

DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

JUNE/JULY 2011 \$14.95

7th ANNUAL PEOPLE'S AWARDS

7th Annual People's Awards

ALSO INSIDE

ROTISSERIE CHICKEN
OLIVES
PARTY TIME
SALADS & SIDES
CROSS-MERCHANDISING
ITALIAN FOODS
FRESH PASTA
WISCONSIN CHEESE
GOAT CHEESE
CHEESE PROGRAMS

SPECIAL SECTION

2011 DELI MEAT
GUIDE

JUNE/JULY 2011



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PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
JAMES E. PREVOR
jprevor@phoenixmedianet.com

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR
KENNETH L. WHITACRE
kwhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com

PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
LEE SMITH
lsmith@phoenixmedianet.com

MANAGING EDITOR
JAN FIALKOW
jfialkow@phoenixmedianet.com

CIRCULATION MANAGER
KELLY ROSKIN
kroskin@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR
DIANA LEVINE
dlevine@phoenixmedianet.com

ART DIRECTOR
JACKIE TUCKER
jtucker@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT
FREDDY PULIDO

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER
RICK PURCARO
rpurcaro@phoenixmedianet.com

WESTERN SALES & MARKETING
JORDAN BAUM
jbaum@phoenixmedianet.com

RESEARCH DIRECTOR
SHARON OLSON

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
CAROL BAREUTHER KRISTINE HANSEN
BOB JOHNSON LAUREN KATIMS DALE KOPPEL
KAREN SILVERSTON LISA WHITE

SEND INSERTION ORDERS, PAYMENTS, PRESS RELEASES,
PHOTOS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, ETC., TO:
DELI BUSINESS
P.O. BOX 810217, BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0217
PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610
E-MAIL: delibusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

PHOENIX MEDIA NETWORK, INC.
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
JAMES E. PREVOR

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SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
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GENERAL COUNSEL
DEBRA PREVOR

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
FRAN GRUSKIN

TRADE SHOW COORDINATOR
JACKIE LOMONTE

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CLEAR LAM RECEIVES FIRST USDA CERTIFIED BIOBASED PRODUCT LABEL



Clear Lam Packaging, Inc., Elk Grove Village, IL, has earned the industry's first USDA Certified Biobased Product Label, part of a new voluntary labeling program to help purchasers choose products made with biobased commodities.

Biobased products are composed wholly or significantly of agricultural ingredients — renewable plant, animal, marine or forestry materials. This new label indicates the product has been independently certified to

meet USDA BioPreferred program

standards. Clear Lam was among the first companies to submit applications for the USDA BioPreferred program, including five product lines in the packaging category.

For nearly a decade, Clear Lam has invested extensively in R&D to commercialize new packaging technologies that minimize the impact on the environment. These efforts include three product lines developed for Clear Lam's Project Earth-Clear program: flexible and rigid packaging made from renewable raw materials, bioplastics, cellophane and paper (not petroleum-based feedstocks); flexible and rigid packaging made with recycled plastic or paper; and lightweight materials to eliminate heavy cans, bottles and jars. Today Clear Lam is one of the world's largest extruders and thermoformers of plant-based Ingeo PLA.

COMING NEXT ISSUE IN AUG./SEPT. 2011

COVER STORY
Sustainability

FEATURE STORIES
Ribs & Wings
Tailgating Parties

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS
Entrées
Mexican Foods
Vegetarian Foods

PREPARED FOODS
Soups

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES
Holiday Offers

DELI MEAT
Natural
Hams

CHEESES
Roquefort
Flavored
Cheddar

COMING IN OCT./NOV. 2011

DELI BUSINESS will present its annual look at the economic factors influencing the deli industry, retailers and consumers.

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Gourmet Foods International
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Boston, MA (978) 664-1100

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

The Age Of Relationships

The advance of technology has created an unexpected dichotomy in our relationships with the world. On the one hand, the growth of blogging and the rise of Twitter and Facebook — as well other social sites, such as Classmates.com and LinkedIn — have enormously increased the number of people we are in contact with.

Although sometimes these relationships become rich ones, and maintaining even a thin connection with old classmates and business associates can be helpful if you ever need their help, for the most part these relationships are, by their nature, somewhat superficial. One who has a few thousand “friends” on Facebook may not really have any friends at all.

On the other hand, tools such as Skype, e-mail, texting and other communication advances have enabled us to do two things: First, they have altered the nature of maintaining relationships. Without these tools — and we could also add inexpensive jet transportation — it was difficult to maintain relationships with people outside one’s geographic community. Now communities of interest can easily be maintained without regard to geography. So although neighborhood barbecues aren’t going out of style, it is also true that if you love opera, playing bridge, engaging in libertarian politics and philosophy or discussing the deli industry — you can have friends and colleagues across the country and around the world who share these interests with you.

Second, today’s tools have ramped up the intensity of interaction between those who are really close. My parents were — and are — very close, but, in the absence of emergencies, they communicated just once a day during working hours when my father, who as an executive in the food industry had somewhat unpredictable working hours, would call my mother to let her know he was on the way home so she could know to prepare dinner.

Today my wife and I will exchange more than a dozen texts and e-mails during the day, and phone calls are easier to do when you can do them from lunch, in the car, etc.

The comeuppance of all this is that in the age of technology, the people you have working in your organization are more important than ever and in ways that don’t necessarily accord with any traditional hiring profiles.

A really great national salesperson today is going to so enjoy the industry that inevitably lots of his close friends will be in the trade. He is going to use technology to maintain an intensity of contact with these friends that was impossible for previous generations of salespeople.

It means he can be highly productive. It also means that the salesperson who is just doing a job, rather than engaging a passion, is go to have a tough time competing.

It means one other thing as well: That many people will come to know your employee with a depth they didn’t

have in previous generations. After all, many could put on a “front” if the contact was one convention a year or one personal visit. If one is posting on Facebook, sending out Tweets and sharing a lot of private communication with texts, e-mails and free Skype calls and maybe using Southwest and other discount airlines to visit or vacation together, a client is really going to come to know your sales rep, and the sales executive is really going to come to know a buy-side executive. And these impressions will reflect on you and your whole organization. Is this a person who keeps promises? Does he cut corners? Does he take advantage of situations to benefit himself at the expense of others? Does he cheat?

Intense social interaction teaches all this, and people, rightly or wrongly, will assume that the values this person presents are the values your organization embraces.

Recently, *Scientific American* featured an interesting article titled, “How the Illusion of Being Observed Can Make You a Better Person.” The gist was that people are on their best behavior when they think someone is watching.

The interesting business question is what is the implication of this for staffing? On the one hand, it argues that businesses should put in as many touch points with employees as possible. The more employees feel they are being watched, the more likely they are to follow corporate policy and behave well.

Of course, the title of the *Scientific American* article is not quite right. Is someone really a better person — to use the article title — if their natural inclination is to do bad things but they behave because they fear consequences when they are being observed?

In other words, is it sufficient to have someone not steal because there is a camera on them or do you want an employee who won’t steal — camera or not — because that is the nature of his character?

In truth, as the industry gathers in Anaheim for the IDDBA convention, we are reminded that, even with modern technology, there is no way for a business to always be watching its associates. So, in an age when technology means that people will have intense relationships in which a person’s true character is highly likely to be discovered, it becomes clear that technology raises the importance of people in your organization and requires organizations to notch up their requirements for hiring to include only people of good character. After all, the character your people present is a most certain reflection on your own.

DB



James F. Prevor



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by Lee Smith, Publisher

Increasing Prices Is A Good Idea

Mid-year is when we all sit down and assess the state of the deli industry. The IDDBA Show is in early June, the most common month for new product launches. The entire industry puts on its best face for a giant show-and-tell.

It's also a period to take a little time off running day-to-day operations, reflect on the past and attempt to gain insight into tomorrow before next year's planning and budgeting begins.

For the past few years, the economy and national mood have been less than stellar — depressed to scared to death. Finally, the engines of recovery seem to be starting, albeit more slowly than hoped for, and now additional consternations are affecting the food industry.

Commodity food prices are anticipated to increase substantially due to rising oil prices, floods, droughts and other natural disasters. The increases are further complicated because manufacturers wanting to keep products flowing while staying competitive and saving as many jobs as possible have kept prices artificially low.

It's now time for manufacturers and retailers to pass along the increases and allow the market to adjust. Keeping prices at their lowest helps no one; regardless how low the price of pita bread and potato salad, the resulting change in behavior is not going to change market conditions or save a family from starvation.

For most people, the best way to save money is to reduce the number of times they eat out. That includes taking lunch to work and entertaining at home.

The second best way to save money is to cook more. Foods prepared from scratch, fresh fruit and vegetables and homemade desserts can push back the food bill.

As an example — last night we had friends come to town and we took them to a very nice restaurant — not over the top or the most expensive restaurant in town, but a very nice restaurant with excellent food. There were four of us and dinner consisted of four beers, one cocktail, a shared appetizer, four entrées, two desserts, three coffees and one tea. The bill was \$203 including tip.

I could have made dinner at home. I could have served a terrific piece of cheese for an appetizer; made shrimp scampi using large shrimp, organic butter and lemons, fresh garlic, my favorite olive oil and Parmigiano Reggiano, and served it with a fresh tomato and Mozzarella salad drizzled with olive oil and aged balsamic vinegar, bread from the best bakery, and fresh fruit and coffee for dessert. All with a really good bottle of wine. And I could have whipped it all up in about 30 minutes — less time than it took to drive to the restaurant. Cost, including wine — less than \$100.

Do I need to reflect on where I would have bought

the ingredients? Do I need to write that out-of-pocket cost would have actually been much less, since most of the ingredients are already in my house?

If we as an industry really want to save consumers money, then we need to focus on education and making it easy. The savings are already built into the program.

Of course, no one is going to do all their cooking from scratch or give up eating out, but most people are willing to compromise — or at least face the reality of increasing expenses and stagnating or declining income. They're looking for solutions.

There are two more very important parts of delivering satisfying solutions. The first is addressing the trend to more nutritious food, and the second is food safety.

Consumers are becoming more aware of what is in food and everyone is developing plans to attack the obesity problem. Average consumers are looking at additives, preservatives, additional salt and sugar, and artificial colors.

Retailers need a shelf life that gets them through the distribution cycle and allows for unintended mishandling. Consumers need enough shelf life to actually use the product within reasonable expectations. All products must allow for at least moderate abuse without causing life-threatening scenarios.

One exciting and proven technique is high-pressure pasteurization — and it can be used on many products without causing a degradation of particulate. In other words, the potato salad won't become mashed potato salad and vegetable soup won't look puréed.

The product is essentially sterile with no chance of contamination. Shelf life can begin on the day the package is opened instead of the day the product is made. It isn't a panacea for all abuse but the game-changing dynamics are, well, game-changing. But there is a cost.

All of which goes back to my original premise that retailers must be willing to pay for better quality, food safety and product innovation and that manufacturers need to be able to increase their costs to accommodate market changes and new technologies.

Retailers need to understand that drawing consumers back into the retail environment is the best way to save those consumers money — if, of course, the retailers can supply products that offer great taste and nutrition in a safe way without adding potentially toxic chemicals.

DB



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

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Mission Foodservice can help you turn your deli into something delicious. Our consistently fresh, high quality, versatile products allow you to expand your menu and wow your customers with easy to prepare eye-catching culinary creations. To find out how you can make Mission Tortillas a part of your operation visit us at **IDDBA Show Booth #1195** or go to Missionfoodservice.com.



DELI WATCH

Transitions



Lisa Yerger-Facera has been named director of retail sales at Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA. Previously director of the Mid-Atlantic market at A.J. Letizio Sales & Marketing, she brings a wealth of experience in the retail food business and is also a Certified Food Safety Trainer. Yerger-Facera will build out Blount's branded and private-label retail business, with an emphasis on major grocery chains, with Blount brand gourmet soups and Panera and Legal Sea Foods brand soups that Blount markets through licensing agreements. She will be based out of Philadelphia.

www.blountfinefoods.com



Dane Huebner has joined Grafton Village Cheese Company, Grafton, VT, as cheese artisan, following a year in which he won 15 cheese-making awards. He is responsible for training, grading, R&D, recipe creation, and consumer education programs. Most recently, he was head cheesemaker and culinary scientist at Flat Creek Lodge, Swainsboro, GA, where he developed the award-winning Aztec Cheddar, a traditional milled curd Cheddar layered with guajillo chile and cocoa. Prior to that, he was quality assurance manager and research chef at Cedar Grove Cheese, Plain, WI.

www.graftonvillage.com



Dan Stewart has joined Deep, a Marlin Network Agency in Springfield, MO, as vice president, creative. He will be responsible for creative input and leadership for all deep clients, including ConAgra Foods – Lamb Weston, Nestle Professional (Stouffers, Lean Cuisine, Minor's, Chef-Mate, Hot Pockets, and Trio) and Aisle 411. He was most recently chief creative officer at Noble Communications. Stewart's creative credits include work on H. J. Heinz, Tyson Foods, M&M Mars, Reckitt Benckizer, Schwan's, Nestle, Borden, Portion Pac, Kellogg's, and Precision Foods.

www.deepgroup.com

New Products



ZATARAIN'S FOR FOODSERVICE

McCormick For Chefs, Hunt Valley, MD, has launched a portfolio of Zatarain's rice mixes designed to meet foodservice operator needs and patrons' evolving desire for great tasting and better-for-me dishes. The products are made with natural ingredients, lower sodium, no MSG, no partially hydrogenated fats and no trans fatty acids. New pouch packaging has clean labels in English and Spanish, a special design for improved freshness, and is eco-friendly with 50 percent reduced material by weight.

www.mccormickforchefs.com

New Products



CHEF-INSPIRED SALAD KIT

Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, introduces eight new varieties of bulk salad kits featuring on-trend flavors such as Buffalo Chicken and Tandoori Chicken and Curry. Each kit component is pre-measured and pre-cooked requiring minimal labor and preparation. The pre-measured portions cut down on shrink, provide greater consistency, and make it easier to manage inventory. Variety in texture and ingredients creates a made-from-scratch appearance. Retailers can sell these salads behind-the-case or as grab-and-go items. The salads can be used as a main course or side dish.

www.resers.com



NEW DIPPING CATEGORIES

Sabra Dipping Co. LLC, White Plains, NY, will enter several new categories, introducing fresh lines of salsa, guacamole and Greek yogurt-based vegetable dips. Sabra Salsa flavors: Classic, Southwestern Style, Home-style, and Chunky Pico de Gallo. Sabra Greek Yogurt Veggie Dip flavors: Roasted Garlic, Spinach and Artichoke, Sun Dried Tomato and Onion & Fresh Herbs, the Sabra Veggie. Sabra Guacamole flavors: Classic and Spicy flavors. Sabra will also expand its award-winning hummus line with two new flavors — Basil Pesto and Buffalo Style.

www.sabra.com



SERVE & STORE PIZZA BOX

Ecovention, LLC, New York, NY, has launched the Roma Serve & Store easy-to-assemble pizza box available exclusively through Performance Foodservice/Roma Food. The box breaks down into plates and a smaller container for leftovers, eliminating the need for disposable plates and ancillary storage materials like aluminum foil and plastic wrap. The technology elevates take-out pizza to a new level of convenience and creates an effective source of differentiation. Ecovention is dedicated to improving outmoded, outdated and wasteful food packaging.

www.greenboxny.com



REBRANDING AND REPACKAGING CAMPAIGN

Future Food Brands, Ltd., Carrollton, TX, has embarked on a rebranding and repackaging campaign. The company's Salads of the Sea and Santa Barbara Bay products will now be sold in 100 percent recyclable and BPA-free oval containers that are microwave- and dishwasher-safe and have break-tab tamper-evident seals. In addition to being more convenient and aesthetically appealing, the elimination of film seals and shrink bands reduces plastic waste and energy consumption, lowering the package's overall carbon footprint.

www.futurebrands.com

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Take & Bake Pizza Programs

With No Assembly Required



Champion Foods Offers A Complete Line Of Take & Bake Products

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Champion Foods' Private Label and Branded Take & Bake programs will help you create a pizzeria destination in your deli and keep your customers coming back for more.

We use the finest, hand-topped ingredients in all of our products including 100% natural cheese, the finest cuts of meat and garden fresh vegetables. Our patented crust recipe bakes crisp and delicious with an authentic pizzeria taste. All of our products are packaged to convey a fresh, made-in-store feel and are shipped ready for refrigerated merchandising.

Our new line of Take-N-Bake Split Top Calzones feature a unique, stratified ingredient fill that creates a homemade/pizzeria taste and appearance. We score them deeply in the middle creating a "Split Top" that allows customers to easily eat on the go. They come in four delicious flavors; Pepperoni, Ham & Cheese, Philly Cheese Steak and Buffalo Chicken.

We have years of experience with Take & Bake programs and currently partner with some of the country's top retailers. Contact us today to leverage our expertise and drive profitable deli business.

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New Products



ADD ZIP TO DELI FOODS

Jenkins Jellies, Los Angeles, CA, introduces Hell Fire Pepper Jelly, an intricate blend of seven hot and sweet peppers. Perfect with cheese and crackers, as a marinade or accompaniment to any dish. Perfectly placed at the deli counter near the meats, cheeses and gourmet breads. Delicious sandwich condiment — try it with Brie and smoked turkey on sourdough. Or as a dip on a platter of deli meats. Perfect with chicken tenders or popcorn chicken or shrimp. Can be positioned for any day-part.

www.jenkinsjellies.com



VERMONT-MADE BURRATA

Maplebrook Fine Cheese, Bennington, VT, has added Burrata to its line of handmade cheeses. Italian cheesemaker Domenico Marchitelli joined Maplebrook to make true Puglian Burrata. It starts with stracciatelli: thin, hand-pulled strands of fresh Mozzarella soaked in a creamy base. Forming Burrata balls is a two-person operation, with one person stretching out a pocket of mozzarella, while the partner scoops stracciatelli into the middle. The ball is formed around the filling and pinched at the top.

www.maplebrookvt.com



INDIVIDUAL OLOVES PACKS

Brand Stand Limited, Barcelona, Spain, introduces Oloves, individually packaged olive snacks, to the U.S. 50 calories per 1.1-ounce pouch. Low sodium, low saturated fat, certified kosher, vegan, nut-free and preservative-free. Foil-fresh packaging allows for 18-month shelf life and requires no refrigeration. Available in shelf-ready cases (12 pouches per case), pallets (1,200 pouches per pallet) or pre-loaded hang-strip cases (6 pouches per reusable hang-strip).

www.oloves.com



PRIVATE-LABEL PACKAGING OPTION

West Liberty Foods, West Liberty, IA, introduces its Peel & Reseal packaging system for private label. Packaging can be opened and closed multiple times while maintaining its seal. Available in rectangle configuration with or without hang tab for fluffed deli meats, or D-shaped configurations allowing easy removal of meat slices without tearing. Holds seven to 16 ounces of product. Accommodates horizontal or vertical four-color print labeling.

www.wlfoods.com

Announcements



NEW TAVERN SELECT CHEDDAR LINE

Grafton Village Cheese, Grafton, VT, is launching a new line of traditionally aged, handmade, raw-milk Cheddars, named for The Old Tavern at Grafton Inn. The line is comprised of 2-, 3- and 4-year-old, naturally aged Cheddars, and a unique Maple Smoked Cheddar that is cold-smoked for up to four hours over maple wood chips. All Tavern Select cheeses are handmade in small batches from local Jersey cow's milk, which is naturally high in protein and butterfat.

www.graftonvillagecheese.com



GREENWARE CUPS

Fabri-Kal, Kalamazoo, MI, affirms a recent study revealing cold-drink cups made with Ingeo biopolymer have a smaller environmental footprint than similar cups made from polypropylene (PP) or polyethylene terephthalate (PET). Fabri-Kal's Greenware cold-drink and portion cups are made with Ingeo biopolymer, made from renewable plant material — not oil. Greenware products made with Ingeo biopolymer are 100% compostable in actively managed municipal or industrial facilities, where available.

www.f-k.com



SOFI-WINNING PASTA

Nuovo Pasta Productions, Stratford, CT, proudly announces that its Spinach, Portabella & Gruyere Ravioli has been recognized by the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (NASFT) with a 2011 Silver Sofi award in the category of Outstanding Pasta, Rice or Grain. Fresh-picked spinach is sautéed and blended with slow-roasted Portabella mushrooms and distinctive Gruyère cheese, a perfect flavor combination. This sumptuous filling is presented in a colorful green and white striped ravioli.

www.nuovopasta.com



AWARD-WINNING CHEESE

BelGioioso Cheese, Green Bay, WI, earned six awards at the 2011 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest. Winners are: First place, Best of Class Gold Medal: BelGioioso Sharp Provolone Mandarino; First place, Best of Class Gold Medal: BelGioioso Romano; Second place, Silver Medal: BelGioioso Fresh Mozzarella; Second place, Silver Medal: BelGioioso Ricotta Salata; Third place, Bronze Medal: BelGioioso Crema di Mascarpone; Third place, Bronze Medal: BelGioioso Mild Provolone.

www.belgioioso.com

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Genuine Taste Has No Imitation *Asiago PDO* *&* *Speck Alto Adige PGI*



Unique, Authentic, Guaranteed



The PDO and PGI symbols were designed under European Law to designate regional foods using geographical indicators. The legislation for these seals was formed in 1992 to ensure that only products that originate within the specified European Union regions are allowed to establish themselves as such.

The laws apply to a wide range of products produced in Italy, including authentic Speck Alto Adige and Asiago. These two products from Northern Italy embody European agricultural production that is characterized by the PGI and PDO quality seals.

To qualify for a PGI or PDO seal, a product must comply with the European Union's standards with regard to the name and description of the product, the definition of the geographical area, the methods of preparation, factors relating to the geographic environment, the inspection bodies, details of how the product is labeled and any legislative requirements that must be met. For more information, recipes and events, please visit www.genuinetaste.org



Campaign financed with aid from the European Union and Italy

Announcements



NAME CHANGE SWEEPSTAKES

Arla Foods, Inc., based in Denmark with production facilities in Michigan and Wisconsin, announces a new name and label for its Rosenborg Blue Cheese. Castello will be the new name and label. The launch will coincide with a nationwide sweepstakes. Shoppers are invited to celebrate the name change by entering to win one of five iPad2s or one of 10 sets of Orrefors crystal glassware. The sweepstakes will be open for online entry through the end of June.

www.castellocheeseusa.com



WEBSITE FOR FOOD PROFESSIONALS

Unilever Food Solutions, Lisle, IL, has launched SandwichPro.com, a one-stop resource for foodservice professionals, eliminating the need to search multiple websites. The website was designed with engaging, insider language and entertaining graphics. By presenting industry insights with Unilever Food Solutions' category knowledge and product offerings, the site makes it easy to find the sandwich information most relevant to a particular operation.

www.sandwichpro.com



CONTEST AND NEW PACKAGING

DCI Cheese Co., Richfield, WI unveils *Goodness. Naturally.* — sponsored by Organic Creamery. Grand Prize of a \$500 gift card to purchase garden items. Redesigned packaging highlights the line's eco-friendly, handmade nature. In-store shelf-talkers with contest information and a coupon are available through June 30. Smart-phone users can connect to the website — via the display's QR code — for an online entry form, contest rules and gardening tips and tricks.

www.organiccreamerycheese.com



MEDAL-WINNING COLBY

Arena Cheese, Arena, WI, received a medal in the 2011 U.S. Cheese Championships. It also won a medal for Colby cheese at the 2010 American Cheese Society cheese contest. The company has received eight national medals this past decade for Colby and Colby/Jack cheese. This year Arena Cheese introduced, under the Spring Green brand, the first deli horn all-natural, hardwood smoked Gouda. The 4-inch diameter, 4¼-pound horn is perfect for any slicing deli.

www.arenacheese.com

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7th Annual People's Awards

JOHN GREELEY
STEVE MAYER
FRED MAZUR
MARK D. SANDRIDGE
JULIANA URUBURU
ARI WEINZWIG
SCOTT ZOELLER



Each year DELI BUSINESS honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to the industry, their company and their community. Nominations for 2012 may be submitted to: Publisher Lee Smith (lsmith@phoenixmedianet.com) or Managing Editor Jan Fialkow (jfialkow@phoenixmedianet.com).

