Challenges in Panning

Pam Gesford
Colorcon

Trends in the confectionery industry today present challenges in manufacturing high-quality, consistent panned confections. New product trends (for example, high-acid, softer centers or ultrabright colors) can make panning processes more difficult for even the most experienced pan operator. Operational trends like shorter processing times, less-experienced workers and just generally doing more with less can also impact final product quality. Each one of these topics could easily be a paper in and of itself so some of the issues may seem simplified for the sake of time.

DEFINITIONS
Before looking at challenges to these confections, it is always good to review what the working definitions are for the three panning types.

Hard panning is the application of a hard shell by the repeated application of sugar syrup, which dries and crystallizes on the surface.

Soft panning is the application of syrup, which is a mixture of corn syrup and sugar and is dried by the application of dry sugar, to form a smaller number of usually softer, thicker layers.

Chocolate panning is the application of fat-based coating around a center. This coating could be chocolate, cocoa-based confectionery compound coatings or white/colored confectionery compound coatings (can be flavored as well).

MARKETING TRENDS

Extreme is the Word

Getting your customer’s attention has always been the name of the game for marketing confectionery items and panned confections are no exception. The position seems to be one of extremes. For young people, subtle is just not going to catch their eye. The number and volume of high-intensity products continues to grow. Many of these are high-impact flavors, sour products and products with extremely bright colors. Also, to find that point of differentiation, more products seem to be going toward differences in texture, licensing brand name popularity from other industries and new ways of looking at the internal brand identities.

High-impact Flavors
First, consider the issue of high-impact flavors. Traditionally, many panned confections contained the flavor in the center or the shell, but not in both layers. If high intensity is the goal, the duration of the flavor release may not be acceptable and increasing flavor to compensate may lead to an unacceptable flavor profile. Also, flavor carriers can create issues. Oil-based flavors may not cause problems at low levels, but when used at higher levels they may cause sliding in the pan for hard- and soft-panned confections. This results in poorly coated product. Propylene glycol is a common flavor carrier but also is a commonly used humectant. It can hold moisture and interfere with proper drying.