

# Will healthy options = healthy sales?

This year's Food Marketing Institute show featured lots of new and CONVENIENT PACKAGES to entice consumers to munch those five-a-day fruits and veggies.

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From individually wrapped prunes to snack-size pickle-packs, the supermarket show was packed with new food and beverage introductions in packaging that emphasized convenience and portability. The *Packaging Digest* editors sampled their way through the aisles of Chicago's McCormick Place in May, filling their bags with the best packaging innovations they could find. Here are their top picks:

## Sunsweet individually wraps Ones

Who would have guessed that modern research and healthy eating trends would lead straight back to the humble prune? Sunsweet Growers, Inc., Yuba City, CA, that's who, with its launch of New Ones™ individually film-wrapped, pitted, dried plums (prunes) (1). Aiming to broaden the appeal and usage of juicy, sweet prunes, Sunsweet launched Ones nationally in January 2007. Twenty prunes come in a transparent, 10.7-oz vinyl canister that clearly shows off the film-wrapped product—intended as a healthy snack—while the tall canister offers portable, on-the-go convenience.

According to Sunsweet, which is celebrating its 90th anniversary, the product was test-marketed with great success and outperformed the rest of the U.S. market in terms of dollar growth. Meeting consumer needs for foods that are ready to eat but not messy, the film-wrapped, single prunes are the largest marketing investment in the company's history, says Arthur Driscoll II, president and CEO of the grower-owned cooperative.

"Consumers' demand for healthy snacks is no longer just a trend, it's a reality," says Driscoll. "Whether it's antioxidants, vitamins or minerals, bite for bite, the nutritional profile of Sunsweet

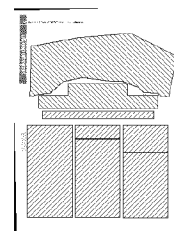
prunes stands up against any other 'pretty' fruit or snack out there. Prunes are truly a superfruit; we just need to get the message out."

A good deal of that task is being handled by Ones' packaging. The custom, six-color-printed canister, decorated in Sunsweet's yellow, royal blue and white color scheme, helps to position Ones as an indulgent yet tailable treat. The printed film wraps inside look like they might contain candy, though they're actually there to keep the prunes juicy and moist. Measuring 7½ in. tall and 2½ in. dia, the canister has a polyvinyl chloride insert that seals the bottom and a bright-blue cap printed in three colors that friction-fits into the top. Over the cap is a clear, tamper-evident film band. Inside, the prunes are individually wrapped in 48-ga polyethylene terephthalate/80-ga oriented polypropylene film.

Wrapping of the prunes at speeds of 250 to 300 min is on a **Delta Systems (www.delta-systems-inc.com)** Eagle flowrapper line that was installed earlier this year at Sunsweet Growers' plant in Yuba City. The line includes a Delta servo-driven, low-pressure Smart Belt infeed that singulates the prunes prior to wrapping.

"Perishability can make fruit fairly impractical as a snack," says David Lance, vp of worldwide marketing and sales at Sunsweet. "That's where Sunsweet Ones comes in; you can keep Ones in your purse, desk, car or lunchbox, for whenever the snacking urge hits. We're truly excited that consumers are ready to look past the wrinkly disguise and discover Sunsweet prunes as a great-tasting, truly nutritious snack."

The canister sells for about \$2.35 to \$2.50 per package. Says product manager Jeff McLemore, since the introduction of Ones, the response has been outstanding for the dried-plum category, driving growth more than 20 percent where Ones



are in distribution.

### Snack-pack is the pick of the peck

Pickle packages from Mt. Olive Pickle Co., Mt. Olive, NC, just got more convenient, as the company took its whole-petite kosher-dill and sweet-pickle varieties out of the glass jar and put them into a convenient, single-serve, 3.7-oz multilayer plastic cup (2) with a peelable, foil-based lid. Available as a line extension in four-pack paperboard sleeves, or what the company calls its picklePAK™, the snack-sized cup package was launched this spring.

The easy-to-grip, clear cup closely resembles those for pre-cut fruit snacks, pudding or apple sauce, which has been around for years, but Mt. Olive's cup is a first for pickles.