7th Annual People's Awards

JOHN GREELEY

PRESIDENT, SHEILA MARIE IMPORTS, NO. READING, MA
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
ATLANTA FOODS INTERNATIONAL, ATLANTA, GA

1. How did you get started in the industry?

In the 1980s I started retailing French specialty cheese at John Dewar's Butcher Shop in Boston. I brought local cheeses to our food-service customers and began traveling, learning and studying about American specialty cheeses. The American Cheese Society (ACS) was in its second year when I joined and started working with Russ McCall, Steve Jenkins, Gerd Stern, David Grotenstein and Riki Carroll on the annual cheese contest. We saw all of the new American cheeses and I brought many of them to New England.

I started my import company, Sheila Marie Imports (SMI), in 1990 and it became my full-time job in 1993. Steven Jones and Long Clawson Dairy in England backed SMI from the beginning. English cheese, then French specialty, made SMI an ocean and airfreight importer in our first year. My butcher shop/cheese foodservice background prepared me well for managing highly perishable cheeses.

In 2007 Atlanta Foods International bought SMI providing us with resources and depth to meet demands of the modern deli market.

2. How has your career evolved over the years?

I loved working with cheesemakers and creating ways for them to access large and small retailers. I always thought product knowledge was the one thing you can't replace in our business so I tried to invent creative/fun programs and events to attract customers to their local cheeses.

I used the same style with my imports. Balancing a portfolio of local cheese and imports was an education itself. I also donated more time every year to the ACS and the Cheese Competition. Today my career is a small part of — and witness to — the history of America's rapid rise into a world cheese power.

3. What positions have you held in industry organizations?

Garde de Jure in 2002 and maître fromager in 2009 in the *Gilde des Fromagers*; board member and chairman of the ACS Judging and Cheese Competition; co-chair of the 1993 & 1996 ACS Conferences; master judge for New Zealand's *Champion of Cheese National Competition*; *Chaine De Rotisseurs*, Boston; awarded the 2010 ACS Lifetime Achievement Award.

4. What is your leadership philosophy?

In Jamaica they say, "If you think a lot about what you are doing and act with integrity, you don't go too far wrong."

Be willing to do the same work you ask others to do to merit their respect and trust.

I give people the benefit of the doubt — once!

5. What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Watching my two boys play sports, reading mysteries, gardening, keeping our old house in good repair, traveling and cooking with my wife Nancy.



6. What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you personally tweet? Have a personal Facebook page, etc.?

I would like to find the time to visit the Facebook page my kids started for me. I don't tweet — my daily events aren't headlines. I think sites like Groupon are the future for mixing commerce and social interests.

7. What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

I worry that "winner/loser" has replaced "altruistic/unethical" and "good/bad" as the modern moral compass. Sometimes our sense of compassion needs a jump-start to keep us human. We can make the world different just by living healthy, positive lives. We are all examples of something to each other.

8. What charity is your personal favorite?

The Jimmy Fund in Boston, homeless people and people with AIDS get my attention. SMI contributes regularly to the Boston Food Bank.

9. What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Product knowledge, stamina, imagination, and tight personal connections are good cornerstones for building your career in the deli industry. Cheese and deli people are almost universally caring, friendly and honest — they can teach you a lot — get to know them.

10. What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Flavored cheese keeps growing every year. Specialty charcuterie replacing large entrées as center of the plate protein. Cactus Mousse pâté — just kidding!

11. What's your favorite read?

Frank Kosikowski, Major Patrick Rance, Pierre Androuet, Laura Werlin, Max McCalman, Lee Smith pieces in *DELI BUSINESS*, *Cheese Market News*, *New Yorker Magazine*, out-of-print cheese books and James Joyce.

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7th Annual People's Awards

STEVE MAYER

SR. VICE PRESIDENT FRESH
AHOLD USA
QUINCY, MA

1. How did you get started in the industry?

I started out in the foodservice business washing dishes and moved to various positions inside the restaurant business.

2. How has your career evolved over the years?

Smitty's

Dishwasher, cook, waiter
Assistant restaurant manager, unit manager,
construction coordinator
District director
Director of restaurants

Meijer

Director of special projects (HMR)
Director of food service
VP deli and bakery

BI-LO

VP produce, floral, deli and bakery
Group VP fresh

Ahold

Senior VP fresh – Stop and Shop
Senior VP fresh – Ahold USA

3. What positions have you held in industry organizations?

Produce for Better Health

4. What is your leadership philosophy?

Always listen to the customer. Never get comfortable. Be a lifetime learner. Know that you don't have all the answers — it's the team that counts,

5. What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Bicycle riding and basketball coach

6. What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you personally tweet? Have a personal Facebook page, etc.?

Social networking sites are important. The world is getting smaller and to succeed in business you have to listen to your customers; social networking breaks down the barriers between retailers and their customers. The question becomes now that you are more connected, are you listening?



7. What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

My children.

8. What charity is your personal favorite?

Habitat for Humanity

9. What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Lifetime learning is the key — it's not just when you start in the industry, it's your whole career. Actively seek out new responsibilities, put yourself into areas where you don't know everything. Most importantly, always try to think like a customer, because everything else is secondary.

10. What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Restaurant-fresh-style food offerings that change daily, which would be very similar to the specials restaurants have on their menus. This would encourage customers to come into supermarkets daily for their meal selections. It would include setting the delis differently for each day-part of the business you were appealing to. The deli could be reset numerous times during the day so that the deli itself is the menu that the customers are drawn to.

11. What's your favorite read?

The Killer Angels by Mike Shaara

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7th Annual People's Awards

FRED MAZUR

DIRECTOR OF PERISHABLES & NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
GEORGE E. DELALLO COMPANY
JEANNETTE, PA

1. How did you get started in the industry?

In 1968, I got involved in a retail operation, where I was co-owner of three local food markets.

2. How has your career evolved over the years?

Well, after my initial experience with owning a few markets, around 1975, I moved onto owning my own operation — a kosher-style deli and restaurant. There, I was heavily involved with deli meats, prepared foods and dining-room management. I came to DeLallo 24 years ago and focused in on the deli and prepared foods. Also, I was involved with the olive and antipasti bar — a concept that DeLallo developed and introduced to the trade — which has grown and evolved to be a nationwide staple in better retail stores. All of my experiences led me here.

3. What is your leadership philosophy?

The only way to grow in any industry is with integrity. It's the only way to build contacts. The people you deal with need to trust you to make the best decisions for them. You can't afford to destroy relationships. You treat them with respect and channel their strengths and abilities in the right direction. Help them grow, too.

4. What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

Any time I have I spend with my family. I spend a lot of time with my grandchildren. We read quite a bit. They keep me busy.

5. What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you personally tweet? Have a personal Facebook page, etc.?

As a company, we really value our customers and what better way to get their feedback than with the Web? We have a site that features recipes, products and articles, and this is helpful for introducing consumers to our products and our passion — Italian cuisine. Facebook and Twitter are great avenues for reaching the end consumer, too. With polls, daily posts and promotions, we can get direct feedback, ultimately giving our customers a better, more-personal experience with products and offers. The evolution of on-line marketing enhances our business and allows us to connect with so many consumers. I'm very impressed with social networking. It's a great asset.

6. What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

I'll tell you what inspires me. When I was 16, a fellow asked me what I wanted to do with my life. I worked for him, for a landscaping company. Back then, I didn't have an answer. He advised me to contribute and make an impact on whatever industry I ended up in. He told me to make my mark. Throughout all of my 43 years working in this industry, that advice still inspires me daily.



7. What charity is your personal favorite?

The church, the Roman Catholic Church, and I'll tell you why: Pope John Paul. He gave back to his community and no one really knew where his contributions came from. He stayed anonymous, and that's the way to give. Don't announce it to the world if it's from the heart.

8. What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Take advantage of exciting opportunities. Change is a constant. Make sure to be a part of the changes and be adaptable.

9. What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Take a look at our olive and antipasti bar and I think you'll get a pretty good idea. We find consumers are looking for new ingredients, new ways to prepare quick and easy dishes for entertaining. We've made it convenient for them to incorporate gourmet into everyday — both meals and appetizers. Our antipasti are perfect for simple, yet elegant, entertaining, and these offers are right there in their local supermarkets.

10. What's your favorite read?

The Bible, when I have time. I read the paper, too — the world news and business sections, those that affect the market.

Entertainment News:



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7th Annual People's Awards

MARK D. SANDRIDGE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SANDRIDGE FOOD CORPORATION
MEDINA, OH



1. How did you get started in the industry?

My company is a family business, so I've been around the fresh foods industry nearly my entire life. My passion began at a young age and I decided in high school I was going to attend college to learn about food manufacturing. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from The Ohio State University and then officially joined the family business in 1976.

2. How has your career evolved over the years?

Subsequent to receiving formal training as a food scientist, I started my career with the company in sanitation and moved into multiple roles, including quality assurance, shipping and additional areas of operations, from there. In 1986 I became president of the company and began to take a broader look into all aspects of the business. Although I embodied a focus on the science of our products, I soon developed a broader perspective and made a commitment to become skilled in sales. In 1997 I purchased the company from my father, Vincent R. Sandridge, and assumed my present position as CEO. In addition to changing roles over the course of my career, I've advanced in other areas including my listening and discovery skills and ability to find others who are aligned with the core values of the company.

3. What positions have you held in industry organizations?

Board Member of Center for Innovative Food Technology (CIFT)
Food Industry Center Advisory Board
Officer of the Refrigerated Foods Association.

4. What is your leadership philosophy?

I hold a strong belief that it's important to share a vision from the heart, regardless of whether the end goal is large scale or small scale. This is why I've made it my personal mission to share with others my passion and drive for continuous improvement. When your employees can share this vision, they're aligned with the company strategy and this makes it easier for everyone to accomplish their tasks. Foremost, the overriding goal is to always be the best you can be and perform at your best ability in your unique area of expertise.

5. What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

My favorite pastime is golfing, which I enjoy doing with my two sons. I also race sports cars and practice martial arts.

6. What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you personally tweet? Have a personal Facebook page, etc.?

While I don't personally tweet nor have my own Facebook page, I think social media is a valuable tool that fits well into many integrated marketing plans. With today's modern technology, these tools make it possible to deliver key information to a targeted audience in a matter of minutes. It's easy to understand the value in this. Our

marketing team is looking forward to launching Sandridge accounts and utilizing these social media sites in the months to come.

7. What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

Seeing growth in the people I work with is very inspiring to me. My role is about helping people to grow professionally in this industry and gain a more worldly view — when I see that development I feel proud and inspired to do more. Also inspiring is allowing people to see things from a different perspective.

From a company-wide standpoint, we're in the business of producing better tasting products that are better for the consumer. It's very moving to be in a position that lets you help empower consumers to make better eating choices. We're doing this through the production of better-for-you, functional products.

Lastly, the continuation of a family business and raising two boys has been a great inspiration in everything I do.

8. What charity is your personal favorite?

I favor local charities because they let me make a difference in my own backyard. In particular, we donate to the Akron Canton Regional Food Bank, which is routed to the Medina County Food Bank.

9. What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

I highly recommend finding an employer who shares your same core values. It's important to be aligned with your employer and to see whether your values coincide with each other. If your goals are aligned with your company's goals, you'll be working toward both. In addition, great listening skills and discovery skills are imperative and will help you gain a greater understanding of your industry. Having a willingness to learn is a value-added skill that will benefit anyone in this industry.

10. What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

The next prevailing trend will be delivering on customers' expectations of better-for-you options that are full-flavored. We're hearing that consumers want healthier products but don't want to sacrifice taste. This won't be a fleeting trend — it will include providing foods that have traits of lower sodium and bold flavors. Clean label products are also emerging.

11. What's your favorite read?

Good to Great by Jim Collins. This book has had a major impact on our company.

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7th Annual People's Awards

JULIANA URUBURU

CHEESE PROGRAM DIRECTOR
THE PASTA SHOP AND MARKET HALL FOODS
OAKLAND, CA



1. How did you get started in the industry?

I grew up in a family where food was a very important part of our time spent together, whether it was shopping for delicious ingredients, spending the entire weekend cooking our Sunday meal together or sitting around the table enjoying a meal and each other's company. Not surprisingly, the first job I ever held was for a catering company. When I graduated from high school, I started working at The Pasta Shop, a small specialty grocery that had only been open for a week or two. Little did I know that humble beginning was the start of a very passionate and successful career.

2. How has your career evolved over the years?

When I began working in this industry in my teens, the options seemed limitless. I didn't initially choose cheese and the specialty industry as my chosen career path. At first, I was just working in the food industry because I loved it. I loved cooking food and talking about food and sharing my passion with other people while learning from them. Later, when the opportunity arose to learn more about cheese, I jumped at it and my 20-year career in cheese was born.

3. What positions have you held in industry organizations?

Founding Member, California Artisan Cheese Guild
Guard du Jare, Guild de Fromage de St. Uguzon
Chevalier du Taste Fromage
Marketing & Communications Committee for the American Cheese Society
Spokesperson, California Milk Advisory Board

4. What is your leadership philosophy?

Being a leader is a privilege. I need everyone on my team to be successful. I let them know that they are my boss and it is my responsibility to enable them to do the best they can. I lead by example and always put the customer first. It's important the people that come into our stores feel as if they're the best thing that happened to us. Retail sales is a form of entertainment and I work with my staff in educating them on customer service, cheese knowledge and entertaining. I empower confidence through knowledge.

5. What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Hiking, cooking, games and puzzles, reading cookbooks and food magazines, traveling the world and discovering new cultures, teaching people about cheese and finding a perfect view.

6. What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you personally tweet? Have a personal Facebook page, etc.?

As retailers, we have to keep up with new trends using social media outlets. Our cheese counters and both locations of The Pasta Shop have Twitter accounts and Facebook pages. We tweet daily

menus and what cheese looks perfect on our counter at the moment. We try to tweet every day to stay fresh in peoples' minds. We use Facebook a bit differently: We post our weekly menus and invite people to our in-store events. I have a personal Facebook page that I use to document my food travels for my staff, family and friends.

7. What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

I'm lucky to be a naturally inspired individual. I love bringing people together to learn about food and cultures and the world. I'm inspired by the cheesemakers I meet every day. I tell my staff that it's our responsibility to sell cheese with the cheesemaker's vision in mind. I want cheesemakers to walk into our shops and buy their own cheese and confidently serve it to their family and friends and be happy with the cheese that they made.

8. What charity is your personal favorite?

My stores work with local food banks on a daily basis. In addition, my husband and I attend various charity events for food-based charities such as Project Open Hand.

9. What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Follow your heart — and appetite. It's important to be inspired in life and so much easier to excel in our chosen professions if we work at something we love. Get out and meet other people who share your same interests and learn from one another, motivate one another. This is a very social industry that continues to grow in so many ways — look at the evolution of the taco truck into the grilled cheese truck.

10. What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

I think there's a huge amount of interest in South American cultures and food right now. In the cheese world, many South American ranchers are seeing the worldwide interest in cheese and learning traditional cheesemaking techniques. In the United States, there's an enormous amount of interest in South American meats, cheeses, wine and cuisine.

11. What's your favorite read?

I love a good puzzle book as much as I like reading. I am just as likely to sit down with a Sudoku and escape into a puzzle as I am to fall into a good book. When I read, I prefer non-fiction, especially real-life, harrowing adventures, such as *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer.

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7th Annual People's Awards

ARI WEINZWIG

CO-OWNER AND FOUNDING PARTNER
ZINGERMAN'S COMMUNITY OF BUSINESSES
ANN ARBOR, MI

1. How did you get started in the industry?

I earned a degree in Russian history at the University of Michigan — my concentration was the Russian anarchists. After I graduated, I got a job washing dishes in a local restaurant and discovered I loved the food business. In 1982 Paul Saginaw and I started Zingerman's Delicatessen with a \$20,000 bank loan, a small selection of specialty foods and a short sandwich menu.

2. How has your career evolved over the years?

Today, Zingerman's is an Ann Arbor institution — with over 500,000 visitors every year. We've added Zingerman's Bakehouse, Mail Order, Catering, Creamery, Roadhouse, Coffee Company and Training (aka ZingTrain). ZCoB — the Zingerman's Community of Businesses — employs over 500 people.

3. What positions have you held in industry organizations?

Board member and president of ACS (American Cheese Society), on the NASFT (National Association of the Specialty Food Trade) retail board, and others that I probably can't recall right now!

4. What is your leadership philosophy?

It's all in my book, *Zingerman's Guide to Good Leading, Part 1: A Lapsed Anarchist's Approach to Building a Great Business*. There will be more in the next book, *Part 2: A Lapsed Anarchist's Approach to Being a Better Leader*. Servant leadership would be at the core of it. It's from Robert Greenleaf's book of the same name and spells out the approach in which we as leaders commit to serving the organization, not the other way around!

5. What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Reading and running.

6. What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you personally tweet? Have a personal Facebook page, etc.?

I think the social networking sites are one more great way to reach customers and we're actively doing more and more work with them.

I don't personally tweet or have a Facebook page nor do I look at others. That said, I also have hundreds of books stacked up that are on my list to read but haven't yet read. There's always been, and always will be, more information out there than any of us can possibly read or hear or taste or process. Social media just allows it



to come at you more quickly than it might have before. Bottom line is that they're good tools and we'll be working hard to use them with ever-greater effectiveness!

7. What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

I think that's really at the core of all our work. It's all, again, in the new book.

8. What charity is your personal favorite?

We started Food Gatherers here in 1986 — it was Paul's idea to do it and it's become a huge success thanks to his hard work and that of many others. You can go the website — foodgatherers.org — for details.

9. What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

It's mostly all in the book (the part on leadership will be out later this year). The No. 1 thing I guess would be to write a vision — details again are in the book on what that means.

10. What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Better tasting more traditional foods

11. What's your favorite read?

Brenda Ueland's *If You Really Want to Write*, Robert Greenleaf's *Servant Leadership* and Hugh MacLeod's *Ignore Everybody*.

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7th Annual People's Awards

SCOTT ZOELLER

DIRECTOR OF DELICATESSEN SALES AND MERCHANDISING
KINGS & BALDUCCI
PARSIPPANY, NJ

1. How did you get started in the industry?

My first experience was as a child in the supermarket business — I would visit with my sister who worked in produce and help packaged green beans in the backroom. I'm not sure if my sister enjoyed babysitting while she was at work. During high school, I worked part time in the cheese department at the local A & P.

2. How has your career evolved over the years?

My career has evolved over the years as I took on new challenges and expanded responsibility. I've held many positions in the deli prepared foods and bakery department in the Mid-Atlantic and Metro NY area. I really love the constant evolution that has taken place in the deli/prepared food segment of the business. I feel lucky to work with the many talented people who have helped me continue to learn, develop and execute great ideas over the years.

3. What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I'm a member of the United Deli Council, which is a share group of small specialty retailers in the United States. I'm also a member of IDDBA, which is a great resource for information.

4. What is your leadership philosophy?

Provide clear direction of the future to the team. Role model expectations and inspire others to be the best they can be. There's an old saying, "Many minds make a better decision." Involve others in the big picture so they can buy in and be a part of the solution. It's important to challenge and develop people and recognize them for their efforts.

5. What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I like the outdoors, hiking, biking, golf and working around the house. I enjoy cooking when I have the time and discovering new foods. I believe exercising on regular bases helps my energy level.

6. What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you personally tweet? Have a personal Facebook page, etc.?

Not a tweeter. However, it's amazing that Facebook has become the third largest country in terms of members. I think it's great way for family and friends to connect and keep in touch. For fun, I poke a few of our mutual friends on my wife's facebook page.

7. What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

My family inspires me to be the best person I can be. I'm fortunate to have the opportunity to be a part of my stepkids' lives.



8. What charity is your personal favorite?

The American Cancer Society and Red Cross, for all the good they do in the world.

9. What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Find the passion in what you love to do and channel the energy into hard work. Continue to challenge yourself to learn through formal education and experience. Get involved with networks groups and visits food shows.

10. What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Portable, wholesome, nutritionally healthy great tasting foods: Sandwiches, salads and soups. Forward-thinking retailers continue to blur the line of restaurant-quality food and deliver great alternatives to the fast-food drive-thru's that appeal to today's health conscious consumer. Think convenience, such as an App that lets you order a custom-made sandwich or green salad from your phone and have it delivered to your office or curbside pick up!

11. What's your favorite read?

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Increasing Rotisserie Chicken Sales

Don't neglect this category because you think it sells itself

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Rotisserie chicken is one of the most popular and profitable deli prepared foods. Convenience, flavor and minimal prep time are features that score big with consumers who want to put dinner on the table fast. Meanwhile, poultry producers and manufacturing companies have made it easy for operators to rotisserie cook, package and showcase the birds in a mouth-watering display.

These two advantages really add up. According to the Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based market research firm that tracks and analyzes retail sales data of fresh foods, rotisserie chicken contributed 6.1 percent of deli department and 11.7 percent of deli prepared foods dollar sales for the 52-weeks ending Dec. 25, 2010. This is up from 5.5 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively, since 2005.

According to Scott Zoeller, director of deli merchandising at Kings Super Markets Inc., a 27-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, "Rotisserie chicken is definitely holding its own in the deli. For us, sales are up 9 percent in the last year."

The trend in rotisserie chicken is for larger birds, says Jeff Stuczynski, poultry area business manager — east for St. Cloud, MN-based Gold'n Plump Poultry. "This means close to a 3-pound cooked weight."

Kings added a larger rotisserie bird to its program four years ago, says Zoeller. "The finished weight is 2¾ pounds. It's an offering that has grown with our customer base. We also market a smaller, 2¼-pound bird."

