



Muldoon brothers Jimmy (left) and Shaun (right) of Muldoon's Own Authentic Coffee Company of Mississauga, Ont. are looking to take a larger cup of the Greater Toronto Area office coffee market with their own greener, single-serve coffee pod.

PERKS OF THE TRADE

Ontario coffee roaster off to the races with a new single-serve, eco-sensitive foodservice solution



ANDREW JOSEPH, FEATURES EDITOR
PHOTOS BY COLE GARSIDE

Despite the nature of the business, work is anything but a grind for an expansive family clan running the day-to-day operations of **Muldoon's Own Authentic Coffee Company** in Mississauga, Ont.

In fact, having fun while working almost seems to be something of a required skill at the lively coffee roasting and packaging operation housed in a spotless, 20,000-square-foot coffee facility owned and operated by the hardworking Muldoon brothers, Jimmy and Shaun, who claim to be at the forefront of a profound evolution in the way Toronto-area office workers get their daily coffee fix.

"Our mantra is simple: we buy great green coffee beans, we roast it slow, and sell it fast to commercial businesses who provide coffee for their employees," Jimmy Muldoon told *Canadian Packaging* on a recent visit to the 50-employee operation—including 10 Muldoon family members—serving a steadily growing customer base currently comprising over 1,500 commercial enterprises in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) region.

Despite the relative abundance of long-established coffee-shop operators and coffee product and equipment suppliers in the metropolitan Toronto area, Muldoon says that the company has managed to carve out and nurture an important marketplace niche by deliberately targeting busy, high-density

Working with the Toronto-based integrator Abbey Packaging, Muldoon's Own purchased and installed a new Italian-crafted OPEM Kikka vertical form/fill/seal machine to manufacture its new single-serve coffee pods.

office complexes where getting a good cup of coffee is just not as quick or easy as Muldoon insists it should be, which he says can actually have a negative impact on workplace productivity and morale.

"Our coffee and equipment will increase an office's productivity by keeping the employees in the office longer."

Muldoon explains: "I know it sounds like a mad thing for a Scotsman to do, but we will provide our coffee and equipment free of charge for a week for a potential customer to prove exactly how office productivity can be increased simply by not losing employees going out for an extended break to find a decent cup of coffee."

Roasting and processing approximately 400,000 pounds of coffee per year, Muldoon's Own markets 10 different products under its own brand name, including fair-trade *Flying Scotsman*, *Highland Blend* and *Columbian Supremo*; the *Costa Rican Tarrazu*; *Donut Shop* and *Breakfast* blends; the *West Coast Signature*, *Guatemalan Rainforest Alliance* and *Mocha Java*; and a fair-trade *Swiss Water* decaf recipe.

Family Ties

The company also stocks over 500 auxiliary items such as coffee cups, lids, stir sticks, dairy powders, etc., according to Muldoon, whose family ties to the coffee business stretch both far and wide.

"The Muldoons clan first started a family business in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1971 under the name Carefree Vending, which was a fully-automated services provider supplying a host of vending machines offering snacks and tobacco products," he recalls.

While the vending business did very well for many years, a severe economic recession in the U.K during the 1980s eventually drove the family to close the shop and, ultimately, move to Toronto in search of greener pastures.

"By 1991, Carefree Vending was back in operation in its new home based in nearby Brampton, Ontario, and through hard work and great service, we began to grow again.

"Although we did not roast or grind the coffee beans ourselves at the time, we managed to land a large corporate client for our services, which really helped us grow the business," he relates.

Inevitably, the Muldoons came to a realization that the best way to being able to guarantee the quality and freshness of the product for its clients was to take matters into their own hands and start roasting the coffee beans themselves.

"We started roasting and packaging our own coffees in 1998 and changed the company name to its current moniker to better reflect who we are," recalls Shaun Muldoon, saying the company has since built up a fair bit of respect within the foodservice industry for elegant packaging that accurately reflected its commitment to high product quality, top customer service, and continuous innovation.

Adds Jimmy Muldoon: "We believe that packaging is, in fact, the ambassador of our products, and as such it must appear and perform to suit the needs of the product and the client.

"It is no secret that packaging sells the product," he says, "but we believe it is the quality and innov-



ation of that package which helps to keep it selling over time.”

