

Innovation extends to packaging

The Whole Grain Stamp brings consumers to the bread aisles and eliminates confusion over whole grain content.

The baking industry has proven again how innovative it is. After a year of exciting new bread launches in 2005, bakers kept up the pace in 2006 by launching more products capitalizing on consumer trends. That is why *Baking Management* has added another honor to its annual leadership awards— Packaging Innovation of the Year.

The baking industry comprises far more than the steps taken to formulate and bake bakery foods. Before consumption, products may be packaged, shipped, displayed and sold. Many wholesale bakers who sell their bakery foods to grocery stores or other retailers realize the increasing importance of product packaging—as well as the importance of whole grains. These two trends come together in the Whole Grain Stamp, a graphic that shows how many grams of whole grains a product has.

In July, the Whole Grains Council launched Phase II of the Stamp, which declares exact whole grain content instead of descriptors such as "good" or "excellent" source. It is this Stamp that *Baking Management* awards Packaging Innovation of the Year.

As of press time, the Whole Grains Council says the Stamp appears on nearly 800 products from 74 companies, which include Interstate Bakeries Corp., Kansas City, Mo.; La Tortilla Factory, Santa Rosa, Calif.; Canada Bread Co., Toronto; Natural Ovens Bakery, Manitowoc, Wis.; Aunt Millie's; Country Choice Organic; and Charter Baking Co.

The Phase II Stamp is similar to the first Stamp, except exact whole grain content is displayed. The Council says this design makes the Stamp easy to spot on food packages.

This Stamp may be used on products that contain at least 8 grams of whole grains. Bakery foods that contain at least 16 grams of whole grains may use the 100% Stamp if the grain content is entirely whole grain.

Displaying the Stamp

Bakers who want to display the Whole Grain Stamp must join the Whole Grains Council. After membership is approved, usually within one business day of application, bakers must request to participate in the Stamp program, says Cynthia Harriman, Whole Grains Council's director of Food and Nutrition Strategies. Bakers must sign a stamp agreement contract.

"The Stamp program isn't useful unless it's held to a high standard, and consumers know it always means the same thing and is a carefully controlled program," Harriman says. By signing the stamp agreement contract, bakers ensure that whole grain content is accurate on products requested to display the Stamp, among other provisions. After this step, the Council provides bakers printable files of the Stamp and a usage guide. Before displaying this Stamp on packaging, bakers must register their products with the Whole Grains Council, along with their nutritional facts panels and ingredients lists. The Council then reviews each product.



Aunt Millie's began displaying the Stamp in the spring of 2005.



These two Stamps show the minimum whole grain gram values for the basic Stamp and the 100% Stamp. The gram value changes for each bakery food to reflect actual content.

"One of the big issues is members have whole grains in their products, but are not getting credit for them," Harriman says. "Like the less common grains, such as amaranth and millet."

Bakery foods must contain at least 8 grams of whole grains in order to display the Stamp. The Whole Grains Council says 8 grams is 0.5 servings of whole grains. "We suspect most consumers will merely look for the increasingly familiar graphic of the Stamp," Harriman says, "knowing that if they always buy Stamped products for all six of their recommended daily grain servings, they'll be guaranteed to get three servings or more of whole grains. This is because every Stamped product contains at least half a serving of whole grain."

Aunt Millie's

The decision for Aunt Millie's, Fort Wayne, Ind., to implement the Stamp was simple. "We were finding in our consumer research groups that consumers want whole grains, but they were confused," says Melissa Dunning, Aunt Millie's marketing director. "I heard about the stamp on 'Oprah' and after national-level publicity, we thought this would be a terrific way to help consumers clear up their confusion looking for whole grain products."

Aunt Millie's began displaying the stamp in the spring of 2005. The bakery has put together a plan to implement the Phase II Stamp, which will be gradual due to costs. Dunning expects the Phase II conversion to be complete within a year.

Harriman says there is no deadline for when the Phase II Stamp must be implemented.

Dunning says the Stamp adds a level of comfort to consumers who have been confused about whole grain content. Aunt Millie's is scheduled to conduct consumer research in October and November, and the company will collect consumer feedback on the Stamp.

Country Choice Organic

This organic company displays the Stamp on four of its soft-baked cookies. These cookies are all whole oatbased. The Eden Prairie, Minn.-based company began displaying the Stamp about a year ago. Country Choice overhauled its packaging and reformulated its brand identity. At the same time, the company decided to join the Whole Grains Council and display the Stamp on its packaging.

At present, Country Choice displays the Phase I Stamp. "Therein lies the rub," says John DePaolis, Country Choice Organic's head of marketing. "The challenge is now with the new program. We will have to go back over time and update Stamp changes to those packages, but it won't be in one swoop." DePaolis says the company updates its packaging every year.

Similar to Dunning, DePaolis says the Stamp is a tool that helps educate consumers. "I think consumers tend to be very confused when it comes to whole grains," he says. "So the opportunity to call it out in one simple icon is something beneficial."

Besides educating consumers, the Stamp has benefits to Country Choice as well, DePaolis says. "There is a lot going on in the media about whole grains. We don't have the dollars to create that type of buzz," he says. "Anything we can do to take advantage of it or jump on the bandwagon, we will. It allows us to participate, albeit on a very small level."

Charter Baking

Baking Management's Capital Investment of the Year Award winner, Charter Baking, has two brands that feature the Stamp—Rudi's Organic Bakery and The Baker. Charter Baking uses the Stamp because "we want consumers to know that our breads can help them meet their daily servings of whole grains," says Victoria Hartman, Charter Baking's vice president of sales and marketing.

Rudi's displays the Stamp on six bread varieties. The Baker has the Stamp on nine bakery items.

Rudi's Organic Bakery has a new product line, Whole Grains and Fiber, and Hartman says the company developed these breads with the goals of 16 grams of whole grain per serving—and the Stamp.

Hartman says consumers will continue to see the Phase I Stamp until remaining packaging inventory is used.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY AUNT MILLIE'S

GRAPHIC PROVIDED BY WHOLE GRAINS COUNCIL

By Melissa Hillebrand