



## Case Study

### Date Code Printing on Dessert Cartons



# Offline Coding System Keeps Pace with Supermarket Orders



**Marston Foods**

DESSERTS HANDMADE IN SOMERSET

**A high-speed carton coding system from PrintSafe is helping award-winning dessert company, Marston Foods, to print best-before date codes on a wide range of packaging for its supermarket retail ranges.**

## Rapidly increasing production volumes

Marston Foods is a thriving chilled desserts manufacturer. Around 200,000 products leave the Somerset factory each week, the majority destined for Asda, Co-op and Tesco for premium own label ranges.

While the desserts are almost entirely handmade, recent rapid growth has meant that the company's packaging processes have had to evolve. This includes the way expiry date codes are printed onto the cartons.

Marston Foods had previously been reliant on a bench mounted date stamper for coding cartons. Operations Director, Colin Gillespie explains that with cartons inserted individually by hand it was slow and labour intensive. It was also difficult to place the date code consistently in the correct place.

"We had an operator on the date stamper pretty much permanently and we could only run one packing line at a time. Sometimes it would cause hold ups in production because of the amount of time it took to print the volumes we needed. We were also getting quality issues," he says.

## Flexibility to handle a variety of packaging types and sizes

Marston Foods produces a wide range of product lines so it needs the flexibility to code a variety of packaging types and sizes. Like other producers, it has to respond very quickly to supermarket orders.

The company needed coding equipment that would handle both the volume and variety of cartons. PrintSafe supplied a high-speed udaFORMAXX carton feeder with integrated continuous inkjet printer.

The udaFORMAXX is a semi-automatic system that can print as many as 500 cartons per minute. The machine takes cartons from a stack, accurately prints the date or batch code and feeds the printed packs neatly into another stack ready for collection. The udaFORMAXX can be integrated with various printing and labelling technologies, including continuous inkjet, thermal inkjet and thermal transfer. In Marston Foods' case, PrintSafe recommended continuous inkjet.

**//** With the udaFORMAXX semi-automatic system, we can code on average 250 cartons per minute which means we are always ahead of the game. **//**

## Production efficiencies

One of the biggest benefits of the udaFORMAXX for Marston Foods is its flexibility. The company's array of desserts, which includes chocolate tarts, fruit tarts and cheesecakes, is packaged in a range of formats, from multi-pack pots with sleeves to foil trays in windowed cartons.

The offline coding system adjusts very easily to accommodate these different packs.

"We are packing 30 different lines a day," says Gillespie. "With the udaFORMAXX semi-automatic system, we can code on average 250 cartons per minute which means we are always ahead of the game."

**//** I've been able to cut the number of operators I need on any single shift. **//**

We can easily swap between products and batches and run extra packing lines when we need to increase production. I have even been able to reduce the number of operators I need on any single shift."



## Fast Facts

- udaFORMAXX offline coding system with alphaJET continuous inkjet printer
- Printing date and batch code on wide range of dessert cartons and sleeves
- 30 different product lines
- Coding 250 packs per minute

## About PrintSafe

PrintSafe is a coding and marking specialist serving manufacturing companies throughout the UK and Ireland with a comprehensive range of coding equipment and after-sales services. PrintSafe is the UK distributor for KBA-Metronic GmbH. As the UK specialist in offline coding and labelling systems, PrintSafe has helped hundreds of customers to cut the cost of handling products and packaging that cannot be coded or labelled within main production.

Call 01962 761761  
email [sales@printsafe.co.uk](mailto:sales@printsafe.co.uk)  
or visit [www.printsafe.co.uk](http://www.printsafe.co.uk)

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