



Brunswick Bierworks chief operating officer Christian Von der Heide is part of the company's senior management team that turned an idea for a unique business model into a fast-growing beverage producer specializing in full-service solutions for premium beverage brand clients across North America and beyond.

# TRUSTING THE PROCESS

Toronto beverage producer blends passion for product innovation with relentless focus on quality control to make big waves in fast-growing product categories

**By George Guidoni, Editor**  
**Photos by Naomi Hiltz**

**T**rust is a priceless commodity in all walks of life, and in these troubling days of high anxiety and uncertainty about what the future has in store, the importance of solid business partnerships based on mutual respect and genuine collaboration can hardly be overstated.

Happily for hardworking folks at the Brunswick Bierworks beverage processing and packaging operation in Toronto's east end, the company's future is looking brighter than ever—thanks to its uncanny knack for building close bonds with its beverage industry clients by meeting and

surpassing their expectations with clockwork professionalism, exceptional technical proficiency, and earnest commitment to continuous collaborative innovation.

Founded in 2016 by Sean Fleming, a former accountant whose passion for beer led him to make a profound career change as a craft beer industry entrepreneur about a decade ago, Brunswick Bierworks has quickly built up an enviable industry reputation for the exceptionally quick turnaround service for its premium brand customers across a varied range of beverage categories including beer, hard seltzer, RTD (ready-to-drink) beverages, wine-based coolers, ciders and non-alcoholic cocktails.



(clockwise) Aluminum cans of beer being filled inside a Krones Craftmate filler; filled cans being lidded inside the Ferrum rotary seamer; a Krones SynCo conveyor transferring cans to the filling station; the user-friendly Krones iPanel CD human-machine interface displaying all of the filling line's operational status; the Krones Checkmat inspection system used to verify correct fill levels inside the aluminum cans.

Ranking as one of the largest privately-owned breweries in Canada, Brunswick markets itself as a turnkey supply chain solutions provider for alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage brands ranging from beer and cider to pre-mixed cocktails and other RTDs in strict accordance with the customers' specs—from recipe development through to production, packaging, quality control, and warehousing and distribution.

Unlike many other beverage co-packers who also develop their own brands while

doing contract manufacturing and co-packing for their outside clients, Brunswick operates as a focused 'partner' manufacturing enterprise fully committed to helping its customers succeed in the marketplace through thoughtful product and packaging innovation.

"We only produce for our partners," says vice-president of sales and marketing David Faber, who joined Brunswick last year after acquiring deep beverage industry experience working the likes of **Heineken, Diego** and **Red Bull**.

"We're not just renting time and space on our production line," Faber points out, "but rather work in partnership with our customers to help their brands succeed."

"We have brand customers coming to us with their product and asking us to make that product perfect for them," Faber told *Canadian Packaging* on a recent visit to the lively facility that also houses an on-site tap room and a large dining/entertaining area for hosting weddings, banquets, workshops and seminars, and other special events.

"Our goal is to put as much value back into our customers' pockets as possible to help their brands be successful," he states, "because we grow as they grow."

This complementary growth strategy has enabled the company to attract and retain some of the biggest brand-owners in the alcoholic drink markets, Faber relates, stressing the competitive advantage of having a full-staffed product development lab on-site to help customers experiment with different product recipes and packaging formats to remain on-trend in a highly competitive and dynamic industry.

"The beverage world has evolved significantly over the years, and as a result there is a lot of blurring going on between all the different beverage categories," Faber points out.

"There are new flavored beers, non-alcoholic beers, energy drinks, alcoholic energy drinks, all kinds of vodka sodas ... companies big and small are all coming up with new innovations, and our on-site lab works with them to bring those innovation to the LCBO (Liquor Control Board of Ontario) and other retail customers," he says.

"We are always trying to be on the forefront of the new package format and style needs to help our customers grow," says Faber, citing recent development of a new five-liter party-sized keg designed for a fast-growing brand of vodka-based soda beverages.



