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# Hurried, Healthy Or Just Hungry?

What drives young adults to purchase in the deli?





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# DELI BUSINESS QUIZ



**NATALIE TAYLOR**  
*Vice President of Operations*  
*Taylor Food Concepts*  
*Champaign, IL*

Taylor Food Concepts is a specialized bakery, deli and meat broker that sells to retail distributors. The family-owned company has been in business for 19 years and services the Midwest, primarily Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana.

"We sell to distributors and follow through with the retailers," says Natalie. "I like to say we're an extension of the manufacturer's sales team because we can service the smaller markets." Among her responsibilities, Natalie introduces manufacturers to her customers and helps with programs and promotions for the retail stores.

She has been reading DELI BUSINESS for five or six years. "A lot of the manufacturers we represent are in the magazine. I can use it as a tool to sell to my customers," she explains. "It has good information to keep us abreast of other markets. We can pass that on to our customers."

As the winner of the DELI BUSINESS quiz, Natalie wins a personal DVD/CD player.

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## Quiz Questions

- 1) What is the toll-free number for Anchor Packaging? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the street address for Widmer's Cheese Cellars? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) How many solutions does Rose Packing offer? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is the fax number for Robbie Manufacturing? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Where is Mills Family Farms located? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What is the phone number for InnovAsian Cuisine? \_\_\_\_\_

This issue was: ☐ Personally addressed to me ☐ Addressed to someone else

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (       ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (       ) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send answers to:

**DELI BUSINESS QUIZ: Feb./Mar. 2006 Issue**

P.O. Box 810217 • Boca Raton, FL 33481-0217

## Announcements



### **Chef's Choice Awarded Trademark**

EdgeCraft Corporation, Avondale, PA, was awarded two registered trademarks for its Chef's Choice electric knife sharpeners, the first of which was introduced in 1985, from the U.S. Patents and Trademark Office. The sharpeners have been sold in over 50 countries worldwide.

Reader Service No. 401



### **Hispanic Advertising Campaign**

Hormel, Austin, MN, has launched its first Hispanic TV advertising campaign to air on major Spanish stations in Los Angeles, CA. A humorous commercial promotes Hormel meats including ham, bacon, pepperoni, and fully cooked entrées. The campaign tagline is "Sabor de Calidad," which in Spanish means "flavor of quality."

Reader Service No. 402



### **New Corporate Headquarters**

Carroll Manufacturing & Sales, Avon, OH, has moved into a new state-of-the-art headquarters almost triple the size of

its old building. The packaging and food processing company is also building another plant designed to emphasize food safety. The new facility will help the FlavorSeal brand to meet its increased demands for packaging films, bags and pouches.

Reader Service No. 403



### **Compact, Manual Slicer**

Globe Food Equipment, Dayton, OH, offers the 12-inch Chefmate GC512 compact manual slicer. It can slice through meats and cheeses easily and is ideal for operations that slice up to four hours daily with a limited space or budget. It has stainless steel food contact areas and features a permanently attached knife ring guard, knife cover interlock and metal sharpener.

Reader Service No. 404



### **Foodservice Seafood Offerings**

Tampa Maid, Lakeland, FL, produces a wide range of quality, value-added seafood products to fit any menu offering, including Shrimp Jammers, Grouper Tenders and award-winning Dript n' Dusted Calamari. The entire line is designed to maximize flavor and have a "made-fresh-from-scratch" appearance.

Reader Service No. 405

## New Products



### **Prepackaged Blue Cheese**

Norseland Incorporated, Stamford, CT, has launched a new line of pre-packaged blue cheeses from Saga, its specialty cheese brand. The Best of the Blues line offers four blue cheeses, (Saga True Blue, Saga Gorgonzola, Saga Crumbled Blue and Saga Sliced Blue)

in 4-ounce packages with a see-through window and easy open/close feature.

Reader Service No. 406



### **Hot Food Container**

Pactiv Corp., Lake Forest, ILL, introduces a new Versatainer Oval Container for hot menu items. These Newspring microwavable containers range from 6-ounce to 32-ounce size, making them suitable for side dishes or entrées. They have a leak-resistant seal for

easy transporting and stackable lids and bases for compact storage.

Reader Service No. 407



### **Specialty Vermont Cheddar**

The award-winning Cabot Creamery, Cabot, VT, introduced its new Cabot Mild Reserve Cheddar at the 31st Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco, CA. Hand-selected with a rich buttery taste and creamy texture, this naturally aged Cheddar has national distribution. Available in random weight bars

packed 12 pounds per case

Reader Service No. 408



### **Consumer-friendly Pouch**

Robbie Manufacturing, Lenexa, KS, offers a new Hot N' Handy Grab N' Go pouch that fits in car cup holders. The pouch is leak resistant with an easy-to-carry handle and microwave safe. A small gusseted bottom allows it to stand straight up in car cup holders. The pouch can be used for both hot and cold foods, maximizing crispness and locking in moisture.

Reader Service No. 409



### **Specialty Goat Cheeses**

Meyenberg Goat Milk Products, Turlock, CA, introduces Aged Goat Milk Cheddar, Special Reserve and four Goat Milk Jack Cheeses (plain, smoked, jalapeño, and garlic and chive). Jacks are available in 4-pound uncut

wheels or cases of eight 8-ounce wedges. Aged Cheddar and Special Reserve are available in 5-pound blocks or cases of 10 8-ounce bars.

Reader Service No. 410



### **Safer Box Cutter**

Paxar Americas Inc, Miamisburg, OH, has introduced the new Monarch Easy-Cut box cutter that minimizes blade exposure and retracts the blade when not in use. Four different blade depth changes are controlled by an easy-to-use dial. All EasyCut blades are specially polished dull, with a rounded point to protect the user and the product.

Reader Service No. 411



DELI WATCH is a regular feature of DELI BUSINESS. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Editor, DELI BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810217 • Boca Raton, FL 33481-0217 • Phone: 561-994-1118 • Fax: 561-994-1610



# High-Value Customers

By  
Jim  
Prevor

**T**his month's cover story does a terrific job of detailing the "hows" of attracting young adults to purchase in the deli.

It also points out, "The habits they adopt now can shape their loyalties for the rest of their lives," which, in and of itself, gives a pretty strong justification for why retailers should try to attract young adults and why manufacturers should be behind the effort.

But the truth is that very few supermarkets are focused properly on attracting the right kind of consumer. Most still think that the "best" customer is the "biggest" customer. And that is rarely the case anymore.

That mother of six who may load up on loss leaders may inspire smiles in the office with her cart overflowing, but her paper towels and canned goods — all priced directly against rigorous competition from warehouse clubs and super centers — are almost certainly not as profitable for the store as the seemingly empty cart of a young bachelor who stops by the deli to pick up some prepared food for dinner, pre-made skewers in the meat department for a barbecue tomorrow, a quality balsamic and some fresh shallots to make his marinade, plus a pricey Cabernet to wash it all down.

Many supermarkets have already lost the battle for being the stock-up location for packaged goods. As super centers, warehouse clubs and dollar stores roll across the country, every week more supermarkets become less competitive in this space. It is becoming increasingly obvious that efforts to keep "share of customer" are backfiring as it results in the devotion of shelf space and promotional effort to items that are marginally profitable at best.

What is more, the customers who are attracted to a store because the ad offers really cheap prices on canned green beans are likely to be the least valuable shoppers.

A subtext to the cover story is a biting criticism of retail operations for putting the bulk of their focus on selling low-profit items to low-profit customers. No wonder so many supermarket chains are going broke.

Now some would say that money is too tight for young people to be big profit contributors. And the 18-to-25-year-old range covered by the study does include the college years, which for many people is a time when resources can be limited.

Remember, though, that it is not total income that matters, but disposable income. Many people make much more at age 40 than they did at 25, but their disposable income, in terms relevant to food stores, may actually be less. If at 25 they were sharing an apartment with three roommates, living downtown and not needing cars, it is very possible that their income available to spend on high-profit prepared food

items is greater than at 40 with a spouse to support, three kids needing braces and summer camp, a mega mortgage on a house greater than they can afford, two car payments and a bunch of life insurance in case the stress kills the guy.

If you extend the definition of young a bit, to include the young working professionals and blue collar and pink collar workers, all with decent incomes, busy social lives and no time to cook, you've got your business target. In fact, expand

it a little more to leap over the midlife phase with kids and include your empty nesters and your gay community that never had the financial burden of children, and you have a whole population ready, willing and able to bring profits to the store.

And, of course, the deli department with its increasing orientation toward foodservice is the crucial draw. The new

iteration of the supermarket is the deli/foodservice area drawing in the customers who also pick up fresh produce, fine meat, seafood, bakery products and some specialty food items. The old core of the store will still be there, but with far fewer SKUs and much higher prices as the same bottle of Clorox is simply a convenience being offered to people who really are drawn to the store to buy the deli's wonderful Beef Wellington and couscous salad.

As is typically the case, the obstacles to implementing this vision of attracting the high-value customer are not so much material or logistical; we have the ability to do all this. It is mostly a matter of perception.

Every strategic planning retreat begins with defining who we are and what our business is. And, psychologically, the problem is that supermarket CEOs, almost always rising through grocery or front end, are having problems imagining a store that is fundamentally different from what they built their careers in.

So it may not happen as quickly as it should.

Fast or slow, however, the deli directors and VPs of deli/foodservice are the ones in control of the future. This is their moment to step out and assert their rightful place at the very center of the store, the heart of the customer offer.

Nobody should build a store anymore where you don't walk into a perishable paradise, and deli directors need to be pounding on the table to make that clear.

And no deli department should think that sliced meat and cheese is sufficient. If any deli director thinks that way anymore, the CEO needs to set him straight — or find a new deli director.

It is good to study the youth. For as it has been written: we never get to visit the future, not even in our dreams. But the young will live there, and by studying them, we can get some dim light of where that might be.

The leaders of today are the ones who position their operations to thrive when that dim light is revealed as a full burning sun.

**DB**



**Jim Prevor**  
is the  
Editor-in-Chief of  
**DELI BUSINESS**

*Attracting the high-value customer is not so much material or logistical. It is mostly a matter of perception.*

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# Reality Shape Shifters

By  
Lee  
Smith

I'm not sure if everyone — or only people over 50 — remember *Twilight Zone*, a black and white TV show (yes, there actually was a time without color TV) in which reality shifted just one degree. In one episode, a guy coming home from work got on a strangely empty train, eventually finding out he was sitting in some giant kid's train set. The show ends when the lonely train rider hears Mom telling the child to put his pet back in the cage (or something like that) and come down for dinner.

The concept of home meal replacement gives me that same out-of-sync feeling *Twilight Zone* did. Home meal replacement has always weirded me out. Why? Because I have no idea what's up with the thinking that people need a replacement for home meals, much less a replacement for meals at home to be eaten at home. Am I the only one who sees a contradiction? And, I've always had the sneaky suspicion that people still cooked, or at least prepared, food at home and ate it sitting at the kitchen table, on the couch or in the dining room. Not sometimes, but the majority of times.

The money consumers spend on food away from home has increased, giving rise to the mistaken impression that increased dollars equate to increased "share of stomach." All it really means is that American consumers have more disposable money to spend on food, and eating out is a favorite entertainment venue. We like it better than going to sports events and, certainly, actually playing sports. As drinking and hanging out in bars has become less popular because of increased awareness about the dangers of drinking and driving and the heavy penalties for getting caught (maybe a greater influencing factor), meeting friends for something to eat has become the thing to do.

But, we are not actually eating out any more than we used to. We may be spending more, but we are not actually eating more. I am not so sure that the average American's diet has really increased enough in caloric count to explain the fattening-up of Americans. I think we eat about the same, even if we are trying to or talking about lightening the load. I have a feeling that the real reason we're getting fatter is we don't exercise enough. It certainly happened to me. The day I gave up unloading, by hand, a tractor-trailer of produce every morning, I started to fatten up. The day I became a buyer, sitting at a desk and getting samples thrust at me every day, I started dieting. Like most Americans, dieting is probably my most proactive and least favorite sport.

Heck, what is "exercise" anyway? Entertainment? No way. Americans used to exercise by walking to school, even in college, and we had jobs that required something other than sitting in front of a computer. We also mowed our own

lawns, shoveled our own driveways, gardened, raked and painted the lawn furniture. It was a way of life.

Moms routinely threw the kids out the door at the crack of dawn, and dads' signature whistle, call or sound brought us home for dinner. We rode our bikes, climbed trees and played in the neighbor's falling-down garage. Actually, we played on the roof of the falling-down garage. We also went sledding and threw snowballs at passing cars and then ran like hell to keep from getting caught. Was it dangerous? Of course. I am always surprised we made it to adulthood.

That's not true any more. Today, kids talk on cell phones, watch TV, play video games and use the Internet. And, get fat.

The reality is that we eat the same number of calories. We like cheese and fried chicken. Granted we may order a fresh garden salad topped with fried chicken strips and loaded with

shredded cheese and ranch dressing, but we feel better. That's marketing.

As for deli departments, when I think back to the origins of "home meal replacement" and the soothsayers who kept saying that supermarket delis would never be able to compete (something that always made me angry), I sit here and gloat, because deli departments are doing great things.

Forget Boston Market — this industry crushed it. Whole Foods, Wegmans, Central Market and dozens of other retailers are selling meals that are better than their restaurant competition.

Has the industry reached its apex? No. We can learn from foodservice retailers and adapt. What are consumers looking for? Convenience, value pricing, quality, variety and customization. The exact same things they were looking for 20 years ago.

By looking at the world as it really is and not what we think it is evolving into, deli departments can better understand consumers' needs. Sandwiches, prepared foods, ethnic favorites, cheese and anything fried continue to be favorites. Flavors, spicing and execution will continue to change, but not the basics. People want to eat at home — they just want it to take less time and be affordable.

It is not about home meal "replacement" and it never has been. It is all about helping customers find easy solutions so they can eat at home. How strong is the desire? In 1985, people ate an average of 93 meals in restaurants; in 2005 that number declined to 80. Out of a possible 1,095 yearly meal occasions, "Seventy-seven percent of meals were eaten in the home," according to Harry Balzer of the NPD Group, Chicago, IL, during a speech he gave at the Refrigerated Foods Association Convention in Orlando, FL.

My ending comment — deli departments have a bright future, and the industry is alive, healthy and winning the war for the real share of stomach.

**DB**



**Lee Smith**  
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the share of stomach.*





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# Hurried, Healthy Or Just Hungry?

What drives young adults to purchase in the deli?

By Heather Nelson,  
Olson Communications



For the majority of deli operators across the country, young adults are taken for granted as part of the customer base. Very few operations target the 18- to 25-year-old market, and even fewer target them with any aggressive or innovative strategies.

And although their current income levels and spending per transaction may be lower than older customers, these young customers tend to shop more frequently — almost daily — and are seeking a balance between the spending habits passed on from their parents and their own preferences. The habits they adopt now can shape their loyalties for the rest of their lives, making them valuable adult consumers.

"Most young adults have very positive impressions of delis," says Tami Cline, co-founder of Y-Pulse, LLC, a youth foodservice research company with offices in Chicago, IL, and Marina del Rey, CA. "There are a lot of things that deli operators are doing right, but

there are also a lot of things we can learn from how young adults view fast food, convenience stores and other venues in order to draw more young adults into the deli."

## Fresh — The Big Factor

Y-Pulse recently surveyed more than 250 young adults, ages 18 to 25, on their perceptions of the deli, as well as their perceptions of fast-food restaurants, convenience stores and club stores. The No. 1 area where delis stood apart from the competition was freshness — and quality of food was rated the most important factor for young adults when choosing a deli.

When asked to name the best thing about shopping for food in the deli, "fresh" was the most popular answer. "You can purchase foods that are hot, fresh and ready to eat," according to a 25-year-old respondent. Fresh was an attribute rarely associated with the other venues in the study, making it a key area for delis to promote.

When customers think "fresh," they are thinking beyond produce to entire meals that are fully prepared and ready to grab-and-go. Combo meals help young customers get the feeling of homemade food without the hassles of cooking.

"I'm single, so cooking a big meal means I have to eat the leftovers for days," said Tara, 23, of Alexandria, VA, in a recent focus group conducted by Olson Communications in Chicago. Frozen foods are a popular solution for many young adults who live or eat alone and deal with the challenge of leftovers. However, single-serving portions or individual ready-to-eat meals solve the problem — and are regarded as higher quality.