Each cup is embossed with the Mt. Olive logo and is date-coded with a best-by date that indicates the pickles are shelf-stable for more than one year. Consumers can enjoy the convenience of taking the pickles to work, school, picnics, tailgates or camping. The company says the picklePAK moves pickles from the refrigerator to anywhere you want to go. Mt. Olive reports that the packages will be marketed in the pickle aisle at stores and in standalone grocery displays later this summer.

Vacuum-formed by **Printpack (www.printpack.com)** of a clear, proprietary material designed to achieve specific barrier and performance requirements, the cup technology was in development at least a year, according to Mt. Olive's community relations spokesperson, Lynn Williams. The cup material is sturdy and has the barriers to prevent migration of the pickle juice, a liquid salt/vinegar combination, while the foil seal locks out air and other harmful elements. The outer wraparound paperboard sleeve, printed in Mt. Olive's signature light and dark green colors, includes product-viewing windows on both side panels to clearly show off the cups inside.

Though the company declines to provide specifics, the cups are believed to be retorted. Launched nationally starting in April, the four-pack picklePAK retails for about \$2.99.

### Green Giant's fresh packs get steamed

The steaming bag technology for

vegetables is a trend heating up at several FMI booths this year. One example was in the Green Giant Fresh booth from Sholl Group II, an Eden Prairie, MN-based General Mills licensee. Sholl Group II unveiled **Freshtables® (3)**, a garden of new microwavable vegetable/sauce combinations in microwavable steaming bags. Both fresh vegetables and fresh fruit are packed under the Freshtables brand. "**Freshtables SteamPerfect™** is the first national brand to come to market with a proprietary steaming microwave bag," says Darci Eckermann, vp of marketing and business development for the Sholl Group II. The 12-oz SteamPerfect microwave steaming bags serve three to four.

Nine items in the line include various combinations of cut vegetables as well as single types and sauces that steam in about two minutes. The varieties include Red Apples and Raisins with Cinnamon Sauce, Broccoli and Baby Slim Carrots with Cheese Sauce, Cauliflower with Cheese Sauce, Green Beans with Garlic Butter and more.

Using SteamFast technology from **Excelsior Technologies, Ltd. UK (www.exceltechuk.com)**, the bagstock consists of a reverse-gravure-printed PET/adhesive/PP laminate. Incorporating a windowed front panel, the custom bag becomes a steaming vessel that expands under the pressure of the steam created inside the package when it's microwave-heated. Through the patented steaming technology, a vent situated between the layers of laminate contains a specially formulated heat seal that opens at a predetermined pressure. As the vent releases built-up steam within the puffed bag, the steam circulates evenly throughout the bag during the cooking process, distributing the pressure and heat. This reduces cooking time. Any excess steam pressure is released through the opened valve.

Sholl Group II says that SteamPerfect has been pioneered in Europe and in the U.S. by Excelsior and is based on an innovative, patented Japanese concept of microwave cooking. Sold in the produce section of grocery stores starting this summer in regional markets, the products will soon roll

out nationally. The 12-oz packages carry a suggested retail price of \$3.99. They have a 14-day refrigerated shelf life.

In another application of the SteamFast technology, Ocean Mist Farms, in January 2007, introduced 10-oz pouches of asparagus and Brussels sprouts (3a) that can be microwave-steamed in just three minutes. The pouches sell for less than \$2.99.

## Eating fresh snacks is easier

Meeting consumer demand for healthier snacking options and greater convenience, Apio, Inc., Guadalupe, CA, a wholly owned subsidiary of Landec Corp., introduced its new Classic Crunch line of fresh snacks at the United Fresh Expo in Chicago. Targeting shoppers-on-the-go, the line packages vegetables and complementary snack products—along with a dipping sauce in a plastic cup—in a plastic tray with a film seal across the top. There are four nutritious fresh-cut varieties: Trailside Crunch with carrots, celery, trail mix and ranch dip; Classic Crunch with carrots, celery, cherry tomatoes and ranch dip; Quick Crunch with carrots, celery and ranch dip; and Pacific Crunch with tuna salad, crackers and celery. “These new snacks are an excellent addition to the cut vegetable category and reinforce our commitment to offer healthy and innovative products for time-pressured consumers to enjoy,” says Mike Casazza, executive vp of sales and marketing for Apio.

