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# Aroma opens the door to a new dimension in produce marketing

January 19, 2005

As packaging is increasingly used in the fresh produce industry, consumers' sense of smell is eliminated as a marketing issue. But ScentSational Technologies, based in the Philadelphia suburb of Jenkintown, PA, is offering a new packaging technology that can make packaging smell like the product.

Since ScentSational began commercialization in the fourth quarter of 2003, it has been busy working with the world's leading packaged food and beverage companies to apply its patented CompelAroma " a proprietary technology utilizing encapsulated flavor and aroma " to packaging.

In a Dec. 23 interview with The Produce News in the offices of U.S. Produce Exchange Inc. in Philadelphia, ScentSational's chairman and chief technical officer, Steven Landau, announced that his firm is prepared to offer its services to the fresh produce industry.

Mr. Landau is a former business associate and close personal friend of Chris Gardella, director of business development for U.S. Produce Exchange. Mr. Gardella, through U.S. Produce Exchange, will be working with ScentSational to introduce the aroma marketing concept to the fresh fruit and vegetable trade.

"This is a new and innovative approach to produce marketing," Mr. Landau said. "It is another dimension. The sense of smell offers the greatest opportunity to appeal to customers."

He noted that "packages are designed to keep fruit and all products fresh. But they are then cut off from an important part of the whole experience: smell."

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To doubters of the importance of smell, Mr. Landau pointed to the attraction of bakery fumes pumped into a street or supermarket. Until about 15 years ago, there were local laws requiring that food establishments vent their bakery odors above their rooflines so as not to attract customers with irresistible smells. "Odors were considered a subliminal marketing tool," he said. "Now they're allowed. They're not deceptive. People won't do what they don't want to do. But smells trigger something in people."

Mr. Landau noted that consumer shopping surveys show that a product has six seconds to attract attention as shoppers walk supermarket aisles. Attractive packaging smells can have a huge influence on gaining a marketing advantage.

"Smell is the most powerful sense and is the most underutilized tool in marketing," he said. "We're working on changing that."

Mr. Gardella said of the involvement of U.S. Produce Exchange, "Steve asked me to pioneer this with the produce industry. We are a conduit for him into fresh produce. We are assisting him in developing this."

Mr. Landau explained, "We have only been commercialized for a year, and in that time we have been inundated with opportunities. I understand we have a huge market potential within fresh produce, and we will develop that with this publicity and U.S. Produce Exchange getting the message out there."

Mr. Gardella added, "I have a lot of connections with a lot of people in the produce industry. When you combine my experience with his technology, we will see with whom we can pioneer the technology. I am the market resource for him in the industry. We will research opportunities in applying the technology to value-added packaging."

Mr. Landau added, "Chris and [U.S. Produce Exchange owner] Jim DeMalo know the players and market. I have a lot of confidence in their ability to develop future industry applications."

Mr. Landau said that pre-cut products, including fruit cups, are an obvious entry point for CompelAroma within the fresh produce business. He noted that on microwavable products, the scent of what some term unhealthy food ingredients, such as butter, can be added to the packaging. Because there is a direct physiological link between smell and taste, the packaging can be designed to release a butter flavor without adding the calories or fat brought by real butter.

Sweet smells can also enhance product taste without adding calories. Mr. Landau noted that children are sometimes put off from eating healthy products because of unpleasant smells. If such products can be packaged to have an improved smell, that product would make a better first impression and therefore consumption might increase. As the firm's marketing efforts within the produce industry begin, he said that all the applications within produce have yet to be discovered.

Mr. Landau added that he tries not to limit his company's potential by making his own predetermination on which new applications might not be a commercial success. He suggested that the creative power of free enterprise might bring new uses for CompelAroma that he has not yet considered.

ScentSational promotes CompelAroma as "an exciting new advanced approach to brand building. CompelAroma compels consumers to use brands over and over again by incorporating an innovative new technology that generates powerful aromas and flavors that create a memorable and

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exceptionally pleasurable experience of the brand."

ScentSational's CompelAroma technology allows food and beverage marketers to differentiate brands by encapsulating flavors within the structure of plastic packaging which release desirable aromas. These FDA-approved food-grade flavors are added directly to packaging materials at the time of manufacturing. During the process, the encapsulated flavors and associated aromas become integral parts of the package itself.

Mr. Landau emphasized that ScentSational Technologies did not develop the concept of scenting plastics, but the firm has pioneered scenting food and beverage packaging.

Mr. Landau said that the strength of a package scent can be very precisely controlled. Furthermore, ScentSational can offer generic scents, such as strawberry and pineapple, or work with individual companies to create a customized signature aroma for the brand that would remain unique to that company, like any other trademark. He noted, for example, that a tomato company might have its own branded scent, and then expand its product line to a processed tomato product, which would be marketed with the same scent. While ScentSational has focused on plastic packaged goods to date, the firm has a patent pending to include flavoring packaging for canned goods. It is also working on technology to scent paper packaging products.

CompelAroma packaging can be designed to have its encapsulated flavors be slowly and uniformly released into the packaged product during its packaged life, or the packaging can be designed to leave the scent of the product to its natural scent.

Mr. Landau became acquainted with Mr. Gardella 25 years ago when the former was the advertising agent for a Chilean fruit marketer Frupac, of which Mr. Gardella was an executive. The pair worked together for a while on an airline operated by Frupac.

In the advertising business, Mr. Landau has used scented inks to add to the appeal of his printed work. In addition to having his own advertising agency, Mr. Landau was a part-time inventor.

One day in 1996, he opened the packaging for a plastic toy for his dog. The toy had a very nice chocolate smell. Being inquisitive, he broke off part of the toy and detected that the plastic had no taste. He found this an interesting concept and filed it away in his memory. A few months later, while snow skiing, he applied cherry-flavored Chap Stick to his lips. When he later stopped for a drink of water, the water had a cherry flavor. By 1997, Mr. Landau filed his first patent for olfaction packaging technology, branded CompelAroma.

ScentSational began commercialization in late 2003 after five years of research, development and intellectual property protection initiatives. Currently, ScentSational is working with 17 of the nation's top 25 processed food and beverage companies. Aromatic product packaging is being established for these firms, with releases scheduled for 2005. ScentSational has patented or patents pending on technology to serve every kind of plastic molding process that exists, including mesh bags.

Mr. Landau organized a company board of directors that reads like a Who's Who of world leaders in the packaging business. His strategic and manufacturing partners include Geneva-based Firmenich, which is the world's third-largest flavor and fragrance company and the largest such company that is privately owned. Founded in 1895, Firmenich maintains a proprietary flavor library for ScentSational that is comprised of natural and artificial flavors specifically engineered and tested to meet the requirements of ScentSational's Olfaction Packaging technology.

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Mr. Landau's product demonstration includes a prototype bottled water. The plastic packaging smells like lemon, and this package was designed to release the lemon flavor into the water. The yellow plastic cap on the package also has a very pleasant lemon smell. While there is no lemon or lemon flavoring involved in the product, it has a very pleasant lemon taste.

"What you smell is what you taste. Perception is reality," Mr. Landau said. "If you hold your nose when you eat something, you don't taste it. It's estimated that 90 percent of our taste comes from the sense of smell."

Through its strategic and manufacturing partner, Pliant Corp., ScentSational is working to improve military meals ready to eat. Mr. Landau said that if soldiers can smell something attractive within an MRE, the legendary "mystery meat" may some day disappear. For more information on ScentSational, log on to [www.scentsationaltechnologies.com](http://www.scentsationaltechnologies.com).

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