

FOOD WRAP

PACKAGES THAT SELL

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STEVEN HELLER & ANNE FINK



Graphic Details

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Designed by Kristen Lilley

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INTRODUCTION 8

Post Modern Dress 18

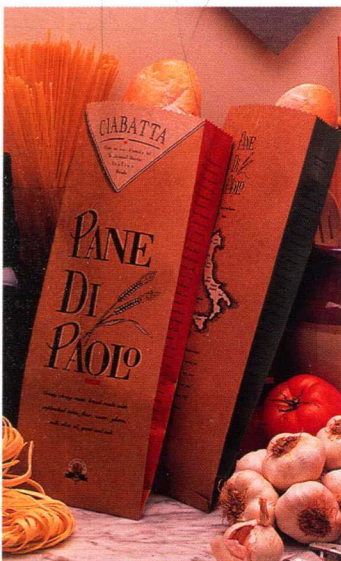
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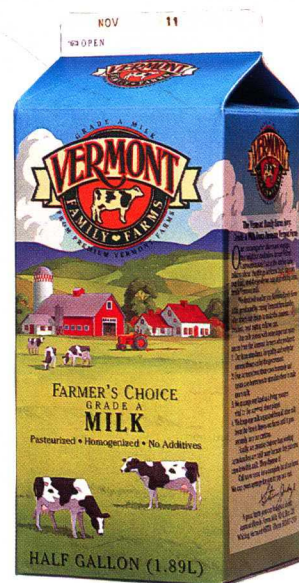
Oh Natural 66



Home Spun Values 112



Nostalgia and Vernacular 132



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DIRECTORY 168

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To Nick,
with the ravenous appetite.



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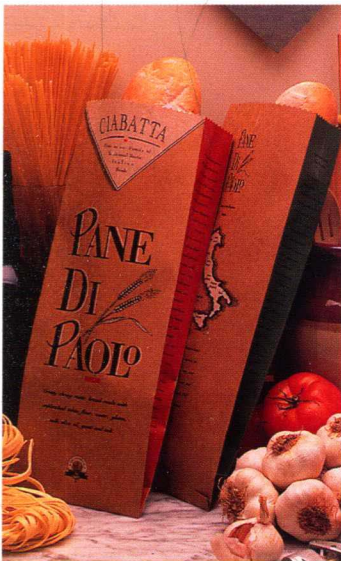
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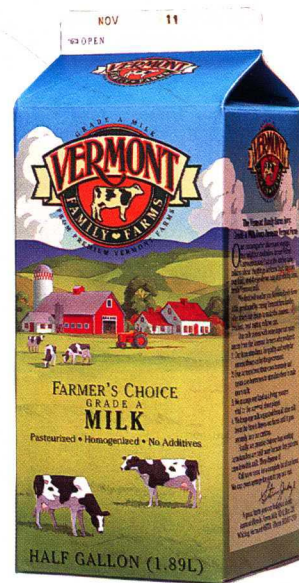
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Introduction

Food packages are the weapons in the war to win a consumer's loyalty. With the huge investment required to develop new and compete with older brands, strategies are employed that would rival many military operations. For every victorious product scores of others are defeated. For every popular brand, armies of tacticians, designers, and marketing experts expend huge amounts of energy devising the perfect package.

A supermarket is stocked with so many competitors that a shopper must be conditioned to buy a specific brand. This special allegiance, or brand loyalty, is hard won. Only after a constant barrage of sales pitches will a shopper even so much as think to try something new. So a three-pronged attack is the most common strategy: advertising, promotion, and packaging. The first introduces and positions the product; the second insures that the brand name becomes a household word, and the third seduces the shopper. In this equation the package is not simply a protective container, it is a signpost—indeed a billboard. Although sustained interest in a brand inevitably relies on quality (a bad product may win a battle but invariably lose the war), without the benefit of these three combined forces a product is as good as invisible. What this strategy must insure is engagement with the eye and the senses through appetite appeal.

Everyone has experienced the seductive sway of an hypnotic aroma. The unmistakable smells of fresh brewed coffee, sizz-



ling bacon, and grilled hash browns make the mouth water so uncontrollably that restaurants have been known to set exterior exhaust fans to high, filling the street with breakfast emanations that lure in a hungry customer. Likewise, a food package must appeal to that part of the brain where appetites reside; where one is most susceptible to suggestion. The challenge of the contemporary package designer is, therefore, how to make paper, tin, cardboard, and glass into something

seductive. Transforming unappetizing materials into a banquet is not easy.

From the introduction of the modern commercial package almost a century ago a variety of conventions remain in place. The most common is a photograph or painting of a prepared packaged food. A stack of pancakes soaked in butter and syrup, a steaming bowl of soup, and plate of spaghetti topped with a delectable sauce excites the salivary glands; reproductions of fruits and vegetables, a freshly sliced apple, orange, or pear on a container of juice, or dew soaked berries on a jar of jelly or jam, have incalculable subliminal powers. In the absence of real aromas precisionist images like these are mouth watering substitutes. The fact is, without these facsimiles the supermarket would be little more than a warehouse of generic staples. With them, it is a cafeteria of tasty beckoning displays.

