

Breath-taking pack seizes the Momint

Momints liquid mints from Yosha! Enterprises, Inc. come in a 0.06-oz, patent-pending EZ Slide™ pack that fits in even the tiniest jeans pocket. Urging users to "take a moment for fast, fresh breath," the mini mints' carded blister-pack is die-cut at the top so that it can be hung from a pegboard. Offering all sorts of puniful slogans playing on the word "moment," the new mints claim to be America's first liquid-filled breath mint (though liquid-filled gum has been around for many years).

Westfield, NJ-based Yosha! Enterprises launched the product in New York City earlier this year. The slim, clarified polypropylene packs are sold online at www.moments.net, through select retailers and soon, nationwide. The handy little slider pack has a sleek, tapered edge on one end that allows it to fit into tight spots and a dispenser cap on the other. The primary package is injection-molded by Bennett Plastics. The company outsources the carded blister through Zaunscherb Marketing Intl., in Hamilton, ON.

Tiny, but powerful, the iridescent blue Momints spheres deliver a burst of peppermint flavor (additional flavors will be available soon) without any calories.

Eighteen months in development, the mints are facing what Yosha! Enterprises refers to as a \$1-billion retail market for mints and chewing gum. "Consumers appreciate that you can easily tuck the Momints EZ Slide pack into jeans or the cellophane wrapper of a cigarette pack, and have instant access," says Anthony Shurman, president of Yosha! Enterprises.

Says Shurman, "The package took a little longer than the product to develop, nearly two years. We developed the package and then finalized the product, but applied for a patent in August, 2001 on the EZ Slide pack, which actually doesn't slide open but is a feature that allows cigarette smokers to slide the pack of mints into the film wrapper of a pack of cigarettes without tearing the wrap."

The dimensions of the slim EZ Slide mint pack were proportioned just for those reasons. The pack opens and dispenses without having to remove it from a cigarette wrapper. In addition, the cap is also accessible to flip open inside the "tiny pocket" of a pair of jeans. The 36-mint pack has a suggested retail price of \$1.69.
Circle No. 360.

One more bottle of beer in the carrier

A revolutionary new packaging design for the traditional "six-pack" of beer places seven bottles of beer in a hexagonal carrier. The patented new design is the brainchild of John Borkoski, owner of Park City Brewing Co. and Moab Brewery of Moab, Utah. Borkoski believed that the beer industry was stale on the packaging end. He believed the consumer was starving for a new and distinct packaging concept, and anything different would be a welcome change to the standard six-pack, 12-pack or case.

Park City Brewing is a microbrewery, and Borkoski was also looking for a way to market his product to the beer drinker who would normally not purchase microbrewed beer due to the cost. Borkoski believed that the value of receiving an extra bottle for the same price as other microbrewed six-packs would entice this consumer to try the product. Hopefully, they would enjoy the taste and realize that the price difference between micro-brewed beer and domestic varieties is worth it for the hand-crafted quality of the product.

Borkoski started looking for ways to somehow get the consumer an extra bottle of beer. He started out with an idea of having the extra bottle be the handle of the six-pack, but that fizzled out. He then mulled the idea over for a couple of months and finally came up with the hexagonal design. Park City Brewing introduced the seven-packs of Baja Especial and Tie Die Red about two months ago into the Utah and Montana markets, and has plans to expand to other western states in the near future. They simultaneously introduced 21-pack cases. Depending on the success of the products, national distribution is a possibility.

"The greatest challenge with the new carriers was making the packaging the same width as a six-pack. We went through several prototypes before finalizing this one. The other issue was trying to keep the costs of the packaging and product competitive with six-pack pricing," says Borkoski.

The seven-pack is printed on .028 SBS and die-cut by Rose City Printing and Packaging, Portland. Graphics were designed by Whitney Advertising & Design and the project was managed by PackagingARTS. The beer is produced at the company's own contract bottling facility, called Great Brewing, in Belgrade, MT.
Circle No. 361.

