

CASE STUDY: A packaging solution for shipping / displaying sensitive fruit



Arizona-based growers sought improvement in display of Medjool dates within packaging for retail stores

The Business & Packaging Problem

Medjool dates are renowned for their large size and plumpness; extra care must be taken to prevent the ‘King of Dates’ from tearing and puncturing in transit. Shifting and bunching compromises both the quality and visual appeal of the product - problems with which Bard Valley Date Growers (bvdg.com) were all too painfully aware.

Bard Valley Date Growers had been harvesting Medjool dates for thirty years. Just as Medjool dates demand a very specific set of growing conditions where high heat, low humidity and plentiful water meet, this fruit also demands equally thoughtful and precise packaging. **Bard Valley’s dissatisfaction with their retail packaging ultimately led them to a total solution from Nuconic Packaging (nuconicpackaging.com).**

Initially, Nuconic supplied Bard Valley with a custom package design, a limited-edition date roll holiday pack, for which Nuconic designed an 8” square container.

How Nuconic Responded to the Problem

“We took their date rolls and came up with a couple of 3-D drawings we thought would work well,” explains CEO Alan Franz of the design process. “The next phase was to give them a 3-D printed prototype to make sure the product fit correctly. We had to create a second one to get the height correct. After that was approved, we made a custom-designed insert that held the date rolls firmly in place and presented them nicely.”

How Nuconic Reduced Costs

Rather than invest in expensive new tooling solutions (and passing those costs onto the customer), Nuconic used existing tooling configuration to make the packaging as affordable as possible for Bard Valley.

The Nuconic team tested the holiday pack prototype by shipping it fruit-filled back and forth

between Nuconic’s California facility and Bard Valley’s headquarters in Yuma, Arizona. The tests were successful. Having demonstrated the stability of their packaging, Nuconic fulfilled the first-year contract and, after a minor modification to create a shallower tub with less headspace, produced a similar holiday edition the following year.

During the design process for the holiday date roll tubs, Nuconic perceived how they could assist with

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the entirety of Bard Valley's packaging requirements. Datepac - Bard Valley's packing division - knew they needed a design that would prevent the dates from moving around (and in some cases, according to Alan, 'actually bouncing out of the container') the rest of the year.

Bard Valley and Datepac were also unhappy with aesthetic inconsistencies between container sizes. They wanted a 'special look on the corner of the package' to make it stand out.



Bard Valley Date Growers
established 1987 – Yuma, Arizona
<http://naturaldelights.com/our-story>

Nuconic Packaging
RIGID PLASTIC FOOD PACKAGING SOLUTIONS

Nuconic Packaging
established 2009 – Vernon, California
<http://www.nuconicpackaging.com>
323-588-9177

How Nuconic Collaborated to Create a Winning Solution

Nuconic's solution was to standardize every pack size with a 45-degree angle on each corner, using three different tools to create the small 4" container, the 6" square container and the rectangular container. The effect was to make the packs 'look like a brand family' despite being different shapes and sizes.

"Based on that design," continued Alan, "we gave them different ways to make their pallets a little taller so they could ship more product to their end-users. We went through a lot of other work to get that right."

Dean White, VP of Operations at Datepac, describes how they whittled down their options during the selection process:

"We went through a pretty extensive vetting process. We found three or four vendors who could do what we needed, and when they came back with their formal responses, it was pretty clear that Nuconic was the supplier we were looking for. Our selection was based on a combination of quality, price and service."

Bard Valley's Director of Marketing Erin Hanagan-Muths had lobbied for Nuconic's inclusion in the vetting line-up from the start, impressed by the company's commitment to the holiday pack project and CEO Alan's culture of customer service. It was this track record that ultimately won Nuconic the contract to become the exclusive packaging supplier for Bard Valley and its sub-brands.

"They are very receptive to client input," says Erin, "working and reworking the design until it's right. 'I've dealt with tub vendors who talk a good game regarding customer service, but ultimately fail to deliver when the rubber hits the road.'"

"When we need assistance, Alan will jump in his car and drive almost 300 miles. He's done that more than once."