Food packages do not, however, show cooked foods or nature's bounty exclusively. The contemporary package is designed to infiltrate the consumer's psyche on a variety of social levels, appealing to the shopper's lifestyle, as well as societal and health concerns. These days a product cannot just be mouth watering or thirst quenching but necessary for the body, mind, and soul. And so old packaging conventions are pushed, taboos are shaken, and standards dislodged to redefine the relationship between consumer and product. In the 1950s virtually all supermarket brands, regardless of the product, looked basically the same: bold gothic type, loud primary colors, and friendly (often goofy) trade characters and mascots on a label or box. They were designed by specialists who understood marketing conventions and taboos. Today, a wide range of graphic



DRINKING TEA BEGINS WITH BREWING TEA

1. Fill the kettle with fresh, cold water and then heat.
2. When the water reaches a rolling boil, warm the teapot by swirling scummy water in it and then pour it out.
3. Place one level teaspoon of leaves per cup into your pot or infusing basket.
4. Pour the water over the tea leaves and infuse for two to five minutes. Experiment to find your favored brewing time.
5. Pour the tea. Avoid letting the leaves steep. Remove the infusing basket or pour the remainder of the tea into a thermos to enjoy later.

CAFFEINE CONTENT
 Milligrams per 5-ounce cup

• Herbal Tea
 Green Tea
 Oolong Tea
 Black Tea
 Coffee

TEAS FOR ALL SEASONS
A Quartet of Full-Leaf Teas and Herbs

AUTUMN
CINNAMON HERB TEA

Pulling up a favorite chair to the hearthside, cup of steaming hot tea in hand, sit snug and cozy during the harvest season. After days in the orchard gathering apples or picking grapes in the vineyard, the soothing aromatic brew relaxes tired muscles. Fields of ripe wheat, bundles of drying corn, cattails in the marsh, cellars filling with the bounty of harvest, all reflect preparation for the approaching season. Geese flying in formation across the fall harvest moon foreshadow this change.

Autumn Herbs and Spices

AN EXOTIC HERBAL BLEND MADE FROM A ROOIBOSCH (HYDRANGEA "ROOIBOSCH") TEA OFFERS A BEAUTIFUL, CARAMEL-COLORED LIQUOR, DELICATE AND SMOOTH TASTE WHICH WARMEN WITH A DASH OF CINNAMON AND OTHER WARMING SPICES THAT WILL TAKE THE EDGE OFF A COOL FALL DAY. NATURALLY CAFFEINE FREE.

Our "seasonal" teapot was painted by California artist Muryo Kech. This watercolor and gouache illustration comes from her book *Delicacies for All Seasons: Tea*, produced for Swans Island by Collins Publishers, San Francisco.

Muryo Kech

INGREDIENTS
 Rooibosch, cinnamon, natural flavors

This container is recyclable and reusable in the home.

© 1994 The Republic of Tea
 For more information on our tea and seaware write to The Minister of Supply, P.O. Box 1173 Mill Valley, CA 94942

7 42676 10073 7

The REPUBLIC of TEA
 Net Wt. 3.5oz. (100g)

designers (many who do not consider packaging to be their specialty) apply themselves to packages as one part of a general practice. Yet because of these designers, the old school conventions have been challenged and taboos busted. In the eighties bold gothics gave way to both classical and fashion-

able typefaces; loud primary colors were replaced by subtler pastels; and trade characters were streamlined or diminished in size. Yet despite changes in graphic style, in the final analysis food packaging is still the least experimental and probably the most conservative of any graphic design form.

Consumers insist that they want novelty as a respite from daily routines, yet an analy-

sis of the average shopping cart reveals that few purchases are novelty or impulse buys. Consistency is the watchword, if not the hobgoblin, of food industry graphics. Once a shopper is hooked and loyal to a particular brand the emphasis of design is on maintaining their loyalty—not confusing them with a barrage of new graphic motifs. Even when “new and improved” versions of old brands are released the product’s fundamental graphic schemes are continued. Venerable brands may have periodic makeovers but few manufacturers are foolhardy enough to threaten their hard-earned equity by tampering with success. Only those older products facing a diminishing consumer base engage in radical cosmetic surgery, and only after extensive market research determines that it is feasible and necessary.

Consumers really want their brands to be loyal to them. They don’t want surprises that interrupt their basic routines or,

more importantly, strain their budgets. Yet this should not mitigate the natural tendency to experiment with new things. Although staple purchases usually remain constant, fashionable or fun foods—a growing segment of the current market—are where new brands with quirkily designed packages have a chance of winning a share. In recent years salsas, bottled waters, fruity soft drinks, and “natural foods” have invaded and staked out territory, first in the specialty food shops, and next in many larger supermarkets. This is where shifts in package trends begin to occur. If smaller, eclectic brands are successful in capturing consumers larger ones may be influenced, too. This is also where contemporaneity is a virtue; the more fashionable the package the more likely it is to attract the impulse buyer. Like turn-of-the-century posters, which were aggressively collected in their day, the more stylish the package, label, or bottle, the better chance it will have to be displayed with pride, not just hidden away in the kitchen cabinet.

Food packaging representing a lifestyle is more than a protective container, it is a status symbol every bit as charged as a Mercedes emblem or as commonly worn as the Nike swoosh. In the eighties the intense competition in the food industry has forced the repositioning of various foods as more than just consumables—they are objects, too.

Advertisements for average bottled waters claim to quench thirst, but packages for the higher priced premium brands presume to satisfy social impulses. To impress one's guests, the theory goes, seltzer is too plebeian, so spend more for a bottle that will stand alongside a

