

Meal Delivery Kit Packaging

Meal kits are the paint-by-numbers of the cooking world. They include pre-portioned and sometimes partially prepared food ingredients and recipes to prepare home cooked meals. The kits are typically mailed once a week to subscribers, or purchased from grocery stores, packaged in a box with basic instructions on how to turn them into different meals, and ice packs to keep it all cold.

The fast-growing niche market of online meal kit delivery services has continued to expand ever since its introduction in 2012. Revenue is expected to grow from one billion U.S. dollars in 2015, to over ten billion in 2020*. This industry claims to offer the potential to reduce wasted food, yet it also creates a significant environmental impact, in particular from packaging. Some of the problems include:

- Individual packaging for small items like sauces and condiments
- Packaging that includes multiple non-recyclable materials
- Confusing or incorrect recycling instructions
- Heavy freezer packs that are problematic to dispose of and add significant emissions impact from transporting the extra weight

What Can Be Done?

The companies providing these services should take the lead on solutions to the problems stemming from these kits:

Cold Packs

Develop alternatives to cold packs that are reusable by the meal-kit provider rather than leaving the consumer with a growing pile of them.

Take Back and Reuse

Offer consumers a take-back program for boxes, insulation, freezer-packs, and other materials to ensure they are reused.



Condiments on Request

Allow consumers to opt out (or in) for items typically stocked in a kitchen such as salt and oil.

Labeling

Provide clear and consistent labeling to the consumer on proper disposal and recycling options. Avoid instructing consumers to recycle materials that are not universally accepted.

* Statista.com/topics/3336/