Eric Le Blanc, director of sales development for Tyson Foods, Inc., Fayetteville, AR, notes, "Many retailers offer a small chicken because they can maintain their gross margins and hold their retail. Fortunately, sales data we've looked at over the past few years make it clear that the rotisserie chicken category is nowhere near as price sensitive as the market seems to believe. Therefore, make sure to have a great tasting chicken and charge what you need for it."





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Delis that want to tempt customers offer rotisserie chicken in one or more flavors. Lemon pepper and sweet BBQ are Gold'n Plump's, "most popular flavors," says Stuczynski. The advantages for deli operators of purchasing a pre-flavored chicken, he adds, include "consistency of flavor, accurate nutrition information, and savings in cost of the seasonings."

Five flavors are available at Kings, says

Zoeller. "We have lemon rosemary, herb garlic and last year introduced a Provençal flavored chicken that is marinated in as well as rolled in a mix of herbs to flavor the bird inside and out. This year, we'll offer two new unique flavors – an Asian Thai and citrus honey."

In the end, says Tyson's Le Blanc, "Make sure you have a great tasting formulation — any flavor you like — don't overcook the bird and follow your hold times. Do that consis-

tently and it won't matter if you have one flavor or three or seven."

Pique Consumer Interest

Most consumers want to buy hot, fresh, ready-to-eat chickens to take home, says Jeff Lucash, national sales manager for the Madison, WI-based Placon Corporation. "Even though a cold ready-to-heat chicken provides reheating ability, most are looking to

Fried Chicken Still Demands Attention

BY JAN FIALKOW

Fried chicken may have lost ground to rotisserie chicken, but its still accounts for significant sales. "Fried chicken is one of the ultimate comfort foods," notes Joe DiPippo, president, Hain Pure Protein Corp., New Oxford, PA. "People have always loved it and always will."

"Ten years ago when you looked at fried chicken and rotisserie sales in the deli category, they were evenly split in terms of unit sales," says John Moore, product marketing, Pilgrim's Pride, Greeley, CO. "Prepared chicken has delivered solid and continual growth over the last 10 years and overall units of fried chicken and rotisserie are both up in deli."

Fried chicken is still a popular choice, even though many consumers are looking for healthier options. According to Jeff Stuczynski, poultry area business manager — east, Gold'n Plump Poultry, St. Cloud, MN, "We haven't noticed a change in consumers' regular fried-chicken buying patterns, but stores are starting to offer baked or grilled options, which are healthier since they're not deep fried."

Hain takes the position that its fried chicken — while not being marketing as 'health food' — can still be more healthful than other iterations. "Our chickens are raised on sustainable farms and with a high level of animal welfare," explains DiPippo. "There's no animal protein in their feed and they're not given antibiotics. That's why we can say we start with superior raw material." Sustainability has become an important factor for a growing segment of the buying public.

He hits another consumer hot button when he adds, "You don't need a food science degree to read and understand our label. There are many breeding systems

but we think using fewer ingredients is best. We use no irradiated spices, no phosphates in the marinades — everything we use must qualify as natural. We go to extremes to make it simple." The importance of this for retailers, according to DiPippo is, "It gives the consumer permission to eat more, more often."

The market has grown beyond traditional pieces of fried chicken pieces. "Tenders, popcorn, chunks and wings are experiencing double-digit growth in the deli," says Moore. "Consumers are looking more to the deli than to take-out to solve their meal dilemmas. Delis are convenient and offer a better value than restaurant take-out. Well-executed, stable flavors such as Buffalo, barbecue and honey barbecue continue to lead the category in

sales. The emerging flavors mix the familiar with a twist, such as savory, sweet, grilled and sour. Delis are focusing on their core item flavors with limited-time offerings of one or two items."

"The category is growing," notes DiPippo. "We're seeing chunks and tenders selling on boneless wing bars. We have a fully cooked, whole-grain breaded, 100 percent breast meat popcorn chicken that's baked not fried. It's a party food, a snack food. The deli just has to heat it and sell it."

"Some retailers are innovating, using fried chicken as a salad topper — combining the craving for comfort with healthy eating. But fried chicken still primarily holds the center-of-the-plate protein position," he continues. **DB**



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Don't Let Out-Of-Stocks Block Sales

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

There's a simple way to sell more chicken, says Eric Le Blanc, director of sales development for Tyson Foods, Inc., Fayetteville, AR. "Make sure you have a great tasting product, tell people you have it, and make sure you're in stock."

Restocking the chicken display is especially important in the late afternoon. Scott Zoeller, director of deli merchandising at Kings Super Markets Inc., based in Parsippany, NJ, notes, "We see 40 percent of sales between 4 PM and 7 PM in the spring and summer and a little earlier in the fall and winter."

To maximize sales and minimize the chance for out-of-stocks, Jeff Stuczynski, eastern area sales manager for retail/deli for St. Cloud, MN-based Gold'n Plump Poultry, recommends:

- Make sure the product is fresh. Don't have product that was cooked at noon out at 5 PM.
- Cook multiple batches during the day instead of one large batch. The chickens stay fresh and give consumers the whole ambiance/theatre. If consumers see birds cooking all the time, it registers as 'fresh.'
- If the deli has a warmer island, have product in it all the time – not just one or two birds – especially during peak hours. Otherwise it looks as if a consumer is getting the 'bottom of the barrel.'

DB

eat their chicken shortly after purchasing it."

A way to capture the value of unsold chickens, says Le Blanc, "is to use them as an ingredient in other products." Last fall, Tyson introduced its 3-item Rotisserie Bakes line, which includes Chicken Pot Pie, Chicken Alfredo, and Chicken Enchilada varieties. "Operators need only thaw, pour the ingredients into a pan and stir in the cut-up chicken meat. This shrink reduction technique also allows operators to easily expand their deli prepared meal offerings."

Beyond this, says Le Blanc, "a simple and effective tool to raise the profile of the product is to utilize checkout merchandisers. For example, only 25 percent of customers shop the deli, but 43 percent will shop a checkout merchandiser. Checkout merchandisers have proven they can achieve 10 to 15 percent incremental volume."

Packaging Options

Rotisserie chickens are time- and date-stamped and displayed hot for no longer than four hours at Kings. The retailer keeps product continually fresh by cooking chickens in two to three batches throughout the day. Consumers can easily see the rotisserie chicken, says Zoeller. "We package them in a



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*Rotational Frying Study, University of Lethbridge, 2005.





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clear-top dome container with a black base.”

The advantage of this type of packaging, says Placon’s Lucash, “is visual clarity. A high-quality anti-fog agent is necessary for the lid to display the chickens for quick sale. A fogged container makes it difficult to see the product consumers are buying and may not result in the sale.” In addition, he adds, this type of container “securely contains the chicken and the juices while it’s in the warmer, thus preventing slip/fall situations as well as burns to the customer.”

Ed Sussman, co-owner of Melville, NY-based Merit Paper Corp., notes, “Since warm chickens require a heat source to maintain their quality while on display, bag-

type packaging provides a doubly efficient use of the heating space since twice the number of items can be placed on the display at once. Thus, half the energy is used to display the same number of chickens resulting in an effective way to sell a product more sustainably.” The best way to display rotisserie chickens, he adds, “is on a warmer that can be placed very close to the deli area.” The other popular type of packaging for rotisserie chicken, he says, “is a leakproof bag with a handle, a reclosable zipper, and anti-fog film for clarity.”

Patrick Starrett, product manager for Lenexa, KS-based Robbie Fantastic Flexibles, explains, “Our Hot N Handy pouch

can be printed with customized branding to increase store awareness. Printing can also include UPC codes, ingredient statements, nutrition facts and any specific marketing or merchandising messages a grocery chain would like to communicate. Color coding of individual flavors of rotisserie chicken can also be part of the package design.”

Deals And Promotions

Rotisserie chicken enjoys the most activity when it’s on feature, says Kings’ Zoeller. “For us, that’s a retail ad at \$3.49 per pound, for example, rather than the regular everyday price of \$4.19 per pound. This price can change by size and variety of flavor.”

Raising the rotisserie option higher in the consumer’s consideration set requires awareness efforts and that means communication, says Tyson’s Le Blanc. “The best-in-class retailers in the category make use of ad features — although these don’t have to be price features — in in-store announcements, in-store signage, cart-corral signage, etc.”

Many retailers are adding meal deals to capture impulse sales from shoppers, notes Starrett. “Promoting side dishes with a rotisserie chicken helps position the hot deli as a time saver for busy consumers. Making consumers aware of the meal deal in either advertising or in-store signage can create trial and encourage repeat business. Flexible packaging can be printed with targeted promotional information noting the meal deal special to grab impulse purchases with this easy meal solution.”

Rotisserie chicken, Cornish hen, duck and fried chicken nuggets, tenders and strips along with seasoned fries are displayed in one merchandiser at Kings. This is positioned, says Zoeller, “next to the hot soup and adjacent to sandwiches. Cold salads are nearby. It makes it easier for customers to come in and pick up a quick meal.”

“There are a few different types of equipment that can accomplish this type of merchandising,” says David Mumaw, sales engineer for Amtekco Industries, Columbus, OH. “The least expensive is a standalone merchandiser for the chicken with dry shelving next to it to cross-merchandise items such as a box of dry poultry stuffing. More expensive — but more versatile — is a 2-tier chicken unit with a hot bar built in with wells to sell soups or hot foods such as mashed potatoes and mixed vegetables. Depending on price and size requirements, these later units can range from six feet long with five heat wells at counter level and chicken underneath to 11 to 12 feet long with two hot shelves each side-by-side and up to 16 soup wells. There are a lot of options both in design and how the units are best utilized.”

DB

Five Ways To Increase Olive Sales

Consumer demand for increased varieties provides a unique selling opportunity

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Olives are one of mankind's oldest cultivated foods. The cultivation of these brine-cured fruits dates back to 5000 BCE, and they, along with the tree on which they grow, have been celebrated as a symbol of peace, power and pureness around the world throughout the ages. Fast forward, and up until the last decade or so, U.S. consumers considered olives primarily as an appetizer, something that sat in the relish dish along with celery and carrot sticks at holiday meals. No longer.

According to John Stueland, deli category manager for Lund Food Holdings, Inc., an Edina, MN-based retailer that operates 10 Lunds and 11 Byerly's supermarkets, "What has changed is the depth of knowledge consumers have today about olives and olive oil. This has been driven by food magazines, television shows and blogs. As a result, demand has grown exponentially as more people find they have personal favorites and as they increase their frequency of olive use."

Retail consumers in the U.S. and Canada spent nearly \$623 million on table olives in 2009, according to *Study on the Promotion of Consumption of Olive oil and Olives in the USA and Canada*, published by Datamonitor Ltd., in 2010, on behalf of the Madrid, Spain-based International Olive Council (IOC). The study reported the average price per kilogram — which is here converted to pounds — paid at retail for table olives in the U.S. rose over 6 percent between 2004 and 2009 to \$10.29 (\$4.69/pound) and is expected to reach \$11.40 (\$5.18/pound) by 2013.

Olives are indeed a ripe sales opportunity. Here are five tips to sell more.

Offer Both Traditional And Trendy

"A store should carry a minimum 20 percent of everyday best-selling olives to create a destination that attracts consumers," recommends Anthony DiPietro, vice president, George E. DeLallo Co., Inc., Jeanette, PA. "Then, add variety. This could be something new or a seasonal item that creates a sense



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE E. DELALLO CO., INC.

of urgency to buy."

The staple olive varieties for supermarket delis, according to Patty Echeverria, marketing manager for Castella Imports, Inc., Hauppauge, NY, "are Kalamata, olive medley, Manzanilla, Greek black, Moroccan cured, Feta salad, green stuffed, French medley, Alfonso and Cerignola." Castella also offers a collection of olives infused with California wines such as Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon and Merlot that Echeverria calls "a must-have when entertaining."

Castelvetro olives are the newest trend, she adds. "These are grown in Sicily and harvested young. With a distinct bright green color and a mild buttery flavor, these babies lack bitterness and are utterly addictive. They don't have any additives and are lower in sodium."

Kalamata "is the favorite," notes Alice Toomanian, vice president of marketing for Nicola International, Inc., Sun Valley, CA. "However, expect price increases this year

due to bad weather in the major European growing regions combined with limited product in inventory. The effects of this started in April and will last until the next harvest in the fall."

Concentrate on the core six or eight top sellers, advises Ann Dressler, manager of service deli and foodservice for G.L. Mezzetta, Inc., American Canyon, CA. "Then rotate out the slower movers to help create and retain interest in the section."

In the realm of new olives to try is the "previously lesser-known dry-cured Divina Thassos from Greece," explains Mary Caldwell, creative services manager for Food-Match Inc., New York, NY. "It's a terrific addition to the dry-cured olive from Morocco; it's in the same family of dry-cured, yet different because of its terroir."

Stuffed varieties are experiencing real sales growth. "Olives hand-stuffed with chunks of real Blue or Feta cheese are very popular. Spanish olives are stuffed with



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EXPANDING AND INNOVATING

By expanding into new markets, such as ethnic specialty stores, supermarkets and club stores, Castella has enhanced its ability to bring unique

offerings to its customers. The company brings new product innovations directly to the consumer through in-store demos and road shows. This one-on-one interaction with customers allows Castella to anticipate and respond to culinary trends.

RAISING THE BAR

Castella's olive bar experts can provide necessary support to maximize olive bar sales. Based on demographics, locations and past sales, Castella can develop a plan-o-gram to suit the needs of each individual store. Castella's priority is to support and ensure the growth and success of the olive bar program.

MOVING FORWARD

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Adding A Fusti Program

A fusti is a container that sits on a stand and has a spigot to dispense olive oil; a fusti program offers a unique opportunity for delis to sell bulk olive oil in addition to olives. Last fall, Lund Food Holdings, Inc., Edina, MN, implemented such a fusti program in the delis of its Lunds and Byerly's stores.

John Stueland, deli category manager, explains, "We played with a similar bulk olive oil program 10 years ago and stopped because there wasn't a big demand. Today, customers have a lot more knowledge and put more thought into their olive oil purchases. We also started the program to showcase olive oil as a fresh perishable agricultural product, not something made in a factory or grown in glass bottles. This program provided an opportunity to tell this story."

Stueland direct-sources two olive oils from California, a single varietal and a blend, to provide customers with two distinct flavors. The single varietal has a grass green color, smooth velvety texture and herbal flavor, and the blend has a golden hue with spicy notes.

Two 30-liter fustis are located in the staffed specialty cheese area or service counter next to the sliced meats so trained employees can assist consumers with sampling and offer usage ideas. Once a consumer has made a selection as to type and quantity, a deli associate dispenses the oil into a single-size random-weight bottle, which is dark to protect the oil from light and rancidity. The fusti-dispensed oils sell for \$9.99 per pound. The deli offers a refill or bottle exchange program for future purchases.

"We've introduced the program in a number of tasting events," says Stueland. "Consumer response is positive. A number know what the program is all about and we are enjoying the opportunity to educate others."

Stueland is open to changing the oils offered seasonally, based on availability and usage opportunities, such as what pairs best, for example, with pasta in the winter and salads in the summer.

DB

Dressler, "A pack-out deli cup program using fresh olives, which looks more like a store branded or fresh product, or a prepared cup program can work well."

According to Caldwell, the benefit of having both a bar and cup program is the ability to stock more SKUs. "You can cup out a lesser known, less popular product that has a loyal customer base. This lets the store continue selling a product and keeps customers happy."

Educate Consumers

One of the best ways to educate consumers about olives is to educate the deli staff. This was definitely a hands-on process for the Lunds & Byerly's deli managers who traveled to Greece in November to meet farmers who grow the Kalamon olives found in the chain's delis. "Olives are a signature category for us," explains Stueland. "When our staff has traveled to meet the producers and seen the method of production, it's easy for them to bring that story back and tell it to customers."

This kind training may not be feasible for most chains, but that doesn't mean staff education should be ignored. "We're strongly dedicated to educating our retail partners," relates Caldwell. "We train in person and also provide materials so store associates can look at an olive — the color, origin, varietal and marinade — and know how to describe it to a customer."

Taste testing provides an opportunity for consumers to try before they buy, says Castella's Echeverria. "We offer manned olive bars in Costco that educate customers on the olives while assisting them in their grab-and-go purchases."

Promote and Cross-Merchandise

Customers expect to pay for freshness, variety and quality so an underpriced olive bar can become suspect, says Dressler. "Conversely, keeping a balanced priced section, in my opinion not exceeding \$9.99 per pound, will not scare off potential new customers to this category."

Price promotions do not provide significant lift, according to Caldwell. "Instead, cupped displays co-merchandised with cut/wrap cheeses are often successful."

Echeverria advises positioning olives as part of meal solution. "Customers are interested in accompaniments for olives and getting customers to leave with more than just olives can mean the difference between red and black. A container of olives, fresh bread, marinated artichokes, bruschettas and olive oil are great add-on purchases, often impulse buys, which can result from clever cross-merchandising."

DB

pimiento and jalapeño 80 to 90 percent of the time. Some are also stuffed with tuna or anchovies, but there's not a big demand for these in America," Nicola's Toomanian adds.

Build The Best Bar

An olive bar, says Mezzetta's Dressler, "offers the consumer the fun and experience of mixing and sampling many different varieties and learning about the different flavor profiles offered."

Twenty-two percent of shoppers reported their local supermarket had an olive bar in 2008, an increase from 18 percent in 2006, according to a Washington, DC-based Food Marketing Institute report referenced in the IOC's 2010 study.

Stueland says Lunds & Byerly's carries "anywhere from 18 varieties in our smaller stores to nearly three dozen in the larger ones. The selections also include antipasti such as marinated cipollini onions, fire-roasted red peppers and roasted garlic."

The most important strategy for the olive bar is inspiring shoppers to shop it as an ingredients bar, says FoodMatch's Caldwell. "We support this initiative with custom recipes we write and test that not only use our product but also increase the customer's

shopping list."

Visual merchandising is key as olives are an impulse purchase. This includes arranging olives to offer color breaks, posting clear and effective signage, and maintaining a clean bountiful display. "Shoppers want to buy product from clean, organized and full pans," Caldwell adds. "If a pan is almost empty, it can send the message the product is old — even if it isn't and it's just been a busy day for the olive bar. So keep it full, clean and stir the product."

Don't Neglect Cups and Pre-Pack

A bar or behind-the-glass program and a cupped out or pre-packaged deli cup program can boost sales of olives in the deli. Pre-pack programs offer convenience and the ability for consumers to know the price upfront.

An olive bar is the best way to present olives, says DeLallo's DiPietro. "However, in formats where space is limited, we offer our Peel, Place and Set racks that hold 2½ pounds each of four or eight types of olives and antipasti. These are set inside the service deli case, ideally next to cold savory salads, and the olives can be portioned to order. The benefit of this display system over traditional bowls is less cleaning and maintenance."

In delis that don't have the room, says

Summertime – And The Entertaining Is Easy

Consumers are looking for bold flavors, healthy ingredients in a no-fuss format

BY BOB JOHNSON

Summer entertaining tends to be relaxed and informal, but informal doesn't mean boring or predictable. Health and nutrition are rising in importance, convenience remains paramount, and consumers are drawn to bold flavor options.

According to Camille Black, marketing director at Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY, "Charcuterie is very popular — you can see this by going to any restaurant with a European influence. French, Italian, Spanish, etc. — they all offer a charcuterie plate made up of a variety of meats and condiments, such as coarse pâté, saucisson sec, whole-grain mustard, cornichons, etc. Due to the popularity of the charcuterie plate in restaurants, consumers are beginning to adapt the idea for home use, such as serving a charcuterie spread at a cocktail party. And obviously charcuterie spreads are a natural at picnics and outdoor gatherings."

An array of Asian foods is also popular for snacking and social gatherings. According to Crystal Elmore, category marketing manager for prepared foods at Innov-Asian, Tukwila, WA, "Asian appetizers seem to be the new trend everywhere we look. From mini spring rolls to authentic shu mai, these items add an exciting option to any gathering, be it formal or casual. Asian food can really cover both ends of the spectrum, bringing bold flavors to the party with Asian dipping sauces for your everyday appetizers, or lightening the fare with refreshing ingredients such as Asian



PHOTO COURTESY OF TH FOODS INC

inspired dressings/sauces with ginger, or even delicate potstickers with Ponzu sauce.”

Some little-known summer holidays can be helpful in promoting Asian foods. “One up-and-coming celebration is the Dragon

Boat Festival — celebrated this year on June 6 — a traditional holiday associated with Chinese, East Asian and Southeast Asian societies. The highlight of the Dragon Boat Festival is the Dragon Boat Race, where

teams of rowers propel Dragon Boats to the beat of drums. The tradition is centuries-old and has been taken up in countries around the world, becoming an international sport. We’re launching a Dragon Boat promotion

Make the Package Convenient

An important part of merchandising foods for summer entertaining is packaging those foods conveniently.

According to Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales at Cedars Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Ward Hill, MA, “There are always new packaging options, but the biggest thing we see are packages that will allow consumers to go right to their events without repacking into serving bowls. That typically means larger containers, which have been the mainstay of the club operators. These packs can also include topping or garnish so they look as if they were finished at home.”

Many producers are coming out with package options specifically designed to be taken directly from the deli to a picnic or barbecue. “Les Trois Petits Cochons offers a special gift pack, made just for a picnic. ‘Backpack through Provence’ is an insulated cooler packed with an 8-ounce Mousse Truffle, 8-ounce Pâté de Campagne, Mini Toasts, Dijon mustard, small cutting board, corkscrew and a French cheese,” says Camille Black, marketing director at Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY.

The key here is packaging that makes the food convenient. “Quick and easy is always important and portability is another factor as well,” states, says Peter Abbenante, vice president of marketing at The Snack Factory, Skillman, NJ. Whether you’re putting a spread together for a backyard barbecue or bringing appetizers down to a neighbor’s house for a party, most people need to be able grab a few elements and create something quick and easy that will travel well.”

Convenience packaging can include everything needed for a meal. According to Crystal Elmore, category marketing manager for prepared foods at InnovAsian, Tukwila, WA, “What we’re really seeing is a spike in ready-made gourmet meals. It’s true we’re all busy, and there doesn’t seem to be an end in sight. But while fast food is most likely here to stay, we all see the emphasis on healthy and speed scratch recipes increasing. When consumers are tired of the drive-thru but still want something easy, they’re heading to the grocery store where they can find the freshest ingredients. Delis are taking products they sell in bulk and creating easy-to-reheat-and-eat single and family-style meals that are fresh, made with care and high quality.”

Some producers are finding packages large enough to serve a fair sized social gathering are popular. “Sales of Huxtable’s

appetizer and large-format products, 36-ounce plus, are increasing rapidly,” notes Jason Knight, president and CEO of Huxtable’s Kitchen, Vernon, CA. “Huxtable’s is known for our gourmet food such as lasagnas, baked ziti, enchiladas, etc., so larger format products were a no brainer.”