Natural supermarket goes wild for corn-based packaging

Upholding a mission value to reduce its negative impact on the environment, Wild Oats Markets, Inc. of Boulder, CO, has become the first North American retail grocery chain to offer deli items in corn-based packaging made from Cargill Dow's NatureWorks PLA (polylactide) resin. Called "amaizing" by local media, the 8-, 16- and 32-oz containers are initially being used in the chain's 11 Portland, OR, locations, with plans to expand the campaign to its remaining 66 U.S. and Canadian stores within the next three to six months, says Mark Cockcroft, Wild Oats western region field marketing manager. "Being able to switch to something that is made from corn, as opposed to petroleum-based plastic, was very appealing to us," Cockcroft says. "And, on the other side, having something that was compostable, that could return to the earth, was also very exciting."

Products packaged in the clear, two-piece containers run the gamut of cold, fresh foods—from salads and sauces to value-added meats, such as chicken fajita and beef stir fry, and seafood items that include shrimp, calamari and scallops. Bases and lids are supplied by Wilkinson Manufacturing of Fort Calhoun, NB, (see PD, April, 2003, p. 4) which recently became the first North American converter to produce thermoforms from the PLA resin. Wilkinson uses extrusion and thermoforming equipment from Brown Machine to produce the containers, which Cockcroft says "pack well, seal well and are very sturdy." He adds: "There have been absolutely no complaints on the functionality of the containers from our customers."

Wild Oats is promoting the campaign through a number of marketing devices. Among them are storefront banners, posters in the deli area and stickers on the PLA-packaged products that read: "Made from 100% renewable resources," "Compostable" and "Made from corn." Explains Cockcroft, "It's definitely an education process though. It's something new for consumers, and it's definitely a learning curve for everybody, because the containers really do look and act like plastic. We are continuously working on trying to engage with customers so that they get used to the idea of composting the containers and not recycling them."

Although the corn-based containers may look and act like plastic, they are priced at approximately 40-percent more than the petroleum-based deli packages they replace. This cost, notes Cockcroft, is not one that is being passed on to customers. "It's a great thing when your company really wants to put its money where its mouth is and be an innovator and really take some chances and some risks," he says. "It's an exciting place to be and not only do the employees respond to that, but customers do as well. We've definitely seen a lot of positive feedback."

New caulking tube provides all-in-one solution

Breaking new ground in the home improvement aisle is the Caulk-It™ tube and applicator from GE Sealants and Adhesives. The new package, released in March, 2003, comes equipped with a nozzle applicator for applying caulk that eliminates the need for a caulk gun. On this innovative package, vibrant, full-body shrink-sleeve labels display do-it-yourselfers using the product. SleeveCo supplies and prints the polyvinyl chloride shrink-sleeve film using six colors on a rotogravure press. Peter Whitney, packaging engineer at GE Sealants & Adhesives, says, "With the shrink-sleeve labels, the package really pops in the aisle. We wanted to differentiate our product from the competition. Right now, the caulk aisle is filled with products using direct-to-print [to the tube]." The white caulk can be used for interior and exterior applications, and is "paintable."

The nozzle applicator, positioned just under the butterfly hanger, dispenses the caulk. Supplied by Polytop Corp., the 33/400 polyethylene nozzle is affixed to the 8-oz multilayer plastic tube when the 2-mil shrink sleeves are applied by Easy Contract Labeling. According to the Easy Contract Labeling, because of the soft properties of the tube, it needed to be innovative when applying the shrink-sleeve. Clarence Jacobs, general manager at Easy Contract Labeling, says, "The material of the container was susceptible to heat, and if it was exposed to excessive heat for a long period of time, it was subject to distortion. So, we had to be creative on how we applied the heat for the shrink sleeves." altira, inc. supplies the tube.

Besides the butterfly hanger, the package also can be stored by resting the tube on its 33-mm, threaded polypropylene cap, supplied by Prime Packaging Group. The product is distributed nationwide in local hardware stores and in Wal-Mart stores, and in July, the product will find a home in Lowe's stores. The product sells for \$3.49 to \$4.29 nationwide. Circle No. 363.