This introduction represents the most

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recent addition to Apio's Eat Smart Fresh Cut Meal Solutions line, which includes fresh-cut vegetables and complementary ingredients for ready-to-make meals and meal components. The Classic Crunch trays measure 5.25 in. wide by 6.25 in. long by 1.5 in. deep, weigh approximately 5 to 7.5 oz and sell for \$2.50 to \$3.50, depending on the variety.

## Dipping up flavor

There's nothing better than a good snack dip when you feel like relaxing. To meet this demand, in late 2006, America's Kitchen, Alpharetta, GA, introduced a line of five restaurant-style Queso cheese dips (4) with a unique blend of ingredients.

Available in Medium, Hot, Shrimp, Beef and Salsa flavors, the dips were developed by certified master chef Michael J. Robins, who, at the age of 26, became the youngest Certified Master Chef in U. S. history. The dips, which weigh 12 oz, are packaged in PP cups with low-density polyethylene lids from **Berry Plastics (www.berryplastics.com)**. The cups are then placed in glossy, vividly colored sleeves from **Carton Service, Inc. (www.cartonservice.com)** that are made from offset-printed, film-coated SBS board with a UV freezer coating that resists moisture. “We introduced the Queso dips in Costco as a two-pack of sixteen-ounce cups, and we immediately started getting calls from consumers asking for a smaller package,” says America's Kitchen marketing director Delores Johnson. “We worked with **XO Create (www.xocreate)** to design the new package.”

Following up on the success of the dips, America's Kitchen introduced a line of four finishing sauces—Seafood Newburg sauce; Lemon Dill sauce; Portobello Demi-Glace sauce; and Scampi sauce in early 2007. “People were looking for premium-quality finishing sauces,” says Johnson. “These not only taste wonderful, but they are also very easy to use—just heat and serve.” The sauces, which weigh 10 oz, are packed in the same style of packaging as the dips. According to a Berry Plastics representative, the finishing sauce can be heated directly in the cup, which adds to their convenience. In addition, she says, the cups are frequently retained for reuse by consumers.

Both the dips and the sauces sell for \$3.99 to \$4.99, depending on the variety and sales location.

## Thirst quenchers debut in a kid-friendly pouch

While fortified foods were *di rigueur* at FMI, many of the soft drinks still aimed at kids can be sweet and sugary. Not at Honest Tea, the Bethesda, MD, organic, bottled teamaker, which introduced Honest Kids organic, fruit-flavored thirst quenchers for kids (5). Introduced at the All Things Organic Show in a 6.75-oz flexible, standup drink pouch, the new thirst quencher was developed for a school lunch, day camp, traveling and afternoon snacks. Three flavors in the low-sugar line include Berry Berry Good Lemonade, Goodness Grapeness and Tropical Tango Punch. Multipacked eight to a

carton, the pouches come with straws attached. Certified organic by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Honest Tea reports, the drinks contain a mere 40 calories, are caffeine-free, incorporate 100 percent of the recommended daily amount of Vitamin C and have less than half the sugar of other drinks, the company says.

Fun and splashy, the fruit-filled graphics design for the pouches was created by Honest Tea in conjunction with **Flow Design (www.flow-design.com)**. They're made of a film with an outer layer of 48-ga PET, ink and adhesive, that's laminated to a high-barrier sealant blend of linear LDPE and low-density PE. The curvy, standup pouches are sized to fit comfortably in kids' hands and have a cinched-in waist that makes them easy to grip.

Honest Tea's Brigid Rauch says that the specific pouch suppliers and other packaging information are proprietary. The graphic elements present the Honest Kids logo on a bold, black band at the top of each pouch and are color-coded by flavor. The company has developed nine new, organic products this year, including the fruit-based thirst quenchers, and expects to expand its reach to new customers. So far, the market response to Honest Kids "has been phenomenal," Rauch says.

With a national launch in May, Honest Kids is sold at Whole Foods and Target stores and will make its way to other retailers soon. The product retails for \$4.99 to \$5.49.