Operating at the site of a one-time leading Canadian office furniture supplier **Brunswick Manufacturing**, Brunswick Bierworks has undergone a series of significant expansions over the last five years—on top of the massive initial facility rebuild and refurbishment—to raise its annual capacity to about one million hectoliters, according to Faber.

*(clockwise)* Brunswick Bierworks vice-president of sales and marketing David Faber at the control panel of the Teledyne TapTone FS leak detection system; close-up of real-time operational data displayed on the TapTone FS control panel; a side and a close-up view of the Teledyne TapTone FS inspection system performing high-speed leak detection of pressurized aluminum cans filled with carbonated or liquid nitrogen-infused beverages.

Incredibly, the company is planning to more than quadruple its current output over the next year with the pending arrival of a new state-of-the-art, high-volume **Krones** canning line that will run at speeds of up to 1,100 containers per minute.

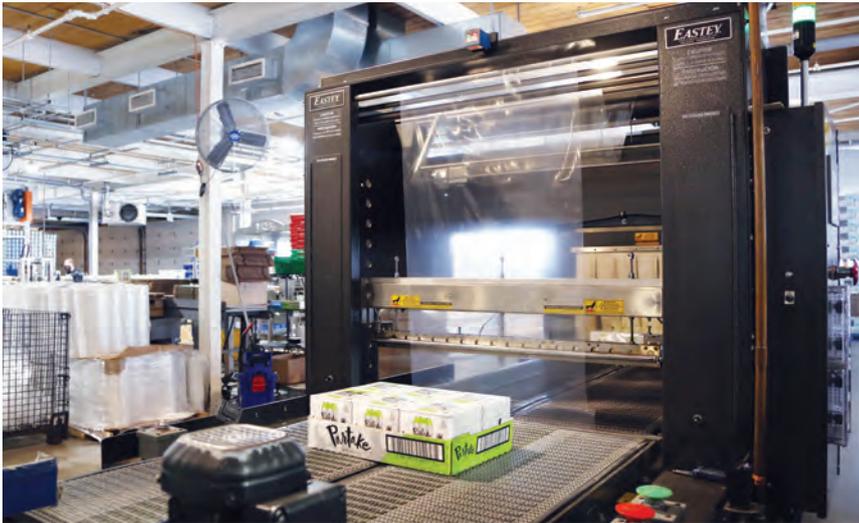
“We have grown tremendously,” says Faber, citing ongoing 30,000-square-foot facility expansion to accommodate the new Krones line, operational this spring.

While Brunswick originally started out as a craft beer producer, the production of innovative beverage categories like hard seltzers, cocktails, ciders, radlers and non-alcoholic beers now accounts for a major share of the plant’s manufacturing capacity.

Housing a multitude of towering 300- and 400-hectoliter holding, fermenting, mixing, blending and other tanks and vessels for brewing and beverage production, the facility currently uses a German-made Krones **Craftmate** filling line to package its beers and RTD drinks at speeds of 250 cans per minute—primarily in standard 355-ml, sleek 355-ml and 473-ml Tallboy cans—along with highly automated case-packing and end-of-line packaging equipment to fill its orders exactly to customers’ wishes and specifications.

“So if a customer needs 10,000 cases of product in January, 100,000 cases in February and some other number in the following month, that is exactly what they will get from us,” says Faber, adding that Brunswick can also arrange for direct delivery of the product to the customer’s own retail clients of choice if that’s what they want.

“That’s what operating as a ‘customers’ production facility’ means to us,” says Faber, adding that the company’s business model enables Brunswick to be selective about what customers it chooses to work with.



“Naturally we prefer to partner up with companies that share the same values that we do,” says Faber, citing environmental responsibility, entrepreneurship, quality and innovation as some of the key selection criteria.

For chief operating officer Christian Von der Heide, the obsession with quality and customer service is a natural expression of Brunswick’s unique business model and mindset—compellingly underscored last May with formal certification to the international *FFSC 2200 (Version 5)* food safety standard of the *GSFI (Global Food Safety Initiative)*.