Packaging also has to address shelf life and sanitation, so modified atmosphere packaging is helping. “Huxtable’s has successfully experimented with a ready-to-use appetizer tray perfect for a party. Open the lid, warm the product and serve! It’s difficult to talk about packaging without discussing shelf life. Huxtable’s products deliver some of the longest shelf life in the category. We accomplish this by a fastidious focus on sanitation, GMPs, hot-fill products, MAP and good old-fashioned care,” Knight adds.

Modified atmosphere is being used to keep antipasti trays fresh and safe. “MAP packaged antipasti trays are an important development in packaging,” says Dean Spilka, president of Norpaco Gourmet Foods, Middletown, CT.

Shelf life is influencing the development of products, as well as packages. “The big issue is the development of foods that are shelf-stable, that people can carry with them without worrying about refrigeration. That has been one of

the major obstacles to providing affordable, healthy foods to the public,” reports Ray Hanania of Ziyad Brothers Importing, Cicero, IL. “We manufacture a shelf-stable hummus under the Wild Garden label that is very popular and healthy, and we’ve packaged it in a way that makes it suitable for reaching audiences in many market environments such as delis.”

In the future, expect manufacturers to come up with new packaging options that meet consumer demand for sustainability. “Convenient, resealable packaging that keeps products fresh remains popular. Recyclable and biodegradable packaging is desired by an increasing number of consumers, but options for manufacturers to satisfy these requests are still very limited,” according to Jim Garsow, director of marketing for TH Foods, Inc., Loves Park, IL.

To be an effective merchandising tool, the package must let the consumer see the food. “Customers want to see what they’re getting either by windows in the actual packages or the photo images used on the box,” says Michael Thompson, president of Venus Wafers, Hingham, MA.

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for the holiday this spring," Elmore says.

Some producers are making appetizer-sized items with familiar summer flavor profiles. "We've focused on taking popular flavor profiles, such as Buffalo chicken, bacon and Cheddar twice-baked potato, cheeseburger, etc., and used our proprietary production techniques to make small format, 1- or 2-bite appetizers," says Jason Knight, president and CEO of Huxtable's Kitchen, Vernon, CA.

Faced with making choices from among

several newly popular foods, many consumers are opting for fusion flavors. "While we all enjoy the standard cocktail meatballs in marinara at a reception or ham sandwiches on a picnic, we see that the most inventive consumers are escalating their dining experiences with the so-called fusion of foods," Innov-Asian's Elmore notes. "Why not try chicken meatballs with an Asian sauce or a Thai salad for your outdoor gathering? No longer are we living in the day that you can only serve one

type of cuisine at an event. Variety is the spice of life, and shopping at the deli to pick up the necessities for your event offers more than enough choices."

Bold flavors in general are growing in popularity but no other category is on the rise like Mediterranean foods. "Lots of new foods are actually old foods, many dating back to biblical time," explains says Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales at Cedars Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Ward Hill, MA. "Mediterranean continues to be a hot category. Hummus continues to lead category growth, and strong brand loyalty by consumers affords manufacturers like us the opportunity to launch new products and build new subcategories of Mediterranean."

The Healthy Options

Consumers are increasingly looking for entertaining menu options that are healthy, and producers of healthier options are finding a steady increase in demand for those items.

"We're experiencing a big increase in demand for non-allergenic foods, especially gluten free. Caterers, hotels, restaurants and consumers having parties are becoming more sensitive to the allergies of their guests. Gluten-free products, such as Crunchmaster Multi-Seed Crackers, that not only taste great but are also natural alternatives to traditional, processed wheat snacks, are having tremendous growth," reports Jim Garsov, director of marketing for TH Foods, Inc., Loves Park, IL.

A number of healthy vegetable snacks are

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becoming more popular. "Roasted tomatoes are growing in market share as are Sweetie-pepps, all natural peppers from the Peruvian highlands," says Dean Spilka, president of Norpaco Gourmet Foods, Middletown, CT.

Mediterranean foods have been a major beneficiary of the search for healthier entertaining options. "Summer party themes are usually planned around outdoor eating and easy-to-prepare foods. When you can incorporate healthy foods such as Mediterranean

dips and spread, you're sure to have a great event," Cedars' Frocione adds.

Entire healthy appetizer trays can be built around a selection of premium fresh olives. "One food gaining new popularity is olives. Many stores now have olive bars, and if they don't, they have a nice selection of premium olives. Throw in some cut vegetables, some cured meats, a chunk of Parmigiano Reggiano and a bag of Pretzel Crisps and you have a nice portable appetizer tray that



works well in just about any setting," says Peter Abbenante, vice president of marketing at The Snack Factory, Skillman, NJ.

Middle Eastern foods are attracting interest from healthy-food advocates. "Besides hummus, falafel is also a very healthy product and that, too, is picking up steam," says Ray Hanania, Ziyad Brothers Importing, Cicero, IL.

But it is hummus that has jumped off the charts in the last few years because it offers a healthy dip option. "In the last five years, hummus has gone from \$100 million to half a billion," says John McGuckin, executive vice president for sales at Sabra Dipping Company, Farmingdale, NY. "The category has exploded. Hummus goes great with barbecue, picnics or whatever social event. Hummus is one of the fastest growing categories, and it's associated with people getting together."

Sabra is trying to draw even more consumers to hummus by introducing new flavors. "We have a new basil pesto hummus that is an Italian variation and is getting good reviews. To broaden the appeal and get new people to try hummus, we've introduced Buffalo style hummus with the flavor of Buffalo wings," he adds.

While Sabra is known primarily as a hummus producer, with slightly more than half the market, the company is moving to define itself more broadly through a full line of dipping products. "We're calling ourselves the deli dipping company. We think we can help

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bring more people to the deli. We're looking at the whole dip category," McGuckin says. Sabra recently acquired a salsa company and will be producing four different flavors of salsa made using only fresh tomatoes under the Sabra name. The company is also testing out a guacamole in New York and California.

Feed Them and They Will Buy

No method of attracting consumers to the new and healthy flavor profiles is as effective as giving them a taste. "The most successful promotions we see are ones that put product in consumers' mouths. A recent study showed more than 70 percent of consumers shop the prepared food/service deli section every other week or less. Anything that can be done to drive traffic, awareness and subsequent trial in the service deli/prepared foods area of the store should result in massive volume gains," Huxtable's Knight says.

Some producers are helping to defray the cost of samples in order to increase sales. "Smaller retailers are ready to offer samples to their customers. To help, manufacturers are offering promotions that include complimentary cases for sampling," notes Michael Thompson, president of Venus Wafers, Hingham, MA.

When it comes to putting together summer entertaining menu options, cross-merchandising is key. "We see cross-merchandising to give customers ideas on how products go together. For example, Pemberton Farms

[Cambridge, MA] had Fig Spread with its gourmet cheeses in a case with crackers nicely merchandised on top — hardly new but a good talking point that supports what we're trying to do," he adds.

Combinations of foods that complete a meal or snack make for effective cross promotions. According to TH Foods' Garson, "Meal and snack solutions continue to be very successful in the deli department. For example, simple combinations such as hummus or artisan cheeses and gluten-free crackers displayed together offer consumers convenient, healthy grab-and-go options. At the same time, promoting these premium, specialty items increases the retailer shopping basket rings and margins."

Cross-merchandising is an effective way to offer promotional bargains to increase total sales. "Promos are typically driven by the retailers as cents-off or BOGO opportunities. We may see a slight lift during a promo like this, but I still like to see cross market ties in with other items in my brand that go together," Cedars' Frocione says.

Another merchandising current is the increased use of restaurant names in the deli. "Another hot trend is restaurant branding for retail market segments, Cedar's has joined a list of prominent manufacturers who will be launching The Moe's Southwest Grill line of Tex-Mex quality products. We will making salsa and two bean dips for the initial launch at IDDBA," he adds.

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Salads & Sides

Offering consumers dishes that don't require heating the oven can build summer sales

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

Summer's long, hot days cause many consumers to search out meals that are fresh and flavorful while requiring little or no cooking. Deli salads and sides can round either out a meal or serve as light entrées. They're perfect both for dining at home and for taking along to any kind of casual get-together.

"Consumers don't want to cook at home and heat their ovens," says John McCarthy, category manager for side dishes at Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, making the season a prime opportunity for delis to sell more

side dishes and salads.

"When people are coming over and the house is dirty and you've got screaming kids, do you really have time to think about the side dishes?" asks Jim Daskaleas, vice president of product development at North Kansas City, MO-based Walker's Food Products, which has been making private-label products since 1947.

"We've actively looked for things that work well during summer and fit with the consumer's lifestyle," says Jason Knight, president and CEO, Vernon, CA-based

Huxtable's Kitchen, which manufactures organic, ethnic and comfort-food side dishes. Its twice-baked potato — available in sour cream with bacon, steakhouse chili, and cheddar with broccoli — is very popular in summer because there's no need to heat the oven. "Our roasted vegetables are to die for. Because we have access to a lot of vegetables, we have a lot of variety in there," he adds. The dish includes carrots, squash, zucchini and red bell peppers, balsamic vinegar and spices.

The company is venturing into new



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debuted in 2010 and is expected to be a top-seller this summer. "It has a fresh and bright flavor, similar to using sour cream but with a nice binding agent," says Daskaleas. A multi-grain and herb side dish, another recent addition, is a refreshing alternative to mayonnaise-laced potato salad. Rosemary, basil, oregano, salt and pepper are added to five different grains. "It's healthy, but it has flavor. We introduced it as a side dish for grilled chicken or baked fish."

However, Huxtable's Knight warns retailers not to let a focus on flavor trump nutrition. "A lot of retailers are going for flavor explosions and not really focusing on health."

Confusing marketing messages from television, newspapers, radio, magazines and the Internet don't help matters. "Everybody's been inundated with 'Don't eat this, don't eat that,'" says Daskaleas. "The big thing we push is you are what you eat. Eat smaller portions and big flavors."

According to Reser's McCarthy, "There's a paradox — consumers say they want less sodium but they also want flavor. You have to find that happy medium." He works with retailers to call out the nutritional benefits in each side dish with the help of tags displayed next to each item. For example, side dishes containing potatoes are signed to let consumers know potatoes can rival bananas as a source of potassium; macaroni-and-cheese, often given short shrift nutritionally, is signed as a good source of calcium.

Blanc Industries in Dover, NJ, creates signage specific to perishable items. Didier Blanc, president, has noticed an increased demand for signage that promotes nutritional qualities. "Having healthy attributes in the signage is the way to attract people to your product." However, he adds, "If the sign is too descriptive, nobody's going to read it. You need to

areas, such as its recently developed cold options. These include dips, potato salads and gazpacho. Huxtable's is increasing its offering of ethnic flavors, via its Red Envelope brand and core existing brands.

USDA organic certified since 2003, Huxtable's has an expansive offering of organic foods and is also developing new all-natural, antibiotic- and hormone-free items. "Everything we work on, we target sodium, less trans fats and all-natural with no preservatives," says Knight. "We're focused on making products that are not only healthy but also delicious." One recent goal is to whittle the calories in each side dish down to 300 calories per serving.

Elaine Simon, business development manager for Litehouse Foods, Sandpoint, ID, says the company's dressings and marinades can help make in-store preparation a point of differentiation. Litehouse offers hundreds of variations in low-fat and full-fat formulations that can be used to marinate proteins and vegetables. The dressings can then be used on salads containing the cooked protein. For example, she explains, "Tangy Citrus Orange, a Dressing of the Year award winner, is a delicious marinade for shrimp or chicken. Add the chicken or shrimp to an oriental salad base, sprinkle with wontons and almonds, and add more dressing. It's a perfect summer entrée salad. Or marinate vegetables in our Red Wine Vinegar dressing. Then toss them with greens or add them to pasta for a distinctive side dish."

Consumer concerns about healthier options have led many manufacturers to take

a careful look at ingredients. According to Tara Milligan, director of marketing at Chicken of the Sea International, San Diego, CA, the company's foodservice tuna products — both light and albacore — were recently reduced to 60-calorie servings. "The only 'bad' thing in tuna is sodium and we just lowered it 28 percent in light and 44 percent in albacore," she notes.

Adding additional spices and flavors can help mask reduced-sodium content. "It's all about the taste of the product for our consumers," states Walker's Daskaleas. "You can formulate around the other ingredients" by adding spices.

Among Walker's newest products is a Greek yogurt pasta salad with fresh cucumber dressing and lots of fresh vegetables. It



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have short, to-the-point attributes." He suggests positioning signs as close as possible to the product to reinforce the message. Attaching a topper onto an existing sign, he says, will attract even more attention.

Summer Merchandising

Summer cross-merchandising offers many retail opportunities supported by manufacturers. Reser's encourages its retail customers to display all the items necessary for a

back-yard barbecue or picnic in one area to facilitate the consumer shopping experience. "We encourage retailers to partner up their meats with our salads," says McCarthy, for example, pairing baked beans with barbecued meats.

In preparation for this summer, Reser's — which since 1950 has supplied potato salads, dips, tortillas and salsas to delis — developed recipes for salads and sides that are easy for deli employees to prepare. The eight new

bulk salad kits are Creamy Pesto Gemelli, Fruit & Nut Couscous, Curry Chickpea, Loaded Antipasto, Mediterranean Orzo, Thai Peanut Yakisoba with BBQ Pork, Buffalo Chicken, and Tandoori Chicken & Curry. The No. 1 focus, according to Teresa Carter, category manager for salads, is on "big, beautiful colors" and "trendier, ethnic flavors." She has implemented a Salad of the Month program to "get more variety into the deli case and more seasonal products into the salads."

Walker's also supports cross-merchandising efforts. "One of the best things we've done is to have the deli work with the meat department. When people buy steak or chickens, they're going to fire up the grill. They need a side dish, too," says Daskaleas.

Litehouse provides signing and POP materials to promote salads and sides made with their dressings. "We have aggressive promotions planned by individual markets," reports Simon.

According to Jeff Siegel, CEO of Farm Ridge Foods in Commack, NY, "One trap manufacturers seem to fall into is getting discouraged by the high failure rate of new items. As manufacturers, we have to not get too comfortable with what we're doing. The onus is on us to come out with something new — otherwise, someone else will."

Siegel hired Steve Thompson as his research and development specialist. A year after joining the company, Thompson — who formerly did R&D at Starbucks — rolled out three salads. All contain healthy ingredients and lots of fresh, bright flavors. The new salads are: edamame, corn and barley with lime-cilantro vinaigrette; bulgur and spring vegetables with Dijon vinaigrette infused with orange; and lentil salad with summer vegetables, barley and lemon-orange vinaigrette.

Successful merchandising requires appropriate carryout containers. They should be spill-proof, attractive and capable of maintaining a consistent temperature, whether for a cold salad or a hot side dish. Lindar Corporation, Baxter, MN, specializes in developing plastic and bioplastic thermoform containers for food packaging. "We're going through the process of looking at all our products, saying 'This is getting kind of tired looking and what can we do to make it more convenient,'" explains Dave Fosse, director of marketing.

He's seen downsized portions and ingredients so price points don't skyrocket; rising food prices are a challenge for both the manufacturers and the retailers. "Since commodities have gotten so crazy over the last five months, it's a matter of keeping things going at the same price points," says Fosse. **DB**



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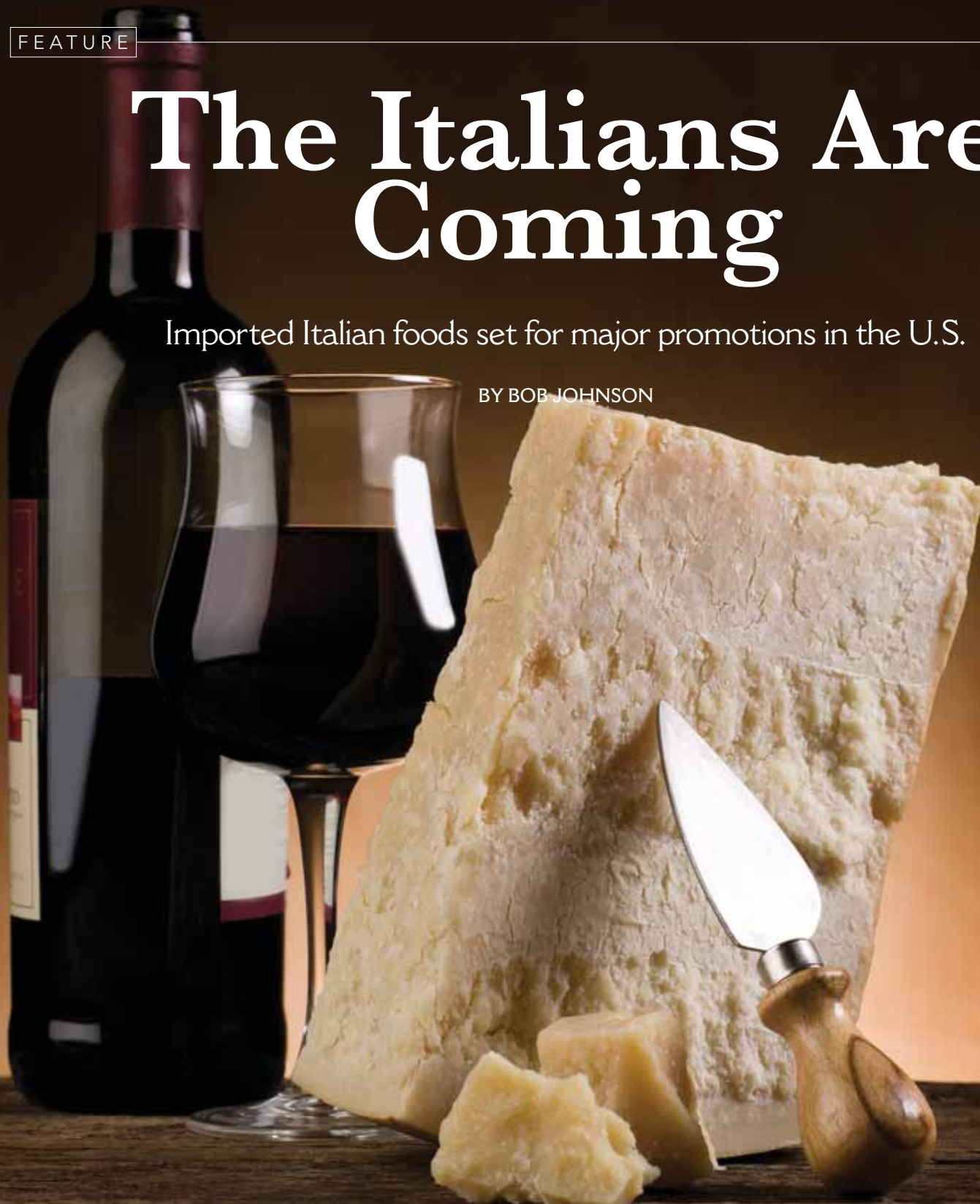
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The Italians Are Coming

Imported Italian foods set for major promotions in the U.S.

BY BOB JOHNSON



Americans love Italian food; some dishes have become so ubiquitous they've virtually lost their ethnic identity. But as the American palate has become more sophisticated, a large segment of consumers are seeking out what they consider the real deal — high-quality products imported from Italy.

"The category is growing and will continue to grow because people are watching the Food Channel and traveling more. The entire category is growing and that helps both the imported and the domestic industries," notes Michael Grazier, president of Busseto foods Inc., Fresno, CA.

While the category already enjoys great popularity, even more

exposure is in store for a group of Italian deli products, dubbed Legends of Europe by Dan Rotenberg, agricultural attaché for the European Union Washington D.C. Office.

"Five producer groups in Italy have banded together to obtain support from the European Union for a 3-year marketing program in the U.S. — prosciutto di Parma, Parmigiano Reggiano, prosciutto di San Daniele, Grana Padano and Montasio cheese," explains Ruth Lowenberg, senior vice president at Lewis & Neale Strategic Food Communications, New York, NY.

The goal of this ambitious campaign is to increase U.S. sales of each of these five products by at least 10 percent. "There will be in-store promotions with tastings, advertising in the trade magazines,



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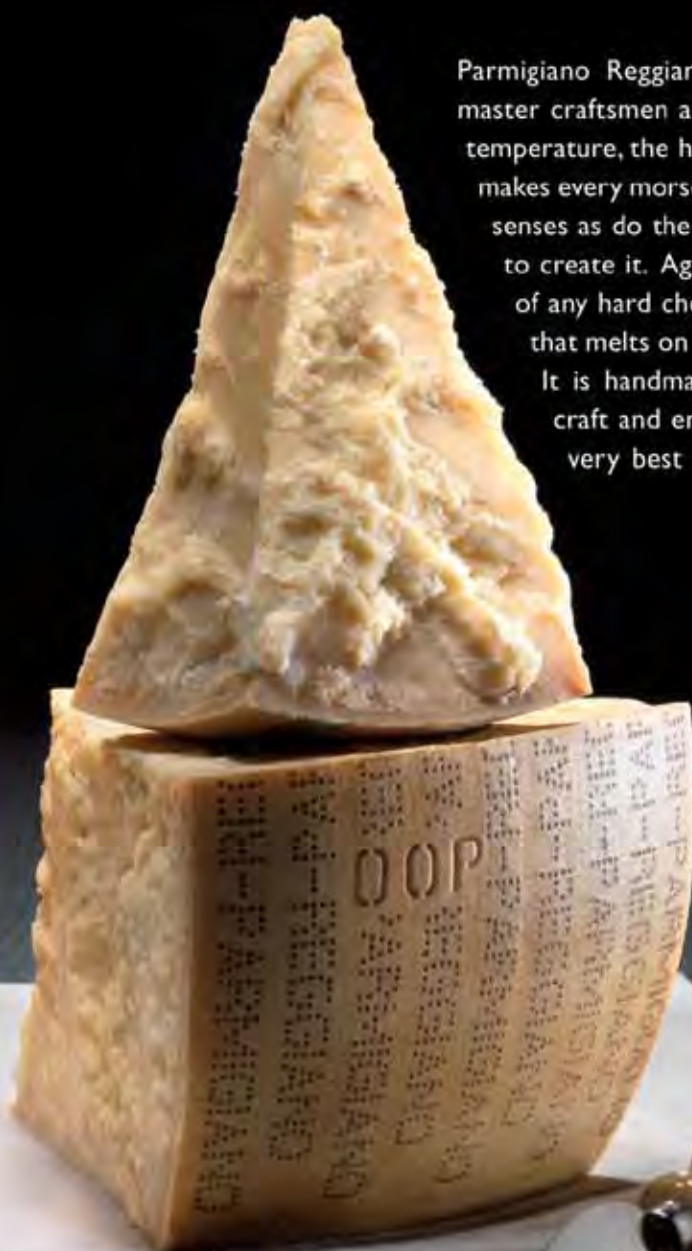




PHOTO COURTESY OF ISOLA IMPORTS, INC.

training for deli handlers and chefs, outreach to consumers through traditional and social media initiatives and, of course, we will be at the Fancy Food Shows as a team,” adds Lewis & Neale’s Lowenberg.

