

DELI BUSINESS

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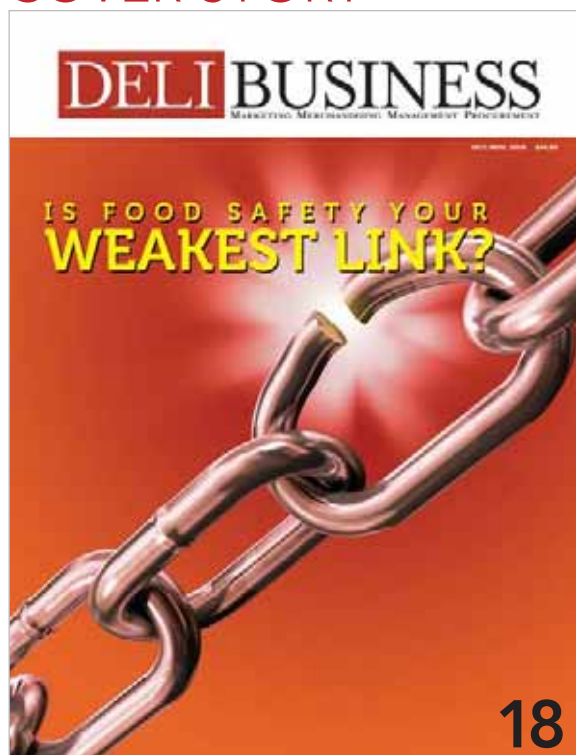
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- Meza® Sonoma Salsa
- Meza® Bruschettas and Tapenades

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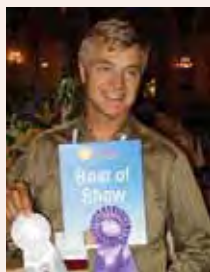
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AMERICAN CHEESE SOCIETY BEST OF SHOW WINNER



The 2008 American Cheese Society (ACS) Competition, held in Chicago, IL, in July, awarded its highest honor—Best of Show—to Carr Valley Cheese Co., LaValle, WI, for its Snow White Goat Cheddar cheese. The 38-pound, cave-aged wheel, aged for a minimum of six months, bested more than 1,100 cheeses to win the coveted award. Owner and Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker Sid Cook, a fourth-generation cheesemaker, accepted the award at the presentation ceremony.

Since 1883, the Cook family has been making cheese, building its business over the years by combining Old World craftsmanship with innovative ideas. Today, Cook carries on the family business at three Wisconsin cheese plants, where more than

80 types of cheese are made from cow's, sheep's and goat's milks. The company has garnered 183 top awards for its cheeses at U.S. and international competitions.

The ACS, based in Louisville, KY, is a nonprofit organization that encourages the understanding, appreciation and promotion of farmstead and natural specialty cheeses made in the United States and Canada. This year, the ACS paid tribute to its 25th anniversary with a retrospective of the organization's humble beginnings and a celebration of its many accomplishments.

COMING NEXT ISSUE IN DEC/JAN 2009

RETAIL TRENDS

What's hot and what's not? A look into what retailers can expect in 2009.

DELI BUSINESS SPECIALTY CHEESE GUIDE

This comprehensive guide to European and American cheeses continues to expand with the addition of new cheeses every year. The Specialty Cheese Guide includes name, classification, brief description, country of origin, and type of milk traditionally used in making each variety.

FEATURE STORIES

Italian Deli
Going Green

PREPARED FOODS

Appetizers

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Sushi
Desserts
Spreads & Dips

DELI MEATS

Cured Meats

SPECIALTY CHEESES

Crackers
Cheese Condiments

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Wing Programs
Cheese Accompaniments

CORRECTION

In DELI BUSINESS Aug/Sept 2008, the following information appeared on p. 61: New packaging protects delicate cheeses such as French Cheese Club member Lincet's triple crème, *Délice de Bourgogne*. The brainchild of 18th-century epicurian Brillat Savarin, this cheese is irresistibly creamy, buttery and melting.

Varieties of Brillat Savarin may be fresh, *affiné* (cured with a rind) with much more intensity, or flavored with cranberries and other fruits. Lincet's velvety Brillat Savarin exudes a milky aroma with a faintly lemon sour tone.

The following better clarifies the intent of the above information: *Délice de Bourgogne* and Brillat Savarin are two of the many popular triple crème cheeses imported from France. *Délice de Bourgogne* is a sumptuous, ripened bloomy-rind cheese. Brillat Savarin, named for 18th-century epicure Jean Anthelme Brillat Savarin, is available in luscious fresh as well as ripened versions, and in truffled, Grand Marnier or fruit-enhanced variations, such as papaya or cranberry.

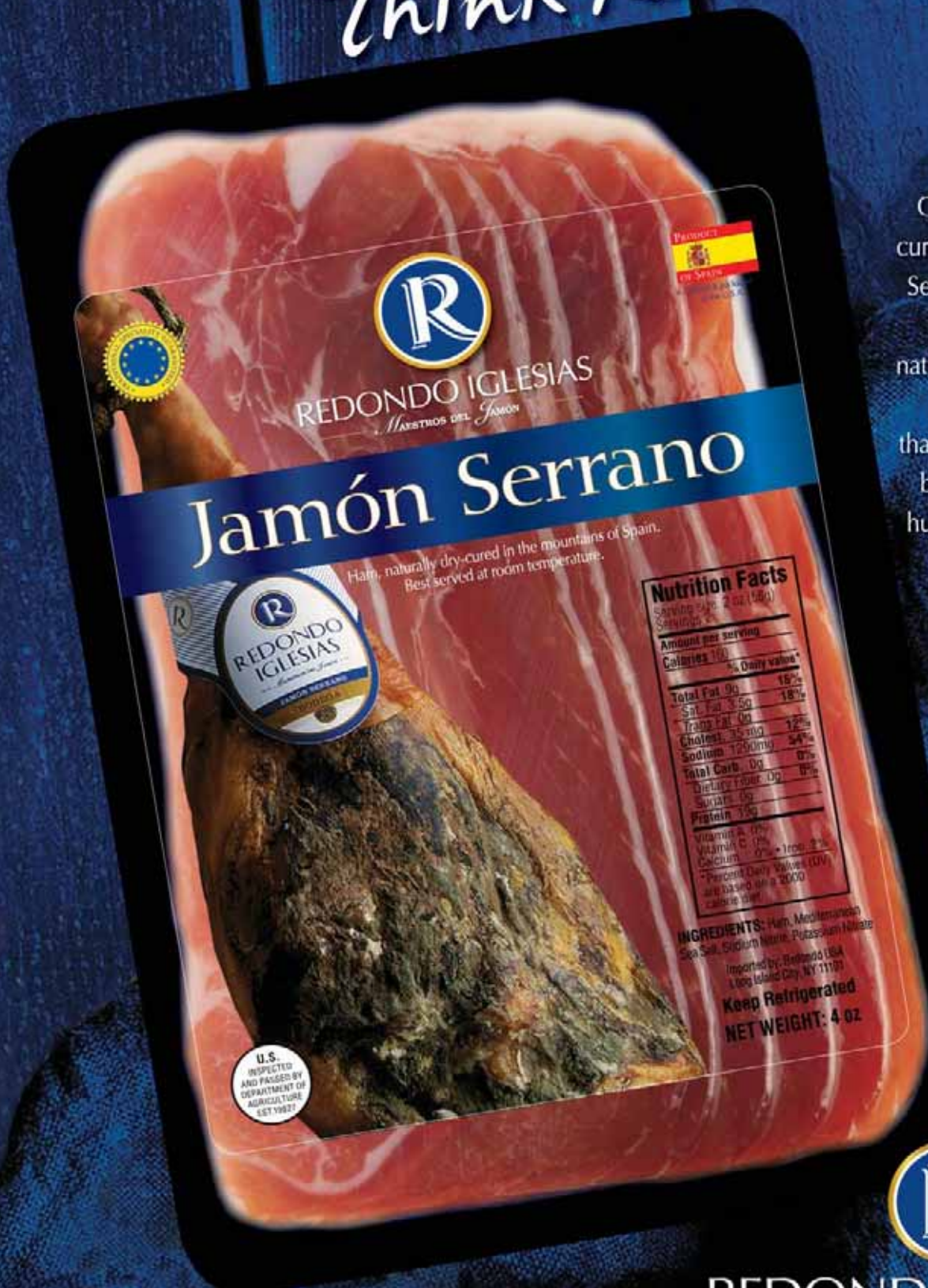
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Servings 2	
Amount per serving	
Calories 100	
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	15%
Sat. Fat 3.5g	18%
Trans Fat 0g	12%
Cholesterol 35mg	54%
Sodium 1200mg	8%
Total Carb. 0g	0%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugar 0g	0%
Protein 15g	30%
Vitamin A 0%	
Vitamin C 12%	
Calcium 0%	
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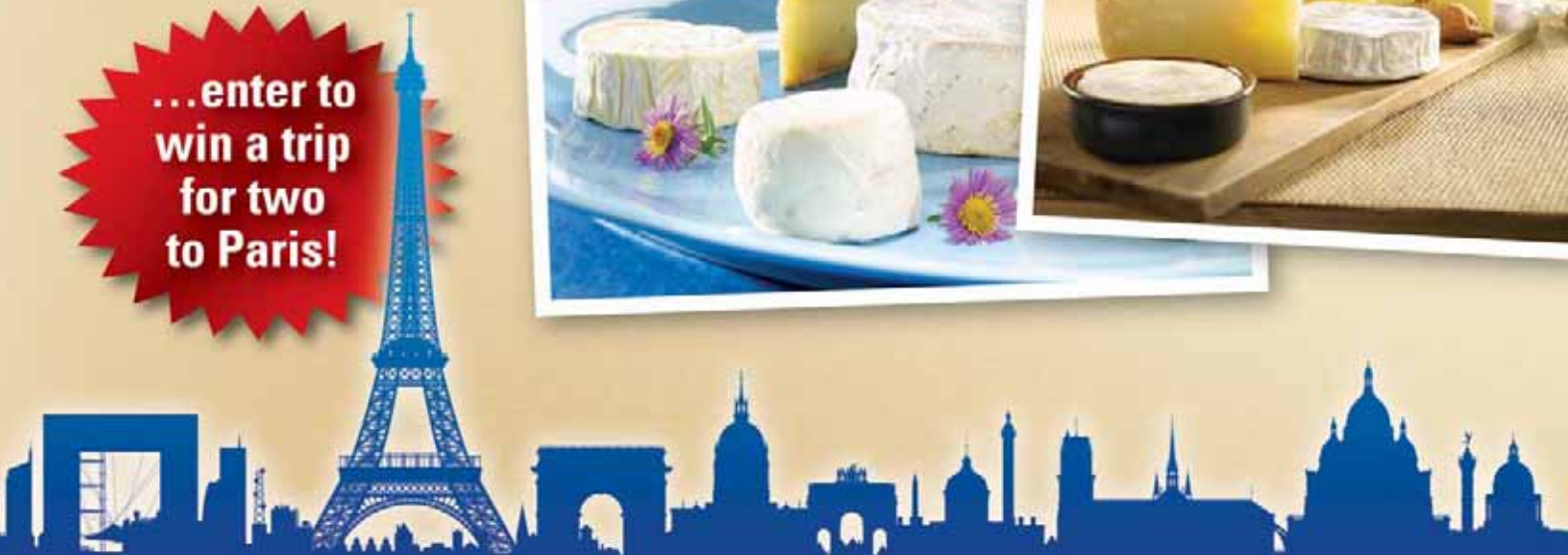
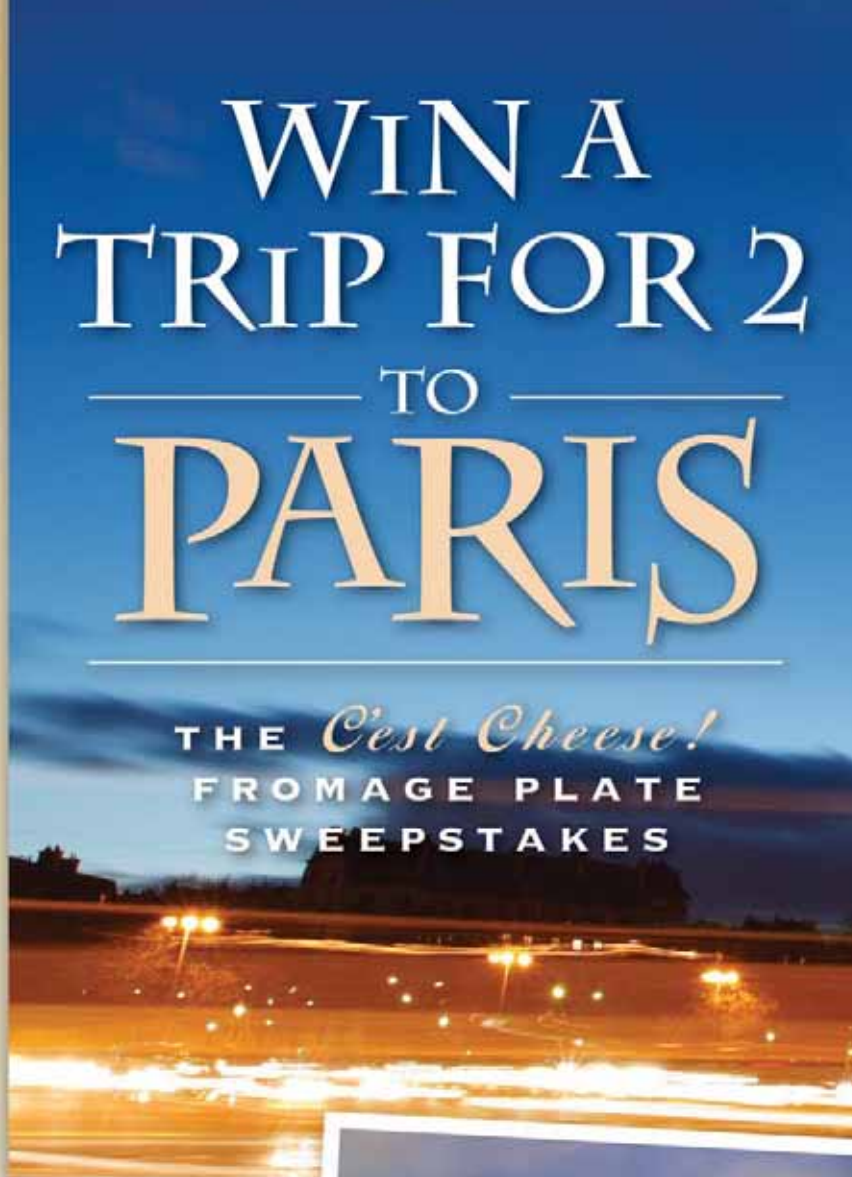
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FROMAGE PLATE, AN ENTERTAINMENT IDEA THAT'S EASY, FESTIVE AND SURE TO DELIGHT YOUR CUSTOMERS. THE FROMAGE PLATE NATURALLY BOOSTS YOUR SALES OF FRENCH CHEESES AS WELL AS WINE, FRUIT, NUTS, CONDIMENTS, CRACKERS AND BREAD TO COMPLEMENT EVERY PLATE. THE CHEESES OF FRANCE WILL BE SUPPORTING YOUR SALES WITH SUPERMARKET SAMPLINGS AND CONSUMER PROMOTIONS. SO IT'S THE PERFECT TIME TO PUT YOUR FROMAGE PLATE ON DISPLAY AND...

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win a trip
for two
to Paris!



WIN A TRIP FOR 2 TO PARIS

THE *C'est Cheese!*
FROMAGE PLATE
SWEEPSTAKES





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More Chances to Win!

Multiply your chances of winning by displaying a new Fromage Plate each week! Simply photograph your new plate display and send in a new entry.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Subject to Official Rules at www.thingsits.com/cheese/rules.html. Sweepstakes begins September 1, 2008 and ends January 7, 2009. Open to all legal US residents, 18 years of age or older who are retail employees that sell & purchase cheese. All on-line entries must be received by January 7, 2009. Odds of winning depend on total number of all eligible entries received. Restrictions apply. Sponsor: The Cheeses of France Marketing Council, 7 Custom House Street, Portland, Maine 04101.

HERE'S HOW TO ENTER THE "C'EST CHEESE" FROMAGE PLATE SWEEPSTAKES

1. Snap a photo of your store's Fromage Plate display, featuring **The Cheeses of France**.
2. Visit www.CheesesofFrance.com/trade and click "enter" to access the online entry form.

Entries must be received by January 7, 2009. Our winner will be announced January 30, 2009; the trip to Paris must be taken by December 20, 2009.

Your Fromage Plate Sweepstakes Grand Prize includes:

- Round-trip airfare for two to Paris, France
- A 5-day, 4-night stay in the heart of the St-Germain-des-Pres district of Paris
- A wine and cheese tasting and dinner at a fine Paris restaurant
- An artisanal cheesemaking experience
- \$500 USD spending money to enjoy in Paris

THE CHEESES OF
FRANCE



SAVOR THE EXPERIENCE™

www.CheesesofFrance.com/trade

Reader Service No. 109

Announcements



FROMAGE PLATE CAMPAIGN

The Cheeses of France, Portland, ME, held a reception in New York, NY, to celebrate its first-year efforts and launch the fall/holiday Fromage Plate campaign. Pictured from left to right: Mike Collins, Swardlick Marketing Group; Philippe Jachnik, The Cheeses of France Marketing Council; Sam Gugino, contributing editor for *Wine Spectator*; Maître Fromager Max McCalman; and Charles Curtis, director of wine and spirit education, Moët Hennessy USA.

www.cheesessoffrance.com

Reader Service No. 401



AAC HONORS CHEF

Unilever Foodsolutions, Lisle, IL, announced that corporate chef Steven Jilleba received the Chair's Medal award at the 2008 American Culinary Federation convention in Las Vegas, NV. The highest award granted by the American Academy of Chefs (AAC), the Chair's Medal is bestowed on a member who has demonstrated exemplary dedication and has made outstanding contributions to the culinary profession.

www.unileverfoodsolutions.us

Reader Service No. 402



DELI SOLUTIONS BROCHURES

Perdue, Salisbury, MD, offers new deli solutions brochures to help support delis with seasonal and branded merchandising. The *Hot Bar Solutions* brochure highlights the company's key poultry products for prepared foods, while the *Deli Case Solutions* brochure showcases the company's line of premium and flavored deli meats. Both brochures can be downloaded from the Web site.

www.perduedeli.com

Reader Service No. 403



BARBECUE GOES GREEN

Smokaroma Inc., Boley, OK, has developed a filter, called the "water bath muffler," which filters the exhaust from its Bar-B-Q Boss through water before being released into the atmosphere. The filter removes nearly all the smoke and grease particles from the exhaust and puts the smoke where it belongs—into the meat. The equipment also uses only a few ounces of wood for up to 40 pounds of meat.

www.smokaroma.com

Reader Service No. 404

Products



UNWRAP, ROLL AND CREATE

BelGioioso Cheese, Denmark, WI, invites chefs and foodservice operators to apply their creative touch to its newest product—Unwrap & Roll Fresh Mozzarella. Simply unwrap the ready-to-use, fresh Mozzarella roll, layer with any choice of ingredients, and slice and plate for a unique, signature item. The product is ideal for salads, appetizers and entrée components. The company also introduced its Fresh Mozzarella, Prosciutto and Basil Roll.

www.belgioioso.com

Reader Service No. 405



NEW BLAZE ROTISSERIE

Hardt Equipment Manufacturing, Lachine, Quebec, Canada, presents the Blaze Rotisserie, which is 50 percent more energy-efficient in comparison to other gas rotisseries. Featuring an attractive open flame, the Blaze is outfitted with a double-pane door for safety and easy-to-use controls. At the end of the day, it can be sprayed down for ease of cleaning.

www.hardtequipment.com

Reader Service No. 406



LIMITED-TIME OFFER PROGRAM

Nestlé Professional, Glendale, CA, offers a new flavor of Hot Pockets brand sandwiches from Oct. 1, 2008, to Dec. 31, 2008, as part of its limited-time offer program to generate excitement in the deli. The half-pound roast beef and melted Provolone cheese sandwich is covered in a peppery sauce and wrapped in a crispy crust.

www.nestleprofessional.com

Reader Service No. 407



TASTY SANDWICH DRESSINGS

Sara Lee, Downers Grove, IL, spices up the sandwich world with its new Sara Lee Fresh Ideas Sandwich Dressings. Available in six tasty flavors, each individual packet brings a gourmet sandwich experience to everyday homemade meals. Flavors include Sweet Honey Mustard, Creamy Ranch, Savory Horseradish with Garlic, Smokey Bacon, Zesty Pepper Trio Mustard, and Sub Sandwich Oil.

www.saralee.com

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DELI WATCH

Products



VINTAGE EXTRA SHARP CHEDDAR

Tillamook Cheese, Tillamook, OR, unveils Tillamook Vintage White Extra Sharp Cheddar, a new three-year aged white Cheddar wedge. Sharper and bolder than other Tillamook Cheddars, this cheese has a smooth yet crumbly texture and a robust, mature flavor. It is made from cow's milk not supplemented with artificial growth hormones.

www.tillamookcheese.com

Reader Service No. 409



LARGER SIZE SEASONING & RUB

Ford's Gourmet Foods, Raleigh, NC, has upsized its Bone Suckin' Sauce Seasoning & Rub due to popular demand. The 26-ounce size, which comes packed four to a case, is perfect for retail and food-service operations. The product can be used for seasoning beef, pork, chicken, vegetables, fish, seafood and salads.

www.bonesuckin.com

Reader Service No. 410



PRE-SLICED GOURMET CHEESE

Anco Fine Cheese, Fairfield, NJ, now offers a variety of Ile de France pre-sliced, pre-packaged cheeses. Ile de France Creamy Slices consists of 25 uniform slices of Brie, separated by paper for easy peeling. Fol Epi, a gourmet alternative to Swiss-style cheeses, also comes in 25 slices, while Corazón de Ronda Manchego, a sheep's milk cheese from Spain, is sliced into 40 thin wedges.

www.iledefrancecheese.com

Reader Service No. 411



NEW SOUP BARREL CARRIER

Durham Ltd., Pittsford, NY, gives mobility to soup with its new disposable soup carrier, appropriately called the Soup Barrel. Ideal packaging to increase "to go" revenue, the Soup Barrel holds three liters of product, making it easy to transport soup, chili, clam chowder and more. It comes with a disposable ladle and keeps the contents warm for hours.

www.durhamltd.com

Reader Service No. 412



COLORFUL RICE TOAST SQUARES

Edward & Sons, Carpinteria, CA, introduces Exotic Rice Toast—gluten-free, deli-style rice toast squares for dips and spreads. Created by milling colorful Asian rice varieties into nutritious whole grain flour and then slowly baking the dough, the rice toasts come in three distinctive flavors: Jasmine Rice & Spring Onion, Thai Red Rice & Flaxseeds and Purple Rice & Black Sesame.

www.edwardandsons.com

Reader Service No. 413



ULTIMATE SAUSAGE SLICES

Johnsonville, Sheboygan Falls, WI, helps eliminate menu fatigue with its new Fully Cooked Ultimate Sausage Slices, available in two seasoned varieties: Italian and Hot 'N' Spicy. Delivered fully cooked and pre-sliced on the bias, these pure pork slices offer recipe versatility, unsurpassed texture as well as the appearance and taste of chef-prepared sausage.

www.johnsonvillefoodservice.com

Reader Service No. 414



FRENCH-INSPIRED PÂTÉ

Alexian Pâtés and Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ, brings to the U.S. market Herbs de Provence Pâté, a style of pâté that originated in the Provence region of France, which is known for its lavender fields. Lavender is one of the primary ingredients in this coarse-style chicken pâté's seasoning mix, along with thyme, bay leaf, sage and fennel.

www.alexianpate.com

Reader Service No. 415



NEW YORK DELI PICKLES

Schorr's Farm Fresh Pickles, Fort Lauderdale, FL, offers authentic New York-style deli pickles with no additives or preservatives. The line includes Sour Garlic, Kosher Spear and Half Sour pickles as well as Sour Tomatoes and Sauerkraut. The products are available for retail and foodservice operations.

