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# READY, STEADY, WHISTLE!

The truly innovative pasteurisation method created by Micvac has revolutionised the European chilled ready meal sector. Emma-Jane Batey spoke to managing director Håkan Pettersson, and sales and marketing director Christina Frohm Kramer, to learn how Micvac offers 'Fresh thinking, served'.

Scandinavian food technology company Micvac has developed a modern packaging and pasteurisation method that allows for chilled ready meals to be cooked in the microwave without losing any nutrients, colour or texture. Anyone that has relied on ready meals for whatever reason – busy lives, times of illness, convenience when travelling or at work – will appreciate just how innovative this really is!

It can be that ready meals are the 'make do' option when we do not have the time, inclination or capability to cook a meal from scratch, but what the Micvac method allows is for people that want a tasty yet easy meal option to not have to go without the pleasure of a freshly-cooked meal. Micvac's sales and marketing director Christina Frohm Kramer told Packaging Europe, "The Micvac method allows you to put proper food on the table even when there is little or no time for preparation. It's a miracle! It's a pasteurisation method for the food processing industry to ensure ready meals are as delicious as they are meant to be."

## A new method

Requiring no additives, Micvac offers a smooth, modern production method based on in-pack cooking and pasteurisation in one continuous process. Each tray, or pouch, is filled, sealed and then pasteurised while passing through a microwave tunnel. The four key steps to the Micvac method see the tray filled with ingredients either by hand or by machine, with the film and all-important valve applied in an automated process. The now-sealed meal is then cooked and pasteurised in a microwave tunnel and, during this process, the Micvac valve opens to let out the steam and the oxygen. The valve then closes and a natural vacuum is created. Following this, the meal is rapidly cooled in a cooling unit and is ready for the supermarket shelf.

Håkan Pettersson explained, "We've invested in independent consumer surveys across Europe to help identify the trends and challenges faced by our customers, by the ready meal sector, and we know there are different issues for consumers in the UK than for

Germany or France, for example. What we know is that vacuum-packed meals can still be quite new for purchasers in the supply chain, but that consumers love it. Consumers really value the advantages of the Micvac method, particularly the freshness and the quality. They also love the whistling!”

Ah yes, the whistling: Micvac meals offer an audible advantage too. When the Micvac meal is cooked in the microwave, the valve whistles when it's ready to eat. Ms Frohm Kramer explained, “It's an interactive element, a reminder that your meal is ready. It's like it's saying, 'Hello! I'm ready for you to enjoy!'”

The ‘focused, gentle cooking’ the Micvac method offers is natural, with no added preservatives. With the vacuum removing the oxygen, it means that the meals stay fresh and tasty for longer, which can lead to minimised waste throughout the value chain. Indeed, Micvac independent taste tests show that, even up to four weeks later, consumers could not tell the difference. Mr Pettersson added, “Consumers really love the quality of the meal that's packaged using the Micvac method, and buyers and retailers love it when consumers are happy. The Micvac method results in a very high quality end product – the texture, colour and nutritional value of the meal is all better than other chilled ready meals.”

### Time to taste

The enthusiastic Micvac team is preparing to present its unique method at the upcoming interpack show. But rather than simply telling visitors that consumers love the ready meals using the Micvac method, the team is letting them decide for themselves. Ms Frohm Kramer said, “We're showing why we say Micvac is ‘Fresh thinking, served’ but giving visitors to our interpack stand the opportunity to try our meals. We have a selection of chilled ready meals for people to try, and to let them see the Micvac method working in real life. We will also be able to show how the Micvac method is suitable for wider applications for the catering industry, such as larger packs.”

With a range of different patents already in place, Micvac's dedication to innovation when it comes to chilled ready meal packaging is second-to-none. Mr Pettersson



concluded, “The Micvac method and our pioneering valve certainly has some exciting opportunities across the food sector. It's not just about packaging, it's a whole system – a method that adds value to chilled ready meals at a time when the sector is booming. We supply the equipment in the food packaging line, as well as the packaging material needed, and work closely with our customers to ensure they are truly getting the very best advantage from investing in the Micvac method.” □

Visit: [www.micvac.com/retail-solutions/packaging](http://www.micvac.com/retail-solutions/packaging)

