

BEHIND THE SCENES AT

Linda McCartney Foods

by Alex Connell

What an honour, to be able to visit the factory that produces the Linda McCartney range. I've been enjoying Linda McCartney products for the past 18 years and my first vegetarian cookbook was *Vegetarian Home Cooking* by Linda McCartney, so it was a real delight to be able to visit the heart of the action. Linda's passion for healthy vegetarian food comes out in her books – her own kitchen was the heart of the household and she loved sharing her food and her recipes.

Based in Fakenham, Norfolk, the Linda McCartney brand was launched in 1991 and has gone from strength to strength. The range is a familiar sight in supermarkets up and down the country and I would imagine that thousands of people, both vegetarians and meat eaters, will have tried at least one of the products. It's still the fastest growing frozen vegetarian food brand in the UK.

Naturally, the company only makes vegetarian products, and in fact the entire site is a meat free zone. It's also a nut and sesame free zone, which is great for anybody with allergies. On the day we visited the legendary Country Pies were being made. The pastry, which is vegan, is freshly made on site, rolled out and put into cases. Then the filling is added and the lids go on. The pies are fast-frozen (to avoid the need for preservatives) and packed by hand into boxes to be sent all over the

country. Other than a metal detector and of course strict attention to food hygiene, it could have been a domestic kitchen... although you would need a big kitchen to produce the 5.1million Country Pies that are eaten in the UK each year!

The company has a strong eco policy and they're continually looking for ways to improve. New machinery seals the boxes without heat – that means less energy is used – and of course the boxes are recyclable.

Each product in the range is developed in 'Linda's Kitchen', a smaller building adjacent to the main factory. Away from the hurly burly, the team of chefs creates new and exciting dishes. We were lucky enough to try the newly launched range: Cannelloni, Cottage pie, Chilli with potato wedges and Meatballs with pasta. The McCartney family sample products at the development stage and make various suggestions of how they could be improved, and

back at the main factory, the products are tested daily by a tasting panel to make sure they are up to scratch.

Many thanks to James Gentle (Marketing Manager for the Linda McCartney brand) and all the staff at the factory and kitchen for taking the time to show us around. Now, what's for tea? I think a BBQ with a few Linda McCartney sausages is the order of the day...

www.lindamccartneyfoods.co.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

31.28 million Linda McCartney sausages are sold in the UK every year – that's enough sausages to make a chain three times the length of Britain!

Linda McCartney

Linda McCartney
Food to come home to.
2 vegetarian farmhouse pies
Meat Free Monday

Linda McCartney
Food to come home to.
vegetarian cottage pie
Meat Free Monday

- ✓ A good source of protein
- ✓ Free from artificial colours, flavours and preservatives

Linda McCartney
Food to come home to.
vegetarian toad in the hole
Meat Free Monday

- ✓ An excellent source of protein