



BODY LANGUAGE

Full-body shrinksleeves help juice producer put the squeeze on competition

If the old chestnut about clothes making the man is to be believed, then this time-tested wisdom more than suits the occasion with the stylish, full-body shrinksleeve labeling gracing the bottles of delicious, nutritious, all-natural fruit-juice smoothies concocted by the **Arthur's Fresh Company** in Toronto.

Tracing its cider- and fruit-processing roots all the way back to 1893 at a family farm near Goderich, Ont., the company really sprang to life in 1997, when its founder and president Travis Bell decided to build a modern juice processing plant in Toronto's west end, using the family's home-grown produce to make not-from-concentrate juices and smoothies in an intriguing range of nonconventional recipes.

Retailing through most major Canadian grocery outlets under the **Arthur's Fresh** brand label—so named in honor of Bell's father—the company's all-natural beverage products have been a hit with the Canadian consumers thirsting for a truly healthy drinking alternative.

"Travis and I grew up in Goderich as a sixth generation family of fruit farmers—growing peaches, apples, pears, plums, grapes, apricots and pressing fresh apple cider," Arthur's chief operating officer and Travis' older brother Scott Bell told *Canadian Packaging* on a visit to the state-of-the-art, 12,000-square-foot production facility in the city's suburb of Etobicoke.

Bell says the company is on course to process approximately three million kilograms of fresh fruit at the plant this year—using not only its own crops but also those sourced from other Canadian and overseas growers, which became necessary to keep up with soaring market demand.

"Today, Arthur's Fresh is available right across Canada in every major retail grocery store, as well as in Wal-Mart supercenters, Costco and Shoppers Drug Mart," beams Bell, adding that product diversification and innovation have been key driving forces in the company's rapid market penetration.

To produce its **Superfruit Smoothie Plus** line—comprising *Açaí Plus*, *Goji Plus* and *Pom Plus* flavors—the company imports purées from Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Turkey, India and China, Bell explains.

Most of the Canadian-grown fruits and veggies, on the other hand, are processed to make the five Arthur's flagship mixes, which include the *Strawberry Rainfor-*



Arthur's Fresh president Travis Bell (left) and chief operating officer Scott Bell pose behind the colourful line of full-body shrinksleeved 325-ml and 900-ml plastic containers used to package their company's not-from-concentrate, all-natural, fast-selling fruit-juice mixes.

est, *Carrot Energizer*, *Mango Plus*, *Verry Berry* and *Green Energy* formulations.

"We are fully dedicated to creating a Canadian company that can capably compete with all comers, and we offer no apologies—we're the best in our class," asserts Bell, noting that the company now boasts the country's bestselling fresh-juice brand retailing in the produce section, as well as enjoying a dominant market share in the single-serve 325-ml size segment.

This year, Arthur's Fresh made the *Top 100* list of the *Profit* magazine's annual ranking of Canada's fastest-growing companies—topping the survey's food-and-beverage category with astounding sales growth of 2,398 per cent over the past five years.

Naturally, such success makes Bell's decision to borrow against his house a few years back to keep the business afloat not only an extraordinary leap of faith, but also a remarkably astute business move.

"One of the reasons we've been so successful is that Arthur's has been creating beverages at the forefront of consumer trends," remarks Bell. "It enables us to utilize our

speed-to-market and leverage media attention to launch our highly health-beneficial products."

One of those products, **Arthur's Strawberry Rainforest** drink, was in fact a runner-up as best-tasting beverage at the prestigious *Good Food Festival* this past April, Bell points out, as chosen by over 1,500 taste-testers involved in the judging.

Not surprisingly, the company's penchant for product innovation is also reflected in the way it packages its product offerings, as confirmed by the two **2007 National Packaging Competition** awards—one for brand marketing and another for best label design—handed out by the **Packaging Association of Canada** earlier this year.

Bell relates that the Mississauga, Ont.-based branding consultants **Davis** came up with the idea of maximizing the highly-decorative marketing possibilities of full-body shrinksleeve labeling to move Arthur's away from its somewhat outdated, triple-labeled look to establish an exciting new brand identity.

