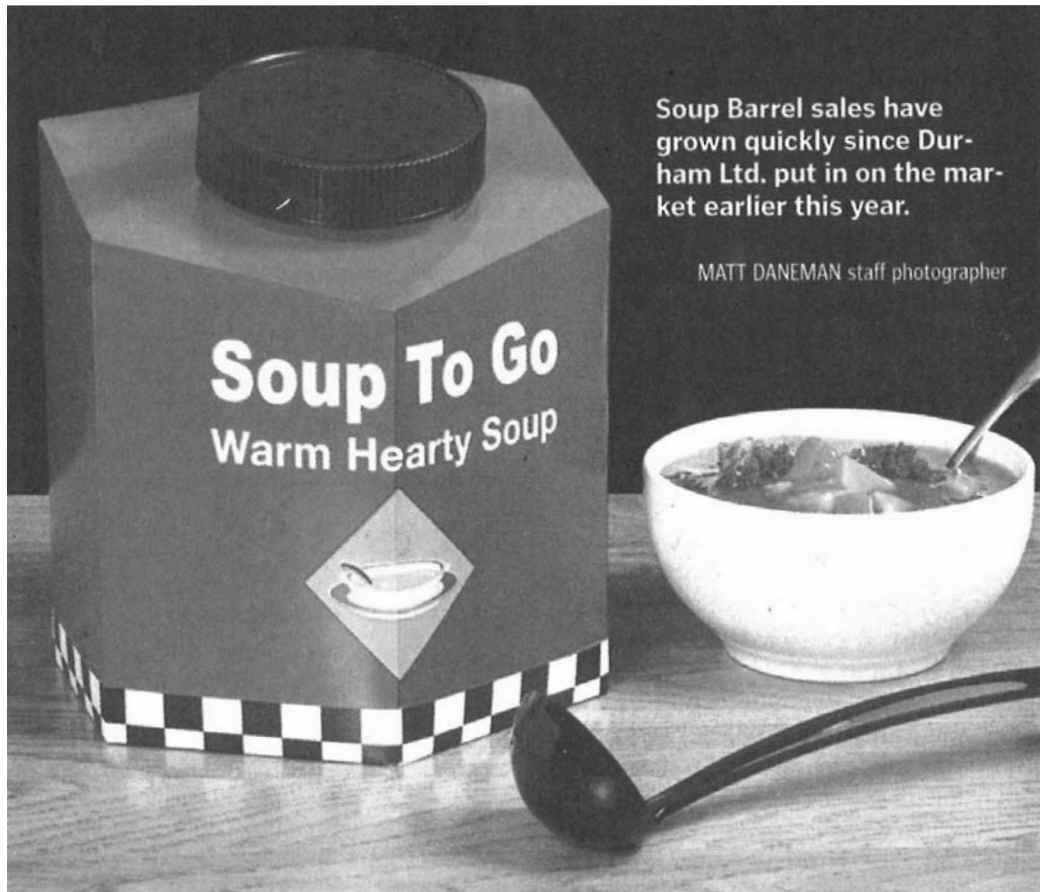


Durham rolls out its barrels

Perinton firm makes specialty containers for caterers, stores



Soup Barrel sales have grown quickly since Durham Ltd. put in on the market earlier this year.

MATT DANEMAN staff photographer

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Staff writer

You can almost imagine housewares gadgetry legend Ron Popeil, he of Chop-O-Matic and Smokeless Ashtray fame, making the pitch: How would you like to carry a lot of hot soup around without worrying about spills?

Meet the Soup Barrel — a three-liter, six-sided disposable plastic jug with a screw-on cap that comes with a plastic ladle and cardboard wrap.

Made by Perinton-based specialty food packaging company Durham Ltd., Soup Barrel was rolled out earlier this year at catering and restaurant industry trade shows in Las Vegas and Chicago.

The target market includes caterers, convenience stores and restaurants doing heavy take-out business, said President Craig McGrain.

Durham spent a year creating the Soup Barrel after customers came looking for a soup variation of its Brew Barrel coffee carrier, McGrain said.

Durham, founded in 1986, creates prototypes and then manufactures a wide variety of pizza boxes, sandwich containers, customized napkins and disposable eating utensils, usually in relatively short runs of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands for national or regional chains, said Suzanne R. Penfold, vice president of sales and marketing.

Designing food packaging means juggling issues such as safety, per-unit cost and chemical composition of the materials involved, as well as the increasing customer push for recycled or recyclable materials, Penfold said.

The Brew Barrel and Soup Barrel are manufactured at a pair of distribution sites in Florida and Onondaga County. The company employs fewer than 30 people, seven at its Powder Mill Office Park headquarters. Durham is thinking of



MEGAN DAILOR

Durham's 96-ounce Brew Barrel coffee carrier. The Perinton firm makes specialty containers and utensils.

consolidating the Onondaga County operation with its headquarters somewhere in the Rochester area, McGrain said.

He declined to discuss the private company's finances, but said Soup Barrel sales have grown quickly since the product's launch, though some other product lines have been suffering as the restaurant industry overall is slowing because of the economic downturn.

Durham next is looking into taking the jug idea in the direction of cold beverages, such as iced tea and iced coffee, Penfold said, though that would require different resins in the composition of the containers. MDANEMAN@DemocratandChronicle.com