At Cosentino's Price Chopper in Kansas City, MO, a daily combo meal consisting of an entrée and two side dishes is offered at a discount, according to deli supervisor Carolyn Mabrey. "This group likes hot products like fried chicken and grab-and-go pre-made



sandwiches, which are available in our store 24 hours a day.”

Customers’ perception of fresh is also influenced by appearance. Keeping foods looking fresh and just prepared, even at the end of the business day, can draw customers to the deli during off-peak hours. More than 50 percent of young adults shop for food in the evening or at night, with women making up more of the just-after-work crowd and men making up more of the late evening crowd.

### Cross-Merchandise For Convenience

Convenience — rated the second best attribute about deli shopping — is a must for today’s time-crunched young adults. Whether they are part of the campus crowd or entering the working world for the first time, these fast-paced diners are seeking more and more grab-and-go options.

“I don’t have time to sit down and eat most days and I eat on the run, so it has to be easy,” says Liz, 23, of Jackson, TN. Easy options can range from prepared sandwiches and other foods that can go from deli to dashboard for a quick meal on the go to prepared items intended for reheating at home.

“I like anything that prevents me from having to cook it myself when I don’t have the time,” according to one 18-year-old surveyed.

Young adults are particularly susceptible to impulse purchasing. “At dinner, you are so hungry that you just want to eat and really don’t care what it is,” notes Lauren, 20, of Milwaukee, WI.

Cross-merchandising items in the deli area that may be impulse purchases not only saves young customers time when shopping but also helps them make quick decisions in a time-crunch. This opens the door to upselling and increasing per-transaction averages by promoting specialty items. They may already have a jar of mustard in the fridge at home but may try a new specialty mustard showcased by the deli counter. Flavored jellies and tortilla wraps, specialty dressings and sandwich spreads are increasingly popular.

### Varying The Menu

Young adults in the Y-Pulse study rank variety as their third favorite thing about the deli. From the wide variety of meats and cheeses available for slicing to the seemingly endless variations of salads and side dishes, the notion that

they can get almost anything they want is a huge driving factor when they choose to shop the deli.

Beyond sandwich staples, delis are expanding into other popular meal items that resonate with this young age group, such as burritos, chicken wings and sushi.

Cookes Family Market in Malibu, CA, has had success catering to the young adult demographic through both a sushi selection and hot service items. “We have lots of different types of chicken and that is what this group likes,” says Xochitl Barroso, bakery

## Top 10 Factors When Choosing A Deli

For young adults ages 18-25:

1. Quality of food
2. Cleanliness
3. Accuracy of order
4. Price
5. Quality of service
6. Convenience
7. Speed of service
8. Safety
9. Healthfulness of food/menu variety
10. Hours of operation

Source: Y-Pulse, LLC 2005

manager. “They come in for lunch and take out food from the hot service area.”

At Russ’s Market in Lincoln, NE, the menu also has recently broadened to much fanfare. “We just built a wing bar, which is an assortment of bone-in and boneless pre-sauced chicken wings,” explains Chris Anno, deli manager. “We usually have four different varieties available each day. You just reheat them. They are fantastic.”

### Be Everything To Everyone

Customization is the fourth reason young adults choose the deli. “You can get what you want, how you want it,” according to a 21-year-old respondent. And, as many young adults surveyed by Y-Pulse stated, as much as they want.

Highland Park Market in Manchester, CT, gets most of its young adult customers in the late afternoon. Deli manager Rich Tyrol points out they primarily choose the deli for “quick items like sandwiches or individual meals.”

As Tyrol notes, sandwiches are big business with young adults, including prepared sandwiches served hot, prepared sandwiches served cold and made-to-order sandwiches served any way they want it. For lunch, for dinner, even for breakfast.

Unlike other food venues where convenience and speed play a larger role, quality of food is the largest decision-making factor for young adults when it comes to the deli. This attention to quality carries over to sandwiches.

When asked about their favorite sandwiches — whether made at home or purchased already prepared — almost every respondent noted specific breads, such as whole wheat, focaccia, potato bread, ciabatta, herb and cheese, rye and panini.

The awareness of specialty items extends to cheeses, such as Smoked Gouda, Muenster and Pepperjack. Grasch Foods in Brookfield, WI, keeps in mind its young customers’ preference for specialty items and tries to stay on top of the trends.

“They are also looking for what is new and fun like specialty water crackers, specialty Boursin cheeses,” says Laurie Granz, deli manager. “We do demos to introduce everyone to these types of items.”

Specialty dressings beyond mayo and mustard, such as raspberry sauce, vinaigrettes and honey mustard, as well as more healthful or organic items such as sun-dried tomatoes, hummus and banana peppers, which are increasingly popular as taste buds diversify at younger ages.

“I like what I eat to be something of quality because I have tastes for things that tend to be a bit more complex. Although, I do have guilty pleasures ... like mac and cheese with hot dogs,” explains Mike, 25, of Chicago, IL.

### Sticking With The Basics

In addition to the fresh food options, convenience, variety and customization available in the deli, young adults also rate their deli experiences high for being able to find what they need. Clearly marked menus and product descriptions that help make shopping simple and comfortable do not go unnoticed with this age group.

While they may be looking for meals on the run, they still use delis as a place to buy items to incorporate into meals they prepare at home, namely sandwiches. Nearly 80 percent of young



adults prepare and eat the majority of their meals at home, with dinner as their largest meal of the day.

To meet the dinner needs of young customers, the Bel Air Market in Elk Grove, CA, offers prepared soups and entrées for take-home reheating or preparation. "We are trying to make things faster and more convenient," reports Kelly Distel-Guption, assistant deli manager. "We have a great new soup program to help the customer get

soup faster. The soup is pre-portioned in ready-to-heat containers. We also have oven-ready pizzas that are ready to go."

### Building Sales With Innovative Promotions

Young adults also turn to the deli for cost-conscious offerings — sales and promotions and daily or weekly specials. "I have very little disposable income, so cheapness is more impor-

tant than quality or convenience," notes Jonathan, 21, of Houston, TX.

Despite their tech-savviness, most young people agreed that face-to-face contact is their preferred method of ordering when inside the deli. However, outside of the deli, technology offers some creative ways to get the word out about specials and promotions.

Nearly 70 percent of young adults have text messaging capabilities on their cell phones, making it an instant way to get a message into their hands and guarantee they will read it. Convenience stores and other segments are exploring opportunities for text messaging daily specials to customers with permission of the recipient.

E-mail blasts are most accepted and more widely used. Sending out a list of weekly or daily specials has been successful for many food venues. Young adults say they do not often clip coupons, yet more and more consumer retailers are having success with e-coupons mailed directly to their customers to print out at home.

Deli operators are also in a unique position to educate and build an ongoing relationship with young customers. E-flyers or e-newsletters containing recipes, cooking tips, a listing of weekly specials or menus and food glossaries, as well as coupons, can not only help cross-sell but also help customers feel completely at home when they shop in the deli.

"This audience freely admits that many of them don't know how to cook," says Y-Pulse's Cline. "The more we can educate them on food and food preparation, the more we can build loyalty from a younger age."

### Convenience Vs. Quality

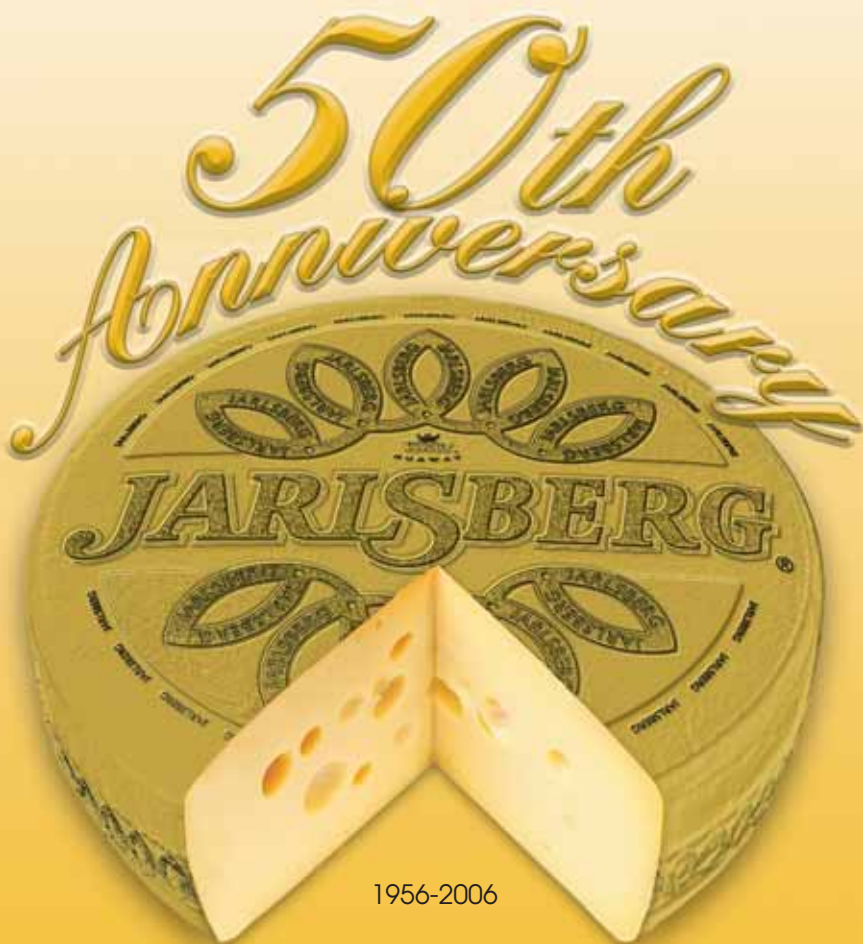
In the study conducted by Y-Pulse, young adults confirmed that the deli meets many of their needs for freshness, convenience and quality, but when it comes to making dining decisions on a daily basis, they have more than just the deli to choose from. Other competing destinations, such as convenience stores, super stores and fast-food restaurants, have their own sets of attractive attributes that draw young consumers.

"By investigating what draws young consumers to other foodservice venues, we can start to identify areas where operators can take specific action to directly compete or change the competitive mindset," Cline

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explains. "For example, if young adults are frequenting quick-service restaurants because of dollar menus, we know that the only way to get the business of those specific customers is to compete on price. However, retailers may choose not to compete on price and create a level of value instead — like late night fresh express items."

Young adults who shop at super stores or club stores for food say they like the low prices, being able to get everything in one place and buying in bulk to save money. Many noted the freshly prepared foods and convenient hours, but many also said they do not shop club or superstores, although their parents do.

When it comes to convenience stores, young adults say they prefer purchasing food there when their primary goals are speed and convenience. The c-store also meets the need for round-the-clock service and easy access, particularly when traveling. The lack of long lines and numerous locations encourage business from young customers, who are willing to sacrifice healthful options when convenience is their first priority.

"It depends on how hungry I am. If I am really hungry, I prefer convenience, but normally I prefer quality," says Mark, 21, of St. Louis, MO. Capitalizing on convenience without sacrificing quality by placing easy meal solutions and snacks in shoppers sight-line as they enter the deli area can help speed up their deli shopping experience.

Fast food is praised by young adults for being just that: fast. Speed is their No. 1 concern when turning to fast food locations for a meal. The menu variety was their No. 2 reason for choosing fast food over other destinations, possibly due to a consistent year-round menu with popular value deals.

Sandwich chains with more healthful options were noted most frequently as favorites, although many young adults say they only eat fast food in a pinch or when traveling. "I don't feel as good when I'm eating fast foods and would prefer to eat something that is more healthy," notes Kathryn, 25, of Portsmouth, NH.

Offering picnic packs or boxed meals for shoppers on the go — and promoting pick-up the night before the big trip — can help customers get a more healthful meal while traveling. For the in-town crowd feeling the time crunch, delivery services or call-ahead ordering,

even if limited to large group orders, can increase lunch business and make the deli as fast as drive-through service. An express checkout exclusively for deli

## Favorite Sandwiches

For young adults ages 18-25:

1. Turkey
2. Ham
3. Chicken Breast
4. Roast Beef
5. Vegetarian OR Burger (tie)
6. Reuben OR Tuna (tie)
7. Salami
8. Peanut Butter

Source: Y-Pulse, LLC 2005

customers is another great way to speed service.

## Make The Deli A Destination

The quickest way any type of food operation can gain a loyal following from younger customers is to make its store a destination, not just a quick stop on the way home from work. If space allows, providing seating is one way to

encourage 20-somethings to arrange to sit down and read the paper over lunch or to meet a friend for dinner.

Donelan's Supermarket in Littleton, MA, promotes its image as a meeting place by having a harpist on-hand every other day to create atmosphere in addition to the warm welcome customers receive from the staff. Assistant deli supervisor Roxanne Hintz says Donelan's customer retention is due to the friendliness behind the counter. "We have a great team and we work to make the customer feel welcome. Many customers come in everyday, so we get to know them."

Simply greeting young adults with a friendly attitude and being open to their questions is a step in the right direction. "Young people have a wide range of options to choose from when it comes to food," says Y-Pulse's Cline. "They're looking for places where they feel comfortable and places that help them save a few extra steps."

"My job keeps me very busy," according to Tara, 23, of Alexandria, VA. "At the end of the day or in my spare time on the weekends, the last thing I want to do is cook." **DB**

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## Recipes



### *Caramelized Apples and Onions with Candied Nuts and Blue Cheese on Wholeaves® Romaine Hearts*

By Chef Wendy Brodie



**SERVES APPROXIMATELY 30**

- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 large Fuji or green apple, thinly sliced
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup candied nuts (walnuts or pecans), rough chopped into about ¼-inch pieces
- ½ cup crumbled blue cheese
- 30 Wholeaves® Romaine Hearts leaves

In a sauté pan, heat 1 Tbsp oil and add the sliced apples, quickly cooking and turning the apples as they brown and caramelize. Remove to bowl when done. In same pan without washing, add remaining tablespoon of oil and heat. Add the onion to the pan. Turn the heat to low and slowly cook, turning regularly, until the onions are golden brown. Add onions to the apples and mix. When cooled, stir in nuts and blue cheese.

To serve, place a rounded teaspoon on the stem end of each leaf.

### *Citrus and Tarragon Tossed Chicken Salad*

By Chef Todd Fisher



**SERVES 6-8**

#### Dressing:

- 2 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 Tbsp honey
- 2 Tbsp orange juice
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tsp minced shallot
- 4 Tbsp rice vinegar
- 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 1 tsp salt and pepper
- 2 tsp minced tarragon

#### Salad:

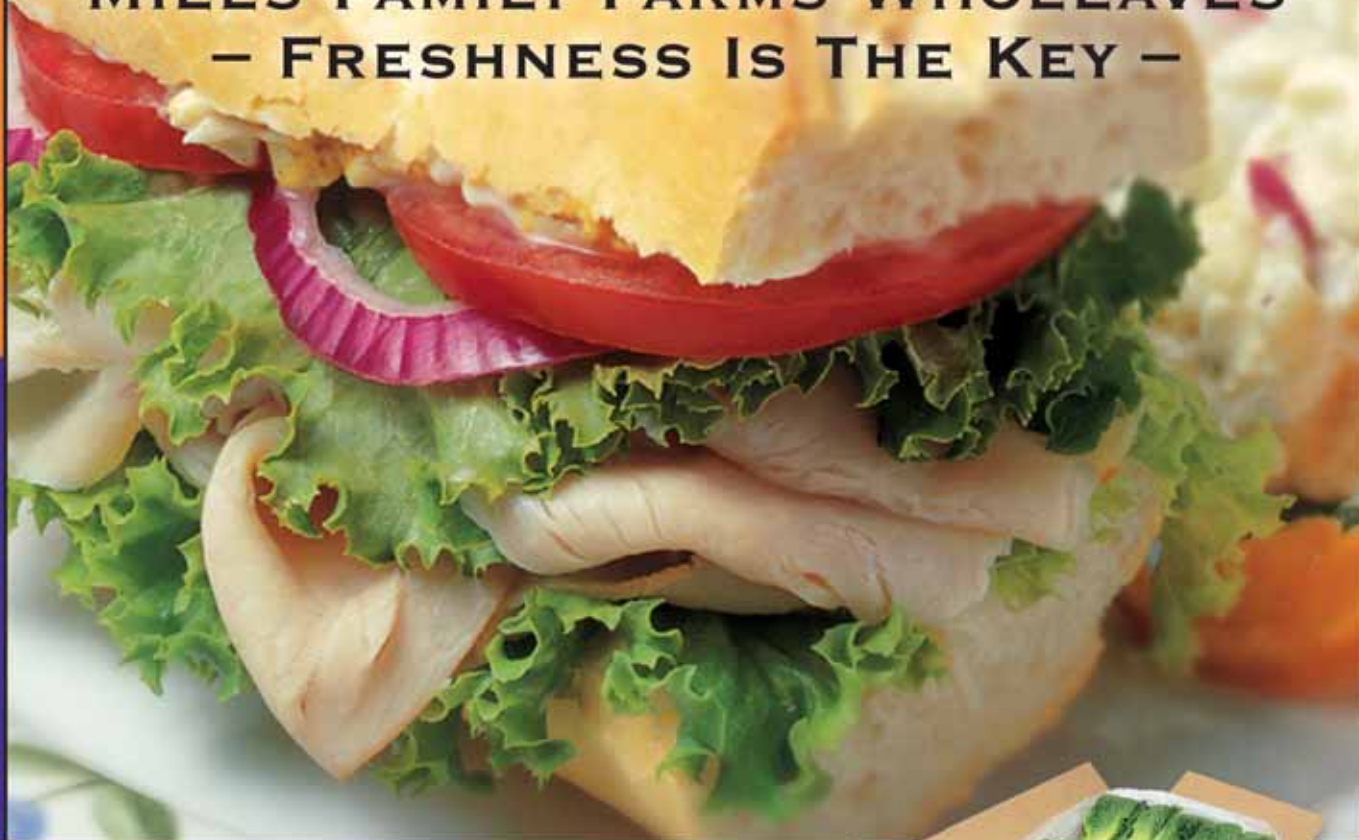
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breasts
  - 2 bags of Mills Family Farms Green Cascade Mix®
  - 1 basket strawberries, top off and quartered
  - 1 small red onion, sliced
  - 10 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
  - 1 avocado, diced
  - 10 radishes, quartered
- Dressing

To make dressing, combine dressing ingredients in medium bowl and mix well to create vinaigrette.

