



# RABE

## SPREEWÄLDER KONSERVEN

- **SECTOR: FOOD PICKLES**  
RABE SPREEWÄLDER KONSERVEN GMBH & CO. KG  
Lübbenau, Brandenburg, Germany  
[www.rabe-gmbh.de](http://www.rabe-gmbh.de)
- Shrink wrapper CSK 50T ERGON



GEO LOCATION

# A FOREST REFLECTED IN WATER

**1** 00 km south-east of Berlin, in the "Spreewald" (Forest of Spree), lies a unique countryside characterised by an alluvial plain which has remained in its natural state. This region, very much like the "Venetian area", is furrowed by a network of over 300 canals and waterways that fill the area of the ancient swampy forest, just like Venice, the Spreewald moves with the water. It's as though you're in another world, each house has its own small boat which move slowly, around the silent canals emersed in the greenery of nature.

This region, which is mainly agricultural, is the home of the Spreewälder Gurken cucumbers, when we speak about the production of cucumbers, horseradish or other vegetables it's impossible not to speak about the Rabe Speewälder Konserven company, which for over five generations has produced and sold numerous varieties of pickles. They recently contacted SMI for the supply of the latest generation CSK 50T to wrap their products in practical shrink-wrap tray and film packages.

## ➤ DISCOVER LÜBBEN AND LÜBBENAU FROM A "PUNT"

Lübben and Lübbenau are the two main cities that interest tourists in the Spreewald region of the Brandenburg Land. To discover the fascination of these places, you need to take a trip along the numerous canals on a boat propelled by a long pole, called a "Punt". Lübbenau is known as the "city of Punts", this kind of rowing boat has a flat bottom and a square bow designed to be used on small, shallow waterways, the "Punter", which is a long pole, is used to move the boat. This picturesque type of boat is of vital importance to the inhabitants of this area, in this way they can explore the impracticable swampy area through which the river Spree flows. An excursion on a "Punt", is without a doubt, one of the main attractions of the Spreewald. This is thanks to more than 300 boatmen who offer every kind of trip around the water ways, some offer a trip dressed up in historical costumes, getting the participants to dress up according to the style of the 1800's, or those, especially in winter, who offer drinks of hot punch during the ride. The "Nautilust" is especially interesting, it's a particular kind of boat that has a small research laboratory on board, equipped with microscopes, nets and binoculars to discover the fascinating world below the waters of this wonderful UNESCO biosphere reserve.



# RABE: A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

The history of the Rabe Spreewälder Konserven is tied to the agricultural history of this region of the Sprea Forest, which, by the 15th Century, was already specialising in the cultivation of various kinds of vegetables, especially cucumbers, horseradish and onions. Eaten freshly picked, in a jar with spices, mustard, garlic, and pepper or in the pickled vinegar version, cucumbers from the Sprea Forest are always a tasty snack any time during the day. For people who love these products, there is even a 260 km cycling track, the Gurkenradweg (Road of the Cucumber), along which you can find the whole production cycle, from field cultivation to the wrapping of the filled jars, discovering the never ending delicious varieties of this vegetable. However, not all the secrets are revealed, the inimitable flavour of the pickles produced by this German company are the result of ancient family recipes which are rigorously kept



The cultivation of vegetables has also played an important role in the development of the Spreewald region and has been fundamental to today's economic structure. Since the 15th Century, farmers have specialised in the cultivation of various kinds of vegetables, especially cucumber, horseradish and onions and today, this area of Brandenburg is famous as the land of cucumber cultivation. The history of the Rabe Spreewälder Konserven company began in 1898, when Ernst Lehmann began producing cucumbers and horseradish. In the following years the company was handed over to his son Gustav, who unfortunately died at a very young age obliging his sisters Marie and Frieda Lehmann to look after the family company, even if with less enthusiasm. The turning point took place in 1932, when Kurt Belaschk married Käthe Lehmann, Marie's daughter, and becoming company manager he gave a new lease of life to the ancient family recipes. A few years later, the Rabe Spreewald Konserven was taken over completely by the Belaschk family and since then, its turnover has grown constantly.


