

PACKAGING INNOVATION WITH 'POP'

Family Time's primary package becomes the 'bowl' at snack time.

Family Time Snacks Inc., Valparaiso, Ind., has created a niche in the saturated microwave popcorn aisle. It markets super-premium popcorn and leverages the positioning through innovative packaging.

In the process, Family Time Snacks found a way to add value in a commodity category while maintaining a competitive retail price per serving with other brands.

Family Time Snacks signals this value in two ways:

- An exclusive, hybrid corn product, marketed under the Family Time brand.

- A proprietary paperboard carton that functions as the primary package in the store and doubles as the serving "bowl."

The microwave popcorn comes in a Perfect Popper pop-up microwave server.

About 83 percent of uncooked popcorn volume lies in microwave popcorn, which is consumed in 62 percent of U.S. households. But Family Time Snacks, working with Commercial Packaging, Normal, Ill., identified a gap in the market to make the Perfect Popper package commercially viable.

Consumers do the transfer drill

Their research found that most consumers do not eat popcorn directly from the popping bag. Instead, they transfer it to another container. This adds the extra step of dish cleanup.

"People will share out of a bowl, but they don't like to share out of a bag.

Reaching in and out of a bag is kind of problematic. The bag is messy with butter," says Ron Leskiw, Family Time Snacks Director of Sales and Marketing.

The Midwestern marketer has responded by inserting a pouch containing the corn kernels into a high-temperature-resistant, grease-resistant, bleached

With structural enhancements, Family Time takes packaging convenience to a higher level in microwave popcorn.

paperboard carton. One side of the pouch adheres to the bottom panel of the carton, and the other side splits open as the kernels pop and expand the pouch.

Prior to use, the carton lays flat inside a clear plastic envelope. The "bowl" forms by removing the carton from the envelope and pushing the red arrows on the top and bottom edges toward each other. The carton becomes erect and locks into position. "Temperature tabs" fold out from

two sides of the container. The package heats in a microwave oven and is then removed using the tabs. The popcorn is ready to eat right out of the carton by pulling open the tab on the top panel to expose the split-open pouch. The Perfect Popper package provides 3.8 ounces of product—33 percent more kernels than some other brands. "Ours is a three-serving size at a retail price of \$1.39 to \$1.49. For three comparable mini-bags with other brands, it's about the same retail price," Leskiw says.

Through package testing, Family Time Snacks achieves cost efficiencies such as in-line adhesion to attach the pouch to the carton. These tactics make a high-quality product possible at a competitive price, Leskiw explains.

Family Time comes in three-packs and six-packs. The cartons lie flat inside the clear envelope. This economy of space attracts C-stores in the brand's primary distribution area—the Upper Great Lakes region. The popcorn also appears in more than 800 grocery stores and in some drugstores in the region.

The Perfect Popper package presents Family Time Snacks with an unexpected distribution channel. It accompanies some direct-mail marketing materials in an attempt to boost response rates. **BP**

Where to go for more information...

♦ **Microwave packaging.** At Commercial Packaging, contact John Little at 312.543.9893 or jlittle@commercial-bag.com.

