

MARCH 2001
A CYGNUS
PUBLICATION

Health

Products Business

**SAIL SMOOTHLY THROUGH
ALLERGY SEASON**

**SPRING CLEANING WITH
HELP FROM MOTHER NATURE**



its 10-oz. microwaveable bowls, which retail from the refrigerated sections of supermarkets, an area increasingly seen as the "promised land" for the soup market.

Chilled or refrigerated, soup is big business in Europe, where sales have doubled over just the past four years. In the U.S., some estimate that chilled soup could eventually account for as much as 20% of the soup market. Dollar sales of refrigerated soups, as well as frozen soups, are pointed in the right direction, growing 12.9% for the year ended December 30, 2000, according to ACNielsen. That's several times the 2.6% dollar sales growth of canned soup over the same period.

SOUP FOR ALL SEASONS

Though refrigeration introduces obvious distribution challenges, it also sets the stage for flavor experimentation. Companies like San Francisco-based Covent Garden Soup use fresh ingredients and in-season vegetables, rotating flavors according to the season. Reinforcing the "fresh" theme, all of Covent Garden's soups are packaged in gabled milk cartons. Seasonal additions to the company's line for this past year included Split Pea & Bacon and Spiced Butternut Squash for winter, Minestrone with Spring Vegetables and Asparagus for spring, and Thai Spinach and Spicy Corn Chowder for the summer season.

Chilled soup certainly has exciting possibilities, but one area offers potentially greater gains. Organic foods may well own the next decade. Current estimates are that just one in



Fair Scones/Canterbury Cuisine's Quick Cook Soup Mix only requires adding water or milk for a "meal" ready in 20 minutes.

ten households purchase organic products. But that number is expected to quadruple within the next three to five years. If that happens, brands like Walnut Acres of Arlington, Va., stand to profit handsomely. One of America's oldest organic brands,

Walnut Acres is launching a new soup line featuring several flavor classics "with a twist." Prepared using less sodium than competing brands — thanks to state-of-the-art production techniques — Walnut Acres Soups are being launched in eight chef-inspired flavors, including: Autumn Harvest (pumpkin



Walnut Acres debuted its new line of soups packaged in canje-style glass jars

squash and potato, enriched with cream, onions, apple juice concentrate, nonfat milk and seasonings), Country Corn Chowder, Ginger Carrot, Zesty Tomato and Classic Minestrone. What's more, the line is packaged in attractive 15-oz. clear glass carafes, which not only look much different than the run-of-the-mill soup can, but are easy to pour from and handle.

PRETTY COOL PACKAGING

Aseptic cartons offer similar advantages with one important difference: they won't shatter when dropped.

These cartons are the package of choice for Palo Alto, Calif.-based Imagine Foods, Inc.'s Imagine Natural Soups line. "Bowl" packaging is another development to watch on the packaging front, with lines like the aforementioned Kettle Cuisine, as well as Petaluma, Calif.-based Fantastic Foods' Big Soup Noodle Bowls. The Big Bowls are about 50% larger than most soup cups and come in flavors such as Spring Vegetable and



Fantastic Foods' Soup & Dip Recipe Mix can be used as a soup, dip or seasoning.

Mandarin Broccoli, both full of organic Asian-style noodles.

Look for more innovation in organic soups, with products such as Fantastic Foods' Soup & Dip Recipe Mix. It's hailed as the first all-natural combination soup, dip and recipe mix

made with organic ingredients and designed for health-conscious consumers on the go. And get set for more products such as Woodstock Organics Soup, said to be the first and only



ShariAnn's introduced chicken soups and broths to its certified organic line.

fresh frozen organic soup made from a base, not simply from water. It's "back to basics" for flavors as more firms use real soup stock, coupled with innovative ideas, to produce novel combinations of ingredients paired with user-friendly packaging to keep soup lovers coming back for more. **HPB**

Tom Vierhile, a new products marketing professional, has more than 15 years of experience in consumer packaged goods reporting and analysis. He is the general manager of Marketing Intelligence Service Ltd., 6473D Route 64, Naples, NY 14512-9726; (716)374-6326, ext. 28 (phone); (716)374-5217 (fax); mi@productscan.com (e-mail); www.productscan.com (Web site). Tom welcomes inquiries.