

PRESS ARTICLE

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Expanding the liquid dairy market – Aseptic PET helps deliver Aurora Organic Dairy's mission



Aurora Organic Dairy installed an Aseptic Combi Predis™ from Sidel in their second milk plant, a greenfield project in Columbia, Missouri. FDA-approved and part of a complete line, which also features Tetra Pak Processing Systems technology, this bottling solution helped the key player in the US organic dairy market expand its organic milk offerings from ultra-pasteurized cartons and HDPE gallon jugs to PET. This choice marks the start of a new journey for Aurora: bottling its UHT milk in PET, ultimately enabling an attractive and premium packaging that reaches consumers in new channels.

Founded in 1976 and headquartered in Colorado, Aurora is a pioneer in the field of sustainable and organic milk production. The company has come a long way from converting its first farm in Colorado to exclusive organic production in 2003 and building its on-farm milk plant in Platteville, Colorado in 2004. Now, Aurora Organic Dairy is the leading producer and processor of store-brand organic milk and butter for US retailers. The company's unique selling point is their philosophy that starts from crop growing to distribution of their award-winning dairy products: the company's vertically integrated supply chain offers unparalleled traceability and affordable organic dairy with excellent quality. As they constantly seek to collaborate with forward-thinking companies that share their values around innovation, they chose Sidel's Aseptic Combi Predis at their new plant in Columbia, Missouri. This solution allows for an expanded product line, namely a variety of products in PET bottles.

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Breaking with traditions to sustain core values in a competitive market

As the leading store-brand organic dairy producer and processor in the US, Aurora continues to challenge themselves in line with their goal: to bring organic milk to mainstream America with the highest quality and freshness, more affordable pricing and improved availability for consumers. According to Aurora Organic Dairy's Chief Customer Officer, Jason Lee, the beverage category has been quickly changing, which makes it difficult to compete in the traditional Liquid Dairy Products (LDP) market without adapting to change. He explains, "We're seeing growth opportunities and customer interest in aseptically bottled milk and milk-based products in PET. These observations have opened the door for unique private brand products to stand out on the shelf – setting them apart from national brands and the more traditional packaging for liquid dairy. We continue to work toward our mission by bringing the nutritional benefits of organic dairy products to more people, in more places with a commitment to integrity in everything we do. This is why we relentlessly seek innovations to achieve product differentiation."

After years of processing ultra-pasteurized milk in gallon jugs and half gallon cartons, Aurora started to bottle low-acid, shelf-stable organic milk in PET in 2019 by choosing Sidel's Aseptic Combi Predis. By doing so, Aurora benefits from increased marketing opportunities while leveraging a cost-effective and flexible production process. PET packaging allows brand differentiation due to the virtually endless design freedom it offers, while ensuring strong brand recognition across a complete bottle family from large to on-the-go formats. These properties are highly valued by Aurora, which is now producing its organic milk bottled in PET in 8oz, 12oz, 16oz and 32oz squared containers, reminiscent of the classic glass milk bottles used for home delivery in the past.

An FDA-approved aseptic PET solution for Aurora

Aurora implemented Sidel's Aseptic Combi Predis because of its certified proficiency: on top of its more than 180 references worldwide, the solution was the world's first aseptic PET filling equipment with dry preform sterilisation to get approved by the FDA three years ago. Thus, Aurora's extremely high standards are preserved by the barrier properties offered by PET – enabling the highest food safety requirements – and the 100% sterile processing and packaging provided by the line. Sidel's reputation in aseptic packaging (more than 40 years both in PET and in aseptic applications) was also a key purchasing factor for Aurora, backed up by their first-hand experience of Sidel's centre of expertise for filling plus some customer visits in the US as well as in Europe to observe the Combi Predis in action.

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Big change made easy

Sidel's Aseptic Combi Predis offers the simplest and fastest dry preform decontamination on the market, the lowest Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and an optimised environmental footprint. No water is used in this process and the use of chemicals is radically reduced while maintaining a high output, offering great ease of operations and ensuring a very flexible production. The latter aspect was a critical success factor in this project, considering Aurora's need for producing multiple SKUs and delivering on store brands' expectations.

Teams from Sidel and Aurora have completed the ramp-up and the commercial validation of the aseptic PET complete line, successfully filling the various bottle formats, now available on the market.

"Our innovation team has been working very closely with the Sidel packaging team to quickly develop new container designs. Sidel has been a great partner throughout this process, and we are extremely excited about the future capabilities this line provides us and our customers," Lee concludes.



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Sidel is a leading provider of equipment and services solutions for packaging beverage, food, home and personal care products in PET, can, glass and other materials.

With over 40,000 machines installed in more than 190 countries, we have nearly 170 years of proven experience, with a strong focus on the factory of tomorrow with advanced systems, line engineering and innovation. Our 5,500+ employees worldwide are passionate about providing solutions that fulfil customer needs and boost the **performance** of their lines, products and businesses.

Delivering this level of performance requires that we stay flexible. We continuously ensure we **understand** our customers' changing challenges and commit to meeting their unique performance and sustainability goals. We do this through dialogue and by understanding the needs of their markets, production and value chains. In turn, we apply our solid technical knowledge and smart data analytics to ensure lifetime productivity reaches its full potential.

We call it **Performance through Understanding**.

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