

# Dragon Star Supermarket



## Retail Application Story

# A Retail Star Is Born

**Sun Foods and Dragon Star Supermarket provide a wide variety of ethnic foods in the Saint Paul, Minnesota area. When they needed to boost efficiency to better serve their customers, they turned to WM-Ai automatic wrappers.**



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The Twin Cities have a lot more to offer than just the Mall of America and the Minnesota Vikings. The area is also known for its outstanding culinary selection. Peppered throughout the cities is a large selection of ethnic food stores, including Sun Foods and Dragon Star Supermarket. Sun Foods and Dragon Star share more than location and food offerings—they also share a general manager. Bona is in charge of helping his stores boost efficiency and deliver high-quality products to their communities.

Sun Foods opened in 2006 with Dragon Star following in 2014. Both of these ethnic food stores provide a wide variety of items from meats and seafood to fruits and vegetables. They offer hard-to-find items their customers love and can't find elsewhere.

Bona knew that one of the most time-consuming tasks at his stores was hand-wrapping the variety of meat they sell. Beef, chicken, pork and goat can all be easily found at Sun Foods and Dragon Star. In addition to the variety of meats, they also have a large selection of delicacies including tongue, liver, heart, feet and even tripe (stomach). Not only was the manual wrapping process time-consuming, but the repetitive motions were becoming a strain on employees. Bona knew he needed to find a better solution for their meat-wrapping departments.



**HEADQUARTERS**

230 West Coleman Street  
Rice Lake, Wisconsin 54868 - USA  
Tel: (715) 234 9171 | Fax: (715) 234 6967  
[www.ricelake.com](http://www.ricelake.com)



When Bona began his search for a new meat-wrapping solution, he knew the stores would need to work with a local supplier who could provide support when they needed it. He began working with Domingo Contreras Jr. of DM&P Equipment & Supplies, Inc. to find their new wrappers. DM&P was founded in 2004 by Anne and Domingo Contreras who had worked for a retail supply company for over 30 years. In 2015, their son, Domingo Jr., joined them in selling and servicing retail equipment for butcher shops, delis and ethnic food stores.

According to Bona, Domingo Jr.'s knowledgeable support is what sold him on wrappers from Rice Lake Retail Solutions. Domingo Jr. took Bona to a store that was already using one of Rice Lake's Ishida WM-Ai automatic wrapper so he could see it in action before deciding to make the purchase. Bona was impressed with both the speed and efficiency boost the WM-Ai provided, but he was most impressed with how much easier it made work for his team members. "That was the biggest reason, it just makes work easier for them," Bona said when explaining why he chose the WM-Ai wrappers. Using automatic wrappers means his team members in the meat departments of Sun Foods and

Dragon Star only need to place the loaded trays on the infeed—the WM-Ai does the rest.

Since implementing WM-Ai wrappers at Sun Foods and Dragon Star in March 2019, some of the most notable process improvements Bona has seen have been in the tray wrapping. His teams are getting cleaner, tighter and more consistent wraps on all of their tray sizes than they were when wrapping everything by hand. The WM-Ai is easy to use for Bona's diverse teams, simplifying processes that were once difficult due to language barriers. Operation is as simple as entering the PLU (Price Look-Up code) and placing the item on the WM-Ai's infeed.

The size of the WM-Ai wrapper was a bonus for Sun Foods and Dragon Star. With a footprint of less than four feet squared, Bona said "It fits our departments perfectly." Bona has also been happy with the automatic labeling. The WM-Ai places the labels on each tray in the same place, making it perfect for high-volume wrapping. In the first eight months after each installation, Sun Foods had wrapped 350,000 trays and Dragon Star had wrapped 313,000 trays. The WM-Ai had no problem keeping up with these numbers.

The Sun Foods and Dragon Star teams have been as happy with the WM-Ai as Bona has been. They love how much faster it is; it used to take them 15 minutes to wrap a rack of trays that now takes less than 2 minutes. One person is able to do the work of four or five and the WM-Ai has no problem handling their wrapping volume. Plus, it's quick and easy to clean.

Bona says the dual-range weighing feature of the WM-Ai has allowed his teams to weigh items with a finer tare weight on the trays, giving them more accurate weights and more accurate pricing. Additionally, Bona has been happy that they have the data to track how products are moving. They'll be able to see trends and anticipate and prepare for busy cycles.

With Domingo Jr.'s help and training, Bona's teams at Sun Foods and Dragon Star Supermarket found a way to easily wrap up every cut of beef, chicken, pork and goat for their customers. The WM-Ai automatic wrappers from Rice Lake Retail Solutions have proven to be shining stars in these meat departments.