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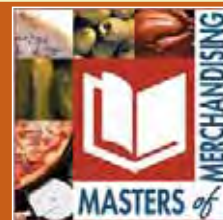


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E-mail: beanos@conroyfoods.com • Website: www.conroyfoods.com



Recommended Display Ideas

Condiment sales increase with multiple displays in different areas of the deli department. Condiments are high impulse-purchase products; increase the number of locations consumers can find the product, and you will increase sales.

Encourage impulse purchases by building displays on top of the deli case, near the sandwich station and near the grab-and-go area. If you have the room available, build a pyramid-type display that is sure to increase sales. The cheese island is also a prime location.

Beano's Original Submarine Dressing is a great impulse item that will turn into a repeat purchase item. Beano's carries countertop displays as well as an attractive new stand that is very space-efficient and can display all of Beano's products very nicely.

Suggested Signage/POS

Impulse sales increase when products are signed to attract customers' attention. Your customers are always looking for easy ways to prepare tasty foods. Signage should include menu suggestions. For instance, signage suggesting sandwich ideas will create interest and generate sales.

A selection of mustards on top of the specialty cheese island will appeal to interested customers. A simple handwritten sign letting customers know which cheeses go with each mustard will encourage your customers to try something new. Rotate different cheeses with different mustards and condiments to keep customers interested all year long.

Employee suggestions incorporated into signage will also help increase the interest level. For instance, a sign might say, "Our deli manager's favorite roast beef sandwich is made with Beano's Heavenly Horseradish Sauce."

Variety

At least one variety of sandwich dressing should be offered, along with condiments for

cheeses, wings and other products. Sales of condiments are incremental sales, meaning they add to the total purchase and don't "steal" sales from other products.

Include a full line of Beano's condiments.

- Beano's Original Submarine Dressing
- Heavenly Horseradish Sauce
- Bold & Tangy Deli Mustard
- All American Sandwich Spread
- Honey Mustard
- When Buffaloes Fly Chicken Wing Sauce (hot sauce)
- Pepper Relish
- Southwest Sauce
- Wasabi Sauce

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Condiments are the ideal products for cross-merchandising with:

- Specialty cheese
- Sandwich stations
- Meat and cheese deli counters
- Wing bars
- Grab-and-go locations
- Sushi bars

Shelf-Life Recommendations

Shelf life is not something the deli needs to be concerned about. Shelf-stable condiments have a 1-year shelf life. Just make sure to rotate product when filling displays.

Packaging Recommendations

POS countertop displays are highly recommended. Beano's Original Submarine Dressing comes pre-packed with 12 8-ounce bottles in a countertop display. Just pop the header up and place it on your deli counter.

Also consider permanent floor displays, party packs, self-feeding black steel counter racks and ½-ounce portion packs. All these also are available from Beano's.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

- Promote a sandwich of the week using one of Beano's special condiments.
- Silent demos. Slice a few loaves of Italian bread and have an open bottle for customers to taste using pieces of bread. Surround the demo with bottles for sale.
- Buy two bottles of Beano's and receive a ½ pound of — fill in the blank — free. Beano's is happy to work with other companies to promote sales.
- Feature condiments in your weekly circular along with other products. For instance,

feature a wing sauce when your store has wings on sale.

Creative And Unconventional Merchandising Ideas

- November to January — include a bottle of Beano's in gift baskets, in the center of sandwich rings or party platters
- September to November — create a tail-gate promotion display next to 6-foot subs
- May to November — place a few bottles in a picnic-basket display alongside a few prepared sandwiches and subs
- January to May — include a bottle of Beano's for Super Bowl catering options as well as rib and wing promos featuring Beano's wing sauce



Quick Tips

1. The more the better — multiple placements will increase sales!
2. Use Beano's Original Submarine Dressing to create a signature made-to-order sub or sandwich.
3. Sign products to increase interest.
4. Use floor and counter displays to increase sales.

Now Serving #1.



When you concentrate on
doing one thing well, it's no

surprise when you become #1 in the category.

Beano's deli condiments have been number one

on deli menus since 1986. Ever since then,

we've gained a faithful following of satisfied

customers. Adding Beano's deli condiments to

your product offering is your best opportunity

to increase add-on sales. When you offer Beano's,

your customers will be lining up for servings

of the #1-selling deli condiments.

Now *that's* the ticket!



Genuine original.
Genuine opportunity.

Counter Top Rack
Height 5 1/2"
Depth 15"
Width 20 5/8"
& Holds 4 cases



Height 60" Depth 16"
Width 15 1/4"
& Holds 7 to 8 cases



Beano's Heavenly Horse Radish Sauce

Beano's Bold & Tangy Deli Mustard

Beano's Honey Mustard

Beano's All-American Sandwich Spread

Beano's Southwest Sandwich Sauce

Beano's Chicken Wing Sauce

Beano's Wasabi Sandwich Sauce

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Brown-Bag Opportunity

With Wall Street basically out of business and good news being defined as days when oil prices go up because it implies the market does not believe we're heading into a new depression, it is not at all surprising that *Brandweek*, a trade magazine for the branding industry, is running an article declaring *Brown Bagging It Becomes Fashionable*.

The piece builds on research by the NPD Group out of Port Washington, NY, indicating brown-bagging has reached a 7-year high: *Adults ages 18-and-older consumed some 8.5 billion brown-bag lunches last year (38 bagged lunches per capita compared to 35 in 2006).*

Nearly 12 percent of lunchtime opportunities were brought from home as of the year ended February 2008. In contrast, the February 2007 figure was 11.3 percent. Of those polled, cost-saving was the primary motivation.

With sandwiches being the most popular brown-bag lunch, this trend looks like an easy win for the deli. But the article indicates branded competitors are started to buzz around the business like bees around honey.

Part of the issue is that sliced meats and cheeses are available elsewhere in the store and often sold there by branded giants: *The return to brown bagging has prompted food companies to reexamine their portfolio of brands. Products that were formerly "lost segments" of a company's business now have a chance to shine, said Paul Leinwand, vice president at Booz & Co., Chicago.*

Take Kraft. The maker of Singles cheese slices introduced new packaging for its Deli Fresh Natural Cheese slices, new Oscar Meyer thick-carved and family-sized meat varieties and a mayonnaise with olive oil this summer.

To promote the products, Oscar Meyer is wrapping up its "Deli Fresh" mobile tour this month. Two trucks hit more than 150 cities handing out more than 100,000 coupon books worth \$6 in value for select products.

"Clearly, more people are looking to prepare meals that are easier on their budgets," said Greg Hughes, marketing director at Kraft's sandwich cheese division. "We're seeing an increased interest in brown-bag lunches and sandwiches as affordable lunch options."

These companies are forming marketing alliances to boost their products, and service deli producers will find it tough to match them: *Soup maker Campbell has teamed with Kraft for a joint FSI promotion dropping this November that pairs the two companies' staple products.*

The partnership marks the first time Campbell and Kraft have joined forces in the last five years. Since the introduction of Soup At Hand, Campbell's heat-and-go line, and microwavable bowls, the company has seen sales exceed \$250 million. "Much of the consumption of microwavable bowls and cups is out-of-home — whether brown-bagged or hidden in a desk drawer," said Campbell

representative John Faulkner.

Competition for lunchtime brown-baggers doesn't come only via traditional sandwiches and soups. Many workplaces offer employees refrigerators, freezers and microwave ovens, so frozen foods pose formidable competition for the deli: *ConAgra announced... its new Banquet Select Recipes frozen lunches.*

Introduced last month, Banquet Select Recipes come in seven "restaurant quality" varieties, including Herb Grilled Chicken Breast and Slow Cooked Beef. The entrées all sell for \$1.50 and are meant to provide affordable and healthy options. "When you compare it to other dining alternatives, whether it's in or outside of the home, it's difficult to find a better value," said Tom McGough, vice president, ConAgra's Banquet and Kid Cuisine brands.

Pretty tough competition. What can your deli offer a consumer who wants to spend \$1.50 on lunch?

Branded marketers of all kinds of foods are looking to grab a piece of this growing niche: *The brown bagging phenomenon has prompted even pasta maker Ronzoni to reach for the lunch crowd. Whereas pasta is traditionally viewed as a dinnertime staple, the Ronzoni Bistro line is a microwavable pasta that consumers can take with them wherever they go. (Note: Refrigeration is not required.)*

"We feel that we're right in line with the trend by bringing convenience to the pasta lover," said Kevin Blacker, brand manager at New World Pasta, Harrisburg, Pa., Ronzoni's parent company. "We've [introduced] the idea of pasta as being consumed in an out-of-home setting."

For the last decade, the deli has expanded into ever more service-intensive offerings so as to compete with restaurants. But most delis have looked at white tablecloth restaurants or, at least, dinner-house chains. The only restaurant sector having real growth, however, is quick service; McDonald's recently announced strong sales growth in a generally depressing environment. Consumers are trading down during tough economic times.

There will always be high-end retail chains, and suddenly running a \$1.50 special will only annoy their core customers, but the vast majority of retailers must recognize their customers are buying off the fast-food dollar menu.

There has to be a way for deli retailers to have competitive offers — if not the big branded manufacturers marketing throughout the other departments are, literally, going to eat what should have been the deli department's lunch. **DB**



James F. Prevor

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Reader Service No. 123

by Lee Smith, Publisher

How Complicated Is An Understanding Of Ethics?

On Sept. 20th, *The Los Angeles Times* reported, "A federal grand jury has indicted eight former and current Ralphs Grocery Co. executives and managers on 23 counts arising from a bitter Southern California supermarket labor dispute five years ago when the chain illegally rehired hundreds of locked-out workers."

The indictment also says that five of the accused are being charged with hiring "employees under false names, Social Security numbers and documentation, which was intended to, and did, undermine the labor action." Three of the accused are lower level managers — store directors/managers. If convicted of all counts, the top five face maximum sentences of 30 years in a federal prison.

Reading the above brings me back to a discussion I had when I was in my mid-20s — it clarified ethics in a simple way that guided me through ambiguous situations and employer demands. Simply stated, make a choice. Be a good guy or a bad guy, but pick your life and do it well.

At the time, I was a store clerk studying martial arts and one of my instructors had the dubious distinction of being known as "well connected" — the muscle of a certain family-run organization. He and I became good friends, not because of his connections to organized crime but because, as it turned out, he was a genius and quite a philosopher. After being seriously hurt in an accident, and even though he never graduated high school, he decided he wanted to become a doctor. Two years later, he graduated from college after taking a pre-med program. Two years after that, he got his doctorate with high honors.

One afternoon, while we were talking about ethics and morality, he made the distinction between right and wrong very simple. He said there are good guys and there are bad guys. Each side has its own rules to live by and each of us has to make our own personal decision about the life we wish to lead. Live by bad guy rules and there are advantages and disadvantages, primarily greater financial rewards with less work, but much greater risks. Good guys, on the other hand, had to live by society's rules and were protected by law. Yes, it might take longer to get where you want to go, but with hard work, you will get to live a longer life and not have the kinds of worries bad guys have.

The real problem, as he explained it, was people wanting to do bad things without accepting the risks

but expecting the rewards. He had no sympathy for that kind of thinking and firmly believed if you crossed the line, you paid the price.

He was, in essence, offering me a choice and I made the decision that I wanted to be a good guy — or woman. I understood the dilemmas I would face and I have made decisions along the way that cost me a job here and there. And, there was a time when I told a senior executive that what he was asking me to do was illegal. What he offered was a job and what I had was a career I wouldn't jeopardize. I paid a pretty stiff price for the decision.

The clarification of right and wrong is not all that difficult. What has become a challenge is living in a world where "wrong" is easily mitigated by circumstance and leaders in a position of authority base decisions on the likelihood of punishment. Very few of the illegal activities that plague politics and corporate America and that have landed prominent people in jail were ever really thought through. And, the squeals of protest from the convicted ring false.

Today, corporate "bad guys" want to be understood and redeemed — forgiven for their sins and pardoned for their actions because they were unjustly influenced. They were told what to do and followed like lambs without principles or free will. Afraid of losing a job or being overlooked for promotion, afraid of not being a team player, they dismissed their actions as justifiable.

There is a leadership crisis because there is a prevalent "the end justifies the means" philosophy. It is perpetrated at the highest levels of corporate leadership and politics. Even the most grievous errors of judgment can be passed off for a lack of information or a miscommunication of intent.

I still think about the simple principles of doing what is right. On a much more troubling level, I think that if you're going to be a crook, at least be a good at what you do and go for the gold. The bumbling, the arrogant, the timid and the stupid of the criminal fringe are seeking our sympathy for their lack of morals. We need not feel sorry for their incompetence at being "bad" — we need to convict them of their crimes.

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IS FOOD SAFETY YOUR WEAKEST LINK?

Become a world-class chain by heeding five hard truths for developing and implementing a first-rate program

BY JIM PREVOR

You would have to be living under a rock these past few years—or even these past few months—to work in the food retailing business and not realize you should be on top of the food safety issue.

The risk of selling contaminated food as a result of its production is obvious. The massive national publicity given to the recent Salmonella Saintpaul outbreak, attributed initially to tomatoes and then to jalapeño and Serrano peppers, has made food safety top of mind. Most delis use fresh produce in sandwich programs and other foods, so the safety of fresh produce and other ingredients is of immediate concern. However, deli-specific product has also been implicated recently—with harsh results.

Although it has been a decade since the 1998-99 Sara Lee Bil Mar hot dog listeria outbreak, which saw 80 identified people sickened,

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Reader Service No. 110

15 deaths and no less than six miscarriages, memories of the event were recently rekindled by a Canadian listeria outbreak traced to Toronto-based Maple Leaf Foods. The outbreak was ongoing at press time, but as of Sept. 2, 2008, the Public Health Agency of Canada claims this outbreak was responsible for 38 confirmed cases, 21 suspect cases, and 12 deaths with seven more under investigation.

Simultaneously the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has warned consumers not to consume fresh cheeses manufactured by Fromages La Chaudière Inc., because the cheeses are believed to be linked to a Salmonella outbreak that has caused at least one death.

Although there are different standards in Canada and the United States, 19 possible deaths is a very serious matter; reconfirming the importance of vetting suppliers to ensure safety.

As deli departments move into foodservice, offering everything from Asian noodle bars to in-store barbecue operations, they are assuming more of the characteristics of restaurants. And this is creating a host of legal, reputational and operational challenges for deli operators.

Legal Challenges

No food retailer wants its customers to get sick. Nowadays the legal implications of a customer getting sick vary dramatically depending on how it occurred. Fifty years ago, most jurisdictions required an injured party in a food safety case to prove that someone had been negligent along the food chain—a hefty burden indeed, but a standard notion in products liability law. In 1963, a famous California case, *Greenman v. Yuba Power Products Inc.*, established that persons and companies can be held “strictly liable” for certain actions causing harm even if they were not negligent.

Today, according to U.S. law, if people get sick from food, the food is always the source of civil liability. It is not necessary to prove negligence.

Generally, primary liability sits with the producer. So if a supermarket sells a bag of fresh-cut spinach and a consumer gets sick, then the producer—in this case the fresh-cut processor—has primary liability. While the supermarket is still legally responsible for the product it sells, its responsibility would usually be secondary to the producer. This means the lawyers won’t typically sue the retailer if the producer is known and solvent. Only if the producer is insolvent and thus incapable of paying a judgment does a supermarket typically get sued.

The foodservice end of things, though, is

Establish World-Class Standards

Want to create a food safety culture? Cheesecake Factory did and decided managers’ bonuses would be partially contingent on how well their stores score on the food safety audit. Not surprisingly, it is now very rare for a store to do poorly.

All too many retailers have decided food safety is the vendors’ problem, but the retailer must be an active partner, especially in the deli foodservice operation.

The five hard truths need to be underlined with a lot of specifics. What audits are required? Which auditors are acceptable? How many hours are to be allocated for store-level training? There are many more questions. Being mindful of these five principles will move safety programs toward world-class standards.

In addition, there is the consumer to deal with, and educating and informing the consumer about proper care and handling of all food is a crucial role for the deli and supermarket at large.

It is not an easy undertaking, and day-to-day pressure exists to cut corners, train less, buy more broadly, etc. Long term, though, the business case is that the reputation of a food retailer, and particularly a foodservice operation, for food safety is priceless. The challenge is to keep the focus on the long-term vision.

Fortunately, there is also a short-term argument. Employees quickly realize if their company is focused on doing the right thing. Companies perceived as ethical will find it easier to attract employees of integrity. Vendors are also acute to the way a company does business. Companies that gain an upstanding reputation become the preferred business partners.

Even consumers are not oblivious. Their family members and neighbors work for supermarkets and suppliers, and as much as a supermarket chain has to decide what its food safety program should be, it also has to decide what its employees and vendors will say about it. Isn’t the value of a reputation for caring about customers very close to priceless?

DB

completely different. If there is a food safety outbreak at a restaurant, then the restaurant is typically deemed the producer of the product, and therefore, primarily liable and the one to sue. If a deli department is selling pre-packaged product, it is functioning as a retailer and has secondary liability. If, however, it is cooking, assembling or repacking product, it becomes more like a restaurant and will typically be held liable for any illnesses resulting from that product.

So if a supermarket sells a bag of fresh-cut spinach and the customer gets sick, the fresh-cut producer is liable. If the deli department opens the same bag, puts the spinach leaves on paninis and customers get sick from eating the paninis, the retailer has primary liability.

Now, of course, the retailer can sue the supplier. But that requires proving the product in question was the cause—not always easy when you sell a whole sandwich—and the producer actually caused the problem as opposed to, say, cross-contamination in the deli department. A lawsuit would still be open to challenge the retailer’s negligence by failing to follow instructions to wash or cook a product.

Reputational Challenges

Legal liability is a problem usually covered by insurance. A more difficult loss to deal with is the reputational problem that a food safety outbreak can create. Just as legal liability tends to pass to the producers, apparently consumers and the media do not hold retailers responsible to any great extent for selling a packaged product from a reputable vendor that happens to have a food safety issue.

On the other hand, restaurants get pilloried in the press when people are sickened by the food they served, and consumers, of course, can get quite nervous. Although the Chi-Chi’s chain was already operating under Chapter 11 of the U.S. bankruptcy code when it was hit by a Hepatitis A outbreak traced back to green onions in 2003—and the outbreak had nothing to do with the cleanliness of the staff or restaurants—the reputational hit was too much and foreclosed any possibility of saving the chain in the United States.

Because deli foodservice operations typically conduct business under the name of the supermarket as opposed to a packaged branded product, a food safety outbreak in the deli is typically far more serious than merely selling a contaminated package. An outbreak puts at risk the reputation not only of the deli department, but also the whole chain. As such, the entire deli foodservice operation is more akin to selling private label



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than branded product.

Operational Challenges

Deli operations struggle on three separate fronts to make sure food is safe for consumers. First, everything starts with effective procurement, but delis have a problem. Many operate like restaurants but procure like supermarkets. Although retailers have various food safety requirements, especially of private label producers, few retailers have the procedures or resources to do much more than get indemnifications or audit certificates from vendors. Many delis have just recently started to buy items such as fresh produce directly, as the quantities used in deli foodservice operations have increased and the product is differentiated from what is sold at retail. For example, retailers now buy Romaine whole leaves for sandwich programs rather than Romaine heads sold in produce.

