



Sesmark Rice Thins Packaging Study

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Overview

Sesmark Rice Thins

Sesmark Rice Thins are a popular type of rice cracker available in both natural/organic and mainstream grocery stores. Gluten-free by nature, these crackers are also limited in ingredients and are Non-GMO Project verified. The brand is owned by PANOS Brands, which owns several other specialty brands and prides itself as a quality product provider. According to their [website](#), PANOS stands for Premium, Authentic, Natural, Organic, and Specialty.

Sesmark manufactures a variety of specialty crackers and touts the benefits of whole and ancient grains. The company utilizes different styles of packaging across their products lines—some are in bags within a cardboard box, others are in open boxes and plastic-wrapped, and the Rice Thins utilize a plastic tray wrapped in additional plastic. In addition to using an excess of plastic, the current Rice Thins packaging does not provide a satisfactory storage option and the combination of its slim profile paired with its subdued branding often recedes on shelf.

As consumer demand for simple and natural ingredients has increased, competition has grown at an exponential rate. Snack packaging is a considerable problem in the sustainability space, and the increase of brands available in the limited-ingredient cracker category creates the opportunity for more forward-thinking companies to capture more of the market share. If Sesmark wants to retain its place in the consumer consideration set, it logically follows that its packaging should reinforce its values.



Sesmark



Sesmark



Sesmark



Competitive Review

The cracker category is overloaded with brands and varieties. This section will assess more direct competitors to identify opportunities and optimizations.

Competitive Review

Overview

Category

The cracker category did \$7.8 billion in sales in 2020, with every key segment within the category experiencing growth. The top player in the category is Mondelez Inc (owner of Nabisco) who made \$1.7 billion in sales.

Offerings in the category target different users and usage occasions. Because Sesmark Rice Thins offer a distinct eating experience (e.g. crisp texture), competitive options will be primarily focused on other rice forward crackers. Sesmark Rice Thins are also often valued for being gluten-free so any extraneous competitors will follow that condition.

Gluten-Free Crackers

Many gluten-free products have joined the marketplace. While rice crackers have emerged as significant players in the gluten-free category, alternative ingredients like potatoes, nuts, and cauliflower have also claimed their own segments of shoppers.

Blue Diamond Nut Thins lead the category in sales which is bolstered by brand trust and recognition. Blue Diamond is synonymous with almonds and has built loyalty in other categories which has likely enhanced their reputation in the category.

Rice Crackers

Rice crackers are growing in popularity and are projected to have a considerable sales spike over the next few years. Originally a Japanese-style cracker, rising interest in gluten-free and simple ingredient foods has expanded the number of competitors, including those with exciting flavors and additional ingredients.

The current leader in the market is Kameda Seika, parent company of Mary's Gone Crackers, and TH Foods, parent company of Crunchmaster.



Competitive Review

Shelf Sets

Specialty Grocery

Both Lund's & Byerly's and Kowalski's Market are local specialty grocery chains known for high quality items with higher price expectations. They sell both mainstream and elevated/specialty products.

Lund's & Byerly's



Kowalski's Market



Competitive Review

Shelf Sets

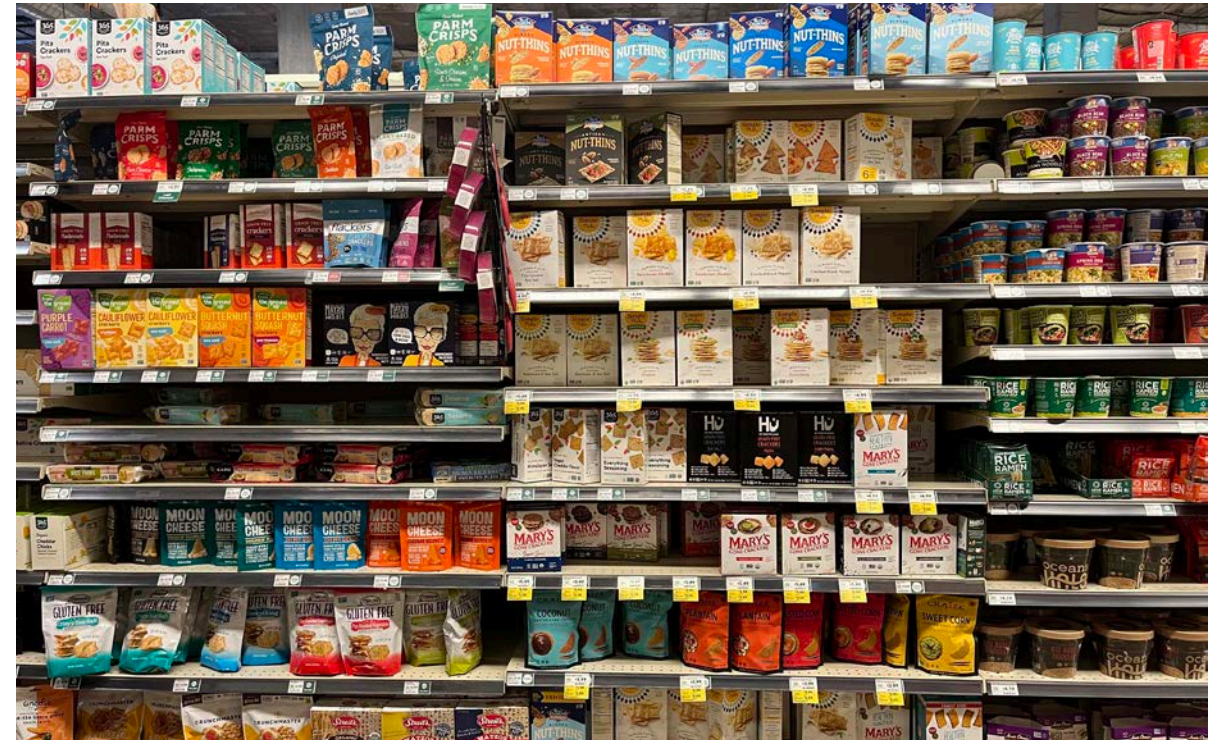
Natural/Organic

With a focus on natural and organic offerings, both the Eastside Co-Op and Whole Foods had extensive rice cracker offerings with less mainstream influence.

Eastside Co-Op



Whole Foods



Competitive Review

Shelf Sets

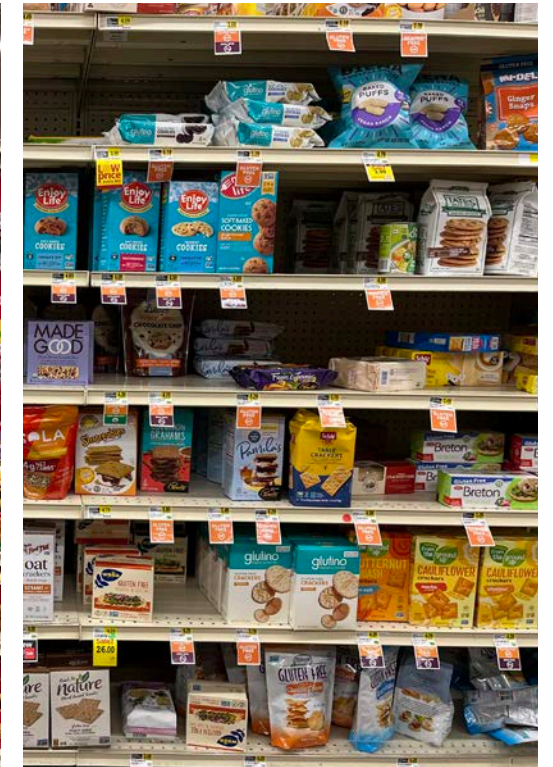
Mainstream Grocery

Hy-Vee and Cub Foods both separate natural/organic/dietary restricted items from traditional offerings which divides the competitive sets.

