

IMAFORNI TODAY

THE NEWSLETTER OF IMAFORNI INT'L

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Dear Readers,

It is with some emotion that we write this editorial to celebrate the 45th birthday of Imaforni! We sincerely thank all of you who, over the years, have put your trust in us by choosing our equipment. Our technical and business growth would have been impossible without your confidence and support.

Special and sincere thanks go to our staff, at all levels, including our sales agents, as their work makes such an enormous contribution to making sure our organization is capable of satisfying your needs. Some of these people you know personally, but there are many more behind the scenes whose contribution is essential to keep the wheels of our organization turning.

We have decided to publish a special issue of our magazine, devoted to the story of Imaforni since its very early days. We think it will provide an interesting, though brief, overview of the technical and technological developments in the sector.

Its 45th year of activity finds Imaforni in a strong and dominant position on the market. Business trends, which sounded promising at the beginning of this year, have proved to be even better than our most optimistic expectations! We are experiencing two-digit growth this year. This outlook seems positive at all levels of the market: our customers appear to be enjoying promising trends and thus feel encouraged in their investments.

Enjoy your read and share with us a short moment of satisfaction with the results of 45 years of business. Now it's time to get back to work! There's still plenty more to do.

Demetrio Castello - Ugo Bademer

IMAFORNI
The basic ingredient

The story of a successful business

On the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the creation of Imaforni, the two founders of the company, Demetrio Castello and Ugo Bademer, retrace the evolution of their business since the early days.

We must of course start from the beginning of your venture: could you tell us how Imaforni was born?

"I was an employee at IMA (Industria Macchine Alimentari), a company that produced ovens and equipment for artisan bread bakeries. I used to do the assembly work and testing at the clients' premises," starts Demetrio Castello. "Ugo joined a few years later, around 1959-1960. He was very young, but extremely smart and enthusiastic, and we got on immediately." "I was assigned to the department that produced and assembled the burners," adds Ugo Bademer. "What a lot of them I made!! I actually joined when the sector was abandoning wood firing and was starting to use the first fuel-oil burners. I pretty well saw

So you had the business spirit even then.

"Absolutely! We took over IMA and immediately changed its name to Imaforni - a marketing decision that, I'd say, was quite right." Says Ugo Bademer. "The new name, Imaforni, was based on the idea that we'd keep up the assistance for IMA installations, but at the same time our production would also focus on supplying baking ovens."

This was in 1962 - what do you remember in particular about the very early days?

"Enthusiasm! An energy within us that compelled us to act, an urge to work and endless enthusiasm." Recalls Demetrio Castello. "I remember the first Christmas: we paid our 10 employees their wages,

experience, but also professional, and highly enriching. The full responsibility was on my shoulders and I couldn't communicate: it took three days just to book a phone call! I had to solve all the technical problems then and there. So I tried to understand what wasn't working and I fixed it! I examined and worked on every single detail of the whole line, including the moulds. It was there in the field that I learnt the ABC of biscuit-manufacturing systems. And that's where I made my first biscuits. Since then, since that first plant, I've never stopped flying. Even now I still go round the world to see our units and talk to our customers to see what we can

do to improve our products even further, and to find out exactly what our customers need."

It seems to me that it's not just a professional commitment, but a passion too.

"That's right," says Ugo Bademer. "I've always been greatly fascinated by all technical matters and, I must admit, I possibly find it easier to see potential applications that might escape others. This way of working - or of being, maybe - is still part of me."

In short, the memory of your first line never fades?!

"Absolutely! I remember one day in Caracas, with this customer, we were going past the Nabisco La Favorita plant. I confessed to this friend of mine that I'd have liked to supply one of our ovens to this prestigious group one day. And I remember saying that with a feeling of respect and reverence, yet I was convinced that our way of working and our range of products would take us a long way."

And I'd say they did, for as far as I know, you're one of the best-established suppliers of the Nabisco group, now Kraft. How did things develop after that?

