



## Juice with tradition

The owner-operated family company with very special juices

*The name Beutelsbacher stands for juice. Particularly for Demeter juice. And for tradition. The firm was established in 1936.*

*But the family business on the outskirts of Stuttgart has much more to offer.*

### Philosophy

Beutelsbacher stands for

- fair, trustworthy cooperation with growers, suppliers and partners on the trading side
- the creation of value on all trading levels (from the grower to the trader)
- Quality in all corporate areas
- Attempt to develop a complete range of fruity drinks in harmony with nature.

The 32 metre high and 70 metre wide white building dominates the area of Weinstadt. A huge golden sun framed in blue with arms full of brightly coloured fruit smiles from the wall announcing: here is *Beutelsbacher*. “An optimum advertising location”, according to the CEO Thomas Maier. He is even more enthusiastic about the content of the tower, a fully automated high rack warehouse with 4.500 palette storage spaces: “Some people would envy us.”

The large hall in front of the warehouse contains a computerised washing and filling plant which washes, checks and fills up to 10.000 recyclable bottles per hour and stacks them on pallets. At the side of the hall, brightly coloured mixed pallets lead the way to the commissioning and loading area. Separated by a series of stainless steel tanks the main press stands at the end of the large hall. The farmers can deliver apples and pears directly to the front of the building.

The plant as a whole is extensive since *Beutelsbacher* has space which allows for easy access. In its original base in the Weinstadt district, the company had no further possibility for expansion and the two brothers Thomas and Matthias Maier sought a new location.

In 1999 the pasta manufacturer *Birkel* sold its headquarters in the neighbouring district. Within the space of only three weeks, the brothers had clinched the sale. Competitors such as a leading car supplier for *Daimler Benz* were too late.

From a financial point of view the transaction was extremely risky as the old premises in Beutelsbach became a residential area. “The deal was an exchange of premises” says Thomas Maier with a typical Swabian understatement.

### Quality and tradition

Thanks to this “exchange” *Beutelsbacher* possessed sufficient space to continue to grow and develop the most recent techniques. For Thomas Maier this was important because it had a positive effect on quality and quality is one of the two watchwords for *Beutelsbacher*. The other is tradition and in many cases the two words are used together, for example in the context of dynamic organic cultivation. The founder of the firm Christian Maier, the grandfather of the current business manager, learned the main features of this from a speech by the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner. The clever gardener successfully tried out what he had heard and became one of the pioneers of dynamic organic fruit growing. After the war, he was involved in the redevelopment of the war *Demeter* federation.

Thomas is currently on the supervisory board of *Demeter e.V.* A large amount of *Beutelsbacher* juice is obtained from *Demeter* fruit and vegetables. In 1999 he introduced the first apple and mango juice in *Demeter* quality at the *BioFach*. It took seven years to transfer the Indian mango project from Organic to *Demeter*. “It only worked when we found an Indian who had studied in Germany but who also spoke the language of Indian farmers to work as project manager.” A reliable person who applies the same quality values to the firm, Matthias Maier also places a great deal of importance on cultivation projects and purchasing overseas.

Matthias Maier has taken on this task with fruit farmer suppliers and tomato growers in Italy. This clever farmer and food technician is responsible for purchasing and quality assurance and spends a great deal of time in the orchards and fields of farms.

Most of the domestic fruit and vegetables come from the region. The Remstal district north east of Stuttgart is a traditional fruit growing region.



### Keeping it in the family

The Beutelsbacher fruit juice cellars were founded in 1936 by Christian and Wilhelm Maier. The business began by only processing home-grown fruit. Later on the Maiers concentrated on juice production. In 1993 the firm entered its third generation with Thomas and Matthias Maier. Thomas Maier is responsible for sales, marketing and personnel whilst his brother Matthias deals with purchasing, quality assurance and production. Important decisions are made by the two brothers together who have also prepared carefully for the management of the family firm. Thomas trained as a fruit juice technician and completed studies in the field of technically orientated business management whilst Matthias was trained in agriculture and completed studies in food processing technology. Up until now, the family has not needed to attract any external capital into the firm and the brothers would like this situation to remain unchanged.



Juice march! 2.700.000 litres  
Juice is stored in tanks at the Beutelsbacher company.

Some farmer families have been supplying *Beutelsbacher* for more than 60 years. The trust which is established through close cooperation and personal contact is a prerequisite for the Maiers in terms of maintaining the required quality.

Production quality is guaranteed by gentle pressing and a shortest possible distance to the filling area as well as optical / electronic verification. "The equipment automatically sorts out all the bottles which are damaged or not perfectly clean before filling" explains Matthias Maier. If the computer detects a flaw in a test run an air jet blows the bottle straight into the glass container. Recyclable bottles are the usual form of packaging. Tetra packs and PET bottles are not used by Maier "Because we know that components from the packaging are transferred to the product."

