

GUEST COLUMNIST *CMN Exclusive!*



Perspective: Industry Issues

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Taste of tradition: Evolution of Halloumi still honors its roots

When it comes to grilled cheese, few varieties carry the cultural weight, and market momentum, of Halloumi. Originating in Cyprus, this resilient, brined cheese has long been a staple of Mediterranean cuisine. Its ability to maintain shape when grilled or pan-seared has helped it leap across borders, finding its way into restaurant kitchens, street food carts and retail aisles from London to New York. Yet

as demand grows globally, producers face a key challenge: how to scale Halloumi production without losing the very qualities that made it beloved in the first place.

In the heart of Cyprus, our company had the privilege of collaborating with a visionary dairy producer to establish a highly advanced, medium-to-large-capacity facility with an output of 2,000 kilograms of Halloumi per hour.

This automatic Halloumi line was designed to meet growing international demand while maintaining the essence of traditional Halloumi-making. The project exemplifies how state-of-the-art dairy production lines can enable significant scaling, while upholding PDO (protected designation of origin) standards and flavor authenticity that Halloumi enthusiasts cherish.

What sets this facility apart is not merely its capacity but the consistent, artisanal quality of the Halloumi it produces. Thanks to precise process engineering, the texture and taste closely match traditional handmade Halloumi: firm yet elastic, rich and briny, and perfect for grilling. The automated system ensures a uniform shape, carefully controlled cooking and brining cycles, and minimizes variation from batch to batch, giving both producers and consumers confidence in product consistency. This achievement underscores the potential of modern technology to honor and preserve time-honored culinary traditions.

In terms of productivity, the results have been equally impressive. Compared to manual processing, personnel needs have been reduced by 74%, and overall cheese yield has improved by 2.4%. Waste from handling errors — common in manual Halloumi lines — has been significantly reduced, contributing to a more efficient, sustainable operation. For any plant manager aiming to boost performance without compromising quality, these metrics speak volumes.

The result? A grilled cheese that's just as satisfying on a bustling supermarket shelf as it is on a village grill in the Cypriot mountains. The cheese softens and browns beautifully on contact with heat, without melting away, just as it should. The taste is unmistakably Halloumi: milky, layered and subtly salty, with that signature squeak against the teeth. It's a sensory experience that bridges past and present.

The success of this project offers valuable insights for U.S.-based cheese producers aiming to enter or enhance their presence in the grilled cheese market. It exemplifies how integrating advanced dairy processing solutions can achieve large-scale production without sacrificing the artisanal qualities that define traditional cheese. Our experience demonstrates that with thoughtful design and respect for original processes, it's possible to maintain product integrity while benefiting from the efficiencies of modern manufacturing.

From the start, the project was about more than installing machines; it was about engineering a tradition. Our approach involved close collaboration with the producer to source milk from local sheep, goats and cows, adhering to PDO requirements. We implemented process controls that emulate the traditional Halloumi-making rhythm passed down through generations. Each stage, from folding and brining

to aging, was carefully engineered into our automated systems to replicate these artisanal methods accurately.

Equally important was embedding sustainability into the plant's design. Our systems incorporate biogas production from dairy waste and an advanced brine system designed to minimize disposal and ensure efficient disinfection. This type of brine disinfection approach supports better hygiene while significantly reducing environmental load. These features not only shrink the plant's environmental footprint but also align with global movements toward climate-resilient food production. Grilled cheese producers worldwide can look to this facility as a model for combining ecological responsibility with industrial efficiency.

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What does this mean for food technologists and plant managers elsewhere? Whether you're scaling a traditional grilled cheese in California, experimenting with grilled cheese-style products in Canada or modernizing a production line in South America, the Cyprus experience provides a compelling blueprint. Taste and tradition can survive, even thrive, within a highly automated, export-driven environment.

One key success factor was how quickly the producer's team adapted to the new systems. Within just two weeks, the plant had reached full production capacity, an achievement that highlights both the line's intuitive design and the operational readiness of the team. Rapid ramp-up time like this can make a major difference when scaling to meet high market demand.

Halloumi's journey, from traditional Cypriot kitchens to international acclaim, illustrates that scaling up doesn't necessitate a loss of authenticity. Our collaboration in Cyprus stands as a testament to the possibility of preserving the soul of traditional cheesemaking while embracing the benefits of modern technology. This narrative serves as an inspiration for cheese producers globally, affirming that with the right approach, it's possible to craft Halloumi and grilled cheese that honor their heritage and captivate contemporary palates. *CMN*

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