Hy-Vee



Cub Foods



Competitive Review

Trays



365 Rice Crackers

Size: 3.57oz / 101g

Cost: \$2.19

Ingredients: Rice Flour, Sesame Seed, Sesame Seed Flour, Expeller Pressed Safflower Seed Oil, Salt

Materials: Plastic wrap, plastic tray

Mission:

- Commitment to reducing single use plastics
- Energy efficient stores
- Responsible sourcing
- Sustainable palm oil
- Gluten-free
- Non-GMO



Edward & Sons Brown Rice Snaps

Size: 3.5oz / 100g

Cost: \$4.29

Ingredients: Organic Brown Rice Flour, Organic White Rice Flour

Materials: Plastic wrap, plastic tray

Mission:

- 100% organic
- Gluten-free
- Non-GMO
- Stated commitment to sustainability
- Japanese style



KAME Rice Crackers Original

Size: 3.5oz / 100g

Cost: \$3.19

Ingredients: Jasmine Rice, Rice Bran Oil, Sea Salt, Soybean Tocopherols (Preservative)

Materials: Plastic outer wrap, plastic tray

Mission:

- Non-GMO
- Gluten-free
- Japanese style
- 100% recyclable package

Competitive Review

Cartons



Blue Diamond

Blue Diamond Almond Nut Thins

Size: 3.57oz / 101g

Cost: \$3.69

Ingredients: Rice Flour, Almonds, Potato Starch, Sea Salt, Safflower Oil, Natural Flavors (Contains Milk).

Materials: Paperboard outer, aluminum-plastic inner bag

Mission:

- Rigorous quality assessments
- CA Almonds and Rice
- Gluten-free
- Comprehensive sustainability plan
- Member of Sustainable packaging coalition



Mary's Gone Crackers

Mary's Gone Crackers Original

Size: 6.5oz / 184g

Cost: \$5.49

Ingredients: Organic whole grain brown rice, organic whole grain quinoa, organic brown flax seeds, organic brown sesame seeds, filtered water, sea salt, organic wheat-free tamari

Materials: Recycled paperboard outer, clear plastic inner bag

Mission:

- Sustainably minded
- Partnership with California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation
- Committed to "Palm Done Right"



Good Thins

Good Thins Rice Snacks

Size: 3.5oz / 100g

Cost: \$3.49

Ingredients: White Rice Flour, High Oleic Safflower Oil, Salt.

Materials: Paperboard outer, aluminum-plastic inner

Mission:

- Gluten-free
- Non-GMO
- Focus on inclusion and diversity
- Comprehensive sustainability goals by 2025, Net Zero by 2050 Net goal
- Deforestation, price-fixing, and child labor allegations

Competitive Review

Pouches



Crunchmaster

Crunchmaster Multi-Seed Original

Size: 4oz / 113g

Cost: \$3.99

Ingredients: Brown Rice Flour, Sesame Seeds, Potato Starch, Quinoa Seeds, Flax Seeds, Safflower Oil, Amaranth Seeds, Tamari Soy Sauce Powder (Tamari Soy Sauce [soybeans, salt], Maltodextrin [corn], Salt), Salt

Materials: Plastic stand-up pouch

Mission:

- Japanense Style
- Gluten-free
- Adherance to Gloabal Food Safety standards
- Parent company commits to low emmisions, efficient resource use and responsible energy consumption



Milton's

Milton's Gluten Free Crackers

Size: 4.5oz / 128g

Cost: \$3.99

Ingredients: Brown Rice Flour, Corn Flour, Gluten Free Oats, Potato Starch, Potato Granules, High Oleic Sunflower Oil (Tocopherols, Rosemary Extract, And Ascorbyl Palmitate Added As An Antioxidant), Rice Flour, Sugar. Contains Less Than 2% Of: Bakers Yeast, Millet, Cane Sugar, Natural Butter Flavor, Sea Salt, Leavening (Monocalcium Phosphate, Sodium Acid Pyrophosphate, Baking Soda), Salt, Sunflower Lecithin, Whey Protein Concentrate, Yeast (Sorbitan Monostearate, Ascorbic Acid).

Materials: Plastic stand-up pouch

Mission:

- Gluten-free,
- Organic
- Non-GMO
- Involved in local communities and charities



Every Body Eat

Every Body Eat Thins

Size: 4oz / 113g

Cost: \$5.99

Ingredients: Brown Rice Flour, Corn Flour, Gluten Free Oats, Potato Starch, PotatBrown Rice Flour, Potato Starch, Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Chia Seeds, Sunflower Seeds, Sea Salt, Dried Garlic, White Pepper

Materials: Plastic stand-up pouch

Mission:

- Gluten-Free
- Products are free of the top 14 allergens
- Non-GMO

Competitive Review

Alternate Ingredients



From the Ground Up

From the Ground Up Cauliflower Crackers

Size: 4oz / 113g

Cost: \$4.29

Ingredients: Cauliflower, Whole Grain Rice, Cassava, Potato Starch, Rice Flour, Potato Flakes, Cassava Starch, RSPO Palm Oil (Responsibly Sourced Palm Oil Certified by Bureau Veritas), Natural Flavors, Maltodextrin, Salt, Sugar, Baking Powder, Paprika, Sunflower Lecithin, Onion Powder, Lentil Flour, Vegetable Blend (Spinach, Broccoli, Carrot, Tomato, Beet Shiitake Mushroom), Garlic Powder, Lactic Acid, Rosemary Extract.

Materials: Paperboard outer, plastic-foil inner

Mission:

- Non-GMO
- Gluten-Free
- Not certified organic, claims "better for you" ingredients



Wasa

Wasa Gluten Free Sesame & Sea Salt

Size: 6.1oz / 175g

Cost: \$4.79

Ingredients: Potato Starch, Sesame Seeds, Amaranth Flour, Sunflower Oil, Rice Flour, Sugar Cane Fiber, Sugar, Rice Sourdough Powder, Mono & Diglycerides, Yeast, Modified Cellulose, Rice Protein, Salt, Sea Salt.

Materials: paperboard outer, plastic-wrapped packs of three crackers

Mission:

- Gluten-free
- Non-GMO
- 100% Climate compensated, carbon neutral



Simple Mills Almond Flour Crackers

Size: 4.25oz / 120g

Cost: \$4.99

Ingredients: Nut And Seed Flour Blend (Almonds, Sunflower Seeds, Flax Seeds), Tapioca, Cassava, Organic Sunflower Oil, Sea Salt, Organic Onion, Organic Garlic, Rosemary Extract (For Freshness)

Materials: Paperboard outer, aluminum-plastic bag

Mission:

- Gluten-free
- Non-GMO
- Choose providers that prioritize regenerative agriculture
- 17% of ingredients USDA organic certified

Competitive Review

Comparison Chart

Brand	Package Type	Size	Serving Size	Servings	Price	Recyclable Outer	Recyclable Inner
Sesmark Rice Thins	Tray	3.5 oz	16 crackers	4	\$3.19	Y*	Y
365 Rice Crackers	Tray	3.57oz	16 crackers	3.5	\$2.19	Y*	Y*
Milton's Gluten Free Crackers	Pouch	4.5oz	14 crackers	4.5	\$3.99	N	N/A
Simple Mills Almond Flour Crackers	Carton	4.25oz	17 crackers	4	\$4.99	Y	N
Blue Diamond Almond Nut Thins	Carton	4.25oz	19 crackers	4	\$3.69	Y	N
Mary's Gone Crackers Original	Carton	6.5oz	12 crackers	6	\$5.49	Y	Y*
Every Body Eat Thins	Pouch	4oz	14 crackers	4	\$5.99	N	N/A
from the ground up Cauliflower Crackers	Carton	4oz	50 crackers	4	\$4.29	Y	N
Edward & Sons Brown Rice Snaps	Tray	3.5oz	9 crackers	7	\$4.29	Y*	Y*
Good Thins Rice Snacks	Carton	3.5oz	18 crackers	3.5	\$3.49	Y	N
KAME Rice Crackers Original	Tray	3.5oz	16 crackers	3.5	\$3.19	Y*	Y
Crunchmaster Multi-Seed Original	Pouch	4oz	14 crackers	4	\$3.99	N	N/A
Wasa Gluten Free Sesame & Sea Salt	Carton	6.10z	1 slice	12	\$4.79	Y	Y

*requires special recycling facilities

Opportunities

Sesmark Rice Thins

Materials

Packaging is already 100% recyclable, but outer lining still requires special treatment in order to be recycled. Both tray and lining are made of oil-based materials.

