

Rahbekfisk

Tasty and convenient products for the retail and food service sector

Rahbekfisk is a producer of innovative food products aimed at the retail and food service sector. Starting out as supplier of frozen fish fillets, today the company has expanded its product range into five categories that encompass both fish and meat and embody the company's values of taste, convenience and health.

Established in 1955 in the Danish harbour city of Fredericia, Rahbekfisk has a long history in the manufacture of quality fish-based products. Then, as now, the company focused on the freshness and quality of the raw material, locating its production facilities in the harbour so as to start processing the fish virtually as it came off the boats, to ensure that customers received the freshest, finest tasting fish. Taste has always been a priority for Rahbekfisk. It is one of the three megatrends in the food industry, says Nicolai Hansen, sales and marketing director, and for us it is the most important aspect of any of our products. To put it differently, if it does not taste good it will not be produced by Rahbekfisk, whatever its other virtues. The strong focus on taste is in tune with consumer priorities. A recent market survey of consumers revealed that over 50% considered taste to be the most important factor in their food purchase decisions*.

Health, an important factor

The other two trends that the company has identified are convenience and health. We have always been good at making convenient products, says Mr Hansen. Now we are responding to consumer concerns about



Morten Rahbek Hansen, CEO of Rahbekfisk, displays some of the raw materials that go into the company's products.

health, and more generally to the problem of obesity which is becoming increasingly widespread. For Rahbekfisk the concept of health covers not only specific consumer health related topics, but also includes issues such as the sustainability of stocks and product traceability.

The Rahbekfisk assortment today is divided into five categories. The first group of products are those that have been on offer more or less unchanged since the company was first established. This is the basic frozen whitefish fillets typically plaice, dab, floun-

der and saithe that is sourced from the North Sea. While the company still has these products in its assortment, their importance for the overall business has decreased. The next step up the value-added chain is adding a layer of breading to the fillets. This too is a legacy product line. However, in keeping with its focus on health the company has developed a range of products, where the quantity of the breading has been reduced, thereby increasing the volume of fish in the product. The new "lightly dusted" rather than breaded product offers a less crunchy ex-

perience, but with the addition of different herbs and flavours is a tasty and healthier alternative to traditionally breaded fish fillets. These fillets are based on both the traditional flat fish and round fish species as well as more exotic fish such as pangasius imported from Viet Nam, and yellow fin sole from China.

Filled and breaded products

Filled and breaded products is a range of products that represent a further step up from the plain breaded fish. Here fillets are

stuffed with a sauce or filling and then breaded. The products can be consumed as snacks, appetizers or even a complete meal, which can be quickly prepared in the oven. No compromises are made with the fillings, which are made from scratch at the company using high quality raw materials and natural fish stocks to ensure that the final product offers a thoroughly enjoyable taste sensation. There is a wide variety of fillings to choose from including herb sauces, cheese cream, garlic sauces, and broccoli and cheese.

One of the more recent product groups is the range of puff pastry items, which comprise a filling of fish, shellfish, poultry, or bacon, combined with a sauce, which is then wrapped and cooked in a fluffy pastry case. These products are available in sizes ranging from 20 g to 750 g to cater to any requirement, whether a snack, appetizer, lunch dish, or main meal. With this line of products the company has diversified into poultry and meat, a move that represents a slight shift in perspective. We no longer see ourselves just as a manufacturer of fish products, says Nicolai Hansen, but a supplier of convenience foods. The experience and expertise that the company has gained by designing and manufacturing sophisticated products based on fish can be used to make items based on other raw materials using the same basic principles. This allows the company to offer a wider range of products than most other comparable suppliers.

Sophisticated ready meals

Ready meals is the last category and one that offers the most sophisticated products. These typi-



The breading on the lightly dusted dab fillets is reduced by 50% giving a healthier product.



Combining fillets of fish or meat with a sauce and encasing it in a puff pastry gives a tasty and convenient snack, appetizer, or meal.

cally include fillets of fish or meat and a sauce mixed together with pasta, rice, potatoes or other vegetables. These products offer very flexible solutions limited only by the imagination of the customer. When developing a ready meal solution Rahbekfisk will work very closely with the client pooling their experience with the client's requirements to arrive at a satisfactory solution. This ability to develop products in close collaboration with a client stems from Rahbekfisk's many years of experience as a private label producer chiefly for Marks and Spencer in the UK and Migros in Switzerland. Private label is still 95% of the business, but four years ago the company started putting its own brand on products, a move

that today has led to markets in ten countries all over Europe including Germany, Ireland and the UK. The main customers for the company's branded goods are the big supermarkets. We supply twelve of the top twenty supermarkets in Europe, says Mr Hansen, and are now exploring opportunities in the United States.

The company is also interested in other countries in central and eastern Europe. As markets develop and consumers adopt increasingly western lifestyles the demand for tasty products that are easy to prepare will increase. The company has already established a presence in the Czech Republic and Poland and is now also looking at Russia.

Innovation is key to staying in front

Rahbekfisk is a highly innovative company setting the trend in products that combine taste with convenience and health. The emphasis on innovation has resulted in honours at the European Seafood Exposition, where it has had products in the finals for the last three years in a row and won the Prix d'Elite in 2005 for the best seafood range. Its track record of innovation was one of the factors that the new owners considered when the company was bought by RedSquare Invest, an Icelandic investment company together with the company management in December 2005. The new owners will continue the company's strategy of developing high quality, tasty products.

**Datamonitor, "The future of mealtimes", DMCM2364*

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Sales and marketing director:

Mr. Nicolai Hansen

Products: Frozen convenience products based primarily on fish

Volumes: 12,000 tonnes

Turnover: EUR55m (2005)

Production facilities: 2, Hirtshals for filleting and breading, Fredericia for ready meals, puff pastry products, filled breaded fillets

Employees: 275