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Sleeve film labels survive cold, moist conditions

Refrigerated dressings manufacturer improves label appearance and durability and enhances container tamper evidence.

Renee's Gourmet, a brand of H.J. Heinz Canada Ltd., St Mary's, Ontario, Canada, is a leading Canadian manufacturer of refrigerated salad dressings, focusing on formulations with no preservatives or MSG. For many years, the company had been using paper-labeled glass jars to package its line of dressings. But in 2005, Renee's decided to take advantage of advanced flexographic printing technology that lends itself to vibrant, attention-getting printing and graphics on 360-degree shrink sleeve film labels.

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The new label development project began in February 2005 and ended 18 months later. The newly labeled dressings entered the refrigerator case in August 2006, just as H.J. Heinz Company of Canada acquired Renee's Gourmet.

Renee's group marketing manager Joe D'Angelo notes, "We had been using paper labels. But the fact that our dressings and dips sit in a chilled environment means that moisture is a consideration. Paper, when wet, tends to wrinkle and distort. It is a factor in the retail environment. Shrink-sleeve film alleviates that moisture consideration. The high-shrink rigid vinyl material we use now in our new packaging has a powerful impact on the shelf. The chilled environment is not a large factor any more."

The PVC (polyvinyl chloride) high-shrink film used for the new labels is a scuff-resistant structure called Pentalabel® OT-M148/01 developed by Klöckner Pentaplast (www.kpfilms.com). Jones Packaging, Inc. (www.jonespackaging.com) produces the eight-color (six colors plus two hits of white) flexo-printed, 360-degree labels and specified the Pentalabel film for the application based on the film's consistency and ability to deter graphics distortions. Once flexo-printed with water-based inks, the labels are hot air-dried. Suppliers of the jars and closures were not disclosed.



FULL BODY. The color-coded, 360-degree, vinyl shrink sleeve labels are flexographically printed in eight colors.



To print the labels, Renee's chose Jones Packaging from among three bidders—two of which were gravure printers. Jones presented the benefits of flexographic printing, including relatively low pre-press costs, quick turnaround, short-run flexibility, the ability to change copy as necessary for multiple SKUs, and comparably vivid graphics. And Renee's was

able to use their existing inventory of glass containers with the new shrink sleeve labels so there was no container waste.

White ink is used as a background to simulate the look of paper labels. Jones helped develop a modified water-based white background ink that withstands heat and steam in the tunnel.

Packaging parameters

Renee's Gourmet was very specific about the packaging criteria that needed to be met. The logo had to be precisely positioned on the label. The sleeve label needed to integrate a tamper-evident band that is applied to the 355-mL contoured jar and folds over the lid. And the band needed to include identification of the dressing flavor.

To address Renee's directive that the flavor information appear on the tamper-evident band, the machine installs a perforation into the film on-line, rendering an easy-tear-open feature for consumers. The body of the label stays firmly in place while the built-in tamper-evident band pulls away from the twist-off lid.

Jones Packaging's vp of process and product development Larry Patterson notes, "Graphic distortion is always a factor with shrink sleeve films. So with Renee's, we printed black lines in a grid pattern. We used those black lines for adjusting the artwork, and Renee's graphics agency fit their design to the grid. We then did a trial printing on the sleeve and checked for placement. The process is computerized now. But just two years ago, we hand-made the shrink sleeve label printed with the black-lined grid."

The printed label material is trimmed and then seamed or welded to turn it into a tube. The tubed material is put on a rewind machine, and the resulting roll is inspected for print registration accuracy.

To shrink the label onto the jar, Renee's uses 100% steam in their shrink tunnel. Renee's bought new sleeve application equipment and a heat shrink tunnel from **Tripack** (www.tripack.net) to accommodate the new labels. The printed tube-roll of labels is slipped over a sleeve applicator that is shaped like a bullet to open the sleeves up. Each sleeve is automatically cut and slipped onto the jar. The sleeved jar then is channeled into the heat tunnel where the steam shrinks the label snugly to the jar contours.

Speed to market

With more than 70% of Canadian sales in the refrigerated salad dressing category, the line includes 12 varieties. All the label varieties are color-coded.

Jones keeps pre-slit stock from Klöckner Pentaplast in stock at all times for short runs, if Renee's so requires for Just-In-Time situations. If Jones wants to print on-demand to satisfy "surprise" lead times, they have a ready supply of the clear vinyl film in their warehouse.

This supplier readiness gives Renee's a speed-to-market advantage.

D'Angelo says, "We believe the new labeling has helped continue the brand's growth. Klöckner Pentaplast's film has done an effective job of making the full-body label stand out. And Jones did a very good job for us, and we developed a good partnership. They were diligent and addressed issues head-on. We received a lot of support from them." —*Judy Rice*

See the adhesive in this picture?



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