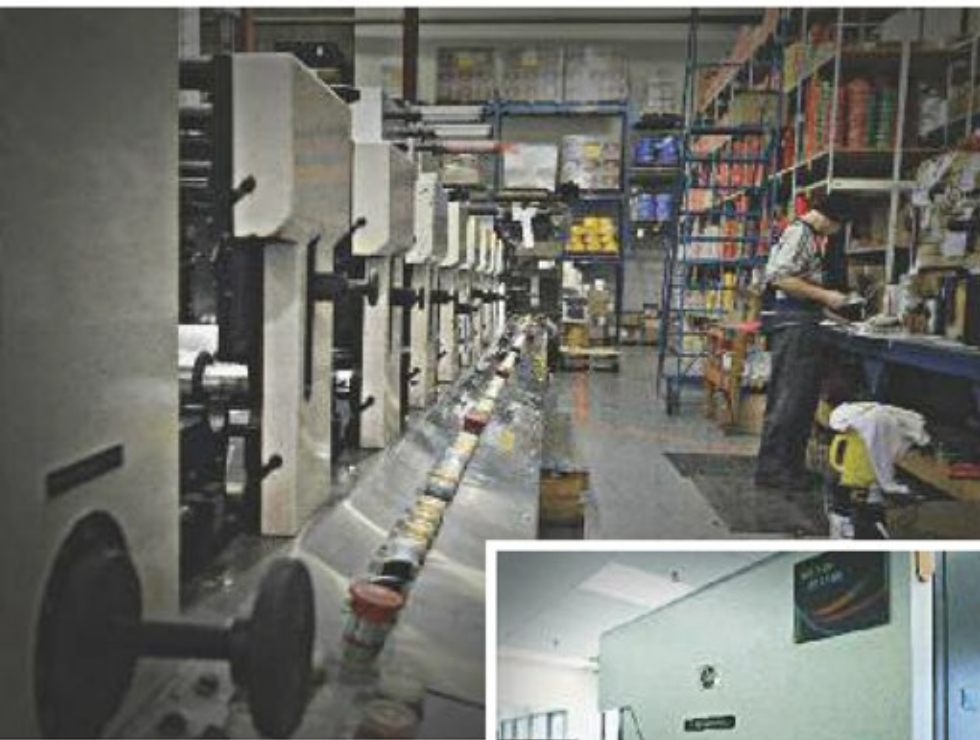


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*With the advances in technology the opportunities to attract consumers via labelling are endless.*

ble thanks to our HP Indigo Digital press," says Friesen.

A major way Sunwest differentiates itself from the competition is by making its own labeling materials. "We purchase silicone, adhesive, liner, face and we create our own label laminate which allows us to better control our costs and quality," says Hansen. "It also affords us the ability to create customized solutions for unique applications."

As for the types of labels that manufacturers will provide to food clients in the foreseeable future, Freedonia in a new report estimates that in-mold, stretch sleeve, and heat-shrink labels will grow the fastest between now and 2019; it also calculates that overall, North American label demand will rise 3.8 per cent annually to \$19.7 billion in 2019.

Friesen notes, "Full body labeling for beverage and pharmaceutical containers is increasing, and wraps overall are extremely popular with the buying public."

Competition in the food industry increases yearly, amplifying the importance of label quality and design. But as advantageous as the digital revolution has been to marketing, technology is only as effective as the information driving it: clear communication between the label maker and the food processor is the best way to ensure an effective end product. **WFP**

"crucial in providing our clients, many of whose products are not shelf stable, just-in-time service."

Jet Label's clients benefit from digital technology in ways other than the creation of a good-looking end product delivered in a timely fashion. "For example, we make eight or 10 labels at a time for clients to examine and test prior to actual production, and this service is economically feasi-

*Jet Label & Packaging Ltd. has two digital and 12 flexo printers at its plant.*

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