The campaign for these legendary products is intended to develop the market of people willing to pay a little more for the best Italian cheese and meat products. “The promotion will help increase sales to these particular products since imported food prices are increasing daily. I believe the promoting they do will help reach a new target market,” notes Jay Nitti, director of sales and marketing at Isola Imports, Inc., Chicago, IL.

The promotions are riding a wave of increased interest that started several years ago. According to Anna Gallo, director of marketing at Savello USA, Inc., Wilkes-Barre, PA, “In 2010 prosciutto di Parma sales increased by about 17 percent, and by keeping up with the promotions we can keep the momentum going.”

Foods With A Story

In the case of imported Italian foods, the deli is merchandising not only the food but also the stories that come with the food. Most are connected to a particular local place where traditions of making the product have continued for centuries.

“The Italians have a lot of cheeses, and they’re proud of their cheeses. They’re proud of their traditions, and they hold to them,” according to Margaret Cicogna, consultant on Italian cheeses for Atalanta Corporation, headquartered in Elizabeth, NJ. “In France, many of the artisan cheesemakers have been bought up by large companies, but not in Italy. There are several other cheeses that are very important in the deli. There is a group of cheeses from the Alto Adige region bordering on Austria.”



Alto Adige cheese is made from the milk of cows that graze in the high mountain pastures of the Dolomites. Stelvio, for example, is one of the region’s cow’s milk hard cheeses with a rich, buttery flavor that is perfect for melting. Lagrein cheese, made from the milk of cows owned by a few thousand farmers in the same region, is soaked in red Lagrein wine, then rubbed with herbs and garlic and aged for two to three months.

Other Italian localities also hold on to cheese and meat traditions that date back centuries or even millennia. “A lot of the sheep’s milk comes from Sardinia. Pecorino Romano is one of the cheeses made from this milk, and every deli should have that,” says Cicogna, adding Tuscan pecorinos are sweeter than the ones from Sicily or Sardinia.

The region that produces cheeses such as Stelvio and Lagrein also produces Speck, a ham that melds the smoking cure of Northern Europe with the salting and air-drying cure of the Mediterranean; and Speck Alto Adige IGP carries a protected geographical designation.

This extraordinary sense of place — or terroir — resonates in this country. “I believe Americans are more interested in product origins; we’re trying to get back to our roots. We like the romance, and we like knowing the cheese is connected to real local people,” states Nancy Radke, director of the U.S. Information Office of the Consorzio del For-



PHOTO COURTESY OF SAVELLO USA, INC.

maggio Parmigiano Reggiano, based in Syracuse, NY.

Parmigiano Reggiano has gained extraordinary U.S. market penetration as a cheese with fine taste and a great story. “Parmigiano Reggiano has had a consistent presence in the U.S. for 20 years. There are POP materials available, and questions are answered quickly in English. Alice Fixx has been doing public relations for 25 years. She takes journalists to Italy and they write the particular Parmigiano Reggiano brand into their recipes,” Radke says.

Importers have done an excellent job of steadily improving the cheese’s availability.

"The recognition that this is a quality product has helped. People can taste the difference and are willing to pay for the difference. The major part of the coming promotion is going to be in-store tasting of the products," Radke continues.

Terroir is particularly important for food groups that undergo fermentation. "With products that involve fermentation — such as wine, bread and cheese — the fermentation process takes on local characteristics. Because you're working with products that have long local traditions, they are all conscious of themselves as having a place of origin," she adds.

In the European Union, foods strive for the coveted Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), which is much like an appellation among wines. All five of the products in the coming campaign have this coveted designation. "Protected Designation of Origin is important. It tells you where it's made, the quality of the product and brings traceability," Radke explains.

An Abundance of Treasures

Savvy consumers have been familiar with most of the products in the campaign for many years. However, one of them is a relatively unknown cheese whose popularity may soon soar. "Through this new E.U.-funded promotion program, we have had the opportunity to become better acquainted with a wonderful, but little known Italian cheese — Montasio," says Lowenberg of Lewis & Neale.

"Montasio is produced in the northeastern region of Italy and its production dates back to the 13th century. Depending on how long Montasio has been aged — from several months to more than 18 months — its qualities change in subtle ways," she explains. "Younger cheeses possess a mild, delicate flavor and are delicious on a cheese platter with pear wedges or other fresh fruit, as a sandwich component or for making a Friulan cheese crisp called a frico that is cooked in a hot skillet. With further aging, Montasio turns a mellow golden color; becomes firmer and develops bolder, more full-bodied qualities. Grated, it adds wonderful depth to pastas, sauces and other dishes."

The deli has many opportunities to introduce this and other new cheeses by showing how they can be used. According to Sarah Zaborowski, vice president for sales and marketing at Columbia Cheese, Elizabeth, NJ, "There are many ways to integrate Italian cheese into the deli department, beyond simple sliced cheeses. One finds a big variety of prepared vegetable dishes in the deli department, from single types such as roasted peppers to the old-fashioned mixed

marinated combination. Certain cheeses hold up well in these moist dishes and add a tremendous impact of flavor. It takes them from a mere side dish to a hearty addition to a meal or a complete lunch on its own.

"Provolone, Fontina and Pecorino, whether young or aged, depending on your preference, add another dimension to these dishes," she continues. "And Gorgonzola Piccante, crumbled over the top of a platter of

these vegetable dishes, adds a great pungency and additional color and texture. All it takes is a little cubing at store level to make a fresh addition and elevate these dishes."

With hundreds of Italian products to choose from, the consumer's culinary adventure can always be exciting. "The list of important products would have to be very long — just in the dairy category there would be hundreds worthy of mention," says



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Aniello Musella, executive director for the USA, Italian Trade Commission, New York, NY. "Italy does, in fact, have one of the greatest selections of cheeses in the world. But besides cheese, we should not forget our specialty cured meats that should also garnish every deli, starting with our authentic imported Italian prosciutto, including the ones from the special productions areas of Parma and San Daniele. These, along with mortadella, prosciutto cotto, porchetta, Speck dell'Alto Adige and salame are now available to American retail merchants nationwide and represent only a limited selection of the authentic Italian cured meat products Italy has to offer in this sector."

Cheese and meat products are just the beginning; there are many other extraordinary Italian foods. "Items that complement meats and cheeses, such as pears, figs, balsamic jelly and moscato jelly, are important in the deli," reports Savello's Gallo. "We import from Italy a flat, smoked and already cooked pancetta from Leoncini. We're the only company to carry this product at the moment. Other pancetta on the market is rolled."

Olives are also gaining popularity.

"Imported olives are probably the most important and highest growing category in the deli department," according to Isola's Nitti. "Many consumers prefer to purchase olives directly from an olive bar or from a deli case rather than in a glass jar/container. They believe the product is fresh and tastes better this way. In addition, they can pick and choose which olives and how many they would like to purchase."

A new pepper product fills out the antipasti menu. "Imported Spicy Calabrian Peppers have a rich, deep red color with a fantastic, unique taste. They will definitely alert your taste buds but are not so hot you can't eat them alone. You will surely enjoy them to flavor your favorite recipes or on a beautiful antipasti tray," Nitti adds.

The Educated Palate

The potential for increased sales of authentic Italian foods is there, and the way to realize that market comes largely down to one word.

"Sampling, sampling, sampling," says Giovanna Varricchione, marketing manager at Colombo Importing US Inc., ON, Canada.

"Colombo's Motto is 'Tasting is believing.' In addition, it's important to educate retailers and their staff about the product as they are 'walking billboards' for your product. Empower the people — let store employees taste the product as well — so whatever they communicate to their customers is believable and more importantly real — not just a pitch.

"More information or promoting of any food product is always helpful," she continues. "Today consumers travel more and are more versed and exposed to these types of products — therefore it is important to emphasize the authenticity of these items as well as any product attributes, like all natural etc."

Many importers of Italian deli products endorse getting the food into consumers' mouths. "A great way is to sample the product to the consumer and do a side-by-side tasting with similar products so the consumer can taste the difference between domestic and imported products. You can truly taste the difference in quality and freshness. Also educating the consumer about the difference between all natural and products produced with preservatives is a key element to promoting authentic Italian products," Isola's Nitti says.

An educated deli staff is key to extending sampling beyond a designated tasting event. "Promoting Italian products in the deli must be done either by an active demonstration — somebody sampling and talking — or by the deli personnel handing out a taste or tease, if you will, to their customers before they place their orders. Unfortunately, deli staff is trained to take orders, slice and move on. They need to sell, educate and then take the order. That will be very helpful to all products especially Italian specialty meats and specialty items," relates Pierre Zreik, president of Eatalia Imports, Clifton, NJ. Eatalia is the exclusive importer of Rovagnati brand, a deli market leader in Italy.

When offering a taste, it makes sense to also offer the product's story. "Education is the most important thing. Some people merchandise these things well with signs that tell you where the cheese is from, and the traditions. When I do a demonstration and tell people the story, they buy the cheese. When we do the promotions, we try to give out as much information as possible to make it interesting," explains Atalanta's Cicogna.

Tasting will be the key to the coming E.U.-sponsored. According to Lewis & Neale's Lowenberg, "These products sell themselves. If a customer hasn't tasted a product, he or she doesn't understand that paying a little more offers a lot more in quality and enjoyment. That's the true meaning of value."

DB



Profitable Pairings



PHOTO COURTESY OF VENUS WAFERS

Cross-merchandising provides an upselling opportunity to increase sales and revenue

BY LISA WHITE

Cross-merchandising in supermarket delis is effective, but it's not without its challenges. It's about combining a display, event and information to help motivate consumers to purchase the items being marketed together.

Its success relies not only on an attentive and educated staff but also on margin and revenue. "Part-time labor is not always interested in suggesting pairings or maximizing revenue and margin opportunities," says Michael Thompson, president of Hingham, MA-based Venus Wafers. "The issue in the deli has always been profitability due to the additional labor used in this department. Staff should be motivated to sell people up to cover costs and make more money."

Cross-merchandising boils down to execution. The easier it is to execute, the more successful the execution will be.

George E. DeLallo Co., a Jeannette, PA-based supplier of Italian foods including antipasti, olives, sauces, pasta, oil and vinegar, uses a number of cross-merchandising methods including promotions with cut-and-wrap cheeses, dry sausages, recipe building with other deli or store category items and selective pairings with wine and beer.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MADRONA SPECIALTY FOODS



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SNACK FACTORY

"Planning and execution between ourselves and the retailer is crucial," says Anthony DiPietro, vice president of the company. "You must have defined ways to present the product, point-of-sale material and purpose of the cross-merchandising event so the retailer's team members help you support the event."

Consumer awareness of products, along with sampling near the display, can bring added attention to items being cross-merchandised. This is what Madrona Specialty Foods, Tukwila, WA, recommends. Its croccantini crackers and crisps are typically paired with cheese and spreads. "With perishables, you have to stay within a certain area to sample," says Michelle Grant, marketing manager. "For example, if we were pairing with a refrigerated dip, we couldn't do a large display at the front of the store."

Another key is cross-merchandising items that have a common usage. For example, meal products, appetizers and snacks should be grouped together. Signage, along with attractive displays, can help draw consumers' attention to the items.

Pittsburgh, PA-based Conroy Foods' Beano line offers a number of merchandising

options for retailers. Its cases of deli sauces contain display trays that can be used on deli counters or in grab-and-go cases or cheese islands. It provides permanent floor and wire counter top racks. Products also can be merchandised in customized shippers, according to Weyd Harris, national sales manager.

Successful cross-merchandising programs don't provide just pairing suggestions — they expand on preconceived notions of what products go together. "Most of what we sell in deli now is flatbread, and Americans equate flatbreads with hummus," Venus' Thompson says. "We're trying to broaden their choices to other items, such as soft, spreadable cheese."

This is a departure for lahvosh, which is Mediterranean in origin and typically paired with items from the region. "We suggest people think about texture. It should be a match," Thompson continues. "Our carrier [is crunchy] and good for softer toppings. A carrier is the means to selling a more expensive item and making it work in the deli."

When pairing an ingredient such as a seasoning, cross-merchandising is more of a value-added proposition. Magic Seasoning Blends, New Orleans, LA, recommends

signage, placards and informational sheets to let customers know its product is a part of prepared deli dishes. "Delis don't typically sell branded products on the counters," notes John McBride, vice president of sales. "Instead, delis can choose to mention brands being used in recipes, if it's determined that this adds value to the product."

Magic Seasoning Blends seasonings are sometimes sold in conjunction with deli rotisserie programs. "The problem is, if a deli has our seasonings on a special rack or display and customers check it out at the main register, the department does not get credit for the sale," McBride says. "In stores where there is competition between the different departments, this may be an issue."

According to Thompson, "Cross-merchandising can be an impulse buying opportunity and, subsequently, can literally double an average transaction." A consumer who visits the supermarket for a few items can easily become inspired by a comprehensive display in the deli department. In this case, cross-merchandising can affect consumers' train of thought and get them thinking about entertaining, new meal ideas or indulging in something unique and/or gourmet.

In this regard, it helps to consider the atmosphere that's being created. "For example, working with lighting is a more innovative approach for cross-merchandising and can make food look more appetizing," he adds.

In the past, deli departments tended to be sterile, bland and unimaginative. Now, décor, warm lighting and innovative display and merchandising techniques are appealing, aesthetically pleasing, and suggestive. "The deli can work for the entire store," Thompson says. "Even though it's on the periphery, if this department has something set up that's appealing, it can lead to other purchases in the store such as wine, bread or other items that are complementary to the occasion."

Pairing Products

Proper pairing of products, whether deli items or those from other departments, is key to increasing register rings.

"I believe most typical deli products are paired together based on seasonality," comments DeLallo's DiPietro. "Although selling a pre-priced olive and antipasti platter along with crackers is an easy pairing, retailers must also create new selections to entice a consumers by something other than what they're used to."

Pairing products from other categories can be an effective way to show creativity as well as tempt consumers to be creative on their own, thereby increasing incremental sales. "An example is the Pepperazzi pepper we sell for stuffing. Many of the supermarkets we deal with have taken that item and used it in seafood and meat departments to create destination items," DiPietro says. "As a result, these types of pairings create incremental sales for both departments."

An increasing number of supermarket delis are cross-merchandising by advertising meal solutions that include multiple items from many product categories for one set price. Others are incorporating displays and kiosks adjacent to displays of the dish's ingredients where in-house chefs perform recipe demonstrations. These effective examples demonstrate how the deli can push the envelope to incorporate multiple categories into one sale.

Venus products have been paired with traditional and non-traditional toppings, including shaved ham, hummus, pâté, spreads and cheese. "Anything new or interesting is fair game for cross-merchandising," Thompson says. However, he advises, flavor and texture are the two most important considerations. "Mixing sweet and savory flavors is interesting. It's important to note that crackers and flatbread are really about texture. The flavor is in the topping."

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Crisp line can be a solo product, many accompaniments can be paired with them, for example cured meats, cheeses, dips and spreads. "Interdepartmental cross-merchandising is more difficult [than intradepartmental pairings]," notes Perry Abbenante, vice president of marketing. "This merchandising works best and is easiest if items from the deli are utilized."

Depending on the retail structure, going outside the deli department adds a level of complexity. Territorial issues between different departments may prohibit or discourage bringing in items from, say, produce or bakery. Still, because deli dips, spreads and cheeses pair so well with carriers, mixing in non-traditional deli items that complement traditional products is key to successful cross-merchandising programs. "It's important to remember the level of complementary pairing needs to work," recommends Abbenante. "It all boils down to execution at the store level. The easier it is for store level deli managers to accomplish, the better."

Delis are labor-centric, offering a higher level of customer service than most other departments. Wasted labor typically equals missed opportunities and squandered sales.

Cross-merchandising in the deli is not just about throwing a box of crackers by the cheese or putting a tub of hummus next to the flatbread. The more thought and effort expended at the store level, the more potential for added sales from the displays.

Available Assistance

Suppliers can provide retailers with point-of-sale assistance and materials to help focus attention on cross-merchandising displays.

DeLallo offers signage, point-of-sale material, pairing brochures, recipe books and cards in addition to its website and other media to provide cross-merchandising events at the store level. "We present a solution by providing, for example, an ideal pairing of olives, cheese and wine. With that, we promote the aspect of entertaining with this solution and finally a recipe for some of the products to be used as ingredients," DiPietro explains.

Magic Seasoning offers stickers for rotisserie chicken packaging that lets consumers know what blends were used in preparing the product. "We also have standup displays that are two sided to put on the warmer," notes McBride.

Madrona offers displays, signage and pair-

ing suggestions for its product lines. However, according to Grant, "We're finding more and more retailers don't accept displays and signage from manufacturers. We do offer a line of display racks and shippers that have been very popular."

Venus is starting to work more directly with retailers; it provides an e-newsletter for those that buy direct. "We're talking to other local retailers, trying to understand how to expand usage of flatbreads by making healthful suggestions and providing them with ways to cross merchandise," Thompson says.

The Snack Factory's products are typically cross-merchandised with a rack, shipper or display-ready cases next to hummus with a sign. "We recently did a promotion with Tribe hummus in which consumers can buy two bags of Pretzel Crisps and get a free tub of hummus," says Abbenante. "It's drawing attention because this is a proper pairing."

By combining complementary items, creating innovative displays and providing consumers with new pairing ideas, delis can increase revenue. It doesn't have to take a lot of time or effort, just a will to succeed. "Cross-merchandising is key to gaining the incremental sale," says Conroy's Harris. **DB**

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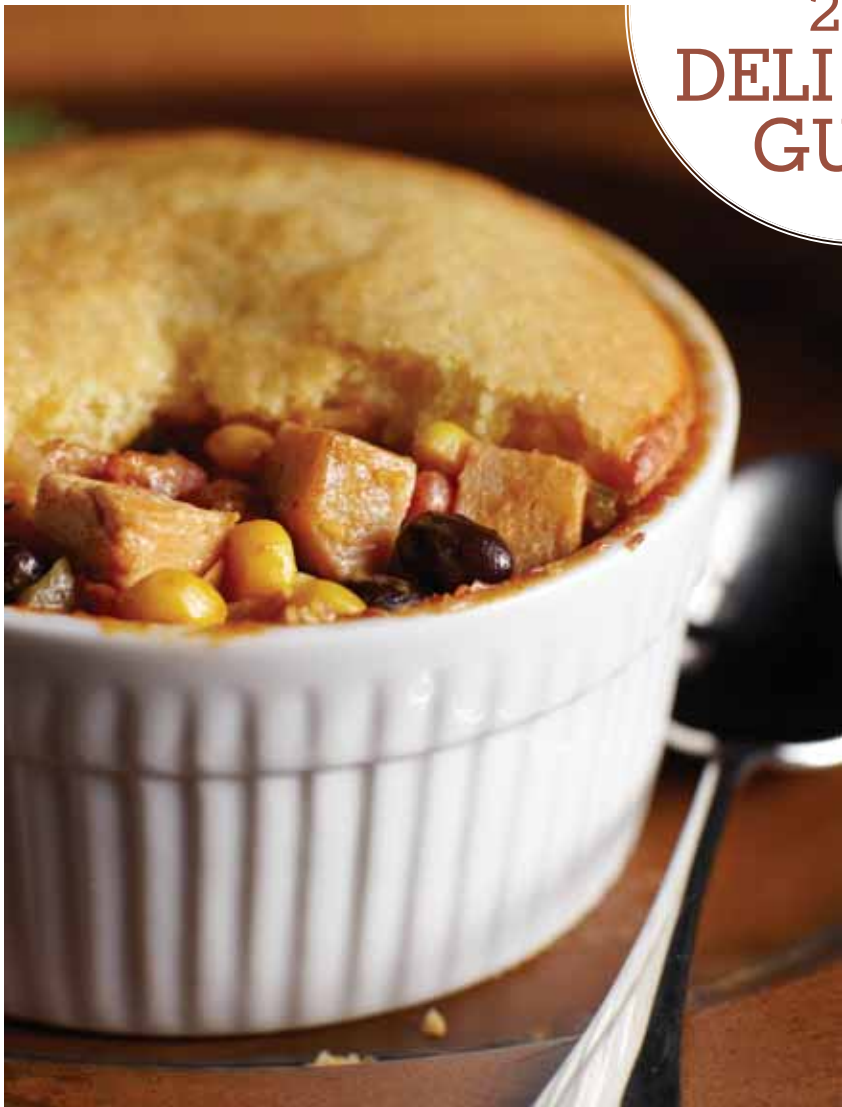




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2011 DELI MEAT GUIDE



A GUIDE TO *Deli Meats*

Bold flavors and healthy profiles are the order of the day

BY BOB JOHNSON

The ongoing consumer search for healthy foods definitely includes healthy deli meats. At the same time, many are looking for meats that offer bold flavor and a sense of adventure. Finding ways to satisfy the desire for both nutrition and strong flavor profiles could be the key for the continued strength of the category.

Ethnic meat products fulfill the interest in the adventure espoused by many consumers. "More products that lean toward ethnic flavors will help increase sales. More and more shoppers are becoming familiar with a variety of foods, and restaurant sales of these foods continue to increase," says Frank Pocino, president of Pocino Foods Company, City of Industry, CA.

These increasingly important meat products with centuries-old origins come from every corner of the globe. "Flavor adventures and experiences are what consumers are seeking out," notes Dave Brandow, director of sales and marketing, corporate foodservice and export at Piller's Sausages, ON, Canada. "Cured meats deliver on this, as time-honored traditional methods are used to produce these products. What's old is new again. These products, due to their intense flavors, require only small amounts to enhance entrée items. East Indian and Asian flavors are being embraced by consumers."

Merchandising these products benefits from education and, above all, sampling. "Although the American consumer has come a long way in understanding our Italian meat or charcuterie items, we need to keep demonstrating and promoting our specialty hams," says Pierre Zreik, president of Eatalia Imports, Clifton, NJ. "The more they understand the product and they taste the difference in quality and flavor, the more they buy." Eatalia is the exclusive importer of Rovagnati brand, a deli market leader in Italy.

The deli has staked out its position as an economical alternative to restaurants, so even if these meat products have higher price points than other deli meats, it isn't a great deterrent to purchasing. According to Louis Eni, CEO of Dietz & Watson, Inc., Philadelphia, PA, "Consumers are continuing to migrate to the premium deli meats, as opposed to the value deli meats. That trend will definitely continue because people are looking for a meal at the deli they can serve to their family."

The search for bold, spicy meat flavors also benefits some regional U.S. meat products that are finding wider audiences. "We just showed Cajun flavored turkey, ham and roast beef to a food distributor in Arkansas and the response was terrific," says Don Schittone, sales manager of Manda Fine Meats, Baton Rouge, LA. Interest in the Cajun flavor profile



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took off in the late 1980s, according to Schittone, and Manda now distribute its line of Cajun meat products in 26 states.

