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Food Storage Providers Serve Up On-The-Go Options

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NEW YORK— Consumers shopping for food storage have a more discerning eye for solutions that perform the best to suit their needs, which has been driving sales in leakproof plastic as well as glass options. Vendors are also targeting these scrutinizing consumers by providing container sizes and uses that suit food-specific specs, and adding functionality for those bringing foods with them on-the-go, be it to work or to a pot luck gathering.

While the food storage category as a whole is still 90% plastic and 10% glass, the glass segment has seen 65% growth year over year, making it a bright spot within the category, said Lynn Lehman, World Kitchen's brand director for Snapware.

"More and more brands have introduced glass food storage in their offerings," said Laura Bianco, sales manager, North America for Bormioli Rocco. "The increased sensitivity of consumers toward environmental issues has been a big push for glass containers," she added. Some brands which have traditionally offered just plastic, such as Rubbermaid and Zinloc, have

glass, for example, how it doesn't break down over time, and doesn't stain." Lifetime Brands is exploring glass food storage

for 2012, and will be introducing ceramic food storage, utilizing Lifetime's dinnerware design expertise in color and pattern.

Consumers are looking for food storage in all materials that is also acceptable for serving, said vendors. Snapware is providing this with its 360 Serve, which is stoneware dinnerware designed with the brand's airtight lids.

Retailers are upping their offerings that keep foods fresher, longer, with airtight, watertight seals, said Michelle Brooks, product manager, food storage, Sterilite. They are offering more glass storage, "best" lines of latching gasket plastic storage and disposable plastic storage, as well as cutting back their assortment of "better" plastic offerings of basic lid and base storage, noted vendors.

"Consumers know they can
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go from disposable to a leakproof product for just a dollar difference. For an extra \$2

"Leakproof solutions have been gaining in popularity since consumers are taking their food storage on the go more than ever and need their containers to perform differently on the go, requiring additional functionality from those sitting in a cupboard or refrigerator keeping foods fresh," said Colleen Kennedy, Aladdin product manager, Pacific Market International.

Consumers are still continuing to save money and time by taking meals to work with them, and are looking for aesthetically pleasing options, according to suppliers. Byron Stanger, trade marketing manager for Trudeau, cited Gallup in the following adult market stats: 65% of all adults surveyed said they eat at least two lunches per month at their desk, with the top two reasons being "save money" and "too much to do, I need to eat at my desk." The survey also noted that 75% of all meals carried to the office are from home; and 75% of adults use a leakproof snap lid container from home.

One on-the-go trend in the storage market is food-specific solutions, said PMI's Kennedy. "As consumers continue to trend towards taking their lunch to work to both save money and

products features a built-in removable freezable ice pod. Cool Gear's EZ Freeze: Freeze n Lock food storage features a four-winged snapping lid as well as a patented non-toxic freezer gel filled lid to keep foods cooler for up to four hours, according to the company.

When consumers were asked how to improve what they carry lunches in, those in the Gallup poll said they wanted to have containers that look "adult like" with some design and color, rather than just be basic, cited Stanger. "More retailers are targeting adult uses than ever before; [adults] are still semi-brown bagging it, but with a more executive look," he said. Trudeau's Office Fuel program offers a one-stop collection that offers hydration, coffee and food storage solutions for "in-office dining" to meet the needs of these consumers, said Stanger. However, he noted that there is still the consumer who works outside of the office environment, for example, construction workers, who do need and use the more traditional thermal flasks for on-the-go beverages and meals such as coffee and stews.

"As you walk the storage aisle, storage used to be clear and very basic; vendors are giving the consumer the option of bold, bright colors. Consumers want to be able to give personality to a category that is otherwise dull and boring," added Lehman.

Consumers do not only transport food to work. As more consumers throw pot luck parties to save money by entertaining at home, Sterilite saw an opportunity to present a cake and pie server for those homemade desserts, featuring a dome lid so the treat is easy to transport and serve, said Brooks.


Smaller-Sized Storage Grows

Another growth area Sterilite saw is in dry food storage. "People are buying food in bulk and want to make sure it lasts longer, that their cereal doesn't go stale. They are being more conscious and making it last as long as they can," said Richard Ahern, vp/sales, Sterilite.

Another product trend in food stor-

age, said vendors, are smaller-sized options. "She is looking for something for the small tidbits; she can store a single serving of something versus dumping the leftovers," said Lehman, adding that the trend is both economically and healthy eating driven. For example, consumers might have spent \$5 on a pint of strawberries and want to make sure they eat every last berry, or they might be watching their portion sizes.

The smaller sizes are also good for snack foods on the go, said Kennedy of PMI.

"Snacks continue to be a growing way that consumers are eating on the go... consumers are looking for new ways to avoid the ubiquitous Ziploc baggie and as an added benefit [to food storage containers] keep their snack foods from being crushed on the move," she added. Aladdin's newest snack size offering, for example, is its mini collapsible bowls. 



Left: Trudeau's Fuel program includes food storage for the office such as soup on-the-go. Right: Frigoverre multi storage in glass from Bormioli Rocco.



The Aladdin Chill series of lunch boxes from PMI features a built-in removable and freezable ice pod.



Aladdin's collapsible mini bowl set can be used to store small snacks.

Dry food storage containers (right) and Ultra Seal bowls (below) from Sterilite.



Trudeau's Fuel line includes in-office food storage and containers such as Duo jars for dry or wet food choices.



For serving and storage, Snapware's 360 Serve is a stoneware dinnerware option designed with the brand's airtight lids.



Cool Gear's EZ Freeze: Freeze n Lock has a four-winged snapping lid and freezer gel filled lid said to keep foods cooler.