This ongoing quest for innovation has recently enabled the company to launch its own brand of a single-serve coffee pod, which it developed in collaboration with some like-minded innovative Canadian packaging suppliers.

Resembling a slightly thicker round tea-bag, the easy-open single-serve pack—called the *Pod* or *Muldoon's Single*—contains 12 grams of high-quality coffee that produces a perfect cup of coffee in only 30 seconds of brewing time.

Intentionally designed to look like a soft pod—rather than the hard-pod packs commonly found in European markets—each of the *Pod* portion-packs is elegantly embossed with the family name, Shaun Muldoon explains, to reflect the company's pride in its creation.

“Our main focus was to create a single-serve solution for a North American audience, but it was also key that it had to properly brew 12 grams of fresh, quality coffee,” adds Jimmy Muldoon.

Greener Choice

While the Muldoon brothers readily acknowledge that their new pods are not likely to pose immediate threat to the current single-serve market dominance in North America enjoyed by the **Kuerig** coffeemakers and its **K-Cup** single-serve packages, they insist that their single-serve solution provides its clients with a much more eco-friendly alternative.

By virtue of doing business with many top-tier corporations with sound understanding and awareness of key environmental sustainabil-



Ellis Packaging created a paperboard box to hold 16 foil single-serve coffee pod pouches of Muldoon's Own coffee brand.

ity issues, Muldoon's Own has met with many of their clients' "green teams" over the years to address their respective environmental concerns with a befitting solution.

“At the outset, these needs were largely met with our certified Fair Trade and Rainforest coffee products,” relates Shaun Muldoon, “but we always knew we had to find a solu-

Installed onto the OPEM Kikka packaging machine, a Videojet Technologies printer applies lot, code and brand information onto individual film pouches containing the single-serve coffee pods.

tion to the plastic cartridge issue, which is a key detrimental factor in that respect for the single-serve coffee makers.

“And that is exactly what we did,” he says, pointing out that the company's pod is made with specialty, fully-biodegradable coffee filter paper—manufactured in England by the **Glatfelter** company—designed with a special weave to withstand the pressure of the pod brewing process.

In addition, the pod's tearaway outer foil package is produced with specialty film, developed by the Mississauga-based **Chantler Packaging Inc.**, that helps reduce the product's environmental footprint.



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The Muldoon's Own OPEM Kikka coffee pod-forming machine uses filter paper manufactured by the Glatfelter company.



A Festo semi-rotary 0-180 degree air cylinder mounted to the bottom of an auger filler on the OPEM Kikka tamps and twists to release the coffee grounds for even dispensing of the product onto the pod's filter paper.



The Muldoon single-serve coffee Pod is packed in pouches manufactured with specialty film developed by Chantler Packaging.

"The Chantler film contains 66-percent EPI—the best currently available, by the way—that lessens the impact on the environment while still protecting the coffee grounds against light and air," says Jimmy Muldoon, adding his company has relied on Chantler for many years as a supplier of its fractional packs for thermal brewers and the fresh-cup films that house the large whole bean bags.

While Jimmy Muldoon estimates that the Mississauga plant is currently running at about 70 per cent of its capacity, "we will be roasting much more once we get into full production with our new, innovative single-serve coffee pods."

In addition to making the 12-gram *Flying Scotsman* and *Rainforce Alliance* pods, the company is also planning to launch another six SKUs in 10-gram pods, with only the *Mocha Java* and *Breakfast* coffees not being converted to pod format, at least for time being.

Noting that it already has 150 customers utilizing single-serve pods manufactured by other coffee suppliers, Jimmy Muldoon expects a fairly easy switchover.

"We don't want to slag the competition, but our new pod-making machine, combined with our own freshly ground estate coffee and specially-tuned coffee machines, provide a superior coffee upgrade that will be offered to all of our customers," he says.

"We have multiple large clients who know we are currently in Pod production, and they intend to change all of their locations to our pods when we are ready.

"Everyone seems excited by our new pods," he says, adding that the new *Pods* will be shipped to customers in elegant, well-designed paperboxes made by the Pickering, Ont.-based **Ellis Packaging Limited**, which can hold 16 12-gram *Pods* or 18 10-gram *Pods* per box.

Home Stretch

"Sorry to sound like Don Cherry, but Ellis Packaging is a good Canadian family-run business that is great to work with," says Shaun Muldoon, noting that Muldoon's Own takes great pride in building its business via Canadian suppliers—from the broker used to source the coffee beans up to the brewing system that delivers the coffee to the customers.

