

**MassMEP Helps Small But "Sweet" Company Grow Without Going Nuts**  
*Working with Manufacturing Expert Helps Concord Based Carolyn's Gourmet Collections  
Improve Profit*

**Concord, MA** - It's hard to say which is growing faster, Carolyn's Gourmet Collections reputation for making some of the finest gourmet sweets and chocolates, or its production space. Based in Concord, Massachusetts, the company is quickly becoming known for mouth watering products such as coated and flavored nuts, white and dark chocolate "bark," toffee, dried fruits, and syrup filled cookies called stroopwafels.

Earlier this year the company even received the honor of being asked to place some of its signature products in gift baskets sent to Academy Award nominees like Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Richard Gere, Hillary Swank and Renee Zellweger.

With success comes growth, and while Carolyn's offers sweets with big taste, the company operates out of a small production facility. Hans Van Putten, the President and owner of Carolyn's contacted the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP) to help develop a new layout, incorporating additional equipment.

When the company purchased new equipment including a Form, Fill and Seal machine, a new nut roaster, and a fire-mixer for toffee, they were concerned about where they would put everything because they had fully utilized their existing space.

"I had an idea in my head about the new layout I wanted and how I would like to incorporate the new machinery," said Van Putten. "Joe Rizzo from the Mass MEP was a great sounding board for which ideas would work, what was good in theory and things I should consider that I never imagined,"

Joe Rizzo, a Lead Project Manager for the Mass MEP, visited Carolyn's, took a plant tour with Van Putten and reviewed their space restrictions and the space requirements of the new equipment.

After reviewing the requirements for the new layout, Rizzo completed a dimensional layout of the facility in its current condition and then created a new layout incorporating Lean Manufacturing (Lean) principles.

Lean is a technique utilizing simple but effective methods to identify and reduce waste and excess inventory, clear shop floors and streamline production processes all with a goal of decreasing costs and increasing productivity.

"Hans gets quite a few custom orders but he also has his standard products that he produces, so I created a new layout that included two production flow lines," said Rizzo. "One line was for high volume products and the second line was for small, customized orders. I also instituted Point of Use storage which helps manufacturers eliminate steps by putting all the components in one centralized area rather than having them spread out across the shop."

The combination of the new equipment and an improved layout helped Carolyn's make better utilization of its existing space, resulting in a significant improvement of profit margins.

"The products that different types of manufacturers make may vary, but no matter what industry you work in, there's always waste and unnecessary steps that can be eliminated," added Rizzo. "The goal of the MassMEP is to help manufacturers, whether they're making chocolates, televisions or Navy destroyers, eliminate that waste and increase productivity and profitability."

The MassMEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business "coaches" whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information, please visit [www.massmep.org](http://www.massmep.org), or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.

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