Designed to ensure optimal food safety for consumers from front to end of the production process, *FFSC 2200* defines a comprehensive food safety system that meets the demands of both the company’s customers and consumers, according to GSFI.

“Achieving FSSC 22000 certification validates our commitment to maintaining the highest standards for food safety guidelines worldwide,” Von der Heide states. “It further highlights our ability to satisfy the most discerning customer needs.”

Since early last summer, this laser-sharp focus on quality has been significantly reinforced on the Kronos *Craftmate* filling

line with the installation of a state-of-the-art *TapTone FS (Force)* container inspection system to detect even the tiniest microleaks caused in the filled pressurized containers during the seaming process—instantly rejecting any leaking containers off the line before they move on to the secondary packaging stages.

Manufactured by North Falmouth, Ma.-based **Teledyne TapTone** and distributed in Canada by **Abbey Equipment Solutions** of Burlington, Ont., the *TapTone FS* systems leverage advanced stain-gauge technology to sense internal pressure by measuring the sidewalls of the container with high-sensitivity DSP (Digital Signal Processing) system for exceptionally thorough inspection of pressurized containers filled with carbonated and/or liquid nitrogen-infused beverages.

As Von der Heide relates, the case for installing such a system first became apparent when Brunswick Bierworks recently added the slim-profile “sleek” 355-ml cans to its packaging repertoire for one of its customers.

“As we had upgraded to the sleek 355-ml, we became aware that our existing equipment was struggling with detecting the really small microleaks,” he recalls, “so we quickly decided to go with the absolute best

equipment that there is for leak detection in cans, and the TapTone technology was quickly identified as being the best there is.

“And although we had not worked with Abbey Equipment Solutions before, I was very impressed with their knowledge and professionalism,” says Von der Heide, a native of Munich, Germany, with over 35 years of experience in the global beer and distilled spirits industries.

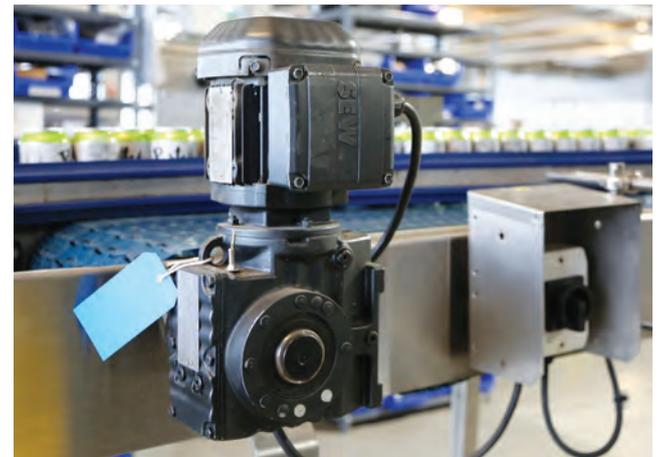
“The TapTone was quickly installed and fully functional immediately,” he recalls.

“Naturally we had to make a few adjustments to adapt it to our line’s specific needs,” he says, “but it was all done within 24 hours of the system’s arrival to our plant, and it has been running seamlessly ever since.

“In retrospect, I would have liked to have installed such a system back in 2016 when we started up,” Von der Heide adds, “but this advanced technology simply did not exist at the time.”

Designed to perform rapid 100-percent container inspection at high production line speeds of up to 525 feet per minute, the *TapTone FS* system leverages its patented *Force* technology to detect leak and low pressure in liquid nitrogen-dosed and carbonated beverage containers by using two parallel belts to transport the container past

**(clockwise)** A corrugated shipping tray containing six multipacks of canned beverages is transported into the Eastey shrink tunnel for application of a plastic hood around the top of the load to keep the boxed product as is is transferred towards palletizing; a close-up of a Videojet inkjet coder marking variable product information onto the paperboard cartons, sealed with the signature-blue ProBlue Nordson applicator (background) from Nordson Corporation.



