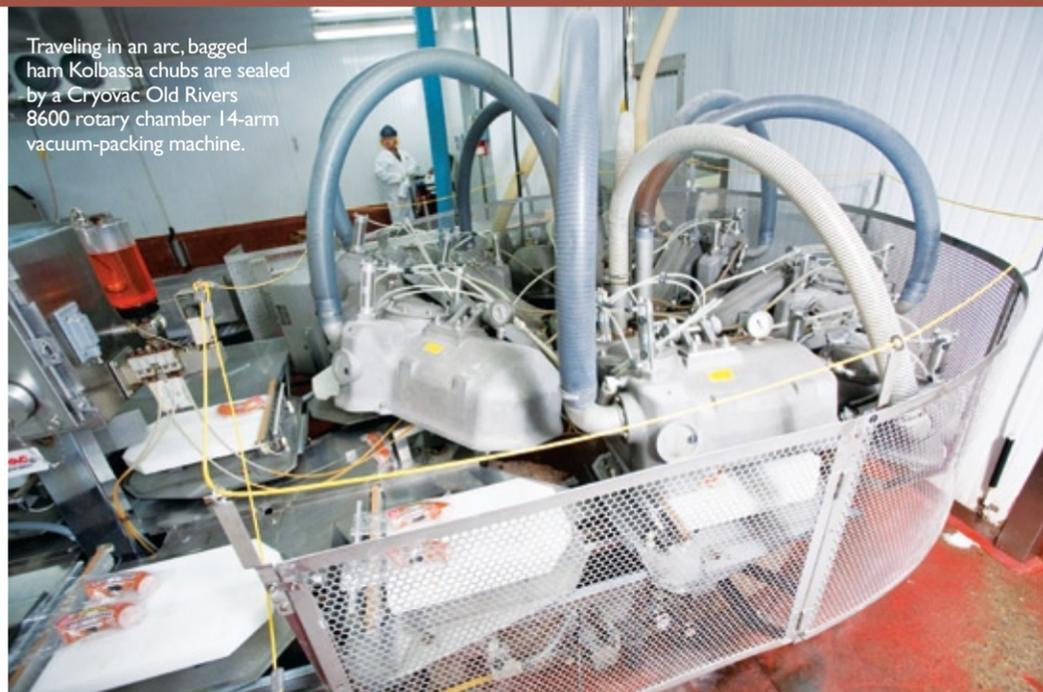




Brigitte Brandt-Welzel, Vice-President, Sales and Marketing, Brandt Meat Packers Ltd.

Right: Brandt is the first company to utilize the Cryovac Multibag packaging for ham Kolbassa chubs in a more consumer-friendly club-pack format.



Traveling in an arc, bagged ham Kolbassa chubs are sealed by a Cryovac Old Rivers 8600 rotary chamber 14-arm vacuum-packing machine.

# DOUBLE THE PLEASURE

A breakthrough two-in-one pack helps hard-working Ontario deli meats processor strut its credentials as packaging innovator

If better things in life come in pairs, then the folks at **Brandt Meat Packers Ltd.** certainly have the formula for doubling up consumer convenience and dining pleasure through cutting-edge packaging down pat.

Since opening its doors back in 1958, the Mississauga, Ont.-based manufacturer of European-style cold-cuts and delicatessen meats—founded by German expat couple Gerhardt and Ida Brandt—has grown to become a well-recognized mainstay in the meat and deli aisles of leading Canadian grocers, with its diverse variety of sausage, salamis and hams renowned for their gourmet-quality flavor and craftsmanship, rooted in old family recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation.

In fact, according to the founding couple's daughter and company vice-president of sales and marketing Brigitte Brandt-Welzel, many of the products Brandt Meat produces today remain fundamentally unchanged from the original recipes—carrying on a proud tradition that has earned the company a fair share of prestigious gold-medal awards at various international deli meats competitions.

“Because we focus so much on our European roots and heritage in how we make our meats, while also offering such a wide range of specialty products, I would describe Brandt Meats as something of a niche company,” Brandt-

Welzel told *Canadian Packaging* on a recent visit to the company's state-of-the-art production complex—comprising over 125,000 square feet of production space over two adjoining buildings—where the company's 175 employees work on a two-shift, five-days-per-week schedule to manufacture over 120 different mouth-watering meat products ranging from dry-cured, cooked, smoked and oven-roasted pork and beef to processed chicken, turkey and veal slices and sausage.

