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MOM offers fast, easy, nutritious meals for kids

By DEBRA CARR-ELSING
Capital Times Staff Writer

With more than half of all American mothers working outside the home, time that used to be spent in the kitchen is now spent on the job.

To help busy parents fix nutritious meals for their children, Mary Ann Jackson of Deerfield, Ill., has developed a line of microwavable meals geared specifically for children ages 2 to 8.

"As a working mother of two young children, I know firsthand about the guilt mothers suffer when they are not there to feed the kids," said Jackson, a certified public accountant and veteran of financial and strategic planning at Beatrice Foods of Chicago.

"When I returned to my career after my daughter was born, I worried about what she was eating when I was away traveling, had night meetings or a date with my husband."

Jackson's company, My Own Meals Inc. (MOM, for short), offers five main-dish meal varieties: two chicken entrees, turkey meatballs, meatballs and macaroni shells, and a pasta dish.

The meals, which sell for \$2.39 to \$2.99 (depending upon the variety), are available at Woodman's, Cub

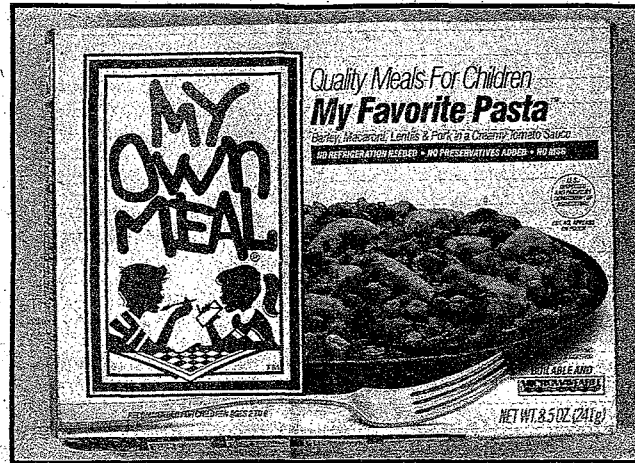
'Parents really need foods that are easy to transport to day care centers or to a babysitter's home without having to worry about refrigeration.'

Foods and Shop-Rite stores. They contain no preservatives, no monosodium glutamate (MSG) and nothing artificial.

But what makes MOM unique is that the line does not have to be frozen or refrigerated. My Own Meals products can sit on the pantry shelf for about a year.

"Parents really need foods that are easy to transport to day care centers or to a babysitter's home without having to worry about refrigeration," said Jackson, who has a 17-month-old son and a daughter who turns 4 today.

Added convenience is the fact that the meals can be prepared within one to four minutes. My Own Meal products can either be microwaved or boiled in their own vacuum-sealed, plastic pouches.



DAVID SANDELL/The Capital Times

A new line of microwavable meals for children, called My Own Meals, contains no preservatives, no MSG and nothing artificial. The meals also are moderate in sugar and salt.

Before forming her own company, Jackson spent 18 months studying the market and developing her products. She distributed a survey through a diaper service to 2,000 Chicago area families. The response was overwhelmingly posi-

tive.

The survey results also showed that parents favored turkey and chicken (94 percent) over beef (74 percent) and opposed MSG (91 percent) and hot dogs (61 percent). So Jackson started working with

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food scientists, nutritionists and dietitians. Her microwavable meals are mildly seasoned and focus on a child's nutritional needs. They also are moderate in sugar and salt.

"One of our chicken meals, for example, provides 100 percent of the protein RDA for children under 10," Jackson said. "There's no meal on the market like that."

"At first, I wasn't going to include vegetables because a lot of kids don't like them," Jackson added. "I was afraid mothers would feel like they were wasting their money."

"But in our market testing, lots of mothers suggested we include vegetables. So we did."

The "Chicken, Please" variety of the MOM line includes chunks of potatoes with corn and carrots.

Originally, it had started out with green beans, but only 53 percent of the kids tested in Jackson's research liked green beans.

A meatball entree uses very lean meat with raisin bits for added natural sweetness. The pasta meal includes ground pork, macaroni, barley and lentils in tomato sauce.

Such entrees are Jackson's solution to busy mothers who need wholesome, quick-to-fix meals for their children.

"In the past, our choices for substitute dinners have been fast-food hamburgers, pizza or canned pasta items," said Jackson. "Lots of mothers also have said that they use cereal as a substitute dinner when they're away from home."

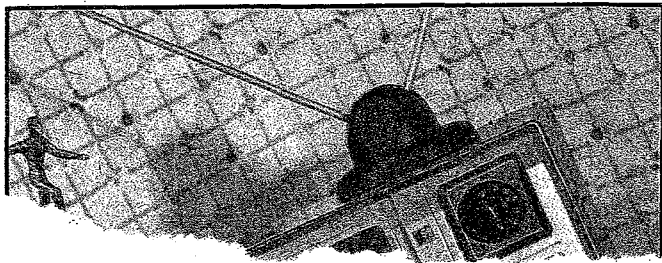
My Own Meals are just reaching the Madison market, and Jackson expects national sales to reach \$10 million this year.

A motto in her company office is that nothing is as important to a child's tomorrow as his meals today.

"I took my experience as a mother and as a manager to provide other busy mothers with convenient, quality meals for their children," Jackson said.

"This has been a very neglected market."

'Roseanne' version of television mom is welcome relief



June Cleaver she ain't, and it's high time we dumped those TV stereotypes

By PATRICIA McLAUGHLIN
Universal Press Syndicate

My favorite thing about Roseanne could be her sofa. It's big, ugly, upholstered in loud plaid Herculon and draped with an afghan crocheted by somebody's grandmother in an unfortunate mix of Dav-Glo colors

'Roseanne is no Alexis Carrington. You won't see her mincing around the house in high-heeled pink satin-and-marabou mules, or wafting down to breakfast in lacy peignoirs. Old jeans and sweatshirts are more her style.

editary male leisure class — a little nervous. Last summer, a headline in the Wall Street Journal, that most old-boyish of newspapers, worried: "Will a Fat Woman Who Ridicules Men Be TV's Next Hero?" The story characterized "Roseanne" as "more like 'Dad Gets Bashed