

Convenience pap en vleis

Food Types - June 2004



One of SA's most loved traditional meals - pap en vleis (cooked maize meal and meat) - is now available in canned form after years of perseverance by businessman Willem Steenkamp of Malmesbury, Western Cape.

The product is being manufactured and distributed by Bull Brand Foods of Krugersdorp under license from Steenkamp's company, Traditional African Pap & Meat. It is also being distributed via Steenkamp's Zadza Distributors to various African countries. The product was exhibited as an SA delicacy at a recent food show in Japan.

Steenkamp says it is too soon to tell how the product is faring locally, but "feedback has been positive".

In 1994, Steenkamp, a former farmer, hit on this as a way to keep cooked maize meal fresh for farm workers. But he realised that adding meat would complicate matters so he approached can manufacturer Nampak Foodcan.

"They were convinced that pap's density was too high for it to be successfully sterilised for canning," says Steenkamp. He eventually cooked the pap samples at home, then raced through to Foodcan's laboratories in Cape Town with the pots wrapped in newspaper.

"When pap cools down it solidifies. It does not become a liquid upon re-heating, which means it has to go into the tin while hot in order to create a vacuum. We also had to consider the potential bacterial hazards once we added the meat, and presentation once the pap and meat had gone through the sterilisation process."

Trials were also done to determine whether the meat should be raw, partially cooked or complete cooked.

Also, after many trials, the correct ratio between the maize meal, gravy and meat texture was found. The SA Bureau of Standards (SABS) wanted a 40% meat content in line with legislation, but a 10% meat content was agreed after market researched showed that even 20% was too much, says Steenkamp. The product also had to be approved by the SABS in terms of colour, taste, presentation, bacterial count, content and quality, and had to have a three year shelf life.

The label proved another headache. The Department of Health and the SABS eventually agreed on the Recommended Daily Allowance and nutritional information, ingredients and serving suggestions, with illustrated heating instructions for the illiterate.

Steenkamp then had to find a SABS-approved factory to manufacture the product. Another two years of negotiations followed with Bull Brand Foods, which finally agreed to both manufacture and market it. This is the first time that Bull Brand Foods has undertaken outside work.

Filling the cans with pap on a production line was easier said than done. "This enormous amount of pap has to reach the can at a specific temperature and liquidity without air bubbles. The filling machines had to be changed and since steam is involved, the ratio between the pap and water had to be adjusted again."

Variants developed by Bull Brand include Mince & Pap, Beef Chakalaka and Chicken Peri-Peri.

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