LEAVING NO TRACE

McAirlaid's' Genia cigarette filters decompose in a matter of weeks rather than years.

By George Gay

Some time ago, Rachel Roddy, a food writer specializing in Italian cuisine, wrote in *The Guardian* newspaper's *Feast* magazine that 80 percent of recipes could be improved by omitting the tomatoes usually included. Being a renowned tomato-phobe, I was delighted with this story and set out on a campaign to have the message more widely disseminated and acted upon—a campaign that was met with little success, I'm sorry to say, and that fell by the wayside.

But I was reminded of Roddy's piece recently when reading the McAirlaid's Vliesstoffe website, which, at one point, poses an intriguing question: Is it possible to achieve more by omitting something? Of course, I was a convert and knew the answer immediately. Yes. Leave out the tomatoes!

While answering yes to its own question, McAirlaid's would not be too happy with my response, I think, because part of its business is focused on food packaging, and tomatoes probably figure in the makeup of that business. But I'm getting ahead of myself. This piece mainly concerns another aspect of the company's business: cigarette filters—specifically, cigarette filters that offer tobacco-smoke taste similar to that provided by cellulose acetate filters but that are manufactured using only pure cellulose, free from bonding agents, and that, therefore, decompose in a matter of weeks rather than years as is the case with cellulose acetate products.

A Patented Process

McAirlaid's specializes in manufacturing nonwoven absorption fleeces from pure, nonchlorine-bleached cellulose fibers using only a patented "airlaid" thermomechanical process to bond the fibers. In other words, the company omits from its SuperCore fleece the nonabsorbing bonding agents typically used to make fleeces, allowing SuperCore to achieve greater absorption and fluid distribution than is achieved using traditionally bonded fleeces. ▶

Photos: McAirlaid's

McAirlaid's' biggest factory, at Berlingerode, Germany