

# Cubes Idea Heats Up

FOOD-GRADE SILICONE TRAY ALLOWS FOR FREEZING OF FOOD IN PORTIONED AMOUNTS BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

**T**HIS DECEPTIVELY simple invention, by Jake and Michelle Sendowski of Los Angeles, has many practical uses for foodies and time-strapped parents. Souper Cubes® is great for freezing baby foods, or for batches of soups or stews that can be easily thawed and/or micro-waved into a quick meal.

**Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): What are your backgrounds that led to this invention?**

**Michelle Sendowski (MS):** Jacob has a Ph.D. in electrical engineering and previously worked in Silicon Valley. I am finishing my Ph.D. in higher education and previously worked in high schools and colleges. Back in 2017, we had a conversation about making and freezing stock that highlighted the need for something like Souper Cubes to solve what we felt was a problem in food storage.

**EGT: How do Souper Cubes work?**

**MS:** Souper Cubes are a large, steel-reinforced, food-grade silicone freezing tray that includes fill lines to allow the user to freeze food in measured, portioned amounts. To use, after cooking your food, add it into the compartments of the tray up to the desired fill line, pop on the lid, and place in the freezer.

Once it's frozen, you can leave the food in the tray for storage, or simply press on the bottom of each compartment in the tray to release the frozen cube of food. It's that easy! They clean up easily in the dishwasher and can even be used for baking because they are oven safe up to 415 degrees F.

**EGT: Tell us about your "aha!" moment.**

**MS:** We did a lot of thinking about the design initially, what elements were a must for us (e.g., the steel wire reinforcement in the rim) and



**“We didn’t have a big budget to make multiple molds. So, for the one-cup tray we went with our instinct on the design. It was a hit.”**—MICHELLE SENDOWSKI



Michelle and Jake Sendowski's Souper Cubes was called "the hero product" of the season on "Shark Tank."

what were not. We also spent time thinking about how the tray would fit in the freezer and the dimensions of the cubes.

We didn't have a big budget to make multiple molds. So, for the one-cup tray we went with our instinct on the design. It was a hit. We never expected this product to be more than a fun side project.

**EGT: Did you land a deal on “Shark Tank”?**

**MS:** The “Shark Tank” experience was fantastic for us! We had a lot of fun pitching to the Sharks and a great conversation about the business and product line that we have built.

To come away from the “Tank” with an investment deal from fellow inventor Lori Greiner was a dream come true. We couldn't have asked for a better partner to join our team. It also meant so much to see all the support and enthusiasm from our community of customers.

*(Editor's note: Greiner called Souper Cubes “the hero product I have seen this season thus far” and offered \$400,000 for 5 percent equity. The couple accepted.)*

**EGT: Have sales increased since “Shark Tank”?**

**MS:** “Shark Tank” had a profound impact on sales. The amount of exposure your product and brand get in front of such a large audience is massive.

**EGT: Please share your experience in manufacturing a food-grade item overseas. Have you done safety testing to be sure no dangerous chemicals are used in the components?**

**MS:** Any manufacturing requires a lot of trust and good relationships with your manufacturing partners.

Our third founder in the business, Sasan, has many years of experience in manufacturing and

sourcing. Because Sasan lives near our factories, he's able to visit them multiple times per week to check in on the production and form relationships with the factory owners and managers. We have visited the factories ourselves and met with the owners, managers, and workers who make our products.

The quality of the products that we make and sell are of the utmost importance to us. We shared videos of our factory trip to our Instagram account to show our customers and followers where and how their Souper Cubes are made.

We have our products regularly tested by a third-party agency to make sure that they exceed the USFDA standards for food contact safety, and that they also meet the California Proposition 65 (the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act) standards.

**EGT: Do you have a patent for Souper Cubes?**

**MS:** We utilized the services of a patent lawyer to first run a patent analysis search for us to help us better understand if we could patent the trays, and whether we'd need to file a design or utility patent. From there, they went ahead and submitted the patent application on our behalf.

**EGT: Where are you selling?**

**MS:** We sell on soupercubes.com, Amazon, and through a variety of retail partners (including Williams Sonoma, Sur la Table and Dillards).

