



Having your cake and eating it – Western Mechanical Handling and Mitsubishi Electric increase throughput and quality for caterpillar-style cake production

Hatfield, UK – August 2026

Western Mechanical Handling UK Ltd (WMH) has turned to Mitsubishi Electric's Automation Systems Division to deliver an innovative automation solution aimed at improving throughput and quality for one of the nation's most famous styles of cake.

Following persistent challenges with accuracy and ingredient wastage during a previously manual handling process, Cornwall-based WMH was tasked by its end-customer with automating the delicate transfer of decorated caterpillar cakes onto the supporting tray prior to packaging.



Key issues with the manual process included inconsistent positioning on the tray, which could lead to quality issues, including product rejection and reduced overall throughput, as well as excessive use of chocolate ganache, contributing to unnecessary cost and ingredient wastage.

To balance delicate handling requirements with accurate positioning and ingredient dispensing, WMH turned to long-term automation partner Mitsubishi Electric for support with the system build.

At the heart of the cell lies WMH's unique soft gripper design, which is specially customised for food grade applications. The gripper mimics the sensitivity of a human hand and enables the delicate handling of decorated cakes without disturbing their finish.

The grippers are mounted on two Mitsubishi Electric RV-7FRLM-D 6-axis robots with a 7 kg payload, supported by an R86TB touchscreen robot teaching box.

Both robots were mounted overhead to help reduce the overall footprint of the finished cell and are rated to IP65, supporting operation at the end user's site, which mandates strict cleaning and hygiene requirements throughout its 24/7 operation.



Ian Ewing, System Sales Engineer at Western Mechanical Handling, comments: “With food production, there is no room for error, and any downtime or product wastage, no matter how small, can very quickly add up.

“With our customer experiencing persistent issues with their previous manual handling process, we were tasked with delivering a cell that would mimic the dexterity and delicacy of the human touch, combined with the precision expected from an industrial automation system. Having worked with Mitsubishi Electric for a number of years, we were confident the robots could deliver the positional accuracy and repeatability needed to complement the sensitive handling capabilities of our gripper head.”

Ian continues: “Speed was also very much of the essence. If the conveyor stopped whilst the robots synchronised with the products, throughput would be impacted, creating a knock-on effect throughout the production process. As a result, we needed the robots to track the conveyor and pick cakes that were continuously moving. Given how easy the Mitsubishi Electric robots are to program, this was achieved with relative ease.”

Jewel George, Robotics Product Manager at Mitsubishi Electric Automation Systems Division UK, adds: “Given the tight operational parameters for speed, accuracy and productivity, it was essential that we worked closely with the WMH team to specify the robots best suited to the application. The RV-FR series is among our most versatile, and we were able to collaborate closely with WMH to support the supply, installation and programming of the robots. With the cell now operational at the end user’s site, throughput and quality are performing well above those of the previous manual process – it looks like you really can have your cake and eat it after all.”

For more information on the RV-FR series, please visit: <https://gb-fa.mitsubishielectric.com/fa/products/rbt/robot>.

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For more information, please visit www.MitsubishiElectric.com



**U.S. dollar amounts are translated from yen at the rate of ¥150=U.S.\$1, the approximate rate on the Tokyo Foreign Exchange Market on March 31, 2025.*

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Offering a vast range of automation and processing technologies, including controllers, drive products, power distribution and control products, electrical discharge machines, electron beam machines, laser processing machines, computerized numerical controllers, and industrial robots, Mitsubishi Electric helps bring higher productivity – and quality – to the factory floor. In addition, its extensive service networks around the globe provide direct communication and comprehensive support to customers. The global slogan “Automating the World” shows the company’s approach to leverage automation for the betterment of society, through the application of advanced technology, sharing know how and supporting customers as a trusted partner.

For more about the story behind “Automating the World” please visit:

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Factory Automation EMEA

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For more information, please visit emea.mitsubishielectric.com/fa

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e-F@ctory is Mitsubishi Electric’s integrated concept to build reliable and flexible manufacturing systems that enable users to achieve many of their high speed, information driven manufacturing aspirations. Through its partner solution activity, the e-F@ctory Alliance, and its work with open network associations such as the CC-Link Partners Association (CLPA), users can build comprehensive solutions based on a wide ranging “best in class” principle. In summary, e-F@ctory and the e-F@ctory Alliance enable customers to achieve integrated manufacturing but still retain the ability to choose the most optimal suppliers and solutions.

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