Over medium hot grill, grill chicken breasts until done and let cool. Once cool, slice ¼-inch thick. In a large bowl, toss together Mills Family Farms Green Cascade Mix®, strawberries, red onion, tomatoes, avocado and radishes. Drizzle with dressing, add chicken and toss. Serve immediately.



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# Cheddar Rules!

By Karen Silverston

Virtually all consumers are familiar with Cheddar in some form, so expanding their palates and increasing Cheddar sales should not be too difficult a task.

The best way to increase Cheddar sales is to get the cheese into the mouths of consumers. "Sampling and telling the story is the most successful technique," according to Linda Hook, marketing vice president, DCI Cheese Company, based in Richfield, WI.

"People are comfortable buying Cheddar. They have an idea of what it will taste like. English farmhouse is not a big risk, and it's not an unfamiliar cheese you can't pronounce," says Maria Walley, marketing manager, Cheese From Britain, based in Cincinnati, OH.

"Sampling is always the best way to sell cheeses, especially something familiar, like Cheddar. The authentic is the West Country PDO [Protected Denomination of Origin], and there are other handmade Cheddars. Sometimes we merchandise around a whole wheel, which romances it, even if the store is limited to fixed-weight packs. For sampling, we use toothpicks with British flags, and we make flyers showing the farms they're featuring and the store logo. Cheddar should be featured as a category. Introduce English farmhouse, then Cheddars from each

region, and focus on the provenance," advises Walley.

Named for the village of Cheddar, England, the cheese is so desired and yet so differentiated that it has become a section unto itself within the specialty cheese category. More than half of the cheese consumed in the United States is Cheddar,

*America's favorite cheese  
offers specialty cheese  
departments a familiar way  
to reach new customers.*

making it the foundation of the specialty cheese department. With three billion pounds of American-produced Cheddar plus imports from around the world, buyers and sales associates need a basic understanding of Cheddar and its sub-categories, including Vermont, Wisconsin, artisanal and flavored.

The successful department will offer basic Cheddars in several styles with multiple choices

at each price point. Imported, award-winning, historic domestic and unpasteurized milk Cheddars also belong in a serious cheese department. Rotating seasonal or limited Cheddars in and out of the lineup will keep consumers coming back to try what is new.

Cheddar is a hard cheese with a close texture. Older Cheddars can become flaky or crumbly but still have a creamy mouthfeel. Flavors range from mild and buttery to rich and mellow. Cheddar may have tangy, nutty or caramel notes, complexity or very pronounced flavor and finish, but it should not be bitter. Cheddar flavors differ seasonally, and from producer to producer.

U.S. standards define Cheddar as a cow's milk cheese with not more than 39 percent moisture content, a minimum of 50 percent milk fat in the solid matter, 25 percent protein and 1.4 to 1.8 percent salt. The standard does not require cheddaring (see below), but Cheddar must have the same physical and chemical properties as cheese produced by the cheddaring process. Cheddar may be white or orange, and if color is used, it should not be spotty. Most U.S. Cheddar comes in blocks, wheels (called daisy wheels), longhorns and/or logs, and most are rindless.

## English Cheddar

Because the English Cheddar category is the inspiration for U.S. artisanal and flavored Cheddars, buyers and sales associates should be familiar with them.

England did not protect the name Cheddar, but those made by the West Country Farmhouse Cheesemakers group are PDO cheeses that are made by hand on farms in Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall. Farmhouse cheddars from this region are the authentic English Cheddars. Cheddars are classified as Mild, aged up to six months; Medium, six to nine months; Mature, nine to 12 months; Vintage, more than 12 months; and West Country Farmhouse PDO. Traditional English Cheddar is white (color is added to other English cheeses).

Cheddaring is the unique process used to make the cheese. To cheddar means to cut, turn and stack the curds repeatedly, causing curds to mat together into slabs. Stacking them presses out additional whey. The cheddared curd is then milled, salted, mixed, placed into cheesecloth-lined forms and pressed for days. When removed from the forms, cheeses are wrapped in layers of cloth to protect the exterior and aged on open wooden shelves exposed to air. English aging

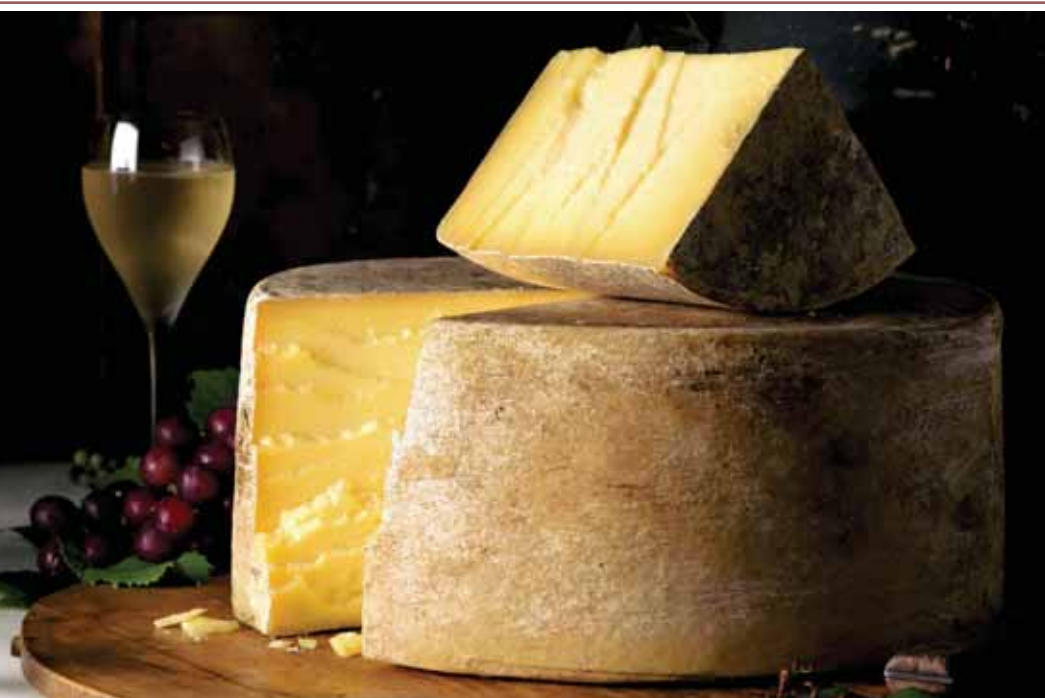


Photo Courtesy of Cabot Creamery

**More than half the cheese consumed in the United States is Cheddar.**



room temperatures are warmer than those in the United States. Flavor and texture development are usually mature at about nine months, and two years is considered very aged.

### Vermont Cheddar

Vermont Cheddar is white, distinguished by age and the sharper flavor profile preferred in the Northeast — where “sharp” is a positive attribute. Texture and flavor differ for each age, and older Cheddars have a unique depth of flavor. The cornerstone of American Cheddar, Vermont’s outstanding Cheddars are, for some, an acquired taste, but they are a mandatory selection in the specialty corner.

Three award-winning Vermont Cheddar producers deliver Vermont terroir, but they use techniques found throughout the United States.

Cabot Creamery, Montpelier, VT, was founded in 1919. As a cooperative, it sources milk from its farmer members and then pasteurizes the milk, producing internationally recognized stirred curd cheeses aged 60 days to 60 months.

Grafton Village Cheese Company, Grafton, VT, founded in 1892 and restored in the mid-1960s, uses Jersey cow milk. Grafton heat-treats the milk but does not pasteurize it, cheddars the curds by hand and ages the Cheddar from one to six years.

Shelburne Farms, a model sustainable farm in Shelburne VT, founded in 1980, uses raw milk from its Brown Swiss herd to produce about 100,000 pounds of sweet, buttery, rich farmhouse Cheddar a year, aging it six months to three years.

Jed Davis, marketing director for Cabot Creamery, suggests incorporating flights of cheese into informative tastings. “Offer mild cheddars from Vermont, Wisconsin, and California, and compare the tastes. Then compare sharp Vermont Cheddars to ones from Wisconsin and California, and you’ll see that the level of sharpness seems a little higher on the Northeast versions. The words you use to describe that flavor profile may differ from mine, but you will taste the difference in flavor profile,” says Davis. “Try mild, sharp and extra sharp. This will be a range of about six months to about six years old, because mild differs from aged by at least a couple of years.”

Peter Mohn, vice president at Grafton, agrees with this and goes further, advising sales associates to tell consumers to repeat the tasting flight. “Try the same tasting yourself two days in a row and limit the tasting to one cheese family. Try them all the first time around with a palate cleanser in between. Next day, taste exactly the same cheeses. The first one you enjoy, but the second one you remember.”



Photo Courtesy of DCI Cheese Company

Promoting Vermont Cheddar with a country life theme — even in sleek urban locations — can be successful. “Merchandising can take on an old-fashioned flair even if you’re not an old-fashioned store by displaying a daisy wheel [about 18 inch diameter] Cheddar on the countertop with a dome over it. It sends the message of old-fashioned values. Honest storekeepers kept authentic cheese on the counter by the register and

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## Merchandising Tips

According to Linda Hook, marketing vice president for DCI Cheese Company, Richfield, WI, "Sampling and telling the story are the most successful techniques." Her suggestions include:

Use drums, large wheels and bottles of beverages that match well to attract consumers.

Display cheese books, such as Laura Werlin's *Great Grilled Cheese* or Janet Fletcher's *The Cheese Course*. Gather the ingredients for a recipe and include them in the display.

Use signage with the name and origin of the Cheddar.

Draw attention to the cheese department by displaying a Mammoth Cheddar.

Create signs such as "Cheddar with apples and pears. The sweetness and crispness of the fruit complements the butteriness and saltiness of the Cheddar," she concludes. **DB**



Photo Courtesy of Cheese From Britain

**Consumer comfort levels with Cheddar make it a good entry into the specialty cheese arena.**

wrapped up your purchase in a piece of paper," Mohn adds.

### Wisconsin Cheddar

Wisconsin's specialty Cheddar is noted for variety, complex flavor development and age. White and annatto-tinted orange Cheddars are made from pasteurized milk, raw milk and organic milk, using production techniques ranging from labor-intensive handcrafting to industrial commercial operations. The full range of Wisconsin Cheddar includes flavored, smoked and mammoths in waxed, cloth-wrapped and rindless styles.

Wisconsin claims more than one-fifth of the nation's Cheddar production. Of its nearly 670-million-pound Cheddar production, 10,900,000 pounds are classified as specialty Cheddar, according to Marilyn Wilkinson, director of national product communications, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI. "Upscale aged Cheddars are increasing, and delis will be featuring these 2-, 4-, 6- and 10-year Cheddars," says Wilkinson.

Wisconsin cheesemakers have been quietly pushing the Cheddar-aging envelope. In the category for Cheddars aged more than four years, 6-year Cheddar from Widmer's Cheese Cellars, Theresa, WI, won First Place, and 10-year Cheddar from Carr Valley Cheese, La Valle, WI, won Second Place at the 2005 competition of the American Cheese Society (ACS), Louisville, KY. ACS added the competition sub-categories for mature Cheddar more than three years old in 2004 and for more than four years old in 2005.

"Delis that tell the story of their products and serve a range of products will benefit. Farm-

friendly, hands-on, and crafted foods are major trends because people really care about the quality of their food. Everyone wants a very cared-for product," Wilkinson says.

### Artisanal Cheddar

Artisanal producers keep traditional cheese-making techniques alive. Although they vary in size from small producers making just enough to sell locally to larger operations that can supply high quality cheeses to large retailers, artisanal producers across the United States pride themselves on quality and distinctive taste.

Rogue Creamery, Central Point, OR, produces 75,000 pounds of handmade Cheddar a year, according to co-owner David Gremmels. "A handmade Cheddar is going to be very different from a commercially made Cheddar. We use our hands and others are using machines. The texture and the way the curd knits will be different. It is hand cut, hand pressed, hand dipped."

Joe Widmer, owner of Widmer's Cheese Cellars, Theresa, WI, also prefers the hands-on approach. "When you handcraft you get more touch and feel of where you're at. You can feel that the curd is right. When machines are used, starter is added in there, curd is cut and cooked in there, and matted out and cut in there. The handwork is taken out of the process. There is a place for both, but the difference should be brought out to the public."

Gremmels and Widmer get very high quality milk from nearby farmers. Gremmels does not pasteurize; Widmer does. Location combined with art and science produce unique Cheddars from each.

When introducing artisanal Cheddar to con-



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## Cheddar Color

**A**nnato, a natural vegetable dye, is used to color cheese. "Technically annato does not change the flavor. However, for many, color translates to a flavor characteristic, which we think isn't really there," says Jed Davis, marketing director for Cabot Creamery in Montpelier, VT.

Color was introduced to make cheese appearance more interesting and to avoid confusion, according to Joe Widmer, third-generation cheesemaker, Widmer's Cheese Cellars, Theresa, WI. "We use the annato color for the majority of our Cheddars. We also make a small amount of white for customers who prefer the colorless cheese."

Black Diamond Brand takes the opposite approach: "Though aged Cheddar is traditionally white, about 10 percent of Black Diamond's Cheddar is produced with annato coloring because of a regional preference in the market," according to Linda Hook, vice president of marketing for DCI Cheese Company, based in Richfield, WI.

Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA), Tillamook, OR, produces both orange and white Cheddar. "While in the past it was true that East Coasters appeared to prefer white Cheddar, consumers now seem to be interested in trying new cheese regardless of color. People are looking more at flavor, texture and ingredients," says Kathy Holstad, marketing director.

According to Ray Bair, formerly with Whole Foods Western Division and now owner, Cheese Plus (formerly known as Leonard's 2001), San Francisco, CA, "Go beyond the white and the orange and get people to think a little more. People think they know Cheddar, but when we show them Cheddar beyond what they know, they're amazed. They'll say, 'I thought I knew about Cheddar, but this is really great.'" **DB**

sumers, tell the story and reinforce it with signage, displays, and samples.

### Flavored Cheddar

Cheddars have long been flavored with herbs or smoke. Today's flavored Cheddars are enhanced with spices, herbs, vegetables, wine and beer. Smoked varieties include oak, apple, cherry, and maple. Recommend flavored cheddars to consumers seeking mild Cheddar.

Flavored Cheddars are booming, for example:

Cabot makes chipotle, sun-dried tomato basil, and five peppercorn flavors; Fiscalini Cheese Co., Modesto, CA, makes caraway, saffron and sage flavors; Rogue makes jalapeño, smoked Spanish paprika and rosemary flavors; and Yancey's Fancy, Corfu, NY, makes habañero, horseradish and peppadew flavors.

