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PRECOATS FOR BETTER BATTERED, BREADED PRODUCTS

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With their crispy, crunchy outsides and moist, juicy insides, battered and breaded food products are irresistible, but it can be a challenge to maintain those desirable attributes once they've been frozen then reheated by the end user.

Advanced Food Systems, Inc., offers a variety of precoats that help improve batter/breading adhesion, moisture retention and freeze/thaw stability, even when microwave heated.

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"Our precoats provide a functional interface between the batter and the substrate," says Mark Purpura, technical service manager. "For example, in a skin-on chicken product, the surface of the skin is much more lipophilic, whereas the batter is much more hydrophilic, so batters hydrated in water don't typically adhere to the skin well. If you put a functional precoat on before the batter, much of the surface tension between the skin and the batter is released, which helps the batter adhere to the skin."

The company's Seal 'N Crisp™ product line includes Precoating 16, an ingredient that promotes batter adhesion, improves texture and crispiness, seals in moisture during frying, and reduces oil absorption. Seal 'N Crisp Precoating AR-46D, a precoating for chicken wings, improves texture, provides freeze/thaw and bake/fry stability, provides moisture retention, improves crispiness, and prevents moisture migration.

Seal 'N Crunch Precoat 18 enhances crispiness upon frying, provides a moisture barrier between the coating and substrate, and reduces spotting that results from protein purge in battered/breaded products. Seal 'N Crisp Precoat CS, specially designed for batter and breaded fish patties, improves adhesion and helps keep products crispy when held under a heat lamp.

While the products are largely used to produce battered and breaded products, both fried and baked, Purpura says the precoats can also be used as a pre-dust on products that aren't battered or breaded. "Used as a pre-dust on chicken wings, for example, they give just a little bit of crunch to help enhance texture," he says. "We've also used precoats this way on egg rolls. Before they're fried, the egg rolls are dusted; this helps keep the product crispy upon microwaving by the end user. We've also developed versions that accelerate browning and help to retain moisture released during cooking to help improve cook yield."

While these precoats can be custom-flavored, AFS also offers the Seal 'N Saucy precoating system, a dry precoating system that, upon frying, creates a flavorful saucy interface between the substrate and batter/breading, eliminating the need for dipping sauce. "It was developed for popcorn shrimp and popcorn chicken," Purpura says. "If you precoat the chicken and shrimp with Seal 'N Saucy, and then batter and bread it, the precoat turns into a liquid glaze when it's reheated. It's a highly functional, flavored precoat." Seal 'N Saucy precoatings are available in a range of flavor profiles, including Buffalo, Cheddar, Pepper Jack, honey mustard, BBQ, Chipotle BBQ, ketchup and marinara.

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