Storage

Package cannot be resealed which shortens freshness window once opened and limits the amount of servings available per pack.

Appearance

While the tray structure is distinct, it inhibits brand visibility on shelf. When shelved with products that are packaged similarly, it recedes even further into the shelf.

Takeaways

The biggest opportunities likely concern the plastic outer lining and shelf-life/freshness once opened. Changes to the outer structure could positively impact brand visibility and recognition on shelf. If plastic must be used, how might the brand package more product with the same amount of materials.





Market Segments

Cracker usage varies by person and by occasion. This section explores consumers wants, needs, and thoughts regarding crackers and Sesmark Rice Thins, in particular.

Market Segment Overview

Methodology

Focus groups and ethnographic interviews took place in the Twin Cities area. While one focus group took place over zoom, the rest were in person. Questions initially centered around the cracker category and cracker usage before narrowing in to packaging and Sesmark Rice Thins specifically.

- Cracker Category
- Cracker Usage
- Cracker Packaging
- Sesmark Rice Thins
- Alternate Packaging



Instagram | @Sesmarkcrackers

Online Reviews

	5-Star	4-Star	3-Star	2-Star	1-Star
Amazon	281	43	19	14	19
Google	18	4	1	0	0
Vitacost	8	0	1	0	0

Overall reviews lean towards the positive. Users enjoy their taste and texture and many appreciate that they are gluten-free, though not all users follow dietary restrictions. Frequently mentioned uses include serving with dip or toppings and as a replacement for chips, saltines, or crackers with gluten.

They are also valued for their limited ingredient deck and low amounts of fat, salt, and overall calories. Some find the flavor underwhelming but that is not necessary a deterrent; they just use them differently than solo snacking.

One star reviews are primarily limited to criticizing Amazon’s shipping and commentary about needing to purchase 12 packages at a time.

Market Segment

Category and Usage

Cracker Category

The cracker category is shopped with varying frequency. Most respondents purchase at least one item from the category each shopping trip, though a few claimed to only visit the aisle monthly.

Overall, the category is not seen as particularly exciting. Most shop the aisle with a particular cracker or usage occasion in mind which limits discovery of new products in-aisle. Inspiration to try something new often comes from outside recommendation.

Respondents are not particularly motivated by price, though a sale can influence the amount of crackers purchased or may be the deciding factor between two brands.



Market Segment

Category and Usage

Cracker Subcategories

Respondents often divided the cracker category into three distinct sections:

Traditional Crackers (e.g. Triscuits, Ritz, Saltines, Club)

- Staple crackers purchased for taste (e.g. buttery flavor), nostalgia, and habit. Many were paired with toppings like peanut butter or cheese

Snack Crackers (e.g. Cheez-Its)

- These crackers don't require any toppings or accompaniment and can be eaten and enjoyed on their own.

"Fancy"/Specialty Crackers/Gluten-free

- These crackers often came with a health halo, assumed high quality ingredients, and/or an expectation of higher prices.

Respondents mentioned that this section of the cracker aisle has grown considerably in the past few years. All had familiarity with the types of offerings in this section.

- Some mentioned that many of these crackers are shelved in a separate Natural/Organic section in certain grocery stores, which could be frustrating when searching for a particular product.
- Gluten conscious respondents find that crackers are an easy way to avoid gluten and the number of available options make it easy to find a gluten free cracker that doesn't feel sacrificial.



Market Segment Usage

Cracker Usage

Crackers are used as a snack, a side, or for entertaining. Specialty crackers are expected to taste “healthy.” Respondents assume they may be less salty, not buttery and rice crackers, in particular, are expected to taste bland.

Snacking

- Snacking with crackers in this section often include dip or toppings
- Flavored crackers are prioritized when searching for a snack to eat on its own

Side

- Often paired with soup, as a replacement for satines, or used as a filler
- Crackers used in this way often replace items like chips and pretzels

Entertaining

- Respondents often search for higher quality crackers when serving guests. They want something that “will look good on a plate.”
- Crackers from this category are most mentioned as components of a charcuterie board.



Market Segment

Competitor Packaging

While familiarity with the category is mixed, every respondent had experienced and/or purchased multiple varieties. Commonly purchased brands include:

Blue Diamond Nut Thins

- Positive associations and familiarity with brand
- Eye catching package and variety of options

Crunchmaster

- Very crunchy and better for pairing
- Appealing, detailed product image

Good Thins

- Easy to see gluten-free
- Packaging looks “clean” and image is enticing; it looks light and airy

Simple Mills

- Valued for flavor and thought of as a chip replacement
- Packaging is not particularly enticing

From the Ground Up

- Strong dislike for certain offerings from this brand

Mary's Gone Crackers

- Polarizing offering: some were huge fans and others completely turned off
- Smaller box size appreciated for avoiding excess.



Adobe Stock

The most appealing cracker packages have enticing product imagery that emphasize attributes like seeds. Those with explicit salt cues are viewed as particularly tasty looking.

Recycling isn't a priority in the category, but it can occasionally influence the purchase of one brand over another.

- Some expressed frustration at lack of clarity surrounding recyclability
- A few avoided pouches because of the plastic, while others thought the single package would be better than buying a tray or carton, which have two levels of packaging.

Market Segment

Sesmark Rice Thins

Respondents familiar with Sesmark Rice Thins enjoy their taste and think of them as having been around for quite some time. They are seen as crispy, crunchy, and satisfying, though some think they could be saltier.

Tray Form

The lack of resealability leads to concerns of staleness and the two layers of packaging feels like an excessive use of plastic. Upon deeper thought, some positive quality emerged like the ability to easily serve the crackers from a tray at a party, appeal of organized appearance, and inherent portion control.



Clear Window

Visibility of the actual product is unique to tray packaging and respondents appreciated being able to see the crackers themselves. It makes it easy to see how many crackers are left, but some felt it implied less crackers than other packaging.

Color

While the colors seem fitting for a “healthy” cracker, the current tones are seen as particularly bland. They don’t stand out on shelf and are quickly looked over for brighter options. While the logo is generally liked, the boxes with the product offering and flavor felt like too simplistic of a design and generic.

Imagery

The farm image is polarizing but the sepia tone is uniformly disliked. Some think the image implies a smaller, family-owned brand, while others think it looks generic and inauthentic. Because these are rice crackers, and rice is grown in a paddy, the image felt more fitting for a wheat-based cracker. The cracker images are strongly disliked. Their appearance does not match the actual product seen through the window, and some think the inclusion of two toppings implies poor/bland taste. A lack of meaningful flavor cues further support this assumption.

Messaging

Much of the package messaging is overlooked. Even when asked to inspect the package, most failed to engage with in-depth product information presented on the backside of the packaging. No one noticed the “100% recyclable” claim. The worn away, rustic appearance of “Rice Thins” was not disliked but also did not generate any strong associations.

