

Kiwi firms set to wrap up best packaging vote

Shortlist of the worst-packaged products is dominated by large multinational companies

by Isaac Davison
environment reporter

Individually wrapped prunes, a tiny meal encased in six pieces of plastic, and a frustratingly fiddly printer cartridge are in line for the dubious title of worst packaging in New Zealand.

A public vote for the Unpackit Packaging Awards found more than 100 products with non-recyclable, poorly labelled or just plain annoying wrapping on our shelves.

A shortlist of the eight worst-packaged products was dominated by large multinationals.

The list included Sealord Deli-Menu, a small tuna meal which came with six pieces of plastic, none of which could be recycled.

Unpackit spokeswoman Sophie Ward said that for a so-called convenience food, it had a "ridiculous amount of waste for a snack or small meal".

Sealord responded by saying there was a balance between reducing the amount of packaging and making sure the food stayed safe, convenient, and kept its flavour. But it admitted there was room for improvement.

Sunsweet Individually Wrapped Prunes had a non-recyclable wrapper for each piece of fruit, with further layers of non-labelled or non-recycled plastic.

Sunsweet's New Zealand spokesman, Ken Garmonsway, said it meant people could take a healthy product with them, without getting in a sticky mess.

Brother's ink cartridges and Oral Braun toothbrush heads were also popular nominations. Their nearly impenetrable packs received many New Zealanders' votes for most annoying wrapping.

Brother marketing manager Michael Smith said the wrapping was being gradually phased out for a different type.

But the individual wrapping around packages was necessary to stop the ink evaporating.

At the other end of the scale, small and medium-sized New Zealand companies have all the nominations for best packaging.

Ms Ward said the overseas businesses could learn a lesson from smaller local firms, which used innovative and commonsense packaging to minimise waste.

Several companies were nominated for using cardboard packaging with a high proportion of recycled material.

Also among the contenders were com-

WORST PACKAGING

- **Cedenco Prepack Corn on the Cob**
Two layers of non-recyclable plastic on every corn cob.
- **Brother Ink Cartridges**
Each cartridge wrapped in difficult-to-open plastic bag and a cardboard box, packaged together in large non-recyclable plastic pack.
- **Oral Braun Toothbrush Heads**
Individually wrapped toothbrush heads, in fiddly recyclable plastic which has no recycling label, all contained within a larger non-recyclable container.

BEST PACKAGING

- **Potatopak (Blenheim)**
Plates and bowls for takeaway food made from potato starch (a waste stream).
- **Speights swap-a-crate (Dunedin)**
"A classic which deserves a comeback," say award organisers. A deposit is paid when the first crate is bought, which ensures empty beer bottles are returned for refilling.
- **Wishbone 3-in-one bike (Wellington)**
The bike's packaging, a cardboard box, is printed for kids to play with, and made of 75% recycled material.

panies that turned packaging into a product.

Ideal Cup and Rethink reusable bags created alternatives to single-use coffee cups and plastic bags.

Wellington company Wishbone produced a modern twist on traditional packaging. The cardboard box its children's bike came in had printed designs, encouraging children to reuse the box as a toy.

Classic packaging such as the swap-a-crate and egg carton were also nominated.

Labelling was a very important point, Ms Ward said. There was no point in using compostable or reusable products if consumers did not know what to do with them.

Public voting for awards runs until April 29, and winners will be announced on May 6.



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www.unpackit.org.nz