

Welcome

To the Stinson Canning Company. We are pleased to have you visit the nation's newest and most modern sardine packing plant.

THE STINSONS

SARDINE HISTORY

The sardine is a small, immature herring. It has a most interesting history and has been enjoyed as a delicacy for centuries. According to the Maine Sardine Council and U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, records of Sardine fishing in Europe date back to 495 A.D. However, there is no way of knowing when the small fish was first harvested in America. Our early North Atlantic coast colonists found that Indian tribes had been harvesting herring for a long time using brush weirs.

Sardines are one of the most abundant food fishes in the North Atlantic, especially in the Gulf of Maine. Only in Maine and the Canadian province of New Brunswick are small herring canned as sardines. The first United States commercial sardine canning operation was at Eastport, Maine, in 1871. Today, Maine fisherman harvest annually billions of the fish which are packed into about 200 million cans. The product is worth more than \$20 million each year. Maine's modern canneries supply well over half of the sardines consumed in the United States.

STINSON CANNING COMPANY

Prospect Harbor, Maine



The
nation's most modern
sardine packing plant.

GOULDSBORO HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

#1406.002

Guest Tour Guide



Stinson Canning Company, Prospect Harbor, Maine

The Stinson Canning Company was formed in 1927 by Cal Stinson, Sr. who is now Chairman of the Board. Over a period of four decades the company has grown from one plant to four and from a handful of employees to over 600. The firm is managed by Charles Stinson, President, and Cal Stinson, Jr., Treasurer.

The actual processing of the sardines begins aboard the carrier boat. As the fish are harvested from the nets into the hold of the boat they are salted layer by layer. This preserves the fish during the sardine carrier's trip to the cannery. On arrival at the cannery the catch is inspected and approved by a State of Maine inspector. The young herring are then pumped from the carrier into salt brine holding tanks where they remain for several hours. This keeps them firm and adds to their flavor.

On your tour of the Stinson Canning Company, production areas are numbered to correspond with the following descriptions of the packing process.

(1) From the brining tanks the fish are transported on a conveyor to the cutting and eviscerating machine which automatically removes heads and tails and cuts fish into proper size for packing. This machine was engineered by Trio Maskinindustri, of Norway, and is being production line tested by Stinson Canning for the entire industry.

(2) The herring, now ready for packing, move along to the packing room where several hundred highly skilled women workers neatly pack them in tin cans.

(3) The packed cans of sardines are placed in racks which in turn are loaded onto special trucks. The trucks are then rolled into a steam box for pre-cooking. After the pre-cook, the cans are removed from the steam box and drained.

(4) The cans are now ready for sealing. At this point on the production line oils or sauces are added, then the covers are sealed on automatically.

(5) From the sealing machine the cans travel on a conveyor belt to the retort, or pressure cooker. All cans of sardines are inspected before entering the retort. In the retort the cooking process is completed and the contents of the can sterilized.

(6) After cooking, the cans are removed from the retort and placed on cooling tables. Following a cooling period the cans of sardines are placed on pallets and transported to the shipping room. Here they are packed in cartons and prepared for shipment. Maine's delicacy from the briny deep is now ready to be shipped nationwide and enjoyed by millions of Americans.

(7) Another interesting area of the Stinson Canning Company is the can making division. Here the company manufactures its own cans and covers from sheets of pre-lithographed metal.

Constant control and inspection during the packing process assures the consumer of a high quality product which must meet exacting standards of taste, fragrance, texture and packing.

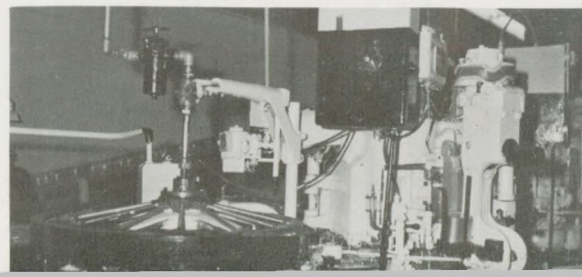
Sardine Carrier unloading at Stinson Wharf



Skilled hands packing sardines



Tops being sealed automatically to cans



Emptying cans from retort