Cross-merchandise this category with beverages such as wine, beer, tea, and cider, and suggest accompaniments that pair with the flavor source.

"Flavored cheddars give variety when doing a cheeseboard, hors d'oeuvres, and cheese trays

because they add extra tastes and visual appeal," says Cabot's Davis.

Nancy Fletcher, vice president of communications, California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), based in Modesto, CA, sees much experimentation among the 17 California producers of Cheddar. "Many ethnic influences in California allow us to try different flavors and that leads to experimentation in the flavored cheese segment." California, which makes almost one-fifth of all U.S. Cheddar, produced over 538 million pounds of Cheddar in 2004. **DB**

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Innovation — Solutions — Results



# Five Keys To A Successful Chicken Program

*Deli departments can capitalize on consumers' seemingly unquenchable desire for prepared chicken.*

By Nalini Maharaj

According to the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, chicken sales represent 11.3 percent of service deli business, and there has been a 28 percent chicken consumption increase between 2001 and 2004. Young adults looking for convenience and taste are the demographic that consumes the most deli chicken.

"Fried and rotisserie chickens are the best growing market. They have been increasing in the deli, and chicken share is going up," says Greg Moore, director of marketing for Gold Kist Inc., based in Atlanta, GA.

Rotisserie chicken has the highest consumption level, accounting for 46.4 percent of deli chicken sales, according to IDDBA. Although all ages buy rotisserie chicken from the deli department, there has been a slight increase in purchases by the 55-64 age group. Flavor, convenience and healthfulness are the attributes that attract consumers to this type of preparation.

Fried chicken accounts for 40.5 percent of deli chicken sales, and wings account for 6.5 percent. "The opportunity for selling wings is very strong at different times of the year. Holidays, the Super Bowl and the summertime are all great money makers for retailers," adds Moore.

## 1. Offer Rotisserie Chicken

Rotisserie chicken, also known as "barbequed chicken," is the current hot seller in the deli department. It is either spice rubbed or pre-marinated to get a consistent taste.

Mark Markwardt, director of marketing, The Broaster Company, a manufacturer of chicken products and foodservice equipment, based in Beloit, WI, says the company has introduced a new Broasterie chicken, which is a hybrid of the fried and rotisserie. Fresh chicken is marinated and seasoned



with rotisserie flavor and then cooked in a pressure fryer for 15 minutes. The company claims this will guarantee flavor and tenderness in each bite. The natural flavors are preserved and oils are sealed out, ensuring the chicken has fewer calories and less fat than other brands of fried chicken. As with any unbreaded chicken, it is naturally low in carbohydrates. Broaster offers its marinades and seasonings as well as pre-marinated and pre-seasoned chickens to deli operators. The chickens are fresh; seasoned have a shelf life of five to six days and pre-marinated nine to 10 days because they are vacuum packed.

Broaster also offers what it calls Bro-tisserie Chicken, which features a rotisserie-flavored chicken that is slowly cooked in a cook-and-hold rotisserie oven to preserve flavor.

According to Eric Le Blanc, director of marketing for Tyson Foods Inc, Springdale, AR, "We offer a considerable variety, and we do customization so that people can take our products off the shelf and be satisfied."

A new product Tyson introduced with the help of Kroger Supermarkets, headquartered in Cincinnati, OH, is an 8-piece unbreaded chicken that is cooked as rotis-



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serie chicken. It offers the great taste of rotisserie combined with the convenience associated with fried chicken pieces.

Tyson is also extending its boneless wings and bone-in wings programs with several exotic flavors, including tequila lime, ranchero, buttery buffalo and ginger soy.

Perdue Farms Inc., based in Salisbury, MD, has recently introduced La Cocina, a rotisserie line aimed at Latino shoppers and consumers who crave a spicier flavor profile, according to Andrew Seymour, vice president of marketing and sales. The chickens receive a citrus marinade and adobo spice rub before cooking. Another Perdue offering with a spicier flavor profile is a raspberry chipotle combination.

### **2. Play Up Fried Chicken**

"Fried chicken has continually shown resilience, weathering recent diet crazes and remaining a favored comfort food for consumers worldwide," reports Broaster Company's Markwardt.

The fried chicken category includes tenders, wings, popcorn chicken and buffalo chicken. Retailers should always have a substantial amount of fried chicken available during the dinner rush. It should be kept warm under heat lamps at all times to ensure product taste and freshness.

Gold Kist, which markets a wide variety of chicken products, offers prepared marinated and breaded chicken ready to go from the freezer to the fryer. This method allows the chicken to be fresh and quickly cooked.

Broaster specializes in fried chicken that Markwardt claims is more healthful than other brands. The chicken is lower in carbs, has fewer calories and less fat than traditional fried chicken, he continues, noting that Broaster's pressure frying process allows the chicken to cook in its own natural juices. This means the chicken absorbs less oil and the company can use a lighter coating. According to Markwardt, Broaster's marinating process drives the flavor down to the bone. With other types of fried chicken, much of the flavor is on the skin and that requires a heavier, less healthful coating and produces a less tasty product beneath the outer skin.

Tyson also offers a line of fried chicken that is marinated raw and can go directly from the freezer to fryer. The chicken comes in eight pieces, so the consumer can buy what is essentially a whole chicken with a consistent taste. "If it's chicken and it's sold through the deli, we are in there," according to Le Blanc

### **3. Get The Right Oils**

Broaster has a selection of healthful

cooking oils that are cholesterol free, naturally low in saturated fat and without trans fatty acids. Both Bro-Oil rice bran oil and Bro-oil canola oil contain antioxidants that resist breakdown during frying, tolerate high frying temperatures and extend fry life.

Ach Food Company, Inc., Memphis, TN, recently introduced two hydrogenated oils with no trans fatty acids. Frymax ZT (zero trans) Deep Frying Oil is high oleic sunflower oil. It has a light, bland taste that does not take away the flavor of fried foods. Mazola ZT (zero trans) is made from corn oil and sunflower oil and has a slight taste. Ach uses a patented ultra purification process that removes any unwanted impurities and extends fry life up to 10 days. "There has been a lot of success in converting over to no trans fat oils in the in-store deli," notes Tom Bandler, national business director of oil products.

### **4. Use The Proper Equipment**

There are many different types of equipment needed to make a chicken program successful.

The Broaster Pressure Fryer, used for the Genuine Broaster Chicken Program, seals in natural flavors and produces a more healthful fried chicken, according to Markwardt. The pressure fryer is available in gas or electric, and three compact models can cook seven, 14 or 22 pounds of chicken. It can cook a fresh 8-piece cut chicken in less than 10 minutes, providing more food per hour and faster service than open fryers.

Only about 20 percent of cooking oil is actually absorbed in the chicken so deli operators use less oil with the pressure fryer than with an open frying process. Markwardt also says the pressure fryers are engineered to distribute heat uniformly and use less energy for the quantity of food that is cooked per hour, which essentially saves deli operators money.

Broaster also offers cook-and-hold rotisserie ovens that slowly seal in all natural flavors and juices by means of a vertical spit design that allows pierce-free cooking and roasting of the skin rather than charring it. These state-of-the-art machines have glass doors, a feature that appeals to many consumers who consider the sight and smell of cooking chicken to be a symbol for freshness, Markwardt adds.

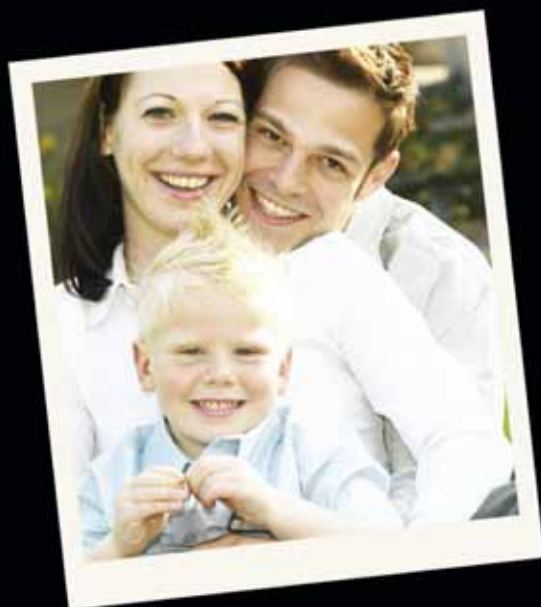
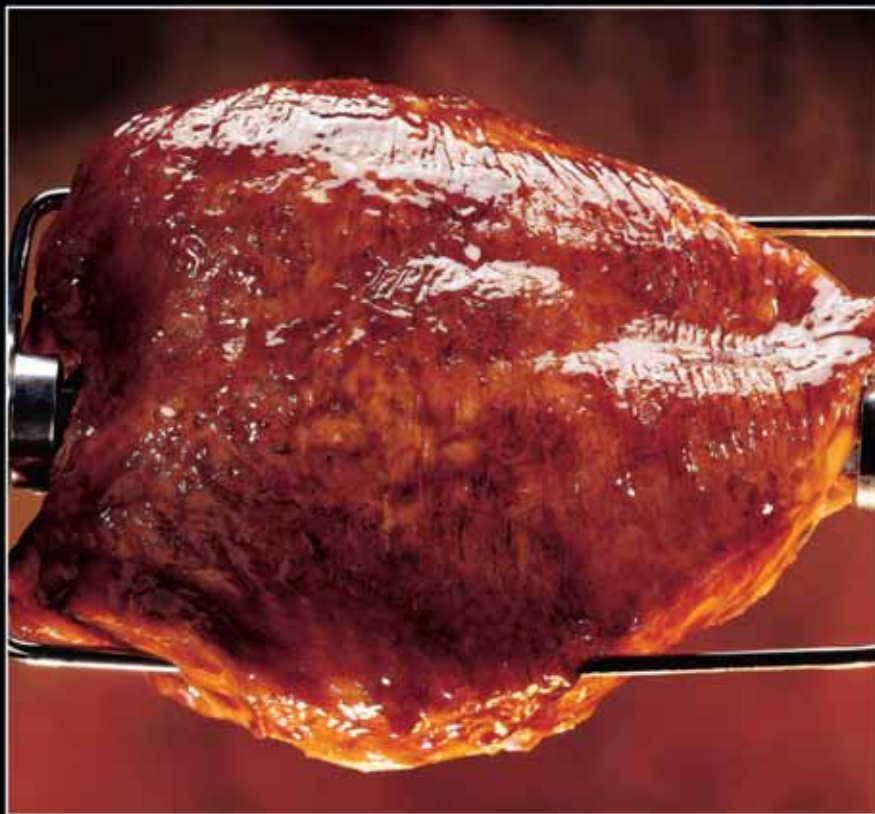
Another important aspect of a successful program is fat, oil and grease (FOG) disposal. MDK Enterprises, Inc., Tucson, AZ, offers the easy and efficient Grease-O-Nator, a self-cleaning machine that removes 97 percent of waste material from wastewater lines at a very low cost. The Grease-O-Nator is the solution to problems such as clogged drains,





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unnecessary use of harmful and costly chemicals, cleaning costs and damage to septic tanks, according to president Chuck McCain. "The Grease-O-Nator is easy to fit, all costs are known and new installations are easy. Delis need to keep their costs low, and this machine can help with that," he says.

A heavy-duty piece of equipment constructed of 14 gauge, 304 stainless steel, it can be plugged into a system with only one 120v/60cy/1ph, 20 amp electrical connection. The Grease-O-Nator has been found to

be virtually odorless and durable in food handling facilities, and it conforms to the Universal Plumbing Code, McCain explains.

#### 5. Display And Merchandise Effectively

Display cases are important because they are the first things a consumer sees and because they keep prepared foods fresh and safe by maintaining the proper temperature and humidity.

Broaster offers a variety of deli cases for both floor and counter plans. They feature

## Definitive Program From Perdue

**S**alisbury, MD-based Perdue Farms Inc. has developed a definitive deli program to increase sales. The program consists of four major components.

The first component is gaining an understanding of consumer trends. This idea analyzes consumers in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and what attracts them as far as products, flavors and packaging.

Maximizing rotisserie and fried chickens in the deli is the second component.

Third is merchandising from different angles to draw attention to products. This component is from the POS viewpoint and includes floor graphics such as easels and stickers that should be placed in the deli.

Last are promotions, which include taking various types of chicken and cross-promoting them with other products to build the brand. Promotions and cross-selling are very effective, especially when maintained over time. They offer a dimension that goes beyond simply sampling products.

**DB**

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individual timers for each pan row, allowing the food to be held for the exact time and temperature that is required. The company also offers compact heated deli cases that are perfect for tight space restrictions.

Cross-merchandising can help sell more chickens and make the department more consumer friendly. Time-pressed consumers rushing in for a quick lunch pick-up or a complete evening meal respond well to one-stop shopping convenience.

Many consumers are programmed to think complete meal. What has proved successful for the fast-food operators can also bring in extra money to deli operators. Adding a soda, a bag of chips or french fries to any chicken meal makes it more appealing, more convenient and more of a perceived value to the consumer.

Side dishes also are great items to cross-merchandise. Offering specials that add on macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, breads or vegetable sides is a great way to promote the whole-meal concept and cater to a fast in-and-out experience.

Consistency is an absolute necessity to a successful deli chicken program. Consumers need to know the meal they grab is hot, delicious and ready to take home. A well-run, well-maintained and well-promoted chicken program has the potential to increase deli sales significantly.

**DB**



# Summer Side Show

*When the weather heats up, the kitchen can stay cool.*

By Lix Campbell

It is 6:00 PM on a sultry summer evening and thousands of consumers across America are asking themselves the same question, "What will we have for dinner tonight?" Mom and dad are tired — that's reason enough to reject the stove. The kids have baseball or tennis or swimming (the list is endless), so dinner has to be fast, too. Data from the Bureau of Labor cites that both American children and parents are spending increased time commuting from work, school and activities. But there is a solution at hand — a quick stop at the supermarket deli counter to pick up dinner.

Sales of refrigerated meals and side dishes rose 46 percent between 2000 and 2005, according to Mintel International Group Ltd., a global supplier of consumer, media and market research whose American headquarters are in Chicago, IL. According to Mintel, a number of factors are driving sales growth including an increased demand for convenience among consumers and their equally strong desire for wholesome, home-cooked meals for themselves and their families; the growing sophistication of the American palate, fueling innovation within the category; and the trend towards smaller households.

Mintel expects growth in the refrigerated foods market will remain strong, setting a precedent in the perception of meal preparation. Thus, any product that capitalizes on convenience and caters to Americans' growing taste preferences will help drive this market to new heights.

Picking up a chicken or meat loaf in the deli has already become standard consumer practice. But what are all those families eating with their main course? An ever-growing range of interesting hot and reheatable side dishes has replaced the ubiquitous potato salad, macaroni salad and coleslaw.

"Sides have traditionally been stepchildren to deli salads," says Wendie DiMatteo, CEO of ASK Foods Inc., Palmyra, PA, "but more and more delis are pairing them with hot foods with great success."

Americans are trading potato salad for



hot potatoes, macaroni salad for macaroni and cheese, and coleslaw for creamed spinach or green beans amandine.

These cold salads are still top sellers in the deli, but David Hamersma, manager at The Market Basket, an upscale market in Franklin Lake, NJ, that draws customers from the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut), is finding more consumers are ordering hot sides like turnips, sweet potatoes, squash and roasted vegetables. "Six years ago, we didn't even have a hot food department. Today, it's a whole separate section and we cook it all from scratch," he notes.

### Quality Choices Abound

Most supermarkets cannot and do not cook from scratch. The cost of labor, safety concerns and time issues all legislate against the practicality of doing this. But with so many companies producing high quality sides, there is little reason for deli managers to do the work themselves.

For example, Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, makes four varieties of mashed potatoes: its creamy premium mashed, made with russet potatoes blended with real butter, is the top seller. The company also offers

both Yukon gold and redskin potatoes in this format. "We have to fight the perception that these aren't as good as homemade. People have said they won't be as fluffy," according to John McCarthy, senior retail marketing manager, "but when we do demos and



tastings, they change their minds fast. Educating the consumer is the only way to get them to buy."

Jeffrey Siegel, president of Chloe Foods Corp., based in Brooklyn, NY, agrees and recommends deli servers suggest sides when customers order a protein, even offering them a taste. "You're trying to get someone to stop making the product at home and buy

it pre-made," he says. "Before they'll spend the five dollars to do that, they have to know what they're getting is going to be as good as their own. There's uncertainty. Put it in their mouth. You have to take away that element of uncertainty."