Market Segment

Cracker Packaging



Carton

Strengths

- ☑ Box is easy to store in cupboards & pantries
- ☑ Outer shell protects crackers from breaking
- ☑ Packaging is considered resealable
- ☑ Familiarity and routine centered around breaking down box to recycle
- ☑ Size of box implies higher amount of crackers

Opportunities

- ☐ While rolling the inner bag to close is expected, some wondered if a zipper would be more effective
- ☐ Amount of crackers occasionally disappointing



Tray

Strengths

- ☑ Window displays the product within
- ☑ Tray structure feels protective
- ☑ Crackers look organized and easy to serve
- ☑ Easy to determine amount of crackers

Opportunities

- ☐ Not resealable which causes crackers to go stale faster
- ☐ Difficult to slide tray back into outer wrap
- ☐ Outer wrap occasionally tears when opening
- ☐ Seeing amount of crackers feels like less to some
- ☐ Unwillingness to transfer to a different vessel for storage



Pouch

Strengths

- ☑ Resealable
- ☑ Easy to open
- ☑ Appears to cut down on packaging (i.e. single pouch rather than a box with bag inside or wrap with tray inside)

Opportunities

- ☐ Structure doesn't necessarily imply cracker
- ☐ Feels plastic-y and wasteful
- ☐ Pouch can be tricky to store at home

Market Segment

Takeaways and Opportunities

Takeaways

- Freshness and texture is a priority when shopping the cracker aisle. Sesmark's inability to reseal is a barrier to purchase.
- Storage and usability can factor into deciding between brands. The tray form makes serving and portion control easy, but sliding back into the package can be difficult and storage messy.
- The cracker image is highly motivating in the category. Popular brands often feature richly detailed product images on the front of the package. Crackers in trays have windows that are unique and appealing, but Sesmark's product images don't match the product and are a turn-off.
- Crackers with bold packaging and larger footprints command attention. While the tray form disrupts the set dominated by cartons and pouches, Sesmark's Rice Thins low profile, muted colors, and bland design recede into the shelf.
- Recyclability is considered but not prioritized in the section. Sesmark's recyclability is not immediately apparent.

Opportunities

- Evaluation of alternate packaging forms suggests an adhesive flap, as seen on Oreos, or a replacable cover, like cracker party trays, would heighen appeal.
- Maintain window of some sort on package, but consider alternate product photography or replace with flavor cues.
- Redesigning the package to include a cover may offer additional design space or allow for different display methods.
- Updating the designs to be more distinct could increase noticability.
- Replacing the farm with a more related image, altering the color hues, and updating the communication boxes can help Sesmark Rice Thins to stand out better on shelf.
- The current Sesmark Rice Thin package claims to be 100% recyclable, but that is only partially true.. Better communication and using more expected recycable material for the packaging will better communicate this benefit.



Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

The cracker aisle is comprised mainly of three packaging types—carton, pouch, and tray—each of which have issues regarding sustainability.

Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Structure Survey

Carton

Packaging type
Semi-Flexible

Printing: Digital



Foil Bag

Material: Metal foil (aluminum),
polypropylene, polyesters,
polyethylene terephthalate

Weight: 6g

Recyclable: No



Outer Carton

Material: Chipboard

Weight: 36.2g

Recyclable: Yes



Plastic Bag (Alternate Brand)

Material: Polypropylene

Weight: 3.3g

Recyclable: Yes*

*If facilities exist in area



Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Structure Survey



Material: Metal foil (aluminum), polypropylene, polyesters, polyethylene terephthalate

Weight: 12.7g

Recyclable: No



Pouch

Packaging type
Flexible
Printing: Flexography

Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Structure Survey

Tray
Packaging type
Rigid
Printing: Flexography



Outer Wrap
Material: Low density
polyethylene
Weight: 5.7g
Recyclable: Yes

Tray
Material: polyethylene
terephthalate
Weight: 9.5g
Recyclable: Yes



Tray (Alternate Brand)
Material: polystyrene
Weight: 5.4g
Recyclable: No



Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Cross Product Inspiration



Oreo

From interviews, the resealing top flap was an appealing alternative to current Sesmark Rice Thins packaging.

Packaging type

Rigid

Printing: Flexography

Outer Wrap

Material: Metal foil (aluminum), polypropylene, polyesters, polyethylene terephthalate

Weight: 6.4g

Recyclable: No

Tray

Material: polystyrene

Weight: 11.3g

Recyclable: No



Sesame Thins

Interviewees thought the single tray would be easier to return to the sleeve, and its cardboard material more naturally connects to recyclability

Packaging type

Rigid

Printing: Digital

Outer Wrap

Material: Low density polyethylene

Weight: 4.5g

Recyclable: Yes

Tray

Material: Chipboard

Weight: 12.9g

Recyclable: Yes

Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Cross Product Inspiration



Goldfish

Tied largely to nostalgia, the foil-lined paper raises concerns about freshness and ability to protect crackers from breaking.

Packaging type

Flexible
Printing: Digital

Bag

Material: Metal foil (aluminum), paper
Weight: 16.8g
Recyclable: No



Pringles

Hard to separate from chip occasion, this packaging was initially appealing but respondents lost enthusiasm.

Packaging type

Rigid
Printing: Digital

Safety Seal

Material: Paper and foil
Weight: 0.5g
Recyclable: No

Plastic Lid

Material: Low density polyethylene
Weight: 3.1g
Recyclable: No

Tube

Material: Paperboard, metal (aluminum)
Weight: 45g
Recyclable: No



Happy Baby

All respondents were turned off by this package. Even when asked to look past the toddler association, the amount of plastic was offputting.

Packaging type

Rigid
Printing: Digital

Safety Seal

Material: Low density polyethylene
Weight: 0.2g
Recyclable: No

Plastic Wrap

Material: Low density polyethylene
Weight: 4.3g
Recyclable: No

Plastic Lid

Material: Polypropylene
Weight: 21.6g
Recyclable: No

Tube

Material: High density polyethylene
Weight: 43.5g
Recyclable: Yes

Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Product Package Ratio

Brand	Package Type	Packaging Weight	Product Weight	Total Weight	% Product	% Package	Recyclable Outer	Recyclable Inner
Sesmark Rice Thins	Tray	15.2g	100g	115.2g	86.8%	13.2%	Y*	Y
Mary’s Gone Crackers Original	Carton	39.6g	184g	223.6g	82.3%	17.7%	Y	Y*
Edward & Sons Brown Rice Snaps	Tray	9.9g	100g	109.9g	91%	9%	Y*	N
Good Thins Rice Snacks	Carton	42g	100g	142g	70.4%	29.6%	Y	N
Crunchmaster Multi-Seed Original	Pouch	12.7g	113g	125.7g	89.9%	10.1%	N	N/A
Oreos	Tray	17.7g	405g	422.7g	95.8%	4.2%	N	Y*
Sesmark Sesame Thins	Tray	17.4g	198g	215.4g	91.9%	8.1%	Y*	Y
Goldfish Crackers Cheddar	Bag	16.8g	187g	203.8g	91.8%	8.2%	N	N/A
Good Crisps Original	Tube	48.6g	160g	208.6g	76.7%	23.3%	N	N
Happy Baby Puffs	Canister	60.1g	60g	120.1g	50%	50%	N (lid)	Y

Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Product Needs

Protect during transport

Crackers, in general, are a fragile product that need to withstand transport from the manufacturer to the store to the buyers home. While cracker packaging doesn't necessarily need to be rigid, it does need to have some sort of structural integrity so as to keep as many crackers as whole as possible.

Shelf stability

With so many available varieties, cracker packaging needs to guarantee the product within will remain fresh while on shelf for an indeterminate amount of time.

Protect from outside elements

Like many center-of-store products, crackers will go stale if exposed to air for too long and mold if exposed to moisture. The packaging needs to be non-porous and guarantee the product within will taste the same as the day they were made.



Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

User Needs

Easy storage and resealability

Easy storage and resealability were popular with interviewees. Packages that are easy to store in a cupboard or pantry are appealing. Resealability is a huge delighter and can be a consideration factor.

Easy to Open

Tray packaging was noted for being particularly frustrating to open. Package tearing would lead to either stale crackers or repackaging in a different container and adds to storage issues.

See the product

Gluten free products often have unsavory taste associations, so being able to see the product does a lot of heavy lifting regarding product appeal and taste promises. Being able to see the crispy cracker helps to remove any negative associations.

Communicate benefits

The packaging needs to communicate the benefits of this product as well as taste appeal. Both visual design and form can work together to improve Sesmark's Rice Thins shelf appeal

Maintain cracker integrity and discourage breakage

Rice crackers, in particular, are known for being particularly crispy. The packaging needs to both communicate that as well as maintain the desired textured, likely via resealability and easier to open packaging.



Materials, Processes, Waste, and Energy

Opportunities

Reduced packaging

Sesmark Rice Thins have a decent product to package ratio, but when compared to products with similar packaging styles, there are clear areas for improvement. If plastic cannot be eliminated, a decrease in amount used could be explored.

