

Editorial Contact: Nicole Allen, Account Manager
ABI
29 Broadway
New York, NY 10006
212.529.4500
nallen@abipr.com

Cheese-Makers Extend Freshness to Five Times the Previous Shelf-Life
French Goat Cheese Maker Successfully Protects Against Bacteria with Oxygen Sorbents

Poitiers, France is well-known for its local gastronomy including food items such as lamb, wine, and goat cheese. And in France, where many local producers and artisanal cheese-makers depend on all natural methods for maintaining cheese shelf life, producers have been increasingly turning to the use of oxygen absorbers to extend the shelf-life and freshness of their products.

Le Père Bafien is one such producer. Originally a family business, Le Père Bafien currently exports their products to countries as far away as Vietnam, in addition to the United States and neighboring European countries. As the cheese-maker has found, in a global economy, the ability to extend shelf-life is important because it increases the time available for shipping and extends the chain of distribution into new and far-reaching markets.

In order to maintain the freshness of goat cheese for extended periods, Le Père Bafien uses oxygen absorbers from Multisorb Technologies LLC. The removal of oxygen from cheese packaging serves to protect the product from bacteria and other contaminants. The French producer packages its cheeses in a variety of packaging materials and then ships them to both wholesalers and retailers.

Le Père Bafien therefore needed a versatile, multi-purpose, and cost-effective solution, which would suit the packaging needs for its numerous cheese varieties. Multisorb Technologies, provided the answer with its FreshPax® oxygen absorbers and assisted the cheese-maker with technical assistance, logistical support, and packaging machinery to help defray excess costs.

Says Fabien Plisson, Director and Founder of Le Père Bafien, “We turned to Multisorb and its sorbents because we were able to experiment with numerous packaging line alternatives, ensuring a greater degree of flexibility for our products. We have been using oxygen absorbers to naturally

extend the freshness of our products for several years now. Multisorb sorbents provide us with multiple options when packaging our cheeses.”

A Discrete and Versatile Packaging Alternative

Currently, Le Père Bafien distributes their goat cheese units individually, in quantities of six or more units and also creates custom-made packaging solutions for their end-users upon request. This is easily accomplished with the use of FreshPax B oxygen absorbers, a 4 cm x 3 cm scavenger packet, which is attached via an adhesive to the clear, peelable lidding material that encompasses the entire cheese product, and can be adjusted accordingly (both in terms of thickness and form) to suit desired packaging materials and sizes.

FreshPax B is designed to work with moist products such as cheese, bread, and processed meats. The sorbent is activated by moisture from the food product itself, which is in contrast to FreshPax D blends that carry moisture and are used with drier food products such as dried legumes, grains, and dried meats. Multisorb’s FreshPax B scavengers allow for longer handling times in the packaging process, but also begin to work within a few hours after the package is sealed. Both formulas effectively reduce the oxygen inside a package to zero within 24 to 36 hours. The lack of oxygen stops aerobic bacterial growth and other oxygen induced chemical reactions.

Packaging flexibility coupled with a lower cost-per-unit and the technical service that Multisorb and its distributor provided, were among the key reasons for the switch to FreshPax. Says Plisson, “When we first worked with Multisorb, we found that the FreshPax was easier to incorporate into our existing packaging than those we had used previously, and we were able to experiment with different thicknesses to get the exact amounts of absorption necessary.”

According to Plisson, for smaller producers, a cost-effective packaging solution is key to remaining competitive both locally and internationally. With FreshPax oxygen absorbers, the packaging machinery that is used can be small and relatively low-cost compared to those of larger, industrial producers, allowing cheese-makers like Le Père Bafien to keep packaging costs down, while maintaining equivalent freshness and versatility in their packaging components. The FreshPax B format lends itself easily to hand insertion, which can be a matter of course for smaller producers. After attaching the sorbent, the products are then sealed hermetically via a heat sealer.

