

Tips for Designing Great Food Packaging

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While the primary function of food packaging is to protect your product, the primary function of food packaging design is to attract. Your package is your brand ambassador. It should sell itself. This means you need to have a strong [brand identity](#) and packaging that communicates information about your product clearly, concisely, and relevant to your [target audience](#).

Know Your Brand Identity

How will your packaging portray your product positioning?

Your packaging often is a consumer's first point-of-contact with your product. When developing your [food package design](#), you must have a clear understanding of your brand.

What is your product? How is it different from similar products on the market? Who is your primary target customer? What is your company philosophy? These are all important questions to have answered to ensure your package design is consistent with your brand identity, as they will help determine the colors, size, shape, and materials used in your packaging. New product

launch requires that your packaging communicates clearly your company name, logo and your brand messages are strong and clearly communicated on the packaging.

Design With Form and Function

A food packaging designer balances the shelf appeal (design and messaging) as well as the functional aspect of food product safety and protection on the grocery store shelf.

It is imperative that when you ship your product to a customer, distributor or retailer, it arrives in the same condition as it left your factory or warehouse. Grocery retailers will send you an invoice or deduct from your invoice the cost of damaged product in their stores.

Food packaging has to carry a clear message of features and benefits that are easy to see and understand: you only have 1/10th of a second to get the consumers attention as they shop the grocery aisles!

The Food and Drug Administration has [Food Labeling Guides](#) that dictate both numerous aspects of food packaging design, both from a functional standpoint and how you can create approved [health claims](#) and your nutritional fact panel.

Food Packaging Design Key Questions for Designing Better Packaging

- **Packaging materials:** What materials will allow for maximum product freshness and protection?
- **Packaging Construction:** Will a flexible or rigid container support your product? How much space do you need for messaging?
- **Ease of which it can be packed into outer containers (secondary packaging):** Will the shape or size prevent you from easily shipping your product to retailers?
- **Ease of storage and distribution:** What is the cost of secondary packaging and transportation to get it to the retailer? Will your product be stored for a period of time before going on display?
- **Shelf life extension through packaging:** How long might your product sit on the shelf before consumer consumption?
- **Convey Information:** What are the ingredients, product benefits, considerations, brand identity?

Packaging Materials and Design Drive Costs

Your package is one of the most important elements in a successful new product launch. However, you need to be flexible and consider alternative options, which can be equally eye-catching and functional.

Key cost drivers for food packaging are:

- **Materials:** Traditional packaging materials include plastic, aluminum, glass, and paperboard. However, there have been advancements in innovative and eco-friendly

packaging materials. [The Greener Package](#) offers help with sustainable packaging materials, or there are associations dedicated to individual packaging materials such as www.glasswebsite.com; www.flexpack.org; www.plasticsindustry.org; www.aluminum.org. To understand issues regarding sustainability, look at www.greenblue.org.

- **Design** (if working with a package designer): Once the development process is complete and specifications are set, 80% of costs are embedded, which means 20% of costs occur in the manufacturing stage. Therefore, there may be several savings opportunities in the design and development phase. Check out one of the following online directories for package designers and design firms: www.thedieline.com and [Core77](#).
- **Packaging production (printing, production, and labor)**: It is possible to make tradeoffs, such as between labor and production costs, but be sure you understand the implications of possible trade-offs in your time and effort and in the look of your package.

We had one customer that moved from hand-wrapping to automated wrapping. There was a significant capital cost to buying a machine, but her [labor costs](#) went down and her retailer bought more from her because of the consistent look of her packages. Her payback was rapid despite the upfront costs. Use this [sample calculator for one of our machines](#) as an example of how capital costs can be reduced.

When looking for packaging equipment, [PMMI](#) is a great resource for North American-made packaging equipment.

Final Thoughts

Great food packaging gets your product off the shelf and onto the consumer's plate. Great packaging is a [key success factor in pitching the retail buyer to get on the shelf](#). Packaging is the single most important marketing tool in today's competitive food & beverage market. Hiring a package designer and using available resources will not only save you time and money in the long run, but will help ensure your brand gets from the kitchen to cash faster!