Often these items are relatively small volume and purchased through a distributor or wholesaler—sometimes with unknown standards or competency to judge food safety practices. In addition, the deli is an unusual department because many products come in

as branded products—say, the meats and cheeses used for slicing. Yet these same items are then used not only for slicing to sell to consumers, but also for slicing to create a “raw material” for a foodservice product such as a sandwich. This, in effect, becomes a private label product, but few chains apply their more rigorous private label standards to the vetting of suppliers of these products.

Second, deli operators need to wrestle with important issues regarding food safety training for employees, developing schedules and procedures for cleaning equipment and avoiding cross-contamination. These efforts can easily get push-back from management—both store level and executive—which, while sympathetic to the goal of food safety, may not fully appreciate the costs involved in doing these things well. Man hours for training, the need to shut down various services before the store closes to allow for thorough cleaning, or the authorization of man-hours to work after the store closes—all this can try the patience of those who see the expense and can't quantify the return-on-investment.

Third, the deli has special obligations to provide consumer education and information

regarding food safety as its products often pose special vulnerabilities. Leave fresh apples in the trunk of a hot car for five hours and, in all likelihood, one just has shortened the shelf life of the fruit or perhaps lessened its eating quality. Leave the wrong deli product in that environment and one has given pathogens an opportunity to multiply—a recipe for food-borne illness.

Plus, few consumers come in contact

**IT MAY BE A CLICHÉ,
BUT IT IS CERTAINLY
TRUE: NO FOOD SAFETY
CHAIN IS STRONGER
THAN ITS WEAKEST LINK.**

anymore with staff outside of service departments such as the deli. If consumers are going to be educated by staff, it won't be by the butchers, but by deli staff or nobody.

So in light of the seriousness of the problem and the enormity and diversity of the challenges to be found in executing a food safety program, what is a progressive deli and retail foodservice operator to do?

Five Hard Truths

Obtaining world-class food safety in any operation involves multifaceted initiatives. It may be a cliché, but it is certainly true: No food safety chain is stronger than its weakest link. Here are five hard truths for developing and implementing a world-class food safety program:

1. It starts at the top.

The fundamental problem with most food safety programs is that neither employees nor vendors believe the retailer is serious. It is so easy to give speeches in vendor meetings, assuring that “nothing is more important than the safety of our customers,” and so much more difficult to give up margin by paying more for product from top-quality producers and manufacturers. It is so easy to tell employees to put “consumer safety first,” and so difficult to decide to fund extra man-hours for employee training.

These tradeoffs and many others are not hypothetical—they are real and come up

5 HARD TRUTHS

1. It starts at the top.
2. Quality Assurance (QA) has to have real authority and a real budget.
3. Receiving and Accounting have to be part of the program.
4. The food safety program has to tie into culture and compensation plans.
5. Third-party audits at retail are essential—and compensation of store level employees should be tied to these as well.



every day. It will be hard enough to deal with lower employees in the organization who want to cut corners for short-term gains if the CEO, board and company ownership are not genuinely committed.

2. Quality assurance (QA) has to have real authority and a real budget.

In all too many organizations, food safety is declared to be the most important initiative, and the responsibility for execution of this crucial initiative is then given to a person with no authority and no budget.

THE CRUCIAL PART IS THAT QA MUST ALWAYS RANK HIGHER IN THE CORPORATE PECKING ORDER THAN PROCUREMENT AND NO SHORT CUTS CAN BE ALLOWED.

Buyers and operational executives will always have conflicts. They need to keep the shelves full, maintain margins, etc. Food safety standards will conflict with all these goals at certain times.

One important solution is to take many decisions out of the hands of people with these conflicts. Typically this takes the form of a QA department and, crucially, this department's approval must be required before: a) any supplier can be given a vendor number, and b) any supplier can use a new or subcontracted facility, farm, ranch, etc.

Ideally the office is staffed sufficiently to allow for actual visits to companies and facilities before they are approved by the buyer's own food safety experts. If the buying organization is too small for this, it must still staff sufficiently to set standards for acceptable third-party audits and to review those audits.

The crucial part is that QA must always rank higher in the corporate pecking order than procurement and no short cuts can be allowed. The long-established vendor of scalions was just wiped out in a fire. Nobody else is on the "approved" list. Shame on the procurement department for not splitting the

business and certifying a secondary supplier. Perhaps heads should roll. But not one scalion is getting on that Mexican food bar until the company and facility are approved.

3. Receiving and accounting have to be part of the program.

Whatever procurement standards are set up, if receiving and accounting are not part of the program, you can count on them to be circumvented. Just recently Austin, TX-based Whole Foods Market had a situation

whereby a long time beef supplier was sold and started contracting out to a new facility for slaughtering. The new facility had a long and controversial history of food safety issues.

Whole Foods had a policy in place to approve such facilities before receiving beef from them. Although the vendor seems to have violated this policy, it did not defraud Whole Foods. The production facility name was indicated on each box of product. Unfortunately Whole Foods had no proce-

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ture in place to cross check box identifications and paper work against its approved facility list, so the product got through.

Another common problem is that retail buyers look to circumvent a company's own food safety standards. A common way of doing this is by asking an approved supplier, with a vendor number, to buy and resell product from an unapproved source in exchange for a brokerage. Accounting can't just pay bills that have been approved by the buyers; it has to take responsibility for mak-

ing sure vendors attest that all the product supplied has been sourced from approved facilities. Then agreements with vendors must include serious penalties for submitting fraudulent documentation.

4. The food safety program has to tie into culture and compensation plans.

When selling commodity products, vendors often tell a story such as this: A big meeting is held, and the vice president gives a

speech explaining that food safety is the top priority of the chain and now wants special higher standards than the industry norm. The vendor responds cooperatively, pointing out its ability and desire to form an aligned supply chain with production and processing specially designed for the retailer and its high standards. All is handshakes and smiles, at which point the VP leaves the meeting to have the details put together by the buyer or category manager, who turns to the vendor and repeats food safety is certainly the top priority, but "how are we going to take advantage of those market dips?"

It is this attitude that makes vendors feel chains are insincere in their statements that food safety is the overwhelming priority in procurement. It is a truism in management that companies get what they pay for. If bonuses, promotions or raises are given without regard to food safety practices, it sends the not-so-subtle message that regardless of what the company executives say, what they really value is a fat bottom line.

In food safety, attitude is crucial because even after QA vetting, countless decisions must be made that impact food safety. Two vendors may both have met the standards to be approved suppliers by the QA department, but it doesn't mean they are equal when it comes to food safety. The executive challenge is to build a culture, and compensation plans are part of creating that culture, which makes the buyer think it is better to pay a little extra to get the best food safety program.

5. Third-party audits at retail are essential—and compensation of store level employees should be tied to these as well.

Food safety is a farm-to-fork proposition, and even perfect procurement doesn't guarantee safe food. Not only do vendors need audits, but retailers must also have the integrity to audit themselves. Food safety leaders, such as Publix, use companies like Steritech Group, in Charlotte, NC, to perform audits regularly. A top restaurant, such as Cheesecake Factory, has its third-party auditor, Everclean Services, Atoura, CA, visit every single restaurant every single month.

These services provide continuing education for associates, emphasizing the importance of calibrating a thermometer, checking the cooler temperature, hand-washing, glove use, etc. The programs are ideal for dealing with a rapid-turnover labor pool. Such services also perform full food safety audits and report back to management, which uses the information to guide training and corrective action at store level.

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Quality Entrées Steal Business From Restaurants

Armed with a variety of main dishes, delis are profiting behind the counter and in hot and cold cases

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

As the economy continues to slump and consumers tighten their belts, deli operators can seize the opportunity to compete with restaurants in ways never before possible. "Retailers are capturing a lot of business that restaurants previously had," says Todd Griffith, vice president of sales and marketing, Alto-Shaam, Menomonee Falls, WI, makers of foodservice equipment. "The overall objective is to offer restaurant-quality food in a convenience environment, and there are many who are doing a great job of it."

For years, consumers have been eating more meals at restaurants even though it was more expensive than eating at home. Now, however, people are scaling back, but they don't want to give up quality. "They're looking for restaurant quality in their supermarkets," says Tom Quinn, vice president, Nuovo Pasta Productions, Stafford, CT, makers of artisan-style specialty pastas with handmade fillings. "There's a direct correlation now more than ever between what people want to eat in a restaurant and what they want to eat at home."

Nuovo's pastas and sauces are available as foodservice items, but its top 25 foodservice products are packaged as grab-and-go items for the deli, such as portabella and Fontina ravioli and Gorgonzola and sun-dried tomato ravioli. "Like many manufacturers of specialty products, we promote the restaurant aspect of our products by putting the phrase, 'Two Full Restaurant Portions,' on all our ravioli packages," Quinn says.

Although Nuovo's products are considered high-end, Quinn believes consumers are willing to pay a bit extra, because they want convenience as well as quality. At the same time, high-end foods bought at the deli are significantly less expensive than similar dishes on restaurant menus.



PHOTO COURTESY OF INNOVATION CUISINE

Good Equipment Means Better Margins

The right equipment can make it or break it for deli operators in the foodservice business. "Equipment has an impact on maintaining food quality, food safety and food sustainability, so we can serve a fresher, more nutritional product and maximize the life of food," says Todd Griffith, vice president of sales and marketing, Alto-Shaam, Menomonee Falls, WI. "Today's higher technology increases performance efficiency and lowers the cost of operations."

Combination ovens combine steam with traditional convection heating so foods maintain their moisture, making longer hold times possible. And they can work solely as a steamer or convection oven depending on what is needed.

"There are cross-departmental applications," Griffith explains. "Delis can use it, meat and seafood can use it, bakery can use it." Alto-Shaam even offers a combination oven that can be used as a smoker. As a result, supermarkets can save money on additional equipment, space and ventilation.

Additionally, today's equipment is designed to be more user-friendly, which helps reduce labor costs, and includes more safety features. "The technology continues to evolve," Griffith says.

DB

"The economy has helped our business," says Mark Phelps, co-founder of InnovAsian Cuisine, Kent, WA, makers of Asian entrées such as General Tso's chicken, sweet and sour pork with vegetables, and Mongolian beef and vegetables. "Gas prices are causing people to think twice about where they go and how many stops they make."

According to foodservice consultant Technomic, based in Chicago, IL, Asian is the second largest takeout food after pizza. "This category is still very under-developed at retail," Phelps says. "By creating a successful Asian program you are creating differentiation from your competition."

The trend toward offering restaurant-style entrées in the deli has led other companies to make some changes, such as Omaha, NE-based ConAgra Foods. "We've been putting more emphasis on new flavors and mirroring some of the more popular restaurant menu offerings," says Melinda Foley, director of customer marketing, foodservice. ConAgra Foods makes a complete line of prepared frozen entrées under the brands Healthy Choice and Award Cuisine. These lines include traditional dishes, such as lasagna, beef stew, and macaroni and cheese as well as a large variety of poultry-based offerings, such as sweet and sour chicken, chicken chow mein and turkey marsala.

Overall, the quality of deli entrées has improved dramatically to meet or exceed the dining out experience. Curly's Foods, a division of John Morrell, Edina, MN, makes barbecue entrées for both retail and foodservice, such as smoked ribs, pulled pork, beef brisket and pork carnitas.

"Over the years, people have been get-

ting out and going to regional places that have that authentic pit-smoked flavor," says Keith Wilcox, Curly's director of cooked meats. "Once you eat that, you crave it."

In recent years, the company has employed new methods to improve the quality and consistency of their products while offering more variety. "We're continuing to develop new flavors," says Wilcox, who believes Curly's products stand up to the

quality found in some of the country's best smokehouses. "We've evolved. We're making more natural smoked products—things you'd see in Kansas City in a real smokehouse."

"WE'VE BEEN PUTTING MORE EMPHASIS ON NEW FLAVORS AND MIRRORING SOME OF THE MORE POPULAR RESTAURANT MENU OFFERINGS."

—Melinda Foley
ConAgra Foods

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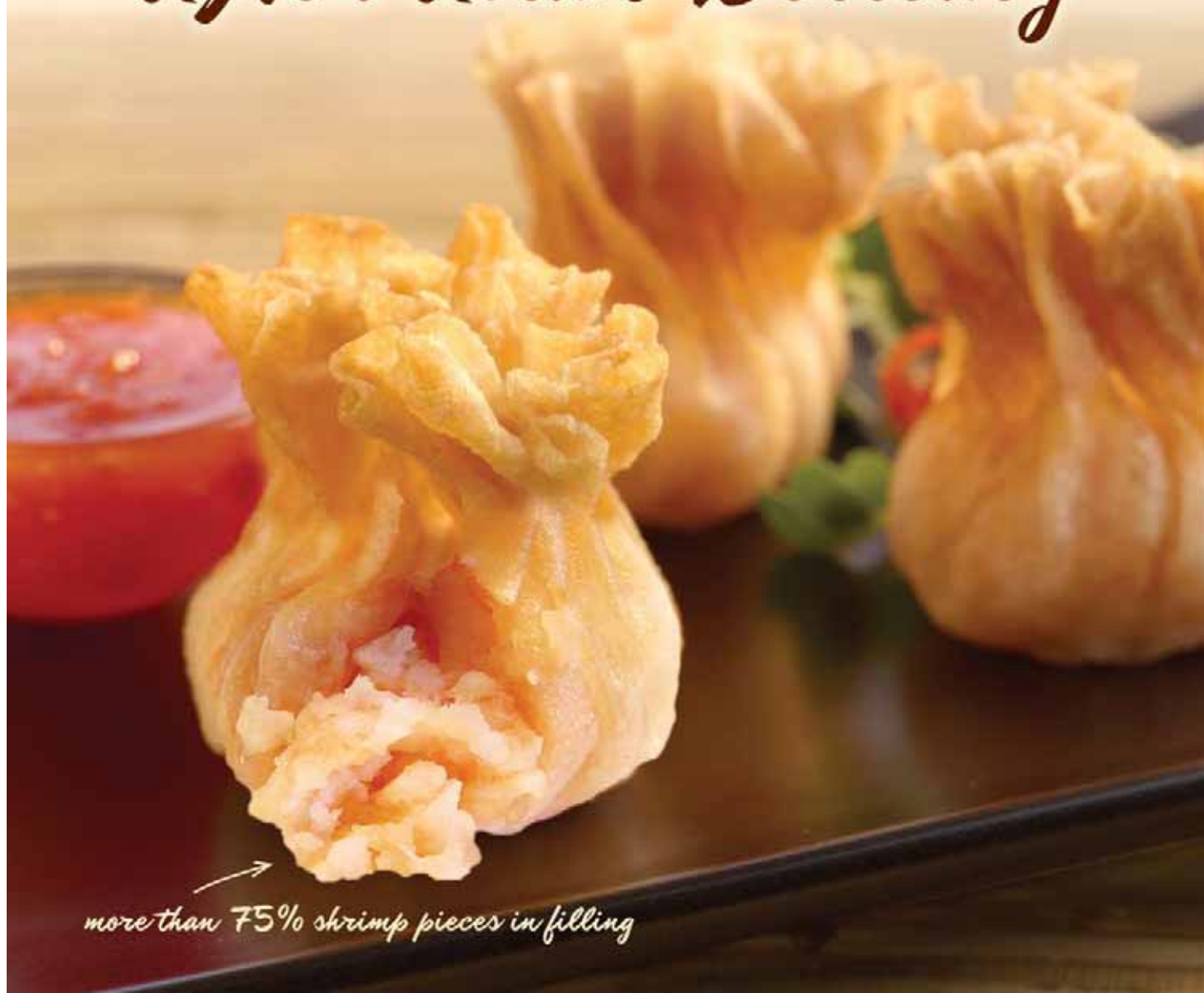
Today's entrées are easier to prepare and hold up better than ever. "Labor costs and food costs are rising, so our frozen prepared entrées offer a consistent, quality solution for deli operators and do not require highly skilled labor," says ConAgra's Foley. "For these frozen entrées, a deli operator must



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thaw the product then reheat.”

InnovAsian began its business with entrées that had to be fully cooked first. Now, all entrées are fully cooked and frozen, so they are much more versatile. The company also designed kits containing one bag of sauce, one bag of protein and one bag of vegetables, which fills a standard two-inch half-pan or deli display bowl.

“Just pull out one batch-protein, vegetables and sauce—and then thaw the sauce in water and mix it with protein and vegetables until completely coated,” InnovAsian’s Phelps says. “The dish has a three-day refrigerated shelf life so delis can sell it out of the bulk cold case by the pound. On the last day, the dish can be heated and transferred for sale in the hot case.”

Deli operators can develop custom dishes using InnovAsian’s products. “We have a full line of sauces, noodles and finger foods that allow stores to mix and match flavors, or use other items like chicken wings to create a new dish with an Asian flair,” Phelps says.

Curly’s Foods offers a way to turn standard barbecue items into local specialties. “Most of our success in the rib segment with foodservice is our ability to produce ribs with natural smoke, great flavor and no sauce, so operators can add the sauce that’s popular in their region,” Wilcox explains.

The ability to create an exciting item using existing products is limited only by the

imagination. “ConAgra Foods offers a wide variety of back-of-house ingredients for deli operators, such as PAM Pan Sprays, Angela Mia Tomato products and sauces, Wesson Oils, and many more brands,” Foley says. “A deli operator can create signature dishes with our ingredients and components.”

Nuovo’s Quinn recommends thinking outside the box to offer something other stores do not. “Nuovo’s sauces are ideal for pasta, but they can be used for everything, from spreads to dips to marinades,” he says.

Cook Up Promotions

With the right promotion, the deli can be a destination for hungry shoppers. “You should always have some seasonal offerings,” Curly’s Wilcox asserts. “Make the deli an exciting place to go to and see what’s new.”

In addition to its natural smoked products, Curly’s offers non-smoked items such as pot roast and tri-tip steak. “Pot roast is a great thing to promote in the fall,” Wilcox says. “Plus it’s football season, and people are starting to tailgate. Ribs and barbecue are always a huge hit. People who don’t tailgate have parties at home, and barbecue lends itself well to those types of events.”

Rotating offerings within a category also keeps customers interested and coming back for more. “Delis should offer top-selling Asian entrées every day and rotate one item,

so consumers stay interested in the category,” says InnovAsian’s Phelps. “We recommend creating a weekly special or a special-of-the-month entrée.”

Wilcox suggests putting together a combo meal, using Curly’s pork carnitas along with rice, peppers and tortilla shells. “Our combo plates—things that make a complete meal—go really quickly,” he says.

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AND SEE WHAT’S
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—Keith Wilcox
Curly’s

According to Quinn, television channels appeal to consumers interested in making and enjoying high-end meals at home. Nuovo’s packaged grab-and-go items are what he calls “participation foods” because they allow consumers to have a hand in cooking without starting from scratch.

Like making pasta, preparing barbecued meats can become “participation food,” Wilcox says. “The younger generation has been affected by the Food Network,” he says. “They want tasty meals, but they want to do it fast.”

While many consumers are looking for ready-to-eat entrées, heat-and-eat foods are an important segment. “We’re seeing more sold in the cold case now,” Wilcox adds.

Cross-merchandising grab-and-go products with complementary items takes the guesswork out of preparing a meal. “A lot of the more successful stores are putting whole meals together,” Quinn says. “A lot of people don’t know what they’re looking for when they go to the supermarket. Put it out there and tell people, ‘Here’s a solution.’ Retailers that carry our items successfully merchandise them with gourmet cheeses, olive bars, creative prepared sauces and other value-added prepared foods.”

Quality counts when it comes to repeat sales of entrées. “It comes back to the deli operator to make sure they have high-quality product out there,” Wilcox says. **DB**

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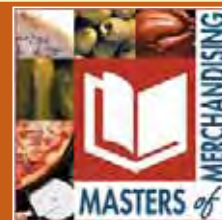


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Recommended Display Ideas

Prominent displays or the merchandising of Beano's Deli Bistro Condiments should be in close proximity to premium deli meats to allow for incremental sales as other items are purchased. For example, Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces should be merchandised in the following locations in ranking of best practices first.

1. Countertop racks should be placed as close to the meat/cheese slicer as possible. Deli personnel should be trained to engage the consumers with suggestive selling of go-along-with products. An example would be to ask the consumer to try Beano's Sweet Chili Pepper Sauce with a roast beef purchase.

2. Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces should be merchandised with grab-and-go sandwiches or gourmet custom sandwich programs (i.e. panini sandwiches, ciabatta and baguette sandwiches). Consumers who make purchases in grab-and-go sections are looking for convenience and a fast shopping experience. Making go-along-with products readily available will lead to incremental impulse purchases.

3. Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces are available in shippers that contain an assortment of each flavor (12 Cilantro & Lime, 12 Roasted Chipotle and 6 each of Mesquite Smoked, Sweet Chili Pepper, Oriental Mustard and Hot Ginger) as another tool to capture more sales. These attractive 48-pack shippers can be configured according to the retailers specifications.

4. Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces are shipped with an attractive inner display tray that can be used to merchandise specific flavors in key areas. An example would be to merchandise Beano's Oriental Mustard and Hot Ginger with spring rolls or sushi.

5. Take merchandising a step further and incorporate Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces into your custom gourmet sandwich program. Beano's can provide easy-to-create bistro sandwich recipes to help you create your own bistro sandwiches.

Quick Tips

1. Keep Beano's visible and available for purchase by using racks and shippers.
2. Teach product knowledge to the deli personnel so they can cross-sell.
3. Be creative — bundle products together to make the purchase easy for the consumer.
4. Walk the department daily to face out, fill out-of-stocks and look for new cross-merchandising opportunities.

Suggested Signage/POS

Making sure your consumer reacts to your merchandising is important to stimulating additional purchases. Signage reminding them of recipes or upcoming events, such as football games, holidays or local events, will create a new need for products.

