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SPOTLIGHT: Food & Beverage

Pinckney Hugo Group Helps Mercer's Tell the Story of First 'Adult Dessert'

The brochure for the new Mercer's Wine Ice Cream product warns: "With up to 5 percent alcohol content, must be 21 years of age or older to enjoy." Nestled in New York State's Adirondack Mountains, Mercer's has mastered the art of blending luscious ice cream with superb wine to create a category first—a wine/dairy mix that makes for an elegant adult dessert.



Pinckney Hugo Group, a full-service marketing communications firm based in Syracuse, NY, took on the challenge of designing the first packaging for a combination wine and dairy product. The Pinckney Hugo group also developed the fact sheets, brochures, trade show displays, and booth materials.

Nestled in New York State's Adirondack Mountains, Mercer's Dairy has produced the finest in ice cream since the 1950s. In January of 2002, Quality Dairy Farms Inc., a group of nine farm families from Lewis and Jefferson Counties, purchased Mercer's Dairy with the vision to showcase their premium quality products.

Getting the point across

The Mercer's Wine Ice Cream is not a "flavored" product—it contains real ice cream and real wine. Each wine is hand-picked and blended with only the freshest natural ingredients, like raspberries, and the packaging aspires to convey that premium message. Because there is alcohol content, there was also the challenge of communicating that clearly in whatever retail environment the ice cream might end up in.

Cathy Van Order, production manager at Pinckney Hugo Group, explains that the packages had to be versatile, because where the product lived at retail might be out of Mercer's control. In some stores, it's actually sold in coolers in the wine section. But they had to prepare for worst case scenario—the uncompromising freezer case. "There's a long list of things I didn't want to see," Van Order explains.

First and foremost, however, was the task of communicating the entirety of a new concept to consumers that would encounter the product for the first time at retail. Robyn Jonick, senior art director at Pinckney Hugo Group, recalls how simplicity of message was a key design strategy. "I wanted representation of wine," says Jonick. She found the "perfect wine glass," or the most prototypical wine glass shape that would immediately indicate a real wine product.

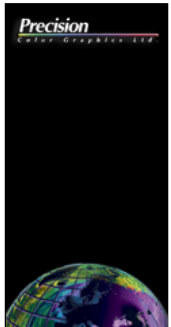
The wine glass illustrations were actually developed in-house at Pinckney Hugo Group. The firm carefully applied colors to suggest the wine variety and to match the color of the ice cream inside.

Wine label touches

Ruth Mignerey, managing partner of Mercer's Dairy, was very pleased with the way the design elements came together. "We wanted it to be edgy," Mignerey emphasizes. "Pinckney Hugo Group had the same mindset we did."

Mignerey discovered that Mercer's couldn't trademark "Wine Ice Cream," because the phrase is descriptive and general. So Pinckney Hugo Group created a packaged that had many allusions to a traditional wine bottle label. Mercer's and Pinckney Hugo Group wanted the script treatment to be modern and edgy, but they also wanted the overall presentation to be clean.

The white background on a semi-gloss surface achieves a premium simplicity, as do the sans serif type of the variety indicator and the tagline of "the ultimate pairing." Like many wine bottle labels, a short paragraph on the back tries to describe what the taste experience will be like for the consumer, capped off with a "Cheers!" and the signature of ice cream maker James R. Derway. As a final home-spun touch, there is a silver illustrated cow in a New York State outline that shows the location of Mercer's Dairy in Booneville, NY, similar to the way a wine label might.



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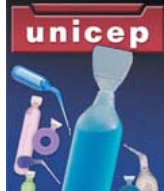
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The container structure was developed by Stanpac Inc. in Lewiston, NY. The SecurTEC™ 100 carton provides great visibility at the point of purchase with bold six-color lithographic print and glossy varnish on both the container and lid. The tamper-evident lid structure prevents accidental removal that can occur on packaging lines and in distribution channels. It's easy for consumer to open, and also easy to close securely with a confident snap.

The patented technology has optimum performance characteristics that reduce waste, keep line speeds up, and minimize equipment investment. The tear-band's "bridges" are designed to be strong enough to allow the tamper-evident teeth to lock over the container rim during application, but fragile enough to separate the tear-band from the lid body when opened by the consumer.



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