Sold at all the major grocery chains across Canada—including **Metro, Sobeys, Loblaws, Food-Basics, Walmart, Longo's** and many others—the company has also enjoyed some success in select U.S. markets in recent years, according to Brandt-Welzel, as well as exporting its products to a regular client in Hong Kong, flying out a special shipment there every six to eight weeks.

While the company does some contract private-label work for a few clients, according to Brandt-Welzel, most of its production and packaging focus is centered around its own flagship brand label, including its signature ham **Brandt Kolbassa Sausage**, which is also offered in low-calorie extra-lean and turkey-meat versions.

### BIG HIT

“It is one of our biggest sellers across Canada and in Hong Kong,” explains Brandt-Welzel, who attributes the product's growing popularity not only to its extraordinary taste profile, but also to the clever and innovative packaging presentation that the company recently developed with a little assistance from the **Cryovac Food Packaging Division** of Elmwood, N.J.-headquartered packaging technologies group **Sealed Air Corporation**.

“About a year ago, I contacted our account manager Denise Drysdal at Sealed Air for help with an idea I had for a club-pack,” Brandt-Welzel relates, recalling how she wanted to be able to launch a new retail package that would offer consumers two *Kolbassa Sausage* chubs, each with its own vacuum seal, in a single outer package.

With the Mississauga plant already using Sealed Air's rotary chamber machines and **Cryovac** films bags to package

the *Kolbassa Sausage* products in 1.6-kilogram coils and 250-gram chubs—Brandt-Welzel recalls being somewhat surprised about the initial hesitation that greeted her inquiry.

“At first, they told me that no one in North America uses the Sealed Air Cryovac machines to do what I wanted,” she recounts, “and that none of the equipment in this hemisphere was set up to provide that type of a package.”

“But I was insistent,” says Brandt-Welzel, recalling how her persistence ultimately led to a suitable packaging solution incorporating Sealed Air's high-performance, all-barrier **Cryovac Multibag** multilayered polyolefin, co-extruded shrink bag—resulting in a convenient ‘club-pack’ format package containing two individually shrink-sealed servings.



A Brandt Meat operator ensures the placement of the chub-filled bag falls properly onto the Cryovac sealing bar prior to it entering a chamber to evacuate the air and securely vacuum-seal the package.



High-performance VC999 packaging equipment is used by the Brandt plant to vacuum-pack larger items like whole hams and chickens.



“We wanted a film ply that could be utilized for bulk packaging while also remaining consumer-friendly—and Sealed Air listened to our demands carefully and developed what we wanted,” states Brandt-Welzel.

“The packaging for the Kolbassa Sausage has to be clear on both ends to show off the open-faced meat—allowing the consumer to see exactly what they are purchasing,” she adds, saying that while it took nearly a year for Brandt and Sealed Air to develop a pragmatic package that would ensure maximum shelf-life and product safety, the final result was well worth the wait and effort.

Mike Rosinski, marketing director for smoked and processed meats for Sealed Air’s Cryovac Food Packaging business in Duncan, N.C., says the two-chub *Kolbassa* packaging idea from Brandt was a fairly challenging proposition—even for a company that is one of the world’s leading food-packaging film suppliers, whose extensive product range includes innovative structures such as:

- oxygen-barrier bags;
- controlled permeability bags;
- cook-in bags and casings;
- foam meat-trays;
- film rolls, laminates and pouches;
- **Cryovac TGB** bags for bone-in meat products;
- **Dri-Loc** absorbent pads for meat, fish and poultry retail packaging;
- **Hot-Loc** pads for in-store deli-roisserie poultry;
- vacuum-packing films and structures.



Placing a ring of sausage on a coil portioning machine, the portioner cuts sausage at a pre-determined length, corresponding to the desired product weight, prior to conveying it to the vacuum-packing lines.

“We’ve made millions and millions of bags in our time,” says Rosinski, “but this request really called for some innovation on our part.”

After looking at all the suitable options, Cryovac decided to use its **Multibag** range of barrier bags—manufactured at its production facility in Rochester, N.Y.—to come up with the answer.

“The Multibag is a vacuum-sealed barrier bag that can be divided into multiple sections,” explains Rosinski. “A perforated seal divides the sections—allowing consumers

to simply separate the packages into two units and use only the portion they require for meal preparation.