Variety

One of the main advantages to merchandising Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces in the deli is the uniqueness of many of our products. Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces are available in:

- Cilantro & Lime — freshness, zest and flavor of a Southern California bistro
- Roasted Chipotle — rich, smoky, sauce made with roasted and blended jalapeño peppers
- Sweet Chili Pepper — oriental style sauce with a sneaky heat and sweet zesty flavor
- Mesquite Smoked — authentic, creamy sauce made of cracked pepper and mesquite smoke
- Hot Ginger — savory pan-Asian deli sauce with heat and spice
- Oriental Mustard — very hot and sharp, made from oriental mustard seed

These flavor profiles were specifically designed to capture the excitement and popularity of both Asian and Hispanic flavors. Asian and Hispanic populations are the two fastest growing communities in the United States. These unique flavors are also popular on menus in restaurants ranging from sandwich shops to white-tablecloth establishments. Our flavor profiles are not available off the dry grocery shelf making your deli the place to find new and exciting products. In addition, our flavors entice the consumer to recreate the sandwiches offered at many of the national and local specialty sandwich restaurants.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Include Beano's with catering orders. Many catering orders are for business lunches where few or no condiments may be available. Include Beano's, chips and fruit to offer the full complement to a meal while taking the guesswork out of the equation for consumers. Everything they need can be bundled into one price point.

Shelf-Life Recommendations

Beano's products are all shelf stable and have a 1-year shelf life. While the deli meat category is considered to have little growth potential, industry experts are suggesting that delis use specialty condiments to provide additional sales.

Because of the year-long shelf life offered by Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces, you will not experience the shrink that is inherent with deli meats,

cheeses and breads.

Packaging Recommendations

Small packaging, such as the 8-ounce bottle we use for Beano's, has many benefits to both the consumer and the retailer. For the consumer, small bottles are great for trial, travel to picnics or ball games and for one-time usage, such as at a tailgate party. For the retailer, small bottles mean the consumer may try more than one flavor. It also means better turns and a fresher product on shelf for the consumer.

Include several flavors in a pre-arranged tailgate kit.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

We all know how important it is to rotate product. It is equally important to reduce back stock. Product in the back is money tied up and not creating revenue. Beano's countertop racks and inner display tracks offer the retailer a home for the product. Merchandise with a plan not just placed randomly in the department.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Cross-merchandising Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces is another opportunity to drive incremental sales. During key selling periods, make sure Beano's is near the gourmet meats in the service deli case and the grab-and-go section. In addition to Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces, include chips, snacks, bread and cheese. Place secondary locations of Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces by the sushi, gourmet cheese case, fresh baked breads and the custom sandwich station.

Creative And Unconventional Merchandising Ideas

Line up a variety of Beano's Deli Bistro products in front of the custom sandwich station.

Passive sampling of Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces allows consumers to taste before they buy.

Pick key selling periods when sandwich making is at a peak. Promote the following to capture new business:

Promote the use of Beano's Deli Bistro on turkey and ham during the Thanksgiving-to-Christmas holiday period.

Include Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces with tailgate promotions during the fall football season.

Create a Super Bowl basket with great tailgate snacks, with Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces and the accompanying dips.

Create a sandwich of the month to keep your custom sandwich program fresh and to keep those customers coming back for more with the great flavors of Beano's Deli Bistro Sauces.

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Profitable Fried Chicken Is As Easy As 1-2-3

Offer fresh fried chicken, use trans fat-free frying oil and merchandise inexpensive meal deals

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Fried chicken—a staple in restaurants and deli departments across the country—is one of the most enduring foods to have captured the hearts of Americans. Not surprisingly, fried chicken ranks among the top 10 list of traditional foods consumers consider “ultimate comfort foods,” according to research conducted by Chicago, IL-based Technomic Information Services for Springdale, AR-based Tyson Foods Inc. Tyson’s Winter 2007/2008 issue of *Insights & Discovery* features the report titled, *Sideways on the Familiar*, in which data from a national survey of 500 consumers found that 70 percent of consumers considered fried chicken their ultimate comfort food.

In the supermarket deli, fried chicken represents 31 percent of prepared chicken deli sales, second only to rotisserie chicken at 42 percent, based on Deli Scan data from the MTD Group, Hazel Crest, IL, for Perdue Foods Inc., a leading fresh chicken producer based in Salisbury, MD. Dollar sales of fried chicken were up 6.9 percent for the 52-week period ending April 19, 2008. During the same period, dollar sales of rotisserie chicken increased by 7.7 percent.

“This data not only underscores consumers’ love of fried chicken, but it also reflects the increased price of all chicken products due to the rising cost of feed corn as corn is diverted to biofuel production,” says Andy Seymour, Perdue’s vice president of sales and marketing.

According to the Washington, DC-based National Chicken Council, corn traded at \$2.22/bushel in August 2006 and nearly quadrupled in price to \$7/bushel as of June 2008. The reason can be attributed to a federal law requiring the production of biofuels to help replace foreign energy supplies and government subsidies to ethanol producers.

Corn prices aside, delis can create a profitable fried chicken deli program as easy as 1-2-3. First, select the chicken. Second, opt for healthful frying oil. Third, maximize merchandising by pairing fried chicken with sides to offer meal deals.



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1. Commit To Selling The Best-Tasting Fried Chicken

Three types of fried chicken are available to delis: 1) fresh raw chicken the operator hand breads, 2) marinated raw breaded (MRB) chicken, which is shipped frozen and fried in-store, and 3) fully cooked fried chicken, shipped frozen and slacked out for sale.

"Our belief is that the MRB doesn't draw customers to the deli," Perdue's Seymour says. "Instead, we see the best product as hand-breaded. Many delis don't take the hand-breaded route because of the labor, but the extra effort and commitment by leadership to a hand-breaded program can pay off."

Seymour explains that delis will use the fully cooked product as a backup to a hand-breaded or MRB product in the refrigerated grab-and-go case, for peak days when they can't fry enough to keep up with demand.

But the difference in sales between hand-breaded fried chicken and MRB product are substantial. "We've seen delis that use the MRB product sell 100 to 200 pounds of fried chicken per week compared to ones that use a freshly hand-breaded product selling 500 to 1,500 pounds per week," Seymour says.

According to Seymour, the key is to use the words "hand-breaded" or "fresh fried

chicken" in merchandising the product. One retailer capitalizing on such language is The Kroger Co., a 2,500-store chain headquartered in Cincinnati, OH—promoting its fried chicken program in the deli by advertising "Fresh Hand-Breaded Fried Chicken."

The cornerstone of supermarket deli sales is the eight-piece dinner or bucket—a whole chicken cut up into individual pieces and fried. "Wings are popular, but they haven't surpassed sales of the eight-piece yet," says Dan Emery, vice president of marketing, Pilgrim's Pride Corp., a leading chicken producer based in Pittsburg, TX. "The attractiveness of wings is their finger-food or dashboard-dining quality."

Pilgrim's Pride meets consumers' demand for portability with its boneless, fully cooked breaded wing sections, called Wing Dings. "Drumsticks are just as convenient to eat, but they haven't taken off as well as wings or wing products," Emery relates. "Breaded breast tenders or strips outpace regular fried chicken breasts because they have 70 percent more moisture. They eat better and don't dry out as much under heat."

Economic times are giving rise to more dark meat chicken options. "We do see some quick-service restaurants (QSR) offering dark meat specials for a lower price point,

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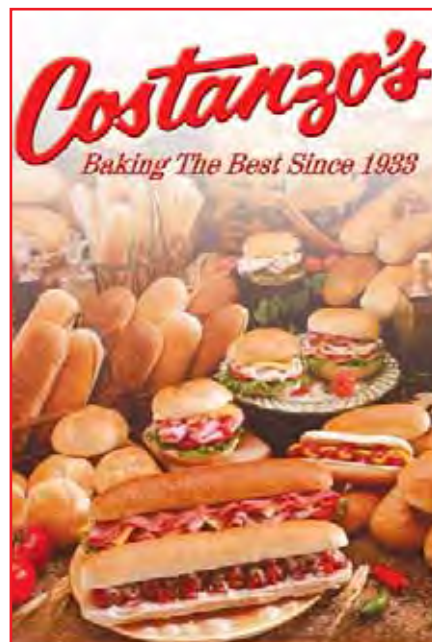
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and it's being received well by customers looking for a value," Emery says. "This might become more important in as the cost of chicken rises due to prices for feed corn."

Some of Albertson's LLC's stores in its 300-store chain are incorporating dark meat into fried chicken programs. In June, select supermarkets in the Dallas/Fort Worth, TX, area advertised a Fresh "Signature" dark meat fried chicken special, containing six thighs and six drumsticks for \$4.99.

Perdue's Seymour also foresees experimentation with a variety of different flavors in the breeding, perhaps a bold spicy Hispanic-influenced seasoning.

2. Cook In Healthful Oil—And Let Customers Know It

Up until a couple of years ago, most foodservice and deli operators chose oil for deep-fat frying based on performance factors, such as functionality and extended life. Today, many operators have converted to trans fat-free oils. Why? Two decades worth of scientific research has linked consumption of trans fats to elevated blood levels of heart-unhealthy LDL or "bad" cholesterol—a body of studies so convincing that the Food & Drug Administration now requires manufacturers to label products containing the amount fats, including trans fats, per serving.

"Several retailers see switching to trans fat-free oils in their fried chicken programs as a point of differentiation and distinction that they capitalize on in merchandising," Pilgrim's Pride Emery says.

For example, following on the heels of McDonald's in Europe and KFC in the United States, Kroger was one of the first supermarket chains to make this oil change in its deli departments. In December 2006, the large national supermarket chain began advertising that its fried chicken dinners, chicken wings and chicken tenders would all be prepared using trans fat-free oil in its stores under the banners City Market, Dillon's, Food 4 Less, Fred Meyer, Fry's, King Soopers, QFC, Ralph's and Smith's.

Four months later, Winn-Dixie, a 522-store chain headquartered in Jacksonville, FL, followed the trend to offer healthier fried foods in the deli by replacing its regular oil with trans fat-free oil.

Judy Holland, director of consumer affairs at Winn-Dixie, says, "We know our customers want healthier options without sacrificing taste. Therefore, we conducted extensive research to ensure we could deliver an excellent and very similar product to our customers while removing the unhealthy trans fats. We think this will provide the best of both worlds for our shoppers."

When choosing a trans fat-free oil, deli

Mrs. Mac's Southern Fried Chicken

Charleston, SC-based Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co. owes its ongoing fried chicken sales to Mrs. Nel McNaughton, who recently passed away this May at the age of 92. In January 1967, Mrs. McNaughton began working as the deli manager at Dupont Crossing Piggly Wiggly in Charleston, SC. "It was one of the first stores we opened that had a deli department with hot foods," recalls Rita Postell, spokesperson for the company. Mrs. McNaughton, or Mrs. Mac, as she was affectionately called, joined the company as deli manager for the store and thought her delicious recipe for Southern fried chicken would attract customers to her counter.

"It's become an icon over the years," Postell says. "It's famous. We use that recipe in every one of our delis." The fried chicken is made fresh daily and never frozen. Each Piggly Wiggly store sells from eight to 10 cases of fried chicken every day, with each case containing about 40 pounds of chicken.

Prior to joining Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co., Mrs. Mac headed up a school lunchroom. She was very active in the community and had an established following of admirers. "She was a real person and everyone knew her reputation," Postell says. "Her recipe helped us tremendously."

DB

operators "need to consider flavor, performance and cost per day," says Tom Bandler, national business director for oil products, ACH Food Companies, Memphis, TN.

The flavor of the oil should allow the food's taste to shine. "You don't want your oil to have a taste that overpowers the host food," says Bill McCullough, director of marketing, Bunge Oils, St. Louis, MO. "You want to taste the chicken, not the oil. A soybean oil-based product will accomplish this more so than a product made with corn oil."

One of ACH's newest trans fat-free oils is Mazola ZT Soy Select, a soybean-based, creamy vegetable liquid frying shortening. "It offers the benefit of creating crispy, non-greasy fried chicken," ACH's Bandler says.

The true cost of a fryer comes down to the amount of oil it uses. "The equipment is a one-time expense," says Todd Griffith, vice president of sales and marketing, Alto-Shaam, a leading foodservice equipment manufacturer based in Menomonee Falls, WI. "If you don't choose your oil wisely or a fryer that isn't efficient in maintaining heat in the oil at the proper temperature, you'll spend much more money buying oil."

A premium trans fat-free oil costs approximately 20 percent to 30 percent more than a commodity trans fat-free oil; however, operators need to evaluate the cost on a per-day basis rather than a per-case price. "Premium-branded oils have a longer fry life, sometimes twice that of a commodity oil, and this can be extended by maintenance and care of the oil," ACH's Bandler says. "For example, deli staff should skim the oil for particles regularly and filter daily."

3. Give Customers An Inexpensive Meal Deal

A sluggish economy and rising food costs

are driving more customers to eat in rather than dine out. This offers a huge opportunity for merchandising complete meal deals from the deli—one that delis tend to under-promote. According to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's (IDDBA), *What's In Store 2008* trends report, combo meals make up only 1.6 percent of all deli-prepared food dollar sales.

The biggest question for consumers today is "What's for dinner?" and manufacturers like Torrance, CA-based King's Hawaiian Bakery help delis answer that dilemma for their customers. "We started the bundling concept eight or nine years ago with Albertson's, then added other chains such as Publix, Meijers and Kroger over the years," says president Shelby Weeda.

In Albertson's, the company places a five-foot-tall wire rack with a header card announcing the chain's fried chicken meal deal. The rack holds packages of King's Hawaiian Sweet Rolls. Large brown paper bags with handles hang under the header.

"The rack is placed next to the hot case containing chicken," Weeda explains. "The customer simply picks up the brown bag, fills it with rolls, an eight-piece pack of fried chicken, and a one-pound container of potato or macaroni salad, all for only \$6.99."

Some chains sell up to 50 to 100 pieces of fried chicken along with equally large portions of sides to target picnic or tailgating occasions. Other chains offer three pieces of fried chicken with a side, such as mashed potatoes or coleslaw and a biscuit, for a single-serve lunch special.

Simplicity sells when creating a meal-deal menu, Weeda says. "And in these economic times, success hinges on being able to offer an attractive price point and effectively compete with the fast-food chicken chains." DB

Easy Ways To Keep Olive Bars In The Spotlight

Draw a standing-room-only crowd with the right product mix, cart presentation and entertaining ideas

BY BOB JOHNSON

Like the tortoise and the hare in Aesop's fable, some trends grow at a steady pace—winning staying power—while others hit the market at lightning speed only to fade quickly. The olive bar category takes its cues from the tortoise, making gradual inroads in supermarket delis as a stationary fixture even though the carts are designed for mobility. The carts and the olives, however, are not rolling out of retailers' doors.

"The consumer today is highly educated, and although economics can affect everyone, a consumer who has come to know a product that has integrity, consistency and quality will not forsake or substitute it for price," says Anthony DiPietro, vice president of George E. DeLallo Co. Inc.

Based in Jeanette, PA, DeLallo produces a wide variety of olive and antipasto products as well as pasta, pasta sauces, olive oils and vinegars. "DeLallo places a great deal of value on educating both our partners as well as consumers about our products so they can buy intelligently," DiPietro says.

According to *U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2008*, published by Arlington, VA-based Food Marketing Institute, more olive bars have been showing up in supermarkets each year since 2006. Of the 1,003 shoppers surveyed in 2008, 22 percent reported that the primary store they shop at includes an olive bar. In comparison, 18 percent of shoppers in 2006 said their primary store had an olive bar. Among the 2008 respondents, 20 percent use the olive bar weekly or monthly, whereas 29 percent use the olive bar less than once a month and 51 percent never use the olive bar.

"We haven't seen any olive bars taken out of stores in the last six or seven months," says Mary Ann Vangrin, public relations director of American Canyon, CA-based



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G.L. Mezzetta Inc., whose product line includes olives, peppers and specialty foods. "It's an investment in store real estate like any other display case, and our retailers are committed to the investment. The opportunity is there to cultivate existing customers and encourage them to buy more as well as to introduce new customers to the benefits of buying olives and antipasto items in bulk."

Sales of some olive products from Greece, however, have felt the effects of the economic downturn. "We don't have all the numbers in yet, but there has been a slow-down this year," says Nicolaos Belias, counselor for commercial and economic affairs at the New York, NY-based Greek Trade Commission. "Olive oil is doing well, but most of the other olive products are down since January or February."

Despite the current economy, Arneg USA reports that sales of olive carts are status quo. The Nazareth, PA-based company manufactures refrigerated cases, including olive and antipasti bar carts. "Just like any other business, Arneg is trying harder to increase sales," says Jim Christman, sales manager food equipment. "We are developing new and exciting versions of the carts to enhance the merchandising aspect to attract more potential customers."

For olive bars to stay on an upward trend, retailers need to merchandise the contents of these carts to their full potential. Here are three ways to keep olive bars in the spotlight.

Mix Best-Sellers With New Varieties

Overall, the olive bar category is still ripening with time, and the increasing popularity of Mediterranean foods is heightening consumer interest in olives. "Mediterranean foods are very popular now in general, but the great variation and selection of olives are driving sales," says Arneg's Christman.

Indeed, Mezzetta's sales are growing, Vangrin points out. "We've had a lot of success because we're able to source the best imported products based on our long-standing supplier relationships," she says.

When it comes to product mix, it's advisable to combine tried-and-true items with a selection of new varieties. "The best-selling items are the standards: pitted Calamatas, whole Calamatas, super colossal pimento-stuffed," Vangrin says. "There is also growing interest in more exotic varieties, such as Cerignolas and Gaetas, and more types of stuffed olives and proprietary blends that include vegetables or trendy seasonings."

Many restaurants are offering bowls of olives as a mini-meal starter, which seems to have piqued consumer interest in olive blends. "Medley blends are gaining in pop-



PHOTO COURTESY OF DELALLO COMPANY, INC.

ularity as well as specialty stuffed olives with cheese," says Annie Owens, director of marketing, Plant City, FL-based Mario Camacho Foods.

Moreover, consumers are interested in knowing where the olives come from and what variety they are. "Just saying 'black' olives and 'green' olives is no longer enough information," Mezzetta's Vangrin says.

One small, but growing specialty area is organic olives. "In my opinion, the organic venue is growing, but presently does not represent a large portion of cart purchases," Arneg's Christman says. "However, organic olives have their niche."

Mario Camacho's Owens also believes organic olives currently have a small role in the world of olives. "They are not something that will pay big dividends to the category as a whole," she says.

Retailers choosing to carry unusual olive products should be aware of what the market can bear when pricing olives. "Olives are extremely price sensitive," Owens says. "The right price depends on what the market will handle. Customers will pay a premi-

um for organic or high-quality specialty olives, but it again depends on the market."

Stage A Spectacular Presentation

Delis need to pay particular attention to the presentation of olive bars to entice customers. The olive bar must appear fresh, inviting and special in order to prosper. Anything short of spectacular won't do.

"The focus has to be on the presentation of the bar," DeLallo's DiPietro says. "Olives and antipasti are bought primarily on vision, and you shouldn't try to substitute any products. As long as the presentation is clean and fresh, there will be increased sales of the olive and antipasti bar because this is what the consumer has come to expect."

The olive cart itself sets the tone for creating a visually striking display. "A well displayed olive cart will attract customers and yield higher sales," Arneg's Christman says. "A beautifully decorated cart will also aid in introducing newer products that are sold in jar or bag form. The well-stocked and displayed cart is truly a destination point of sale."

Merchandising helps draw customers to the cart, and new models are being designed to promote sales. "The good news is that there are very few limitations, and new designs to the carts will boost sales," Christman says.

Careful upkeep of the olive bar environment is key to retaining and making new customers. "A cared-for product appeals to customers and lets them know that the retailer shares their desire for quality," Mezzetta's Vangrin says. "A well-maintained, visually appealing olive bar is essential."

Promote Home Entertaining

These days, people are frequenting restaurants less in favor of dining at home to save money. "Supermarket shopping is doing better because people are spending less at restaurants," says Mary Caldwell, marketing manager of New York-based FoodMatch Inc., an importer of Mediterranean food products such as olives and antipasti. "As a result, specialty food olive bars are doing well. People want to have that special feeling, but they are doing it at home. Through merchandising, you can take advantage of this by giving the consumers already in front of you new ideas."

With more home entertaining taking place, olive/antipasti bars can provide the beginnings of a special meal for family and friends. "It's sociable food," DeLallo's DiPietro says. "Promote the entertaining aspect at your bars. People are going to be entertaining at home because it's economical."

Belias of the Greek Trade Commission believes that planning store promotions is an important step in maintaining olive bar sales. And one way to emphasize the use of the olive bar in party planning is to prominently display large, compartmented trays filled with olives, antipasti and other products.

"Olives are the perfect addition to party platters or relish trays and pair well with cheese, crackers, pickles and more," says Mario Camacho's Owens. "And they are a natural accompaniment to alcoholic beverages."

Owens also suggests promoting "buy one, get one free" offers to attract consumers to the olive bar and to ring up additional sales for condiments or crackers.

FoodMatch's Caldwell recommends recipe booklets as a simple but effective way to boost olive and antipasti bar sales. "We position our Divina brand products as being easy for entertaining," Caldwell says.

In addition, demonstration promotions should encourage the use of numerous items from the bar. Rather than just provide samples of a single product, show how to use multiple products in a simple but special recipe.

"Sampling is another important technique to generate trial," Mezzetta's Vangrin says. "To discourage sampling off the deli bar, we work with retailers to create self-service sampling opportunities adjacent to the olive bar or to provide samples in individual cups on a regular basis."

Suppliers have developed display and merchandising programs that take the guesswork out of merchandising olive bars. "We offer customized or semi-customized point of sale materials and signage for each customer, depending on their needs," Mezzetta's Vangrin says. "We supply a take-away brochure that lists olive, wine and cheese pairings to educate the consumer and offer extra opportunities for perimeter sales."

