Tech advances lend new twist to cappers

Gas-flushing, real-time sensing and other enhancements make capping machinery more adaptable than ever.

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Executive Editor

Capping is where primary packaging receives closure, so to speak.

When the cap goes on a container, it's literally the last chance to address packaging concerns like handling, atmosphere control and ease of opening. In addition, cappers present many compatibility issues: They must be synchronized with the rest of the line (especially the fillers) and must be altered to fit changes in size to both containers and closures.

Technological advancements in capping machinery are addressing many of these concerns. The use of advanced electronics, sensors and design enhancements allow today's cappers to handle a greater variety of containers and closures with more speed and precision than ever.

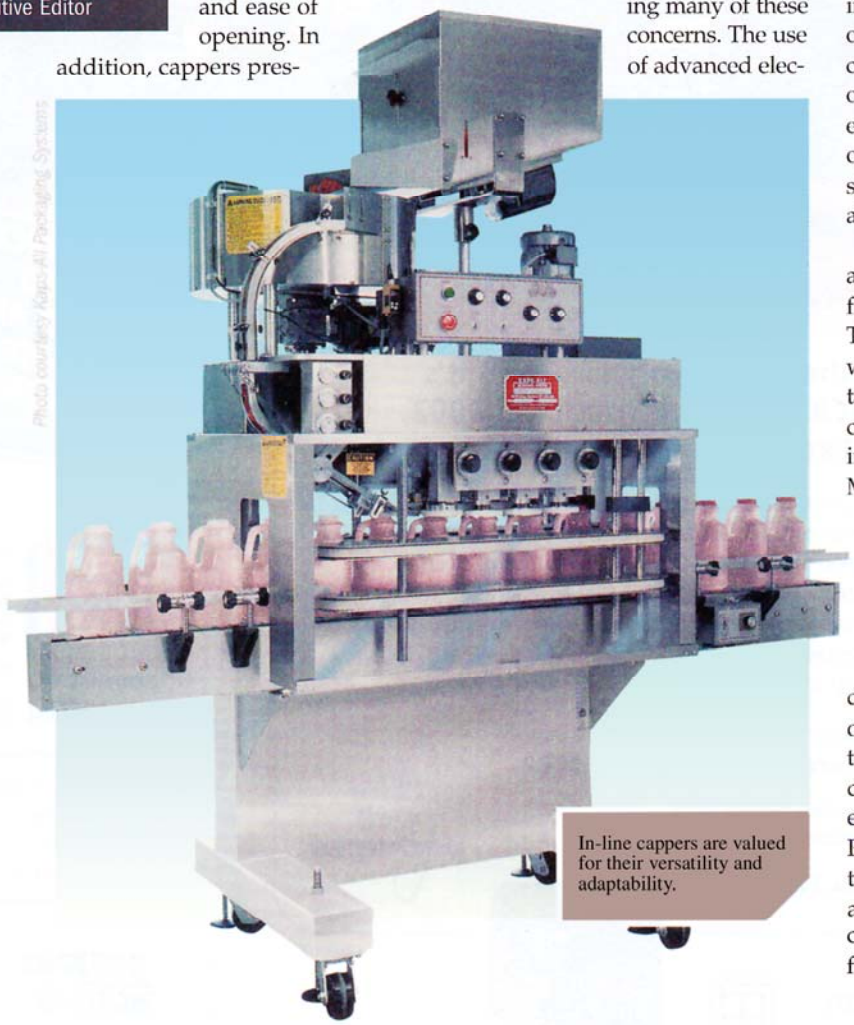

Photo courtesy Kaps-All Packaging Systems

In-line cappers are valued for their versatility and adaptability.

Perhaps the most basic question in capper specification, at least when screw-on closures are involved, is whether to use rotary or in-line machinery. This choice comes down to the basic question of speed vs. versatility. Rotary equipment usually is for dedicated operations that need to run at high speed, where more capital is available for equipment purchases.

In-line equipment usually is appropriate for operations where flexibility is valued over speed. This often describes applications where at least some of the container sizes are relatively large; big containers take longer to fill, reducing the need for capper speed. Many in-line fillers use disk rollers instead of chucks to tighten caps, allowing changeovers to be accomplished without having to extract and replace parts.

"When we have to make a change, we just change the chute dimension, the height and width of our gripper belt and the height and torque dimension of our tightening disks," says Gary Desroisiers, project manager for Leiner Health Products, a private-label manufacturer of nutritional supplements and over-the-counter pharmaceuticals. Leiner uses in-line cappers from Kaps-All Packaging Systems.

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