

STEF Dijon - specialists for freezing blackcurrants

A huge majority of the blackcurrant liqueurs of the world come from Burgundy (France). Not amazingly, you can also find special equipments, infrastructures and companies for the same purpose. STEF Dijon is part of the chain, with solutions for freezing blackcurrants.

Special infrastructure for a special production

In 2014, STEF has adopted an important strategy for the whole cassis production chain. They decided to build a warehouse specially for the needs of the cassis industry in Burgundy. A huge cold storage room of 14.000 m³ is only a part of the whole investment. In total, 2.000 m² are dedicated to blackcurrant storage close to Dijon. *Read more in the global press* STEF Dijon has an annual turnover of 28 million Euro and employs 159 people. Of course, not all of it thanks to blackcurrants only. But the existence of this unique site in France is closely linked to the blackcurrants - for the needs of the liqueur manufacturers. Walking through the warehouses, you can also find peaches, apricots, other berries and cherries. And also all kind of other deep frozen foodstuff.

For the needs of “Crème de cassis”



Every year, when the blackcurrant harvest starts in France, not only the growers are most busy. While the farmers get onto their harvesters in t-shirts and shorts, several seasonal workers put on heavy

warm clothes and gloves. During the hottest time of the year, they will work in such dresses in the warehouses of STEF, a company specializing in refrigerated logistics. Because out of the 6000 tonnes of blackcurrants harvested in France, half will go into the production of “crème de cassis” (blackcurrant liqueur).



And of course, not all of these blackcurrant can be used immediately. Therefore, STEF Dijon has specialized in freezing blackcurrants.



The process - explanations from Sylvain Tatreux, branch manager

“We receive blackcurrants over a duration of three weeks here. They come from the producers in Burgundy or from other production places in France. The best solution for our clients was to freeze the blackcurrants as close as

possible to the place of their processing (in and around Dijon). We can handle up to 220 tonnes of blackcurrants per day. They arrive in crates of 17kg. In peak periods, there are 320 trucks coming and going per day on this site. We therefore give appointments to the producers.”



“Given the huge amount of blackcurrants to deal with in a short period of time, we cannot freeze them individually. This process takes too much time, and has to undergo temperatures of -35 to -50°C. In our warehouse, we store between -18 and

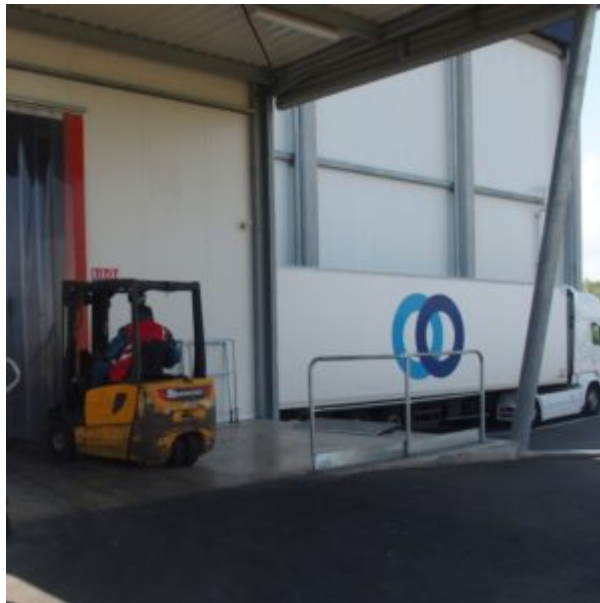


-30°C.”

Freezing blackcurrants at STEF Dijon, step by step



Vehicles arrive fully loaded on a weighbridge. The staff present at the reception assigns a batch number for each blackcurrant variety. They put aside a sample of each for analyses. STEF's clients will come and take them to their respective laboratories in order to check the sugar content and residue levels. The staff members bring the crates into the cold room for 48 hours. They can handle 800 tonnes of



blackcurrants per week.

Reconditioning



Once the blackcurrants are frozen, the staff starts to recondition them. This process will last for more than two months. Staff members empty the crates on a selection desk and remove remaining leaves or boughs from the blackcurrants. From the conveyor belt, the blackcurrants fall into big bags, with a weight according to the clients' needs. 76% of STEF's clients are small and medium sized enterprises.





From the reconditioning room back into the cold room, the big bags can now stay at the warehouse for a maximum duration of 2 years. Whenever the companies now need blackcurrants, they can fetch them from the STEF warehouse and process them.

STEF Dijon - a unique project for blackcurrants

“Storing under such conditions is much more expensive than storing under room temperature.” explains Sylvain Tartreaux. “For a warehouse of the same size than ours, this represents an additional cost of 2 million Euro. We therefore have signed a contract with our partners over 9 years, which allowed us to build up this special equipment for their needs.” Today, STEF is the European leader in freezing logistics.

STEF is present also in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. But the warehouse in Burgundy with its infrastructure and working methods adapted to the blackcurrant industry, under standards of ISO 9001 and 50 001, is unique.