



Food & Beverage

## ALAMO RED

### Salsa

#### Ecommerce-Friendly Packaging Solution is a First for Category and Alamo Red Salsa

*Contract packager, Consolidated Mills, partners with TricorBraun on plastic alternative to standard glass jar for their own brand of salsa.*

Houston-based contract food packager Consolidated Mills wanted a better way to bring their Alamo Red branded products to consumers. After being frustrated with the normal retail model which relies on distributors to manage the distribution channel to the retailer and ultimately to the consumer, owners and brothers Keith and Scott Vrana, decided that they needed to have more control over this process.

"Our ultimate goal was to control our brand including how we supply the product to our consumers and how we continue to support our community," said Keith Vrana.

Consolidated Mills is very active in their community, with their involvement in the local Chamber of Commerce to their support of local charities like Cy-Hope in which they donated 100 cases of their Alamo Red salsa to raise over \$12,000 for Cy-Hope's Backpack program that allows underprivileged kids to take food home each weekend to help feed their family. "We had our own recipe and we knew it was good because the feedback was so positive."

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**"After seeing a sample of the new Apex jar, I knew this would be a game changer for the ecommerce industry."**

**—Keith Vrana, Owner, Consolidated Mills**

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In addition to launching their Alamo Red Foods website, in which consumers can order their family of products, Consolidated Mills has partnered with its local school district, and has launched an additional website to promote "buying local". Parents can go to this website select the school, or school's organization that they associate with, and then order a custom case of salsa. Consolidated Mills will donate \$5.00 per case to the school or organization that the customer has chosen. There are three salsa SKUs: Medium Heat Fire Roasted Salsa, Hot Heat Fire Roasted Salsa and Black Bean, and Corn Fire Roasted Salsa.

#### Ecommerce-friendly Solution

To provide a better ecommerce solution to the standard glass jar, Consolidated Mills needed a more durable and lighter alternative. "After seeing a sample of the new Apex jar, I knew this would be a game changer for the ecommerce industry," explained Keith. At this point, David Parker, packaging consultant and the TricorBraun team, were asked to step in to facilitate the process for commercialization. Parker says, "We understood this would be a first for Consolidated Mills and for the category. We were so pleased to be part of this and confident that we could help put a process in place without adjusting their lines."

TricorBraun partnered with Consolidated Mills and the manufacturer of the Apex jar, to trial a hot fill PET (polyethylene terephthalate) jar. According to Vrana, "TricorBraun was instrumental in helping us realize our objective." Consolidated Mills wanted to be able to fill the PET jars with their current equipment line used to fill glass jars. "We wouldn't have done this if a large financial investment was needed to change the set up and the equipment," explains Vrana.

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The main goal of the trial was to set up the production line in the same way that it would have been for the glass container to properly cap, using a steam injected capper, and label the new PET jar. Technicians were on hand from the enclosure and capper manufacturer to help fine tune the cap application. "Because we do not have a cooling tunnel, we allow the jars to naturally cool in the shipper box after being filled and labeled...so our main concern was how the labels would react to the PET material. We did see some problems initially, but our label supplier recommended a new material that corrected the issue," explains Vrana.

### PET versus Glass

The advantages of PET versus glass are numerous. "Using the PET jars greatly reduces the decibel levels during production, and we don't have to worry about broken glass shutting down the line. Our cases weigh three pounds less now, reducing our freight cost, and because we are now shipping plastic containers, we are able to eliminate the extra packaging costs needed for ecommerce," according to Vrana. "Our goal is to get all of our salsas plus our other [Alamo Red](#) products, Blood Mary mixes and barbeque sauces, into hot fill PET jars," explains Vrana. He goes on, "We will also encourage our private label customers to switch to PET as well."

Vrana describes working with TricorBraun this way, "Every time we discuss a project or idea with TricorBraun, both Scott and I feel that they are truly engaged in what we are trying to accomplish. David and the rest of the TricorBraun team understand where we wanted to go, and offered ideas to help us achieve our mutual goals. We're poised for growth and TricorBraun is helping us get there." According to Parker, "We're thrilled to be helping Consolidated Mills with this ecommerce-friendly project launch...now consumers accustomed to the quality look and feel of a glass jar with a metal lug closure will enjoy the same quality experience with a lightweight, shatter-proof PET jar. It's a win-win."

### About Consolidated Mills

Consolidated Mills, Inc. is a Houston, TX based food contract packaging company that specializes in dry blending, processed foods, and flavor concentrates. Since 1962, Consolidated Mills has offered custom blending and packaging solutions for spices, salsas and sauces, flavor concentrates, and non-alcoholic cocktail mixers. Alamo Red is a Consolidated Mills brand that features Texas Crafted recipes for Fire Roasted Salsas, Bloody Mary Mixes, Spice Blends, BBQ Sauces, and Margarita Mixes. Alamo Red can be found in Spec's Liquor locations around Texas, as well as on the web at [www.alamoredfoods.com](http://www.alamoredfoods.com). For more information about Consolidated Mills, Inc. and contract packaging needs, please see our website and [www.consolidatedmills.com](http://www.consolidatedmills.com) or contact Keith Vrana at 713-896-4196 or at [kvrana@cmillsinc.com](mailto:kvrana@cmillsinc.com).

### About TricorBraun Design & Engineering Group

TricorBraun Design & Engineering Group is a business unit of [TricorBraun](#), one of North America's leading providers of rigid packaging. Our team's primary mission is to design, engineer and manage the development, production and commercialization of custom packaging solutions for personal care, cosmetics, healthcare, food and beverage, industrial household chemical and animal health products. It is supported by TricorBraun's more than 40 offices globally, holding one of the largest inventories of rigid packaging components worldwide. For more information about TricorBraun Design & Engineering Group, contact Charmaine Laine, Marketing Communications Manager, at [claine@tricorbraun.com](mailto:claine@tricorbraun.com) or 630-645-1208.