Mashed potato sales appear to be growing exponentially and with them, the sale of gravy. One way to ensure they become firmly fixed as partners on the dinner menu is to feature them side by side in the deli case and encourage sales with POS signage featuring a picture of steaming potatoes and gravy.

Mashed potatoes and gravy have a huge advantage in that they are familiar. "People don't cook themselves, so they want something they grew up with and they're comfortable with," says Brenda Donahue, director of sales and marketing, Mrs. Gerry's Kitchen Inc., Albert Lea, MN. "If they can find high enough quality in the comfort foods they know, if they can feel it's healthful, they can still feed it to their children and enjoy the convenience."

Indeed, she adds, quality is paramount to building sales because while a product might

# They're Looking for a complete deli selection.



sell once, it will not sell a second time unless the customer's experience is positive. These days, healthful and homemade are in; additives and preservatives are out, so marketing mashed potatoes and gravy as homemade-good is a huge bonus. But cutting out preservatives has a downside for delis.

#### Life Without Preservatives

While delis have traditionally demanded a 45-day shelf life of products they stock, many are getting the message that the shorter shelf life of products without preservatives can actually mean improved sales if the product is perceived as fresh and bursting with goodness and flavor.

Pointing to success stories such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's, Chloe's Siegel points out, "Everything they do, any supermarket deli could do. Healthy is the buzz word today. But you have to be prepared for shrinkage. Customers are willing to pay for high quality and good taste. Foods without preservatives definitely taste better."

Companies like Chloe Foods, Mrs. Gerry's Kitchen, ASK and others make a point of this.

"The labeling acts mean that manufacturers have to state exactly what's in the

food; they can't hide behind words like 'flavoring' or 'color' like they used to do," says ASK's DiMatteo. "And the consumer is better educated. Plus, when you add preservatives, you get an artificial taste."

The twice-yearly global ACNielsen Online Consumer Opinion Survey, the largest of its kind, polled over 21,100 respondents in 38 markets from Europe, Asia Pacific, North America and South Africa, asking consumers around the world how much they understood food labeling, when they would check nutritional information and labeling, and what they check for as they do their grocery shopping. Consumers in North America and Latin America topped the list for most regularly checking out such items as fat, calorie and sugar levels and North American consumers are the most label savvy.

Healthful can be a selling point for Americans today. Two-thirds of respondents in one Mintel consumer research survey reported making purchasing decisions based on whether the product has the right amount of fat, vitamins and minerals, sugar, and calories. In addition, the success of stores like Whole Foods indicates that being preservative-free is a big plus for parents who want to serve their children food as close to

homemade as possible. They want real potatoes, real vegetables, real cheese, etc., and do not want that food to contain anything that might later prove harmful.

#### More Than Just Mashed Potatoes

Moms always made their kids eat their veggies, and most American families still feel that vegetables should be served with dinner. But washing spinach, broccoli or cauliflower and then cooking it is time-consuming. So it is not surprising that vegetable sides have begun to grow in popularity.

Creamed spinach and string beans amandine are the two most popular vegetable dishes in Market Basket's hot counter, according to Hamersma. The top sellers for Nestlé Foodservice, NA, Glendale, CA, include green bean casserole and broccoli au gratin. ASK's creamy country-style corn, creamed spinach and Szechwan green beans are all popular deli choices. It is interesting to note that these dishes all offer a flavor profile that surpasses simply steamed vegetables. And they require rather more effort for customers to prepare from scratch, which explains why they are more likely to be purchased ready-made.

More complicated vegetables to cut and

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prepare like butternut squash and acorn squash are also slowly growing in popularity. A new ASK product, mashed cauliflower, is making inroads in the deli market. It looks like mashed potatoes but has a much more appealing calorie and carb profile. Identifying its nutritional value is one way to attract customers. "Adding nutritional tags to the product can help to sell it," says DiMatteo. "It tastes really good. I've even convinced my 10-year-old to try it, and he loves it. But customers have to recognize it in the deli case before they'll try it."

An alternative starch that is making inroads is rice, whether white or wild. White rice casseroles with vegetables have been around the deli for a while, as has Chinese-style fried rice. But a new product these days is wild rice. Wild rice has the advantage of appearing upscale as well as enjoying a healthful nutritional profile.

Chuck Mollenberg, sales manager for Ramy Wild Rice Co. in Mankato, MN, suggests wild rice is an excellent way for delis to present a diversified and upscale image. "Wild rice is a natural product and it's easy for a deli to prepare — we suggest a slow cooker with some onions, mushrooms or water chestnuts. It triples or quadruples in volume," he says. "It's easy to sell both cold and hot and actually improves in flavor on reheating in the microwave."

For the diner who wants to be a little different or avant garde, wild rice is certainly an option. And there are many consumers who like to think of themselves as willing to experiment with new flavors. On the other hand, most Americans are not yet ready for dishes that are too out-of-the-box.

"Our research shows that consumers want both," says Kathy Lenkov, communications manager for Nestlé. "They want to fall back on reliable standards like mac and cheese but they're willing to try new flavors — especially if they're offered them in the context of a whole meal."

"Consumers think they want to be avant garde but when it comes to the point, they want comfort food," says Donahe of Mrs. Gerry's Kitchen. "On the other hand, they like to think they're being avant garde — they want traditional with a twist." For example, traditional mashed potatoes flavored with garlic or cheddar create a new

spin on an old product.

ASK offers Yukon Gold 'smashed' potatoes. Its macaroni and cheese is a three-cheese version with rotini pasta. "People are trying to upscale some traditional items and create a little more added value to the product," says DiMatteo. "On the other hand, the product isn't too risky a purchase and they can have some confidence in what they're buying."

Confidence is paramount when it comes to encourage consumers to make that first purchase of a product. "The difference between buying our green bean amandine or our corn casserole in the deli case, as

*There are many consumers who like to think of themselves as willing to experiment with new flavors. On the other hand, most Americans are not yet ready for dishes that are too out-of-the-box.*

opposed to buying something in the frozen food section, is that the customer can see what they're getting instead of just a picture of it," says Jimmy Daskaleas (aka Jimmy D), vice-president of product development for Walker's Food Products Co. in North Kansas City, MO. "There's a comfort level if they can see what they get."

And, adds Jimmy D, a former chef, delis

need something more than mashed potatoes to attract the customer. "They need a culinary perspective. They have to emulate what restaurants do and show off great sides that look chef-prepared. If it looks good and freshly prepared, they'll buy them." Companies like Walker's specialize in providing chef-style sides with flair that the retailer can heat and serve. "Our motto is: 'almost anonymous since 1947'. We make others look good," he laughs

Looking good is what deli sales are all about. Having a wide range of sides, attractively displayed in the deli can build both image and profitability. "Your customers are busy and you're helping them with a solution — a whole meal instead of just an entrée," says Lenkov. "And you're selling more products so your profits are improved."

Pleasingly arranged hot and cold counters makes the deli more of a destination and certainly, hot dishes in the deli have the added perception of being freshly made, another factor that could drive sales.

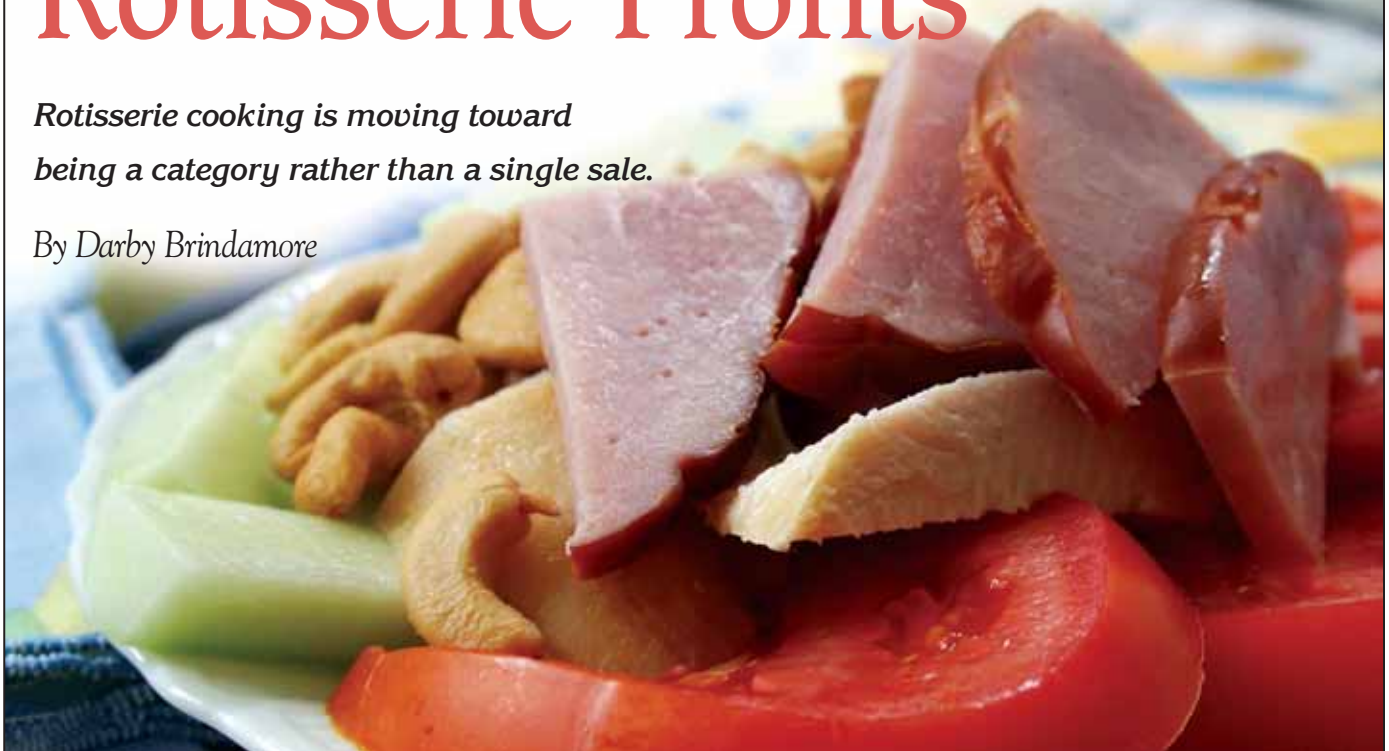
"Some retailers are doing a great job in terms of visual display," says ASK's DiMatteo. "Committing to full service and creating appealing displays with nicely decorated bowls enables customers to easily visualize themselves serving the dish."



# Hams Increasing Rotisserie Profits

*Rotisserie cooking is moving toward being a category rather than a single sale.*

By Darby Brindamore



**R**otisserie chicken is the dominant prepared food in supermarket and chain store deli departments. So, it is logical to move from rotisserie as a single-product sale to a category of products, thereby better utilizing the rotisserie itself, adding more theater to the department, new products and additional sales.

"Rotisserie is showing continued upward growth, driven by new products. Rotisserie chicken has graduated to a category including chicken, ham, brisket, ribs and turkey breasts," according to Joe Sarkis, vice president of sales for Manda Fine Meats, located in Baton Rouge, LA.

The growth of new rotisserie products has been hampered by a number of factors, including lack of reasonable shelf life and price. Chicken has always had the advantages of being a lower price protein, having a shelf life under the heat of at least two hours, and being close to universally liked. In addition, cooking a rotisserie chicken is easy to teach and execute at store level.

The only problem with chicken is what Mark Belding, business manager of branded pork for Farmland Foods, based in Kansas, MO, calls, "chicken fatigue. [Consumers] are tired of seeing nothing but chicken. They have embraced the rotisserie-cooking process

and are looking for something more."

"We wanted something different," says Peter Jazwinski, president of Polean Foods, a distributor and importer of Canadian hams, located in East Norwich, NY, about his personal buying habits. Polean is a family-owned company, and both Jazwinski and his wife work in the business. At least once a week, she would pick up a rotisserie chicken from the supermarket.

"I got tired of chicken being the only option and I developed the recipe for a fresh rotisserie ham that can be handled as easily as a rotisserie chicken, at a similar price point, gross profit margin and shrink level," he explains.

## Rotisserie Growth

Deli chicken sales, according to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), headquartered in Madison, WI, represent 11.3 percent of service deli department sales, with a 28 percent increase between 2001 and 2004. Of that amount, rotisserie chicken sales account for 46.4 percent, making rotisserie chicken the dominant player. [Please see *Five Keys To A Successful Chicken Program*, beginning on page 20.]

Rotisserie chicken has been extraordinar-

ily successful because of a number of qualities. Chicken is the lowest priced protein when compared to beef, pork and seafood; rotisserie chicken returns an excellent gross profit margin with low shrink; the retail price is about the same or less than the price of a meal at a fast-food restaurant; chicken is very popular and viewed as healthful; and, perhaps most important, it is a program that can be executed at store level with little training and outstanding results.

The projected success of rotisserie ham is due to its similar performance characteristics. According to Jazwinski, "My guess is a 25 percent increase in unit sales — based on our test results. Over the summer months, Fairway Market in New York City averaged 18 whole units a day."

Field-testing by Farmland Foods resulted in similar results, according to Belding. Farmland tests showed that rotisserie hams were about 10 to 25 percent of total rotisserie sales and retailers should see a 25 percent increase over rotisserie chicken.

Both Farmland and Polean are marketing a raw pork product that is cooked in the rotisserie and has similar characteristics.

## Retail Performance

Both Farmland's and Polean's hams are

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*"Flavor Says It All"*

Reader Service No. 207

## FEATURE

shipped raw to the retailer. The net weight of the cooked ham is about two pounds with cooking shrink of about 10 percent. The finished product gives customers a 100 percent yield. There is no waste to the consumer — no bone, no extra fat, no skin.

The cooked ham can be sold as a single unit or cut in two. When cut in half, the amount of meat is similar to a rotisserie chicken and the shelf life on the warming table is four to five hours.

Polean's Jazwinski notes that with a retail price point of \$5.99 a pound, the gross profit is over 50 percent, again similar to a rotisserie chicken, and the shrink is minimal due to the long shelf life.

Other possible selling opportunities include selling the ham next to the refrigerated rotisserie chickens for reheating at home, using the fresh hot hams for lunchtime sandwich programs or selling sliced-to-order hot dinners to go.

Cooking directions mirror, once again, rotisserie chicken. The ham needs to be cooked to an internal temperature of 165° Fahrenheit and takes about one and 1½ hours on the rotisserie. According to Jazwinski, the ham also cooks well in a convection oven and the cook times are the same.

"This is an excellent product with the texture of a homemade fresh ham roast with unique flavors, including Provincial Fine Herb, Country Cuisine and New England Maple. There are no fillers or emulsifiers, and our hams have no growth hormones and zero trans fats," he continues.

There are, however, alternatives to a raw product. Manda Fine Meats is marketing a fully cooked rotisserie ham. The small 2- to 2½-pound hams arrive at the retailer fully cooked and ready to put on the rotisserie. There are advantages to the fully cooked ham, according to Sarkis, including the cooking time and shrink. "The fully-cooked hams take only about 15 minutes to heat in a rotisserie and have less than a 5 percent shrink."

Sarkis recommends basting the product with a pineapple-honey or brown sugar glaze; however, each geographical market has its own flavor profile that retailers can capitalize on. He also notes that the ham can be served whole or half. A retail of \$4.99 to \$5.99 a pound returns a 50 to 60 percent gross profit margin.

"The rotisserie category is poised for continued upward growth, driven by new products and [consumer] demand. There is some inevitable cannibalization, but not much," says Sarkis about adding rotisserie hams to the category. "The hams really do not take away from any other product. The presentation is great."

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# BBQ America

## *Hot Flavor, Hot Trend*

*For the savvy retailer, barbeque means expanded sales and profits.*

By Trisha J. Wooldridge

While barbecue means different things to different people and specific regions of the country have different methods of preparation and use specific meats, there is no doubt that the category is expanding and gaining consumers' interest. For the deli department retailer, expanding the category is a profitable fit and tie-in with the very popular rotisserie or "barbeque" chicken category. Understanding "true" barbeque will help retailers capitalize on growth opportunities profitably.

Retailers looking to take advantage of barbecue's ever-increasing popularity must still consider regional flavor profiles and consumer tastes. The best way to maximize barbecue sales and profitability is to learn about the regional differences and what consumers expect from them.