### **Shelf-stable cookie dough is a go**

Formed specifically to develop flexible and convenient new dough products for consumers, First Products, Inc., Rosemount, MN, launched its first offering last spring, with the introduction of four shelf-stable cookie dough varieties at Wal-Mart supercenters nationwide. Presented in a 28-oz PE container with a resealable, snap-on lid (6), both from Berry Plastics, the HomeBake® line of Scoop & Bake Cookie Dough in Classic Sugar, Chocolate Chip, Peanut Butter and Oatmeal Raisin varieties, is said to have a shelf life of 180 days, which First Products president Jeff Hulme says is three-times longer than similar, refrigerated doughs.

While Hulme relates to PD that the secret to HomeBake's shelf stability is a

proprietary dough formulation, he does

reveal that a lack of raw egg in the mixture and the use of all-natural ingredients both factor heavily into eliminating the need for refrigeration, even after opening. "But we are not trying to say that we want people to spread the product out for a long time," he notes. "We're just saying that it's convenient. Because, from a true marketing and sales point of view, if our turns are not fast enough, no matter what we sell, we're not going to be in the stores too long."

Among the benefits cited by First Products of the shelf-stable cookie dough for retailers and consumers are a cost savings in logistics and distribution, as the product does not require refrigerated storage and offers an expanded shelf life; a dough that is more malleable upon opening than frozen product, allowing for immediate use; and the elimination of the food-borne illnesses associated with products containing raw egg. In addition, Hulme adds, shelf-stable cookie dough offers several unique marketing options. These include opportunities to distribute the product in parts of Europe, Asia and South America, where refrigerated storage space is sometimes limited, as well as its use in fund-raising programs. He also envisions co-marketing opportunities, where sugar cookies might be paired with decorating kits in the stores, for example.

HomeBake cookie doughs are currently sold only in Wal-Mart, in 1,180 stores nationwide, but First Products is in talks with other retailers to develop private-label, shelf-stable cookie dough products for their use. The HomeBake version uses a paperboard sleeve over the plastic tub that allows the product to stand upright, providing a broad billboard of tempting cookie graphics, designed by LiveLight! ([www.livelightcreative.com](http://www.livelightcreative.com)), on-shelf. The sleeves are converted by Innovative Fiber, LLC (262/367-7551).

HomeBake Scoop & Bake Cookie Dough is priced at \$2.98 for a 28-oz size. At presstime, First

Products was scheduled to launch a 24-oz shelf-stable brownie mix in Wal-Mart on Aug. 1.

## Grown-up's macaroni and cheese

The cheesy flavor of Kraft Macaroni & Cheese has been a family favorite for years, but taste buds grow up. Now, adults can enjoy the mac and cheese  
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that they've always loved, but with premium taste and ingredients created for the sophisticated adult palate. Introducing Kraft Bistro Deluxe (7), a new premium line of mac and cheese featuring fine ingredients in an easy-open, 10-oz pouch, that helps adults bring the bistro experience home with the twist of unique flavors. And to help bring a real bistro feel to the kitchen table, Kraft is putting a new spin on the classic combo of wine and cheese: Now it's mac and cheese and wine. By pairing wines with the more grown-up flavors found in Kraft Bistro Deluxe pastas, adults can create a memorable meal in minutes right in their own kitchens.

"Pairing the food you love with the perfect glass of wine makes any meal gratifying," says wine specialist and award-winning author Leslie Sbrocco. "Kraft Bistro Deluxe appeals to adults who've always loved to eat mac and cheese with their kids, but now want a more sophisticated meal they can savor with a glass of wine." According to Sbrocco, the richness of the creamy sauce in the new sun-dried tomato Parmesan variety is perfect with a similarly styled wine such as a buttery, oaky Chardonnay.

All four varieties of Kraft Bistro

Deluxe are made with premium Kraft cheeses and pastas made with a blend of durum wheat and whole grain. Each variety makes a one-of-a-kind side dish or main entrée. "Consumers are increasingly interested in experimenting with new foods at home, especially as they try new flavors at restaurants and during their travels," says Erica Hammack, senior brand manager, new product development, at Kraft. "Kraft Bistro Deluxe, featuring premium ingredients, is the perfect fit for consumers looking for a sophisticated twist on a family favorite - all from a brand they know and trust."

