

FLEXIBLE INSIGHTS

Discovering Frozen Assets in the Frozen Food Aisle

Have you noticed lately that the frozen food category is starting to re-invent itself through the use of new and innovative flexible packaging? Over the years, we have not typically thought of the frozen food category as particularly innovative.

However, since many modern freezer cases today have now gone “Upright,” “Lit Up,” and many retail stores have gone “Upscale,” so has frozen food packaging. The modern freezer case of today is starting to get “jazzy” with many new product introductions, new packaging formats with sparkle, vibrate color and attention getting graphics.

Once a category perceived by many as “commodity,” frozen food packaging rarely warranted more than the most minimalistic packaging due to the low level of product protection required. Typically packaging was addressed by basic surface printed polyethylene or paper board cartons. Today there are many new examples of quality, convenient, and creative frozen food solutions making this category one of the most exciting and profitable segments in the food industry. Wow, how things can change quickly once momentum begins.

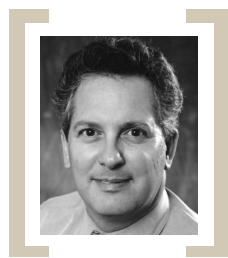
One of the first to venture out of the cookie-cutter packaging more than a decade ago was Contessa Premium Foods, introducing its new line of stir fry meal kits in standup laminated pouches with magnificent rotogravure printing. The frozen food industry must have thought they were crazy! Utilizing an expensive

“pre-made” laminated rotogravure printed stand-up bag was surely insane and certainly not necessary nor cost-effective. What were they thinking?

The expression “crazy like fox” immediately comes to mind. Contessa realized more than a decade ago what many companies are just starting to realize: that if they are to stand out in the market, they need to be magnificently different than the competition, not only with the quality of the product offering, but with the packaging. And to say they were correct would be an understatement. Contessa Foods was well ahead of its time. From the very day it proudly appeared in the frozen food aisle, Contessa and others to come, have had a dramatic effect on how “quality” frozen food is marketed today.

Contessa is just one example of how an entrepreneurial company can break away from their competition by positioning themselves uniquely in the market and not just following the perceived “standard”.

Today we see many examples of package format innovation in the freezer case; styles include standup-pouch, side gusset, microwaveable pouches and film lidded trays with steam venting. Zipper and “slider” reclosability is being added to today’s frozen food packaging at a constantly increasing pace. Reclosability, once considered an unnecessary expense, by many now is becoming an expected norm by today’s astute consumer.



Calamusa

Press-to-close and “slider” zippers can now be applied to both polyethylene or laminated bags providing the convenience and marketing benefits to suit both multi-use and larger format package sizes.

Today’s diversified marketing outlets include retail, super / mega center and club store opportunities, each providing the packager new opportunities to introduce new innovative products, recipes, new sizes and new packaging formats to suit each outlets specific marketing requirements.

With all this happening in the frozen food aisle, your company should obviously be benefiting by now from this growth opportunity through your own flexible packaging sales and marketing efforts through the sale of printed roll stock or pre-made bags.

If the frozen food category has not shown up on your radar, or if you perceived it as a commodity market therefore giving it little or no focus, perhaps you may want to take a fresh look. It may be time to consider creating a specific market strategy, focusing a greater percentage of your group’s time and resources on this evolving market.

To those of you who are already serving this dynamic market segment, by all means keep up the good work! ■

Dennis Calamusa can be reached at ph: (941) 923-1181, e-mail: dfcflex@hotmail.com, or visit www.standup-pouch.com.