

PRESS INFORMATION

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ENOTRIA GOES DOUBLE DEEP IN THE CELLAR

Enotria Winecellars has been helped by Atlet to increase the storage capacity at its Park Royal distribution centre. The leading wine trade supplier has partially converted one of its bonded warehouses for double-deep racking served by two Atlet Forte UHST extending fork reach trucks. The new trucks augment the overall operation and work alongside Atlet Presto PLP powered pallet transporters previously for load assembly and pallet handling tasks.

“Atlet is not the cheapest in the market but their trucks are probably the most reliable,” says Peter Devlin, Warehouse and Distribution Manager at Enotria. “Basically they would come first on the list whenever we want something.”

Enotria was founded in 1972 and rapidly became the largest importer of Italian wines in the UK, serving many of the high street multiples as well as numerous independent retailers. The company's operations now encompass wines from most of the world's major producing countries and it believes it supplies more Michelin starred UK restaurants than any other cellar. Enotria is one of very few suppliers in the UK to manage its own bonded operations and around 70 per cent of the 70,000 sq ft (6500 sq m) of warehouse space at the Park Royal site is dedicated to this side of the business. The company was bought from the founder by venture capitalists ISIS in 2006 and this led to a new period of investment and expansion.

The continued growth of the business inevitably put pressure on the warehouse's ability to store and distribute more and more products. Flexibility is key because orders can include anything from a single bottle of extremely valuable wine for a prestige restaurant through to multiple pallets of popular retail products.

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One of the bonded sections of the warehouse was previously configured for block stacking, with a limited amount of racking down one side, served by electric counterbalance trucks. While block stacking has some benefits in terms of capacity and throughput it does not always support the levels of efficiency, flexibility and load selectivity required in fast moving operations. Enotria recognised that the only way to increase capacity and throughput in this area was to install racking. It initially considered a combination of narrow and very narrow aisle racking with specialist lift trucks but the floor was not level enough and the work required to make it suitable was considered uneconomical. The company has used Atlet powered pallet transporters for over ten years and turned to the lift truck manufacturer for advice. Atlet suggested a combination of single and double deep racking to achieve the required storage with a degree of flexibility.

“We chose to work with Atlet because the service we had on the pallet trucks was excellent,” says Peter Devlin. “Atlet is very professional in its approach and their salesman understood exactly what we wanted. They worked closely with us and the racking supplier to ensure everything was put in place.”

With double deep, two rows of racking are installed down each side of an aisle to maximise the number of pallet locations. It is often used in bulk storage applications where similar loads will be placed in the front and rear pallet positions because this reduces any potential conflicts with selectivity. The Atlet Forte UHST reach truck is designed specifically for double deep operations and the forks extend into the rear row of racking to place and retrieve pallets. The specification at Enotria called for trucks which could handle a full pallet weighing up to 1135kg to front and rear positions all the way up to the 6.3 metre top beam. This was well within the capabilities of the Forte UHST which incorporates all the familiar ergonomic and safety features found across the Atlet range including mini-steer wheel, push button control, tilting seat and the unique S3 Stability Support System that automatically reduces the speed of truck functions in proportion to the height lifted.

“The drivers were a bit wary before we moved to double deep but now they think it’s fantastic,” says Peter Devlin. “The trucks are great to use and easy to manoeuvre. It all works like clockwork.”

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Incoming deliveries are transferred to the new racked warehouse once customs documentation has been checked and completed. The use of double-deep enables Enotria to store the complete contents of a single container together in two or three adjacent bays. This promotes simplicity and efficiency in the bonded operation where every item must be accounted for at all times. Warehouse staff can always see what to pick and from where.

Picking in the bonded part of the warehouse is managed by the company's computerised Bondmaster system in conjunction with its main warehouse management system. Duty only become payable when items are moved out of the bonded area into the order picking and assembly operation so it makes sense to transfer items in line with incoming orders. Pallets are picked from the double and single deep racking areas using the Atlet Forte UHST reach trucks and transferred to the logistics side of the business where they are made immediately available for picking. A lot of the stock management processes are designed to ensure the high accuracy and record keeping that comes with the responsibility of running one of the few independent bonded wine warehouses in the UK. The operation is completely self-contained and only warehouse staff are authorised to handle items from the bonded to the duty-paid parts of the warehouse. Attention to detail is all part of the high level of customer service that Enotria delivers.

The duty-paid warehouse is configured with single-deep racking with faster moving lines nearest the loading bay in the lowest pallet locations for the greatest convenience and efficiency. Slower moving items, which are generally higher value, are stored at the rear of the warehouse and at higher levels because they are accessed less frequently.

The reach trucks are also used in the duty paid section for some replenishment and pallet handling tasks. Most stock movements and full pallet picking from ground level is managed using one of the Atlet Presto PLP powered pallet transporters. Single item and case picking is undertaken with simple manual trolleys known as cash and carry barrows that are designed to hold a customer's complete order.

Picked items brought to front of warehouse assembly area for final checks, preparation and loading on to delivery vehicles. The warehouse picks from 6.30 in the morning through to 3.30 in the afternoon to meet requirements for next day delivery.

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Although some orders are shipped directly to customers from London many more are forwarded overnight to Enotria's other depots in Shepton Mallet, Sheffield, Carluke and Colchester for delivery to customers the following day. The Colchester operation, formerly Wheeler Cellars, was purchased in 2008 to expand the company's capabilities in the eastern part of the country. Enotria also provides a service which manages deliveries from a wine's port of entry direct to a customer's own distribution centres.

Inevitably when a warehouse introduces new equipment that becomes vital to the overall operation it wants to make sure there are no problems with reliability. Atlet maintains all of Enotria's trucks under its top level Gold Service programme that provides rapid response and very high first time fix rates. This is achieved in part because the design approach ensures relatively few different chassis types across the entire range which in turn means proportionately more of the most common components required for routine maintenance and servicing can be carried by the engineers. With many other Atlet customers close by the service engineer is familiar with the area and maintains regular contact with Enotria to ensure everything is in order.

"I can't speak highly enough of Atlet," says Peter Devlin. "They give the right response and the engineers call before they come for a routine maintenance call to make sure it's convenient for us. We've had no breakdowns whatsoever with the powered pallet transporters or the reach trucks."

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