To bring the idea to life, Arthur's teamed up with the Toronto-based prepress services specialists **Tri-ad Graphic Communications** and **Safety Seal Plastics Inc.** of Hamilton, Ont., a producer and converter of shrinksleeve labeling materials.

Being in on the project right from the outset was an important factor in its successful execution, according to Safety Seal's marketing manager Jim Freeburg, allowing for greater input on the artwork and more time to



Bottles of fruit smoothies have full-body shrinksleeves applied by an Aesus shrinksleever before moving into a heated shrink tunnel to have the wrap formed around the body.



address any technical challenges.

“For us, the first step was to accurately size the Arthur’s bottles, which are 900-ml and 325-ml plastic containers, for the shrinksleeve and then to provide grid pattern sleeves for shrink distortion testing,” says Freeburg, explaining that his company supplied Arthur’s with digital shrinksleeve prototypes to demonstrate the most accurate finished sample, accounting for shrink distortions, prior to the final prepress and plate-making stages.

Originally, the shrinksleeves were printed on a 13-inch flexographic press with water-based inks, but eventually Safety Seal began printing the revised label designs on a new, 26-inch UV (ultraviolet)-capable customized flexo press manufactured by the U.K.-based **Edale Ltd.**

“From Arthur’s perspective, the new press provided a more dynamic look while maintaining the original integrity,” explains Freeburg. “And from our perspective as printer, we are able to print a cleaner image, while eliminating undesirable gear marks and hard edges that are often unavoidable on many other flexo presses.”

For Tri-ad, the *Arthur’s Smoothies* launch proved to be a challenge from both the timing and technical perspective, requiring the company to come to grips with the limitations of the earlier print process utilizing the water-based inks.

Says account manager Rick West: “We helped maintain the design’s dynamic labeling by enhancing the special colors via a percentage of process make-up for support, thus allowing us to reach a color gamut more in line with what the designers wanted.”

West adds that Tri-ad also modified the intensity in the distorted area of the images so they wouldn’t seem darker when shrunk towards the top of the label, as well as to maintain a visual consistency from top to bottom when the product is viewed on the actual store-shelf.

To keep the supply part of the equation smoothly running along, the Arthur’s plant employs an impressive line-up of top-quality packaging machinery and supplies, such as the plastic containers from **Pretium Packaging** and plastic caps from **Pano Cap (Canada) Ltd.**, both located in Montreal.

The packaging line process begins at the **NEHAE 48** unscrambler—manufactured by **New England Machinery Inc.**—and proceeds to **AWFS 186** filling machine from **Filler Specialties, Inc.**, which can apply the plastic caps to the filled containers at rates of up to 70-*bpm* (bottles per minute).

After capping, the bottles are conveyed to enter an **Aesus Packaging Systems** shrinksleeve that applies the shrinksleeve to the bottles and sends them through the heated shrink tunnel, where the wrap quickly adheres and conforms to all the contours of the bottle’s body and neck.

As they emerge from the tunnel, an **Imaje** model **9020** inkjet printer quickly applies a best-before date to all the passing bottles, which are then hand-packed into corrugated shipping cartons supplied by **Noramapac Inc.**

Just prior to being taped shut, all the packed cartons pass by one of two Imaje box-coders—either an **S7 Sigma** or an **S8 Classic**—to have all the lot-code numbers applied to the box.



After filling the bottles, a Filler Specialties machine quickly applies the plastic caps on top at speeds of up to 70 bottles per minute.

The cartons are then palletized to await transfer to the customers’ distribution centers.

Bell says the company is planning to automate its end-of-line packaging in coming months with installations of a new drop-pack case-packing machine and

a depalletizer—improving its overall line speed by an estimated 150 per cent.

And with its sales currently still growing by 10 to 15 per cent a month, according to Bell, and a new *Class 100* on-site cleanroom on the way, that may well be just tip of the proverbial iceberg for a little company that just can’t stop growing. ♣

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