"Interest in the spicy flavors has not diminished at all. The Food Channel and the cooking shows have really introduced people to spices in meats. I don't think it's any particular spice — it's just spice, spice, spice. What I see isn't new flavor profiles but further enhancements of the ones that are already out there," Manda's Schittone adds. "One company has a fully cooked turkey breast that you take and deep fry. It comes out a beautiful golden color, and it's fully flavored. Oven roasted and baked are still there, but when you fry something down South, it's going to catch on."

The spices can be used to make meat products healthier by providing strong flavor without relying on salt or fat. "People are adding spices to add flavor to lean cuts of ham or turkey to be healthy. People are looking for more exotic flavors," Schittone continues.

Make Mine Healthy

The deli must respond to the demand for healthy meats, because health awareness is moving from a trend to a way of life. "The biggest trend in the service deli is healthier options, such as low sodium and gluten free. The consumer interest in sodium- and gluten-free has been amazing. The heightened consumer interest took off last year," explains Dietz & Watson's Eni.

Healthier meat options often translate into more natural, less heavily processed products. According to Pocino of Pocino Foods, "The continued growth of natural products will be a major factor in the deli business."

Some deli meat producers have already jumped on the healthy or natural bandwagon. "It didn't surprise us — we've had our Healthy Lifestyle line for eight years," Eni notes. The Healthy Lifestyle line is made with all-natural spices and seasoning, and no fillers, extenders, artificial colors or MSG. The line has more than 60 poultry, beef, and ham products. Since it was introduced, the line has come to represent almost two-thirds of all the meat products from Dietz & Watson.

"We've had a Gourmet Lite line of about a half dozen items for decades. Gourmet Lite turkey breast is our No. 1 seller nationwide and has been for at least 10 years," he adds. Gourmet Lite turkey breast is gluten free, 98 percent fat free, has 40 percent less sodium than

traditional turkey breast, no sugar, fillers, extenders, artificial colors, flavors or MSG added, and no trans fat.

The company will be rolling out a few new flavors but declined to divulge the specifics. "Flavor profiles change from year to year. Every year we introduce new chicken breast or turkey flavors, but I'm not going to tip our hand," Eni says.

The Convenient Package

If there is a trend in packaged deli meats, it is toward offering convenient package options. "Packaging developments are mainly offering products in user-friendly applications, that is to say, instead of piece products, producers are reviewing how consumers use the product and offering it in that format so consumers don't have to do anything," says Piller's Brandow. "If you can help consumers with their time-starved schedules, then you'll be rewarded with these value-added concepts."

You can look to restaurants to see how packaging can cater to the desire for smaller portions. "Share/small plates are trendy at restaurants — they provide consumers the opportunity to share and experience a communal feeling with their friends and relatives. The deli can provide platters of a variety of meats and cheeses for many different applications. See what your local trendy restaurants

are providing and have your deli provide this in a take-home format and you'll have a winner," Brandow adds.

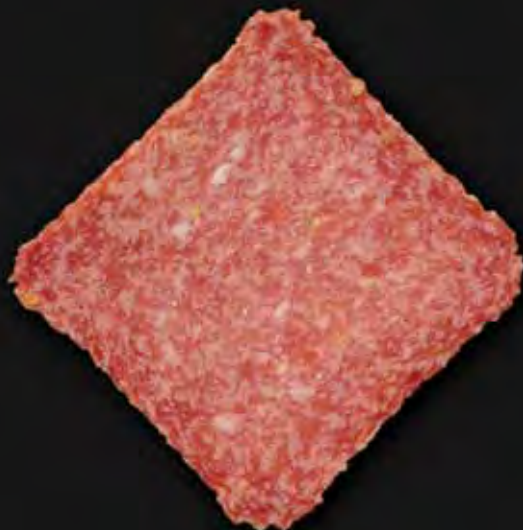
An area to keep an eye on is packaging options that reduce shrink by extending shelf life. "The only new development in packaging I see is extended shelf life, if that is possible," Pocino notes.

One way to extend shelf life is to simply use smaller packages, which reduces the amount of meat exposed. "We've had customers ask us to split our roast beef to save shelf life and reduce shrink. Ninety-five percent of our roast beef is split. Now they're asking us to do the same thing with turkey or ham. By having just 3- or 4-pound turkey breast packages, you're exposing less meat to spoilage when you open the package," Schittone says.

Manda is cutting in half its 6-pound loaves of hog's head cheese so only three pounds are exposed when the loaf is opened at the retail deli. Hog's head cheese is a pork loaf product. Three pounds of pork shoulder is trimmed and cubed, simmered with parsley, celery, garlic and other spices for a few hours, shredded to a stringy consistency, baked in a mold with a gelatin to hold it together and then chilled. This dish is very popular in some parts of the country. "We sell it to every customer we have," Schittone says. **DB**



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Darlings of the Deli

Dry-cured deli meats continue on the upswing

BY LISA WHITE

Consumers continue to seek specialty products at retail to satisfy their increasingly sophisticated palates. This may be why, despite the higher price tag, domestic and imported dry-cured deli meat sales are growing.

"In 2010, prosciutto di Parma had the best third quarter since it was allowed in to the U.S. in 1989," says Ruth Lowenberg, senior vice president of New York, NY-based Lewis and Neale, which represents the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma in the United States. "Total imports are up 22 percent over the same time last year and pre-sliced is up 19 percent."

It appears the current trend of seeking out specialty foods made in this country also has been favorable to the category. "We find that the growing interest in American artisanal products, source-identified and sustainably raised ingredients, and eating and entertaining at home are helping us," says Herb Eckhouse, co-owner with his wife Kathy of La Quercia, Norwalk, IA.

Strangely enough, current economic conditions are now having a beneficial effect. "Consumer trends are favorable for [premium products] because of the economy," says Michael Cruz, director of marketing at Columbus Foods, Hayward, CA. For example, more consumers are choosing to entertain at home instead of dining out. "Because of this, there's a growing culinary appreciation for authentic, higher-end and artisan dry-cured meats such as our Italian dry salami and our traditional artisan line."

Prior to the economic downturn, many consumers were traveling and experiencing a variety of foods and flavors. They may not be travelling as much, but they continue to seek luxury indulgences that don't break the bank. "Even when the economy fully recovers, the change in consumer behavior looks as if it's going to be long-term," Cruz says.

Fortunately, lackluster sales of dry-cured deli meats seen early in the economic downturn are now on the rebound and expected to continue. "Dry-cured meat sales have stayed strong and even grown," notes Chris Bowler, president of Creminelli Fine Meats, Salt Lake City, UT. "Perhaps it's because of the growth of home meal preparation or maybe it's a movement toward the European practice of using cured meats that have a stronger flavor and stretch further rather than a large center-of-plate steak."

Giovanna Varricchione, marketing manager at Jan K Overweel Limited/Limitée, Woodridge, ON, Canada, notes "Consumers' buying habits are changing. They're looking to purchase cooked meats that are lower in fat and sodium."

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Whatever the reason, consumers are purchasing more cooked meat products, with more dry-cured meats being sold at the foodservice level.

Domestic vs. Imports

Although imported dry-cured deli meats have a strong presence in American supermarkets, U.S. manufacturers also own a significant share of the market.

"This isn't necessarily an apples-to-apples comparison, because certain dry-cured meats, such as salami, cannot be imported," explains Columbus' Cruz. "If you consider total dry-cured meat, Italian/European products are a small share of the total category, maybe less than 5 percent of the U.S. market share. Even if you consider only dry-cured ham such as prosciutto, domestic and Canadian producers own a fairly significant share of the category."

Cremellini's Bowler contends the U.S. doesn't always get the best of the European products due to perishability issues. "Particularly in the area of cured meats, we often receive what's leftover or what travels best," he says. "This has given American companies an opportunity we

might not have otherwise had."

Domestic companies have a different approach than European manufacturers. "One is not better or worse, simply different," notes Lorenza Passetti, president of Volpi Foods, St. Louis, MO. "The producers of high-quality deli products have continuously improved their methods and the results are noticeable in the marketplace."

Domestic dry-cured meat suppliers also benefit from the increased travel that is broadening consumers' food experiences. "Domestic companies have caught up with European companies, and flavor profiles are being matched," says Overweel's Varricchione.

Fratelli Beretta USA, South Hackensack, NJ, an extension of the parent company in Italy, has benefitted from the increase of more adventurous consumers. "We tried to replicate as much as possible our main products in Europe, but the issue until now was that American consumers weren't ready for the strong, bold European flavors," notes Simone Bocchini, vice president of sales. But, he says, this is changing.

According to Bowler, the economy

has had a chilling effect on the growth of Italian dry-cured meat companies setting up shop in the U.S. "Many are choosing to direct their export resources to Europe, where the costs are lower."

Unstable market conditions and decreased consumption during the turn-down have slowed investment and new company arrival to the U.S. "But we all know America is a great market, and the consumption of quality products can be big, so I am pretty sure we will see more [European] players come in [this category] in the near future," Bocchini adds.

Some say it's becoming more difficult to distinguish between American and European dry-cured meats from a quality standpoint. "Our biggest challenge is that the Italians have a 2,000-year head start," explains Eckhouse. "They've done a great job of establishing their brands. We generally get surprised reactions when we offer prosciutto from Iowa." La Quercia's dry-cured lines have received positive reviews from both domestic and European consumers.

The U.S.-based office of the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma has increased merchandising efforts during the past

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two years, and it is paying off. "The Consorzio is an active partner by providing marketing support, working with producers and distributors to provide in-store demos, training programs for deli staff and a merchandising contest for deli managers and owners," Lowenberg says.

Individual European companies have traditionally approached the U.S. as an export market rather than an investment market. "The result is U.S. companies have an advantage in terms of merchandising, point-of-sale presentation and promotions," Creminelli's Bowler says.

Some European suppliers get marketing support from their governments, but American companies are pretty much on their own. "They are professional and evolved, and in most cases, much bigger than we are, so they keep us running to keep up," says La Quercia's Eckhouse.

Selling Challenges

Selling dry-cured meat in supermarket delis can be challenging. "The biggest challenge to selling is overall consumer knowledge of the category," says Columbus' Cruz. "Just as with wine, there are clear differences between flavors, production, price points and

higher end vs. lower end. To over-generalize, aside from Genoa in the East, hard salami in the Midwest and Italian Dry in the West, the consumer is not as familiar with the variety of salami types."

Educating and training deli personnel about dry-cured meats can be difficult. "Training of the deli staff is a big issue," Creminelli's Bowler says. "I'm still surprised when I find a deli worker capable of slicing prosciutto in the right way. That's still the exception. A lot of consumer education needs to happen. If Americans understood how to use dry-cured meats to stretch a simple salad into a full meal, I think there would be much more product movement."

Explaining to the end users why dry-cured products are different from other American products, such as cooked ham, pastrami, chicken and turkey, is key. Fortunately, "The food channels help a lot in this regard," adds Volpi's Passetti.

"Sometimes we face issues with knowledge of the products, space on the shelf and the right position within the store," says Fratelli's Bocchini. "Delis need to explain the dry curing process to customers and what this represents for the final products. Suppliers need to

partner with retailers for demo programs."


Recipe suggestions, sampling and cross-merchandising can foster the education process and bring added attention to the category. "The biggest challenges are having attractive retails for dry-cured meats and educating the consumer. This is why demonstrations are very useful," Overweel's Varrichione says.

Suppliers predict a bright future for the dry-cured deli meat category. "I expect this category to be steady, with maybe slight growth in new items, artisanal products and new imported items," forecasts Bocchini. "The economy in the U.S. right now is not at its peak for sure, but we see signs of recovery. I believe we will feel the effect also on the consumption of high-end cold cuts."

With innovative domestic and imported product introductions, delis need to take a closer look at their dry-cured meat offerings. "I expect a continued growth in high-end offerings, more specialists being trained or hired into mainstream grocery and continued growth in the size of the category," Bowler predicts. **DB**

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Turkey Talk

Versatility helps turkey maintain its best-selling position

BY LAUREN KRAMER

Head to any deli department and you'll find turkey. Turkey, the No. 1 selling protein in the deli, shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, this versatile protein is emerging with new flavor profiles and showing its compatibility at any meal.

"Turkey's nutrient-rich profile gives consumers the added benefit of enjoying it as their favorite protein between two slices of bread," says Sherrie Rosenblatt, vice president of marketing and communications for the National Turkey Federation (NTF), Washington, D.C. "Whether it's turkey breast deli meat, turkey ham or turkey pastrami, we're seeing turkey used at breakfast, lunch and dinner, in pasta, soups, pot pies and salads."

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOSTER FARMS



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The tried-and-true flavor profiles for turkey still hold value and rank top with consumers, says Kari Lindell, retail marketing director, Butterball LLC, Garner, NC. Oven-roasted, rotisserie, mesquite smoked, honey smoked and traditional smoked are the top five turkey flavors across the United States.

NTF's Rosenblatt says turkey's versatility derives, in part, from it's being a blank canvas. "Adding different seasonings to turkey creates more options for consumers. You're finding everything from Cajun- and Italian-style turkey to maple brown sugar. In its smoked form, there's mesquite, hickory, honey-cured and many other flavors."

According to Brian Wells, marketing manager for turkey at Foster Farms in Livingston, CA, "The ability for turkey to so easily be complemented by other flavors makes it the perfect building block or accompaniment to nearly any type of dish. The fact that turkey is such a great flavor platform has produced increased flavor offerings from producers in recent years. Some of our most popular offerings in delis are turkey breast seasoned with sun-dried tomato rub and turkey breast with seven pepper salsa rub."

Turkey also lends itself to great flavor

even with reduced levels of sodium, an important selling point for an increasing number of consumers. "We have several turkey products that offer even lower levels of sodium, while still delivering great turkey taste," he continues.

While turkey can be used in a variety of ways at every meal, it has remained the most popular sandwich choice for many years, Foster Farms' Wells adds. "Turkey leads the way in sandwiches — it's a comfort food most people can feel good about eating because of its superb nutritional value, and it's versatile and can be combined with many different flavors or added ingredients to create appealing on-trend sandwich items."

Most turkey consumption happens at lunchtime, notes David D. Dohmann, vice president of the deli business unit at Jennie-O Turkey Store in Willmar, MN. "That's when 77 percent of deli meats are consumed. Ten percent are being used at dinner, 4 percent at breakfast and 9 percent are being used as snacks, according to our 2010 research."

This finding perfectly dovetails with an episode of NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, on which Jennie-O deli turkey was featured in a snacking tip. "In the episode, Bob Harper demonstrated how to make a simple, healthful snack by wrapping a slice of Jennie-O Turkey Store deli meat around a favorite vegetable such as carrots, celery, or red pepper strips," notes Dohmann.

The three factors affecting consumers' choice of deli turkey are taste, price and appearance. "Generally, they're very satisfied about taste, and price has garnered a very good performance rating in our Counter Intelligence research," he says. "Appearance lags behind, closely followed by 'Made with Whole Breast.' These last two factors are still clearly important to consumers, and the performance gap uncovered in the research indicates they feel turkey companies aren't quite delivering yet."

Jennie-O recently introduced Signature Creations, a precooked turkey breast seasoned with a unique spice blend developed by Chef Reece Williams. According to Dohmann,

"Stores can simply deep-fry the item for five minutes for a golden appearance and rich flavor, and then offer their shoppers freshly deep-fried turkey. This innovative product line was the result of a recent food trend — consumers love deep-fried turkey, but it's costly and messy to prepare at home."

Mike Springer, national sales manager, Praters Foods, headquartered in Lubbock, TX, says Cajun fried turkey, which was launched three years ago, is the company's No. 2 seller after smoked turkey. "We're looking at trying to tag onto that with other flavors, such as Cajun fried mild turkey, which will launch in June 2011," he says. "A lot of people complain about the heat of Cajun fried, so Cajun fried mild will cater to those with milder tastes."

In January 2010, Butterball introduced its deep-fried turkey line. It was launched after research showed that consumers love the concept but don't want to deal with the cost, mess and safety concerns of preparing it at home, reports Lindell. **DB**

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Artisan Deli Meats Find Their Niche

Consumers embrace high-end, high-quality meat products

BY CHRISTINA ROBERTS

Artisan meat products — those high-end salamis, pâtés and hams such as prosciutto and serrano — have become increasingly popular at the deli. Although the number of products in the category may be relatively small, their total sales impact is growing.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSORZIO DEL PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA






PHOTO COURTESY OF LES TROIS PETITS COCHONS

Industry watchers attribute the success, at least partially, to the increased presence of these items on television food shows and in cooking magazines. Such media attention "has increased interest in artisanal meats as an everyday item rather than past consideration as a specialty product only," says Simone Bocchini, vice president of sales, Fratelli Beretta USA, Inc., So. Hackensack, NJ.

"Consumers are looking more and more into high-end salami with distinctive characteristics such as texture, flavor and color," Bocchini adds. "We're all trying to develop more unique and high-end product. Sales are growing at a very interesting rate and we believe this category will identify our company with tradition and innovation at the same time."

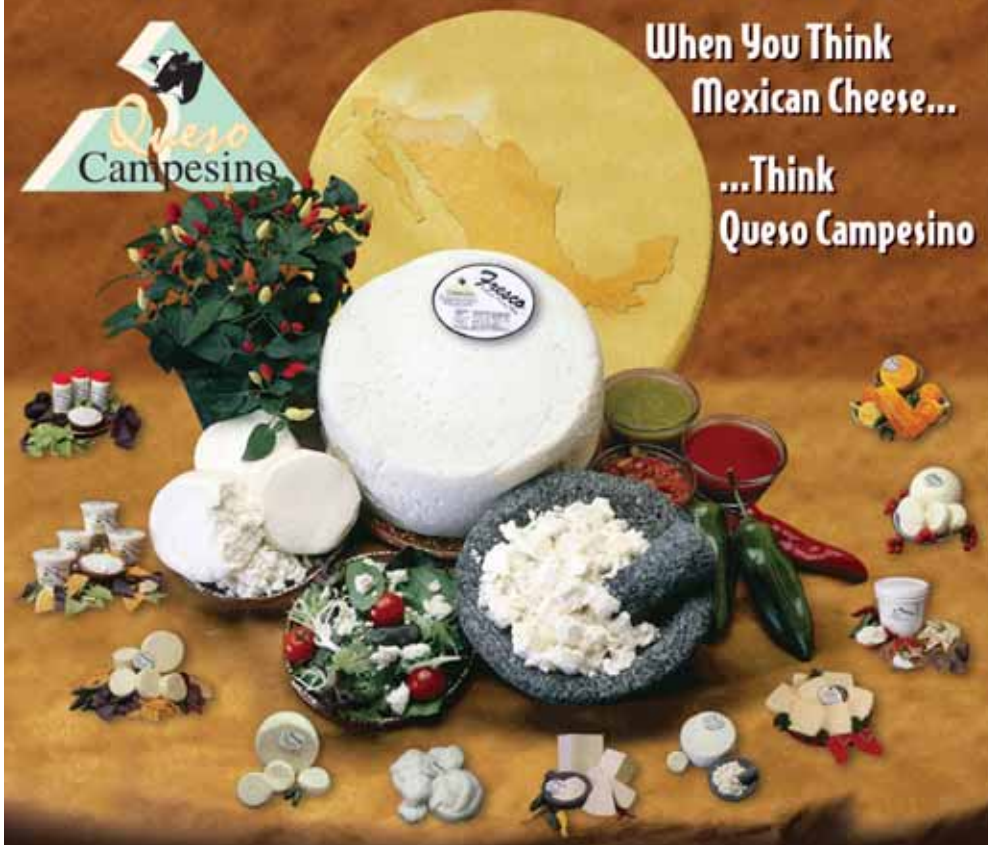
To best position and promote artisanal meats, Bocchini suggests deli retailers "be sure to offer their customers the best selection possible. I believe product category introduction in the store should be done with slow attention to details. Retailers should consider offering demos of these products to make their customers aware of all the different flavors and characteristics. They should be able to walk those customers slowly down the path toward Old-World Italian cold cuts."

Consumer awareness of charcuterie is



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growing in America with deli departments beginning to merchandise specific charcuterie sections. "More and more Americans are looking for charcuterie products in their markets because they have seen them in restaurants and want to replicate that trend at home," notes Camille Collins Black, marketing director, Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY, which produces award-winning, all-natural pâté and charcuterie. She sees the growing knowledge of the many diverse cuisines that include charcuteries as increasing the category as a whole.

"The meat products are not solely Italian in nature anymore — the category is expanding to include French and Spanish flavors," she continues. "For instance, Les Trois Petits Cochons just launched a line of slicing dried sausages — Saucisson Sec — for delis in four flavors, our original Saucisson Sec, Saucisson Sec aux Herbes de Provence, Saucisson Sec aux Cepes and Chorizo. All are antibiotic- and hormone-free, all-natural and available in a 3-pound size. We also just launched a smoked cooked ham — Jambon de Paris Fume."

According to Lorenza Passetti, CEO,

**"IN SOME REGARDS,
OUR CULTURE IS LOOKING
FOR SIMPLICITY. WE
ARE IN THE MIDST OF
TRANSITIONING FROM
HIGHLY PROCESSED FOODS
TO GENTLY PROCESSED
FOODS AND ONES THAT
USE LIMITED INGREDIENTS.
ARTISAN MEATS FIT THIS.**

— LORENZA PASSETTI
VOLPI FOODS

Volpi Foods, St. Louis, MO, artisan meats are versatile, offer great value and taste delicious. "The reason may be multifaceted. In some regards, our culture is looking for simplicity. We are in the midst of transitioning from highly processed foods to gently processed foods and ones that use limited ingredients. Dry-cured meats, more specifically artisan

meats, fit this. Another contributing factor is the popularity and education at the restaurant level. Charcuterie plates have seen a dramatic increase in restaurants across the country. People who, up to this point had not previously enjoyed them, are discovering dry-cured meat.

"Artisan meat is what we do," she adds. "It's who Volpi is. We use simple ingredients and fresh meat, and we allow time and gentle processing conditions to bring out dramatically different flavors. We produce in small batches and continue to handcraft our products. After some 110 years, we are being discovered overnight!"

Values Add Value

Volpi is headed toward "taking the best from our long history and applying up-to-date values and flavors," Passetti continues. "Values would include using meats from local producers and family farms that are raising humanely handled pigs, antibiotic- and hormone-free. Flavors involve using better ingredients — no added sodium nitrite, nitrates, BHT, erythorbate and the like, and going the extra mile by using fresh garlic, toasted spices, etc."

She suggests retailers "align these products with specialty artisan cheeses. Promoting them with complementary products — fresh breads, cheeses, wines, and olives — lends itself to many creative ideas for convenient meals and entertaining."

Current interest in food origin and quality is advancing consumer interest in artisanal meats, relates Laurie Cummins, owner, Alexian Pâté & Terrines, Neptune, NJ. "I think it's a driving trend that could be described as less is more. The word 'artisan' implies food that is crafted, made in small batches with wholesome ingredients by a caring and responsible food producer who equates his or her income with her art. Also, I think the growth is fueled simply by the greater availability of domestic and imported specialty meat products."

