

Inspired Foods Prepared With Precision

Craig Schauffel has a lot of mouths to feed. Hundreds of thousands, in fact, since that's the number of filled pasta and sauce servings that roll off the Valley Fine Foods production lines each year.

As Vice President of Research & Culinary Innovation and Quality Assurance at Valley Fine Foods, a family-owned fresh pasta, sauce and prepared meal producer in Northern California,

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— Craig Schauffel, Vice President of Research & Culinary Innovation and Quality Assurance



Fresh pasta and sauce maker Valley Fine Foods for years used spreadsheets and notebooks to track formulas and recipes. A new formula and recipe management solution from PSC Group has added security, consistency, and manufacturing controls that ensure quality for every batch, and bring delight to each meal.

Schauffel and his team must account for the high-quality production of every gourmet ravioli, sauce and meal.

Managing their three brands – Three Bridges, Pasta Prima and Artisola – in some of the country’s largest grocers and wholesale clubs, Valley Fine Foods has plenty of raw ingredients, production runs, and finished packages to track. Each product has its own formulas, recipes, labels, and shipping information, too.

Schauffel joined Valley Fine Foods to bring a more formally-trained culinary perspective to product innovation and production. His training included graduation from the Culinary Institute of America and stints at some of Europe and America’s finest dining venues. Before coming to Valley Fine Foods, Schauffel ran his own fine-dining and catering operation in Napa Valley for 14 years.

“Ever since Valley Fine Foods was founded in 1984, there’s always been a commitment to fresh and ‘Grandma’s kitchen cupboard’ ingredient selection which means natural and flavorful, no artificial stuff,” said Schauffel. “The only problem was we didn’t have a great way to keep track of these wonderful recipes and formulas. Product information was hard to find and manage. That’s what got us interested in the formula and recipe management solution from PSC Group.”

Valley Fine Foods selected PSC Group to design and develop its formula and recipe management solution because of PSC’s track record with similar projects. Darryl Poore, PSC’s team leader, led the implementation.

“Darryl and the PSC team came in and clearly had a good understanding of food manufacturing and how to apply formula and recipe management principles,” said Schaufel. “They knew our world and could recommend best practices, and brought a lot of business sense and common sense as well.”

Schauffel had already tried a few things that weren't the right fit for Valley Fine Foods. Solutions from giant enterprise resource planning software companies were too complicated. Poore introduced the formula and recipe management solution built on the ARAS Innovator PLM platform.

Poore and the PSC team converted Valley Fine Foods' product formulas and recipes previously stored in spreadsheets and text documents into a searchable database, easily accessible by anyone in the company with the right credentials.

Manufacturing information is much easier to access now. Ingredients, lot numbers and package details are available with a few mouse-clicks for internal or external reporting requirements driven by the FDA. Valley Fine Foods also manufactures natural, organic, gluten free and non-GMO project verified products and each one of those standards has their own regulations which must be tracked.

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Research Tracking and Transparency

Schauffel and his team of chefs and food scientists are constantly challenging themselves to improve their products

Pains & Gains

Pains

- Formula and recipe information was previously stored in spreadsheets and text files.
- Updating and searching for specific files took too long.
- The culinary research and production team didn't have good visibility into workflow or documented projects.

Gains

- Valley Fine Foods' new formula and recipe management platform stores all formulas and recipes in one searchable database.
- Valley Fine Foods is saving hours each week in terms of documentation and reporting.
- Teams across the company now have access to important research and production information.

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– Craig Schaufel, Vice President of Research & Culinary Innovation and Quality Assurance



and create new ones. Sourcing the best quality ingredients is paramount in the perpetual quest for the right balance of taste, nutrition, texture and stability.

“We have new food product testing underway all the time and this work is recorded in our formula and recipe database,” said Schaufel. “Documentation is critical for being able to replicate, test, and refine new recipes since we are always making adjustments to flavor profiles.”

Schauffel said the formula and recipe management solution has also provided more transparency among departments. Workflow is better understood and other teams can see progress throughout the research and production process.

“Communication among our departments is so much faster and more accurate,” said Schaufel. “We've seen fewer mistakes and better teamwork. The formula and recipe management software makes everyone's job easier.”

Valley Fine Foods and PSC aren't stopping there. Plans for adding onto the formula and recipe management solution include recording more production details, adding benchmarking data, and attaching costs that will allow for more what-if testing on formula changes and the overall impact on expenses. Tablets on the production floor will also be rolled out in the future.

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