

# Montic Dairy launches **ESL milk**

Montic Dairy has significantly improved its competitive edge in the fresh milk category by launching extended shelf life (ESL) milk across its entire range of bottled milk in June.

This is a first for the general trade in Gauteng and other regional markets served by Montic, which is currently the only branded ESL fresh milk range in South Africa available in 2 ℓ, 1 ℓ and 500 ml bottles, in both full-cream and low-fat variants. This is considered a big technological leap into the realm of ESL milk, as the company becomes the third dairy in South Africa to enter this field.

Montic ESL milk is packed under extremely hygienic conditions to ensure freshness throughout the production process.

One of the processes to produce ESL milk is by mechanical removal of micro flora by means of a centrifugal force, normal pasteurised temperature, ultraclean filler and packaging with a light protecting barrier, which is what Montic has opted for.

Bottles are sterilised with ozone spray prior to packaging. In addition, the white-pigmented bottles have a stretch sleeve, further enhancing the product's image and branding. This all ensures a product that stays fresh for up to 21 days, says marketing manager Donna Allen.

The processing equipment was supplied by GEA, and the ESL filler by Filmatic. Montic was founded in 1984 by Karl Kebert and his family, who still remain actively involved in the management of the business. Currently, Montic offers a wide variety of fruit juices and dairy blended beverages, fresh milk and cream, drinking yoghurt and UHT long-life dairy products, all of which are mainly available throughout Gauteng.



## Background to ESL milk in SA

In late 2005, Clover set out on this strategic, value-added milk path with the launch of new ESL fresh milk, branded SealFresh, barely a month after one of its smaller rivals, Woodlands Dairy, had similarly entered the market on behalf of its key customer, Spar. Woodlands and Spar went with Elopak/APV's Pure-Lac rapid steam-infusion technology that extends life by up to 45 days in resealable 2 ℓ Elopak cartons, while Clover put its faith in Tetra Pak for both the processing and packaging, with the Tetra Top package making its first appearance in South Africa.

With an extended shelf life of production +20 days, Clover has used its technology to open up additional launches: Clover Mmmilk, vanilla-flavoured, ESL milk in August 2007, and less than a year later, another rather more noteworthy ESL milk débutante arrived in retail fridges: Clover Great Taste, No Fat! milk – fat-free milk enhanced with milk peptides that answers many a health-conscious wish for milk with full, indulgent dairy flavour but with all the benefits of fat-free milk.

### What is ESL milk?

Raw milk requires a heat process to ensure microbiological safety plus a reasonable shelf life and minimum processes for heat-treating milk are set out in national legislations.

That heat process could be pasteurisation, typically a high temperature-short time (HTST) process of 72-75°C for 15 to 40 seconds in modern dairies, or commercial sterilisation, which is now almost exclusively an ultra-high temperature (UHT) process usually in the region of 135 to 145°C for two to five seconds.

Pasteurised milk is usually sold as fresh, has a relatively short shelf life of less than 10 days at chill temperatures, but retains most of the flavour and nutritional value of raw milk.

In contrast, UHT processed milk will keep at ambient temperature for at least six months but tends to have a slight cooked taste and lower levels of certain vitamins. In some

respects, ESL milk slots neatly in between the two, typically achieving a shelf life of at least 20 days (up to 60 days in some cases), but retaining much of the taste and nutritional attributes of fresh pasteurised milk.

### What's the difference?

There is no current internationally accepted definition for ESL milk, although it can be loosely defined as having a longer shelf life than fresh pasteurised milk under equivalent chilled storage and distribution conditions.

There are several different technological approaches for producing that extension in shelf life and the name is something of a blanket term for a range of different products.

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