Material Change

While the plastic used to package Sesmark Rice Thins is light and (conditionally) recyclable, swapping some plastic in favor of a different material could make a larger impact. Considering paperboard as a substitute for the outer wrap or the tray--as Sesmark does for its Sesame Thins line--are two potential alternatives.

Form Change

If plastic needs to be used, it could be used smarter. Replacing the outer wrap with a lid made of the same #1 plastic as the tray would make recyclability more accessible without adding much, if any, weight to the product. This would also solve resealability, storage, and easy to open demands.

Improved communication

Closer inspection of the Sesmark Rice Thins package is an underwhelming and vague experience. The visuals do not match the tangible crackers viewed through the window and the colors are perceived as muted. While technically true, its "100% Recyclable" claim offers no direction and the lack of clarity implies the outer wrap could be recycled at home



Supply Chains

Sesmark Rice Thins are manufactured in Thailand and distributed by PANOS Brands in New Jersey. This section will look deeper into potential packaging avenues and analyze the feasibility and sustainability of each.

Supply Chains

Potential Solutions

Crackers are currently packaged in a variety of different ways with most using some semblance of plastic—as overwrap, lining, a window, etc. The forms explored in this section are not radical in their shape, but the materials used for them have the potential to decrease the Sesmark Rice Thins footprint.

Because Sesmark Rice Thins are currently manufactured in Thailand, each packaging solution is looked at with the understanding that a significant portion of impact rests with manufacturing and shipping the crackers back overseas.

Packaging Needs

- Ensure long shelf life
- Moisture and oxygen barrier
- Maintain cracker structural integrity
- Resealability

Solution Musts

- Made of recycled materials and/or can be recycled
- Use VOC-free inks
- Use recyclable, biodegradable, or separatable linings (if applicable)

Vendor Requisites

- Vet suppliers and provide qualified criteria
- Use FSC certified suppliers (when applicable)
- Demonstrate commitment to sustainability
- Demonstrate commitment to employee and surrounding community welfare



Graphic Packaging

IntegraPak
(Graphic Packaging)



ePac

PCR Pouch
(ePac)



Belmark

tru-IMPACT carton
(Belmark)



Amcor

AmPrima
(Amcor)

Supply Chains

Solution Review



IntegraPak

Manufacturer: Graphic Packaging

Sustainability Approach: "Graphic Packaging has taken bold actions to advance our sustainability and social responsibility initiatives, including meeting ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, decrease our dependence on fossil fuel-based energy and responsibly utilize water."

Materials:

- Recycled Paperboard
- LDPE inner coating



PCR Pouch

Manufacturer: ePac

Sustainability Approach: "As an eco-friendly company, ePac is committed to creating a more sustainable world through our development of earth-friendly packaging solutions, our energy-efficient production process, and involvement in local communities.."

Materials:

- 100% Polyethylene
- Post-Consumer recyclable zippers*

**Coming soon*



tru-IMPACT Carton

Manufacturer: Belmark

Sustainability Approach: "We take a broad view of sustainability at Belmark. Because it's more than green initiatives or recycling programs. It's about our responsibility to ourselves and to each other to create positive change in the world.."

Materials:

- Minimum 20% PCR materials
- SFI-certified paperboard



AmPrima

Manufacturer: Amcor

Sustainability Approach: "We work daily to embed sustainability deeper into everything we do. We aspire for the environment to be better off thanks to our leadership and products. Our responsible packaging strategy identifies a clear path to meeting our sustainability ambitions."

Materials:

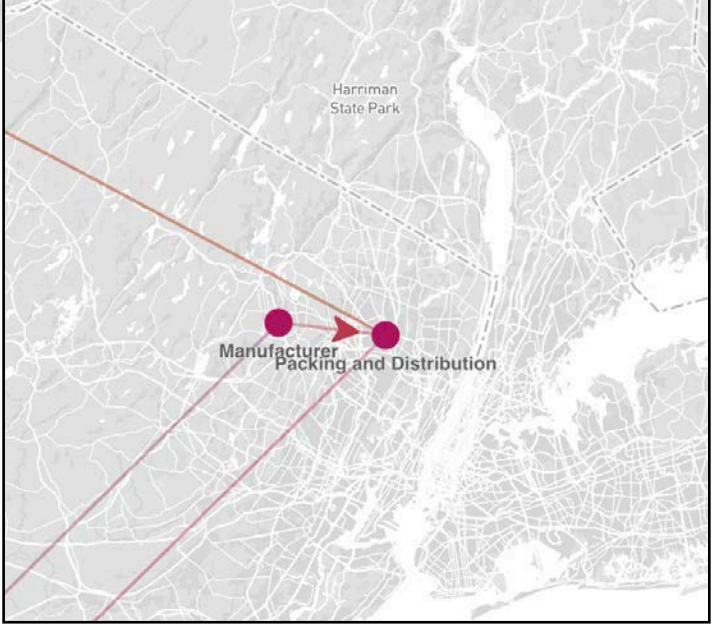
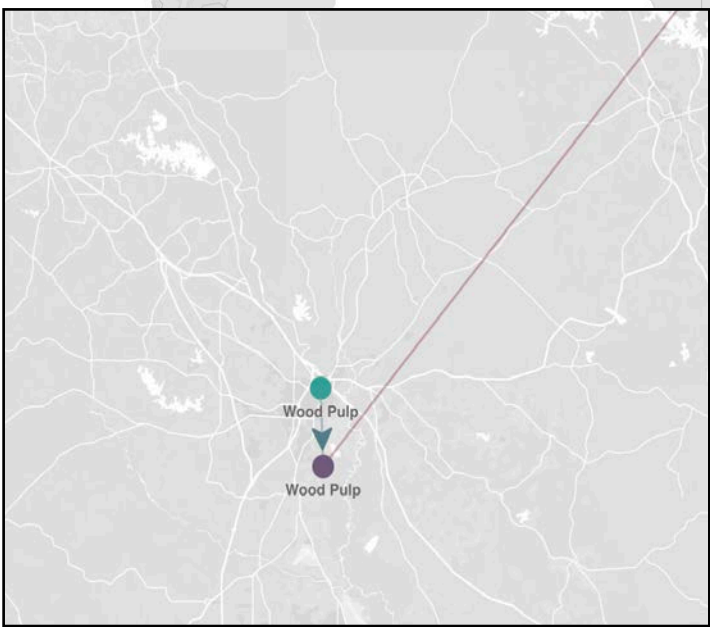
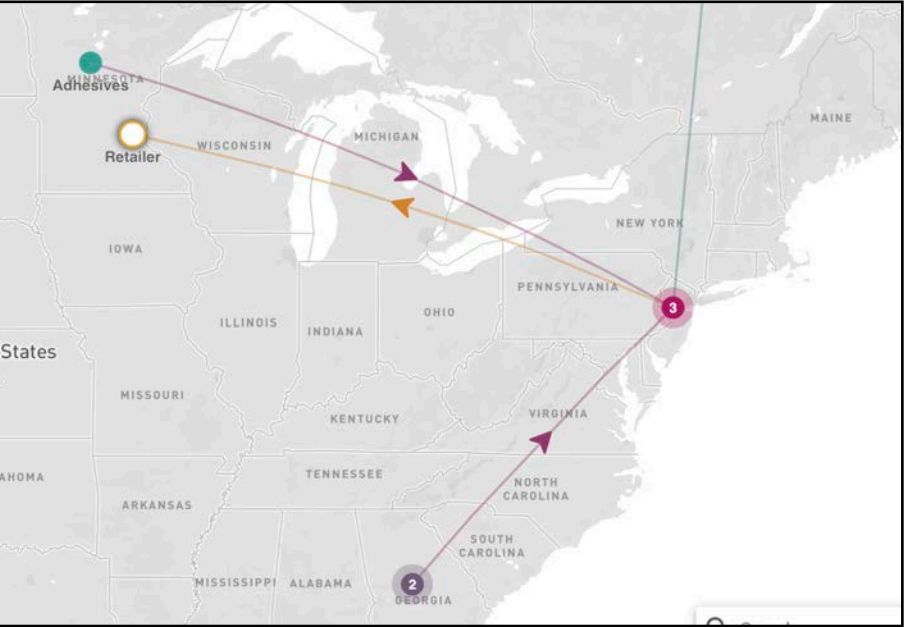
- PE

Supply Chains

Graphic Packaging

IntegraPak

Graphic Packaging can source virgin wood pulp and process it in Georgia. From there, it would travel to their New Jersey manufacturing facility that generates the cardboard carton packaging. This package requires a thin layer of LDPE on the inner carton in order to provide an oxygen and moisture barrier. The product is then packed at PANOS Brands headquarters in New Jersey and shipped nationwide using boxes and adhesives from Minnesota.