Zebra Technologies welcomes Wal-Mart's RFID initiative

Zebra Technologies has announced its support for the retail industry's new radio frequency identification (RFID) initiative backed by Wal-Mart Stores, the Uniform Code Council (UCC), and the Auto-ID Center at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. During a co-presentation at the Retail Systems Conference and Exposition held recently in Chicago, the UCC and Wal-Mart announced plans to implement a new, industry-wide RFID compliance program that will begin with Wal-Mart requiring its top 100 suppliers to include an ePC-compliant RFID tag on all case- and pallet-level shipments to the retailer by January, 2005. These RFID smart labels must conform to the ePC specifications developed by the Auto-ID Center.

Zebra Technologies is a sponsor and active participant of the Auto ID Center's ongoing research and has pioneered technology to encode and print smart labels on-demand. The on-demand printing process enables end-users to print, program and verify data in one step. Zebra is currently involved in global ePC field trials where Zebra's RFID

printer/encoders are producing ePC smart labels for consumer goods manufacturers, logistics providers and retailers. [More on the RFID initiative in Editor's Comment, page 12.]
Circle No. 364.

Hershey unwraps new packaging

For the first time in 67 years, Hershey Foods Corp. has updated the packaging for its Hershey's® Milk Chocolate and Hershey's® Milk Chocolate with Almonds candy bars. The new wrapper design incorporates a contemporary look, along with consumer-preferred graphics and fin-seal packaging. The new look is part of an overall marketing effort designed to revitalize Hershey's iconic brands and is an important component in reconnecting with today's younger consumers.

Developed by the Sterling Group in New York City, the new design features a high-gloss packaging material that creates a dramatic and vibrant effect, while retaining the familiar maroon and silver colors first utilized more than 100 years ago. A new almond graphic has been added to the Hershey's milk chocolate bar with almonds wrapper to make it more easily identifiable. The new graphics increase the brand's visibility on store shelves to better drive sales. To increase consumer awareness, the new wrapper design will be integrated into the existing television and print advertising campaign that was launched in late 2002, featuring chocolate lovers expressing their happiness associated with a Hershey's bar. The new packaging complements the existing ad campaign and consumer promotion, further enhancing Hershey's image with consumers.

The new packaging material is a two-ply lamination of ExxonMobil Chemical's Bicolor® 75 CSR-2/ink/adhesive/Metallyte™ 50 TSPM/cold seal converted by Curwood. The outside web of Bicolor 75 CSR-2 was specifically designed to provide excellent cold-seal release, while the Metallyte 50 TSPM offers a brilliant metal appearance and exceptional cold-seal adhesion to the nonmetallized surface.

The Hershey's bar is not the first brand in Hershey Foods' product line to receive a face-lift. Earlier this year, Hershey revitalized the look of the largest brand in its stable: Reese's® Peanut Butter Cup. The packaging retained the recognizable orange color, synonymous with the Reese's franchise, but added a new swirling textural element that contemporized the brand.

"Consumer reaction to the design change has been very positive," says Christine Wiker, marketing director at Hershey. "Our research indicates that the new design has greater overall appeal, plus the more contemporary design is on track with today's consumer tastes."

The new Hershey's bar packaging also will be incorporated into the signage that towers above Hershey's Times Square store in the heart of Manhattan. The redesigned, oversized Hershey bar will take center stage in the 60X215-ft sign that is the largest permanent fixture ever constructed in Times Square.
Circle No. 365.

Latran provides proof of its innovative prepress solution

Latran Technologies LLC, formerly Polaroid Graphics Imaging, welcomed some long overdue sunny weather, along with several members of the packaging-related trade press, to its Bedford, MA, headquarters in late June, where it discussed its unique proofing solution for the converting industry and the company's future vision. Last November, the company, which has been an independent enterprise since 1999, erased its last link to Polaroid with a change in its corporate identity. According to Latran, the new name is derived from "laser ablation transfer," which is the patented technology employed in the company's digital halftone proofing systems.

According to Dave McCarthy, general manager and CTO of Latran, in 2001, the company discovered an increasing interest from the package converting industry in its digital proofing solution for the commercial printing market. McCarthy says that the National Association for Printing Leadership estimates that the percent of labels printed in process color is expected to grow from 19 percent to 41 percent by 2006. Recognizing both an opportunity and a need for a product more tailored to converter's needs, Latran built strategic alliances with companies such as Esko-Graphics, Artwork Systems and Pitman to develop a digital prepress system for converters.

