epac flexible packaging

PAID CONTENT

How to do Sampling Right at Natural Products Expo West



Let this guide help you determine everything from your sample count to how to package up your goods to help them stand out from the crowds at Expo West.

Let's face it, with approximately 65,000 attendees descending upon Natural Products Expo West (NPEW), figuring out your brand's strategy to stand out from the crowd can be a trick. One way to do so is to sample product. While product packaging can definitely catch the attention of attendees, it's hard to beat tasting and testing the real thing.

But sampling can be a trick. How many samples should you bring? How do you package samples? And how do you get them to the show? A lot goes into doing sampling right. Let this guide help you prepare and be ready to share your product when the doors open.

New Hope NETWORK

Choose the Right Product:

With so much happening on the show floor, food and beverage samples, even non-food samples, are an easy way to draw people to your booth and to get them to try your product. But where to start? You'll want to select a product that is easy to sample and showcases the best of what your brand has to offer. Consider products that are popular or have a wow factor. And remember, people want to be excited about your products, so help them do that by being excited about them, too.

How Many Samples is the Right Amount?

In 2023, Natural Products Expo West had 65,000 attendees and 3,000 exhibitors. Show producers expect to have at least this many attendees and exhibitors again in 2024. That's a lot of samples. To determine how many samples to have on hand, a good objective is to determine what you'd like to get from sampling your product. Is the goal to simply go for exposure and get your product in the hands of as many attendees as possible? Or are you okay with setting a limit on what you bring? Maybe you only sample for two days or you're selective about who gets samples. Maybe, you're okay with possibly running out of samples? It's feasible that you could give out several thousand samples at a show.

Portion Control:

A key to sampling is to provide sample sizes that are sufficient to give a taste of the product, but not too large to discourage people from trying it. Portion control is crucial to managing costs. This is in part why NPEW maintains that the bite-sized samples on offer at the show be 4 ounces or less. Similarly, non-alcoholic beverages are limited to a maximum of 8 ounces or less.



Factors to consider for booth sampling:



1. **Product desirability**: Research trending items in your industry to gauge the appeal of your product, this can help with establishing how many samples to serve.
2. **Booth traffic**: Consider the location of your booth and what the flow of traffic past your booth might look like.
3. **Average take rate**: Estimate the percentage of visitors likely to take a sample.
4. **Variety of samples**: If offering multiple types, account for attendees taking more than one sample.
5. **Niche product considerations**: Customize your samples for your target audience, e.g., dog treats specifically for dog owners.

PAID CONTENT



Exhibitor Exclusive Sample Packaging

Don't worry, it's not too late to have product and samples ready for Expo West. ePac can help with its technology-driven custom flexible lay flat packaging pouches. Whatever your need, ePac has packaging solutions for brands of all sizes.

Use these guidelines for making your selection to order a 3 Side Seal (3SS) pouch with ePac, to make sure your samples are ready in time to catch the attention they deserve.

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Select a Size:
   - XS: 2w x 4h 3SS with a tear notch
   - S: 4.75 x 4.75 3SS with a press to close zipper and tear notch
2. Choose Your Material:
   - Post-Consumer Recycled (PCR)
   - Compostable
3. Determine Quantity: Base this on your budget and the suggestions listed above. There is a minimum order of 1,000 per SKU.
4. Submit Artwork:
   - Option A) Use your own design
   - Option B) Send ePac your logo, SKU name and brief description along with a background color selection
     - The back panel will include the ePac logo and a message about the sustainable material used. There will be room for customer design/text (i.e. ingredient list, brand story, etc.)

Need custom pouches or rollstock? Reach out to contact@epacflexibles.com place an order with any size, material, or features!

Ordering Timeline: Don't Miss Out!

Ensure your product is beautifully packaged and ready for sampling:

- Submission Deadline: Orders and artwork must be submitted by January 12, 2024
- Shipping Window: Expected to ship out early to mid February

Please note: Dates are subject to change.

Ready to Order?

Place your order here and upload artwork here.

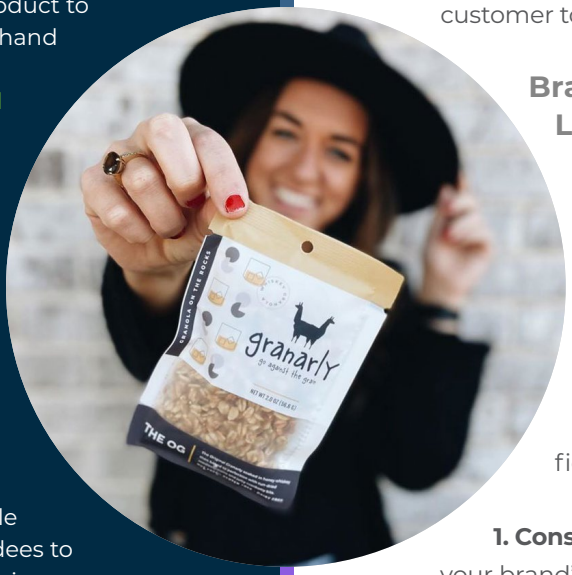
Once your product is placed inside the finished pouch, you will need to seal the top edge. If this is your first time using flexible packaging, a **hand** or **foot** sealer will do the trick! If you order the 4.75 x 4.75 pouch, you can opt to just press to close the zipper in place of a seal.