Because quality is the utmost priority for *Beutelsbacher*, the juices are only stored in glass bottles (0.2 l for gastronomy, 0.33 l in 12 bottle crates, 0.7, 0.75 l and 1 l). This means on the one hand that an average MHD of 24 months is possible (plastic bottles and drinks cartons have max. 6 – 12 months). In addition, returned plastic bottles or cartons can only be used to make lower quality raw materials to which more plastic has to be added (downcycling). However, recycled glass can be used to make almost completely new glass of the same quality which is a decisive factor for *Beutelsbacher*. Moreover, substances from the cardboard or plastic can be released by the acid in the juices. A further positive element in favour of glass is that fact that 35 – 40 cycles can be obtained in the natural food market for recyclable glass bottles (only 15 – 17 cycles are entered in most eco-balance sheets). According to Alexander Beck, business manager of AOEL, an association of ecological food manufacturers, glass is a mono-material of mineral origin (sand) which is available in unlimited quantities. In his opinion, glass is practically the only packaging material which produces no interaction between the product and the packaging. This is true at room temperature as well as during pasteurisation and sterilisation.

Quality is also guaranteed for *Beutelsbacher* by its own laboratory which verifies important production parameters such as fruit sugar and acid content as well as microbiological purity. The regular analyses of chemical residue are sent to specialist institutes.

## Innovation as an impetus

Three food technologists work for *Beutelsbacher*. They deal with product development not only for the own brand but also for other manufacturers and distributors. "We can afford to conduct research into quality and develop products on which we can depend" says Thomas Maier. He sees this as a result of corporate freedom "Which is obtained from a well run family business". But it is also a necessity. "We live from our good ideas" says Maier.

One of the most famous ideas from the *Beutelsbacher* company is the *Demeter* children's juice. It was developed together with the food research group. The formulation reflected anthroposophical legislation and the first tasters were Waldorf students.

The children's juice was often copied by other manufacturers like a number of other products first produced by *Beutelsbacher* such as the *multi-pure juice*, a mixture of local and tropical fruits which is rich in natural vitamins. "They only copy what is good", says the business manager selfconfident. He is particularly annoyed that most firms simply copy a product and offer it at a cheaper price rather than improving it.

The entire *Beutelsbacher* range consists of around 80 different products. Apart from pears and quince, apple juice from the region is one of the highlights

of *Beutelsbacher*; at least 50% – 60% of German apples are produced in Baden-Württemberg. However *Beutelsbacher* processes the whole fruit ABC: from acerola, banana and Chardonnay grapes to mango, buckthorn and tomato. Refreshing carrot juice is a leader in the vegetable juice sector. According to the CEO, "The fermented juices attract a constant, grateful public".

Vegetable juices originate from fields of biodynamic farms (Demeter), not descended from hybrid seeds, are a totally new products which *Beutelsbacher* has introduced as a product innovation.

*Beutelsbacher* places particular importance on homozygous vegetables in contrast to hybrid products which currently account for around 70 % of vegetable varieties. The name "homozygous" indicates that the seeds from these products possess fixed characteristics which can be passed down through several generations. This was normal in principle for a fruit-bearing, vital cultivated plant. An important cultivation aim for homozygous varieties is to produce a typical flavour which the consumer can recognize immediately. The freshly pressed carrot juice as well as the lactic fermented carrot juice, the lactic fermented beetroot juice and the vegetable cocktail (celery, black radish, beetroot and carrots) are made from homozygous root vegetables. "This plays an extremely important role in guaranteeing the independence of dynamic organic farmers", points out Maier.

Some of the most successful specialities produced by *Beutelsbacher* are the pure juices. These include tropical multi-fruit juices in the form of freshly squeezed juice such as Exotik Pur, ABCVitalPur and Multi Pur, which was distinguished in 1996 as the best German natural food product at the Ifoam word exhibition in Copenhagen. The range has been extended even further with coconut and pineapple, pineapple and mango and banana and vanilla. Non-pasteurised enzyme drinks such as Kombucha play an important role in the range. However, natural sweeteners such as agave, apple and pear and wine vinegar as a seasoning are also available.

Balsamic apple vinegar is a new development. Due to the wide range of apple varieties and specific fermentation conditions, the apple vinegar tastes like the famous Balsamico from Modena in Italy.

The formulations and range differ in a number of ways from those of the competitors, for example with regard to sweeteners for fruit juices and fruit drinks. *Beutelsbacher* uses concentrated grape juice in addition to concentrated agave juice.

Quince juice and the sparkling fizzy quince drink are rarities in the range. This local relative of the apple has largely been forgotten. Its use in the production of juice plays an important role for the Maiers in promoting their varied range.

What does the future hold for the firm? "We intend to remain an owner-operated family company whose aim is to produce even better, more vital food than before", says Thomas Maier. "It is important to maintain satisfied customers by offering top quality and suppliers who can rely on long-term partnerships with *Beutelsbacher*" points out the business manager. ■



Alongside the processing of large quantities there is still room for regional suppliers