



The Italian way of going to press

Angus Kennedy recently visited GSR Cocoa Machinery in the North of Italy for a full factory tour and an interview with Luigi and Giuseppe Turla. In this month's cover story, Angus presents a full account of his fascinating trip

I love the sort of editorial trips where you're not entirely sure what adventure you are on and what you will see when you wake up in your hotel and open the curtains; but you know everything is going to be unusually wonderful. I know that sounds a little cliché, but we are talking of the infectious mix of the magnetic presence of the Turla family combined with the unforgettable scenery of Italy's stunning mountains, painted boats, clear rivers, flowers, cobbled squares and lakes. I'm next to Lake Como and precisely "that branch of lake

Corno....." mentioned by Alessandro Manzoni.

So beautiful it is, that the GSR machines seem to radiate the aesthetics of this stunning region of Italy. As soon as I arrived, like with a lot of our wonderful customers, I didn't want to go home, not least because my host, Giuseppe, was your perfect host that possessed such passion for the business and life, that it would take you to the outer edges of the universe and back!

Giuseppe, the son of the founder Luigi Turla, filled me in the night before over dinner as we dined watching the

sunset go down on Lake Como. Blimey! I was thinking, this is dangerously hypnotising; what a great way to buy a machine, I thought; things are looking curiously favourable already. Giuseppe gave me the story most enthusiastically on the company background before the following day's tour of their factory in Calolziocorte, a perfectly placed town on the edge of the lake and mountains.

"Yes it's beautiful here," he said smiling, as I remembered incidentally, what real pasta should taste like. "We have been a market-leading manufacturer of machines, accessories

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and spare parts for cocoa pressing processes since 1992 Angus. The company was started by my father, Luigi, who you will meet tomorrow. He used to work in Carle & Montanari as General Manager and the opportunity came to exit and go his own way. So he set up a new independent company to produce cocoa presses through his entrepreneurial spirit, careful diligence and sheer commitment.

It's a real privilege for me to be working here you know. We worked very hard together, all of us, since we started nearly 25 years ago", Giuseppe continued. "It didn't happen over night. Yes, while my friends were playing football and enjoying life, I was working with my father and our team to make this work. It's been a magnificent journey and I love all my customers as a result! We worked hard to create such an environment of wonderful staff, perfect client relationships and state-of-the-art production. And, he says laughing, "some of my clients even invite me to their weddings Angus!"

I believed it. I thought, indeed he would be a cool person to have at a wedding: passionate, articulate with a strong vision for the future of the company and staff. But above all, with 200 days of his year visiting clients, he is able to move quickly to adapt their machines.

"We spend a lot of time with our clients – we know what they like and what would work and where we can improve. I collect this information during my visits and we are the perfect size to adapt quickly. Feedback comes from

long-term relationships. Combined with our experience in presses overall (including our competitors) we are aware and careful to avoid mistakes that have been made by others. So we improve the quality and fix any problems right away. It's the small details that count, making things easier to clean, more efficient, less down time, safer... we look at everything all the time."

I retired that evening truly fired up on what I was going to see the next day. I was greeted by Luigi, the founder, and his team. The factory was spotless and their machines had a real presence about them. Well, any passionately crafted 39 tons machine coming in at 7m long that has been built with style, colour, precision and love and is a genuine reflection of customers ongoing needs. I'm attracted to their press on the factory floor like a giant magnet. I had a thousand questions about it. We stood

in front of this brilliantly sculptured press and hypnotising aesthetics. Keep in mind readers, I normally see them in action, some of them very many years old. But this one was in the show room, engineered to perfection with incredible Italian precision.

Luigi Turfa was keen to tell me about the press. I listened as I ran my fingers over one of the pots. We are assisted here now by Carlo Inzani, Sales Manager, who is also a key part of the team who translates this next interview.

Luigi Turfa: Angus, firstly I want to say that the area here is perfect for an engineering and manufacturing company to be situated. Local colleges and schools, along with a fine tradition of engineering in the region makes for the perfect place to be located for GSR. Industry in this area goes back hundreds of years and many fine products are produced here, as well as our cocoa presses!

AK: So tell me about this particular machine that we're standing next to? It's huge! Is it destined to go anywhere? And how big is it?

LT: This is part of a complete pressing line, but obviously we also produce singular machinery. Now you are looking to the press and accessories. It's not possible to assemble the full line here at GSR's facility, so we assemble singular machinery and test electrical, hydraulic and mechanical elements. After this, we ship the machinery to the customer.

AK: So are all the machines different, or are they adapted?



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LT: We have standard machinery that is customised in function based on the needs of the customer. But the requirement of the customer can vary, and we first need to find which machine they need: are they looking to produce one tonne per hour, or up to ten tonnes or more? Once we fully understand the customer's needs, we customise the line in function to the type of the product that needs to be processed.

AK: So what about this amazing press here? How much does it weigh, and what does it do exactly?

LT: This is a 16 pots press and it weighs 39 tonnes; but it's not our largest press. We have two larger sizes and this one is 7 metres long. This press is able to process over 1,3/1,4 tonnes per hour of cocoa liquor, depending on the fat content the customer needs on the product, and this line is designed to work 24 hours a day, and 330 or more days each year. The machinery can be a non-stop line!

AK: And how about energy conservation? Is that a big concern for many of your customers?

LT: Yes, it's interesting because we work a lot on safe energy, and for a long time we have been developing a new control to save energy to use a very small fraction of energy needed during the processes. In the beginning, there were 30 kilowatt machines, and higher, but the controls we have on the new GSR system use less quantity at the beginning and a high quantity of energy

when necessary. When the product needs energy, we give energy; and when the product doesn't need energy, we save it. This is our philosophy. In terms of power generation, this press here is 550 bar, but now, if you made the calculations, the push on the product at the maximum pressure will reach 980 kg/cm² on the product. This is an impressive quantity.

