

Multifaceted partner

Atlantic C presents new filler
on the occasion of the 25th company anniversary

For more than 25 years now, Atlantic C has been a partner of the beverage industry. After its beginnings as an automation partner for wineries, the company from Bernkastel-Kues has continuously developed and today offers software solutions as well as packing, palletizing and storage concepts. New in the portfolio is the AC Fill filler, designed for small and medium-sized breweries and beverage bottlers. The BRAUINDUSTRIE talked to owner Rolf Gänz about the company history and the new filler.



Rolf Gänz (right), owner of Atlantic C, in conversation with BRAUINDUSTRIE editor Benedikt Meier

BRAUINDUSTRIE: *Mr. Gänz, you founded Atlantic C in 1994, so last year you celebrated your 25th anniversary. Please take us with you into the early days of your company.*

Rolf Gänz: Together with my wife I founded Atlantic C in 1994 and initially offered software solutions for the workflow in the beverage industry. We came to the market just in time to accompany the change in the wine industry towards automation. In particular, the increased requirements for flexibility for greater diversification and special products had to be integrated into the processes. At that time, we were able to support large companies with innovative proposals to streamline their processes. One example: Two of our first customers were the wineries Peter Mertes in Bernkastel-Kues and Reh in Leiwen, both on the Moselle. In both cases it was necessary to reorganize processes and introduce flexible solutions for the gentle grouping and packing of bottles into cartons and crates and their further processing.

BI: *What are the milestones in the History of your company?*

Gänz: There are two directions in which we developed. One was our branch in Shanghai for the marketing of German machines from 1997 and the exclusive distribution there for the brands Köstritzer, König and Licher of the Bitburger brewery. This activity was mainly supervised by my wife from 1997 until the end of 2016.

On the other hand, it remained our focus to completely cover beverage filling and the associated processes and to act as a full-service provider for complete projects. For this reason, we took over the German sales and distribution for the dynamic floor buffer system from Hartness in 1999. As a result, significant increases in efficiency and improvements in OEE in the filler sector were feasible for many manufacturers.

In 2001 a partnership with the Italian filler manufacturer Bertolaso was added. This enabled us to convince customers from the beverage industry, such as Gallo, California, in 1997, or Les Grands Chais de France, with tailor-made solutions in the wet and dry sections. In addition to these partnerships, I would see a further milestone in the fact that we

were able to carry out the major merger project of Hardenberg-Wilthen AG and Underberg AG in 2007 and the relocation of the production lines from the three company sites of these manufacturers. The time window was narrow: we only had three months.

BI: *So Atlantic C initially established as a partner of the wine industry. How did the leap into other areas of the beverage industry and other branches of industry succeed?*

Gänz: Well, word of good work is getting around and the beverage industry is quite well networked. So inquiries from other industries followed. At Hansa Heemann we implemented a production and plant optimisation for two plants. For Milchunion Hocheifel, we developed a mixing robot that not only unpacks trays but also loads the same trays with a mixed product range according to customer requirements. These are just two examples where we have been able to show that we are not only good at wine.

BI: *Can you give us some details to the packing and palletising solutions and warehouse logistics, which are also part of your portfolio?*



Packing and palletizing solutions are also part of Atlantic C's portfolio.

Gänz: The portfolio ranges from gantry solutions on a small footprint to supplying filling plants with a specially developed, fully automated satellite warehouse. Then order picking is a large field of activity: We were able to implement an automatic pre-picking system for 30 truckloads consisting of two floors and thus decouple the compilation and loading of the truckloads during automatic order picking. Also for the production of mixed trays for the supply of the large chains we have a good solution available. In

addition, the acquisition of an Augsburg-based automation specialist for the bobbin / filament division of the textile industry has opened up great potential for us from 2010.

The company is the market leader in this niche area and has extensive know-how in handling difficult products including data tracking. In the meantime, we have sold the company again, but we have been able to adapt technologies for the beverage industry, for example for the construction of fully automated high-bay warehouses, overhead conveyor systems and driverless transport systems for intralogistics technologies - topics that are definitely in demand in beverage operations or in the food industry.

BI: *In 2017 you have acquired the filling technology of the Slovenian manufacturer ICS. How did this come about and what were your motives behind it?*

Gänz: The Bertolaso and Atlantic C paths had previously separated, so we needed a supplement on the filler side. In addition, we also want to serve customers in the brewing industry, which was not possible with the Bertolaso fillers.

