# Consumers Will Soon Have a New Heat-And-Eat Option: Rice Now(R) in Sonoco's Sonotort(TM) Shatterproof(TM) Retort Pouch

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CHICAGO, Nov. 2 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Pack Expo 2006 -- Working people, school children, and busy seniors hungry for a hot meal, but who don't have the time or the inclination to cook, will soon have a new option. In early 2007, Now Foods, LLC will introduce Rice Now(R), a line of prepared rice dishes in Sonoco's Sonotort(TM) Shatterproof(TM) microwaveable retort pouches that satisfy the growing demand for portable heat-and-eat entrees.

This is the first commercial application of Sonoco's Shatterproof coating, an organic polymer that replaces oxide and glass coatings typically used on retort pouches. Sonoco's Shatterproof technology is highly resistant to flex cracking, an unsightly phenomenon in which the laminate becomes marked with stress fractures as a result of handling during converting, packaging and distribution. The coating is also more robust than previous types of coating, offering better barrier properties at similar cost. Sonoco is supplying the printed Sonotort roll stock and Floeter, in Chicago, is converting the film into pouches.

The eight-ounce single-serving pouches of Rice Now will be sold at discount stores throughout the United States. There are seven flavors: Asian Stir-fry, Beefy Rice, Black Bean Chipotle, Garlic Butter, Golden Chicken, Red Beans and Rice, and White and Wild.

Shelf appeal was a major concern of Rice Now partner R.J. Reed. "Because this is a new product, it was important that the package graphics immediately convey the heat-and-eat nature of the product and the type of rice dish inside the pouch. The package's eight-color rotogravure printing provides the mouth- watering realism we need to get shoppers to stop, pick up the product and buy it. You can almost taste the flavors by just looking at the package."

The Shatterproof coating used in Sonotort retort pouches protects the shelf appeal of Rice Now, an attribute Reed appreciates. "The more worn a package looks, the less likely consumers will buy it," he says.

The go-anywhere, eat anytime size of the Sonotort retort pouch fits easily into lunch boxes, book bags, purses and brief cases. The three-ply pouches do not contain foil, making them safe to microwave.

Rice Now can be eaten straight from the pouch or transferred to a bowl or plate. To heat, the consumer vents the top of the pouch with the help of a directional tear, places it in a microwave oven and heats for the time indicated on instructions printed on the pouch. The bottom of the Sonotort pouch is gusseted so it stands erect.

Now Foods, LLC also has plans to launch two new lines of ready-to-eat foods, Soup Now(R) and Dine Now(R) meal "kits" that will include the meat and pasta or rice in separate microwaveable Sonotort retort pouches.

Headquartered in Pearl, Miss., Now Foods, LLC develops and markets flavorful, high-quality prepared foods and entrees for the ready-to-serve market using patented technology.

About Sonoco

Sonoco (NYSE: SON), founded in 1899, is a $3.5 billion global manufacturer of industrial and consumer products and provider of packaging services, with more than 300 operations in 35 countries, serving customers in some 85 nations. For more information on the Company, visit www.sonoco.com.

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