In this instance, Multisorb provided the cheese-maker with the heat sealer that encloses the scavengers in an impermeable pocket. This technology, in comparison to alternative technologies such as MAP (modified atmosphere packaging), which is used by large-scale producers, was less expensive and is a more affordable alternative for the cheese-maker.

“We feel it’s important to provide our customer with advice and support; whether it’s in regard to cost minimization, technical, or delivery assistance. Our role is to facilitate the incorporation of the oxygen scavenger with the existing product packaging and in so doing, enhance the appearance and taste as well,” said John Solomon, Market Leader, Specialty Foods, of Multisorb Technologies.

Extending Freshness x 5

For Le Père Bafien, a further significant difference with the use of FreshPax sorbents, has been the extension of a previously short time period in which cheese products would become outdated and susceptible to bacterial contamination. Plisson says that by using oxygen absorbers in their goat cheese, they have been able to sell their products for longer periods of time at equivalent levels of quality. This has allowed them to reap a greater financial return and sell their products farther away. “With the use of Multisorb FreshPax oxygen absorbers, we have been able to increase the shelf-life from eight to forty-five days, dramatically increasing our ability to provide consumers with a fresher product over a longer time-period,” states Plisson.

The extension in freshness has also allowed Le Père Bafien to sell its products overseas, expand its distribution network, and stock increased quantities of inventory. While originally doing business at a retail level, selling to local green grocer markets; the cheese-maker now sells over half of its products at the wholesale level. The wholesalers then sell to supermarkets and grocery stores across France, and finally to the end-user. This increase in distribution has allowed the cheese-maker to diversify and improve its sales. Says Plisson, “Overall, by extending the freshness of our products, we have also been able to enhance our logistical flexibility.”

Investment in R & D

Multisorb’s efforts in the research and development of newer varieties of oxygen absorbers have increasingly helped local producers with their packaging needs by offering improved and newer types of sorbent technology. For example, in the agro-food sector in France, the use of oxygen absorbers in food products currently extends to a wide variety of products including specialty

foods such as iced chestnuts, bread products, dietary supplements, and even natural food coloring. Producers point to the investment in research and development of sorbents and a company that listens to their needs.

Says Plisson, “Multisorb’s technical assistance and service were additional factors in our decision to use FreshPax. By being able to adapt to our needs as producers and find solutions through innovative products, Multisorb has allowed us to remain innovative as well.”

Sidebar: Packaging Artisanal Goat Cheese

The end product that includes FreshPax B is the final result of an extensive production process, which is controlled under strict environmental conditions. In fact, Le Père Bafien is a cheese ‘refiner’, which means that all of their products arrive directly from dairy farmers in the form of curds, which they then shape and stamp with the letters A.O.C. (Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée), a strict measure in France whereby the end-user is able to directly trace the origin of products upon time of purchase. Because the goat cheese is ‘fresh’ when the curds are received, the cheese must be protected immediately from bacteria and kept in a safe location. The steps in the manufacture of goat cheese include draining and drying out the cheese, followed by a maturation period, then cooling, and finally, packaging.

About Le Père Bafien:

Le Père Bafien is a goat cheese refiner and specialist based in Poitiers, France in the Poitou-Charentes region. For more information, please contact: Le Père Bafien, Rue de la croix Berthon, 86170 Neuville de Poitou, France. For more information email: info@leperebafien.fr web: www.leperebafien.fr Tel.: +33 05 49 51 12 63 Fax : +33 05 49 51 31 11

About Multisorb:

Multisorb Technologies has been an innovator in sorbent technology for over 40 years. Founded in 1961 by John S. Cullen to protect products against the damaging effects of moisture, today Multisorb is North America’s largest producer of packaged and fabricated sorbents and the world leader in active packaging components.

Multisorb Technologies LTD. is located at 30/31 Harwick Grange Woolston, Warrington, WA1 4RF, United Kingdom. For more information, please call: +44 (1) 925 839 960 or email: sales@multisorb.co.uk. For information within the Americas, contact: info@multisorb.com.