**EGT: What problems, if any, have you had in developing this invention?**

**MS:** Development of the invention itself hasn't presented many problems in itself, as it's pretty simple. But making a real business based on the product has presented all sorts of

challenges—for example, forecasting demand and maintaining enough inventory.

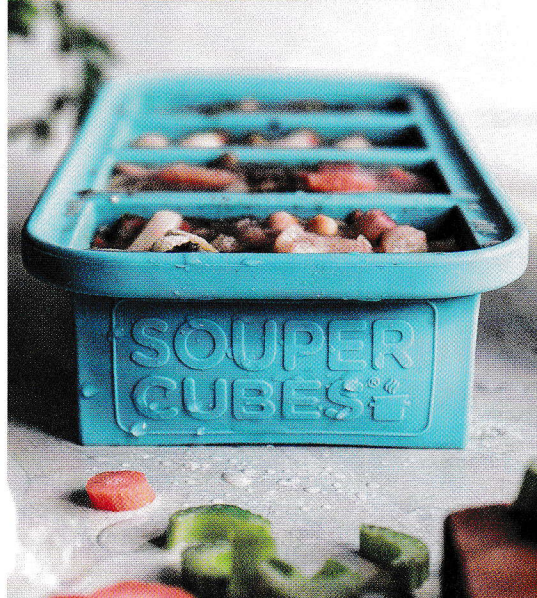
We've run out of stock a good number of times, but we are getting better. More recently, due to COVID-19, delays in shipping have also made it more difficult to accurately predict the amount of time it takes to bring our goods to the USA and ultimately to the customers.

**EGT: Any new products on the horizon?**

**MS:** Yes! We will be releasing a ceramic baking dish designed to bake our two-cup cubes in the oven—perfect for dishes like casseroles, shepherd's pie and fruit crisps.

**EGT: What guidance can you provide for inventors based on your experiences?**

**MS:** Act as if your invention will be a success from the beginning. Get all your legal, financial and other documents in order so that you can protect your invention. Think about the market



you are solving a problem for and try to anticipate their other needs and interests to help guide your journey to market. 📧

Details: [hello@soupercubes.com](mailto:hello@soupercubes.com)

**Edith G Tolchin** has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is an editor ([opinionatededitor.com/testimonials](http://opinionatededitor.com/testimonials)), writer ([edietolchin.com](http://edietolchin.com)), and has specialized in China manufacturing since 1990 ([egtglobaltrading.com](http://egtglobaltrading.com)).



# The Opinionated Editor

## Edith G. Tolchin

Editor ♦ Copywriter ♦ Journalist ♦ Author

### Helping you to say it **WRITE!**

[www.opinionatededitor.com](http://www.opinionatededitor.com)

[editor@opinionatededitor.com](mailto:editor@opinionatededitor.com)

**@QueenWrites**

**845-321-2362**

# Contents

December 2021 Volume 37 Issue 12



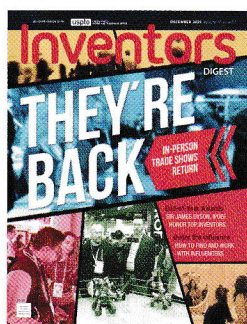
14



36



6



**ON THE COVER**  
Photos courtesy of the  
Consumer Electronics Show

24



## Features

- 17 **IPOEF Inventor of the Year**  
4 Honored for COVID Vaccines
- 30 **We Meet Again**  
In-Person Trade Shows  
Return With Major Events
- 36 **International James Dyson Award**  
3 Winners Named for First Time

## Inventor Spotlight

- 24 **Meeting in the Middle**  
360-degree Videoconferencing
- 26 **Cubes Idea Heats Up**  
Couple's Food-grade Silicone Tray



## Departments

- 6 **Your USPTO**  
News, Upcoming Events
- 11 **Everybody's Talking**  
Conversation Pieces
- 12 **Bright Ideas**  
Innovation That Shines
- 14 **Time Tested**  
Romanian Inventions
- 18 **Lander Zone**  
Inventor as Fixer
- 20 **Social Hour**  
Making Influencers Work for You
- 23 **Inventing 101**  
Early Investments
- 29 **Inventor Update**  
Inventor on National TV Show
- 38 **Prototyping**  
Working With Wood
- 40 **IP Market**  
Fiction Becoming Fate?
- 44 **Eye on Washington**  
Insider Reaction to Vidal
- 46 **Inventiveness**  
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating

