

Spanish sushi adventure

Small, delicious and in demand. The Spanish people have recently discovered (and delight in) Japanese sushi – produced locally using Norwegian salmon.

Workers dressed from head to toe in white, wearing masks to cover their mouths and noses and with blue plastic aprons and gloves move quickly from production station to production station in the huge factory halls in Valencia. Beautifully sliced salmon, tuna and shrimp are efficiently draped over carefully weighed fingers of rice placed on white trays. Quick hands fill black trays with an assorted selection of nigiri or salmon sashimi before the trays continue on the conveyor belt to the packaging and transport stations.

Every single day, 65 employees at the new Lerøy plant in Valencia produce up to 60,000 delicious pieces of sushi for the Spanish people. 2019 was the first entire year of operations for the factory, where production started in the spring of 2018.

“The healthy cuisine from Asia is increasing in popularity on the Spanish market, and we have specialised in ready meals such as sushi. These products are becoming more and more popular with consumers in Spain,” explains Antonio Diez, CEO for Lerøy in Spain. He is in charge of four factories and a total of 429 employees in Spain, where the main activities are processing of fish and ready meals.

Intense start-up

“Previously, we sold whole salmon and whitefish to Spain, and we have had a strong position on the Spanish market for many years. We wanted to gain a closer position to the market, and this required us to set up our own production in Spain. With local production, we can achieve the level of flexibility needed to supply processed seafood to the market. We opened sales and distribution in Spain in 2013, with our headquarters in Madrid,” explains Lina Larsen, Sales and Concept Manager in Spain.

Antonio Diez has his office in Madrid, where he is in charge of administration for Lerøy Processing Spain. In January 2013, he was the first – and at that time only – Lerøy employee in Spain, and can now look back on a busy and eventful period.

“I’ve had a number of exciting years setting up the facilities in Barcelona, Valencia and Alicante, in addition to the one in Madrid. Our factory in Valencia is the first that we have built based entirely on our own specifications. With this factory, we have

focused on efficiency and sustainable energy systems, and we reuse energy to the greatest extent possible. However, the most important issues when producing ready meals are hygiene and food safety – and we have developed excellent routines in this field, which we are happy to share with the rest of the Lerøy Group,” he proudly confirms.

Continuous growth

The factory in Valencia extended its product range in 2019:

“We set up a separate production line for gyoza last year. Gyoza are Japanese dumplings, and the new production line is completely new, modern, automated and extremely efficient. We have high expectations for this product and our production,” Antonio Diez confirms.

However, even though we have a number of machines to simplify production, our employees are still the heart and soul of our factories.

“Our employees play an extremely important role, obviously. Our goal is to make sure they want to work for Lerøy for many years to come. If we are to achieve this, we have to give them the space to develop and enjoy their work. We are now in the process of actively communicating the company’s core values, so that everyone at work is aware of what honest, open, responsible and creative mean,” explains the CEO.

Feel valued

In conversations with the employees, we hear words such as pride, responsibility and stability over and over again.

“For me, Lerøy is a company that allows its employees the potential to grow professionally. I feel valued as a person here, and not just as a number among all the employees,” says one of the staff at Valencia during a survey recently conducted by the Lerøy Group.

Another employee explained how Lerøy has helped increase his quality of life: “I feel flattered that a foreign company is investing in our local community and helping the people of Valencia dream about living a full life. It gives us faith that there are still good people in this world.”



"I hope Lerøy will stay in Valencia for ever," says Nuria Peris.