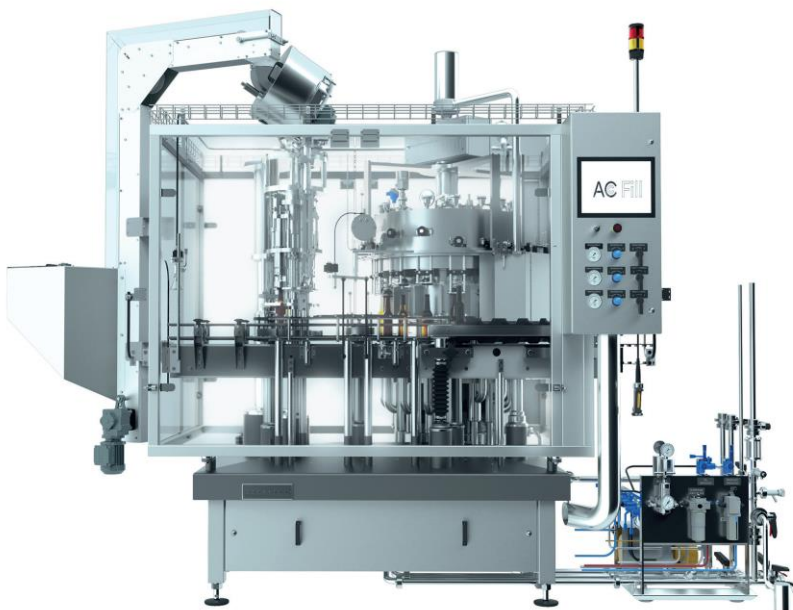
In this respect, it was a good opportunity that ICS was for sale. We took a close look at it and found that the fillers received a good rating from the customers and are very reliable. One example: the filler at the Dutch brewery Jopen is a filler from the ICS production and the brewery management is very satisfied. It was particularly important to us that we have a good range of products for small and mediumsized breweries, and the variably dimensioned filler for PET and glass bottles is very well suited for this.

BI: You have extensively modernized the former Slovenian filling technology and adapted it to today's requirements. Please take a look at the most important further developments.

an output of 4 000 bottles an hour was installed in October at the Knoblach Brewery in Schammelsdorf, Franconia.

now want to become a constant on the filler market with this filling technology. Our message to breweries or soft drink bottlers is that the requirements of medium-sized companies are best met by medium-sized companies. With us, there are short contact channels, personal support and just as much technology as the medium-sized brewer needs. And of course it would be a good opportunity for users in the market to have a complete line built by Atlantic C, including packing and palletizing. But it would be too short a leap, if we always look only at the machine or line side, because even closer coordination between man, machine and material is absolutely necessary. Here I see a lot of potential for manufacturers in the beverage and food industry. This is far from being exhausted.

BI: Mr Gänz, thank you very much for the interview! (bm)



With AC Fill, Atlantic C wants to become a constant on the filler market, says Rolf Gänz.

Gänz: First of all: All users of an ICS filler have purchased an extremely reliable and robust filler from ICS. But of course, we also included optimisations in the initial design of the AC Fill. This applies, for example, to the design of the filling valve and the lifting unit, where we have made improvements. This benefits Hygienic Design, as we can now maintain even higher hygiene standards in many areas. In addition, a roofable table top is now planned. Easy maintenance was important to us, especially when it comes to regular lubrication tasks. Easy maintenance was important to us, especially when it comes to regular lubrication tasks. We use self-lubricating bearings wherever possible. Therefore only a few separate lubrication lines remain, which are easily accessible. Another aspect is especially important for small breweries: We build with our smallest machine on 2.9 x 1.7 meters with a height of 2.6 meters. This is compact and can be easily installed in very confined spaces.

BI: Are there already initial practical experiences with the new filler?

Gänz: Yeah, we're already on the market. The AC Fill filler - this is the name of the new filler series - with

The filler is an isobaric counterpressure filler with a short tube as return gas tube. We therefore rely on the well-known counterpressure filling system with electropneumatic control. The filler there has 15 filling valves at a 151 machine pitch. The integrated crown cork capper has four capping heads, also with a pitch of 151 mm. This is our smallest model, which we can expand up to an output of 16 500 bottles per hour - then with 50 filling valves and 10 capping heads. We use a 0.5-liter standard bottle, a product with 6 grams of CO₂ and a filling temperature of 5 °C as reference values.

BI: How was the response to your new filler during the BrauBeviale 2019 trade fair?

Gänz: The BrauBeviale was a good start for us to introduce the filler. We were able to show selected customers the filler at the Knoblach Brewery on site, and thus not only give a dry course in filling technology, but also aim at the real conditions in a brewery.

BI: What plans do you have for Atlantic C in the future?

Gänz: It goes without saying that we