epac flexible packaging

PAID CONTENT

Booth Sampling Tips:

1. **Make it easy:** If your product isn't straightforward to sample, find ways to simplify the process. For example, offer serving sticks or spoons for nut butters.
2. **Moderate sample quantity:** Don't put too many samples out simultaneously. It's best to display a few at a time to maintain freshness and appeal.
3. **Temperature control:** If your samples need heating, ensure they remain at food safety temperatures without drying out.
4. **Offer multiple flavors:** If the product comes in different flavors, allow visitors to choose which one they prefer based on their preferences.
5. **Avoid assumptions:** Don't judge visitors solely by their badges. Everyone has potential connections and influence.
6. **Be catchy:** Even with a small booth, you can create a presentation style to leave a lasting impression. Keep a clutter-free station and make sure your packaging stands out and tells your story.
7. **Diverse sample types:** Not all samples need to be food. For non-food companies, such as personal care or dietary supplements, offer testers or samples of the product to give visitors a firsthand experience.
8. **Stay positive and engaged:** Being enthusiastic about your product can excite potential customers. Also, engage in activities to stay energetic throughout the day such as spinning a wheel to choose a sample or allowing attendees to take part in a drawing.



Official NPEW Sampling Rules

Although there are so many natural products companies at Expo West, it can be considered primarily as a food and beverage sampling event. As such, there are specific rules exhibitors must adhere to. By ensuring compliance with these official rules, exhibitors can provide attendees with a safe and enjoyable sampling experience:

1. **Food and beverage**: Sampling and serving of food/snack/novelty products are permitted when the product is the brand name of the manufacturing exhibitor or distributed by the exhibitor.
2. **Sampling**: Only products that are the brand name of the manufacturing exhibitor or distributed by the exhibitor are permitted for serving and sampling. If an exhibitor samples items not produced by them, these items must be acquired from the exclusive caterer of the convention center.
   - Bite-sized food samples should be four (4) ounces or less.
   - Non-alcoholic beverages should be limited to a maximum of eight (8) ounces or less.
   - Alcoholic beverages are capped at 2 oz or less and must be poured by a licensed bartender provided by the Center at the exhibitors' cost.
   - All food should be dispensed in single-service quantities. To serve samples, consider items like napkins, a single service cup, toothpicks or single serve sample packages.
   - Full-sized product samples are allowed only if they are given out in the manufacturer's sealed original packaging, allowing a potential customer to take one home.

Branded Packaging: Making a Lasting Impression

When attendees roam the expansive floor of Expo West, one of the key factors that can draw them to a booth or to sample product, is the product's visual appeal. Packaging plays an enormous role in this attraction. But proper branding isn't just about placing your logo on the package, it's about communicating your brand's story, values and promise to your consumers. Here's how to ensure your packaging amplifies your brand's voice:

1. Consistency is key: Ensure that your packaging aligns with your brand's colors, fonts and other design elements. This creates a consistent brand identity and makes your products instantly recognizable to consumers.

Hygiene and Safety:

If your product is consumable, prioritize hygiene and safety.

- All food must be dispensed in single-service quantities.
- Open samples that are prepared or cooked must be served in individual portions under a sneeze guard or food cover.
- Samples must be served in single portions using such items as napkins, a single service cup, toothpick or sample size sealed package.
- Use disposable utensils or other appropriate means to maintain cleanliness.
- Consider any allergy concerns as well.

In addition, gloves are recommended as are hair nets or some form of confinement. Hand washing and sanitation kits are also necessary. Using hand sanitizer or wipes is not sufficient hygiene protocol for sampling. Of course, participants preparing samples should wash their hands often.

2. **High-quality imagery**: Use high-resolution images that reflect the quality of your product. Grainy or pixelated images can create a negative impression and suggest inferior quality.
3. **Informative yet concise**: While it's crucial to inform your consumers about your product, too much text can be overwhelming. Aim for clarity and brevity, highlighting the most essential points.
4. **Eco-friendly options**: With the increasing emphasis on sustainability, consider using eco-friendly packaging materials like recycled cardboard or plastics. Not only is it good for the environment, but it also appeals to the growing segment of conscious consumers.
5. **Tactile experience**: Remember, sampling is not just a visual experience. The feel of the packaging in the attendees' hands can also influence their perception. Quality materials that are pleasant to touch can elevate the overall experience.
6. **Engaging design elements**: Consider using design elements that stand out, such as embossing, metallic finishes or unique shapes. These features can make your product more memorable.
7. **Clear brand messaging**: What makes your product special? Whether it's organic ingredients, a unique manufacturing process or a particular benefit, make sure this messaging is clear on your packaging.

By prioritizing branded packaging, you're not just packaging a product, you're delivering an experience. And in a venue as bustling as NPEW, where every brand is vying for attention, a well-packaged product can be the difference between blending in and standing out.

