Packaging

by

*Eyes Right*

**Islamorada FL –** Life is full of small frustrations. Some are unavoidable, such as attempting to cope with many current forms of packaging. This manner of marketing products began several years ago when devious individuals began to attempt to add dangerous materials to various food types by unscrewing lids and adding contaminants. The packaging industry responded with a wide spectrum of countermeasures. Although I understand the rationale for these preventative schemes, I find myself muttering under my breath (and sometimes screaming) as I attempt to gain entrance to many of these products.

One of my “unfavorites” is a gallon jug of some drink (milk, apple cider) which has a lid requiring some level of torque to loosen it. Inevitably, my efforts to unloosen the lid happens concurrently with my inadvertently squeezing the bottle. Just as the lid becomes loose, part of the contents spill on me and/or the counter.

Another drink-related issue are products (Coffee Mate creamers comes to mind) packaged with an inner plastic ring. After unscrewing the lid, one has to stick their finger into this tiny plastic ring and yank mightily to access the liquid. I am not sure how many pinkie fingers are sprained in this process.

Soup cans used to be very straightforward to open. Get out a can opener, attach it, and presto, you have soup. Now, many brands have metal rings to grasp with a finger and then pull, pull, pull with considerable effort. More than once the metal ring has snapped off the top of the can leaving me searching for the can opener.

Another annoying type of food packaging involves cereal boxes. The contents inside are almost always in a sealed plastic bag. There appear to be two choices on how to open this bag: grab it on the sides and attempt to pull the top apart – with great effort this sometimes works, or, most often, I slash the plastic with a knife or scissors. In both cases, the problem then becomes how to re-seal the bag so that the cereal does not become stale. Why do cereal companies not package their products in zip-lock bags to avoid both opening and re-sealing problems? Surely, these outfits are not counting on their products becoming stale so that you have to buy more?? (as if!) I called the 800 number for WK Kellogg (still in Battle Creek, Michigan) and talked to Vanessa about my concerns. She told me that they are “always reviewing packaging options” and will consider my suggestion about zip-lock packaging. In appreciation of my call, Vanessa offered to send me a coupon for Kellogg products. BTW, I have found that most large food companies have staff waiting for your call to take your comments and then mail you coupons…try it!

There are, of course, other food products which are so tightly sealed that no amount of twisting can get the lid open. Tapping with the handle of a large knife sometimes works, but often I am left hitting the lid with a hammer after trying heat to expand the metal lid.

The most exasperating packaging is sealed, hard plastic which is used to enclose some product which you are trying to extricate. These are usually called blister packs. They range from various pharmaceuticals (my anti-ejection meds come in these) to tools (a set of wrenches). Most of the time, I have to use scissors or a knife to cut the plastic and then try to avoid cutting myself on the hard plastic as I struggle to get the remainder of the package open. So far, I have not sliced open my hand on one of the sharp edges, but I often find myself musing about how many ER visits happen each day tussling with these.

Speaking of cuts, have you ever cut a finger and then tried to open a Band-Aid? There are two small flaps to pull apart, but inevitably I am unable to separate the flaps while my wound is bleeding all over the floor. Usually, I end up ripping the sides open with my teeth simultaneous with more than a few expletives.

I could go on with these whiny memories, but I am on my way to our garage to pick up a pair of vice grips to open the lid on a jar of juice. Truly first-world problems!

I thought you might like to know.

E-R