Olive bars can lure consumers and lend excitement to the shopping experience, provided delis know how to maximize their merchandising capabilities. "I would go to my supplier for help and advice because we're the experts," DeLallo's DiPietro says. **DB**

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Vegetarian Alternatives Appeal To 'Flexitarians'

Tap this growing segment of the population by introducing meatless products into the core lineup

BY LAURA MARTINEZ

Many Americans today are fielding a complex set of issues when deciding what to eat. They are considering their health, weight and carbon footprint as well as the effect of food production on global warming. Meat and poultry prices are on the rise, as are concerns about animal rights. Add food safety issues to this long list, and food choices become an extremely complicated equation.

An emerging group of consumers, dubbed "flexitarians," are looking to solve this equation by including vegetarian meat-alternatives in their regular diets. Deli operators who showcase vegetarian meat-alternatives as ready-made solutions have a unique opportunity to tap this market.

Baltimore, MD-based Vegetarian Resource Group (VRG), a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public about vegetarianism and related issues, published a report in 2006 titled, *How Many Adults Are Vegetarian?* According to the report, 1.4 percent of American adults were vegans and 2.3 percent of adults were vegetarians. The report also speaks to the "flexitarian" market, estimating that 30 percent to 40 percent of American adults seek vegetarian options at least some time each week.

Mike Ryan, executive director of Eastern Perishable Products Association Inc., (EPPA), Wanaque, NJ, believes there are two distinct marketing groups for vegetarian meat-alternatives. "The first is vegans and vegetarians, and the second is Baby Boomers looking for one-off vegetarian alternatives for a healthier meal," he says.

What Are Vegetarian Meat-Alternatives?

Vegetarian meat-alternatives are grain- or soy-based products flavored and textured to mimic meat: turkey, beef, chicken, bologna,



PHOTO COURTESY OF YVES MEATLESS PRODUCTS

salami and pepperoni, just to name a few. Some are available as sliced-meat alternatives and others as meat strips. Ground meat-alternatives are often used in making tacos, spaghetti, lasagna and the like.

Meat-alternatives made for vegans are free of all animal products and do not contain any eggs or dairy products, such as cheese or milk. Meat-alternatives made for vegetarians are free of fish, poultry and meat, but they may contain eggs or dairy products.

Designed to meet high percentages of daily protein and vitamin needs, meat-alternatives contain ingredients such as soy, wheat, vegetables, beans and good oils. They are high in antioxidants, and usually much lower in calories, fat and cholesterol than traditional meat products.

Flexitarians are also increasingly interested in enjoying traditional vegetarian food from around the world, such as burritos or tortilla wraps with beans, rice and vegetables, pasta pomodoro, spanakopita, and vegetarian curries.

Most producers of vegetarian meat-alternatives are keenly interested in manufacturing processes that use less energy, water and fuel. In addition, plant-based food does not use the water, fuel and energy needed to raise and sustain animals for food. Organic ingredients are emphasized, as well as the absence of preservatives and genetically modified (GMO) ingredients.

Typically, these meat-alternative products are merchandised in the produce section of retailers' stores; however, given the health-oriented consumer trends identified in *What's in Store 2008*, published by the Madison, WI-based International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), delis may want to start adding these products to their core lineup. When shopping the deli, consumers are looking for greater selection and value, health and wellness, along with taste and convenience.

Carol L. Christison, executive director of the IDDBA, reinforced these findings at the 2008 IDDBA Annual Seminar and Expo in New Orleans, LA, citing consumers' desire for balance in health and wellness choices, including healthier alternatives and dietary trade-offs, as the No. 1 trend. Consumers want to eat simpler, greener, cleaner and "better-for-you," Christison emphasized.

The Growing "Flexitarian" Market

Sales of vegetarian meat-alternatives have been steadily growing, grabbing the attention of large conglomerates. "This isn't a small cottage industry anymore," EPPA's Ryan says. "Large companies with savvy consumer packaging are blanketing the marketplace."

Indeed, once the province of small, independent producers, major corporations are bringing these businesses into the fold. Omaha, NE-based ConAgra Foods acquired Turner Falls, MA-based Lightlife Foods, makers of vegetarian meat-alternatives, in 2000. And Yves Veggie Cuisine, another meatless producer based in Delta, British Columbia, Canada, became part of the Hain-Celestial Group Inc., in Melville, NY, in 2001.

Susan Rolnick, director of Marketing for

ConAgra, the parent company of Lightlife Foods, sees flexitarians as an "expansion base" to its vegetarian customers. Studies conducted by the company found that 31 percent of the U.S. population is looking to eat meatless at least once per week.

"Highly educated consumers are more important to this category than financial demographics," says Rolnick, adding that for the 12-week period ending May 25, 2008, Lightlife refrigerated meat sub-dollar growth was up 11.7 percent from the previous year,

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according to Chicago, IL-based Information Resources Inc. (IRI).

Consumers looking to cut back on calories will find that four slices (57 grams) of Lightlife's Smart Deli Bologna Style contains only 70 calories, and 0 grams of fat and cholesterol. An equivalent amount of conventional bologna has 216 calories, 20 grams of fat and 40 milligrams of cholesterol.

Independent producers, such as Turtle Island Foods, Hood River, OR, are also thriving in the marketplace. Owner and president Seth Tibbott says the company's sales of its Tofurky meatless deli slices increased 13.1 percent from 2006 to 2007.

Tibbott, a vegetarian since 1971, says he never transitioned out of wanting meat flavors and believes that many vegans and vegetarians also like meat flavors. Turtle Island Foods manufactures "fake meat products that deliver plant-based protein in a familiar, comfortable form," Tibbott says. "You can remember the texture and flavor without eating meat."

Fitting Into The Deli

When introducing consumers to vegetarian meat-alternatives in the deli, consider using a checklist to inform staff, prepare signage and communicate with customers. A typical product sign includes the following:

NAME OF PRODUCT

- + Healthful Eating
- + Better-For-You Food
- + Good Taste
- + Weight Control
- + Low Cost
- + Low Carbon Footprint
- + 100% Vegan (or Vegetarian)
- = Good Eating

Manufacturers of meat-alternatives believe education is key to good sales, and use Web sites and point-of-sale materials to tell consumers how their foods promote healthy living, a healthy planet and animal kindness. This information can be incorporated into deli signage and to tie into larger store efforts.

"Educate consumers and make sure they are aware of the benefits behind the items," says Michael Goose, brand manager, Yves Meatless Products. "These are value-added items. You're not only giving them a great product that tastes great, you're also giving them the health benefits that everyone is looking for these days. Highlight this as much as possible."

Turtle Island Foods' Tibbott believes demo programs are "one of the keys to any new product," he says. "We like to work with stores that put a Tofurky sandwich on their menu in the deli and sell retail packs alongside. For example, people can try a

Cranberry-Tofurky sandwich, and they'll say, 'Wow, I never would have known this tastes so good.'"

Most people are willing to taste something new, especially if the food is more healthful. "Manufacturers are making new things, tastier things," EPPA's Ryan says. "If I saw these products in the deli and was offered a taste, I'd be more inclined to buy."

In addition to supermarket venues, Yves Meatless Products provides samples at health fairs and events such as marathons, women's shows, nutrition shows, and more.

MANUFACTURERS OF MEAT-ALTERNATIVES BELIEVE EDUCATION IS KEY TO GOOD SALES

"Let the taste do the talking," Goose says. "We have a huge fan base of nutritionists and trainers."

Executive Chef Demetrios Haralambatos, of Kontos Foods in Paterson, NJ, frequently advises food professionals on vegetarian cuisines. He recommends following the Kosher model. "The best way to present meatless-alternatives is to isolate a specific area of the showcase, perhaps change the color of the mats or plates to indicate vegetarian or a different style of dining," Haralambatos says.

The first step delis should take is to add sliced meat-alternatives to their sandwich programs. Turtle Island Foods makes six flavors, with hickory-smoked Tofurky being one of its best-selling products. The company pays careful attention to ultra-thin slicing to produce just the right texture and flavor.

Lightlife Smart Deli offers five sliced meat-alternatives, ranging from bologna to Santa Fe chicken, while Yves Veggie Cuisine offers seven flavors, including salami and roast beef.

Prepare the sandwiches using 100 percent vegetarian breads. Kontos Foods has been making vegetarian, Kosher-certified breads for many years as well as a selection of vegetarian flatbreads.

Next, introduce vegetarian products as heat-and-serve meals. Yves Veggie Cuisine produces six savory entrées, including Meatless Lasagna, Santa Fe Meatless Beef, and Classic Mac and Soy Cheese. Lightlife's

Smart Chili, a blend of vegetable protein and beans, mimics traditional flavors and delivers a robust, full-flavored soup entrée.

When preparing salads for the grab-and-go case, think about using chicken- or beef-flavored meat-alternative strips or tempeh strips. Put these choices right alongside traditional vegetarian entrées, such as meatless tortilla wraps, vegetarian curries and pastas.

Tapas-style foods, or small plates, also appeal to flexitarians. "Many deli departments have gondolas of olives," Haralambatos says. "Offer small plates with dolmades, hummus and olives." Sushi is another way to draw in more flexitarians. "If you've got sushi, expand it to introduce more vegetarian choices," he says.

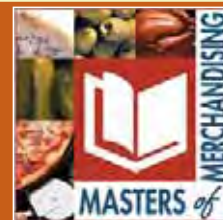
Through meal-of-the-day programs, deli operators can cycle in vegetarian meal choices, such as meals originating from Mediterranean countries where vegetarian eating is a tradition. Chef Haralambatos sees a trend in restaurants that delis can emulate. "People are identifying a vegetarian diet with healthy foods in the mainstream," he says.

Recently Haralambatos worked with two restaurant chains to develop vegetarian entrées, such as Greek vegetarian pastitsio, to replace other "heart-healthy" entrées. In addition, this year, Kontos Foods unveiled a 100 percent vegetarian pre-made falafel with tahini sauce. The falafels can be served on top of a salad along with Kontos' Pita Bread for a complete meal. The falafels come pre-made and ready to pop into the deep fryer or microwave.

And don't be afraid to introduce a little bit of humor along with the meat-alternative products. Turtle Island Foods' Tibbott expects people to make jokes about the company's tofu-based "Tofurky" products. "It's a great name for us, because it tells you what it is, and it's great to laugh along with," Tibbott says. "We've had some amazing free media over the years on shows like *Jeopardy*, *The X-Files*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and everything in between."

The Web sites for Yves Veggie Cuisine and Lightlife as well as their product packaging also lean toward humor and lightness, so take advantage of each company's point-of-sale materials and signage when doing demos. It will help people relax and be more open to trying the products.

Demographics, however, play an important role in successfully integrating meat-alternatives into mainstream delis. Delis with the highest likelihood of capturing more rings typically serve an educated consumer base of Baby Boomers concerned about healthful eating, better-for-you foods, weight control, the environment, animal rights and food safety. **DB**



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There are no substitute ingredients, preservatives, additives, artificial coloring or flavoring, nor are there fillers of any kind — no rice, wheat, corn or soy glutens of any kind, no soy protein isolates or corn by products.

Alexian produces distinctive pâtés and mousses in many varieties, which use pork liver,

chicken liver, turkey liver, as well as duck liver and goose liver. None of the meat or the liver that is used for production is from any animal that has been force fed. New package labeling indicates that its pâtés do not contain foie gras.

European Culinary Heritage

Alexian's reputation for creating outstanding meat products was started by the Groezinger family in the Black Forest of Germany in the 16th century.

Ewald Groezinger brought Alexian to America, and his distinctive, time-tested methods quickly became well known within the industry. He introduced unique specialties that are now nationally distributed under the Alexian brand. Today, celebrating 25 years, the tradition is continued by Laurie Cummins.

Promotional/Advertising/POS Ideas

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- Point-of-sale display and literature
- Sales incentives and promotion program
- Press relations in our main markets
- Display advertising targeting the trade.

Now celebrating 26 years in business, Alexian published *The 26 Years — 25 Ways to Enjoy Pâté* recipe collection, which was warmly received by both consumers and the trade. It is available to retailers at no charge.

Alexian's annual *Pâté Digest* newsletter informs the industry of the latest trends and happenings at the company.

Packaging Recommendations

Alexian's "first class" products are presented with upscale, modern packaging and graphics to convey their rarified quality. Abundant ingredient and product information reinforces the freshness and quality of the brand at point of purchase. Its unique, 7-ounce sliced packaging has 56 days of shelf life.

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In Today's Economy, Pizzas Show Their True Value

Generating \$89 million in sales, prepared pizza is the eighth-largest deli prepared category

BY CHRISTINA DAVIS ROBERTS

America's passion for pizza as a convenient and tasty meal is stronger than ever—and sales prove it. Prepared pizza sales in the deli totaled over \$89 million in the 52-week period ending May 2008, an increase of 5 percent over the previous year. During this period, supermarket delis sold more than 27 million pounds of prepared pizza, making it the eighth-largest deli prepared category, according to The FreshLook Marketing Group, a Hoffman Estates, IL-based market research company that tracks sales of in-store deli products.

Familiar favorites continue to be popular even though delis are introducing on-trend variations of pizza products and toppings. "Traditional flavors, such as cheese, pepperoni and combinations, are best-sellers," says Jon Newsom, national sales and marketing manager of food manufacturer Champion Foods, based in New Boston, MI.

Backing him up is FreshLook Marketing's report, indicating that nationwide deli department sales of "cheese" pizza alone increased 27 percent for the year ending May 2008 over the previous year, with sales totaling \$23 million. Sales of "combo" pizzas rose 11 percent, generating \$4 million. "Pepperoni" pizza sales held steady, realizing only a 3 percent increase and sales totaling almost \$9 million.

"Consumer attitudes regarding pizza are changing. Given the recent economic downturn, families—especially those with young children—are discovering pizza to provide exceptional food value," says Alan Hamer, vice president sales and marketing, Charlotte, NC-based Stefano Foods, a supplier of pizza and related food products. "Stefano's has noted a change in mix toward high-protein items, such as our House Special, which includes pepperoni, sausage, peppers, onions and olives."



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Whether pizza is assembled in-house, prepared at a supermarket chain's central kitchen or made-to-order for private label sales, deli pizza is racking up sales despite heavy foodservice competition. Approximately 69,000 pizzerias comprise 17 percent of all restaurants in the United States. Moreover, pizza is one of the most popular restaurant foods, with trendy toppings featured on 580 restaurant chain menus, according to FreshLook Marketing.

Customer familiarity with pizza products is driving deli sales, and some retailers are mimicking pizzeria meal-deal programs. Promo tie-ins allow delis to cross-promote breadsticks or beverages to make a complete "value" meal and merchandise additional deli items nearby to round out the meal.

DELIS SHOULD CONSIDER SELLING BY THE SLICE IN THE HOT BAR TO INCREASE SALES VOLUME.

— *Jon Newsom*
Champion Foods

"We've created a program to complement pizza sales in the deli by offering garlic or cheesy breadsticks, and work with retailers to promote a two-liter bottle of soda to complete a deli pizza program," says Champion Foods' Newsom.

He also notes the typical deli pizza differs from what's offered elsewhere in the supermarket. "We go for higher quality in larger sizes," Newsom says. "For example, 14-inch deli pizzas rather than the typical 12-inch pizzas found in the frozen section."

Making More Dough

Pizza dough makers servicing the deli industry, however, have encountered challenges along the way, requiring a change in direction. Dough manufacturer TNT Crust, part of Tyson Foods Inc., recently backed away from products geared for the



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEFANO FOODS

deli. "We are a 'hot press' dough manufacturer, which offers a younger, 'greener' dough that needs more rise, but gives great flavor," says Lisa Bartikofsky, TNT's national accounts sales manager for the Green Bay, WI-based company. "At the deli level, we found there was too much fluctuation in temperatures among different retailers' display cases to provide consistency in the product for take-and-bake."

TNT Crust's products are now found mainly in the frozen aisle. "Most of the deli pizza products use a sheeted dough, which is partially proofed and matured, so the flavor holds up, and offers more consistent product for take-and-bake," Bartikofsky explains. "Sheeted dough is not as sensitive to user handling and what you'll mostly find at supermarket delis."

Sheeted par-baked crusts provide deli operators with consistency as well as flexibility, says Bob Horth, vice president of business development, Utica, NY-based Delorio's Frozen Dough, a frozen dough maker. "The trend we're seeing is people asking for component programs in which stores put out their own sauce, cheese and shells with other products and make their own," Horth says. "We are constantly getting requests for flavored crusts as well as wheat crusts that appeal to more health-conscious customers."

Like other crusts, whole wheat varieties must hold up on their own. "It's not just about offering a wheat par-baked shell, but the recipe needs to offer nutritional benefits while still tasting good," Horth stresses. "We put out a healthier product that also makes people say, 'Gee, this tastes pretty good.'"

Delorio's offers an entire line of pizza components, including dough balls and par-baked crusts as well as fresh packaged tomato sauces and fresh tomatoes, allowing stores to customize and even specify unique recipes. "For foodservice we offer a 25-ounce package of sauce to create pizzas on-site, customizing the sauce with individual store minimums," Horth says. "Component sauce products can be tailored to different regions of the country, which can be at opposite ends of the spectrum for different brands, from a smoother, sweeter taste profile to a more rustic, chunkier texture. One region might like a chunkier sauce with seed in it so it has more texture, and another region might prefer a smoother, more finely ground sauce."

Delorio's also offers supermarket delis a new size and shape—a 12-cut "half sheet" rectangle that fits in almost any oven and feeds more people. "You get more eye appeal than a nine-cut, and the customer perceives more value with the 12-cut,"

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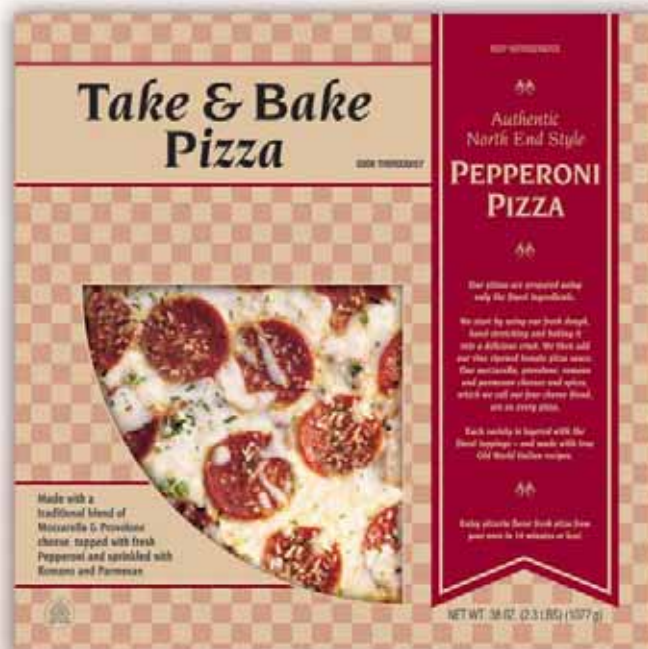
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Horth says. "In this day and age, with this economy, if you can show value to the customer, you can pick up sales."

And for people on special diets, Delo-rio's supplies gluten-free shells that come in retail packs to assemble in-house. "People are just learning what causes a lot of ailments where before they didn't know what was triggering them," Horth says. "Although we also promote the 'natural' aspects of deli pizza, we find more consumers relate to the concept of 'fresh' when it comes to buying pizza in the deli."

This fall, Champion Foods is rolling out a line of thin crust flatbreads to meet consumer demand for healthier and lighter foods. Flatbreads feature a thinner, crispier crust and a higher flavor profile than normally found in take-and-bake pizzas. Instead of pizza sauce, a flavored oil-based spread is used as a base.

"Flatbreads have a 10-inch square crispy crust that bakes faster, like in five minutes," says Champion Foods' Newson. "We've had success mimicking what customers are used to purchasing at local pizzerias. We offer BBQ Chicken, Buffalo, Margarita, and Spinach, Feta and Mushroom flatbreads, with top-of-the-line toppings such as diced tomatoes and spinach. They are comparable in price to a larger, traditional pizza product."

Serving Up Sales By The Slice

No matter how you slice it, pizza sold by the piece adds up to increased rings. "In addition to selling in the refrigerated section, delis should consider selling by the slice in the hot bar to increase sales volume, and offer a meal deal with the slice program to include a drink," Champion Foods' Newsom says.

Ukrop's, a Richmond, VA-based privately owned chain of 29 supermarkets throughout central Virginia, has incorporated foodservice as a large part of its retail footprint. The company makes its deli pizzas in a central corporate kitchen and sells a variety of pizza products in different areas of the deli.

"We have decided to make prepared foods a priority and have committed a lot of our efforts, such as store layouts, seating and dedicated registers, toward foodservice operations," says Nancy Wingfield, director of foodservice.

The in-store hot pizza program relies on conveyer-style ovens to bake hand-tossed pizzas prepared at the company's central kitchen. The company buys 24-ounce dough balls, which are slacked out, and then topped with sauce and bulk-purchased toppings following Ukrop's established handling guidelines and foodservice procedures.

"As an employer, we strive to hire people from the restaurant industry, or who are

interested in cooking and handling product," Wingfield says. "Our biggest portion of in-store hot pizza is by the slice for the lunch service versus whole pizza."

However, Ukrop's offers whole hot pizza delivery as part of its catering program. Customers can order online at the company's Web site, which provides an array of topping choices for its hot 16-inch hand-tossed pizzas. These range from traditional cheese and pepperoni to specialty pizzas, such as artichoke and asparagus, spinach Florentine, chicken with roasted red pepper, Taco, and Hawaiian.

MEAL DEALS ARE A GREAT WAY TO KEEP THE CUSTOMER IN THE DELI.