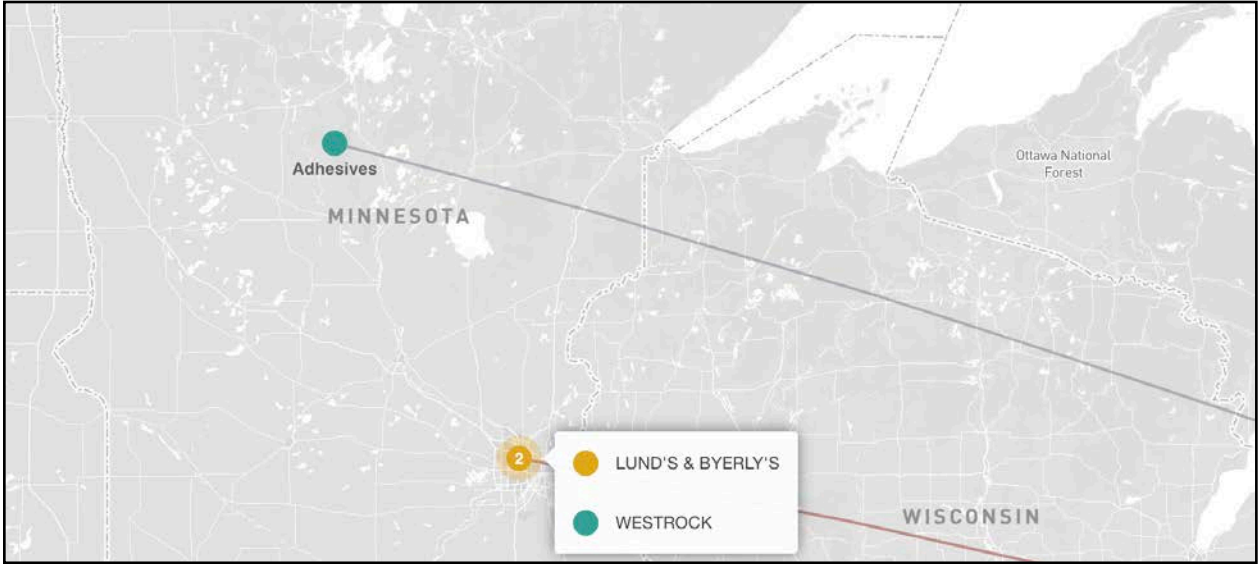
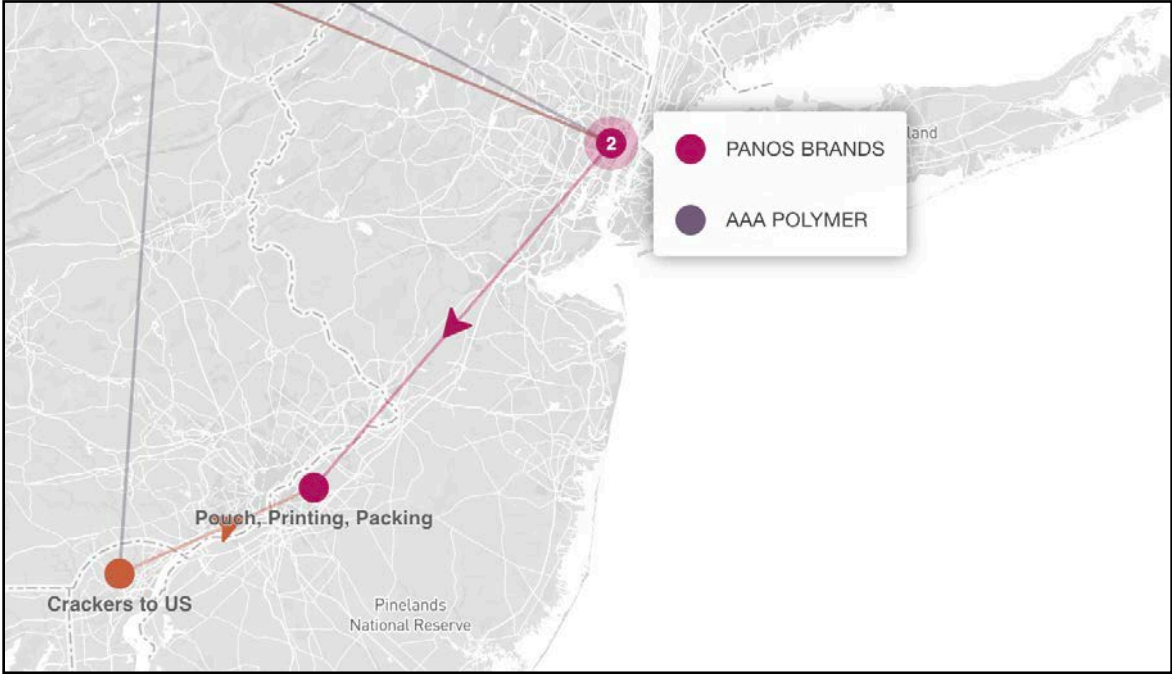


Supply Chains

ePac

PCR Pouch

ePac would manufacture the PCR pouch at their New Jersey facility using plastic processed by nearby AAA Polymer in Brooklyn. The product is then packed at PANOS Brands headquarters in New Jersey and shipped nationwide using boxes and adhesives from Minnesota.

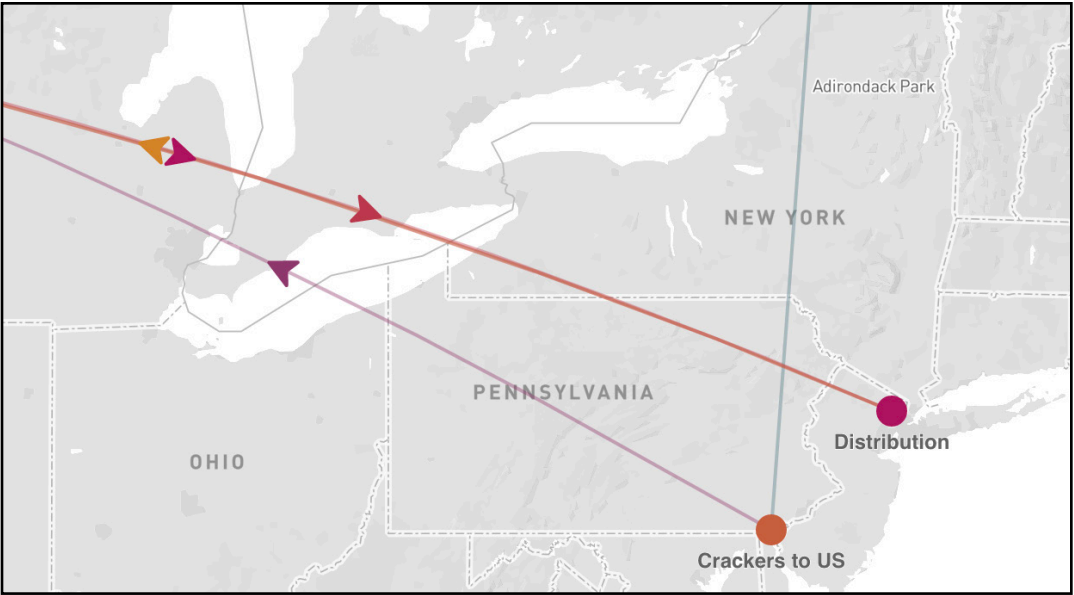
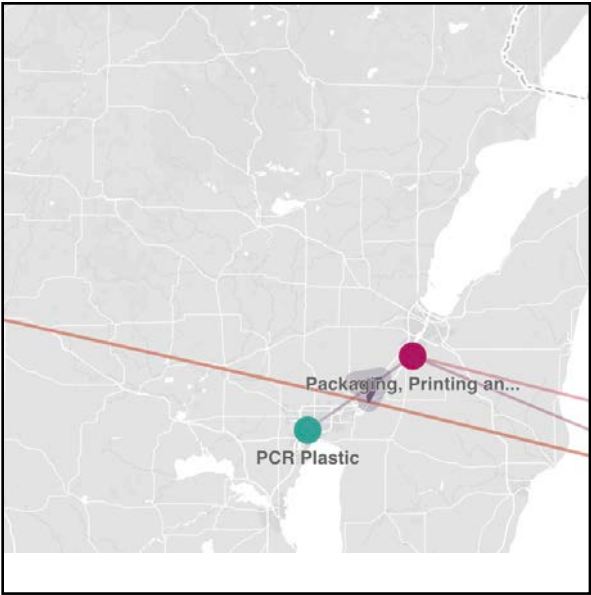


