

FEATURE ARTICLE

| JUNE 30, 2000

## Super marketing through packaging

*Products at the Food Marketing Institute trade show in Chicago illustrate how grocery marketers rely heavily on packaging to add convenience and sales appeal.*

**By Rick Lingle, Technical Editor and Abbey Lewis**

The annual Food Marketing Institute (Washington DC) extravaganza proved once again to be a spotlight for the grocery industry's latest innovations. Packaging World presents this first-hand look at packages for products ranging from bagels to walnuts. Editors singled out these packs while scouring the aisles at Chicago's McCormick Place during the show in May.

For some manufacturers the spotlight was broad. For example prepared foods powerhouse Kraft Glenview IL introduced 30 items at the show. Indicative of Kraft's emphasis on consumer convenience was Athenos® Travelers® Mediterranean foods launched in March in five refrigerated varieties. Produced and packaged by Churny Co. Inc. Weyauwega WI Travelers are available in two-compartment 4 1/2"-diameter polypropylene trays heat-sealed with a foil lamination. The lidding is sealed around the perimeter and along the divider that separates the two compartments to keep the food in place. One compartment contains 3 oz of hummus the other has five slices of pita bread and a plastic spreader. A colorful paperboard sleeve completes the presentation.

"The sleeve was designed specifically to allow Travelers to be vertically displayed" says Gary Carmichael associate research engineer Kraft Cheese Div. Packaging Development. Priced from \$1.59 to \$1.99 Travelers adapts for adults a package style Kraft and others have used previously for kid-targeted snack and meal kits such as Oscar Mayer® Lunchables®. Kraft informs PW that parents are also packing Travelers in their kids' lunches as an alternative to classic "junk food." "The product is the marriage of two escalating trends: snacking and Mediterranean foods" states Mark Magnesen Churny Co. president. "Because of the tray's unique design we had to develop some specialized tub handling equipment" says Carmichael. Kraft declines to elaborate on the packaging process.

## 'Opportunistic' zipper tops bagel bags

Packaging innovation slides conveniently into the bakery aisle atop six-count bags of bagels from Earthgrains Co. St. Louis MO. The bags are made reclosable with the Hefty Slide-Rite® zipper device from Pactiv (Lake Forest IL). "Packaging is the next big opportunity in bakery" stated Gary Jensen Earthgrains' senior vp marketing from the floor of the FMI show.

The repackaged Earthgrains® bagels in five varieties are currently in test market in California and Texas in 19 ½-oz zippered bags. Before a bread-style bag with a bread-bag-style clip was used. Pactiv flexo-prints the premade zippered bags in up to seven colors. The 2 ½-mil low-density polyethylene bag film is thicker than the previous bag film PW is told. The bags are supplied to the bakery with the slider and tamper evident seal in place ready to

be bottom-filled and heat-sealed/trimmed. With the repackaging the bagels are displayed lying down with the top facing outward to emphasize the improved packaging. A gusset added to the new bag accommodates the 7"-long zipper.

As of early May Earthgrains reached midway of a planned 24-week market test Jensen says. Feedback has been "extremely positive" he adds noting that consumers indicated the zipper "connotes freshness." The company believes the Slide-Rite system is easier to open and close than competitive reclosure methods says Andre Biane vice president of bakery research and total quality. Earthgrains anticipates the package will increase marketshare enough to more than offset the premium it pays for zippered packaging. Suggested retail prices vary by flavor variety and sales region from \$2.59 to \$2.99 per six-pack.