— Alan Hamer
Stefano Foods

"For traditional supermarkets with foodservice, pizza is a good next step from sandwich programs in terms of product handling, training and labor source," says Ukrop's Wingfield. "I view the pizza category as a good entry point to supplement prepared food in-store. It's feasible, uses common ingredients and doesn't require a tremendous amount of skill. I think in many ways it's a lot simpler than other food products you see in the supermarket."

Although Wingfield considers hot pizza sales in the deli to be a great entry point, she cautions that retailers need to look at the capital investment and space requirements for such an operation, and how hot pizza fits into existing programs in terms of sales and labor. Another thing to keep in mind, she adds, is how retailers are currently capturing the lunch business.

Heat-And-Eat Specialties

For consumers who want items to grab-and-go, delis should stock the cold case with pre-baked pizza, calzones, strombolis and

paninis for customers to heat and eat in the store or at work or home. "We find stores are typically under-SKUed in this category," Stefano Foods' Hamer says. "While in-store produced hot foods generate sales during lunch and dinner, heat-and-eat products handle demand whenever shoppers are in the department. Heat-and-eat items provide a certain margin, longer shelf life and unequaled product consistency. Finding the proper blend between hot and cold foods is the challenge."

Stefano's offers 15-ounce strombolis (a stuffed bread pocket) that come in traditional Italian flavors, such as pepperoni and cheese, or pepperoni, cheese and sausage. New additions to its stromboli product line address consumer demand for a natural whole grain product stuffed with spinach or broccoli and fresh garlic, peppers and different blends of Mozzarella, Provolone, Feta and Romano cheeses. Packaging statements underscore the healthful points of the product: no artificial flavors or colors and 19 grams of whole grain per stromboli.

Hamer also notes that the company's pre-grilled panini has shown strong growth. "Given strong national foodservice advertising, consumers are becoming more acquainted with these upscale sandwiches," he says.

In the refrigerated case, Ukrop's offers prepared products such as a ciabatta crust pizza and a square Sicilian-style pizza to take home. Grab-and-go cases are stocked with 12-inch pizzas, along with packs of personal-size pizzas so kids can have plain cheese and moms can choose pepperoni and sausage.

Ukrop's entices customers by bundling pizza products with free two-liter bottles of soda positioned nearby. "I view these take-home pizza products more as competing with regular products in the store versus the restaurant-sized pizza products offered hot behind the counter," Wingfield says.

Positioning take-home pizzas near additional topping ingredients can pump up sales. New York, NY-based Lactalis USA sells its President brand of cheeses in the deli, which can be grouped with other suggested toppings like salami, ham or diced produce. "One item that works very well on certain pizza is Brie," says President brand product manager Margolaine Besnard, who points out that customers have the choice of customizing pizza to their own tastes.

Delis can further merchandise pizzas by placing them near ready-made salads, easy-to-grab beverages, and other grocery items that would round out a meal. "The common goal for the retailer and supplier is to grow the deli contribution to store sales," Stefano Foods' Hamer says. "Meal deals are a great way to keep the customer in the deli." **DB**

The Case For Natural Deli Meats

For now, this category is a step ahead of premium, but the lines of distinction are blurring

BY LISA WHITE

In category management, natural deli meats are typically considered a higher grade than premium deli meats. But as Americans pay more attention to ingredients and labels, and processing technologies continue to improve, the line is blurring between the premium and natural categories. Consumers concerned about additives and preservatives are choosing natural meats because they feel they are benefiting their health, and as a result, a growing number of manufacturers are introducing and promoting a “natural” label.

“These are not the beige meats of yesteryear,” says industry consultant Stephen Goldberg whose eponymous firm is based in Boston, MA. “In fact, the quality is just as good, if not better, than premium deli meat brands.” Goldberg was previously vice president of operations in the United Kingdom for Austin, TX-based Whole Foods Market and regional vice president of the company’s Northeast Atlantic region.

Others in the industry believe natural deli meats will become part of the premium category and a more visible segment in supermarkets. “The buzz word is ‘value-added.’ This is where a majority of U.S. supermarkets are headed,” says Tony Zarek, director of sales for Negroni Corp.’s U.S. division, based in Little Falls, NJ. Negroni’s Italian meats are made in Northern Italy.

The Nielsen Company, headquartered in New York, NY, tracked sales of pre-packaged UPC-coded lunchmeat products for the 52-week period ending July 12, 2008. During this timeframe, dollar sales of lunchmeats with a natural claim on the package totaled almost \$109 million. In comparison, in the analogous 52-week period the previous year, dollar sales had totaled more than \$97 million. Overall in 2008, this category represented only 2.9 percent of the total dollar share of pre-packaged, UPC-coded lunchmeat products.

Random weight sales of natural deli meats increased 14 percent from February 2007 to February 2008, according to Hoff-

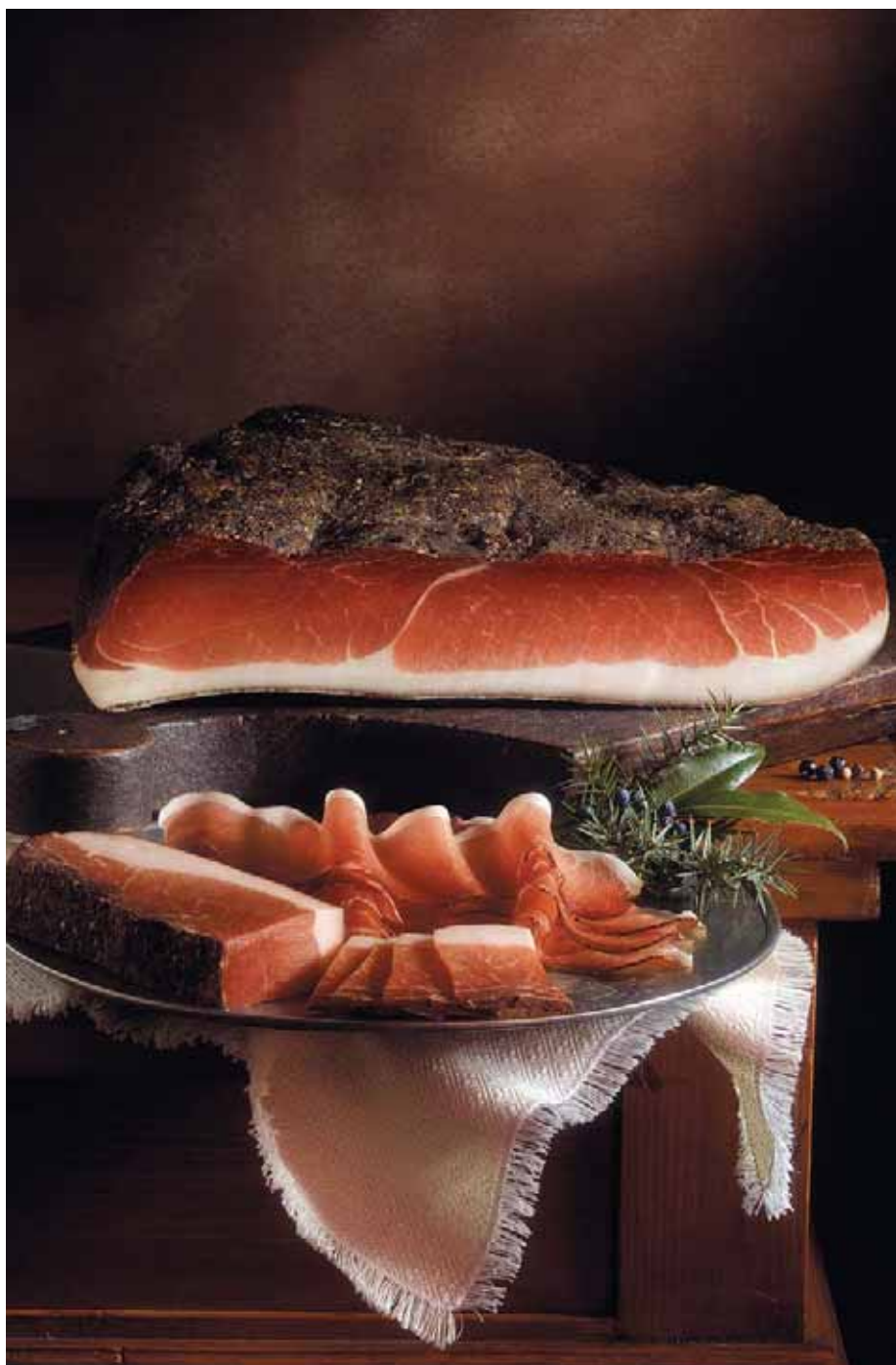


PHOTO COURTESY OF COLANGELO & PARTNERS

Labeling Confusion

Generally speaking, two main points of controversy apply to the labeling of processed meats. The first issue pertains to the distinction between artificial ingredients or chemical preservatives and natural ingredients or natural preservatives. For example, naturally occurring nitrates, including certain vegetables and sea salts, can be combined with harmless microorganisms to yield nitrite. These types of cutting-edge preservation methods, however, are not always recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards for labeling. Therefore, whether a manufacturer likes it or not, the potential exists for misleading labeling, such as “not preserved,” when in fact the product uses natural preservation methods. Furthermore, USDA definitions of “natural” ingredients are sometimes vague or inconsistent, which can lead to unnecessarily inefficient rules for manufacturers.

The second key labeling issue revolves around the definition of “minimally processed,” similar to the way the first issue revolves around the definition of “natural.” Because natural ingredients or preservatives are often slower to act than their chemical counterparts, manufacturers have modified their processing methods to maximize the effects of natural substances. The new processing methods, which include longer tumbling, mixing and heating times, are not always viewed by the USDA as fitting the criterion of “minimally processed.” As a result, “minimum” may have to be reconceived as the meat-making process is modified to work optimally with natural ingredients.

At the time of this report, USDA was still in the process of finalizing its definitions for natural processed meats, with major marketers and producers offering opinions. **DB**

Source: The U.S. Market for Deli and Other Refrigerated Processed Meats, March 2008, Packaged Facts, Rockville, MD.

man Estates, IL-based FreshLook Marketing. Dollar sales totaled more than \$51.8 million during the 52-week period ending February 24, 2008, versus a little more than \$45.3 million the previous year. Annual random weight sales of all deli meats totaled about \$4 billion—an indication that natural products play a minor role in the big picture.

Jim Costas, FreshLook Marketing's director of client services for deli cheese and meat, believes the figures might be inflated because the criteria for assigning “natural” were based solely on description. “This is not an attribute I feel comfortable with. I’m told there are no specific standards as to what constitutes ‘natural’ as there is now for ‘organic.’ I’m told that some brands added ‘natural’ to their packaging even though there were no changes to the product.”

Among producers, controversy surrounds the definition of “natural” because of its vagueness and potential for misleading labeling. According to the labeling terms used by the United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, a product can be labeled “natural” if it does not contain artificial ingredients or added colors, synthetic ingredients or chemical preservatives, and is only minimally processed—a process that does not fundamentally alter the raw product. Both manufacturers and the public have petitioned for a better clarification of the definition.

Natural Deli Meats Gain Momentum

For some time, the appearance of natural deli meats suffered from the lack of preservatives. Advances in technology and packaging have given natural meats better freshness appeal. “These meats aren’t graying as quickly as they have in the past,” Goldberg says. “We’ve overcome this obstacle with newer technology and processes.” Goldberg cites the example of Austin, MIN-based Hormel, which uses high-pressure processing (HPP), a cutting-edge USDA-approved all-natural process that employs intense water pressure to protect against harmful bacteria without affecting a food product’s taste, texture, appearance or nutritional value. Non-heat technologies to preserve foods, such as HPP, are propelling the category’s growth.

According to Pierre Zreik, CEO of Rovagnati USA, many natural deli meat manufacturers are investing heavily in research and development. “I feel the category will explode once everyone gets their act together,” Zreik says. Clifton, NJ-based Rovagnati USA, a subsidiary of Rovagnati in Biassono, Italy, imports the company’s brand of natural dry-cured prosciutto di Parma PDO and speck Alto Adige PGI.

Dry-cured meats from Italy have heightened consumer awareness about natural preservation methods, such as air and smoke curing. Moreover, the European Union’s Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and

Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) quality systems ensure meats are authentically produced and/or processed and prepared according to regional methods.

The curing methods used in producing speck Alto Adige PGI originated in the Tyrolean region of Italy, where farmers needed to preserve meat for their families. These methods merge the cultures of Europe’s northern Germanic states and southern Mediterranean regions.

“Speck combines the smoking methods of the north and the salting techniques of the south, and serves as a bridge between the two cultures,” says Dario Chiarini, account supervisor, New York, NY-based Colangelo & Partners, which represents the Consorzio Tutela Speck Alto Adige in the United States. “Speck Alto Adige is a gourmet ham appreciated worldwide for its quality and traditional method by which it is produced.”

Consumer interest in imported Italian natural deli meats is on the rise. “This segment has grown 10 to 15 percent in the last three years, similar to growth of imported cheese 20 years ago,” Negroni’s Zarek says.

Italy’s all-natural prosciutto di Parma is considered part of the premium category, says Paolo Tramelli, marketing manager for Parma, Italy-based Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma. “But when we point out that we are all natural, we want to be above the premium deli category,” he says.

At home in the United States, Birmingham, AL-based Porchetta Primata, has replicated a 2,000-year-old porchetta recipe, creating its own niche in the natural deli meat segment. The company has overcome challenges to produce such specialized products. “We were being supplied by a call market slaughterhouse but the animals they provided were inconsistent and fatty,” says Nathan Marcus, director of Porchetta Primata.

Porchetta Primata now works with Kentucky farmers who supply the type of pigs required. “We partnered with the Kentucky Proud program, which aimed to wean farmers off of tobacco crops and provide money to help them farm other crops and raise live animals for slaughter,” Marcus says. “We know our farmers and work with them to make sure we are supplied with the correct animal for our program and that their farming methods are up to par.”

Natural deli meats have yet to take conventional supermarkets by storm. Even in upscale delis, these products comprise an estimated 10 percent of sales. Many in the industry believe consumers are ready for them even though they cost \$2 to \$3 more per pound than traditional deli meats on sale.

Initially, speck Alto Adige piqued consumer interest because of its status as a new



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import product from Italy. Now widely distributed throughout the United States, speck Alto Adige draws repeat customers who are familiar with the meat's distinctive flavor profile. "The combination of the smokiness mixed with spice makes it truly unique," Colangelo's Chiarini says. "That extra bit of flavor combined with a pleasant texture really resonates with American palates."

"We have found that, even in conventional stores, investing in promotions and marketing to create additional awareness

and exposure for these products can drive growth in the natural deli meat category," says Ed Jenkins, vice president of sales and marketing for Plainville Farms, Hain Pure Protein and New Oxford Food, all part of Melville, NY-based Hain-Celestial Group.

Golden, CO-based Coleman Natural Products launched its pre-sliced natural deli meats and bulk deli program almost two years ago. Ernie Davis, vice president of sales, deli division, predicts the category will see major growth in the next six to 12

months as larger conventional supermarkets realize the potential for profits.

"I'm noticing that the trend is more toward private label natural deli meats rather than branded," Davis says. "There are major initiatives by big chains like Kroger and Ahold to incorporate these items into the deli."

In the short term, Davis says the natural category is still a notch above premium, but in the long term, it could become part of the premium category.

The Changing Consumer

Customer demographics for natural deli meats have subtly shifted over the past few years. Typically, consumers were affluent, highly educated with disposable income, and purchased the products from upscale natural food stores.

In recent years, the consumer base has expanded to include mothers of young children worried about artificial ingredients and preservatives, and Baby Boomers focused on eating more healthful foods. In addition, younger consumers concerned about the environment and animal cruelty are more apt to purchase natural meats. The bottom line is that consumers are more educated about their food and have more options.

When speck Alto Adige was first introduced to the United States, the primary goal was to target major markets with no specific demographic in mind. "However, given the price point and nature of the product, the target market has been food enthusiasts," Colangelo's Chiarini reports.

Studies by the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma revealed that, consumers who purchased deli meat at the full-service counter commonly perceived these products as "all natural" because the packaging didn't include ingredients, labels or a description.

"The risk in labeling is to exaggerate and focus all of the attention and marketing efforts on the concept of "all natural" while losing the importance of taste," says Tramelli of the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma.

Nevertheless, the younger generation is more knowledgeable and sophisticated when it comes to specialty foods like natural meats. "The growth of specialty products is prevalent in the 25- to 40-year-old age bracket, and this is where I see potential growth in natural meats," Zarek says.

Consultant Goldberg believes the natural deli meats segment crosses all boundaries. "Even in today's economy, natural meat consumers will eat higher quality protein in smaller quantities rather than buy cheaper meat," he says. "I believe, over time, natural deli meats will take over the premium deli meat section or at least become an equivalent category."

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Portion-control, eco-friendly, resealable and reusable products are driving innovation and continuous improvement

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

Packaging manufacturers are geared up and driving full throttle to solve the evolving needs of retailers and consumers. Innovation and continuous improvement go hand in hand as they barrel ahead to satisfy an ever-growing list of demands from consumers and retailers.

While quality and convenience are givens, new benchmarks are raising the bar on packaging products. Today's consumers want portion-control containers; eco-friendly materials; and microwavable, freezable, resealable and reusable packaging. "Consumer lifestyles are always changing, and people are demanding packaging options to fit these needs," says Tracey Murphy, product manager, InnoWare Plastics Inc., Alpharetta, GA. "Some of the most influential trends in recent years have been environmental concerns, health and dieting needs, convenience and transportability for on-the-move consumers."

Glenn Wiechman, manager, national sales, Lake Forest, IL-based Pactiv Corp., cites the fundamental shift from shelf-stable to refrigerated products as an impetus for new packaging designs. "Much of the market research shows that consumers perceive fresh refrigerated deli products as a healthy choice for their family," Wiechman says.

Pactiv Corp. provides the deli industry with a wide range of products and platforms.

"The majority of our products in the deli arena are polypropylene, so our focus is on 'reduce, reuse and recycle' to ensure we are moving in a positive direction to obtain sustainability," Wiechman says.

To meet the demand for sustainable packaging, Inline Plastics Corp., Shelton, CT, has been migrating many of its containers from oriented polystyrene (OPS) to polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is more recyclable than OPS. The company has adapted other products in light of recent trends. "Customers have been requesting containers with less ribbing for better product visibility, more leak-resistant seals, and more custom sizes," says Herb Knutson, Inline Plastics' director of marketing. "Product safety is also a big consumer concern."

Food safety is one reason vacuum packaging is at the forefront of the industry. New films scavenge oxygen to keep air away from the product, reducing the need for preservatives while providing longer shelf life and fresher flavor. "Consumers are now associating vacuum packaging with freshness," says Tim Avery, director of marketing, processed meats-North America, Sealed Air Cryovac Food Packaging Division, Duncan, SC.

Sealed Air Cryovac's Grip and Tear Bag combines oxygen-barrier properties with an easy-open pull-tab feature. Consumers can open the bag and keep fingers, counters and

utensils clean. From a food safety standpoint, the bag eliminates excessive handling and having to use knives to open it.

The field of tamper-resistant and tamper-evident packaging also continues to evolve because of food safety concerns. "Consumer research showed us that consumers wanted a leak-resistant clamshell container that was also tamper-resistant and tamper-evident," Inline Plastics' Knutson says.

As a result, Inline Plastics created its Safe-T-Fresh line of containers—tamper-resistant clamshells with a tamper-evident tear-strip hinge called Safe-T-Gard. "Once the container is closed, the consumer must remove the tear-strip hinge to access the contents," Knutson says. "There is no need to apply a shrink band to secure the product. In addition, the containers are highly leak-resistant, which makes them great for wet salads, olives, fresh cut fruit, etc."

New Twists On Convenience

Overall, packaging must enhance a product's convenience. "Convenience is No. 1 and that's what consumers gravitate toward," says Colin Butts, marketing associate, Fabri-Kal Corp., Kalamazoo, MI. "Grab-and-go. Things that fit in cup holders. Things that fit in your hand; that hold a small amount. Portion size is important."

In response to consumer demand for portion control, InnoWare launched a line called



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Meanwhile, sales of InnoWare's specialty, snack, and deli assortments have skyrocketed over the past few years. "This line includes smaller containers in a variety of shapes and sizes that can be used for portion control or space-saving needs," Murphy explains.

Sealed Air Cryovac's new portion control Multibag is geared for smaller households, single dwellers or empty nesters. The vacuum-sealed bag can be divided into several sections, allowing consumers to use what they need to prepare a meal, and then refrigerate or freeze the rest in the original packaging. A perforated seal divides the sections.

WNA, Chelmsford, MA, has reacted to the portion-control trend by producing a greater range of product sizes to meet specific demands. "WNA deli containers come in a wide variety of sizes," says Kara DiSarcina, marketing specialist. "Eight-ounce, 12-

ounce, 12-ounce XL, 16-ounce, 16-ounce XL, 24-ounce XL, 32-ounce and 32-ounce XL. The CaterLine PET Pack n' Serve bowl line continues to grow and is now available in nine sizes and two colors. In addition, CaterLine sectional and compartment trays allow for controlling portions and keeping flavors separate in sturdy, proportioned trays."

WNA's dome lids are made with a "Press-n-Lift" tab. "This makes opening and reclosing a snap without dome damage," DiSarcina says. "And WNA's CaterLine Pack n' Serve bowls have generous sized tabs on the lid and bowl for easy opening."

The ability to reseal has taken on more importance in recent years, as consumers expect food to remain fresher longer. "All of our packaging can be resealed so the unused portions can be kept fresh," says Jennifer Mitchell, marketing communications manager, Placon Corp., Madison, WI.

Merit Paper Corp., Melville, NY, makers of high-graphic, anti-fog rotisserie chicken bags, recently developed its Super Slide reclosable bag, making it easier for retailers and consumers to open and reseal. According to co-owner Ed Sussman, the bags are microwavable, freezable, leak-proof and perfect for grab-and-go products. The bags allow deli staff to carry as many as three in

each hand to the warmer.

