

CARTONING



CASE STUDY: THE DENVER BEER CO. GETS AUTOMATED

Cartoning machinery packages cold beer cans. / by **LIZ CUNEO**, Editor in Chief

The Denver Beer Co. was co-founded by Charlie Berger and Patrick Crawford in August 2011. The company was born in the founders' garages, with what they describe as "a few batches of homebrew and a love for the craft of brewing." The duo began selling their beer in a tap room brewery, complete with a beer garden, on Platte Street, in Denver, CO. The company has come a long way from a garage and now has a cannery for its craft ales, but still boasts that it serves only premium artisan ales and lagers, with fresh ingredients.

All of the beer company's packaging happens at Canworks, Denver Beer Co.'s new production brewery and cannery, located at 4455 Jason Street in Denver's Sunnyside neighborhood. Founder Charlie Berger says Canworks is an easy bike ride from Downtown Denver or from the Platte Street Taproom. Open for tours Thursday through Sunday, Canworks is the place to go to check out the packaging machinery and then stay to enjoy a beer in the tasting room.

"With a view of the brewhouse and canning line, you can watch the brewers in action while you enjoy a freshly tapped beer," says Berger.



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PACKAGING MACHINERY SAVES TIME AND MONEY

At Canworks, the Denver Beer Co. is packaging 6-packs of cold beer, in 12-ounce cans, in paperboard, end load cartons. They have recently installed an E-System 2000 cartoner from ECONOCORP (econocorp.com) to complete a fully automatic system combined with a Wild Goose four head automated canning line. This system is capable of getting up to speeds of about 13 six packs per minute, but normally run about 6 six packs per minute.

The Econocorp E-System 2000 is an automatic horizontal cartoner for erecting, loading and sealing end load cartons with hot melt glue. This machine has the flexibility to accommodate four 12-packs of 12-ounce and 16-ounce cans in paperboard or corrugated cartons. Production floor space being at a premium at most craft brewers, the E-2000 is small and compact with minimal footprint and fits nicely in to limited working areas.

The brewer is currently running four SKUs on this machine. While the brewery brews several different beers for any palette, right now the company is only packaging the Graham Cracker Porter, Incredible Pedal IPA, Sun Drenched Exploratory Ale and the Hey! Pumpkin for distribution.

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“We anticipate using this machine for years at production rates up to five times our current output,” says Berger.

WHY THE PURCHASE?

According to Berger, the major factor in purchasing the E-System 2000 was to increase the efficiency of the packaging line. It is a no brainer that a machine has a much higher throughput than human hands. He also said that the cartoner allows them to provide a unique look on the retail shelf in order to stand out from all the brands currently in the market.

“It costs a bit more to package our beers this way, but we love the clean look, the ease with which a customer can carry it, and the expanded opportunity to tell our story,” he continues.

Because of the E-System 2000, the company can now order double sided glue boxes, rather than the auto-bottom variety, thus resulting in a reduction of carton costs. In addition to monetary savings, the system is helping to save worker's time. The installation saves the staff from having to hand pack the cases, which they were doing prior to installation, but it wasn't all work and no play.



“We did have about four batches come through before the machine was delivered, and we did have to box them up by hand, which was a true pain! Lots of guys with glue guns shoving cans into boxes... There was some beer drinking involved in that project...,” says Berger.

All of the beer is self-distributed, within about 20 miles of the brewery, on the Rocky Mountain Front Range. Look for the cans in stores in that area, or if you happen to be in downtown Denver, stop by Canworks to see the packaging line in action and enjoy a brew while you're there. **F&BP**



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