

Under Pressure

An innovative pouch for microwave cooking

Shirley Cox was so impressed with what she saw at the WaveQuick Technology Co. Ltd. booth at the packaging show in Las Vegas last year that she knew right away she wanted to get involved. At the show, she met David and Irene Lin, owners of the company and creators of its microwave pressure cooking pouch that's been around in Taiwan for about six years.

In fact she helped establish QuickWave International Corp. in Alliston, Ont. this January to sell the product in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. The company will launch the microwave pressure cooking pouches to consumers by this summer. They are also looking to sell to food processors in North America and Europe. Currently the company sells to frozen food manufacturers and vending machine suppliers in Taiwan.

Cox, who is president of QuickWave, says, "Our product will allow the industry to package food and then it can go direct from freezer to microwave without consumers having to vent or slit [the pouch]."

Called Tender Gourmet for the consumer market, the pouches are made of a multilayered film that when heated allows pressure to build up inside to cook the food, says Cox. But while any other pouch would burst without a slit, she adds, "ours actually vents."

"If you hold up the pouch to the light there's almost a dust on a section of it. That's the actual venting. So excess heat, moisture and steam will vent through those holes allowing the minerals and vitamins to be maintained within the pouch and without compromising the pressure in the pouch," explains Cox.

The self-venting feature also means consumers will have consistent cooking results. Often, when having to slit pouches, says Cox, some consumers slit too much or too little resulting in either food that's dry and overcooked in spots or undercooked in spots.

The self-venting feature also makes the pouches ideal for



A sample of what the QuickWave pouch can do.

vegetables. Cox says rather than steam or boil vegetables and have to tend to them, the pouches ensure that they're always crispy. She adds that consumers just have to make sure the pouch is sealed with the zipper. In testing, the company found that consumers could likely get between five and nine uses from each pouch before the zipper is compromised.

Each package will come with 10 microwave pressure cooking pouches of varying sizes. Some will be large enough for a dinner plate, corn on the cob asparagus and small enough for a luncheon plate or a handful of carrots.

Cox says because it's so new the company still hasn't got a complete list of foods and cooking times. Consumers can visit: www.quickwaveintl.com for a sampling of different meats, fish and vegetables and their recommended cooking times. She adds

that for the most part the pouches cut traditional microwave cooking times in half. The company is also still experimenting with cooking times and different microwave oven wattages.

Cox says they think the pouch would be ideal for frozen fish and frozen pizza manufacturers among others. She says that Lin is also working on a pouch with a browning element that should launch in a few months. The company's standing pouches could also be ideal for soups, rice dishes, stews and gravies and have the same freezing and cooking features.

The pouches are environmentally safe since they burn down to H₂O and CO₂ and can replace most film packaging materials without equipment reconfiguration. The film can withstand heat of up to 200°C and flexo printing is available in eight colours. The pouches are also approved for food contact by the Food and Drug Administration. For now they'll be manufactured in Taiwan, but, says Cox, the Lins are prepared if demand increases and have scouted factories in North America.

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