Supply Chains

Belmark

tru-IMPACT Carton

Belamrk would manufacture the tru-IMPACT carton at their De Pere, WI facility using plastic processed by nearby Becher Solutions in Menasha, Wi. The product is then packed at PANOS Brands headquarters in New Jersey and shipped nationwide using boxes and adhesives from Minnesota.

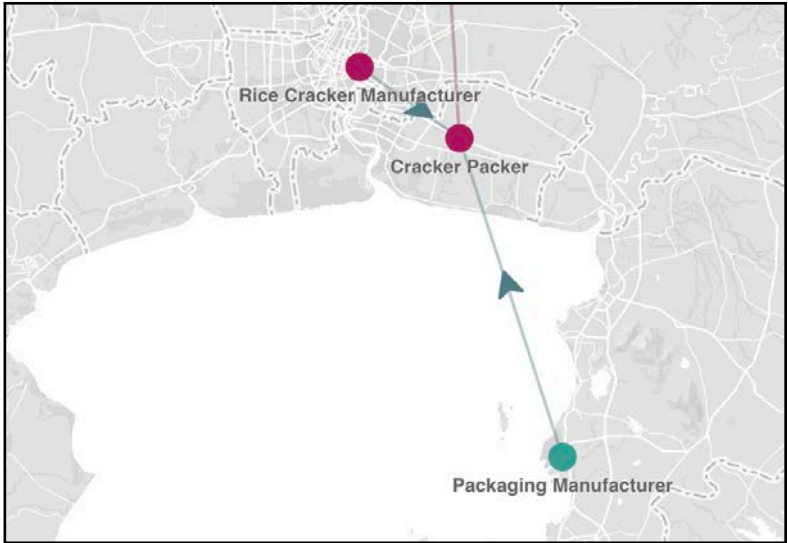
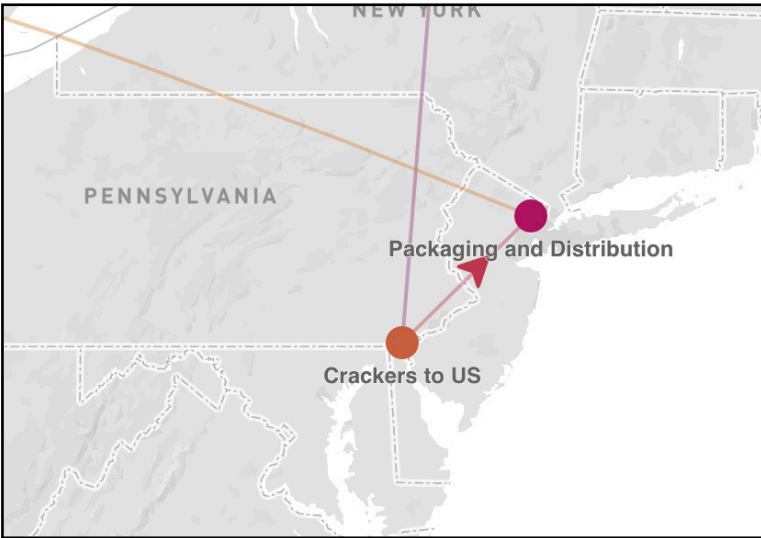


Supply Chains

Amcor

AmPrima Line

Because Sesmark Rice Thins are manufactured in Thailand, exploring packaging options located at the point of manufacture could increase efficiency. In this scenario, the crackers are made, packaged, and shipped in Thailand before being sent to PANOS Brands for national distribution.



Supply Chains

Supplier Comparison

Criteria	Graphic Packaging	ePac	Belmark	Amcor
Does the company have fair labor practices?	+ + 0	0	+ +	+ - 0 + +
Do they require their partners have fair labor standards?	-	0	0	0
Do they contribute to the community in any way?	+ + +	+ 0	+	+ + + +
Do they adhere to any sustainability standards? Goals?	+ + -	+ 0	+	+ +
Is the packaging food safe and free of additives?	+	+	+	+
Is the packaging cost effective and scalable?	0	+ +	+	+
Does the company have a quantifiable method to reduce energy usage?	+ + +	0	0	+ 0
Do they have a commitment to renewable energy?	- 0 + 0 +	-	0	+
Do they plans in place to reduce water usage?	+ 0	-	0	+ 0 + 0
Does the company prioritize recyclable/renewable materials over new/raw? Current usage? Goal?	+ + + -	+ - + -	+ -	+
Do they require their suppliers to follow similar standards or achieve certain certifications?	+ -	-	0	+ + + -
What are the company's pollution policies? Is the company a known source of pollution? Do they have quantifiable metrics proving reduction? Future goals?	+ +	+	+	+ 0 +
Are all printing processes and inks environmentally sound?	0	+ 0	+	0
Are materials sourced responsibly?	+ + -	0	+ 0 +	+ + -
Is the package designed to efficiently use materials and energy?	+	+	+ 0	+
Does it minimize use of excess materials?	+ +	+	+	0 -
Does the company design for end of life and waste reduction?	+ + + 0	+ - 0	+ + 0	+ + + + -
Is compostable/biodegradable packaging prioritized? What about recyclable?	+ - 0 +	+ -	+ 0	+ + + -
	23	6	15	26

Supply Chains

Opportunities

Localized Manufacturing

Because Sesmark Rice Thins are manufactured overseas, keeping packaging, printing, and fulfillment as close as possible to headquarters could have a significant impact on footprint.

Prioritize Values

All vendors have stated sustainability goals, but some are more devoted and transparent than others. Partnering with a vendor that is committed to innovation and has a holistic view of sustainability could provide the best long term solution.

Cardboard Tray

Alternate vendors not explored here offer components that could potentially work well together, but could require sourcing from two to three vendors to compose a single package. However, many suppliers offer custom packaging options that could be lucrative for both the vendor and Sesmark if scalable.

Pouches

Pouches are emerging as a packaging option that many vendors are prioritizing as a sustainable alternative. In spite of prioritizing using PCR plastic or ensuring recyclability, the pouches likely still need to be taken to a drop-off site. Additionally, the Sesmark Rice Thins tray distinguishes it from other varieties available on shelf and the pouch isn't fully trusted to prevent crackers from breaking.



Repositioning Proposal

In order to emerge as a leader in the gluten-free, rice cracker space, Sesmark Rice Thins would do well to redesign their packaging visuals and structure.

Repositioning Package Design



Brand Recognition

Sesmark does not have strong brand recognition. Many that have used the product in the past cannot recall the brand until it is in front of them. While other offerings in the Sesmark portfolio may contain wheat, the reference in the logo does not connect with the Rice Thins offering.

