

Insulation Solution for Mindful Chef - A Recipe For Success

With the nation stuck indoors during the pandemic, recipe delivery boxes were booming. Healthy, home-cooked meal kits delivered directly to your door? It's a recipe for success.

Mindful Chef, 'the UK's highest-rated meal box subscription' (www.mindfulchef.com), burst onto the scene in 2015, founded by three friends who were determined that the future of food should be delicious, locally sourced, and sustainable.

They were looking to make their packaging more eco-friendly and more efficient. According to a 2021 report*, 67% of consumers think that recyclable packaging and sustainability is important. This holds true across the recipe box sector, so Mindful Chef decided to work with Smurfit Kappa to find their perfect packaging solution.

An eCommerce entrée

Recipe subscription boxes face a fairly unique challenge:

The customer is not always home to accept delivery and due to the fresh and perishable contents inside, the Box is often left at a secure location outside the home of the customer.

Most other delicate produce or dairy products are shipped straight to stores, and either picked up by the customer in person or scheduled to arrive at a convenient time. Like almost all eCommerce companies, Mindful Chef are reliant on 3rd party couriers to safely deliver their parcels from warehouse to the consumer (final mile) within 24-48 hours.

So, Mindful Chef needed an eCommerce box that could withstand Great British weather, protect its contents during the final mile, as well as delight the consumer with the packed items arriving in exactly the condition they were packed by Mindful Chef. Plus, the packaging's sustainability was of tantamount importance. Smurfit Kappa were up to the challenge.

For the outer layer, the Smurfit Kappa team at their Experience Centre in Yate suggested a Kraft substrate that had a fighting chance of surviving the unpredictability of year-round British weather and a vibrant colour allowing Mindful Chef's logo to shine: a critical aspect of eCommerce packaging design, especially with the possibility that the package will be on a doorstep for hours at a time.

Meanwhile, the simple but effective structural design allows for easy assembly and recycling.

A masterful main course

As they contain fresh food, it is absolutely imperative that Mindful Chef's boxes be able to withstand temperature changes. In fact, in line with regulations, they must be able to keep chilled food under 8°C for the entirety of the supply chain.

Mindful Chef's existing solution consisted of insulation pouches combined with gel ice packs. Whilst effective at keeping the produce inside cool and edible, kerbside recycling options wouldn't accept these insulation pouches - though they can be recycled at specialist facilities.

Mindful Chef wanted a solution that was more easily recyclable. Any hurdles that can be removed on the green journey make it easier for consumers to be sustainable and are an improvement.

Plus, Mindful Chef is a B-Corp: they're dedicated to meeting the highest standards of social and environmental performance. They even became entirely climate neutral in 2019 - so sustainable options are of paramount importance.

The Smurfit Kappa Experience Centre team set out on a mission: to replace these insulation pouches with an option that would be even better for the environment, but still offer the required temperatures over extended periods.

Their final solution was ingenious: corrugated cardboard insulation packs in a snug two-piece telescopic design, reducing airflow ideal for maintaining required temperatures.

These were thoroughly tested at Smurfit Kappa's ISTA testing lab to ensure that they met the strict demands of chilled food transportation. The Smurfit Kappa Experience Centre team found that the final iteration kept the ingredients under 8°C for over 30 hours in ambient conditions.

More than enough to give a British summer a run for its money!



A delightful dessert

A tapeless insulation solution was a must for Mindful Chef, and the Smurfit Kappa Experience Centre team also know from their research that customers prefer packaging that they can open without tools – frustration-free packaging (FFP).

In eCommerce, the customer journey starts with brand recognition and ends with an unboxing - a complete experience that's ideally as frustration-free and seamless as possible, especially when it comes to subscription models.

Consequently, the insulated packaging needed to fit together without additional adhesives.

The two-part design achieved this perfectly: its tight fit kept the contents safe inside and prevented them from slipping out of the insulated area.

The insulated inner is made to measure, fitting snugly into the outer layer creating a reduction in air-flow and removes the possibility of the heavy chilled ingredients crushing the loose produce.

A recipe for success

After an initial trial, a revision of the lid design, and positive feedback from both Mindful Chef packers and customers, the Experience Centre team and Mindful Chef were satisfied.

Not only were the new insulation packs more eco-friendly, they also provided better product protection as a bonus.

“Smurfit Kappa have helped us to become even more sustainable: our new insulation packs are perfect for the job and we can keep our customers and the planet happy”

David Waller, Mindful Chef's Buying Manager.

Smurfit Kappa enjoyed working with Mindful Chef to create the perfect packaging solution for their needs, and hope to continue the partnership into the future.

*Source: <https://triviumpackaging.com/sustainability/2021BuyingGreenReport.pdf>

For more information visit smurfitkappa.com