However, Cummins cautions about the challenges of the current economic climate. "I think ethnic specialty meats and meat products are here to stay. But I think the rate of sale may be seriously impacted by the steady climb of pork and beef commodity prices over the last 12 months — and they continue to move upwards." And she warns, these rising prices will also affect "the lowliest bologna."

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strongly in the importance of the deli counter staff. "The staff should endeavor not only to serve, but to engage customers by asking, for example, if they would like to try something new that they haven't had before, while they wait for their order to be prepared. The staff should be prepared to tell customers something about where a product was made, how it was made and any other features that make it special. The deli presents an opportunity to learn about what your customers like and need. If there's a new product or a new brand in the deli case, be sure customers know what it is and why it deserves to get that shelf space."

An example of a successful product is prosciutto di Parma. "One reason sales have increased is that U.S.-based offices of prosciutto di Parma producers and major distributors have increased merchandising efforts during the past two years and it's paying off," says Ruth Lowenberg, senior vice president of New York, NY-based Lewis and Neale, which represents the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma in the United States. "The Consorzio is an active partner by providing marketing support — working with producers and distributors to offer in-store demos to retailers, training programs for deli staff and a merchandising contest for deli managers and owners."

While prosciutto di Parma has benefited from coordinated, concerted marketing efforts in the U.S., no organized effort on behalf of Serrano ham has been organized. Despite this, Garden City, NY-based Redondo Iglesias USA, an importer of jamón Serrano, uses a branded logo consumers can recognize. According to Joe Moskowitz, chairman, "In Spain, there could be 25 different brands, and the qualities are as different as their names. Serrano ham is a national dish in Spain, but in the U.S. we have one imported brand — Redondo Iglesias."

Moskowitz sees packages of presliced Serrano — aged for 12 months or 18 months — as a potential growth segment. He advises retailers to set up tasting demos with knowledgeable personnel. "Spaniards and hard-core aficionados will want the ham freshly sliced off the leg, but other consumers who want the cachet and unique taste of the product will try the presliced, packaged product for convenience." Longer term, he sees the package options expanding to include combinations of ham varieties as well as ham and cheese pairings. **DB**



Bringing the Restaurant Home

Fresh pasta offers consumers a gourmet dining experience on a tight budget

BY LAUREN KATIMS



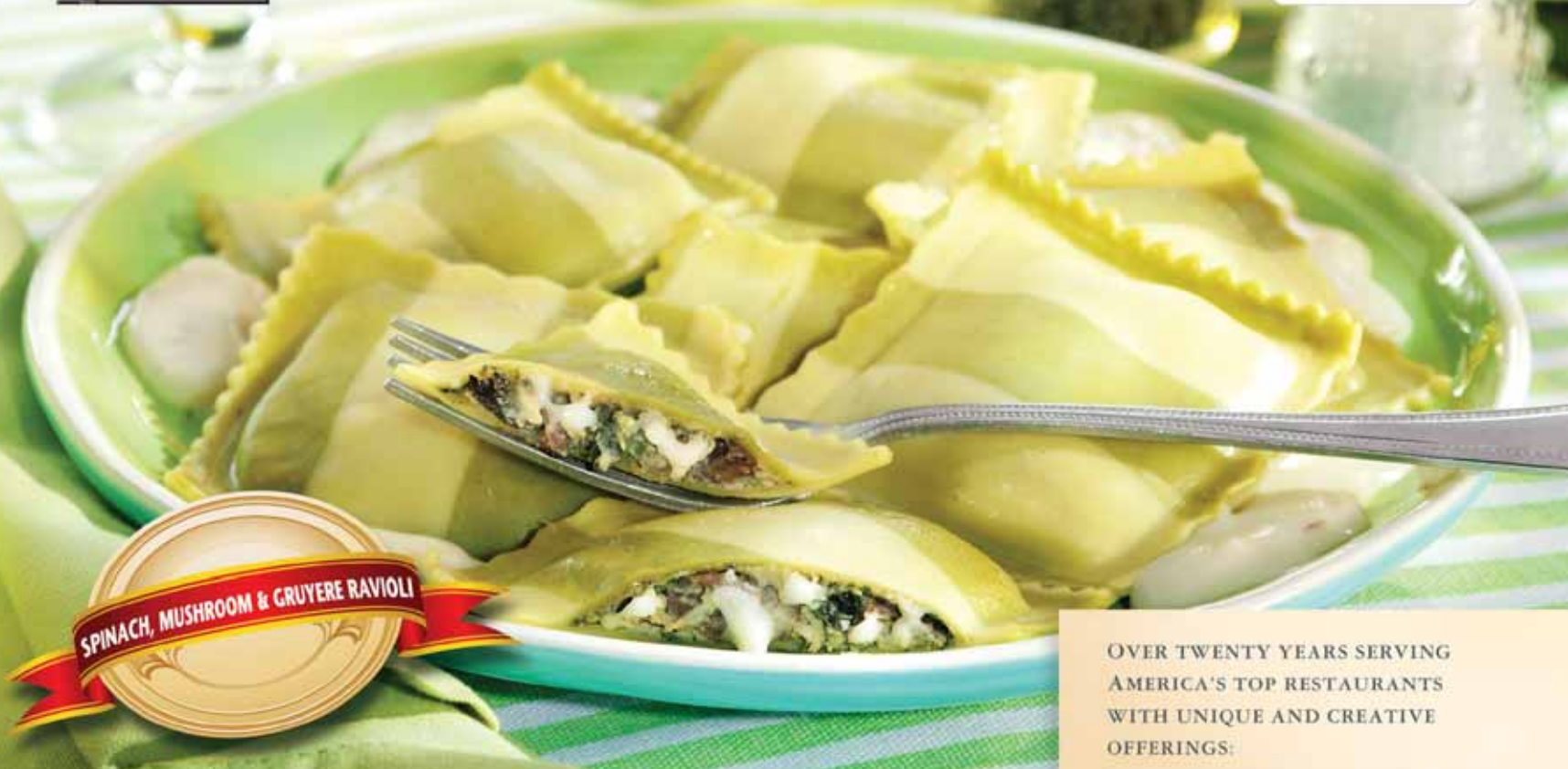
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To meet the increasing consumer demand for relatively inexpensive yet high quality food, pasta companies are experimenting with flavor profiles, varied ingredients and cross-merchandising options to give consumers dining options previously available only at restaurants.

Pasta has long been a popular go-to dinner choice for American families, primarily because it's inexpensive and easy to make. When fresh pasta became available in the deli in the 1980s, the market was dominated by egg pastas such as angel hair, fettucini and linguini, says Wayne Tu, marketing manager at Valley Fine Foods, Benicia, CA.

As consumers requested more unique flavorings, plain pastas evolved into filled pastas such as ravioli and tortellini, which presented many more opportunities for experimenting with ingredient combinations. Filled pasta now dominates with about 80 to 90 percent of the fresh pasta market, Tu notes. "It makes sense. It can be attributed to the difficulty of making raviolis at home. The pasta category should be accessible to everyone. It's about the convenient restaurant-quality dining experience that you can bring home."

When the economy started its downward shift and consumers cut back on restaurant expenditures, the fresh pasta market benefited. Consumers had developed a palate for types of pasta that were difficult to make at home. The Food Network, food magazines and their own travels had convinced many of them that fresh pasta was better than dried. The time commitment and difficulty making fresh homemade pasta deterred the majority of consumers, so many pasta companies found a niche creating products that provide a restaurant experience at home.

"What we saw when the economy shifted is people couldn't afford to go out as often as they used to, but they really had changed their expectation of food quality," says Tom Quinn, vice president of operations at Stratford, CT-based Nuovo Pasta Productions. In fact, taking the restaurant experience home has become the inspiration for many pasta companies, which have labeled themselves as upscale and affordable. Nuovo promotes that message on its packaging, stating one package is the size of two restaurant por-



PHOTO COURTESY OF NUOVO PASTA PRODUCTIONS

tions. "We relate it to how it relates to a restaurant meal," says Quinn.

What's On The Inside Counts

In the quest to make pasta more upscale, companies are using high-quality ingredients that offer versatility and varied flavor profiles. Filled pasta is the perfect foundation for a plethora of tastes, both sweet and savory. Although four-cheese ravioli remains the most popular option, many more creative ingredients mixtures are being seen on the shelves.

"We're always looking for unique flavor combinations," says Tu. Valley offers roasted vegetable ravioli with chunks of zucchini and bell peppers as well as chestnut, prosciutto and apple ravioli, which, Tu advises, is best to market during the fall. "When you bite into it, there's the texture, a burst of flavor of the actual ingredients." He says the chunky quality of the fillings differentiate the products from other stuffed pastas that are filled with a blended paste.

Valley includes a Parmesan, garlic, thyme and oregano herb packet in the same package as the pasta as an easy seasoning option. "We get wonderful customer response regarding flavor and how simple it is," says Tu.

The addition of meats, such as chicken, sausage and prosciutto, adds protein and makes the dish more filling. "We travel to Europe several times a year for new ideas and to keep up with the growing trends," notes Sonia lasenza, project manager at Pasta Romana Foods, Inc., Montreal, QC. The company's pastas include saffron, Ricotta and asparagus medaglioni; cheese, sun-dried tomato and pesto tortellini; and prosciutto and fine herbs perline. "Quality is most important," she stresses, suggesting the pasta be accompanied with fresh grated cheese or fresh in-store bakery bread. "We like to add options to our product that make it better, but do not compete."



PHOTO COURTESY OF HUXTABLE'S KITCHEN

"The beauty of a lot of the different pasta offerings is you can mix and match different filling flavor profiles, like portabella and Asiatgo, crab and lobster; you mix it up with sauce and you have a couple different meals," says Quinn.

The sauce is as important as the pasta. A sauce's ingredients can transform a dish, explains Jason Knight, president and CEO at Vernon, CA-based Huxtable's Kitchen, whose pastas include butternut squash ravioli and yam-filled ravioli with mascarpone and sage sauce. "You can tailor dishes with different components of the sauce or the pasta to make it more upscale," he notes. Huxtable's uses San Marzano tomatoes, which have a richer, more complex flavor and a uniquely textured pulp and skin, says Knight, adding, "They upscale the flavor profile of the sauce."

Marinara remains the most common red sauce, and Alfredo and vodka-based sauces are also popular. "Pasta is classic comfort food — it's filling, it tastes good, it's understandable, it's approachable and it's easy," says Knight.

Cross-merchandising allows consumers to put together the components for a complete dinner quickly and easily. "Refrigerated pastas usually are in the same aisle as gourmet cheeses and if you look closely, there's usually a basket of fresh-baked bread and a display of olive oil," notes Quinn. "If you stand in the deli section and just watch, you can see people looking for an answer to 'What am I going to serve my family?'"

Wines and salad ingredients can be positioned near the pasta to inspire ideas for appetizers and sides. The dinner components can be grouped together to create a destination that doesn't take up much counter space and would be a good option for delis that don't have a full-blown prepared-food section, says Quinn. "It's a never-ending opportunity for new items."

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Wisconsin Cheese: A Reason To Be Proud

Phenomenal expertise reigns supreme

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

Wisconsin cheese production surpassed Italy's in 2009. If Wisconsin were a country, it would rank fourth, behind the rest of the U.S., Germany and France.

"Over the last 30 years, Wisconsin has changed from commodity to specialty to artisan," says Sid Cook, Wisconsin master cheesemaker and owner of Carr Valley Cheese, LaValle, WI. "There's a tremendous amount of depth in Wisconsin cheesemaking, and it's because of infrastructure, generational cheesemakers and all of those who have gone before us and paved the way."

Small farms are keystones of Wisconsin's tremendous dairy heritage. "Around every corner, every nook and cranny of this state, there's a family dairy farm. This, along with the cheesemaking infrastructure, sets it apart," notes Kirsten Steinhauer, marketing manager at Monroe, WI-based Emmi Roth USA, Inc.

"Wisconsin is responding to many important national food trends," says Marilyn Wilkinson, director of national product communications, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI. "People want to feel good about the food they're eating. They want to know it's well-cared-for food. They seek something special such as smaller batches, grass fed, or a washed-rind or cave-aged cheese. Another segment is passionate about humane treatment of animals. When you have herd sizes like ours — averaging 100 cows — it's much easier to control how you treat your animals."

Transparency From The Ground Up

Consumers and chefs make choices based on the origin of a cheese and how it is produced.

Bob Wills, Wisconsin master cheesemaker and owner of Cedar Grove Cheese, Plain, WI, makes cheese from milk of cows, goats and sheep, as well as the water buffalo herd down the road. The milk is free of artificial growth hormones, and no animal enzymes or genetically modified ingredients



PHOTO COURTESY OF BELGIOIOSO

are used. Production processes are environmentally sound. Cedar Grove also serves as an incubator for artisan cheese and start-up cheesemakers.

Wills makes the Otter Creek Organic Farm Seasonal Cheddar line of single-herd, grass-based organic cheeses marketed by Otter Creek Organic Farm, Avoca, WI. The color-coded logo on each package of aged Cheddar indicates the season during which the milk was produced: The Cheddar available in winter is likely to have been made from summer or autumn milk, so it will bear the summer or autumn logo.

According to Chad Pawlak, president of Organic Farm Marketing, Thorp, WI, "Grass-fed is the original form of dairying. Consumers are becoming aware of the value of the naturally occurring nutrients in grass-fed dairy products. The flavor profile is richer, creamier and sweeter." Milk for his Grass

Point Farms brand cheese is sourced from Wisconsin dairy farmers who rotationally graze their herds and raise them humanely in conditions that support natural behavior. The nutritious pasture diet is free of antibiotics or artificial hormones. "The farmers adhere to a third-party-certified set of standards that offers transparency from the farms to the retailers to the consumers."

Bruce Workman has completed the 3-year Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker program five times and is certified for nine cheese types. At Edelweiss Creamery, Monroe, WI, he sources milk from the Edelweiss Graziers Cooperative — a cooperative of five family-owned grass-based dairies — for grass-based Cheddar, Gouda and 180-pound Emmentaler wheels, marketed by Jeff Wideman and Shirley Knox of Maple Leaf Cheese, Monroe, WI.

Uplands Cheese, Dodgeville, WI, is a

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grass-based dairy that produces Pleasant Ridge Reserve — American Cheese Society (ACS) Best of Show in 2001, 2005 and 2010. From spring through fall, on each day that desired pasture conditions are present, one vat of this raw-milk cheese is made. Wheels are hand-tended for months, until the batch reaches maturity. A small amount is reserved for extra aging. “Certainly the flavors in Extra Aged are more intense and concentrated, but whether or not that makes it more appealing really is up to the person eating it,” says Uplands’ cheesemaker Andy Hatch. Rather than positioning it as “better,” Hatch positions it as a different cheese. The higher price of Extra Aged is a reflection of the higher costs involved in extended aging.

Growth In Artisan Cheese

WMMB’s first artisan cheese booklet in 2004 listed 26 companies. In 2010 the number is over 60 if goat and sheep are included. “We’re seeing artisan cheeses winning repeated awards. The general trend bodes well — throughout the country, natural cheeses have led growth in the cheese category,” says Wilkinson.

“More and more new farmstead and artisan plants are popping up,” relates Joe Widmer, Wisconsin master cheesemaker and

owner of Widmer’s Cheese Cellars, Theresa, WI. Aged Brick, Cheddar and authentic stirred-curd Colby are made in small batches and aged in the aging room. “Wisconsin has every possible resource somebody starting out would need. Handmade natural products are a big thing now. Quite a bit of Wisconsin cheese falls into the farmstead or artisan and natural category. It’s just milk, coagulant, bacterial cultures, salt — the rest is in the handling. The cooking, cutting, and curing with the right humidity and temperature make all the difference in the cheeses.”

Dairy farming and cheesemaking supports the families of four brothers raised on the family dairy farm. George Crave, cheesemaker for Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, Waterloo, WI. Les Frères — the signature cheese — won an ACS award in 2006 and every year since, and earned four London, England-based World Cheese Awards medals. The 8-ounce wooden-boxed Petit version is retail friendly. Stores that cut and wrap like the random weight Les Frères wheel.

Holland’s Family Farm, Thorp, WI, is producing definitive farmstead Gouda in seven ages and flavors, including the distinctive Foenegreek. Marieke Penterman and her husband emigrated from the Netherlands

in 2002. Marieke Gouda Super was second runner-up at the Madison, WI-based Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association April 2011 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest (USCCC) held in Green Bay, WI.

Larger companies are launching smaller scale lines, too. A new cave-aged line marketed by Meister Cheese Company, Muscoda, WI, features Eagle Cave Reserve, a 6-pound bandaged Cheddar truckle.

BelGioioso Cheese, Green Bay, WI, markets two small-scale fresh lines: Crescenza-Stracchino and Burrata.

Plymouth, WI-based Sartori is marketing retail lines named Reserve, Limited Edition and Classic. SarVecchio Parmesan, first runner-up at the 2011 USCCC, is marketed in the Reserve line. “We’ve added four items to our Reserve line of products: espresso-rubbed BellaVitano and salsa-rubbed Asiago, both available now, and Extra-Aged Fontina and a Mediterranean-rubbed Fontina, available in July,” says Sue Merckx, retail marketing manager.

Sartori’s master cheesemaker, Mike Matucheski, received Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker certification in April 2011 in Asiago and Parmesan. “In the flavored world, we’re very different. We’re trying to complement the cheese. I see people who

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are reluctant to try things, especially flavor combinations. They'll say, 'I don't like that,' but when they get it into their mouth, they'll say, 'I wasn't expecting this — I love it,' he explains.

Merchandising Wisconsin Cheese

"Merchandising is creating theater," says Francis J. Wall, vice president of marketing for BelGioioso. "Using cheese for displays engages the consumer, shows usage ideas and increases sales. I've seen Hy-Vee in Madison create a 6-foot wide sea of white using Fresh Mozzarella packages in a refrigerated case — and, using tomatoes, form a huge red 'W' for the Wisconsin Badgers. Their school colors are red and white so it tied in really well. It's art, and it's theater. For back-to-school or tailgating you could do an 'Any Way You Slice It' promotion. Or do an 'Any Way You Top It' shredded cup promotion and build a display with shredded, grated, shaved, and crumbled."

BelGioioso is introducing a deli slicing loaf of Peperoncino — mellow Asiago with spicy red peppers — and Ricotta Salata crumble. "We're calling it 'the Italian Feta.' It has just a hint of salt, a nice clean milky flavor and porcelain appearance," says Wall. BelGioioso's traditional Italian cheeses run the gamut — Fresh Mozzarella, washed-rind Italico, American Grana, and 20-pound Mandarino Provolone, which when compared to traditional 200-pound Provolones, is easy to handle and display.

Cold-pack spreads, unlike processed cheese, are not heat-treated or cooked when packaged. Showcase them in the cheese case with the type of cheese they're made from. Fayette Creamery Raw Milk Cheddar Cold Pack Cheese, made by Brunkow Cheese of Wisconsin, Inc., Darlington, WI, is available in Original White Cheddar and flavors, such as Horseradish. Widmer's Aged Brick Spread blends two Widmer's cheeses: Aged Brick and White Cheddar.

Retailers can benefit from WMMB's toolbox promotions that can be customized to a store's identity, and training. WMMB trains retail and foodservice staff to understand, sell and care for Blue, cave-aged and washed-rind cheeses. Outstanding resources, including the *Heightened Taste Cheese Pairing Guide*, are available at WMMB's website, www.eatwisconsincheese.com.

Top Categories

Even the largest categories — Feta, Blue and Hispanic are the top three — offer opportunities to educate consumers.

"Five years ago, people didn't ask the same questions," says Teena Buholzer, marketing director for Klondike Cheese Company, Mon-

roe, WI. "We've come out with Odyssey Reduced Fat and Fat Free Feta just in the last few years and, yes, even the Fat Free has an excellent flavor profile. There is a place and a need for them, and we see both categories growing. Our Traditional Feta is a lower-fat cheese to begin with and you only need a little bit to add zest to your dish."

Klondike built its own triple-lagoon water treatment plant in 2004 and irrigates several hundred acres of farmland with the water. "We're a family business. Three brothers are Wisconsin master cheesemakers and their children — the fourth generation — have all come into the business. There's a lot of pride in working hand in hand with the farm families who've been with us to provide a superior product. It's important that we take care of each other," Buholzer believes.

Signage and sampling with pairing suggestions help lead consumers to explore Wisconsin's Blues. It's important to differentiate Danish, creamy or crumbly Gorgonzola style, cream added, goat's milk, sheep's milk, mixed milk, Cheddar Blue, washed-rind, natural-rind and smoked.

Mindoro Blue and Mindoro Gorg are made in Mindoro, WI. Mindoro is a brand of Swiss Valley Farms Cooperative, Davenport, IA. "We see value in the Wisconsin Pride logo and display it on the packaging of our Wisconsin-made cheeses. It's a recognizable image to have — whether on the shelf or at a trade show," says Lauren Albracht, marketing specialist. Mindoro Blue is a rich, buttery, piquant Danish-style Blue aged over 60 days. Mindoro Gorg has a creamier and milder profile when compared with the Mindoro Blue, and is aged over 90 days.

Seymour Dairy Products, Inc., Seymour, WI, partnered with Appleton, WI-based Red Barn Family Farms, a group of certified humane farms, to produce Weinlese Cheddar Blue. The golden Cheddar body with blue-green veins is cheesemaker Mike Brennenstuhl's seventh Blue variation.

A goat's milk Blue Cheddar, Carr Valley Baraboo Blue, has spots of blue throughout the cheese. The company's delicious Billy Blue, Ba Ba Blue and slowly cold-smoked versions have earned ACS awards.

Dunbarton Blue is a cave-aged Cheddar Blue with rich flavor Roelli Cheese Company, Shullsberg, WI. The Roelli family is a multi-generation cheesemaking family turning the page from commodity to artisan production.

Under the foam cheese-wedge hats is serious dedication to cheesemaking — 160 years of art, craft and science — to meet continually rising marketplace expectations, the new food safety standards of the Global Food Safety Initiative, and consumers' desire not only to eat well but also to eat better. **DB**

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Goats Rule

Consumers have gotten over their distrust and embraced goat cheese

BY DALE KOPPEL

There was a time, not so long ago, that goat cheese might well have been called the Rodney Dangerfield of the cheese circuit.

Allison Hooper, co-founder of Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery (VBCC) in Westerville, VT, attributes the bad rap to consumers who had a negative encounter with goat cheese as a result of poor importation, maintenance, and storage problems — and they've never forgotten it. Traveling throughout the country to promote her products, Hooper is surprised at how many people have a no-thank-you knee-jerk reaction when she says, "It's goat cheese."

On the other hand, she says, it's not surprising when she gets these people to try it and "their reaction is so positive." Hooper knew progress had been made when the creamery's Bonne Bouche won Best Goat Cheese and Second Place Best In Show at the 2010 American Cheese Society (ACS) Competition. "With that recognition, it was instant credibility," Hooper admits.