"When most people think barbecue, they think of sauce, but barbecue is really the process by which the meat is cooked," explains James Chambless, executive director of business development at Sadler's Smokehouse in Henderson, TX. The Sadler family has been making barbecue for four generations and distributing its products nationwide. "The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines barbecue as having no direct heat, cooked over hardwood coals, and it [the meat] has to shrink 30 percent through this cooking process."

According to Jack Griggs, director of marketing for Southern Pride in Marion, IL, and a leading manufacturer of barbecue smokers, rotisseries and pits, "Genuine American barbecue comes from the slow smoking of meat over burning wood. No matter where you're from or what is considered true barbecue, the slow cooking of meat over the smoke and the heat of burning wood creates a mouth-watering tender product that we can all agree is





yum, yum good.”

On the other hand, says Ken Feinberg, senior vice president of Minneapolis, MN-based Curly's Foods Inc., a division of John Morrell and a wholly owned subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, “Smoked meat is its own category [within barbecue], and is taking off as well. To me, true barbeque is a smoked product, whether it is done by the manufacturer or a restaurant chain. It just must be smoked.”

***“Delis mirror restaurants. Barbecue restaurants have moved from the bad side of town to the upside. Growth has been in both areas [restaurant and deli].”***

— Maurice Lee III  
 Smokaroma, Inc.

Once a down-home specialty, barbeque has moved uptown and is a favorite for family-style and mid-priced restaurants. Deli operators can gauge local consumer preferences by checking out local barbecue restaurants.

“Delis mirror restaurants,” explains Maurice Lee III, president of Smokaroma, Inc., Boley, OK. “Barbecue restaurants have moved from the bad side of town to the upside. Growth has been in both areas [restaurant and deli].”

Expanding barbeque into its own niche within the deli department is a way to create a product offering with a regional flair and good profit margins. It is doable in mainstream markets because of manufacturers’ support.

Chambless adds, “Deli is a good way to compete with restaurants, especially for price points.” Even though Sadler’s is not set up for consumer sales, he explains, individuals will call and order a case of brisket, proving how strong the consumer demand for barbecue is.

#### It’s All About The Protein

Protein is the center of barbecue and

sales depend on what meats are available to the consumer. What meats do they want and what will sell? Terry Hyer, COO, Zarda BBQ Inc., Blue Springs, MO, declares, “Ribs are king! No matter where you go, ribs are going to be your No. 1 seller.”

On the other hand, Sadler’s Chambless believes, “Across the board, it’s beef brisket. Ribs are the slowest growing because the cost is so high, especially in delis.”

Southern Pride’s Griggs believes protein popularity is regional. “Barbecue is as region-

alized as any food in the United States. Whether you like the vinegar-mustard-based sauce on pork from the Carolinas, the heavy hickory smoked beef from Texas or the dry rubbed ribs from Tennessee, there are as many sauces, rubs, meats and wood combinations in barbecue as there are people to lick their lips.

“All types of barbecue are growing and gaining in popularity, but your pulled pork butt, pork ribs and beef brisket lead the way in the hearts of true barbecue lovers,” he

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contends. In addition to these, the beef tri-tip is growing in popularity, especially on the West Coast.

### Don't Forget The Chicken

In the deli department, rotisserie chicken is one of the hottest categories around and even though a classic rotisserie chicken spinning on its spit may not technically be barbecue, it is oftentimes called "barbeque" chicken. Prepared chicken is now over 10 percent of most deli department sales.

Because chicken is the most popular prepared food in the deli department, "barbeque" or rotisserie chicken can be the merchandising draw for an expanded barbecue offer. Rotisserie chicken has the advantage of having the lowest cost of any protein and an unusually high gross profit. But, more important, the quality of the average store's chicken offering stands tall enough for supermarkets to often be a consumer's favorite spot — or a destination.

Rotisserie chicken and barbeque wings (technically another product that is not barbeque) act as the draw for an expanded and more inclusive prepared foods department.

"Chicken has always been a main staple in delis," Curly's Feinberg says. Ignoring barbecued chicken is a risk retailers cannot

## Getting Saucy

Even if "true" barbecue is defined as how the protein is prepared, many consumers still think of barbecue in terms of "barbecue sauce." What is barbecue sauce? Well, that depends on where you are and whom you ask!

"You can get into a fistfight in the Carolinas about sauce," laughs James Chambless, executive director of business development at Sadler's Smokehouse in Henderson, TX.

Michael Dentico, executive vice president of La Nova Wings, Buffalo, NY, illustrates this point. Eastern North Carolina sauce is vinegar based with black pepper and chili flakes, he explains, while western North Carolina's sauce is vinegar/ketchup based. Then there is South Carolina. "It's the only state to have four types of barbecue sauces: mustard, vinegar, heavy and light tomato bases."

While barbecue fanatics duke it out over which is a better sauce for which protein, there are some general regional flavors. Memphis area sauces tend to be sweet, tangy and dominated by ketchup; Alabama has a white, mayonnaise-based barbecue sauce; and Kentucky has a black barbecue sauce based on Worcestershire sauce and vinegar, according to Dentico.

Dan Emery, vice president of Pilgrim's Pride, Pittsburg, TX, has a different take. "Arkansas and Memphis sauces are vinegary, spicy and runny," he claims. He also says Kansas and Chicago have molasses bases.

However, Ken Feinberg, senior vice president of Minneapolis, MN-based Curly's Foods Inc., a division of John Morrell and a wholly owned subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, describes Midwest sauces as "a mix of vinegar, sweet and smoky, like hickory" and New England and the Northeast as having a lot more spice, as well as an Italian influence.

Chambless describes Colorado barbecue sauce as having a plum flavor.

Barbecue sauce continues to evolve. Some of the lines between regions are blurring, and flavors are migrating outside of their home regions. Additionally, new flavors are being introduced and growing in popularity. Emery lists some of these: "Honey is growing more popular, and so is mandarin orange. You've also got Jamaican jerk gaining ground, as well as an Asian fusion."

While it is important to cater to various tastes, especially if your region is known for certain flavors, there is at least one style that is growing in popularity nationwide. "Tomato and ketchup sauces are more and more popular. The big players, like Kraft, are what sell," says Maurice Lee III, president of Smokaroma, Inc., Boley, OK.

The end result is that barbecue sauces have more variety than anything else, and variety can be added to every protein with difference sauces. Barbecue has gone beyond the technical definition as described by the USDA into a category of foods with different meats and sauces that encompass all ethnic favorites from Chinese barbecue sauces to Italian flavor profiles.

Exploring different sauces are an excellent way to add variety without adding additional cooking methods, suppliers and the devil itself — shrink.

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afford to make.

Hyer agrees and sees new chicken offerings that can increase sales. "Chicken is on the growth side. Now there's pulled chicken moving with pulled pork. That's big for the Midwest."

Smokaroma's Lee has another reason for trumpeting chicken. It "still has a big profit margin — it's the least costly of the meats."

Regardless of differences, the category of barbecue is hot and in demand. "There are so many options for barbecue products on the market today that any food business

could find a product that would work in its area," says Michael Dentico, executive vice president of La Nova Wings, based in Buffalo, NY.

Barbecue is a consumer-driven category that can positively impact the bottom line. While the variety seems daunting, if businesses take a bit of time to assess their region and look at elements that are transcending regional boundaries, adding traditional barbecue to the deli department is a winner that can only add to delis becoming a destination for great food.

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# Packed With Promise

*Innovations in deli packaging boost department sales.*

By Becky Billingsley

**D**eli customers want food containers that are resealable, easy to carry, microwavable, leak-free and biodegradable. Deli managers also want all that, but they have other needs as well, such as packaging that takes up minimal storage space, is cost-effective and assembles easily.

Food-packaging manufacturers are listening and have recently released, or have in the works, innovative products that will boost deli sales and save managers both time and money.

It is certainly an excellent time to focus on giving deli customers additional reasons to spend money. According to a recent report from Information Resources, Inc., headquartered in Chicago, IL, consumer packaged goods sales grew by 2.5 percent when gasoline exceeded \$2 per gallon. As gas prices continue to increase, diners are spending less money at sit-down restaurants and shopping more frequently for prepared foods they can take home.

## Breaking It Down

Rising oil prices play another role in the future of packaging as traditional petroleum-based plastics become more expensive to make. Coupling this expense with customers' desires for products that are biodegradable has resulted in a new breed of packaging made with products such as a corn-based resin called NatureWorks PLA, which was developed by Cargill Dow LLC, based in Minneapolis, MN.

A fiber in the PLA category has to be synthetic and made from polylactic acid or polylactate that is derived from naturally occurring sugars. In 2002 NatureWorks received a Federal Trade Commission designation as a new generic fiber.

NatureWorks sells the corn resin to companies such as Wilkinson Industries, Inc. in Ft. Calhoun, NE. Joe Selzer, Wilkinson's vice president of marketing and sales, says the best part about using NatureWorks PLA sheets is that they can compete in price and application with petroleum containers.

"The newest thing is PLA," he says. "We have a full line — a deli hinge line, salad



Photo courtesy of Pactiv Corporation

bowls, cookie containers. It helps the environment, and with the price of oil [rising during] the last year and a half, it's thought to be a more stable product for the future."

Another company that uses NatureWorks PLA is Huhtamaki, which has global headquarters in Finland and North American headquarters in DeSoto, KS. Currently Huhtamaki's BioWare line of single-use cold drink cups, plates, containers and cutlery are available only in Europe.

Huhtamaki also makes the Chinnet brand of molded fiber products. "There is a renewed emphasis on the environment," notes Duane Cheesman, North American marketing manager for paper and plastics who is based in DeSoto, "and Chinnet is probably one of the oldest manufacturers of molded fiber. Just two weeks ago we got certified [by the American Society for Testing and Materials] as being fully compostable and biodegradable."

Even the inks on Chinnet products are biodegradable, Cheesman says, and the line is made of recycled material that started out as milk cartons.

## Get A Handle On It

Deli customers also want convenience, so

in February Huhtamaki launched a new line called Chinnet Handleware. "It has a patented integrated handle and comes in 8-, 16- and 32-ounce sizes," Cheesman relates. "One lid fits all three sizes, and they can be vented or nonvented."

"They have operator and end-user advantages. You can hang the merchandise by the handles and free up valuable shelf space. The deli clerk can put hot food in them and then carry them by the handles, which eliminates spills. Customers can carry four or five of them in one hand, which gives the potential to sell more product, or the customer can use the free hand to grab other items off the shelf. It will definitely extend sales."

Other companies to employ handles and other beneficial features in new products are Robbie Manufacturing, Lexena, KS, and Paul Winkler Plastics Industries (PWP), Vernon, CA.

Robbie has the new Hot N Handy Pouch, which is a flexible, microwave-friendly plastic pouch with an anti-fog film that allows customers to see the product, according to product manager Tara Downing. The biggest consumer complaint Robbie addressed when developing the pouch was





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the elimination of leakage. Its research showed nearly 97 percent of consumers said they were willing to pay more for convenient and versatile packaging.

"The Hot N Handy Pouch has a built-in handle, making it easy to pick up the product and keep hands free from heat and grease," Downing says. "The zipper eliminates surprise spills and ends the 'trail of grease' from the checkout to the table."

The pouch maximizes the crispiness of fried foods and locks in the moisture of rotisserie meats. Clerks save time because large items, such as whole chickens, are easily loaded in the pouch through a wide opening. Gussets make the bag stand up, and it takes up less display space due to a "smaller footprint" than rigid dome containers.

Hot N Handy Pouches are available in a variety of sizes and shapes, so in addition to rotisserie chicken, deli managers can use them for pork tenderloin, ribs, turkey breasts and more. Small pouches that will easily fit in car cup holder are available for single-serve portions.

Because Robbie knows freshness is important to customers, the pouch has a "freshness lock" that lets users know when the product was prepared, and the food can be reheated right in the container.

PWP has a Chicken Roaster made of rigid polypropylene that can also be popped in the microwave, according to Ben Knight, senior vice president of marketing and corporate accounts.

"Our Chicken Roaster was designed specifically with the deli shopper in mind," he explains. "It features two convenient safety handles, an anti-fog system to enhance clarity and improve visual appeal, and a full perimeter leak-resistant seal that eliminates messy spills."

PWP's new 4-inch Round Deli Containers also address leakage. Marketing manager Natalie Kirschner relates, the "secure leak-resistant seal on our containers assures that lids won't pop off on the retailer's shelf or when a consumer takes the product home. This secure closer also helps the retailer to alleviate shrink, as it keeps food products fresh for a longer period of time." The containers are also microwavable, reusable and dishwasher-safe.

#### Hot Stuff

The ability to do side-by-side extrusion of polypropylene products has earned Anchor Packaging, St. Louis, MO, industry recognition. It received second place in the 2004 *Quality and Speed for Restaurant Success*



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*Magazine/Foodservice and Packaging Institute Packaging Awards Competition* for its Culinary Classics line. The unique containers have black bases and clear tops.

"The advantage (of Culinary Classics packaging) is you can keep foods hot under heat lamps, and you can't do that with polystyrene," says Mike Thaler, vice president of marketing. "And if customers want to take the package home and reheat it in the microwave, they can do that too."

Until the new technology became available, Thaler says, deli managers had to choose between being able to see the food clearly through the package and packaging that could tolerate heat lamps and microwaves. "Now they have the best of both worlds, and they no longer have to make a decision whether to go with clarity or heat resistance."

Anchor Packaging is soon releasing a new line of four modular packages. The line will have only two components, but they can be put together in such a way as to create four different sizes that will accommodate small items, such as appetizers, salads and desserts, as well as large family side dishes and entrées.

#### Freshness Factor

Deli foods that are not freshly cooked can still taste like they were just prepared thanks to some stunning innovations in long-term packaging.

Until recently prosciutto di Parma, or Parma ham, was available in America only in high-end delis that could slice the air-cured delicacy into its signature paper-thin form. But since January 2004, genuine prosciutto di Parma has been imported from Italy in sliced form, because packaging advances allowed the product to be shipped and have a sufficiently long shelf life to retain optimum quality.

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Citterio USA, based in Freeland, PA, has experienced huge success importing the product and making it available for Costco customers. According to Joe Petruce, Citterio's national sales manager, the product would not be available without the packaging, which is a resealable plastic pouch that comes in different sizes.

The smallest package contains just six slices of the tender ham, which Petruce says, "is true convenience. Then it becomes an impulse product. Before you were talking about someone behind the counter having to trim and slice, and perhaps wasting a slice. This way they're getting 100 percent profit of what they sell."

Tom Kennedy, business development manager for the Cryovac Sealed Air Corp., Duncan, SC, says just a "couple extra days of shelf life can mean a lot in additional sales and reduced returns."

He explains that the Cryovac Oxygen Scavenging System can give meats an additional seven to 14 days of shelf life versus traditional barrier packaging. Cryovac makes a special multi-layer plastic film that is activated to "eat oxygen" with ultraviolet light produced in the Cryovac Model 4100 Oxygen Scavenging Initiation System.

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## Safety Sealed

**F**ood packaged in pouches has been available for a while on grocery shelves, but PPI Industries, Sarasota, FL, has stand-up pouches with slide-close zippers and spouts that are microwavable and trays with unique lids. The advantages of the products are immense for deli foods, according to new products manager Rudi Kleer.

The small pouches are ideal for packaging soups, he says, because the customer can take them home and put the container right into a microwave. The company also sells a tray sealer that takes up only three square feet of space and makes use of the trays for an entire microwavable meal concept called FineCuisine.

"Deli managers pack foods in the tray, then seal them with our SmartDevice Lid that has a heat release valve. You can stick the tray right in the microwave without having to empty the contents. As steam is released out of the valve it acts like a pressure cooker, and it cooks evenly. It's ideal for delis. If there are any leftover foods, you can turn them into meals for the next day."

**DB**

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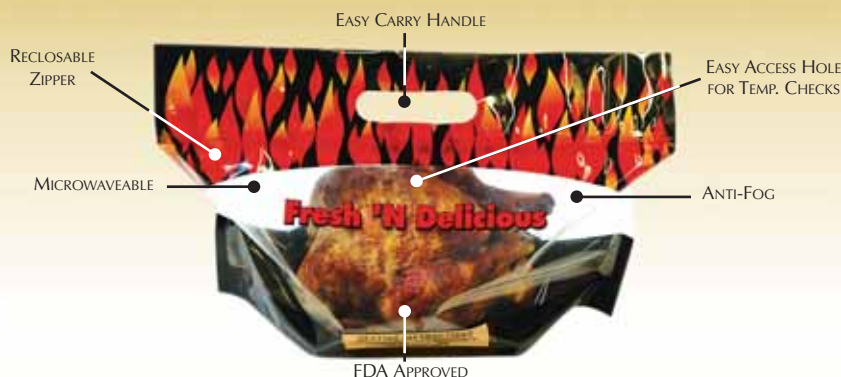
PWP's Kirschner says deli managers and their customers are knowledgeable about packaging issues, and the company understands their needs. "Deli customers should be able to feel confident that when they buy product from their favorite store, it will arrive at home as fresh and secure as when they took it from the deli counter."