AK: That's huge, I never heard it like that Luigi.

LT: Yes Angus, it's often overlooked how powerful these presses really are. Regarding the quality of the raw material and the grade of the machining of the mechanical parts, for GSR the high quality and attention to detail, the finishing degree even on small parts, and grade of hygienic conditions are essential. The machine should not only be very high quality, it should also work at a good performance. Not only that, but the design of the equipment – even on the cocoa presses – is intended to be as beautiful as possible.

AK: Yes, it is very beautiful actually.

LT: This is very important for us, as it follows and respects our philosophy here and as Giuseppe rightly said, it's not only for us, but for the operators who end up using the cocoa press. If you work on a nice machine, it gives you satisfaction all the time. If you work on an 'ugly' or imperfect machine, things are different. This is a positive that we give to our work (free of charge!)

AK: Ha! Yes we spend a lot of times with machines – like a second husband or wife! So how many beans can this press cycle in a day?

LT: It is able to process over 1.4 tonnes of cocoa liquor per hour, multiplied by 24 hours a day.

AK: So that's 33,5 tonnes a day, for an average of 330 days a year, that gives you a figure of how much this machine can produce over 11,000 tonnes a year. Which is massive. What kind of size ranges do you offer?

LT: It's based on how many kilograms the producers need the machine to process. We tailor-make the machines to the need of each customer. The full range of GSR presses are available, from the mini-press 500g (a small industrial scale size often used at laboratories). Then the 'small' capacity range, which can be used for chocolate or origin chocolate, and then the compact cocoa press for small factories or a small cocoa processor. With this capacity, they can achieve intermediate production capacity. In the middle, we have one for 200kg per hour, but when we show the customer the 'family' of presses, we can then tailor make the size. Between 200kg-400kg is considered the compact line.

Giuseppe continues...

GT: Angus, let me add that performance is our top priority. In the last ten years, we have been working hard to optimise the downtime. Now for us, one press performs well based on the speed, but it's also essential that it works continuously without interruptions (for cleaning, replacement consumables or maintenance, for instance). For us, performance is not only about speed, but about making the customer's work as easy as possible.

AK: Yes Giuseppe, things have changed a lot I see. So what's the difference between a GSR press today and one from ten years ago?

GT: The main modifications are the development of our raw material, but it is also performance based on the tonnage you can produce a day – and how much money it costs. Also the quality of the raw materials has a large impact. Today, we can produce

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more with less money. This is the big difference between now and ten years ago: it's about a 20 percent improvement in cost savings.

AK: And as for the design? It looks similar, but there's definitely some critical differences. Will the press still look like this in 20 years' time you think?

Luigi Turla: I think the horizontal press we use today will still be available for many, many years. If you look at presses from ten years ago, we have to make a distinction between the different elements. We were at 3.5 cycles per hour ten years ago; today, we are at 5-6 cycles per hour. The presses are working on a 24 hour basis, around the clock all year long, and if you compare the previous presses, the cost of parts, maintenance and power were more expensive. But we have different customers with different stories, so sometimes it's difficult to quantify exact figures and advancements as a whole as it depends on the customer and process conditions.

The preparation of the cocoa mass process has also improved Angus; and a lot in the last ten years, so we are working with raw materials which are better than in the past. A decade ago, the processors who were processing at 12-14 percent fat-indicate now go down to 10 percent, which is the standard grade. So there was even an improvement in the processing. And today they work on a continuous basis with no downtime.

The efficiency of the cocoa press is currently at 95 percent; not so long ago it was only 75 percent, so the performance differences here are very high. If you calculated that based on the total output in one year, it's a huge difference.

AK: In a nutshell, how would you describe what GSR does?

Giuseppe Turla: Ha Angus, great question! We completely take care of the technical side, the aftersales service, and the design of the machine internally. But we set our workshop in this area because it is a typical area to do this job. We buy and check the raw materials, and if it does not conform to our specifications, we reject it if need

be. The raw materials then go to the workshop where they can be worked on, and then – when the parts are ready – the quality assurance team at GSR go to the supplier, certify the make and the specifications, and the parts are then assembled. The machinery is fine-tuned and tested in the quality control process. And everything is assembled here on this site. In a nutshell, well we do it passionately because we all love what we do and are very proud to be one of the market leaders.

AK: Finally, can you give us your interpretation of what the main advantages of the GSR press are?

LT: The performance and the quality to the manufacturer, but also the look and feel of the product. We give our equipment a small Italian touch Angus – the colour, the design, the angles, everything. It's a beautiful machine in every way isn't it?

AK: Does it all come from your imagination?

Giuseppe Turla: Well it's not just that, I spend a lot of time with the customer and we spend a lot of time with them, we know what they like about our machinery, and what would work well for them – and what they need to improve. I collect all this information during my visits with clients, and by listening to their exact needs.

The improvements come from our customers, our own experience on our press and our experience in presses overall (including our competitors'). We are aware and careful to avoid mistakes that have been made by others. So we continuously improve the quality and fix any problems and make new developments.

My visit to GSR was on the first 'official' day of summer, and you couldn't help but feel good about being there in this stunning area of geographical beauty, seeing a fine traditional Italian business with a wonderful spirit of passionate culture. I look forward to following them and seeing them again, especially now they have reached that important milestone of 25 years – which we are sure they will and very much deserve to celebrate.

