

Green Gate



'Lean on me' tray concept

AMONG the myriad of challenges facing airlines today, two of the most pressing are the need to reduce flying weight to conserve fuel and to take visible steps to respond to public and governmental concerns about the environment.

As one of the world's largest suppliers to the aviation sector, the member companies of gategroup are tackling the issues head-on. This spring they are unveiling a number of new products and initiatives aimed squarely at helping customer airlines fly greener, but remain competitive.

"The strategic decision to acquire companies that expand our capabilities beyond the core Gate Gourmet brand is yielding immense benefits in creative thinking and innovative products," said gategroup ceo **Guy Dubois**.

A unique gategroup development from deSter and potmstudios is the "Lean-on-Me" tray concept, in which the loaded back section of a tray "leans" on the empty front section of the tray behind. "This simple, but effective interlockable

design saves at least 35 percent space in a trolley while passengers still receive a half-tray service with high value

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perception," said **Mike Pooley**, group vp of Innovation and Culinary Excellence.

"Lean on Me" variations will be available in both disposable and rotatable format as airlines balance aesthetics with costs, both financial and environmental. deSter, the gategroup manufacturer, has within its broad portfolio a number of packaging alternatives featuring materials and specifications that provide a better image and are competitively priced. Having thoroughly researched plastics and bio-materials, such as sugarcane and wood, de Ster believes it is well educated to pass on its assessments to customers.

Another product innovation involves fully disposable catering service equipment sets that reduce handling and emission levels. With such systems, pre-packaged meals and snacks are loaded into outer cartons made from biodegradable or compostable materials that stack two or three high in a serving cart. Since trolleys can remain on the aircraft, the system avoids the need to transport the carts to and from the flight kitchen for washing after each trip. In addition, rotatable serviceware is replaced with stylish disposable equipment. An

extension of this concept is a disposable oven insert, currently in development, that would eliminate the need for heavier metal oven equipment.

Perhaps the most revolutionary product is a new lightweight onboard trolley that will cut the weight of an empty full-size serving cart in half from approximately 70 pounds/31.75 kilograms to approximately 33 pounds/15 kg.

On the strength of relationships developed by member companies, potmstudios and deSter, gategroup has entered into a strategic partnership with Aerocat, a Dutch company, to produce the cart, for which a patent is pending. The trolley is certified by the

European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and is made entirely of polymer and equipped with RFID (radio-frequency identification) for efficient tracking through the supply chain. Everything but the wheels can be recycled.

"This cart can be a game-changer," Pooley said. "Replacement of existing trolleys for the new gategroup model would result in dramatic annual fuel burn savings," he said.

And in yet another example, this time from the culinary arena, Gate Gourmet is pursuing the use of locally sourced food products to actively reduce the number of miles and emissions) in the supply chain. An added benefit is the strong promotion of local flavours.

"An increased emphasis on protecting the environment and improving sustainability in air travel is high on the agenda of airlines. That's why gategroup has embraced the challenge so aggressively," said Dubois.

Lightweight recyclable trolley