Anchor's Thaler says he goes out to talk to deli managers to hear about their needs. "We ask what they like about packages, but if they could do anything they wanted what would they change? Then we take their input and design it into our products."

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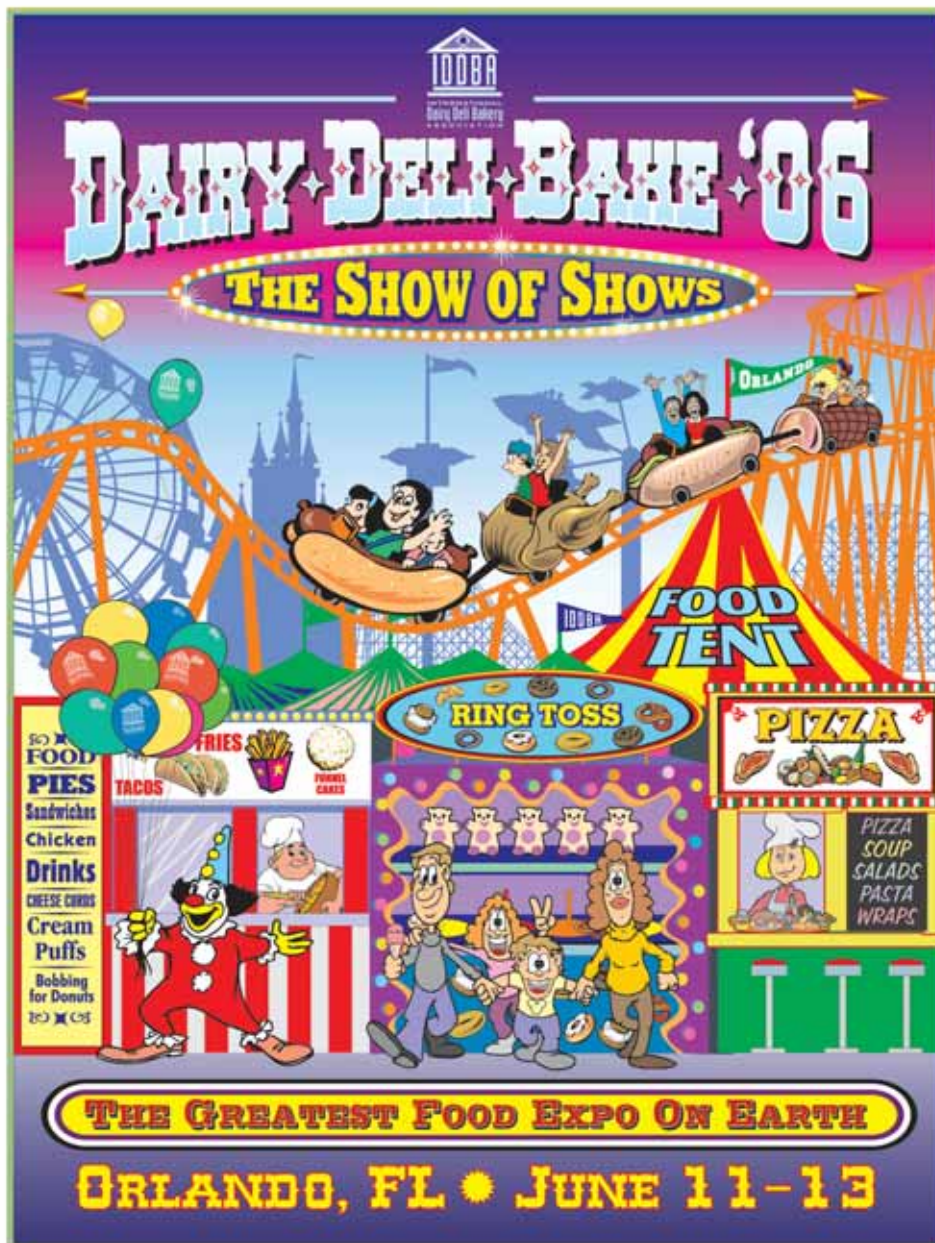
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# Hispanic Foods REACHING A BROAD AUDIENCE

*Both ethnic and mainstream consumers are seeking out the intense flavors of Hispanic cuisines.*

By Nalini Maharaj

The explosion of ethnic food awareness among consumers bodes well for deli operators seeking ways to differentiate their departments. And no ethnic cuisine is growing faster than the large, diverse category dubbed Hispanic. The cuisines lumped into this category are predominately from Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean, although there are numerous variations within each geographic area. The foods appeal to recent immigrants, ethnic Americans and those referred to as mainstream consumers.

Hispanic communities, in general, follow a more traditional lifestyle — they love food, they love to cook and they love to spend as much time with their families as possible. So they are more likely than most of the more acculturated ethnic groups to sit down to a family dinner at night.

According to the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, Hispanic consumers visit the deli department more than any other ethnic group. Deli departments have therefore witnessed a huge increase in demand for Hispanic meats and cheeses. This high demand has left both manufacturers and retailers striving to keep up.

## Hispanic Meats

“Consumers are looking for the taste they are accustomed to, and authenticity, especially in the meats they buy,” reports Louis Teijeiro, president of Webeco Foods, Miami, FL.

According to Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing for Bronx, NY-based Cibao Meat Products, a leading manufacturer of Hispanic sausages and salamis, “The Mexican market is growing and we are expanding with them. There is a very high demand from New England to Puerto Rico.”

Cibao sells gourmet salamis under the





Induveca and Salami Campesino brands. Induveca, made with pork and beef enhanced with a special smoke flavor, is the No. 1 seller among Hispanics in the New York metropolitan area, according to Soto. Salami Campesino, made from beef, turkey and pork, has been a household favorite since 1969.

Cibao's newest salami is Salami Del Pueblo, translated the "people's salami." Made with chicken, it offers quality along with a low price.

Cibao has also introduced a new line called Ver-Mex targeted to Mexican consumers. Salapeno Salami, the hottest flavor profile in the line, is made with jalapeño peppers, pork and beef. This spicy salami appeals to Hispanic consumers because of its intense flavor. Two semi-cooked sausages, longaniza and chorizo, are made with 100 percent pork. The longaniza can be delivered to local New York retailers on the same day it is made.

Teijeiro says Webeco's best selling deli product is authentic Serrano ham. Also known as Jamon Serrano, this meat is the ultimate necessity for Spanish meals such as

paella and various tapas dishes, which have been adopted by many Hispanic cuisines. These dry cured hams have a spicy taste, distinct aroma and unusual purple-reddish color, and are available bone-in and boneless. Serrano hams are gaining popularity;

however, only a few manufacturers have U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval to export it to the United States.

"TV programs like the Food network and various lifestyle magazines and store concepts like Whole Foods and 'new' Balducci's have promoted a sense of gourmet food for everyday people. People realize that specialty food is affordable and easy to consume. Regular consumers now go to their local gourmet shops asking for a fancy item like Jamon Serrano," says Paloma Hsieh, marketing manager of Redondo Iglesias USA, based in Long Island City, NY.

Redondo Iglesias USA is one of two importers bringing Serrano ham into the country. Its Serrano hams are aged for a minimum of 12 months. Hsieh believes many consumers are unfamiliar with the

product and do not understand its quality and standards. She encourages educational displays and sampling to expose consumers to the its attributes, as well as decorating the deli with Spanish flags and cross-merchandising with cookbooks and other products such as peppers and rice.

### Hispanic Cheeses

According to IDDBA, Hispanic cheese is the quickest growing item in the specialty cheese category.

"Consumers are looking for authenticity, freshness, quality, and food safety in cheeses. We manufacture to order, we test every cheese that goes through and we have a research team that travels the world for authenticity," notes Liza Etienne, assistant marketing manager of Wisconsin Cheeses Group, Eagan, MN.

The company's Hispanic cheese brand is El Viajero. These cheeses made with 100 percent Wisconsin milk have been available for well over a decade.

Mexican cheeses are as diverse as those of any European country. One of the unique characteristics of several Mexican cheeses is that although they become warm and soft when heated, they hold their shape, unlike most traditional cheeses.

Fresh cheeses, such as Queso Blanco,



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## Hispanic Cross-Merchandising Opportunity

**T**ortillas are essential to many Hispanic dishes. They come in many flavors and sizes to satisfy health, taste and preference needs. "Our product has a mixture of various functional, healthful ingredients for consumers," says Brian Jacobs, vice president of Tumaro's Gourmet Tortillas, Los Angeles, CA.

Tumaro's produces many gourmet tortillas that are fat-free, trans fat-free, cholesterol free, low sodium and kosher with a shelf life of 90 days. It is the only company producing a flour tortilla with the endorsement of the American Heart Association.

The company has partnered with Solae brand soy protein to introduce Soy-Full Heart, the first soy-fortified flatbread available nationally. This multi-grain line is made from oats, wheat, red wheat, rye, barley and buckwheat and is the perfect fit for the health-conscious consumer.

Salsa is another traditional addition to Hispanic cuisine. However, salsa is not used just for dipping or topping anymore, according to Chuck Santry, national sales manager for California Creative Foods, Oceanside, CA. Consumers are cooking with salsas, adding them to casseroles and using them as cooking sauces. Consumers who come to the deli to buy ingredients to prepare meals at home may also purchase salsas, especially fresh ones, if they are available in the department. "There is a higher demand for better quality and fresher products. There is a better awareness of the ingredient statement for the Hispanic public," he says.

Spices and seasonings are also key components for ethnic meals. Consumers are looking for the right blend of herbs, spices and chiles.

Chef Paul Prudhomme's Magic Seasoning has put together a line of Magic Chiles that range from mild to hot to satisfy the Hispanic consumer. These powders have flavor profiles such as chipotle, New Mexico and pasilla. "The Hispanic population has grown so much that the day is coming when English and Spanish labels will both need to be on all products," comments John McBride, vice president of sales for Magic Seasoning, New Orleans, LA. The company is considering putting bi-lingual labels on its seasonings for U.S. consumers.

And, of course, there are desserts, the part of any meal that most people save room for.

"There is a growing opportunity with desserts. Even though people want to eat healthfully, they also want to indulge after meals," relates Bill Stewart, vice-president of sales and marketing for LuLu's Dessert Factory, Anaheim, CA.

Lulu's manufactures over 50 different varieties of gourmet desserts. Its best-selling Hispanic dessert is a portable, ready-to-eat gelatin that is extremely popular in Mexico. Stewart encourages selling them as part of a combo with items such as sandwiches because they are a great way to boost sales. These desserts are sold in singles as well as family sizes.

Tortillas and salsa are used in many common Hispanic meals, so displaying them in the deli, where consumers are picking up meats, cheeses and prepared Hispanic foods, makes shopping convenient and sparks add-on purchases. By providing dessert in the same location, deli operators can expect to generate additional rings. **DB**

Queso Fresco and Queso Enchilado, are moist and crumbly with a mild taste. They are mainly used as toppings and fillings for

many popular Hispanic dishes. Queso Blanco has the unique melting quality.

Other popular Mexican cheese include

Queso Oaxaca, a soft cheese similar to Mozzarella; Asadero, a semi-soft traditional melting cheese; Manchego, a semi-firm cheese good for eating out of hand or melting; and Cotija, a firm cheese. The most popular Mexican hard cheese, Cotija is also known as the Parmesan of Mexico.

"Overall, there has been a greater demand for this market; however, what works for one ethnic group may not work for another. Mexican is not the same as Hispanic. That's why we are providing Hispanic communities from Miami to Boston with flavors they are used to," explains Tom Gellert, vice president of Atalanta Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ.

Atalanta is a multinational importer of both meats and cheeses from over 30 countries, including Spain, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Costa Rica for the Latin market. The company also imports authentic Serrano hams and chorizo sausages from Spain.

Atalanta is introducing red-waxed Edam balls imported from Argentina. Made from cow's milk, it is a semi-soft cheese available in three pepper, Caprese and Magnasco flavors. The cheese will be marketed to higher income Hispanic consumers through specialty stores on the East Coast.

Atalanta will also be introducing a new line of flavored cream cheeses from Costa Rica. The flavors include mango, tropical fruit, guava and red pepper. They will be positioned as perfect for breakfast dishes and mixed spreads. **DB**



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# ASIAN FOODS

## No Longer Niche Items

*Once considered exotic, these flavorful cuisines are now a major consumer draw.*

By Nalini Maharaj

Asian food has found a place at the American table. Chinese food has been popular in the United States for so long that most Americans no longer consider it an ethnic cuisine. Now other once formerly exotic cuisines, such as Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese and Indian, are tempting the palates of both ethnic and mainstream consumers.

Whether their introduction was through world travel, niche restaurants or the ubiquitous Food TV, consumers who have tried these delicious foods are clamoring for the ability to enjoy them at home at a reasonable price.

"We just can't keep up with the demands these days. Our main focus is in the West; however, there is tremendous growth in the Northeast," reports Mark Phelps, vice president of InnovAsian Cuisine Enterprises, LLC, Kent, WA.

According to Phelps, in the past year Asian foods have become the most popular ethnic cuisine, and it is the second fastest growing market behind Mexican foods.

To meet the demands of these consumers, InnovAsian plans on expanding its serving hot case and grab-and-go selections by adding more variety to its menu. At the present, InnovAsian specializes in Chinese and Japanese foods but it is expanding into the Thai repertoire.

"The growth of Asian foods has been rather substantial and dramatic over the past five years. Consumers are realizing that it is better for their health and wellness," says Alan Hoover, president of Kahiki Foods, Gahanna, OH.

Kahiki has expanded into the grab-and-go section with the addition of Asian in Minutes. The line includes four entrées, with



meat and rice separated so they do not mix. Among the line's appetizers are pot stickers and egg rolls.

Kahiki recently introduced Asian in Minutes branded party platters, which are marketed as a holiday and get-together solution. They include mini-vegetable egg rolls, coconut curry chicken samosas, lemon-grass

chicken sticks and chipotle-lime chicken pot stickers.

All are packaged fresh and aimed to appeal to the time-constrained consumer.

### Chinese And Japanese Reign Supreme

In the hot foods case, according to Phelps, "Chinese food is by far the biggest

## Chain Restaurant Competition

**T**wo of the major Asian restaurant chains are Scottsdale, AZ-based P.F. Chang's China Bistro, which is located in most states, and Chicago IL-based Stir Crazy, which has a presence in six states.

Although certainly not white tablecloth, P.F. Chang's is more upscale than the average Chinese restaurant and has over 50 outlets. It specializes in Chinese cuisine with a specialty menu of appetizers, soups and salads, entrees and desserts. It serves all the Chinese favorites such as lettuce wraps, a variety of lo mains, Kung Pao Chicken and Mongolian Beef.

Stir Crazy, on the other hand, offers a mixture of Thai, Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese foods. The actual kitchen is a part of the dining area so guests are entertained by watching the chefs prepare their meals. Stir Crazy allows consumers either to create their own stir-fry meal from its Asian Market Bar or to pick a traditional entrée.

The Asian Market Bar contains 20 different vegetables, sauces, noodles and rice, plus a choice of meat. Sauces include classic Chinese, Thai curry, sweet and sour, and spicy basil, to name just a few.

With only a few locations east of the Mississippi, Stir Crazy is bound to start expanding as the Asian demand keeps growing.

Visiting either of these chains — or any popular local Asian restaurant — can help deli operators size up the competition and allow them to offer meal alternatives that turn the deli into an ethnic Asian destination for hungry consumers. **DB**

seller and the most popular food among the Asian cuisines because it is the most well known — but Thai is growing.”

Fried rice is the best-selling Chinese dish, he continues, because consumers do not know how to prepare it properly themselves. He says they frequently choose it over lo mein because it is easier to scoop a specific amount of rice than a specific amount of noodles.

Japanese foods have grown in popularity and are now the second best sellers among Asian cuisines. Americans have grown to love Japanese food — sushi in particular. It is an easy meal that fits in to almost any diet,

so sushi-to-go is a draw for busy consumers looking to pick up a quick lunch or dinner.

