Operation Mac n' Tap Final Concept Model

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Introduction

American society is at a crossroads in a wealthy inequality crisis, leaving even some high-income households struggling to both pay rent and put food on the table. The terrible sight of men and women forced to beg for food scraps outside of restaurants just to survive the day is becoming even more common. We are in desperate need to rethink the logistics of providing literally anything to eat in areas and to populations we currently are not reaching.

Soup kitchens and food banks already play a vital role in ensuring access to nutritious meals for over 50 million Americans. But those who work late hours, do not have the means to get to these crucial lifelines, or fear societal judgement are usually left with little to no options. This is where my proposal comes in.

Many are familiar with the concept of Instant Ramen—a favorite of many countries overseas. Just throw in some hot water, let it simmer, and eat up. But what if we could take a more western approach to this concept with a different technology, say with Macaroni and Cheese?

Companies that specialize in emergency or camping food in recent years have developed new innovative methods for making precooked, dehydrated pastas like macaroni come down in price dramatically. Mix-in cheese powders have long been a thing, with microwavable Kraft Mac & Cheese Cups being the best example. Throwing these together in a cup with a lid/spork, giving access to a hot water source, and adding basic safety and preparation instructions/warnings would be all an organization needs to make this work with no additional equipment. Skip the queue for the microwave or pot.

Any organization from churches to homeless shelters, food banks, gluten-free societies, and even re-purposed Ramen Noodle Vending Machines (such as those made by VMFS) can provide these meals cheap and on-demand with minimal costs and equipment. With the latter idea, these can be put in back alleys of cities to allow homeless individuals to reach a meal in areas soup kitchens cannot reach.

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Proposal Details

1. Organizations would provide the following:
    a. Provide a hot water source at 195°F.
    b. Heat safe disposable polypropylene cups with steeping lids, filled with .25lbs of precooked, dehydrated pasta only; provide cheese powder in a separate packet or dispenser (3 tablespoons per meal), with optional butter or milk powder packets for enhanced creaminess.
    c. A disposable spork.
    d. Clear safety warnings and instructions, see #4.
2. These are the preparation instructions:
    a. Place pasta only into a heat-safe cup. **Do not add cheese powder yet.**
    b. Add 1.25-1.5 cups of hot water and stir immediately.
    c. Cover and steep for approximately 12 minutes.
    d. Drain excess water, then stir in cheese powder. Recommended: add butter or milk powder for additional creaminess and flavor. Stir thoroughly and enjoy.
3. Suggested Food Suppliers (target of $1.35 or less per meal served):
    a. For precooked, dehydrated pasta; I suggest using a company called Prepare Direct. They are A+ rated with the Better Business Bureau (BBB) and are accredited by them. If you buy precooked, dehydrated pasta in bulk from them, each individual meal's pasta can come out well under a dollar (based on current pricing at time of writing).
    b. Two pounds of dry Cheese Powder can be bought for around $20 on Amazon, and even cheaper in bulk.
    c. Plenty of Hot Water Dispensers can also be purchased for a variety of price ranges on Amazon.
    d. Sporks and Heat Safe cups with lids (be sure to check specs) can also be found cheap on Amazon.
4. Warnings and Additional Instructions:
    a. Different pasta types may require slightly adjusted simmer times.
    b. For safety, water temperature should be 195 degrees Fahrenheit.
    c. Do not add cheese powder before steeping; add only after draining.

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   d. Avoid pasta shapes with holes (e.g., elbows, penne) as cheese powder may become trapped and create a crunchy texture.

5. **I would love to help in any way I can for those interested in using my work! I already have performed a Test Kitchen to demonstrate the effectiveness of the model. Please reach out to me via DMs on my u/JessicaPink703 Reddit or via my website for any interest or questions. <3**