

MK Restaurants' Central Laboratory Delivers the Perfect Bite with the STARLIMS Laboratory Information Management System

By consolidating quality laboratory testing within STARLIMS LIMS, MK Restaurants has streamlined its testing workflow, reduced processing time, and enhanced employee experience by minimizing manual documentation.

MK Restaurants has been serving Thai consumers for more than 38 years. With 600+ restaurants spread across Thailand, MK Restaurants specializes in suki, a type of hot pot where diners dip meat, seafood, noodles, and vegetables into a broth and sauce before eating. With this unique dining experience, fresh and quality ingredients are of utmost importance. MK Restaurants operates a central laboratory in Bangkok for quality testing of ingredients for its restaurants across Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Laos.



Since 2023, MK Restaurants has performed its laboratory operations using the LIMS from STARLIMS, dramatically decreasing the number of redundant steps in its testing process, minimizing manual effort, and increasing data security, enabling the restaurant chain to deliver safe, fresh, and delectable ingredients to its diners.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

To process ingredient samples for quality testing, MK Restaurants follows an eight-step workflow, from sample labeling to reporting and backup. The lab handles thousands of ingredient samples from over 600 locations using this workflow. Before engaging STARLIMS, MK Restaurants found the manual workflow cumbersome and difficult to supervise. It was unsustainable, requiring significant time from staff to manually document sample data and test results. This often involved repeated steps, introducing redundancy and opportunities for error. Data quality and security were also concerns, as sample documentation passed through different teams, including an external team for analysis and reporting. This created risks for duplicate data, information loss, and leaks. Additionally, storing hard copies of tests on site was becoming an obstacle due to limited storage space. These challenges highlighted the need for a centralized, digital environment for data capture, storage, and accessibility to streamline and systematize the testing process.

"Before implementing STARLIMS, our lab staff was overwhelmed. Since integrating STARLIMS into our operations, however, the improvements have been so significant that our team now expresses a desire to remain with MK Restaurants until retirement."

Nirut Thaiprasert, Assistant Vice President of Quality Laboratory and Food Safety Sup-Division, MK Restaurants, Thailand

WHY MK RESTAURANTS SELECTED STARLIMS

MK Restaurants initiated a search for a lab informatics partner to assist it in its digital transformation. The company sought a vendor with a robust and easy-to-use platform that also had a strong reputation in its geographic region. STARLIMS, with a legacy of 20 years working with businesses in the region, was recommended by the National Food Institute of Thailand for its knowledge and adherence to industry standards and best practices. Further, MK Restaurants' external partner, that performs certain test parameters, was already using STARLIMS, enabling MK to align its systems and processes seamlessly with its partner.

After evaluating multiple vendors, MK narrowed it down to two. As part of the vendor selection process, STARLIMS presented a prototype that was positively received by MK Restaurants. Given STARLIMS' significantly stronger presence in the area, it outperformed the competition in the evaluation. Additionally, STARLIMS was able to configure the solution to MK's workflow out of the box and seamlessly integrate into its existing systems.

RESULTS

The implementation of STARLIMS LIMS has greatly optimized MK Restaurants' lab operations. The workflow steps are more efficient, reducing manual effort and significantly decreasing processing time. It's now easier to capture information and maintain sample records, reducing the burden on restaurant managers and staff at the central lab.

As part of the implementation, STARLIMS collaborated with MK to design a Request Form that accelerates the process of sample intake by pre-logging ingredient samples that are coming to the lab from restaurants. When submitting a Request Form, restaurants can select the test parameters they need for analysis. The Request Form also includes preconfigured parameters depending on the type of ingredient, eliminating the performance of unnecessary tests, which occurred frequently prior to onboarding STARLIMS. Now, when restaurants send samples to the lab, the team completes a Request Form, and automated communication with details on the sample is sent to the lab for testing. By maintaining records of samples on a singular digital file, data quality and security have improved, with fewer errors and a reduced risk of data loss.



MK Restaurants
spends

64%

less time doing
manual record
keeping.

MK's workflows are fully embedded in the LIMS, making oversight easy for lab managers and allowing real-time access to information for restaurants, internal teams, and external partners. Data can now be quickly accessed and analyzed, enhancing decision-making processes. Once a sample has been analyzed, the results are automatically reported back to all the restaurant branches via email notification within 24 hours, where it previously took 2 to 3 days. This capability also supports the restaurants during surprise, on-site inspections. Moreover, using the Queries function in STARLIMS has eliminated the need for monthly manual reporting. This function provides the lab with an overview of data over time, allowing them to track progress and reagent usage efficiently. Since their implementation of STARLIMS, lab managers can now leverage real-time data insights to enhance lab productivity, and as a result, MK saves 64% of the time that they used to take to manually document data throughout the testing lifecycle.

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