

AWARDS COMPETITION

Flexible films find gold in FPA awards

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PACKAGE Vacuum skin packaging, gorgeous stand-up pouches, and a WHO winner with life-saving potential are among the highlights in this year's FPA competition.

Case-ready asparagus



In the end, a case-ready microwavable package of asparagus proved to be a cut above the other FPA entrants, earning both a Gold Award for packaging excellence and Highest Achievement Award for the **Cryovac div.** (www.cryovac.com) of **Sealed Air Corp.** (www.sealedair.com). Cryovac's Cre8 package design division, and especially manager Marc Edlein, also contributed to the project.

The technology takes what Cryovac learned initially in the case-ready meat category and adapts it for the special needs of produce. In this instance, it's for 8-oz packs of three varieties of asparagus spears—green, white, and a blend—and mixed vegetables from Southern Specialties, Pompano Beach, FL.

Unveiled in October 2008 at the Fresh Summit tradeshow of the **Produce Marketing Assn.** (www.pma.com), the products are currently in trial at retail stores in Minneapolis and Florida, where the line of 8-oz Southern Selects brand products retail for \$4.99 each. That's according to the Southern Specialties vp of business development, Charlie Eagle, who describes the refrigerated, heat-and-serve line as "microwavable, steamable products in tray form." The company has previously offered its produce in bags that were microwavable, but not steamable.

"This unique packaging has a lot of attributes to help sell our high-end products," says Eagle. "The main attribute is the product flavor once it's cooked using this [packaging technology]." He also notes that the format provides good shipping integrity, excellent presentation, and shelf-to-table convenience.



Cryovac reports that the technology permits processors to cook in the package.

The packaging comprises a polypropylene-based tray, breathable film, and two paperboard bands for graphics. The vacuum skin film is a 3-mil, highly permeable, multilayer polyolefin structure. It lets oxygen in and carbon dioxide out at controlled rates, says Cryovac business development manager Myra Foster. It also maintains carbon dioxide levels

of 5% to 10% within the package; this delays decay and softening of the asparagus spears. It provides the products "a good" 10-days' shelf life, Eagle says. Several film structures were tested before the company settled on one that worked well for the different products.

The tray and film combination permits a steamable tray sealed with a film that balloons and self-vents during microwave heating. The tray has flanges on the ends that act as stay-cool handles.

The vacuum skin film is sealed to the trays using a **Multivac** (www.multivac.com) thermoformer that Eagle calls a "product-specific machine" installed at the company's plant in Pompano Beach. Eagle notes that the packaging is done two-up, though he could not disclose rates.

He expects to move forward from the trial during Q1. "We're hopeful that we've got a product that will work for many of our customers," he says. "Our company has never had a better working relationship than we've had with Cryovac Sealed Air in this project," he adds. "They've been great."

This is yet another FPA Gold Award for Cryovac Sealed Air's Simple Steps packaging concept, which also won an FPA technical achievement in 2006 for an application for veggies from Sun Valley Foods (see packworld.com/package-20531). —Rick Lingle

Next-generation sliced lunchmeat packaging

Packagers seeking reclosability for sliced deli meats, cheeses, snacks, and other foods have a fresh new option: The Cryovac Multi-Seal™ Package. From the **Cryovac Div.** (www.cryovac.com) of **Sealed Air Corp.** (www.sealedair.com), this entry found gold in FPA's technical innovation category.



The concept is a reclosable semi-rigid flexible package produced in-line using conventional thermoformers. The zipper-free Multi-Seal attributes include easy opening and multiple reclosure over the life of the product. The package design also allows peg display.

The high-barrier, semi-rigid forming web is offered in gauges from 12 to 26 mils, says Chad Stephens, Cryovac manager of application, development, and support, and it's available in about any color.

The barrier sealant is laminated to a traditional substrate of polyester. It's designed with a pattern cut such that when the package is opened, an adhesive strip portion remains on the flange for the reseal.

Tim Avery, Cryovac director of marketing, Processed Meats-North America, says the Multi-Seal package's advantages include a smaller footprint versus zippered packs and a material and process that is transparent to the packager. There is no secondary application needed; the Multi-Seal is done through a straightforward thermoforming and sealing process using conventional machinery.

Cryovac states that there are little to no machinery modifications required for nonforming web widths to 459 mm (18 in.), which can equate to a four-up, 2 x 2 pack arrangement of 6 x 8-in. semi-rigid trays. Originally intended for sliced meat packaging, Multi-Seal lends itself to a range of foods including beef jerky, Avery says. He points to dairy as one of the next market opportunities.

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Developed over a two-year period, the Multi-Seal concept presented two sets of challenges, according to Avery. “For consumers, we needed a package that worked consistently,” he says, “and for processors we wanted a product that would work on their existing equipment. We’ve successfully run the Multi-Seal on several makes of equipment including **Multivac** (www.multivac.com), **RapidPak** (www.rapidpak.com), **Ulma Packaging** (www.ulmapackaging.com), and others. This is one of the most exciting products that I’ve been around.”

PW has learned that the first customer is producing a 20-oz club store size of the Multi-Seal package, though Cryovac cannot identify the end user by name. That club-store pack was introduced in September for about a half-dozen varieties of sliced meats, Avery says. A second customer is expected Q1 2009. —Rick Lingle