"In package printing, there was a need, a fit, an opportunity," says McCarthy. "In 2002, fifty percent of our new business came from package printers."

Latran's digital halftone proofing solution, the Prediction® system (formerly the Polaproof), allows prepress operators to apply an ink pigment directly onto the same material that will be used on-press using a 10-micron-dot image spot size. Proofs are protected by a 4-micron-thick, clear finish that allows the system to maintain the minimum dot gain so that matching the proof on press is more reliable and predictable. Demonstrations during the press event in Latran's 1,250-ft demo center proved the Prediction's ability to produce proofs on virtually any package printing surface, including plastics, paperboard, flexible packaging, adhesive labels and even lenticular substrates. "If it can be wrapped around the [Prediction imager] drum," said Andy DiDonato, vp, quality assurance for Latran, "it will be wrapped around the drum."

Proofs are created when Latran's Extended Range Media (ERM), a plastic sheet with a layer of adhesive, is placed onto the Prediction imager's drum and is held in place by a vacuum. One at a time, ink sheets supplied by Latran are laid on top of the ERM, which is imaged by Laser Ablation Transfer technology. Once all the colors have been applied, the

ERM is fed through a Prediction finisher along with the substrate to be used on press. Through heat and pressure, the image and adhesive are transferred to the desired stock.

Latran provides different sets of ink sheets for different types of printers, along with spot colors and an opaque white, and can cover 90 percent of the Pantone book, says DiDonato.

According to Richard Deroo, Latran's director, marketing and strategic alliances, the Prediction system "raises the bar" for digital halftone proofing. "It simulates press conditions and enables the proof provider to exceed the demands of their customers."

Products offered by Latran include the Prediction 2000 imager, an automatic system that accommodates sheets up to 14 X 20 in. and can run unattended for up to eight hours; the 1420, a semi-automatic machine for narrow-web flexo applications that can image sheets up to 14 X 20 in.; and the 2230 for folding carton jobs, which has a 22 X 30-in. format. Latran also offer finishers for the 2000, 1420 and 2230. Consumables from the company include the ink sheets, the ERM sheets and the finish laminate.

Sidel and Pressco share future vision

In its continuing effort to make polyethylene terephthalate bottle production less expensive, Sidel has signed an agreement with Pressco Technology, whereby Sidel will become the exclusive distributor of Pressco's integrated INTELLISPEC™ system for blow molders in Europe and Asia. Explained Gérard Stricher, president and CEO of Sidel, at a press event held during NPE 2003 in late June, "Because there is a limit to how fast we can make PET production, we are moving toward full process control. We want to be able to control the material distribution in the bottle to produce a new level of lightweight."

Pressco, based in Cleveland, OH, engineers vision systems that use cameras mounted on blowing equipment for online inspection of PET preforms and containers. Images are instantly analyzed to detect any defects occurring in the base, seal surface or sidewall of the container. Results are then correlated to blowing-machine components using a patented process-monitoring capability. This ensures container quality and blowing productivity, while allowing operators to monitor the production process to optimize productivity and improve uptime.

"More intelligent machines are the need today," said Don Cochran, president and CEO of Pressco, who emphasized that the Pressco system goes beyond just camera-based inspection, with the ability to diagnose equipment and processing problems relating to particular machine components. The system is also capable of processing images at production speeds of up to 300/sec. "Our background is in can technology," explained Cochran, "which requires high speeds and better illumination." The agreement between Sidel and Pressco continues an already-longstanding collaboration between the two companies, noted Stricher. At present, 350 Pressco systems are in place on Sidel blow-molding machines around the world. Future systems can be retrofit on existing Sidel equipment, and will be integrated into new machines. Also as part of the alliance, Sidel will participate on Pressco's board of directors and its investment in Pressco will help launch a joint R&D program for machine vision and intelligent sensing technologies for Sidel's core businesses.

In another discussion during the event, Stricher related to the press Sidel's hopes to get into labeling within the next two years. "We may sell a noncore business in order to acquire labeling technology," he said, "so that we can offer our customers a full turnkey system."