



DELI

BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

APRIL/MAY 2012 \$14.95

HOW TO INCREASE TAKE-OUT SALES

ALSO INSIDE

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SANDWICHES
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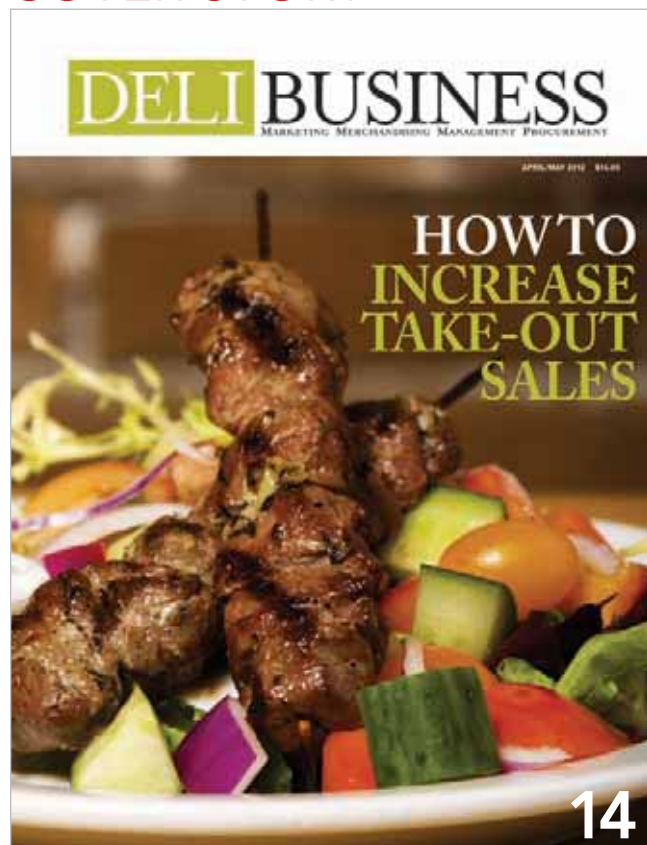
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COVER STORY



