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Seniori Ateria's food lasts longer but looks and tastes as though it has just been prepared

Naantali's Seniori Ateria Oy packs as many as 14,000 meals and desserts in a week and these are delivered to meals service customers around Finland. In addition to prolonging the storage period, the use of shielding gases (protective gases) improves quality, cost effectiveness and reliability of delivery says CEO Lassi Nurmela.

– Actually is quite amazing - although food is stored for a longer (1+9 24-hour periods), it looks and tastes as if it was prepared a moment ago. It is incredible how much protective gases affect a product's storage life and quality, says Seniori Ateria's CEO Lassi Nurmela.

Seniori Ateria is a small but growing Naantali company, which presently employs 15 – 17 people. The company prepares and delivers prepared food portions to meals service customers in towns and municipalities where such services have been outsourced. During a week, Seniori Ateria transports 10,000 – 14,000 meals and desserts around Finland, for example as far as Ostrobothnia.

“The use of protective gases is truly cost-effective”

Seniori Ateria food portions are prepared using the “cook&chill” method in which the food is prepared and then frozen quickly for two hours at -4 to -8 °C, packed using a carbon dioxide – nitrogen mixture and sealed in a condensation-free anti-fog film.

According to Nurmela, food prepared with the cook&chill has a taste close to that of genuine home cooking. The method in question combined with protective gases guarantees a good storage life.

– Our own quality control is exact and the responsibility for preparation and cooking remains with us, tells Nurmela. Thus, we are able to ensure that food retains its goodness and remains safe until its “best before” date.

How has your company benefited from the use of protective gases?

– Protective gases prolong the storage life of fresh food so that fats do not oxidise and microbes are not able to grow. Reliability of delivery remains better because food can be prepared in advance and this also gives the customer time for freezing (chilling) and for transport, says Nurmela.

From the point of view of reliability of delivery and quality factors, the use of protective that gases is truly cost-effective in Lassi Nurmela's opinion.

– Food production is not as hectic: quality and shelf life improves” lists Nurmela.

On tasting, customers' prejudices are dispelled.

Before tasting, customers' preconceptions can be rather critical: many would prefer food prepared locally. When customers have tasted the food and become familiar with the concept, they nevertheless notice that the food is quality Finnish home cooking, Nurmela adds that the company prepares all foods individually and with care. Seniori Ateria is also able to take special dietary choices into consideration.

Originally, Lassi Nurmela also had the same prejudices as the customer – at first protective gases brought to mind the bad smell of meatballs packed in gas. But, according to Nurmela, the odour in question is more related to the recipe.

– Odours and tastes are not associated with protective gases. “These contain the same elements as the air that we breathe. Therefore, our products do not release any greenhouse emissions”, laughs Nurmela.

Protective gases are an essential part of production

Lassi Nurmela is satisfied with AGA's MAPAX® solution and states that protective gases are an essential part of Seniori Ateria's production. AGA supplies Seniori Ateria with a protective gas mixture composed of carbon dioxide and nitrogen, which the

company adds to foodstuffs using four gas packing machines. Seniori Ateria has also tried other gas suppliers but has remained a customer of AGA since 2008.

Seniori Ateria operates, as the meals service handles logistics and offers its customers the use of a customised information system.

Read more:

www.senioriaateria.fi
ig.aga.is/MAPAX_info

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