"It's such a grab-and-go item that now a lot of supermarkets are putting these up front, not just in delis," Merit's Sussman says.

Sealed Air Cryovac is working on ovenable barrier bags that go directly in the oven to cook. "That's going to be huge," Avery says. "It's a fast-paced world. This will allow the processor to put product into the bag vacuum-packed. The consumer can put the package in the oven without touching the product and take it out ready to eat." The bags also shorten cooking time.

Retailers are working with manufacturers to create customized solutions. Pactiv Corp. has a state-of-the-art product development facility to provide customers with tailor-made solutions. "The facility allows us to custom design packaging and provide concepts, prototypes, and test market quantities, with a focus on speed and simplification," Wiechman says. "We provide value with innovative products over a wide range of materials."

Flair Flexible Packaging, Appleton, WI, also has a sizable research and development department. "The engineers help customers design packaging specific for their product needs," says Cheryl Miller, marketing and operations manager. "We can alter film

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Labels And Looks

Packaging holds the product, but the label sells what's inside. "Eye-popping graphics have provided companies without national brand identity an opportunity to have their products stand out in the store," says Glenn Wiechman, manager, national sales, Pactiv Corp., Lake Forest, IL. "Many researchers will tell you, the initial purchase of the product is due to the attention created by labeling or packaging. The repeat customer's purchase is normally generated by what's inside."

Chelmsford, MA-based WNA's deli container bases can be custom printed in up to seven colors and the lids in up to six colors. "This allows delis to customize their products with a logo, tagline, etc., to further promote the business," says Kara DiSarcina, WNA's marketing specialist. "Bold red and black are favorite choices for making an impact."

It is important to take advantage of customization options. "I think package design has a lot of room for innovation by creating unique designs or that are event-specific," says Niall Kelly, president, Cool Pak LLC, Oxnard, CA. "Labels can call out the benefits of the products or provide recipes for using the product."

Labels also can include stamps of approval by organizations, such as the New York, NY-based Biodegradable Products Institute, which lend authenticity to the packaging. "With increasing environmental legislation and laws within the packaging industry, stamps and certifications begin to become a major factor," says Tracey Murphy, product manager, InnoWare Plastics Inc., Alpharetta, GA. "We have worked to have our Eco line certified

by the Biodegradable Products Institute for compostability."

Besides safety and sustainability, other buzzwords are grabbing consumers' attention. "Vacuum-packed freshness—that's huge right now. Another one is 'No preservatives added,'" says Tim Avery, director of marketing, processed meat, North America, Sealed Air Cryovac Fresh Food Packaging, Duncan, SC. "All-natural. I think that's huge. Health related and reduced fat—those types of catch phrases are very big."

Along with buzzwords, package appearance speaks volumes about a product's image. For instance, Sealed Air Cryovac uses today's technology to create barrier packaging in metal or parchment finishes that evoke an old-fashioned feel. "There are some areas in retail where you do not want not a processed look," says Al Williams, product director, rollstock, North America, Sealed Air Cryovac Fresh Food Packaging. "Do you want to make it look like a brand or do you want an Old World feel?"

The colors chosen for InnoWare's containers convey very distinct messages. "Research shows that our black base/clear lid combination is viewed as the most upscale and trendy," Murphy says. "The tan color of our Desert Tan Eco containers portrays an eco-friendly message to consumers."

Packaging with maximum product visibility is often more important than the label, particularly when it comes to fresh foods. "You're trying to sell the product inside the package more than the graphics outside the package," says Roman Forowycz, executive vice president corporate sales and marketing, Clear Lam Packaging Inc., Elk Grove Village, IL. **DB**

structures to include resealable options, alter barrier qualities of the film, change sizes and designs. We also offer a creative design service for customers who would like a custom-printed design but do not have design work in hand."

Flair Flexible Packaging markets deli bags in various styles and sizes, including wing pouches, rotisserie bags and pouches, rib bags and fried chicken bags. The films are specially designed to not fog and to resist wilting under heat lamps or in deli warmers.

According to Miller, Flair offers several options for sustainable packaging, such as completely recyclable bags and pouches. Fully biodegradable and partially biodegradable structures are made on a custom basis. All biodegradable structures are tested and certified as biodegradable. Plastic products must decompose within 60 to 180 days in order to be certified biodegradable by the New York, NY-based Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).

The Eco-Friendly Boom

The green packaging boom is propelling the growth of eco-friendly options. "Clearly large retailers—and ultimately consumers—have put a lot more pressure on their suppliers and packaging supply chain to become more 'green' with their packaging," says Niall

Kelly, president, Cool Pak LLC, Oxnard, CA.

Cool Pak makes clear recycled plastic lids for containers made by Be Green Packaging LLC, Santa Barbara, CA, which began offering tree-free compostable bulrush-fiber food containers in May 2007. "It is estimated that the market for these types of packages will reach \$50 billion by 2015," says Ron Blitzer, co-founder of Be Green Packaging and global marketing and green packaging chief executive. "Over the past few years, demand for this kind of packaging has grown beyond the ability of any one company to meet demand."

Be Green's bulrush packaging is designed for the same uses as its traditional counterparts. "We have matched the sizes and shapes of the most commonly used deli containers in the food service industry—52-ounce, 32-ounce, 16-ounce and eight-ounce containers," Blitzer explains. "These containers are microwave-safe, freezer-safe and will hold up well in refrigerated environments."

Clear Lam Packaging, Elk Grove Village, IL, manufactures the EarthClear line of eco-friendly packaging. In launching this line, the company targeted four earth-friendly initiatives: sustainables, made from partially and sometimes fully renewable resources; recyclables, made from recycled plastic or paper

as well as fully recyclable packages; degradables, made from degradable oil-based or paper-based materials; and lightweighting, made from materials offering significant weight savings over traditional containers, such as cans, bottles and jars.

"In the focus groups and studies we've done online, consumers want to be educated and want to be told what's the right thing to do," says Roman Forowycz, Clear Lam's executive vice president of corporate sales and marketing.

"This is not a fad," Be Green's Blitzer says. "This is a reality that has converged into a perfect storm of awareness. The price of oil, the use of oil, the end of landfill space, issues of topsoil, water conservation and the legacy of what we are leaving behind for the next generation is now top of mind. The retailer can no longer justify using foam trays and plastic containers when alternatives are available at prices that are near neutral."

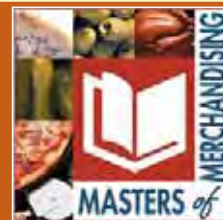
Many areas around the country are banning foam, according to Megan Havrda, Be Green's senior sales and marketing director and eco advisor. "This is creating a huge need for an alternative," she says.

Fabri-Kal Corp. recently introduced its Greenware line made from corn-based plastics. In addition to cold drink cups, its portion cups and lids are now available in two-



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Recommended Display Ideas

In-mold labeling can add “pop off” graphics to the containers with true colors and images that inevitably will catch the consumers’ eye. This process along with utilizing square containers that allow you to have the appropriate facing on

from the side view but also from a top view of the product.

Branding Opportunities

Eye-popping graphics have provided companies without national brand identity an opportu-

able investment in high-quality dry offset printing, in-mold labeling, and custom package design capabilities to meet these market trends.

Creative/Unconventional Merchandising Ideas

- Merchandise your take-home deli meals by offering different shape containers to represent different food groups. For example, square containers would hold fruit, vegetables would be in ovals and starches in rounds.
- Provide an in-store flyer that will help consumers pick out all the appropriate items for a fresh take-home meal.

Food Safety Considerations

Tamper evident closure systems are designed to meet today’s increasing food safety standards without raising packaging costs. These consumer friendly containers offer processors the choice of container or closure base systems to meet their requirements.



the store shelf will draw the consumers’ attention to your package. Utilizing a square package with in-mold labeling such as the Pactiv TE-tainer™ series provides a billboard approach not only

nity to have their products stand out on the store shelf. As many researchers will probably tell you, the initial purchase of the product is because of the attention created by labeling or packaging. The repeat buyer’s purchase is normally generated for what’s inside. Much of the buzz comes from buying fresh products rather than shelf stable products that are considered processed and less healthy. These products also provide a sense of home-style appeal that is often lost with large food companies.

What do consumers want

Much of the market research shows today that consumers perceive fresh refrigerated deli products as a healthy choice for their family. The changes we have seen focus on family healthy meals with packaging becoming a vehicle to deliver convenience right to the consumers table. Small companies are capitalizing on this market change by turning to custom package designs and graphics to get them recognized on store shelves. That’s why Pactiv has made a consider-



Quick Tips

1. Allow your packaging to stand out on the shelf—using different colored and shaped packaging as well as vibrant graphics to differentiate your product from your competitors.
2. Let the product sell itself—leave enough area on your clear container without graphics to allow the consumer to see the product inside
3. Grab-and-go—Don’t forget about the Single-serve portion sized deli salads with the growing demand for fresh foods.



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ounce, 3.25-ounce, and four-ounce sizes. "The benefits of this type of packaging are that it's compostable, and it's also a natural material that's renewable," Fabri-Kal's Butts says. "Plus the source is American-grown, so it cuts down on transportation and fuel use."

InnoWare has responded to environmental concerns with its Eco line of products and a new collection of PET items. "Our Eco containers are sustainable and compostable," Murphy says. "They are made

from plant starches, which is an annual renewable resource. PET is the most recycled plastic. Developments in both materials have been a result of technology and consumer demand."

Packaging innovations are including more recycled content. Placon's food-grade EcoStar PET material combines amorphous polyethylene terephthalate (APET) and recycled polyethylene terephthalate (RPET) materials that together meet Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requirements. Recy-

clad water and soft drink bottles create RPET. "When consumers are finished with PET packages, they can be placed in curbside recycling bins for later use in other package applications," Placon's Mitchell says.

At the same time, Placon aims to reduce the amount of source materials in some of its products. "Our products made from polypropylene—HomeFresh roaster and deli containers—are made from a lighter gauge polypropylene material compared to others on the market," Mitchell explains.

At Sealed Air Cryovac, barrier bags present somewhat of a challenge. "Biodegradability is not something that works well for these products, so we're looking at source reduction," Avery says.

Along the same lines, Merit Paper's Sussman notes that the company's rotisserie chicken bags use much less material and take up about 75 percent less space than traditional domed containers.

Comparing Costs

The comparative price of eco-friendly packaging continues to drop, in part because the relatively stable cost of plants and plant-based materials compared to the recent spikes in oil costs.

"Yes, people are willing to pay more for sustainable packaging," Be Green's Blitzer says. "But if you look at the real costs, you can make a case for costs being neutral."

While the price of Be Green's bulrush containers is close to that of plastic packaging, it is more expensive than foam. However, Blitzer says, "A 200-count box of foam trays is almost three times the cube of our sustainable trays. When you think of the time and energy it takes to transport and store those trays you begin to see what the costs really are. Or take a look at the warehouse space foam occupies—the real estate is expensive and every square foot needs to be utilized for profit and sales, not the storage of foam. Once this industry gets some traction with volumes, we may actually have a lower cost than traditional packaging."


When packaging costs are higher, retailers frequently make up the difference. "Consumers are willing to pay minute amounts more," Fabri-Kal's Butts says. "They're not willing to take on the full cost."

Retailers with an established reputation for being environmentally friendly view green packaging as an obvious choice, whereas more traditional stores are eying eco-friendly products as an opportunity. And unlike some nebulous environmental strategies, everyone can see the tangible merits of green packaging. "It can be a visible, take-out-of-the-store opportunity for marketing," Butts says. **DB**

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The Artistry Of California Artisan Cheese

Cheesemakers in the Golden State are earning a reputation for quality, variety and flavor

BY LAURA MARTINEZ

From coast to coast, California cheeses are making a name for themselves in American food-savvy cities, top restaurants and specialty cheese departments. It's all part of a rapidly changing American palate eager for intriguing aromas, complex flavors and natural ingredients. As the new American palate takes hold, people are turning to California artisan cheeses for consistent high quality, variety and flavor.

"The American palate is becoming more sophisticated," says Doug Jay, president of Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA, a supplier of specialty and gourmet foods and cheeses. "People are looking for higher quality products, and they're willing to pay for them. It's not just the taste, but also the nutrition and environmental impact of what they put in their mouths."

The state's artisan cheesemakers produce award-winning cheeses—many of them American originals—from cow's, goat's and sheep's milk, using traditional, handcrafted techniques. Some are producing farmstead cheese from the milk of their own herds.

"When people hear the word 'artisanal,' so many envision a family living on a small farm," says Jason Knight, president of Mozzarella Fresca Inc., Concord, CA. "But there's a broader spirit to the word 'artisanal'—it's the love of making the highest quality, best tasting cheese that everyone can enjoy. Innovation is critical to do this, and we've focused very hard on that."

Mozzarella Fresca is the first U.S. producer of fresh Mozzarella to win gold medals at the 2007 World Cheese Awards in London, England. Both its Fresh Mozzarella Ovoline and Fresh Mozzarella Ovoline, Cultured, took top honors. The company's line of fresh Mozzarella cheeses also include marinated Mozzarella, Mozzarella medallions and Perlini—smooth, milky, one-gram pearls of cheese for topping pizzas, tossing into salads or popping into the mouth.

"We think of ourselves as an artisan producer," Knight says. "We make cheese on an individual vat level. It's a small-batch process,



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAROUND DAIRIES

but we're able to produce batches more frequently. It's still handcrafted, but you can buy it nationally and internationally."

At the 2008 American Cheese Society competition held in Chicago, IL, California cheesemakers took home 40 awards, including 12 first-place ribbons. The awards reflect their continual efforts to perfect their craft.

Heather Fiscali, director of sales and marketing for Modesto, CA-based Fiscali Cheese Co. credits master cheesemaker Mariano Gonzalez for producing Fiscali's award-winning San Joaquin Gold, Lionza, and Bandage Wrapped Cheddar, all of which require careful aging. "The care and nurturing of a wheel of cheese is something the average person isn't aware of," Fiscali says. "Our cheddar is turned every day for 60 days. After that, Mariano checks and turns it whenever he feels it is necessary."

According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Golden State cheesemakers produce 250 different varieties and styles of cheese. In 2007, California produced 2.29 billion pounds of cow's milk commodity and artisan cheeses, making it the second-largest cheese-producing state. Of this figure, 50 percent was Mozzarella, 21 percent was Cheddar and 14 percent was Monterey Jack, a California original pro-

duced by the missions that settled in the state more than 200 years ago. Hispanic-style cheeses account for 5 percent of the state's production, making California the largest producer of Hispanic-style cheeses.

A History Of Cheesemaking

California's robust dairy industry is two centuries in the making. Artisan cheesemakers draw on local experience in animal husbandry, herd management, fluid milk production and commodity cheese production.

In 1914, Fiscali's Swiss ancestors founded a dairy farm in Modesto, CA, in the San Joaquin Valley. Today, the company's herd of Holstein, Jersey and Brown Swiss cows supply milk to major manufacturers such as Nestlé as well as its own farmstead operations, which the company founded in 2000.

"We've added Jerseys and Brown Swiss to the herd of Holsteins to increase the butterfat content of the milk," Fiscali says. "Holsteins produce a lot of milk, but don't have as high a butterfat content."

Terrain and climate—or terroir—are key ingredients in producing Original Blue: the coastal fog, the salty Pacific breezes, and the Grade A raw milk from a closed herd of 250 Holsteins that graze on certified organic, green pastured hills overlooking Tomales Bay.

Original Blue is made within hours of milking, while the salty air helps cure and age the cheese for a minimum of six months.

"Our animals are not exposed to the extremities found in other parts of the country," says managing partner Jill Giacomini-Basch. "Our climate is temperate year-round—between 55 and 75 degrees."

Turlock, CA-based Karoun Dairies Inc. not only draws on California's abundant milk resources, but also on the Armenian heritage of founder and CEO Anto Baghdassarian. "Almost all of our cheeses and cultured products are influenced by our Mediterranean background—by the way we make our products and by their unique taste," says chief operating officer Ross Baghdassarian. "Most of the cheeses are handmade, require a lot of care and are made in small batches."

The company produces numerous cheese and cultured milk products from hormone-free cow's milk and goat's milk. According to Baghdassarian, California's terroir is very important in making cheese products. "The climate and vegetation of California greatly influence the milk we receive," he says. "Our reputation of making high-quality cheese is dependent on the high quality of California milk that we receive and our traditional Middle Eastern cheesemaking skills."

Established by the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), South San Francisco, CA, the Real California Cheese seal was adopted in 1984 as part of a strategic promotional effort for the California cheese industry. Products bearing the seal are made from cow's milk produced in California, contain no preservatives and comply with quality standards established by state law.

Although the CMAB represents the interests of all cow's milk products, the Real California Cheese seal assures consumers they are purchasing natural cheese, made in California exclusively with California milk. "The seal was created by the CMAB, which was the first U.S. dairy advisory board to generate a set of industry standards for cheese production," says Stan Andre, CEO of the CMAB.

The program also has heightened consumer awareness about the state's cheese-making prowess. "From 1983 to 2004, California cheese production increased by 609 percent, seven times the national growth rate," Andre says. "And national cheese consumption increased by 1.8 billion pounds."

Where The Goats Roam

In Humboldt County, all the best goat's milk goes into making Cypress Grove Chevre's fresh and aged goat's milk cheeses. "The grass carries a lot of legumes that keep the goats healthy," says Bob McCall, sales



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and marketing manager for the McKinleyville, CA-based company. "We pay an additional bonus for high butterfat and protein in milk. If you know anything about raising goats, the only way to get that quality of milk is to make sure they are well fed and cared for—happy goats make good milk."

Jennifer Bice, owner of Redwood Hill Farms and Creamery in Sebastopol, CA, is as well known for her goats as she is for her natural and bloomy-rind goat's milk cheeses. "If you don't have great milk to start with, you can't make great cheese," she stresses.

Meyenberg Goat Milk Products, Turlock, CA, is the largest goat's milk producer in the United States. Working with 26 dairies, this family business produces five varieties of Jack cheese—all of which have an exceptionally light, creamy texture and flavor. The company also produces robust, aged Cheddar cheeses with a firmer, drier texture than traditional Cheddar cheese. "People want to buy local, and artisan cheese is in demand," says Tracy Plante-Darrimon, director of marketing.

The California Artisan Cheese Guild

Several years of artisan cheesemaker discussions led to the 2007 incorporation of the California Artisan Cheese Guild (CACG),

based in Petaluma, CA. "The Guild helps consumers recognize the farmers and cheesemakers in our own backyard," says CACG president Lynne Devereux. "We support consumer education through targeted events sponsored by retailers, wineries and publications. For guild-member cheesemakers, we bring high-level educational programs and networking opportunities to help producers refine their products and build new skills."

The CACG is particularly important to goat's and sheep's milk cheesemakers as they are not represented by the CMAB. "By representing the range of milks, varieties and styles of cheese made throughout the state we make a strong statement to national consumer markets," Devereux says.

The CACG represents the collaborative spirit of California's artisan cheesemakers. Established producers give tours and help aspiring cheesemakers learn techniques. To assist each other with national distribution, they've consolidated shipments. "We have trucks picking up in California every week," says Atlanta Foods' Jay. "Cheesemakers work together to bring all the cheese back on the same truck. Volume cures a lot of problems, particularly in the freight business."

Jay also appreciates the differences

among California's artisan cheeses, whose textures, flavors and types do not have a lot of redundancy. "One thing that's unique about California is the variety," he says. "You'll find American original Monterey Dry Jack next to some of the best soft-ripened cheeses in the world."

He's right. For every category of artisan cheese, there is a California example: fresh and natural-rind Chevres; Feta; fresh Mozzarella; stracchino-style cheese; soft-ripened with bloomy, washed and ash rinds; Camembert and Brie; Blue Cheese; raw milk cheese; Hispanic-style cheeses, aged Cheddars, Monterey Jack, and cheeses flavored with a wide array of spices, vegetables, fruits and deli meats.

Karoun recently introduced Yanni Grilling Cheese, a semi-firm white cheese with a light yellow tint and distinctive layered texture similar to chicken breast. "The unique feature of this cheese is that it can withstand a tremendous amount of heat and yet stay relatively firm and develop a golden crust," Baghdassarian says.

In Monrovia, CA, King Cheese Corp. is turning a 30-year history of producing hand-braided Armenian cheese into new products by incorporating top-quality deli meats such as prosciutto and jamón serrano. The company's braided cheeses and deli meat rolls can be found in Costco stores and large supermarkets on both coasts.

"California makes the best artisan cheeses in the country," Mozzarella Fresca's Knight says. "We have the widest variety and diversity of climate. We're already a household name in some places. We need to get the word out better."

Local pride goes a long way in spreading the word about California artisan cheese. "We are unabashedly American and original in both names of our cheeses and configuration," says Cypress Grove's McCall. "Cypress Grove Humboldt Fog Grande is an absolutely unique cheese, as is Bermuda Triangle and Purple Haze."

Giving people a chance to taste artisan cheese is another key promotional tool. Cheesemaker demonstrations, food festival appearances and in-store demos are part of everyone's marketing plan.

"We believe the best use of our marketing dollar is getting cheese into people's mouths," says Point Reyes' Giacomini-Basch. "That's where we spend the bulk of our money. We've put together demo kits in a box that we inventory and ship to warehouses so retailers can see who we are, how we make our cheese, and sample out a one-pound wedge of cheese."

Clearly, the American palate has much to look forward to.