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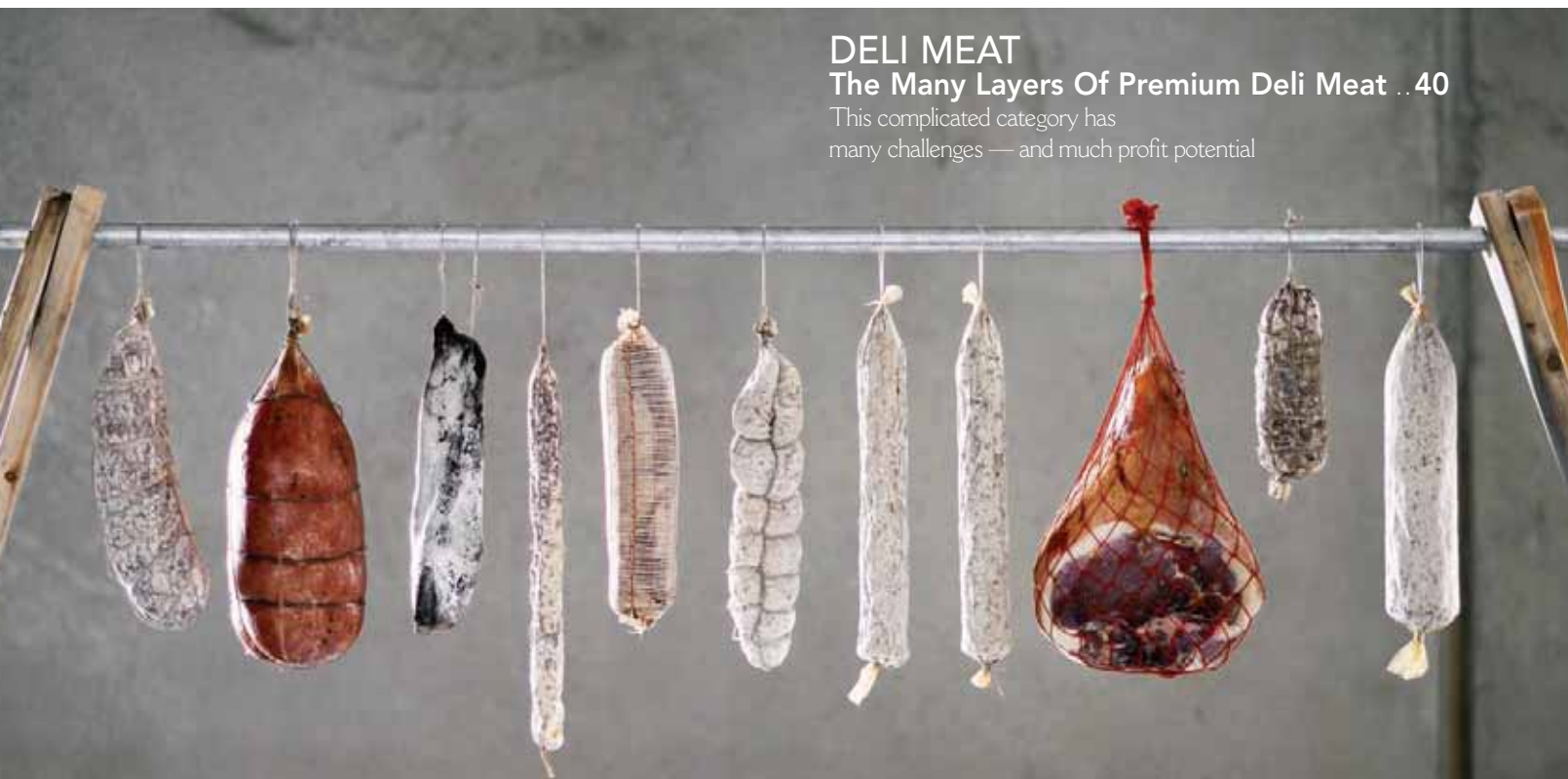
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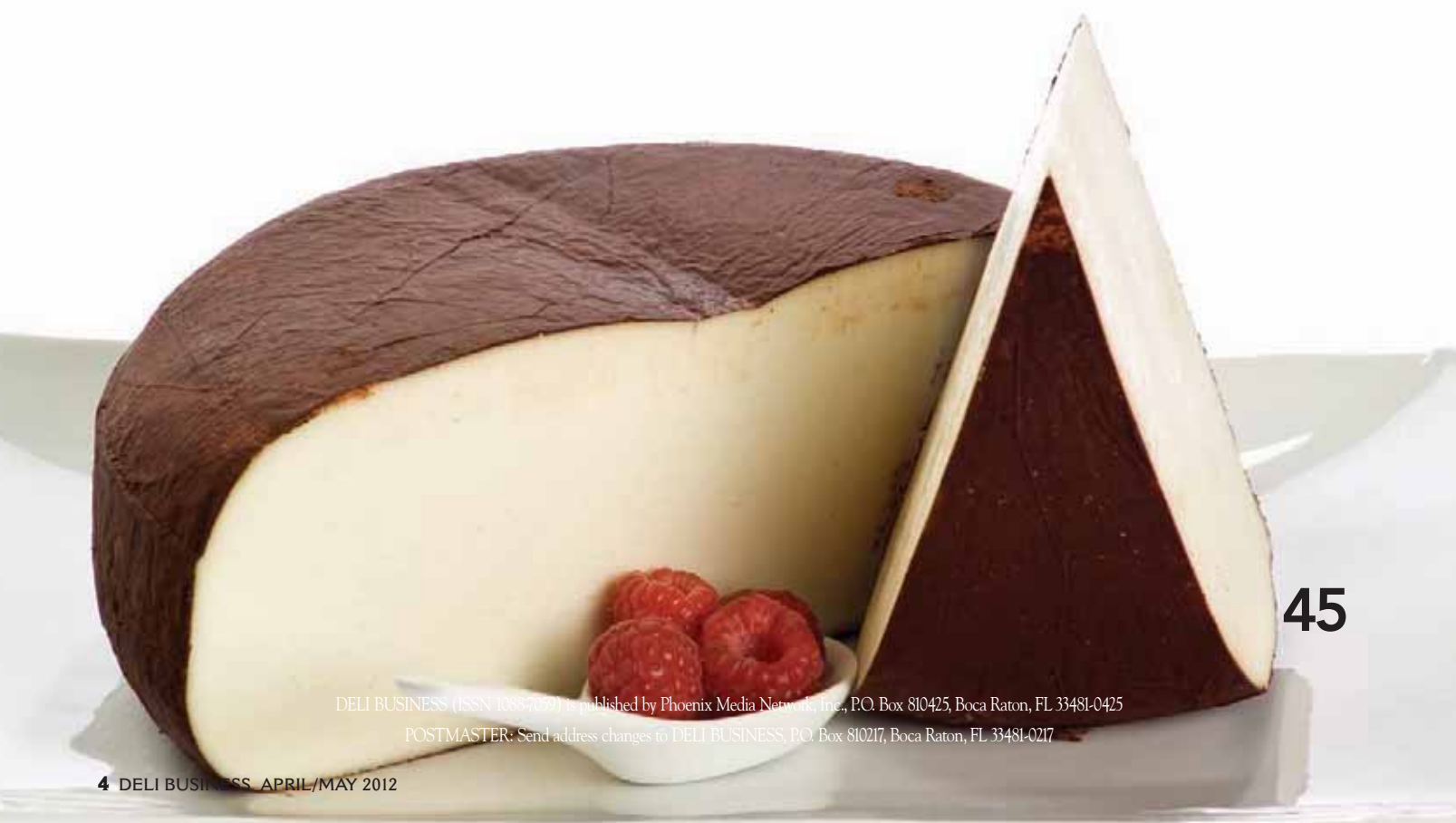
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GRUYERE RECIPE CONTEST WINNER