## RABE SPREEWÄLDER KONSERVEN GMBH & CO. KG

 **Year of foundation:** 1992 (however activity began in 1898)

 **Place of production:** Lübbenau, Germany

 **Revenue:** 8M Euro

 **Employees:** 60

 **Activity:** production and sale of vegetable based pickles

In April 1979 Rainer Belaschk, Kurt Belaschk's son, together with his wife Heidemarie took over the management of the factory, which in 1992 took the

new denomination "RABE-Spreewälder Konserven GmbH" (RABE comes from the first letters of Rainer BELaschk).



secret to ensure that this quality and uniqueness continue in the future. These are essential values which the Rabe Spreewälder Konserven are always able to guarantee to their customers, thanks



to their accurate packaging process, which uses latest generation technology such as the new automatic SMI shrink wrapper, from the CSK ERGON series.



# THE SMI SOLUTION FOR RABE SPREEWÄLDER KONSERVEN

To automate and optimise the end of line secondary packaging procedure, the German company once again turned to SMI. In 2014 they had already bought a tray former from the TF 400 series. Now the process of modernising the production plant in the Lübbenau factory, made it necessary to invest in a new plant that would be able to wrap different kinds of glass bottles and jars in lots of different tray+film formats. The installation of the new compact shrink wrapper from the CSK series was immediately chosen as the best solution, as this packaging machine with its cutting edge technology, is noted for its advanced automation, flexibility of use, energy saving and respect of the environment. The new series of SMI packers has a range of single or twin lane, compact and ergonomic design, the best technology available in the shrink wrap sector with a maximum speed of 50+50 packs/ minute (depending on the size of the container and the pack format).



➔ **CSK 50T SHRINK WRAPPER - For production up to 50 packs/minute**

**Packaged products:** glass jars 0.143L / 0.25L / 0.3L / 0.72 L; glass bottles 0.2 L

**Packages worked:** 4x2 in tray+film (jars 0.143L bottles 0,2L); 3x2 in tray+film (jar 0.25 L); 4x3 in tray+film (jar 0.37 L); 4x3 in tray+film (jar 0.72 L)

**Main advantages:**

- shrink wrapper equipped with a motorised system of oscillating guides at the infeed of the machine, these help to correctly channel the loose containers onto a conveyor equipped with chains made from thermoplastic, with a low friction co-efficient
- formation of loose containers into the desired format in continuous motion by means of electronically synchronized dividing pins and bars
- cardboard magazine situated below the infeed conveyor, from where the cardboard is picked by an alternate motion cardboard blank-picker, situated at the bottom of the cardboard ramp, made up of a set of suckers that work via an empty suction system
- cardboard ramp with a curvilinear shape at the beginning and at the end, to facilitate tray insertion under the group of products at the outfeed of the electronic separator
- film cutting unit with a compact design, where the blade is managed by "direct-drive" brushless motorisation that makes the cutting operation more precise and simplifies maintenance
- new ICOS integrated digital servo-mechanism (driver) motors, that can simplify the machine cabling and ensure greater energy efficiency, less noise and reduced component wear and tear.



## FROM THE FIELD TO THE JAR

### THE LONG JOURNEY OF THE CUCUMBER

The discovery of the cucumber began with golden yellow flowers that bloom in the middle of fields, rich with humus, and quickly produce their tasty fruit, which is rich in vitamins. Once ripe, the cucumbers are picked and undergo constant checking in the laboratories of the Rabe Spreewälder Konserven and in special food institutes so as to guarantee the quality. Apart from these regular checks, the whole range of production undergoes minute selection through which, only the best examples arrive on the consumer's table, as the consumer needs to immediately recognise the quality of the product and its typical rich and spicy flavour. Over the years, this German company has invested a lot of resources in research and development, using the most advanced technology for production and packaging, to ensure that the cucumbers maintain their naturalness and genuineness. These are then sold with the denomination Spreewälder Gurken IGP and are sold fresh, or in jars which are available in many different formats. The pickles are sold in glass jars of 100 gr, 750 gr, 720 ml, 420 gr, 370 ml and 100 ml, and can be flavoured with pepper, spices, garlic or with mustard. The Rabe Spreewälder Konserven products can also be found in 100ml and 200ml tins, in 1000ml buckets or in 30L "hobbock" containers.