"Well, we'd started building up a sales network in Italy which secured maintenance contracts and sold ovens for bread bakeries and pastry shops," continues Demetrio Castello, "a sector that was starting to grow at the time. The rotary oven with swinging shelves got us into the pastries sector. This was in 1968-69, when we started supplying our ovens to the leading players of the day, such as Alemagna, Paluani, and so many others. This is when the "cyclotherm" oven, with a slat-type conveyor and side chains for baking



Demetrio Castello and his son Pierluigi, the future General Manager of the company.

the products on trays, was first made. The radiating-tube oven with circulation of the combustion gas was a milestone for the entire sector, so we couldn't be without it in our range. From that moment on, tunnel ovens really dominated

our production. In those days there was no subcontracting, there were no small local suppliers who could provide the components we needed, so everything - and I mean everything - had to be designed and made in-house!! It was very exciting, and it gave us a technical background from the smallest details up."

“ Since the early 1980s we started building up the export oriented culture within our organisation ”

Another important step?

"The change in consumption in Italy, I'd say," continues Demetrio Castello. "Around 1968 we finally abandoned the bread sector and concentrated on industrial biscuits and pastries. Italy was enjoying constant economic growth in those years, and the Italians were changing their eating habits: they no longer had breakfast at home with milk and dry bread, as they'd done just after the war, and it became sort of fashionable to go to the café and have a "cappuccino & brioche". Small traditional patisseries were transformed, taking production away from downtown and delivering their products back to points of sale in the city. And Imaforni matched this growth by making its range of innovative and reliable tunnel ovens available to the market. This was a time of rapid growth: one need only think that in the 1970s we were producing two tunnel ovens a month. Bauli, Paluani, Besana, and Dal Colle were the most prestigious local brands that bought our ovens! Imaforni also started adopting a more structured organisation, especially in terms of its engineering and design department."

“ The first hybrid oven was first introduced in the mid '70s. A successful innovation ”

Says Demetrio Castello: "We managed to grasp all the growth opportunities offered by the local market i.e. patisseries, sponge cake and, last but not least, ladyfinger biscuits, a sector we still dominate today. My partner and I started thinking about other market opportunities, so it was only natural that we should turn to other countries." Ugo Bademer continues: "We have to be grateful to Mr. Toscani, the founder of Tonelli, who made us realise the potential of foreign markets and granted us 15 square metres of his stand at the Dusseldorf Interpack exhibition in 1981. We took a vertical layering unit for cracker production, and there we met our first foreign agent. From that moment on our equipment started to become established in Venezuela and Argentina. Once again we had made the right decision! As a matter of fact, we saw sales decline in Italy but at the same time, exports

off. Motta and Delser were the first producers to take our ovens. In particular, Delser bought a 60-metre-long oven which was later used by Barilla for baking their first biscuits, when this famous Italian brand entered the sector in 1976. From that moment on, with the help of local suppliers, Imaforni was able to ship complete lines for sponge-cake production. The first hybrid oven - direct-gas-fired and cyclothermic - was supplied in that period. Our idea was a technical challenge and the process of baking in hybrid ovens was really innovative, but it worked perfectly!"

When did Imaforni start exporting regularly?

"I have always looked after the technical side, export and innovation," explains Ugo Bademer, and Demetrio Castello adds: "whereas I've always seen to general company management, such as production, sales in Italy, purchasing and administration." "I have got a more volcanic temperament. I'm more inclined to take risks and explore new possibilities, while my partner is more pragmatic and cautious", confesses Ugo Bademer. "I'd say we've been pretty well balanced over all these years," says Demetrio Castello, "always finding the right equilibrium in our decisions with harmony and frankness. Our friendship, which became stronger over the years, is based on mutual esteem and respect."



Ugo Bademer, ready to go for a further installation.....

were growing. That was when the company started building up its company-oriented culture."

How do you share your workload?

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When did Imaforni enter the cracker business?

Ugo Bademer replies: "The cracker lines came in the second half of the 1980s, and they are the type of equipment that best characterises the Imaforni brand around the world. Our main market for these lines was South America. Now we can see the markets are interested in added-value products such as deposited, wire-cut and soft centers. Here too we are bringing in great innovations and the market is responding well."

How do you see the future of your company?