Banzai Sushi/Entrees Inc., headquartered in Seattle, WA, is one of the largest producer/distributors of sushi products across the United States. According to president Henderson Mar, “There is a very good demand for sushi right now. Supermarkets are requesting it more and more for their delis these days. I feel that consumers are looking for convenience, quality and natural food products.”

Banzai distributes fresh sushi to local businesses in the Northwest on a regular basis. For the rest of the country, product is sent frozen with a shelf life of up to six months.

These 100 percent all natural sushi products come in frozen bulk or individual trays that make it easy for deli departments to monitor how much they need daily. All the deli attendant has to do is remove a portion, thaw it out at night and add condiments and labeling before putting it on sale the next day. These products can be merchandised as a freshly processed product.

“The recent low-carb craze affected business greatly; however, it is slowly coming back now. It was very interesting to watch this product move from a trendy fad to an actual mainstream staple

product,” adds Mar.

The most popular types of sushi distributed by Banzai are the omnipresent California rolls plus cream cheese and smoked sockeye salmon rolls. Banzai also has a unique tea and dessert roll — cream cheese, apples, and cranberries surrounded by sweetened rice rolled in cinnamon.

Competition may soon be coming from the frozen food department. Banzai is introducing its Banzai Frozen Retail Pieces, which are pre-made sushi that can be stored in consumer freezers for up to six months. These pieces of sushi come 12 in a bag and can be defrosted in the microwave for after-school snacks or light meals.

Mar encourages marketing these items in the deli department if there is a frozen case available.

### What Consumers Are Looking For

Consumers are looking for bold, spicy and exotic flavors to satisfy their taste buds. Among the most popular Asian sauce flavors to American taste buds are chile sauces, soy sauces and fruity sauces such as sweet and sour or those that are lemon or orange based.

According to the ACNielsen report Asian sauces rose 2.4 percent and totaled \$184 million in sales for the 26-week period from July to December 2005.

InnovAsian has added two new sauces to its line. Since Thai is one of the flavor profiles showing good growth potential, it is introducing Thai Peanut Sauce designed to enhance both cold noodle salads and hot entrées, especially those featuring chicken and vegetables. The other sauce is Peking Sweet and Sour Sauce with barbecue flavor, which plays into the barbecue craze as well as the Asian.

Lee Kum Kee, City of Industry, CA, manufactures over 200 Asian products. It has been producing Chinese-style sauces since 1888 and offers a variety of ready-made and one-step sauces. The company is introducing a foodservice line of New Foil Sauce Packs in classic flavors including Mongolian Beef, Mandarin Orange Chicken, Broccoli Beef, Mu Shu Sauce, Chinese Chicken Salad and Kung Pao Chicken.

Consumers are looking for taste, convenience and quality. One way for the deli department to offer all three is to present a combination meal — as many Asian restaurants do.

Since consumers are already used to getting soup, egg roll, entrée and rice when they do ethnic take-out, the deli department that positions itself as a lower cost alternative without sacrificing taste or quality is sure to ring up additional sales. **DB**





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# Complementing The Consumer Cheese Palate

By  
**Marilyn  
Wilkinson**

**C**onsumer appetites for cheese are maturing. Americans craving more robust flavors are leaving the sanctuary of traditional cheese varieties, such as mild Cheddar and Swiss, to dabble in more artisanal or specialty style cheeses, such as aged Cheddar and Gruyère.

What has sparked this change? The simple answer is an increased number and availability of cheese varieties. But that would be too simple. Several cultural factors are influencing us. Americans are well traveled, experiencing firsthand the pleasures of European-style eating. Back at home, we have a great appreciation for all things culinary (except, possibly, cooking). High-profile TV cooking shows and a nationwide proliferation of exceptional eateries acquaint consumers with a wide variety of gastronomic delights. Cheese courses have become de rigueur at today's upscale, white tablecloth restaurants, providing an introduction to distinctive cheeses with appealing, stand-alone flavors.

Retailers can build on this trend by helping shoppers replicate the cheese course experience at home. A diverse collection of quality cheeses and a well-executed cheese education program, including sampling, cheese course ideas and suggestions for complementary cheese, food and beverage pairings, can boost sales opportunities.

Cheese courses generally fall into three categories: traditional, flight and vertical. A traditional cheese course captures cheeses with diverse textures and flavors. A cheese flight centers on a singular theme, such as a season or place of origin. A vertical cheese flight showcases a single cheese variety and highlights the cheese at different ages or moisture/taste levels.

No hard and fast rules apply to cheese course compositions, but here are some ideas how to combine several different varieties, all of which are made in Wisconsin.

A vertical flight of Cheddar would explore the taste and texture differences increasingly aged cheeses develop, including 1-, 3-, 5-year, 7- and 10-year aged Cheddars.

An Italian-Style cheese flight might feature fresh Mozzarella, Pepato, aged Provolone and Gorgonzola.

A winter cheese course can include full-flavor cheeses, such as an aged Brick, full-bodied Parmesan, buttery Havarti and Gruyère.

Spring Cheese Course would highlight lighter cheeses, such as a marinated fresh Mozzarella, Gouda and Emmentaler Swiss.

A successful pairing should enhance the taste and texture of both the cheese and its accompaniments, but not overpower with fragrance or flavor.

Hearty multi-grain breads and crackers pair well with stronger cheese flavors, such as aged Cheddar, while mild-tasting white breads match best with more delicate cheeses, such as Gouda.

As a general rule, fruits with low acidity, such as pears, make the best cheese accompaniments. Popular fruit and cheese pairings include Parmesan with pears, Cheddar with apples and Blue cheese with figs.

Vegetables can enhance a cheese's flavor and texture by adding contrast. A crisp,

crunchy vegetable, such as celery, is a nice complement to soft cheeses such as Brie. Fresh vegetables, such as green beans, fennel and radishes are excellent vegetable pairing choices. Pickled and marinated vegetables, such as artichokes, are options for full-bodied cheese varieties like an aged Provolone but can overwhelm milder cheeses.

The fat and oil in nuts marry well with hard cheeses. Good combinations include toasted walnuts with aged Cheddar or Parmesan and toasted almonds with Spanish-style varieties.

Sweet flavors provide balance. Chutneys, honey and other sweet spreads complement acidic, dry, salty cheeses such as Parmesan or Blue cheese.

Wine is an ideal partner for many foods because of its acidity. Foods and drinks with high levels of acidity make the mouth water, helping augment the flavor of food. In the end, it boils down to pure old-fashioned chemistry. Wines have high levels of tannin, an astringent-like substance that mellows over time allowing the wine to develop complex flavors. Protein packed foods, such as cheese, smooth out the flavor of tannin. Consumed together, wine and cheese bring out the best in each other.

In general, sweet white wines tend to have an affinity for almost all cheeses, and fruity-styled wines, whether red or white, go well with most. Red wines are more challenging to match. They pair best with full-flavored cheeses, but a sweet red dessert wine, such as a Port, can complement almost all full-flavored cheese varieties.

Because wine and cheese go so well together, beer is often overlooked. But when it comes to beer and cheese, beer pairings hardly ever stumble. Specialty cheese and craft beer are natural partners. Both are made from fermented liquids infused with special yeasts or cultures. A bitter pale ale will harmonize with a piquant aged Cheddar and a licorice-flavored Belgian-style beer will play off the rich taste of a full-bodied aged Gruyère.

**DB**



**Marilyn  
Wilkinson**  
Director of  
National Product  
Communications  
Wisconsin Milk  
Marketing Board



## Bacteria-Killing Water Replaces Chemical Cleaners

March 1, 2006

Ahmed ElAmin

A U.S. company has made inroads bringing its electrolyzed water technology to market as a replacement for chemical cleaners.

EAU Technologies [Linden, UT], which provides what it calls "green chemistry" to the food processing, agriculture and consumer products industries, said it has received its first order for its Perfect Essential Oxygen products, from Elken Sdn Bhd, a Malaysian direct marketing company. Elken will use the stabilized oxygen technology for a range of dietary supplements.

EAU said its electrolyzed oxidative water technology can replace many traditional methods in the processing sector now used to clean, disinfect, hydrate and moisturize foods. The non-toxic water cuts down on existing bacteria, virus and mold proliferation.

The water eliminates pathogens in processing plants by treating not only surface contamination without toxicity but also the plant and animal foods directly.

EAU has been testing the water production technology with companies such as Tyson Foods, Whole Foods Market, Super Saver and Water Sciences.

At the acidity levels EAU employs, testing results demonstrate zero toxicity throughout every application. "Green chemistry" is the design and convergence of traditional chemical processes and procedures with new environmentally friendly technologies in an attempt to reduce or eliminate the use and generation of hazardous substances. EAU is petitioning the Food and Drug Administration for approval to use its disinfecting products along the entire food chain process for fruits and vegetables.

The company manufactures generators for water electrolysis. The generators use a combination of cell technology, salt and electricity to alter the molecular structure of water, creating a non-toxic oxidized antimicrobial solution capable of killing many pathogens in less than a minute.

The stabilized electrolyzed water is non-toxic, inexpensive to produce, and can be used in multiple applications due to its various inherent sanitizing characteristics, the company claims. EAU sells or leases the generators to companies.

The high oxidation of the water first damages bacteria cell walls, allowing infiltration by water. The microbe reaches capacity, causing an osmotic, or hydration, overload. The acidic fluid and water floods the cell

faster than the cell can expel it, literally causing the cell to burst.

Standard toxic chemicals can create strains of pathogens that become resistant over time, because the cell can expel or neutralize the chemical before it can kill it, thereby causing the overall efficacy of chemical cleaners and disinfectants to be significantly reduced.

## FSIS Food Labeling Fact Sheet Food Product Dating

For full Fact Sheet on Food Product Dating visit [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Food\\_Product\\_Dating/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Food_Product_Dating/index.asp)

"Sell by Feb 14" is a type of information you might find on a meat or poultry product. Are dates required on food products? Does it mean the product will be unsafe to use after that date? Here is some background information that answers these and other questions about product dating.

What is Dating?

"Open Dating" (use of a calendar date as opposed to a code) on a food product is a date stamped on a product's package to help the store determine how long to display the product for sale. It can also help the purchaser to know the time limit to purchase or use the product at its best quality. It is not a safety date.

Is Dating Required by Federal Law?

Except for infant formula and some baby food, product dating is not required by federal regulations. However, if a calendar date is used, it must express both the month and day of the month (and the year, in the case of shelf-stable and frozen products). If a calendar date is shown, immediately adjacent to the date must be a phrase explaining the meaning of that date such as "sell by" or "use before."

There is no uniform or universally accepted system used for food dating in the United States. Although dating of some foods is required by more than 20 states, there are areas of the country where much of the food supply has some type of open date and other areas where almost no food is dated.

## Organic Food: Buying More Safety Or Just Peace Of Mind?

Feb. 3, 2006

*Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition, via myaccenture.com*

Magkos, Faidon; Arvaniti, Fotini; Zampelas, Antonis

Consumer concern over the quality and safety of conventional food has intensified in recent years, and primarily drives the increas-

**M**artin Mitchell, technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) and managing director of Certified Laboratories compiles TechNews.



The information has been compiled from press releases, news articles and government announcements and policy clarifications. Additional information may be obtained by contacting RFA by phone at 770-452-0660 or online at [www.refrigeratedfoods.org](http://www.refrigeratedfoods.org).

ing demand for organically grown food, which is perceived as healthier and safer. Relevant scientific evidence, however, is scarce, while anecdotal reports abound. Although there is an urgent need for information related to health benefits and/or hazards of food products of both origins, generalized conclusions remain tentative in the absence of adequate comparative data. Organic fruits and vegetables can be expected to contain fewer agrochemical residues than conventionally grown alternatives; yet, the significance of this difference is questionable, inasmuch as actual levels of contamination in both types of food are generally well below acceptable limits. Also, some leafy, root, and tuber organic vegetables appear to have lower nitrate content compared with conventional ones, but whether or not dietary nitrate indeed constitutes a threat to human health is a matter of debate. On the other hand, no differences can be identified for environmental contaminants (e.g. cadmium and other heavy metals), which are likely to be present in food from both origins. With respect to other food hazards, such as endogenous plant toxins, biological pesticides and pathogenic microorganisms, available evidence is extremely limited preventing generalized statements. Also, results for mycotoxin contamination in cereal crops are variable and inconclusive; hence, no clear picture emerges. It is difficult, therefore, to weigh the risks, but what should be made clear is that 'organic' does not automatically equal 'safe'. Additional studies in this area of research are warranted. At our present state of knowledge, other factors rather than safety aspects seem to speak in favor of organic food.

The complete document can be viewed at: [http://myac.yellowbrix.com/pages/myac/Story.nsp?story\\_id=88906682=myac=Chemicals%3AAgricultural](http://myac.yellowbrix.com/pages/myac/Story.nsp?story_id=88906682=myac=Chemicals%3AAgricultural)

# Blast from the Past

In 1919, a group of 94 local farmers joined together to purchase the village creamery, and in so doing they started the company today known as Cabot Creamery, Montpelier, VT.

Operating under the name Rosedale, they started producing butter from their excess milk. In 1930, they hired the first cheesemaker and added cheddar cheese to the product line. A few decades later, the farmers dropped the Rosedale brand and started marketing high-quality cheeses and butter under the Cabot brand. This picture, taken in 1954, shows the state of cheesemaking a half-century ago.

Cabot cheddar cheese won first place in 1989 at the U.S. Championship Cheese Contest in Green Bay, WI. In 1992, Cabot's farmer-owners combined with the farm families of Agri-mark, a southern New England co-op formed in 1918, to create a major dairy cooperative. Today, Cabot Creamery is a leading producer of high quality dairy products and is well known for its naturally aged cheddar.



**Blast From The Past is a regular feature of DELI BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with a brief description of the photo. Please send material to: Editor, DELI BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810217, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0217 or for more information contact us at (561)994-1118**

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The Broaster Company	24	200	Chicken Program	608-365-0193	608-365-5158
Cibao Meat Products	43	201	Hispanic Deli Meats	718-993-5072	718-993-5638
DCI Cheese Company	19	202	Cheese	800-782-0741	920-387-2194
George E. DeLallo Co.	52	107	Olives	800-433-9100	724-523-0981
Great Lakes Cheeses	17	203	Cheese	800-677-7181	940-834-1002
Hormel Foods Corporation	26-27	204	Deli Meats	800-523-4635	612-931-9372
IDDBA	41	111	Trade Association	608-238-7908	608-238-6330
Inline Plastics Corp.	39	222	Packaging	800-826-5567	203-924-0370
Innovation	47	537	Asian Food	425-251-3706	425-251-1565
Legend Packaging Group	40	205	Packaging	678-614-4489	614-664-0009
Magic Seasoning	22	206	Seasoning Blends	504-731-3519	504-731-3576
Manda Fine Meats	30	207	Deli Meats	800-343-2642	225-344-7647
Merit Paper Corporation	40	208	Packaging	800-346-1560	631-454-9170
Mills, Inc.	15	171	Fresh Produce	831-757-3061	831-424-9475
Norseland, Inc.	12	209	Cheese	203-324-5620	203-325-3189
Perdue Farms, Incorporated	23	528	Rotisserie Chicken	800-992-7042	410-543-3500
Pilgrims Pride	2	221	Poultry	800-321-1470	214-920-2396
Placon	37	220	Packaging	800-541-1535	608-271-3162
Plastic Packaging Corp.	38	210	Packaging	800-342-2011	413-731-5952
Polean Foods, Inc.	30	211	Ham	866-POLEAN3	516-922-1429
Queso Campesino	44	212	Hispanic Cheese	303-316-4251	303-316-4249
Redondo Iglesias USA	51	223	Ham From Spain	718-729-2763	718-937-3250
Robbie Manufacturing	21	554	Packaging - Prepared Chicken	800-255-6328	913-492-1543
Rose Packing Co., Inc.	31	219	Deli Meats	800-323-7363	847-381-9424
Rubschlager Baking Corporation	13	213	Bakery	773-826-1245	773-826-6619
Rudy's Tortillas	43	214	Tortillas	214-634-7839	214-638-5317
Smokaroma, Inc.	34	215	Equipment	800-331-5565	918-667-3935
Southern Pride	33	216	Equipment	800-851-8180	618-993-5960
Unilever Bestfoods Foodservice	9	525	Condiments	800-272-1217	
Walker's Food Products Co.	28	217	Side Dishes	816-472-8121	816-421-7273
Widmer's Cheese Cellar	18	218	Cheese	888-878-1107	920-488-2130



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