“It’s essentially a portion-control pack—in an innovative format,” he says, adding that any unused portion of the Kolbassa chub can be refrigerated for later use, with the vacuum-pack designed specifically to ensure maximum shelf-life not only for smoked and processed meats, but also for cheeses products.

“Along with our new semi-rigid MultiSeal—a very well-performing, easy-to-open reclosable package for the cheese and meats manufacturers that represents the next step beyond zipper packaging—the Multibag will help customers like Brandt Meats achieve a new level of product promotion,” he states, pointing out that the film can be easily processed on all existing Cryovac rotary chamber vacuum systems without major modifications.

In fact, the Brandt Meat plant in Mississauga is currently using its eight-year-old **Cryovac Old Rivers 8600** vacuum-packing machine to package its *Kolbassa Sausages*—inserting and sealing two equal-sized chubs into the 25-millimeter **Multibag** film at speeds of up to 35 packs per minute.

Charlie Saldutto, Brandt Meat plant manager explains: “After placing a ring of the sausage onto a coil portioning machine, which we designed and built ourselves, the portioner cuts the sausage at a pre-determined length—giving us the product weight of 250 grams per piece that we require.

“The chubs are then automatically placed into the Multibag, and conveyed to the Cryovac rotary chamber machines for sealing,” says Saldutto, adding the Mississauga plant operates two **Cryovac Old Rivers 8600** rotary chamber, 14-arm octopus-style vacuum-packing machines.

**BULKING UP**

In addition to the **Cryovac** machinery, Saldutto relates, the Brandt Meat plant also employs a pair of fully-automated model **07P** vacuum chamber machines manufactured by the Swiss-based **VC999 Packaging**

**Systems AG**, as well as a VC999 model **85.47i** shrink tank—using this equipment to package bulkier items like whole hams and chickens—and an assortment of machines from the Dutch-based **CFS B.V.** to process sliced meats with application of MAP (modified-atmosphere packaging) gas-flushing systems.

According to Saldutto, the plant leaves nothing to chance in its stringent quality control protocol and procedures by employing two state-of-the-art metal detection systems—a **Phantom** model from the Toronto-based **Fortress Technology Inc.** and an **IQ’** model from **Loma Systems**—to make sure all of its packaged products are free from any potentially hazardous metal contaminants.

After the products pass through their assigned metal detection stations, they are directed onto a high-precision scale and checkweigher—manufactured by the German-based **Bizerba GmbH & Co.**—to verify the proper product weight and to generate a price label with ‘best-before’ date information.

While these labels are cur-



A CFS packaging line for sliced meats conveys packaged product on to a Bizerba scale to ensure proper weight prior to shipping.

rently applied onto the sealed packages by hand, Saldutto says he is currently automating this function as part of the plant’s continuous drive to improve its efficiencies and productivity.

“We are always looking for ways to improve the way we do business,” Brandt-Welzel asserts. “Although our core products have remained unchanged since we first opened our doors, we have created many exciting new products, and some variations on old products, to change with the times.

“And because we can’t afford to be left behind technology-wise, we have to be very proactive in the way we run our business,” she stresses. “Our relationship with



Charlie Saldutto, Brandt Meat Packers plant manager, poses alongside coils of ham Kolbassa Sausage at the company’s Mississauga facility.

Sealed Air to create the Multibag pack is one of those examples where we feel we have helped push the packaging industry to new heights,” Brandt-Welzel points out, “while at the same time creating a product that we know will be very beneficial for our customers.

“While we know there will be always changes in the industry,” she sums up, “you can rest assured that we will continue to be leading the way with our quality products and innovative packaging.

“After all, that’s how we put ‘deli’ into ‘delicious.’” ♦



Filled with two 250-gram chubs of Kolbassa Sausage each, the Cryovac Multibags pass through a Phantom metal detector to ensure that no metal contaminants snuck in.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON:	
<b>Cryovac (Food Packaging Div. of Sealed Air Corporation)</b>	<b>460</b>
<b>VC999 Packaging Systems AG</b>	<b>461</b>
<b>CFS B.V.</b>	<b>462</b>
<b>Fortress Technology Inc.</b>	<b>463</b>
<b>Loma Systems</b>	<b>464</b>
<b>Bizerba Canada Inc.</b>	<b>465</b>