Package Imagery

As a cracker manufactured in Thailand, the Americana-esque imagery on the packaging is not compelling and feels inaccurate. Imagery that evokes the environment in which the rice is grown improves the authenticity of the product and opens up the opportunity to use brighter, more eye-catching colors on the packaging.

Product Imagery

Sesmark Rice Thins were noted for showing the product through a clear window. However, the visible product is incongruent with the other images of the crackers on the packaging. Improving the photography to make the product look more realistic and enticing would help to better communicate the product, especially if future package structures are without windows.



Joojin

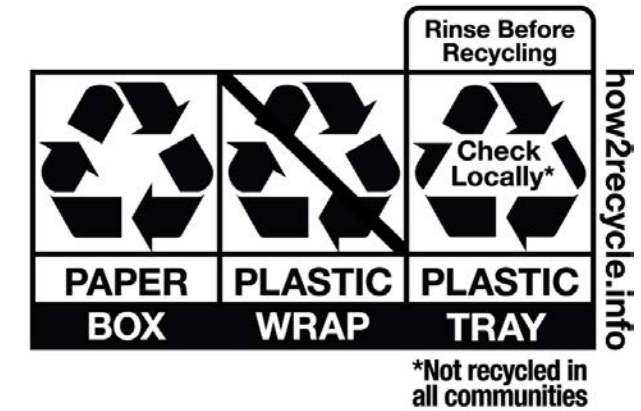


Instagram | @Sesmarkcrackers

Repositioning Package Structure

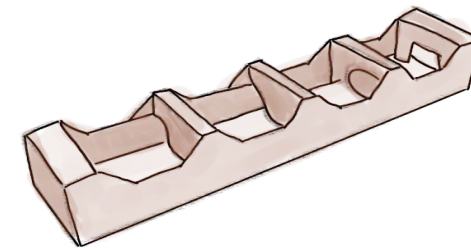
Stick with the Tray

With updated design, the Sesmark Rice Thins current tray packaging could pivot to using PCR plastic films. If the brand were to move in this direction, partnering with How2Recycle for packaging labels would make the recycling process more transparent. The current packaging claims it is 100% recyclable, but clearly displaying the claims while providing guidance on how to recycle would improve its validity.



Consider Cardboard

Sesmark already packages a variety of its crackers in a paper tray that is wrapped in plastic. In order to preserve the Rice Thins tray experience, reconfiguring this cardboard tray to mimic the existing plastic tray would provide the same serving-size compartments in a more easily recyclable format. Because the plastic overwrap is still a barrier in the product experience, swapping for a cardboard carton with a slide out tray could provide an elevated experience with eliminating the need for plastic.



Ponder the Pouch

Sustainable innovation is working to improve the pouch from its current multi-layer construction. The Amcor AmPrima pouch is intentionally made with PE so that it is recyclable, though it requires a store drop-off in most areas. This pouch also boasts a 22% decrease in carbon footprint and 51% decrease in water consumption during manufacture.



Next Steps

Sesmark has a lot of opportunities to make their packaging more sustainable with each requiring a different level effort.

Moving the product into a pouch would be the biggest change, but the resealability would be a win. The pouch structure would also likely allow Rice Thins to more directly compete with Crunchmaster and provide a larger billboard to represent the brand.

At the very least, Sesmark should consider adding How2Recycle labelling to their packaging. Doing so would add credibility to their recyclability claim while providing instruction on how to do so.





Appendix

Appendix

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Hello everyone. Today we are here to talk a little bit about crackers. There are no right or wrong answers here; I want your true and honest opinions.

To begin, we're going to talk a little bit about the crackers you buy and why you buy them.

1. Take a look at the crackers displayed on this table. What brands have you purchased? Why did you buy them? Do you still?

Probe: When did you first try them? What inspired you to try them?

Probe: What makes them a good fit?

Probe: Are there any other shopping considerations (e.g. sales, price/value, amount)?

2. (If it hasn't come up) You may have noticed that these crackers all share a common quality: they are gluten-free. Does anyone here follow a gluten-free diet?

If yes: tell me more about your experience with gluten-free crackers. What are you looking for?

If no: how do you feel, if anything, about the crackers being gluten-free?

3. Are there any other product considerations (e.g. organic ingredients)?

4. How do you use crackers? Other members of your household?

Probe: How, if at all, does usage occasion influence which crackers you buy?

Probe: What other crackers or products do you use that fill a similar need?

5. Now I'd like to talk about packaging. Look at the products on the table once more. How do you feel about the packaging of the products you currently use?

Probe: What do you like about the packaging? What frustrates you?

Probe: Regardless of the product, do any other packages appeal to you? Why?

Probe: Are there any other packaging considerations (e.g. resealable, recyclable, amount)?

6. Thanks for all your responses so far. We're now going to focus on a specific product: Sesmark Rice Thins. (If they have not come up), is anyone familiar with this brand of crackers?

If yes: What is your experience with them?

If someone selected similar item, prioritizing form (Edward & Sons, Everyday 365, Kami, Good Thins, Blue Diamond Nut Thins): How did [selected item] become your chosen brand?

7. Take a closer look at the package. How does it make you feel? What is it telling you about the product?

Probe: Is anything appealing? A turn off?

Probe: How would you compare this packaging to others on the table?

8. What is your experience with tray type packages like this one? Likes? Dislikes? Are there any other products—other than crackers—that are packaged similarly?

Probe: How might this packaging be improved?

9. To wrap up, I'd like to show you some packaging forms that could be explored as alternatives to the current packaging, some of which we may have already spoken about. In order of least to most appealing, how would you rank each of these packaging forms? (e.g. Pringles-type can, metal cylinder, baby cracker cannister, Oreos package, Goldfish bag)

Probe: What makes you rank them that way? What did you take into consideration?

Probe: Are there any other suggestions that weren't presented here?

Thanks for all your feedback!

Appendix

One-on-One Discussion Guide

1. Take a look at the crackers displayed in the aisle. What brands have you purchased? Why did you buy them? Do you still?

Probe: When did you first try them? What inspired you to try them?

Probe: What makes them a good fit?

Probe: Are there any other shopping considerations (e.g. sales, price/value, amount)

2. (If it hasn't come up) You may have noticed that these crackers all share a common quality: they are gluten-free. Does anyone here follow a gluten-free diet?

If yes: tell me more about your experience with gluten-free crackers. What are you looking for?

If no: how do you feel, if anything, about the crackers being gluten-free?

3. Are there any other product considerations (e.g. organic ingredients)?

4. How do you use crackers? Other members of your household?

Probe: How, if at all, does usage occasion influence which crackers you buy?

Probe: What other crackers or products do you use that fill a similar need?

5. Now I'd like to talk about packaging. Look at the products on the table once more.

How do you feel about the packaging of the products you currently use?

Probe: What do you like about the packaging? What frustrates you?

Probe: Regardless of the product, do any other packages appeal to you? Why?

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6. Thanks for all your responses so far. We're now going to focus on a specific product: Sesmark Rice Thins. (If they have not come up), is anyone familiar with this brand of crackers?

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8. What is your experience with tray type packages like this one? Likes? Dislikes? Are there any other products—other than crackers—that are packaged similarly?

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Appendix

One-on-One Discussion Guide

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- Do they require their partners have fair labor standards?
- Do they contribute to the community in any way?
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- Do they have a commitment to renewable energy?
- Do they plans in place to reduce water usage?
- Does the company prioritize recyclable/renewable materials over new/raw? Current usage? Goal?
- Do they require their suppliers to follow similar standards or achieve certain certifications?
- What are the company's pollution policies? Is the company a known source of pollution? Do they have quantifiable metrics proving reduction? Future goals?
- Are all printing processes and inks environmentally sound?
- Are materials sourced responsibly?
- Is the package designed to efficiently use materials and energy?
- Does it minimize use of excess materials?
- Does the company design for end of life and waste reduction?
- Is compostable/biodegradable packaging prioritized? What about recyclable? If so, is recycling accessible/convenient for the end user?

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