

# Taming the dragon with Swiss-like chocolate

How the Chinese producer Afición raises a standard  
of chocolate production with Bosch





As the Chinese proverb goes, if you catch one's heart you will never be apart. This phrase perfectly describes the driving force behind premium Chinese chocolate from Afición. Not only has the company created a high-quality chocolate brand, but it has also established a place where chocolate enthusiasts can witness the process – the museum of chocolate in its Jiashan's facility, China. Every year it is visited by millions of tourists who come to see how chocolate is transformed from a simple cocoa bean to a perfectly wrapped edible gift. Visitors can also enjoy a gallery of chocolate packaging styles, showcasing variations from different regions around the globe. **Sapal, a Bosch Packaging Technology** company based in Ecublens, Switzerland, has played its part in the creation of this chocolate lovers' paradise. Its packaging line wraps Afición's chocolate into perfectly formed envelope-shaped die-folds differentiating the product offering and challenging competitors by raising the standards for product quality, safety and aesthetics.

### A sweet deal

China's economy and society are innovating at a rapid pace – by 2022 its retail market is forecasted to be double that of the United States, reaching an estimated \$8 trillion, according to a report by A.T. Kearney<sup>1</sup>. This is an important message for Western brands in particular, who are close

<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.luxurydaily.com/brands-entering-chinese-market-must-appeal-to-unique-preferences/>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.moduslink.com/chinese-demand-for-foreign-brand-products/>

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.chinabusinessreview.com/understanding-chinese-consumers/>

to the local customers' hearts. Why? Because Western products have always been associated with high quality and elegance, which means that owning them is a matter of prestige<sup>2</sup>. This trend is especially visible among the younger generation of Chinese consumers who are willing to pay a premium for high-end products as they become more 'westernized' and brand quality-conscious<sup>3</sup>. Keeping in mind the growing hunger for premium products, the founders of the Afición brand decided that their chocolate will be made to a classic recipe; grinding layer upon layer of cocoa paste resulting in a unique taste and structure. In order to stand out even more at the point-of-sale, it was decided that the chocolate should be packaged in a classic die-fold wrap to reinforce the brand statement. With a long global heritage for providing high quality machinery to the chocolate industry – and over 80 percent of the premium die-fold chocolate packaging market share in China – Bosch was the partner of choice for the Chinese manufacturer. "We required a high-quality packaging machine to match our exceptional product, while also preserving the unique taste of Afición chocolate. Not only did Bosch deliver that, they exceeded our expectations," explains Xue Feng Mo, the founder and general manager of Afición. However, it was not only premium quality of the wrapping and the efficiency of the machine that convinced the customer. "The reliable, fast and local service support provided by Bosch, as well as the additional training for our operators and engineers, goes above and beyond any other machine supplier that we could have dealt with," adds Xue Feng Mo.

### Unwrap the potential

The result of this cooperation is now on display for the million plus visitors that pass through Afición's doors. The whole line is 156 meters long and consists of three different parts; the processing unit, where the cocoa mass and sugar is grinded and conched; the tempering unit, where the chocolate is formed into tablets, and finally – the wrapping unit, which features two DSD 0600 die-fold packaging machines and a Transver SDI distribu-

tion station from Rotzinger AG. In order to ensure product safety each 10 gram chocolate tablet is first checked for any contamination by a metal detector. If approved, the product is then transferred to the two folding revolvers on the infeed belts where it proceeds through separate folding sequences before being hand-packed into gift boxes. To achieve the tidy, classic, die-fold pack style, the chocolates are separated and covered with packaging material consisting of an inner paper-aluminum layer and an outer paper cover on which the glue has been already applied. They are then picked up by lower and upper grippers

which gently lead the products across the folding box firstly forming the side folds and then the longitudinal. The product is then transferred to the second revolver, which maintains the pressure after gluing to ensure secure sealing. The gripper leads the product, in counter clockwise rotation, to the exit pusher, where it is deposited on the exit belt. With achievable speeds of up to 600 products per minute, stable performance and high line efficiency of up to 7000 tons of chocolate per year, Afición expects to be in a position to export its products beyond the Chinese market very soon. “Before we go ahead with the planned expansion, we will need to think about automating the end of our line. To do so, we will definitely be consulting with Bosch to make sure our goals and business objectives are achieved.”

#### **This is just the beginning**

With the help of a single-source solution supplier, such as Bosch, the Afición brand managed to achieve its goal – to create classic Swiss-style chocolate, wrapped in premium packaging, which preserves the unique taste of the product. Additionally, the high level of product protection secures and builds brand loyalty, differentiating it from its competition. With Bosch by his side, Xue Feng Mo achieved a lot more than just satisfying his customers' needs for premium chocolate – he challenged the local market by raising the standards of quality, safety and aesthetics, in turn safeguarding his products against the challenges of tomorrow – today. The successful response to Afición brand from the Chinese audience and sales boosting up to a few thousand tons per year are a strong proof that the journey has just begun.

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