Emmi Roth USA, Monroe, WI, sponsor of the Gruyere Recipe Contest for Foodservice Professionals, announces Chef David Vlach, owner of Custom Cuisine in the Twin Cities, as the winner.

Out of 105 entries, Chef Vlach's Grand Cru Gruyere Ravioli with Swiss Chard, Apple and Sweet Potato Sauce finished with Kaltbach Cave-Aged Le Gruyère Switzerland AOC took top honors in the contest, judged by a panel of Emmi Roth experts, including Corporate Chef Evan Topel.

As the contest winner, Vlach wins \$5,000 and a five-day, four-night trip to Lucerne, Switzerland.

Grand Cru Gruyere is crafted in imported copper vats and carefully cellar-cured for four months to develop distinct earthy flavors with light floral notes. Kaltbach Cave-Aged Le Gruyère Switzerland AOC is a classic cheese from Switzerland. It is matured through a proprietary curing method for over 300 days in the Kaltbach caves to create boldly complex flavors with layers of earthiness and sweet, herbal undertones. It was recently awarded a Gold Medal at the 2011 World Cheese Awards. To view Chef Vlach's award-winning recipe, visit www.emmirothusa.com/ravioli_recipe.

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8th Annual People's Awards

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CHEESES
Cheese Cross-Merchandising
Goat Cheese
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COMING IN AUG/SEPT 2012

DELI BUSINESS will take an in-depth look at how the deli department can become a go-to solution for back-to-school meals for kids, parents and students of all ages.

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www.atlantafoods.com

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New Products



NEW HUMMUS FLAVORS

Sabra, White Plains, NY, has introduced a new line of hummus, Garden Variety, in two flavors — Southwest and Tuscan Herb. Two additional flavors will follow later this year. As with all Sabra products, the new hummus flavors are made with the freshest ingredients; these flavors have the extra twist of using regional authentic flavors. The Southwest hummus features corn, black beans and jalapeño peppers, while the Tuscan Herb combines red peppers, tomatoes, carrots and spinach with Sabra's smooth hummus. Both are gluten free. The new offerings will join Sabra's family of almost 20 hummus flavors, salsas, guacamoles and Greek yogurt vegetable dips.

www.sabra.com



VEGAN AND WHOLE-GRAIN MEAL OPTIONS

Kettle Cuisine, Chelsea, MA has launched two new varieties of soup to help their customers satisfy the resurging demand for vegan soups and meals that incorporate whole grains. Aztec Chili with Ancient Grains (dairy free, gluten free, vegetarian) includes tender cannellini and pinto beans, caramelized onions, red and green peppers, quinoa, amaranth, millet, lime juice, cilantro and ancho chili. Yellow Pea Soup with Roasted Red Peppers (dairy free, gluten free, vegetarian) is carefully prepared with slow simmered yellow split peas, tender carrots, roasted red peppers and caramelized onions with marjoram, thyme and a pinch of sea salt.

