

Phase 2 - Packaging Options

Packaging of the finished tomato sauce is one of the most critical aspects of this project. Many criteria will need to be considered, including Food Safety, environmental impact, flexibility to package other products from the SSF, and the ability of Dining Services to handle the container. Due to this, the proposal includes a Graduate student internship which will focus on researching and presenting different options. This internship will afford the student a great real-world opportunity overseen by the Pilot Plant Manager and Food Science faculty. During the Fall 2013 semester, a presentation will be made to the SSC detailing the pros and cons of each packaging option, along with a detailed budget for each.

The team was asked to consider a reusable package option, which may be difficult due to Food Safety concerns and high equipment costs, but it will be pursued as a desired option. Other aspects of the process will be made as environmentally conscious as possible, such as the equipment (see Tomato Processing Equipment Attachment) and packing materials used for transporting the finished product to Dining Services and Bevier Cafe. Re-usable packing containers will be used for transport as opposed to the standard wood pallet and cardboard box solution.

At the recommendation of the Food & Waste working group, several options have been researched in an effort to present an approximate budget for this equipment, and therefore, the entire project. It is difficult to give an exact equipment cost due to the wide range of available options. It was decided to present one of the more expensive options in the budget sheet to ensure funds would be available for a particularly unique or desirable package. However, it is worth noting that there are packaging options that would cost considerably less money. During the Fall 2013 semester, the SSC will choose the most desired option among those available. Any funds that would not be used due to choosing a cheaper packaging option would be returned to the SSC.

Several companies have indicated interest in working with the group to develop a suitable package at our scale. Tetrapak, a company whose recyclable cartons are only made from renewable resources and recycled materials, showed significant interest in developing packaging options for processors on a scale similar to this project. During some conversations over the past few weeks, it was noted as an opportunity they are currently pursuing, and with appropriate structure, would possibly be willing to partner with us in developing a sustainable solution that could then be provided to others. This and other opportunities would need time to be developed over the Summer months, but could be a very desirable option to choose from this coming Fall.

In conclusion, the team is willing to pursue any and all packaging options that show merit and meet Food Safety criteria as determined by the FDA and other certifying agencies.