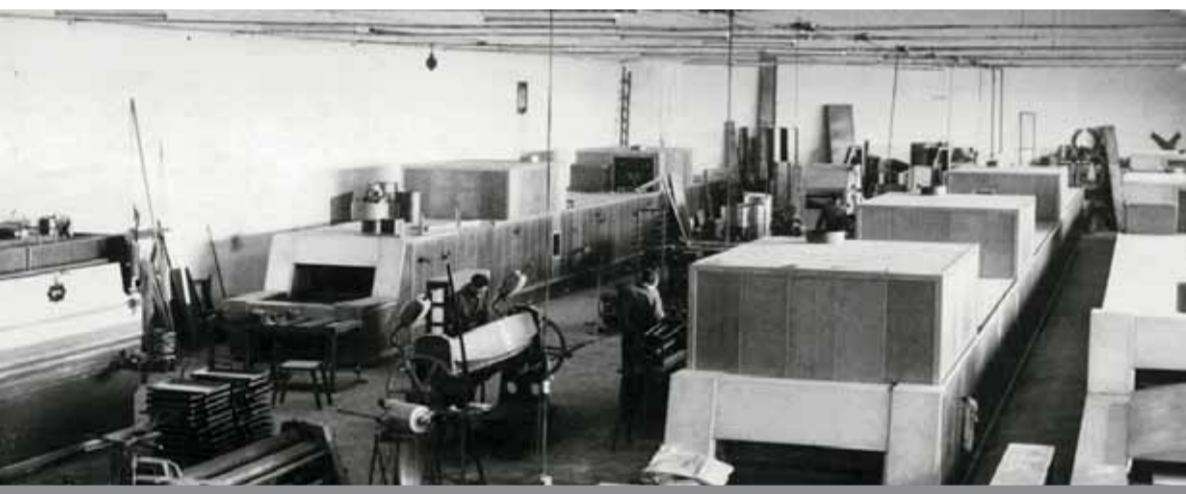
Demetrio Castello answers: "An entrepreneur can never allow himself the luxury of stopping. He always has to move forward and look after his business, in terms both of important strategic decisions and of

the details of his organisation. This principle has always been true and it has always guided us in the management of our company."

Ugo Bademer continues: "We live in a constantly changing market. The past few years have shown that the baked-products sector is expanding and that it rewards our business philosophy. This gives us the confidence to make further investments to enlarge both our production and technical facilities, to maintain the high standards that the market demands. We've been working a lot on our organisation over the past few years and now I can say our staff

are highly professional and well prepared for the future: I think this is still the most successful formula for the coming years." Demetrio Castello concludes: "I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my partner as well, to express my sincere thanks to all our customers, all those who have chosen our lines over the years, letting us continue to grow and make technical progress. Warmest thanks are due to our company staff who, through their hard work and commitment, have helped build up this business. We cannot neglect or fail to thank our agents, some of whom have been with us for many years. Their work of promotion and their constant activity in the market is of paramount importance for us. They have helped introduce our equipment throughout the world. I really am truly grateful: without your positive response, we'd never have been able to achieve such growth, and become the market leader today."

“ The cracker lines are the type of equipment that best characterises our brand around the world ”



▲ Overview of the Imaforni factory in the early '70s.

▼ The latest design: a direct gas fired oven in operation.



the concept of burners coming into existence in my own hands, and I've followed their technical developments ever since."

and my partner and I shared what little was left in the safe. Christmas was very lean indeed for us that year, but we had enormous confidence in the future, and we didn't worry about it. We spent the first two or three years building up our business of servicing existing IMA ovens and supplying new static or rotor ovens for the artisan sector." "1965 brought an important turning point," breaks in Ugo Bademer. "We sold a line for hard sweet biscuits to a customer in Venezuela complete with a 30-metre-long steam tunnel oven. And so, at the age of 25, I took the plane for the first time in my life and flew to the Venezuelan countryside to set up my first line. There was nothing there, I stayed three months: it was primarily a life

Ugo Bademer and Demetrio Castello



Feel free to send any opinion to: marketing@imaforni.it