This Canadian preference also applies to **KruPack**, a business unit of the Brampton, Ont.-based **Kruger Inc.**, which manufactures the large master cases holding six of the Ellis cartons—adding an extra layer of protection during transport, while still providing colorful branding graphics on the exterior of the cases.

The Muldoon brothers were keen to point out that along with utilizing the best coffee beans, the choice of equipment and packaging are key ingredients in the continued success of the company.

"From our key Samiac roaster that is engineered to slow-roast specialty coffees, to our new OPEM pod system that was designed and built to make the best 12-gram freshly-ground, zero-oxygen, easy-opening awesome pod that can be made to date—we just love our equipment," says Shaun Muldoon.

Equipment utilized at the Muldoon's Own facility includes:

- a **San Franciscan** roaster;
- a **Sasa Samiac** roaster;
- a **Key Pak EL 600** form/fill/seal machine for fractional packs weighing between 2.25-ounces up to one pound;
- a **Markem-Imaje Smart Date 3** thermal-transfer printer mounted onto the Key Pak machine;
- a **Model GPX** coffee bean roller-style grinder from



Modern Process Equipment Corporation perched atop the packaging machinery; • an **OPEM Kikka** pod-making machine outfitted with a **Videojet Technologies** printer.

Installed by the Toronto-based packaging line equipment integrators **Abbey Packaging**, the Muldoon's new **Kikka** is a compact, integrated vertical packaging machine designed to manufacture single-serve coffee pods utilizing filter-paper with an individual overwrap.

Abbey Packaging was involved in ensuring Muldoon's Own not only got the best machine for its needs, but also acting as the sole point-of-contact with OPEM.

"We chose Abbey Packaging because we had been using them to service our Key Pak for the past 10 years, and it just so happens they are also the sole Canadian distributor for OPEM, who we feel manufactures the best coffee-related equipment around."

Rob McNaught, president of Abbey Packaging, says that while there are other manufacturers of pod equipment available, "OPEM was selected due to its experience in the single-serve market, ability to provide local support, and advanced features such as inline grinding, a servo auger filler for accurate dosing, pre-forming and tamping for consistent brewing, and integrated form/fill/seal machine design with gas flush to guarantee shelflife quality."

Shaun Muldoon is quick to compliment Abbey Packaging's service manager Derek Wood and lead service technician Rik Vernhout for all their professional assistance with the project.

"I would say that both of those gentlemen were excellent in every aspect of the process, from how they handled OPEM in Italy to the actual install in our plant, which only took about a week."

Daily Grind

According to Wood, the OPEM machine works by having the ground coffee beans pass through a servo auger filler system onto a pre-formed pod bottom.

After passing a tamping station to form the pod's circular shape, the top part of the filter paper is placed atop the pod, automatically embossed with the Muldoon's logo and heat-sealed together.

The filled paper pod is then die-cut to shape, after which a robotic arm removes it from the forming chain to be individually wrapped in a plastic film flushed with Nitrogen gas to keep it fresh.

"I really like what Muldoon's Own is doing," says Wood. "In Europe, the pod market has always been considered an economical, low-cost solution, but also a low-cost, inferior product."

"But with the new market and attitudes here in North America, Muldoon's Own has sought to remake the pod's image into one of quality, while still maintaining an attractive cost-point."

Both Muldoon brothers says they are ecstatic about the results achieved with their new OPEM pod machine to date, and are excited to be running it at top speeds soon.

While Shaun Muldoon admits that there are quite a few competitors out there in the office coffee business, what sets Muldoon's Own apart is that it actually roasts its own coffee, instead of being a mere middle-man.

"We are not a courier-style provider of coffee who just drops off the coffee—our service level is at another tier," says Shaun Muldoon. "From our well-trained, long-term staff, to the full customer care we provide, to the clean uniforms of our CSRs (customer service representatives), customer service is not an added service—it's just a part of who we are."

"Our corporate arena is an area where service, quality and innovation is awarded with long-term

support," Shaun sums up. "To be honest, in the foodservice sector, the only thing on their wish list is price and free equipment."

"Of course we give them this, but we also provide the best service in the city and a superior blend of coffee, which is now also available in a single-serve, eco-responsible coffee pod." 🍁

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