# SPREEWALD: A NATURAL PARADISE

Centuries of land cultivation have created a mosaic of meadows, countryside and forest, as well as a network of waterways that extend for over a 1,000 km, characterised by small rivers, canals and over 3,000 lakes and ponds. This is the Sprea Forest, a picturesque area south of Berlin, the

name which was taken from the river Sprea which flows throughout, is an alluvial plain in its natural state, where the development of heterogeneous environments, home to a wide variety of animal and vegetable species, is the lucky result of human intervention. There are still species of animals that live here, which in other places are in danger of becoming

extinct, or have already disappeared, such as the black swan, the otter and the beaver. In 1990, in order to help this countryside, the Sprea Forest was declared a biosphere world nature reserve, recognition which was strengthened by UNESCO in 1991. This biosphere nature reserve offers numerous opportunities to closely discover this unique

heritage, a true natural paradise. If you love nature, you must visit this area incredibly rich with vegetation, where you can take trips on a boat, a canoe or a bike ( the region has around 7,000km of cycle trails), go fishing, listen to the sounds of the forest or visit the villages around it with their traditional houses made from tree trunks and their splendid gardens.



## ➤ LÜBBENAU: THE SECRET CAPITAL

The main town of Spreewald was called the "secret capital" by the poet Theodor Fontane (\*); the little Lübbenau (with around 16,000 inhabitants) is a real gem, a unique place despite the numerous presence of tourists all year round. Within the town's small confines, it's not hard to find the Grosser Hafen, the large port, from which lots of navigation companies set sail. At Lübbenau there are lots of attractions for visitors, starting from the historical centre you can explore the port or the castle (Schloss Lübbenau), today a luxurious hotel that rises within a beautifully equipped park. The city walls, built in the Middle Ages when the first settlers arrived, archeological digs have found relics from the 8th or 9th Century, these interesting objects which show the region's rich history can now be found in the museum next to the city's port.

(\* *Heinrich Theodor Fontane (Neuruppin, 30 December 1819 – Berlin, 20 September 1898) was a German pharmacist, writer, poet considered to have been a representative of poetic realism.*



#### ▶ THE SPREEWÄLDER GURKEN IDENTIKIT

The Spreewälder Gurken IGP is a cucumber belonging to the family of the Cucurbitaceae and it is planted from April to June if grown in the open air, or from December in a heated area such as a greenhouse. Harvesting lasts two to three months and begins around three months from planting, when the fruit is still not ripe it is a shiny green colour. The Spreewälder Gurken IGP can be from 4 to 12 cm long with firm, crispy pulp with a typical slightly bitter taste. The production area of the Spreewälder Gurken IGP is within the territory of the Spreewald, in the southern part of the federal state of Brandenburg.

## ONE PRODUCT... LOTS OF RECIPES

The history of the Rabe Spreewälder Konserven is characterised by success built over time, the result of continual improvement made possible through experience gained from generation to generation, allowing the company to refine and optimise its systems of cultivation, production and conservation. Today this German company takes credit of having a very wide production, which is mainly concentrated on the most famous vegetable of the area, the cucumber. This vegetable is the main ingredient for lots of recipes and is sold with many different flavours, each with a unique taste: natural, with peppers, with vinegar, with garlic, etc. This variety needs a very flexible process for production and putting into jars, which must be able to switch quickly and easily from one format to another, to maintain high levels of operational efficiency within the plant. The machine will be also used to pack other products like tomato sauces, seasoning sauce or spread. For five generations the Rabe Spreewälder Konserven company has produced, packed and distributed a wide range of pickles made from vegetables cultivated in the Spreewald. Apart from the famous cucumber, the company also sells products with pumpkin, red and white cabbage etc. These come from trusted, local farmers who guarantee an immediate supply of fresh vegetables which makes all the preparation phases of the pickles much faster and therefore they are put into jars in the least time possible, guaranteeing that everything inside the jar is fresh and genuine.



