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Chocolate Panning

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Chocolate panning, as a process, has been employed for many years in the confectionery industry. Almost any commonly used confectionery inclusion can be chocolate coated through this process. Some of the most popular are nutmeats (peanuts, almonds and cashews), fruits (raisins, cherries) and malted milk balls. Many successful candy products on the market today are produced in this manner. Chocolate panning is also used as an intermediate step for further processing such as enrobing and sugar panning.

Chocolate panning is a fast, efficient way to add a chocolate coating to a wide variety of items. It does not require tempering; therefore, the expense of tempering equipment and cooling tunnels does not exist. Chocolate panning, when done properly, does not have the space requirements of an enrobing operation and can be more cost effective. It is a forgiving process that adds flexibility and versatility to any confectionery manufacturing operation.

The term *chocolate* is used, for the sake of simplicity, in this paper as a generic term meaning any fat-based coating material. There are many fat-based coatings used in the manufacture of confectionery today. These include milk chocolate, dark choco-

late, white chocolate, yogurt coatings, chocolate-flavored compound coatings and white coatings.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The chocolate panning process is based mainly on one major principle—heat transfer. There are other factors that can affect the process, such as humidity, but heat transfer is the most influential. The ability to transfer heat from the product rapidly will determine, in large part, the efficiency of the process. Cooling or drying the product between coats of chocolate is essential. The more quickly the product is cooled the sooner the next coat of chocolate can be applied. Rapid wetting and drying of the batch will allow for faster and more efficient processing. Also, the friction created by the tumbling action in the pan will influence the distribution of the chocolate and the smoothness of the coating.

The most widely used method of achieving heat transfer, in the chocolate panning process, is to pass conditioned air over and/or through the product intermittently. Other methods, such as adding CO₂ to the batch, are in use today, but conditioned air is the most widely used. ▶

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