Kraft Bistro Deluxe pastas are available in four varieties. Sun-dried Tomato Parmesan features Penne pasta with sun-dried tomatoes and basil in a cheese sauce. Creamy Portobello Mushroom includes Cavatappi pasta with Portobello mushrooms in a creamy, three-cheese sauce of Parmesan, Romano and Monterey Jack cheeses. Classic Cheddar contains elbow pasta in a premium Cheddar cheese sauce.

Three Cheese Italiano features elbow pasta in a Parmesan, Romano and Asiago cheese sauce. Kraft Bistro Deluxe is available now in grocery stores nationwide and has a suggested retail price of \$2.89. Each pouch serves two to three people and takes less than 10 minutes to prepare.

### **Reclosable tray brings home the bacon**

Claiming to be the largest exhibit at FMI, Kraft Foods showcased more than 70 new foods and beverages in an Internet-based, "virtual world." Its food and beverage innovations focused on four key growth areas for the company: health and wellness;

premium taste; quick meals; and snacking. Among the new products, the company featured cheeses with probiotics and prebiotics for digestive health, on-the-go snacks and convenient meal kit packs for brands including DiGiorno, Jell-O, Oscar Mayer, Philadelphia, Planters and South Beach Diet. But the most high-tech, intriguing package at the booth was a one-of-a-kind, stay-fresh, reclosable PET tray for Oscar Mayer Center Cut Bacon (8). An addition to Oscar Mayer's Ready to Serve Bacon line, the Center Cut product package was developed after consumers asked for it, the company reports. The clear tray with a snap-on, clear PET lid over a peelable film membrane offers less mess, while the reclosable benefits are what Kraft says consumers have been looking for. The container structure—the technology and specifics of which Kraft declines to reveal—won't take up additional space in the refrigerator, is sturdy and allows easy access to the bacon slices inside.

"We listened to people's concerns about traditional bacon packaging and designed the stay-fresh reclosable tray to help solve those issues," says Beth Goeddel, senior brand manager for Madison, WI-based Oscar Mayer. "We think our new packaging is the 'best thing since sliced bacon,' and we're thrilled to provide an innovative, practical solution that sets the standard for bacon packaging."

Available nationwide starting this month for an average price of \$3.99 a pack, the innovative, thermoformed tray-pack is merchandised in the grocery refrigerated meat case section. Kraft calls the new package "the bacon industry's first packaging innovation in more than eighty years."

## Eggland's Best launches hard-cooked, peeled, eggs

Last November, Eggland's Best (EB) rolled out a new and deliciously convenient way to eat hard-boiled eggs. It introduced its resealable, standup pouch (9) that contains 10 hard-cooked, peeled eggs that weigh 0.96-lb. Currently

available in select retail markets in the U.S., the eggs feature the same taste, high quality and nutritional benefits as EB shelled eggs, the co. says.

"We at Eggland's

Best pride ourselves on providing great tasting and nutritionally superior eggs. Now, we're thrilled to offer those same great qualities with our convenient, ready-to-eat eggs," says EB president/CEO Charlie Lanktree.

The product is contract-packed by Almark Foods, Gainesville, GA, and

at another plant in Pennsylvania. The pouches are gas-flushed before the eggs are loaded into them.

**J. Roy Parcels Assoc. (www.jroyparcels.com)** designed the pouches, which sell for about \$2.99, depending on location.

The pouches, which are supplied by **Exopack (www.exopack.com)**, are made from PET film that is flexo-printed in eight colors. A surface coating is laminated to the film to seal the printing. The film is then formed into pouches, and zippers are applied

For busy consumers, EB's hard-cooked, peeled eggs are great for making egg salad or as a simple, healthy snack on the run.

Hard-cooked to perfection and peeled for convenience, this new way to enjoy EB eggs is perfect for cooking.

Compared to an ordinary egg, EB eggs contain 25-percent-less saturated fat and 19-percent-less cholesterol while providing three times more Omega 3 and 10 times more Vitamin E. They also contain 40 percent of a person's daily requirement of iodine and 200 micrograms of lutein.