# THE WORD TO THE CUSTOMER

## → INTERVIEW WITH MARKUS BELASCHK President and CEO of Rabe Spreewälder Konserven



**Q: Rabe Spreewälder Konserven holds a leading position in the production of pickles, above all for the famous Spreewald cucumbers. What are the key factors to your success?**

**A:** Our aim is to make people's lives simpler and more delicious. We try to combine family traditions, that date back to 1898, with new ideas, technology and trends, putting all our knowledge and experience, lots of love and limitless passion into our work. Thanks to this, we obtain high quality products that have gained the appreciation and respect of many consumers and partners in Germany and other countries.

**Q: What are the main elements at the basis of your choice to invest in a new CSK ERGON shrink wrapper provided by SMI?**

**A:** Everyone knows that you can't stop time! One of the most important aspects at the basis of a successful firm is constant market analysis into trends and changes; adapting immediately to new market conditions and trends, not only helps to avoid unpleasant consequences to sales, but favours the firm's development and strength. Investing in a new CSK 50T ERGON produced by SMI, should increase efficiency and help us to reply to our customers' requests in a more flexible way, by proposing new packs and products.

**Q: In terms of flexibility, innovation and efficiency, what do you require from suppliers of packaging machinery?**

**A:** At the moment we are a small company, we live by being flexible! This is without a doubt our main competitive advantage compared to bigger companies. The elevated flexibility of the new packer is possible through the reduced number of components involved when changing format and by the high level of technology that is used to carry out the procedure. This means that less time is spent going from one type of production to another, and this is one of the main reasons that we chose to invest in SMI machinery. The useful efficiency of resources and the use of latest generation technology are essential elements for the output and reliability of our production line.

**Q: What are the market trends at the moment?**

**A:** Currently market trends are slowly taking us to a choice of food that is healthier and very diverse, based on a strong regional "background". Today's consumers pay more attention to the amount of sugar and fat in food and more and more often artificial additives and preservatives are being put under the microscope. At the same time, shops are requesting products that cost less, are safer and that can be stored longer. All these aspects are important, as they come from the needs of the final consumers of our products, therefore, they deserve quick appropriate replies all of which become possible through the use of modern production systems that are automated and versatile.

**Q: What role will sustainability play in the food industry over the next 5-10 years?**

**A:** The Earth's population is increasing constantly, while the resources on this planet are limited and running out quickly. Therefore, the efficient sustainable use of existing resources is fundamental to allowing the ecosystem and our social fabric to continue over a long period, While in the short term, economic obligations are pushing everything involved in the economic cycle to use resources in a reasonable and cautious way. Therefore, we can say that sustainability, in all its aspects, is an element of extraordinary importance for the future survival of every company.

# IN THE HOMELAND OF CUCUMBERS, HISTORY AND CURIOSITY

**Y**ou can't go to the Spreewald without tasting these typical pickled gherkins (cucumbers) - Spreewälder Gurken - which is now an IGP product, that has to its name a long tradition passed down from generation to generation. Here are a few curiosities about this vegetable:

- it was already famous in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), after Germany was re-unified in 1990, the Spreewälder Gurken IGP was one of the few products still available.
- In the 2003 film "Good Bye, Lenin!" produced by the German Wolfgang Becker, the cucumber is one of the favourite foods eaten by the mother of the protagonist, Alex. Alex wants her to believe that he is still working in the GDR, so with great difficulty he tries to get them for her.
- There are cucumber fields in all the Spreewald, the biggest part has been protected since 1990, like the Spreewald Biosphere World Nature Reserve.
- In the area of the "Sprea Forest" over 40.000 tonnes of cucumbers are picked each year, eaten fresh or pickled, they are greatly appreciated as a side dish for plates of meat or cheese.



▪ The Spreewälder Gurken IGP is so well-known, that it has given its name to the Gurken-Radweg, or the "cucumber bike path".

▪ Every year the Spreewald-Marathon starts to the shout of "Auf die Gurke, fertig, los!", or "On your cucumber, get set, go!".

