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## RECYCLING



PinnPack

# Food Packaging Turns Green with rPET Sustainability

The most popular brand of dates in the US switches to thermoformed tubs and lids made from recycled green PET bottles.

Rick Lingle | Sep 09, 2020



Because it echoes the hue of the natural world including grass, forest, jungles, and plant life in general, green is a color long associated with sustainability.

Datepac, a Yuma, AZ, packer of Medjool dates, makes that connection a reality through new green-colored packaging. The repackaging supports the company's drive toward greater sustainability as it switches from clear virgin plastic PET to 100% post-consumer green PET beverage bottles.

Branded as *PinnPACK Green*, the recycled PET containers are supplied in 12oz and 2-pound sizes by PinnPACK, an Oxnard, CA, subsidiary of CarbonLITE Holdings, the world's largest recycler of PET beverage containers. The thermoformed tubs and lids are sourced from green PET bottles for Sprite, 7-UP, and other beverage brands.

The move to literally greener packaging comes at a time when many brands opt for transparent plastic packaging.

“Green-colored recycled plastics have been hard to find a home for because they are unconventional,” says David Baxter, Natural Delights' brand manager. “People are used to seeing clear plastic packaging. We're excited to take this step because it's best for the environment and we believe for our customers. It means less plastic in the landfill and less use of virgin plastic.”

Datepac packs and ships dates for two tray sizes of Natural Delights Brand, the #1 brand of Medjool dates in the United States. The containers are embossed with “100% made from your recycled bottles” while a printed label applied by Datepac tells the story of the packaging's recycled content.



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### Naturally green color.

The green colored rPET is molded from the source materials without any dyes, and remains the same hue as the incoming bottles, according to Ira Maroofian, president of CarbonLITE and PinnPack Packaging.

The development of rPET sourced from green bottles has been in development for the past four years, Maroofian tells *Packaging Digest*.

“We believe once our customers as well as consumers start seeing more and more green recycled packaging it will become commonplace,” he says. “The color green is already associated with sustainability and many products come in green packaging, particularly organic offerings. We are proud to be leading the way with Datepac. Ultimately, higher demand for higher recycled content will translate into better and more recycling, which will mean less plastic pollution.”

The green rPET container can be recycled, but with a caveat.



PinnPack

“That's dependent on the capabilities of the recycling plant in any given area,” Maroofian. “However, currently there are very few facilities that process thermoformed packaging.”

PinnPack, which envisions increased acceptance of produce packaging in green-colored rPET, also uses the recycled materials to manufacture salad bowls for Health Nut, a Los Angeles-area restaurant chain. Health Nut has taken the same innovative step as Datepac and received positive customer feedback.

There may be additional green rPET examples. “We are aware of a few other green colored packages being used in the market today,” says Maroofian. “For example, there is a clamshell used in Whole Foods Stores that is a darker green and there are also some egg cartons that are made of green PET, but we do not know where they source the material.”

The dates are carried by Whole Foods, Costco, Kroger and other outlets.

Pack label image: Cyrus Maroofian, PinnPACK

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