DB



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The Renaissance Of Dutch Cheese

Hollandse kaas continues to reinvent itself as it travels across the waters of the world

BY ELIZABETH BLAND

The Dutch Renaissance was a period of exploration and growth in all areas of culture, including dairy farming and cheese trading. From a mere handful of basic cheese styles—Gouda, Edam and Boerenkaas—came an explosion of new cheeses that have found a niche in a variety of cultures. Today, Holland is one of the largest cheese exporters in the world, with Gouda accounting for almost 50 percent of the production. At the same time, Dutch cheesemakers are protecting artisanal methods, reviving ancient recipes and creating new flavor combinations to keep Dutch cheese vibrant.

The Proof Is In The Polder

Although historical records date Dutch cheesemaking back to 400 AD, the true dairy Renaissance came about in the 1500s and 1600s when cheesemakers began to export Dutch products on a large scale. To accommodate the growing demand for farmland, a territory in northern Holland was reclaimed from the sea for agricultural uses. The Beemster polder is the oldest area of reclaimed land in the Netherlands. It is a virtual masterpiece of creative planning—a well-ordered network of fields, roads, canals, dikes and settlements, all laid out according to Renaissance design and ideals. The polder also boasts rich clay soil covered with premium grazing grass.

"Cheesemaking in Holland has an incredible history," says Daphne Zepos, co-owner and vice president of cheese importer Essex Street Cheese Co., Long Island City, NY. "It's linked to the Dutch Renaissance in its use of cows in the swamps that were left behind by the dikes that kept the sea out. That's how we got that incredible milk to make cheese."

Essex Street's imported Dutch line, L'Amuse, comes from the Fromagerie L'Amuse, which like Neal's Yard Dairy, in London, England, aims to safeguard farmhouse production in the Netherlands. Located outside of Haarlem, L'Amuse selects



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEEMSTER

Is It Dutch Or Is It Domestic?

In the United States, the line between Dutch and domestic cheeses becomes blurred. Dutch-born cheesemakers are coming to America to make cheese, and Americans are following suit with interpretations of Dutch-style cheeses.

Jules Wesselink, from Haarlem, Holland, established the Winchester Cheese Co. in Winchester, CA, in 1996. According to general sales manager Jeff Smoot, Winchester's most popular cheeses are those made in the traditional Dutch style, with medium aged and super aged Goudas leading the pack. "There is no substitute for Parmesan," Smoot says, "but any recipe that calls for Parmesan can use our super aged Gouda.

In keeping with the ever-changing American palate, Winchester also makes a

young jalapeño Gouda laced with red peppers. King Tut, Winchester's most aged cheese is extremely hard.

The Midwest is home to pockets of Dutch communities as well. Rolf and Marieke Penterman emigrated from the Netherlands to Thorp, WI, in 2002 to pursue their passion for dairy farming.

In 2006, Marieke founded Holland's Family Farm and began making "Marieke" brand Goudas, and by 2007, the company's Foenegreek Gouda won top honors at the U.S. Championship Cheese Contest. "We had only been making cheese for four months," Marieke recalls. The winning streak continues, with Holland's Family Farm taking home eight awards at the 2008 American Cheese Society Competition, held in Chicago, IL.

Flavio DeCastilhos, founder of Tumalo Farms in Bend, OR, draws his inspiration from Italian and Dutch cheeses, art and culture.

Besides producing Classico, an award-winning wheel aged eight to 10 weeks, DeCastilhos also experiments with local ingredients to develop uniquely Oregonian recipes, including Pondhopper made with beer from a local microbrewery, and Nocciola, a goat cheese with hazelnuts from Oregon.

For DeCastilhos, creating cheese is like creating art. His keen interest in Dutch and Japanese art, combined with his penchant for Dutch cheese, drew him to an industry with imminent possibilities for commingling food, culture and esthetics. **DB**

cheeses specifically for Essex Street, buying very young cheese from the Beemster area and aging it for two years until it is complex and crystallized.

Cheese producer Beemster, however, runs the most visible cheese operation in the Beemster polder. Beemster remains on the public palate because of its newsworthy products, such as the début of Wasabi Beemster on NBC's *Today Show* and Beemster's entry in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for the world's largest cheese.

Besides producing traditional Dutch cheeses, Beemster also has resurrected long-lost recipes, the most recent of which is Master's Choice. Released in fall 2008, this special-edition cheese is made only from summer milk and aged for 17 months. "There are so many extra steps that go into Master's Choice to make it smoother and deeper in flavor," explains Michael Blum, director of Beemster USA, Elizabeth, NJ. "The curd is washed at least twice. Originally, the winter milk was used to feed the calves, so they had to make cheese that would last as long as possible. That's why they have the extra step of washing the curd."

Typically, a basic formula is used in making Dutch cheeses that calls for only one curd washing. In Dutch cheese production, calf rennet curdles the milk and the resulting curds are cut and exposed to hot water, hence the term "washed curd." This mass of curds undergoes a pressing to expel the whey. The diminished sugar and water levels keep the bacteria in check, allowing the cheese to age longer.

The wheel then spends several days in a

brine bath and dries on pine shelves for maximum ventilation. At the end of the drying process, a porous plastic coating is painted onto the rind so the cheese can breathe as it ages. When it is ripe, the cheesemaker seals it in decorative paint or wax and sends it to market.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEEMSTER

The Universal Appeal Of Dutch Cheeses

As a legendary sea-faring people, the Dutch have traveled far and wide. Their cheeses have melded with foreign flavors and adapted to local preferences. It seems the entire world is eating Dutch cheese, but exactly who is eating which cheeses and where?

Fred Chesman, vice president of the cheese department at Atalanta Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ, divides the Dutch cheese market into three basic segments: 1) Dutch-Americans who prefer both medium-aged and cured cheeses, 2) U.S. consumers who crave exotic specialty items and 3) certain

Hispanic populations that are driving high demand for mild Edam and Gouda. "I think the majority of the Dutch cheese goes to the Hispanic trade, with Edam popular in Puerto Rico and Gouda popular in Cuba," Chesman says. "That's not to say Americans don't eat it, but the specialty items from Holland, such as the flavored cheeses, are more geared toward the American trade."

Canadians also relish quality Gouda, particularly consumers in the English-speaking areas of central and western Canada where the Dutch originally settled. La Fromagerie Bergeron is Canada's premier producer of Gouda. Located in Saint-Antoine-de-Tilly, Québec, it has adopted the moniker, "Canada's Masters of Gouda."

Although primarily English-speaking Canadians consume La Fromagerie Bergeron's Goudas, the company uses French names for marketing purposes. "We kept the French names because they give some romance to the cheeses," says Isabelle Roy, La Fromagerie Bergeron's director of sales and marketing. Some fanciful names include Le Fin Renard ("clever fox"), Le Coureur des Bois ("runner of the woods" or "illegal fur trader") and a smoked Gouda called Le Calumet, which means "peace pipe."

At press time, La Fromagerie Bergeron was only available in Canada, but the company is investigating export opportunities to the northeastern United States.

The Art Of Fine Cheese

When people refer to the Renaissance, they usually think of art—not cheese. In the Netherlands, fine art has been a key cultural component throughout history, and Dutch



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producer K.H. de Jong has incorporated famous Dutch artists into its Masterpiece collection. David Voremberg, president of Jana Foods in Secaucus, NJ, importers of K.H. de Jong, explains the correlation. "We're drawing a connection between the quality of Dutch art and Dutch artists, and the quality of our cheeses," Voremberg says.

The best-known brand is Rembrandt, aged at least 12 months. Other Masterpiece cheeses include Vincent, Mondrian and Mediterranean-flavored DaVinci. The

romantic imagery and complex flavors of the cheeses have proven successful. "In the last five to 10 years, we've had double-digit growth of the Dutch line," Voremberg adds.

During the height of the Renaissance, Dutch explorers discovered aromatic spices on their journeys—cumin, curry and cloves—which soon made their way into cheeses. The Dutch proclivity for flavored cheese exists today, but primarily within a limited spice set.

On the other hand, U.S. consumers have

developed a hankering for Dutch cheeses with bold and flashy flavorings. Both Dutch and American producers have responded with a rainbow of unconventional combinations. Jana Foods imports Red Dutch, an Edam blended with red hot chili peppers, and Anco Fine Cheese, Fairfield, NJ, brings in a goat's milk cheese, Belle Blanche, dotted with stinging nettles.

As demand for the exotic increases, previously unconventional cheeses are becoming standard. Producer Anna Van Dijk's quirky Dorothea, a "potato chip" goat's milk cheese flavored with potato skins and basil oil, is now a common item in U.S. stores. Dorothea, Cornelia and Van Dijk cheeses are made in the Netherlands near Eindhoven from a single herd of 500 goats.

Dutch Cheese Reaches New Heights

No longer is Dutch cheese limited to sea-faring voyages. Today, it also travels in hot air balloons. In an education campaign for schoolchildren, Beemster's "Betty Bovine" hot air balloon, emblazoned with a giant blue cow, floats across the United States to visit schools where pilot and retired schoolteacher Rebecca Elkins discusses science, nutrition and life goals.

"It's not just about cheese," says Beemster's Blum. He finds that cheese opens the gateway to diverse topics of study. "You can tie cheese into the classroom in so many ways. You can even teach ancient history around cheesemaking."

According to Blum, children are important players in the movement toward educated food choices and social awareness. "Kids influence their parents," he points out. "The next step is to get kids to want a good, healthy Dutch cheese and not just Kraft singles."

Yet others view the American gourmet palate as firmly established. According to Emmanuelle Hofer-Louis, Anco's director of marketing, Americans respond to the authenticity and value of farmstead and artisan cheeses. "More people in the U.S. are educated enough to know what is good and what is not," she says. "They go after something of better quality."

In such a vast country, Americans are at different places in their journey of cheese appreciation, and education is key in building upon the established base of the modern specialty market.

Indeed, Renaissance and learning go hand in hand, but exploration of the senses and all that is beautiful—including cheese—has proven its merit over the centuries. As one of the leading cheese categories in the world, Hollandse kaas is here to stay and to captivate new generations of cheese lovers. **DB**

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FEDERAL REGISTER: Food Labeling; Current Trends In The Use Of Allergen Advisory Labeling; Public Hearing; Request For Comments

08.aug.08

Federal Register (Volume 73, Number 154)

Pages 46302-46307

DOCID: fr08au08-69

AGENCY: Food and Drug Administration, HHS

ACTION: Notice of public hearing; request for comments

SUMMARY: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is announcing a public hearing on the use of advisory labeling of allergens in foods. FDA is developing a long-term strategy to assist manufacturers in using allergen advisory labeling that is truthful and not misleading, conveys a clear and uniform message, and adequately informs food-allergic consumers and their caregivers. To that end, FDA is soliciting comments and information to assist the agency in determining how manufacturers currently use advisory labeling, how consumers interpret different advisory labeling statements, and what wording is likely to be most effective in communicating to consumers the likelihood that an allergen may be present in a food. The agency is also interested in receiving comments about whether consumers find advisory labeling helpful for making food purchasing decisions. This public hearing is the first step in closing existing knowledge gaps in developing our long-term strategy.

FDA Announces Final Rule Amending The Food Additive Regulations To Allow For The Irradiation Of Fresh Iceberg Lettuce And Fresh Spinach

21.aug.08

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/irradlet.html>

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced a final rule today amending the food additive regulations to provide for the safe use of ionizing radiation for the control of food-borne pathogens and extension of shelf life in fresh iceberg lettuce and fresh spinach. FDA has determined that this use of ionizing radiation will not adversely affect the safety of the food.

This final rule is a partial response to a food additive petition (FAP 9M4697) that had been filed by The National Food Processors Association (now the Grocery Manufacturers' Association) on behalf of The Food Irradiation Coalition. In 2007, the petitioner requested a response to a part of the original scope of the

petition while the remainder would remain under safe use of ionizing radiation for the control of food-borne pathogens and extension of shelf life in fresh iceberg lettuce and fresh spinach up to a maximum absorbed dose of 4.0 kilogray (kGy).

This final rule will permit the irradiation of fresh iceberg lettuce and fresh spinach to a maximum absorbed dose of 4.0 kGy, which is effective in reducing microbial pathogens that have been associated with these crops in the past.

There will be a 30-day period for submitting objections or a request for the Federal eRulemaking Portal at:

<http://www.regulations.gov>. Or written submissions may be sent to the Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305), Food and Drug Administration, 5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061, Rockville, MD 20852.

Additional information regarding the final rule is available by contacting Dr. Lane A. Highbarger, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (HFS-255), Food and Drug Administration, 5100 Paint Branch Pkwy., College Park, MD 20740, 301-436-1204.

U.S. Senator Barack Obama Introduced The Improving Food-borne Illness Surveillance And Response Act Of 2008

02.aug.08

7th Space

Michael Ortiz

<http://7thspace.com/headlines/>

U.S. Senator Barack Obama introduced the Improving Food-borne Illness Surveillance and Response Act of 2008, which would improve information sharing and collaboration between public and private agencies and other organizations to effectively address food safety challenges. This summer, millions of Americans were exposed to Salmonella and many became ill, while state and federal agencies struggled to identify the contaminated food source and develop a comprehensive and timely response.

The Obama food safety legislation would strengthen and expand food-borne illness surveillance in order to better inform and evaluate efforts to prevent these illnesses. This bill would also enhance the identification and investigation of food-borne illness outbreaks, which would assist officials to respond appropriately. In anticipation of future challenges, this bill will require a survey of state health departments to determine critical needs as well as the development of strategic plans.

"We must do everything we can to ensure

Martin 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.

that our families don't get sick from the foods they eat," said Senator Obama. "This summer, when so many Americans were exposed to Salmonella, we learned that state and federal agencies lacked the sufficient capacity to quickly and effectively respond to this crisis. This legislation will improve our government's monitoring of food, strengthen information sharing between government agencies, and increase collaboration between public and private partners."

Today, a number of problems have been identified by federal and state agency officials and advocacy groups that challenge our ability to respond to food-borne illness outbreaks. These challenges include the need for increased coordination and full participation in existing surveillance systems; collection of data that identifies not just the pathogen but also the food source; easier and more rapid tests and improved technology to identify pathogens; better information sharing across public health and regulatory agencies; and efforts to recruit and retain a multidisciplinary workforce.

The Obama bill would:

Enhance food-borne illness surveillance systems to improve the collection, analysis, reporting and usefulness of data on food-borne illnesses.

Establish a diverse working group of food safety experts and stakeholders to develop an annual public report and strategic plan to address deficiencies in food-borne illness surveillance.

Enhance the food safety capacity and roles of state and local agencies, and integrate their efforts as fully as possible into national food safety initiatives.

Make grants to state and local agencies to expand food safety capacity and programs.

A Bipartisan Approach To Improving Food Safety



By
Richard H. Kobayashi
Partner

Hartman &
Craven LLP
New York, NY

On Aug. 1, 2008, Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-IL), along with a bipartisan group of other Senators, including Judd Gregg (R-NH) and Richard Burr (R-NC), introduced a bill which, if enacted, would fundamentally change the way the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) protects the safety of America's food supply. The bill, entitled *The FDA*

Food Safety Modernization Act, would give FDA dramatic new authorities and resources that would shift the focus of our nation's food safety system away from FDA's approach of reacting to problems after they occur to one of proactive prevention.

Bills introduced near the end of a Congressional session are rarely viable, but this bill may be a noteworthy exception. There is a distinct possibility this legislation will be promptly approved by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee, passed by a large bipartisan majority on the Senate floor, and then given expeditious consideration and passage by the House before year-end. Even if this scenario is not achieved, Sen. Durbin's bill will almost certainly remain of central importance at the outset of Congress in early 2009 and will likely be enacted into law.

The bill focuses on four key areas where FDA's authorities and resources desperately need improvement: food-borne illness prevention; food-borne illness detection and response; food defense capabilities; and overall resources.

With respect to improving food-borne illness prevention, the legislation would impose Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) requirements on most domestic and foreign food facilities; give FDA authority to set commodity-specific standards to improve the safety of fresh fruits and vegetables; require U.S. importers to continuously verify imported food safety by maintaining an FDA-mandated Foreign Supplier Verification Program; require foreign governments to certify the safety of high-risk foods; and grant FDA the authority to establish an accreditation system, enabling qualified labs to certify that domestic and foreign food facilities comply with U.S. food safety standards.

With respect to improving food-borne illness detection and response, the legislation would give FDA the authority to order the mandatory recall of a food product when a company fails to voluntarily recall the product upon FDA's request. Additionally, it would grant FDA sweeping new enforcement powers, including the power to suspend a food facility's operations if the agency determines that food manufactured, processed, packed or held there may cause serious adverse health consequences or death.

To improve our nation's food defense capabilities, Sen. Durbin's bill would direct FDA to adopt new regulations to assist food companies in protecting their products from intentional contamination. The bill also calls for a national strategy to protect America's food supply from terrorist threats and to rapidly respond to food emergencies.

Recognizing that FDA is not only underfunded, but also overwhelmed, the bill's sponsors call for a \$775 million increase in funding for FDA's food safety activities in fiscal 2009. The bill would also increase FDA's food safety field staff from 3,600 in 2009 to 4,600 by 2013.

I am among the many food industry professional advisors who believe *The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act's* comprehensive reform measures provide a great opportunity to significantly improve and modernize our nation's food safety system. Having commended the bill, I hasten to add it contains some serious flaws that will have an adverse impact on small food companies, including America's producers of artisanal foods and beverages—your stores' suppliers.

As currently written, the bill will harm small businesses in two ways. First, several of its provisions will raise the costs of doing business. Food importers, for example, will be burdened with the expense of maintaining both a HACCP plan and a Foreign Supplier Verification Program, and they will effectively be forced to join the bill's new Voluntary Qualified Importer Program. Participation in this "voluntary" program will necessitate incurring significant third-party certification costs and FDA user fees to cover 100 percent of the agency's program expenditures.

Second, FDA's new authority to close down a food facility's entire operation by suspending its registration based on a reasonable belief that food from the facility will cause serious adverse health consequences or death will be far more disruptive and financially damaging to small food companies than to large food companies. Because of the unconscionable ease with which FDA will be able to exercise its new power, I fear this new enforcement tool will result in enormous commercial and financial hardship for small food producers and importers. Worse, I am convinced that, unless basic due process rights are added to protect the food industry, it will even lead to some small food companies being forced out of business.

Therefore, it is imperative that all food industry organizations work with the bill's sponsors and Senate and House members to refine the bill's suspension of registration provisions. Sen. Durbin has come up with a good, albeit somewhat flawed, approach for reforming our nation's food safety laws. Let's help him to really get it right.

DB

The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act would give FDA dramatic new authorities that would shift the focus of our nation's food safety system...

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Fiorucci Foods, Inc.	53	132	Roasted Ham	800-524-7775	804-520-2681
Fiscalini Cheese Co.	66	137	Cheese	800-610-FARM	209-545-5008
FoodMatch, Inc.	41	124	Mini Toast	800-350-3411	212-334-5042
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Refrigerated Foods Association	24	114	Association	770-452-0660	770-455-3879
Rubschlager Baking Corporation	34	138	Bakery	773-826-1245	773-826-6619
Stefano Foods, Inc.	48-49	118	Pizza	800-340-4019	704-399-3930
Ventura Foods, LLC	19, 21	110	Shortening, Oils, Spreads	760-447-9657	303-679-0095

Blast From The Past

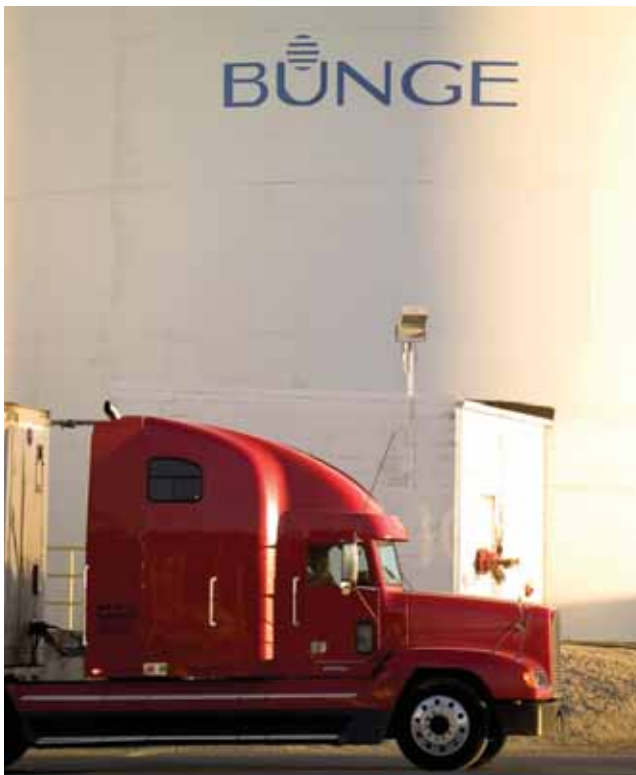
Bunge Limited

W

hite Plains, NY-based Bunge Limited, a global agribusiness and food company, has earned a reputation for its resilience and enterprising culture throughout its nearly 200-year history.

Johann Peter Gottlieb Bunge founded Bunge in 1818 as a grain trading concern in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Over the next 40 years, the business grew to become one of the world's leading commodity traders. In 1859, Bunge relocated to Antwerp, Belgium, at the King's invitation, and in 1884, his grandson, Edouard Bunge, moved to South America to establish Bunge y Born to trade in Argentine grain.

Over the next century, Bunge built a thriving international



company, moved its world headquarters to Brazil and expanded into North America, Asia and Australia. In the 1990s, the company tightened its strategic focus on food production, divested non-core businesses and strengthened its management team. In 1999, Bunge moved its headquarters to White Plains, NY, to leverage its nearly two centuries of experience in global food production and position itself for a new phase of growth.

Bunge Oil produces trans fat-free oils for a variety of deli applications, from deep frying foods to making salad dressings. The product line comprises Nutra-Clear NT, an Omega 9 canola oil; Pour' n Fry, a soybean/canola blend; and Amaizing NT, a corn/canola blend.

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