# Inventors

DIGEST

# THEY'RE BACK

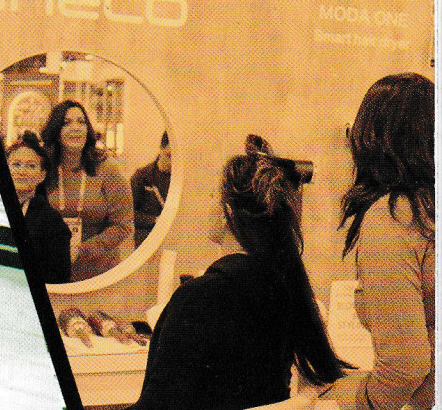
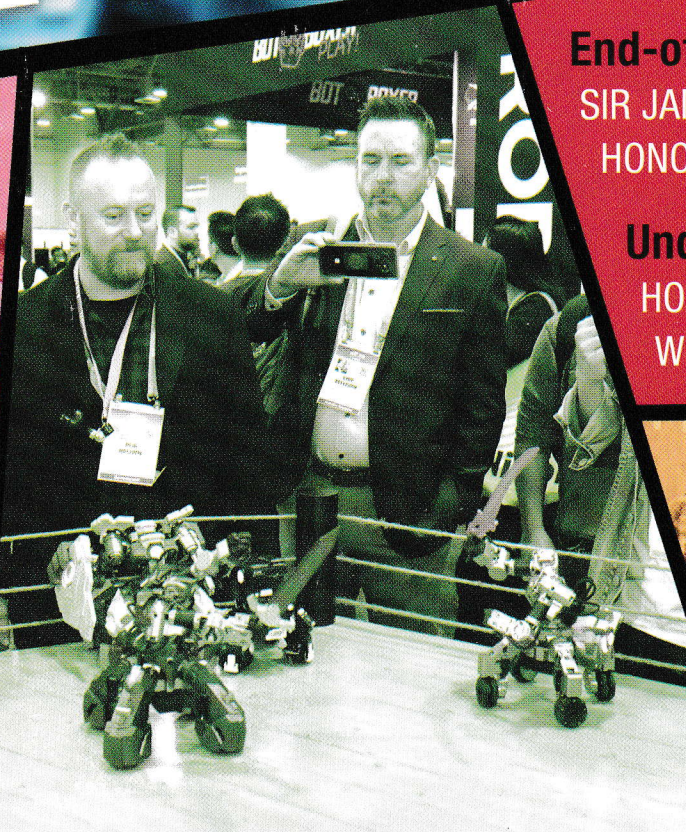
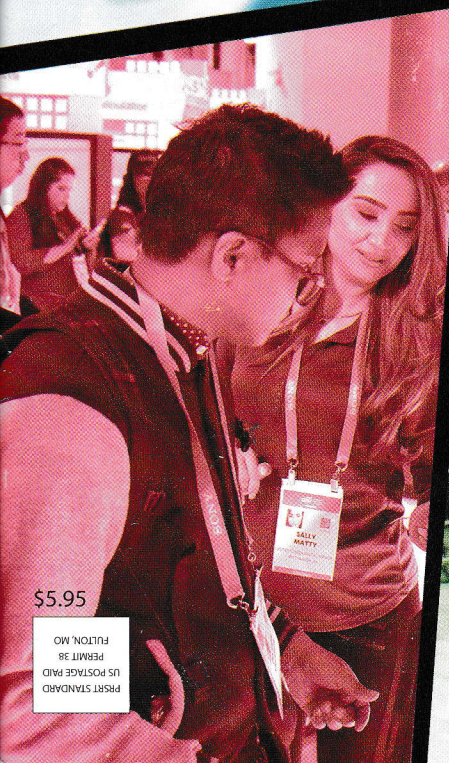
IN-PERSON TRADE SHOWS RETURN

## End-of-Year Awards

SIR JAMES DYSON, IPOEF HONOR TOP INVENTORS

## Under the Influence

HOW TO FIND AND WORK WITH INFLUENCERS



\$5.95

PRINT STANDARD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT 38  
FULTON, MO