**(clockwise)**  
**The BrewPack 200 cartoner from Mpac Switchback incorporating signature-blue Nordson hot-melt adhesive applicator; a few of the plant's many stainless-steel vessels used for distilling and fermentation; an SEW Eurodrive motor powering a conveyor line; a Top Tier combination palletizer-stretchwrapper prepares a load for shipping.**

a sensor that measures the tension on the sidewall of the container—enabling the system to measure the pressure inside the container.

Utilizing DSP technology, the controller analyzes the measurement and assigns a merit value to each container. If the merit value is outside of the acceptable range, a reject signal activates a remote reject system and the container is removed from the line.

Easy to operate and program using a large color touchscreen and icon-driven menus, the *TapTone FS* system uses two independently operating reject output mechanisms to reject and sort the passing containers, and it can also be used in applications such as aerosol containers; retorted dairy drinks packaged in cans; liquid nitrogen-dosed and/or carbonated iced tea, juices and water packaged in PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic bottles; and other low- to mid-range pressure applications up to 160-psi pressure levels.

Easy to integrate in most existing automated beverage filling lines, the *TapTone FS* system offers a broad range of options to cover just about every conceivable potential bottleneck or problem area, including:

- **Air Pressure Monitoring.** Monitoring and displaying the air pressure at the rejector, activating an alarm signal if the air pressure drops below user pre-set limits.
- **Cap Inspection.** A choice of optical or camera-based inspection sensors for missing, high, or cocked bottle caps.
- **Down Bottle/Can Inspection,** for detecting containers that might have fallen over on the conveyor and were not inspected.
- **Rejectors,** a choice of pneumatic ram and standing rejection systems.
- **Reject Verification,** for detecting a container that has failed the inspection but has not been rejected from the production conveyor.

Andrej Bagrinev, technical sales repre-

sentative with Abbey Equipment Solutions who oversaw the *TapTone FS* system installation at Brunswick Bierworks, is quick to compliment the beverage producer for making the right equipment choice to improve its quality control and assurance capabilities.

“Traditional proximity sensors that are widespread in beer industry don’t work for leakage inspection of low-pressure beverage cans because there is not enough pressure to develop typical curvature of can lids,” he explains.

“In other words, proximity sensors cannot offer enough resolution to measure pressure inside cans,” Bagrinev states.

“That’s why Brunswick Bierworks needed a more sophisticated system,” he says, “and that’s why they chose TapTone to achieve their objective of acquiring a highly accurate leakage detection system for their low-pressure beverage cans.”

Von der Heide concurs: “We wanted to make sure not only that we meet normal criteria with our regular inspection equipment, but that we would achieve the highest levels of package integrity by making sure there are no micro-leaked containers going to market from our facility.

“The TapTone inspection system has enabled us to completely remove that risk to date.”

Says Von der Heide: “As a real partner packaging company, we take pride in helping our clients develop innovative packaging formats for their products.

“This means thinking ahead of the immediate transaction by linking our company’s success to our customers’ success—taking advantage of their growth through joint ‘incubation + innovation,’ if you will.

“We are far more integrated with our clients than your classic co-packers—that’s the key point of difference for us in the marketplace,” he reiterates.

“Clients can struggle in the complex

end-to-end C2C (concept-to-commercialization) process for their products,” Von der Heide notes, “and that’s where we put our skill to use, translating a client’s commercial mission into an attractive CPG product that they leverage accordingly in the marketplace.

“That’s why all our capital investments, including TapTone, are geared to us being a total solutions provider to the entire beverage industry,” he concludes, “rather than just being a bit player in a narrow product category.”

**SUPPLIERS**

- Abbey Equipment Solutions
- Krones Machinery, Inc.
- SEW-Eurodrive Co. of Canada Ltd.
- Mpac Switchback
- TopTier