

Pepping up your presentation

Packaging is multi-functional and is an important part of the independent's armoury for making products fly.

Andrew Don reports

The great thing about bakery products is they speak for themselves. You cannot beat the golden glow of freshly made croissants or smiling gingerbread men, free of packaging.

Contrast this, for example, with supermarket crisps, with their all-singing-and-dancing packaging that reveals more air than product once open.

Yet packaging nonetheless plays a crucial, if not more subtle, role in the bakery mix, from environmentally-friendly paper bags in which fresh loaves are dispensed to the likes of Colpac's Fuzione sandwich packs that boost visibility, improve stackability and feature a "snap-lok" system to maintain freshness once the pack is opened.

Tri-Star Packaging says the food and beverage industry is completely dependent on quality and presentation. Matthew Slade-Pedrick, a buyer at the company, which supplies everything from sandwich wedges to disposables, says: "Packaging is massively important. People buy with their eyes. It makes product look good, it's tidy, it stops contamination and it enhances the look. It also gives branding and marketing opportunities."

Keeping it green

Nowadays, packaging's green credentials are key and Martin Kersh, administrator at the Food Packaging Association, says many new clever developments combine environmental considerations with style. With disposable foodservice items, issues include disposability and convenience. "You are able to promote the company on the packaging, the consumer should be able to enjoy the product without the risk of excess heat or cold, and the packaging should keep the product in pristine condition between purchase and an acceptable time of consumption."

Kersh does not believe the packaging industry is over-using or under-using materials, but he says fewer materials are going into packaging without sacrificing effectiveness, style and visibility. "Sandwich boxes need to look the right size for the sandwich and not make it look bigger than it is." He adds that there is not much point in having a product that is "recyclable" if the cost of recycling it is more than the cost of production.

Jim Winship, director of the British Sandwich Association, says everyone is focused on sustainability and trying to reduce packaging. He reckons that the big problem for people selling sandwiches is that the consumer carries them to their office and then the packaging tends to be dumped in the bin, so even if it is environmentally-friendly, it might not end up in recycling facilities.

"A lot of people think cardboard is better, but corn-starch plastic is best," says Winship. "A lot depends on what recycling facilities there are in the local area."

The importance of the environmental issue should not be over-



Colpac's Fuzione sandwich packs feature a 'snap-lok' system to keep the contents fresh once opened

Bakery packaging analysed

The Future of European Food and Drink Packaging to 2015, just published by packaging industry research organisation Pira International, notes that a high proportion of baked products are sold unpackaged.

Most baked products are sold in flexible packaging – pouches and films. Flexible films are principally used for the higher added-value pre-packed Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP) products, such as ordinary breads, croissants, pancakes, speciality breads and cakes.

Baked goods are a significant market for folding cartons and plastic trays, with the major demand being for cakes, biscuits and morning goods.

The report says metal trays are also benefiting from growth in sales of packaged cakes. Barrier film packaging helps to extend the shelf-life of fresh baked foods and innovative film structures enhance presentation.

Pira says some of the reasons why barrier films for baked products are expected to grow much faster than all films include an increased share of premium products, increased pressure on shelf-life – as metallised bread wrap extends shelf-life and promotes differentiation – and the fact that sandwich bread in MAP will replace frozen bread for foodservice.

looked. Research from Huhtamaki, the global packaging company that supplies the BioWare range, found nearly a third of those questioned felt sustainability and environmental considerations had affected their business. Its products include bio-coated paper cuts, suitable for hot drinks, and stronghold carry trays for several cups to reduce the possibility of spillage. ■