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CASE STUDY

Inspired Foods Prepared with Precision

ABOUT VALLEY FINE FOODS

Headquartered in Benicia, California, Valley Fine Foods is an independent, family-owned company with a mission to produce healthy, 100 percent natural foods rich with gourmet flavor. Founded in 1984, the company manufactures premium, high-quality filled pastas, selling dozens of varieties at club and grocery stores nationwide and producing private label brands for fine grocers and restaurants. Its Pasta Prima brand of premium quality, handcrafted, filled pasta introduced in 1993 has grown into a complete line of 100 percent natural ravioli and tortellini still made in small batches with only the finest ingredients. For more information, visit pastaprima.com.

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Craig Schauffel, Vice President of Research & Culinary Innovation and Quality Assurance

PAINS

- Formula and recipe information was previously stored in spreadsheets and text files
- Updating and searching for specific files took too long
- The culinary research and production team didn't have good visibility into workflow or documented projects

GAINS

- Valley Fine Foods' new formula and recipe management platform stores all formulas and recipes in one searchable database
- Valley Fine Foods is saving hours each week in terms of documentation and reporting
- Teams across the company now have access to important research and production information

For years, fresh pasta and sauce maker Valley Fine Foods tracked formulas and recipes using multiple spreadsheets and notebooks. A new formula and recipe management solution from PSC Group and Aras has added security, consistency, and manufacturing controls that ensure quality for every batch and bring delight to each meal.

Craig Schauffel has a lot of mouths to feed. Hundreds of thousands, in fact, since that's the number of filled pasta and sauce servings that roll off Valley Fine Foods' production lines each year. As Vice President of Research & Culinary Innovation and Quality Assurance at Valley Fine Foods, a family-owned fresh pasta, sauce, and prepared meal producer in Northern California, Schauffel and his team must account for the high-quality production of every gourmet meal.

Managing their three brands – Three Bridges, Pasta Prima, and Artisola – in some of the country's largest grocers and wholesale clubs, Valley Fine Foods has plenty of raw ingredients, production runs, and finished packages to track. Each product has its own formulas, recipes, labels, and shipping information, too.

Schauffel joined Valley Fine Foods to bring a more formally-trained culinary perspective to product innovation and production. His training includes graduation from the Culinary Institute of America and positions at some of Europe and America's finest dining venues. Before coming to Valley Fine Foods, Schauffel ran his own fine-dining and catering operation in Napa Valley for 14 years.



"Ever since Valley Fine Foods was founded in 1984, there's always been a commitment to fresh and 'Grandma's kitchen cupboard' ingredient selection, which means natural and flavorful, no artificial stuff," said Schauffel. "The only problem was, we didn't have a great way to keep track of these wonderful recipes and formulas. Product information was hard to find and manage. That's what got us interested in a formula and recipe management solution."

“When we look at the time and energy saved as a result of our new formula and recipe management solution, the ROI is easy to calculate. What used to take hours and days to compile and communicate can now be extracted and reported on in a matter of minutes. And we know we’re dealing with the latest details since the master database is automatically updated. Versioning and out-of-date files are things we no longer need to worry about,” said Schaufel.

Schauffel had already tried a few things that weren't the right fit for Valley Fine Foods. Solutions from giant enterprise resource planning software companies were too complicated. Instead, Valley Fine Foods selected PSC Group, a professional services and information technology consulting firm, to design and develop its formula and recipe management solution. Darryl Poore of PSC led the implementation.

Poore introduced the formula and recipe management solution built on the Aras Innovator® PLM platform. Using Aras, the PSC team moved Valley Fine Foods' product formulas and recipes from stand-alone spreadsheets and text documents into a searchable database, easily accessible by anyone in the company with the right credentials.

“Darryl and the PSC team came in and clearly had a good understanding of food manufacturing and how to apply formula and recipe management principles,” said Schaufel. “They knew our world and could recommend best practices, and brought a lot of business and common sense as well.”

With the new platform, manufacturing information is much easier to access. Ingredients, lot numbers and package details are available with a few mouse-clicks for internal or external reporting requirements driven by the FDA.

Valley Fine Foods also manufactures natural, organic, gluten free, and non-GMO project verified products and each one of those standards has their own regulations that must be tracked.

RESEARCH TRACKING AND TRANSPARENCY

Schauffel and his team of chefs and food scientists are constantly challenging themselves to improve their products and create new ones. Sourcing the best quality ingredients is paramount in the perpetual quest for the right balance of taste, nutrition, texture, and stability.

"We have new food product testing underway all the time and this work is recorded in our formula and recipe database," said Schauffel. "Documentation is critical for being able to replicate, test, and refine new recipes since we are always making adjustments to flavor profiles."

Schauffel said the formula and recipe management solution has also provided more transparency among departments. Workflow is better understood and other teams can see progress throughout the research and production process.



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Valley Fine Foods isn't stopping there. Plans for adding onto the formula and recipe management solution include recording more production details, adding benchmarking data, and attaching costs that will allow for more what-if testing on formula changes and the overall impact on expenses. Tablets on the production floor will also be rolled out in the future.

"We operate in a highly competitive national and international food marketplace," said Schauffel.

"Our new formula and recipe management technology makes us more efficient, more competitive, and ready for future growth."



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