"Perception becomes reception," explains Jacquelyn Buchanan, director of culinary development at Laura Chenel's Chèvre, Inc., in Sonoma, CA. She credits the artisan cheese movement and farmers markets as "keys to more exposure." She encourages retailers to do cheese tastings and, "If possible, have the cheese producer or a representative there to give the back story. It's putting a face on the food."

Expanding product lines, changing perceptions, and educating the public benefit the industry, of course. Lindsay Gregory, marketing coordinator for Woolwich Dairy in Orangeville, ON, Canada, believes that while an unflavored fresh goat cheese will always lead the way in terms of simplicity and popularity, the trend toward exciting and inventive flavors is the way to "cater to an ever-growing consumer base." And it's the retailer who can educate the public. "There are still a lot of misconceptions about goat cheese," she says. "It could be related to



PHOTO COURTESY OF CYPRESS GROVE CHEVRE

taste, texture, or smell, and the best way to overcome those misconceptions is when retailers invite customers to try the cheese."

Arnaud Solandt, co-owner, Montchevre-Betin in Belmont, WI, spent time educating himself about what the public was looking for by listening to consumers and retailers. The answer: Smaller portions. Less than a year ago, Montchevre-Betin came out with a package of five 1-ounce single-serving portions of its Goat Medallion. Solandt calls it a "convenient innovation for the consumer," and for the retailer, too. Its size can fill holes in the cheese case.

At Cypress Grove Chevre in Arcata, CA, founder Mary Keehn, uses her company website as a vehicle to educate con-

sumers and help retailers. The Newsroom area of the website offers a series called *The Secret Life of Cheese*, which focuses on pairing and handling suggestions for fresh and aged goat cheese. A beer and cheese kit contains pairing suggestions and offers downloadable place mats for tastings. "As consumers become more interested," she says, "they crave more knowledge."

Consider Geotrichum

The growth and popularity of Geotrichum cheeses reflect a learning curve as well. But it's taking time, especially in terms of helping the public embrace appearance. Think: a wrinkly brain.

The biochemical attributes of the fungus,



PHOTO COURTESY OF FIREFLY FARMS

also referred to as *G. candidum*, have a direct impact on the ripening cheese. Using it in place of the more popular penicillium candidum (*P. candidum*) can result in a less bitter cheese, but, says Laura Chenel's Buchanan, "American cheesemakers have used penicillium because it's easier to grow."

VBCC's Hooper and her partner, Bob

Reese, started looking into Geotrichum cheeses about a decade ago. They entered the experimental stage in early 2000, which ultimately led to designing a new creamery. "It took six years to get it right," Hooper says. "Now, we have it all figured out."

Jennifer Bice, owner, president and cheesemaker of Redwood Hill Farm & Creamery in Sebastopol, CA, acknowledges that Geotrichum cheeses are "tricky," which is the reason the numbers are small. Still, she says, given that it's the most popular rind treatment for goat cheeses in France, "It's not surprising it's becoming popular here." In fact, California Crottin, aged and semi-firm with its edible, golden Geotrichum rind, is one of the company's most popular and award-winning cheeses, including Best in Show at the 2010 American Dairy Goat Products Association.

Popularity Surges

With so many types, shapes, tastes and ages, there's a goat cheese for everyone.

For those with lactose intolerance, the increased popularity of goat cheese may be a function of necessity. "Consumers are increasingly finding a member of their family unable to tolerate cows' milk but able to digest goats' milk," says Rachel Oriana

Schraeder, sales and marketing director of Sierra Nevada Cheese Company in Willows, CA. Studies have shown that eight out of 10 people with cow milk allergies can digest goat cheese with no adverse reactions.

While fresh goat cheese still makes up about 90 percent of the volume, according to Emmanuelle Hofer-Louis, vice president of marketing at Anco Fine Cheese in Fairfield, NJ, aged goat cheeses are getting more recognition. Whether fresh or aged, goat cheese is both versatile and healthful. "Put it on a salad for a great source of protein without much fat," she advises, adding it's important to promote the health benefits. For example, goat milk is higher in vitamins A, B2 (riboflavin) and B3 (niacin) than cow milk.

Michael Koch, president, FireFly Farms in Bittering, MD, says the creamery, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, is now able to age cheeses multiple months, "not just multiple weeks." FireFly can channel more of its milk into the production of longer-ripened aged goat cheeses, such as Cabra La Mancha (launched in 2005), Bella Vita, and Black & Blue (both launched in 2006 and both taking category First Place at the 2010 ACS competition). Merry Goat Round won the 2010 Reserve Best-in-Show at the American Dairy Goat Conference.

Woolwich's Gregory is bullish on spreadable goat cheese, which, she says, is becoming more popular. "It has the same fresh, tangy taste as goat cheeses found in a log but with a higher moisture content. It's ideal for chip and vegetable dips or spreading on breads and pastries."

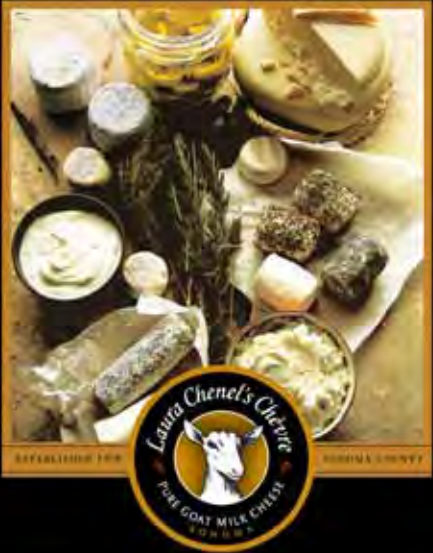
The award-winning Bella Capra semi-softs from Sierra Nevada are sliceable goat cheeses that pair with beer for a tailgating party as well as with the finest wines for a formal dinner party. The jalapeño-flavored version took the First Place award for cheeses flavored with peppers (all milk types) at the 2010 ACS Competition.

Cypress Grove's Keehn is working on new aged products "to make our line more complete and exciting." She's also tweaking the fresh line of cheese, including changing the name of the Herb Chevre to Herbs de Humboldt because of its new blend of more local herbs.

And there's more to come. Redwood Hill boasts two new state-of-the-art aging rooms. And Bice says to watch for the re-introduction of the Gravenstein Gold, a semi-hard raw-milk cheese washed in the eponymous hard apple cider. She is also doing R&D on a hard raw-milk cheese with a special rind treatment.

"It's not just the consumers who are learning more," Laura Chenel's Buchanan insists. "It's the cheesemakers, too." **DB**

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The Elements of Cheese Programs

Knowing the market and customers allows retailers to best design a successful cheese program

BY LISA WHITE

A successful cheese program has variety, a beautiful display, competitive and profitable pricing, and perhaps most importantly — a good system for sampling with potential customers. Retailers that commit to getting the right people, dedicating enough labor hours and having the right lead person can help guarantee a cheese program's success.

What's the best way to put together a cheese program? How is cheese properly merchandised? Is pre-wrapped cheese or cut-to-order the way to go? The answers to these questions are dependent on many factors and will vary, depending on the store, location and demographics.

"Delis need to have clear objectives in terms of revenue, image, margin or client satisfaction, while incorporating a basic assortment with eye catchers, demos, cross merchandising, clear explanations for clients — just keep it simple," says Martijn Bos, owner of Boska USA, based in Holland.

As with any merchandising program, success is highly dependent on the education of personnel. Stores with uneducated staff behind the counter selling cheese they're unfamiliar with are at a severe disadvantage.

According to Mike Hatch, vice president of sales for Englewood Cliffs, NY-based Champignon North America. "If you intend on providing a service, the people behind the counter have to be trained and enabled by the program to be there for any consumer. Handling cheese correctly to ensure the best quality is one of the biggest challenges we typically see, along with dedicating enough time for training, demos and marketing."

"Stores with enthusiastic staff who have been on the job for years or plan to be are a step ahead of the competition," explains Michael Blum, sales and marketing manager of Beemster, a Dutch cheese company with offices in Jersey City, NJ. Prior to creating a cheese program, retailers should develop a calendar with a schedule to inform staff



PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA MILK ADVISORY BOARD

about what the store plans on doing, he says.

"As for cheese selection, there should be a large range," Blum adds. This should include basic, less expensive cheeses all the way up to high-end, sophisticated varieties that have more complex flavors.

"It's important to entice customers with the stories of the cheeses using point-of-sale materials, and this is where larger, high-volume supermarkets run into problems," he continues. "There shouldn't be a take-it-or-leave-it attitude."

Stores that tap into the romance of gourmet and artisan cheeses can gain a competitive edge. "Not many Americans see cheese as something with a rich history or diverse flavors and backgrounds," Blum says. "Consumers eat cheese to live rather than live to eat cheese."

In some stores, it makes sense to integrate several cheeses into high-profile loca-

tions throughout the deli department. "In these types of programs, all cheeses work together, whether we connect them via wine, beer or certain accompaniments that are appropriate," says Ruth Flore, marketing manager at Norseland, a cheese importer and marketer in Stamford, CT.

Cheese merchandising has many schools of thought. Some delis arrange cheeses by country of origin, others by category, such as Cheddar, Blue, etc. Cheeses also can be arranged by production method, texture or usage, such as snacking.

"We build programs based on needs," notes Chris Huey, vice president of retail sales for Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA. "Stores that are into category management arrange cheeses by usage, others arrange case flow based on how customers use these products."

Product consistency is key to ensure

the brands customers have come to expect will remain available. "It can be a challenge to understand what cheese variety sells in the deli, because this can vary depending on the neighborhood and region," says Jay Allison, vice president of sales and marketing for Tillamook Cheese, Tillamook, OR.

Demographics and past sales help determine the proper cheese mix. "There's no cookie-cutter approach," relates Steve Margarites, president of Best Cheese Corp., Mt. Kisco, NY. "Ideally, stores need to embrace

the local market. Focusing on local cheese producers also is a plus."

Retailers need to ensure enough variety to show consumers the deli is serious about cheese. "Variety and quality are key," says David Freedheim, sales consultant for the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), South San Francisco, CA.

After locating a reliable distributor with good sources of product, fair pricing and a good record of product rotation and promotion, Freedheim recommends deli buyers visit

the distributor's facility to check the storage and warehousing arrangements. "Ask the distributor buyer about where and how they buy product. Do they import directly or go through an importing agent? How do they handle promotional funds and display materials? And most importantly, how will they service the account? With that in mind, it's critical that the deli manager understand the cheese world and is given the training and access to whatever educational opportunities available to equip him or her for the job."



Artisanal CheeseClock Collection

BY JAN FIALKOW

Artisanal Cheese Center, New York, NY, has developed the Artisanal CheeseClock Collection based on the CheeseClock on its website, www.artisanalcheese.com.

The CheeseClock is divided into four quadrants representing mild, medium, bold and strong flavor profiles, along with pairing ideas for wines, beers and complementary items. "It's a teaching tool," says Dan Dowe, CEO. "The CheeseClock Collection offers the why, the how-to."

According to Dowe, "Per capita consumption of cheese is going up, but cheese doesn't have a voice. How do you spread knowledge?" The answer, he says, lies in the Collection's packaging and displays.

All the information needed to serve, pair and use the cheeses are on the packages, which are color-coded to correspond to the four quadrants of the CheeseClock. There are presently four cheeses in each quadrant – and these are some of the best cheeses in the world. Current choices include Brillat Savarin, Pecorino Sardo, Uplands Pleasant Ridge Reserve, and Artisanal Roquefort. The cheeses in the Collection are subject to change to insure that each cheese is offered at its peak.

The packaging offers information that facilitates cheese plate creation. In delis without an educated cheesemonger, the packaging can guide consumers in their selections; it can also be used as a training device for store personnel. The packaging also makes it easy to position the cheeses as a gift-giving solution.

DB

Pre-wrapped vs. Cut-to-order

Both pre-wrapped and cut-to-order cheese programs have advantages and disadvantages. Some say both solutions can be utilized. For example, stores can provide cut-to-order service during busier day parts and offer pre-wrapped product on off hours.

"Keep the busy hours to teach and inspire clients, instead of cut to order," Boska's Bos says. "Pre-packed is great but not for specialties. Clients expect an experience where they pay more."

From a deli management perspective, pre-wrapped cheese provides consistent packaging, more uniform case appearance and extended shelf life. "In a high-volume supermarket, pre-wrapped definitely provides significant savings on both labor and shrink," explains Norseland's Flore.

Pre-wrapped cheese requires less labor than cut to order. Dating pre-wrapped products is usually taken care of, so the primary function required is proper rotation in the case, ordering and merchandising. "The disadvantage to pre-wrapped cheese is people may not perceive it to be as fresh, although it most likely is," says Tillamook's Allison.

Due to the high cost of labor, many stores have turned their backs on cut-and-wrap programs. "Where they may have started with a cheesemonger cutting fresh cheeses and wrapping on site, labor pressures came along and stores can't afford to staff these programs," Atlanta's Huey relates. "Then sanitation issues came into play."

There are signs, however, the segment has come full circle, with more stores dedicating staff to cutting cheeses within the department, due to consumer demand. "We're selling more bulk whole wheels than years ago because retailers are recommitting to these in-store specialty cheese shops," Huey adds.

A Successful Display

An innovative marketing approach, competitive pricing, plus a sampling or demo program are key to moving any specialty cheese. "It all starts visually with signs that these cheeses are available," says Blum. "Retailers must show off the category to draw attention and educate through visual aids."

Eye-appealing point-of-sale materials should be used whenever possible. Product should be stocked, rotated and in date. "Cut-to-order merchandising has to be obvious and functional for both the consumer and the store personnel," says Champignon's Hatch. "Building displays for seasonal offerings and keeping a fresh appearance are also very important."

Educational materials should cover how to use the cheese and what it tastes like, not just the name and country of origin. CMAB's

Freedheim believes, "The more information provided to the consumer about taste, pairings with other foods and beverages and the best way to serve it, the better the merchandising tools for the deli." CMAB provides demo sampling programs and instant, redeemable coupons to encourage consumer trial.

"Sampling is huge," notes Tillamook's Allison. "If delis have the opportunity to take it to another level by building small cheese displays and adding wine tasting, it's a cross-

merchandising opportunity. To be successful with cheese programs, delis have to differentiate their products from the dairy section."

Merchandising and presentation can make or break a cheese program. "Although there aren't many cheeses that can be displayed outside a refrigerated case, this is the best method to use," Margarites says. "Non-refrigerated cheese displays outsell refrigerated displays five to one because they're more accessible and visible."

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When There's No Road Map...



By
**Neville
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The American Cheese Society was founded in 1983 but cheesemaking was founded long before as the evolution of an art form passed on from craftsman to craftsman. With the formation of the American Cheese Society some 28 years ago, you would think an entry-level cheesemaker might have an easier row to hoe in 2011.

Nothing could be further from the truth; it may actually be more difficult today to launch a cheese venture than

it was pre-1983. In 2010, the FDA closed down four raw-milk cheese operations and recalled 12 cheeses — seven pasteurized-milk and five raw-milk cheeses. A new cheesemaker must wonder how best to avoid losing his or her investment.

At an increasing rate, it appears many new entrants into the cheesemaking business have no formal training, are not certified, and/or have never made cheese before.

They have limited formal guidelines to follow for how safe cheese is made, how a production facility is constructed, what the sanitary practices are, what constitutes a safe air supply and how to access CGMP (current good manufacturing practices) for cheese production.

What they do have access to is retailers, distributors and consumers who require no proof of safety. Why would a large supermarket chain buy and resell cheese from a new cheesemaker who doesn't own a pH meter, who doesn't know you can't go directly from the animals into the make room, who isn't aware that a chlorine-based foot wash loses its effectiveness, who doesn't test any finished product?

In an ideal world, state inspectors should tell new cheesemakers what is required to build and operate a safe business. Unfortunately, what these cheesemakers get is information on how to create a state-compliant business. Building requirements are often ambiguous, unclear and inadequate; in some cases they allow outdated practices that fly in the face of current best practices.

It is entirely possible to construct and operate a new artisan cheese facility with a flawed design that will not permit CGMP, has components that are difficult to clean adequately, and is not required to do any testing or proof of performance for public health and safety purposes. And if the cheesemaker is making raw-milk cheese, the hygiene standards must flow back to the milking parlor — and no true requirement exists for a comprehensive cow-to-platter performance standard.

The four raw-milk cheesemakers whose operations were shut down after recalls do not appear to have been testing finished product on any formal basis; two confirmed

this, the other two were not available for comment. Interviews with them revealed a common theme — “We never had any problems in the past.” It was almost as if they were using consumers as their test lab. Analysis of the comments of the selected cheesemakers after the FDA interventions provided no confidence that they knew what to do to solve the problems.

Endorsement often stands for validation; third-party endorsements by the popular press and prominent retailers can make these now celebrity cheesemakers almost untouchable. He or she who tarnishes the image of the celebrity can become an outcast. Unqualified endorsement has contributed to the problem; no retailers or members of the press are qualified to tell the consumer that the cheesemaker from whom they receive their cheese is a good operator, but they often do. Add in the distributors who have no requirements for a product other than the

taste of the sample used as demo and no ongoing future performance criteria. Why would they take cheese from our example cheesemakers above? Are they so desperate to have artisan cheese in their catalog it's worth taking the risk? Or perhaps they simply don't perceive the risk.

Retailers visiting a cheese manufacturer might want to look for the following: Is there a controlled entry point where you leave your civilian clothes and put on production smocks? Are all lunchrooms, lockers and bathrooms located outside the controlled entry point? Is staff removing work clothing prior to using the bathroom? Are the windows open? Is there an extract fan? Is there a positive filtered air system? Can products flow through the building without compromising product integrity? Do any doors open directly to the outside? Is plant entry allowed from the dock or any door other than the controlled entry?

We have young newcomers studying under cheesemakers with dubious skills and receiving information that has only some basis in fact or science. Tomorrow's successful cheesemakers can access almost all the information needed if they know where to look and have the training to sort the wheat from the chaff. Consider the following: There are no road maps, no comprehensive federal guidelines, no comprehensive state guidelines, no true cheesemaking trade schools in the USA or Canada, no apprenticeship programs.

When cheesemaking was a craft, it was also a livelihood. The cheesemaker survived on quality. Today cheesemaking is often a way to save the farm. Without regulation, there will be operators who risk our artisan cheese industry out of ignorance, lack of knowledge/education and indifference. I, for one, would welcome more regulation.

DB

At an increasing rate, it appears many new entrants into the cheesemaking business have no formal training, are not certified, and/or have never made cheese before.

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Blast From The Past

Kettle Cuisine

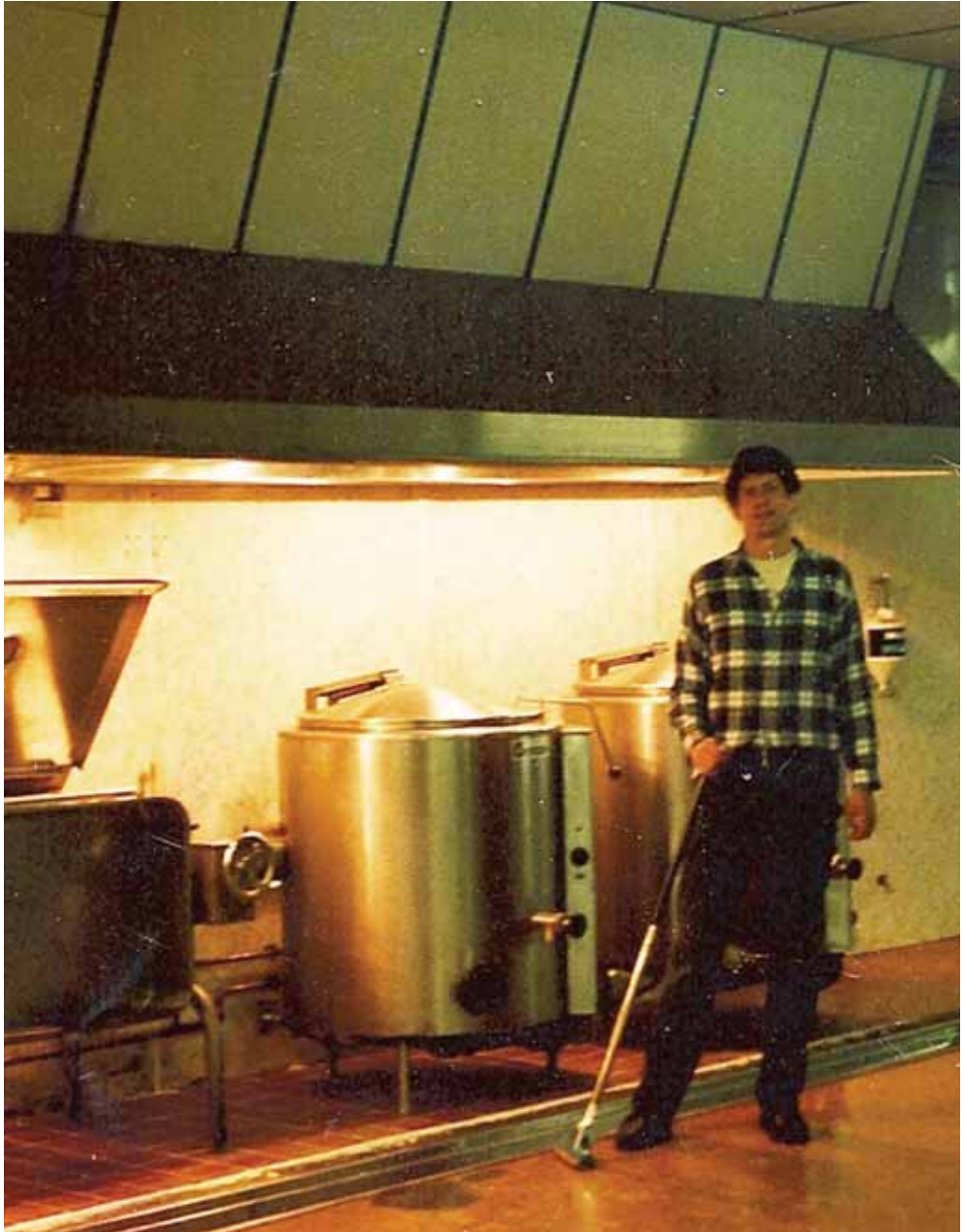
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n 1986 Jerry Shafir started Kettle Cuisine, now headquartered in Chelsea, MA, to fill what he saw as a void in the foodservice industry for premium-quality, fully prepared soups. Today, Kettle Cuisine serves over 5,000 supermarkets, restaurants, cafes and delis throughout the country.

The company's product range has grown from only a few products to more than 50 varieties of refrigerated and frozen all-natural soups, chilis, chowders and stews.

Since its founding, Kettle Cuisine has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to delivering consistently top-quality products by using the best available, real food ingredients and by staying true to traditional artisan cooking techniques. Kettle Cuisine continues to develop a steady stream of new varieties with a focus on current consumer flavor, lifestyle and wellness preferences.

In this picture taken in 1986, Jerry is cleaning Kettle Cuisine's first kitchen in Revere, MA.



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