

UNIFIED PALETTES

FOR YOUR PALATE *written by Ron Romanik*



Challenger brands are raising the quality bar at retail in more creative — and colorful — ways than ever before. From small, independent startups to retailer-driven private label, these branding strategies work hard to capture shoppers' attention — and to keep it.

The WFM package design firm in Shillington, PA, has recently helped a handful of brands execute boldly colorful challenger strategies with flair and precision. "It might be counterintuitive," explains WFM partner Tom Newmaster, "but challenger brands actually have much more freedom in design strategies than most established national brands."

Well-known national, or "heritage," brands are often locked into a primary brand color across nearly all of their products. Upstart brands can forego a primary brand color and elevate variety accent colors to primary positions on packages. The rainbow effect grabs attention as a contrast to the common, expected blocks of brand color on store shelves.

Last year, Blake Niemann, the creator of Keenwa Krunch, knew he was ahead of the crest of several consumer trends that were going mainstream. Niemann's tasty all-natural, preservative-free snacks based on the Quinoa grain had a leg up on the competition, and, after all, the United Nations had declared 2013 as the "International Year of Quinoa."

The challenge the WFM team faced with redeveloping the existing brand was not only to reflect quinoa's heritage, but also to introduce it to mainstream culture in an energetic, contemporary way that would resonate with an active, health-conscious audience. WFM updated the

existing bowl icon around a product window, providing a perfect way to reconcile the Inca-inspired element with a newly vibrant, high-energy background. The colors that now dominate each package are the flavor variety indicators, unified in boldness and intensity, and the core brand message is contained in the central logo, bowl and caring hands.

WFM also recommended rebranding Keenwa to open up flexibility in future product line extensions. The new overbrand, eatKeenwa, is a call to action and the "fuel your greatness" tagline inspires fitness warriors to take control of their diets. Niemann was very pleased how the fun and exciting packaging resonated with Millennials, and how WFM's Newmaster handled the project. "Tom is in the same parallel universe as I am," Niemann says. "He really extracted my vision."

Another healthy grain is at the center of the new Grainful line of frozen oatmeal-based entrées. Jan Pajerski, Grainful's President, explains that using steel-cut oats in savory recipes is the perfect way to add healthy, whole grains to your dinner. Each of Grainful's recipes were created by co-founder Jeannine Sacco, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America.



In the frozen food aisle, being category defying means avoiding a single color background, especially white. As with eatKeenwa, the dominant Grainful colors indicate the recipe variety, which will help returning shoppers find their favorite meal quickly. The consistent information architecture unites the product line, as does the earthy color palette. "WFM was very responsive to what we were looking for," Pajerski recalls.

Hollis Baley heads up Marketing and Sales for the Klamath Basin Fresh Organics potato brand and charged WFM with coming up with a more innovative packaging strategy. WFM created a new logo, reemphasized the organic differentiation of the product and managed the development and print execution of 11 variety colors, which once again dominate the packaging.



Baley was very pleased with how the paper packaging created a better canvas and more space for educational information of all kinds while still featuring a product-viewing window, moved to the back of the package. "The pictures on the paper package are also so much better," Baley emphasizes.

WFM developed a uniform and informed approach that would make it easier for people to shop for potatoes.

In more ways than one, the Klamath Basin project grew out of a previous WFM packaging project for potatoes sold at Walmart. That project was as much about variety color design strategy and execution as it was about print management.

WFM's Newmaster explains that they knew there were different levels of quality in the print sourcing, so WFM made sure the imagery would look good with a variety of reproduction levels. Part of the solution was using PMS colors that, when created with process colors, wouldn't shift to affect the primary colors. This policy helped create a standard that would provide consistent results nationally.

"We gave the segmented design strategy a lot of thought," Newmaster adds. "The challenge was to create a branded-product look without a brand. Now the whole potato section looks better than before."