www.kettlecuisine.com



NEW SPECIALTY CHEESES

DCI Cheese Company, Richfield, WI, has expanded several of its lines. New items include Nikos Crumbled Fat Free Feta in a 6-ounce cup; Nikos Feta in Brine in a 4-pound pail; Landana Red Pesto, Dutch Gouda-style with tomatoes, oregano and garlic in 7-ounce wedges in re-sealable parchment bags; Alexis de Portneuf Bleubry with the best attributes of soft and blue cheeses; Alexis de Portneuf Le Cendrillon, a vegetable ash-covered goat cheese; Alexis de Portneuf Saint-Honoré triple crème Brie; Alexis de Portneuf Snow Goat's Triple Cream Brie, goat's and cow's milk; DuVillage 1860 Moon Dust, triple crème coated in ash; and DuVillage 1860 Sir Laurier d'Arthabaska, a supple, washed-rind cheese.

www.dcicheese.com



LOW-PROFILE BOWLS

Anchor Packaging, St. Louis, MO, introduces CPS700 and CPS800 square, black, low-profile bowls that make excellent use of valuable space, when merchandising in grab-and-go cold display cases, refrigerated shelves, staging on counters, or stacked in carryout bags. CPS700: three bowls for a mid-sized portion — 12-, 16- and 24-ounce versions; CPS800: 20-, 32- and 48-ounce sizes. All are recyclable, crack-resistant, leak-resistant and stackable. Easy to use — lids apply quickly, providing excellent operational efficiency. Textured tabs on both the bowl and lid facilitate easy removal by the consumer.

www.anchorpackaging.com



BURRATA CON PANNA

Lioni Latticini, Inc., Union, NJ, introduces natural Burrata cheese — fresh Mozzarella filled with authentic panna di latte and pasta filata. The panna, made from creamy milk, is merged with carefully spun pieces of curd called pasta filata. The Burrata Con Panna is handmade in the traditional manner at Lioni's facility in New Jersey. Each piece is individually wrapped and then packaged in water to insure freshness. It has a shelf life of 21 days from date of manufacture and is available in two sizes for retail — one 8-ounce piece per cup and two 4-ounce pieces per cup — and two foodservice options — 12 8-ounce pieces and 24 4-ounce pieces per case.

www.lionimozzarella.com



NEW HUMMUS FLAVORS & PACKAGES

Eat Well Enjoy Life (EWEL), Alpharetta, GA, has introduced four new hummus flavors and new packages. The new flavors are: red lentil chipotle hummus with poblano pepper and corn topping; wasabi edamame hummus with ginger and black sesame topping; black bean hummus with spicy roasted corn relish; and traditional hummus with harvest grains and apricots topping. New packages include the grab-and-go snack pack, a 3.5-oz container of traditional hummus with original pretzel crisps, and two 20-ounce variety packs: Hummus Quartet — 5 ounces each of traditional, edamame, white bean and yellow lentil; and Fiesta Quartet — 5 ounces each of salsa, black bean dip, cilantro jalapeno hummus and taco dip.

www.eatwell-enjoylife.com



HAWAIIAN KETTLE STYLE POTATO CHIPS

Pinnacle Foods Group, Inc., Peoria, IL, has introduced a new flavor of Hawaiian Kettle Style Potato Chips — Mango Habanero. Consumers will love the distinct, fiery habanero pepper flavor with sweet hints of mango. The line already offers four exotic, unique and delicious flavors including Original, Luau BBQ, Sweet Maui Onion and Wasabi. Hawaiian Kettle Style Potato Chips are available in a range of sizes including 2-ounce grab-and-go bags with a suggested retail price of 99¢-\$1.29.

www.hawaiianbrandsnacks.com



LANDANA RED PESTO

Vandersterre Groep International B.V., Bodegraven, The Netherlands, has created Landana Red Pesto, a strikingly red cheese with a delicious red pesto taste and a dash of garlic and basil for an herby finishing touch. This 4-kilogram cheese has already won an award at the World Cheese Awards in England. An eye-catching addition to any cheese counter, it can also be sold in the self-service section in its reclosable parchment bag. The parchment bag stands upright and creates a freshly sliced feel and taste.

www.landana-cheese.com

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by Jim Prevora, Editor-in-Chief

Engagement Is Key To Future Deli Sales

Supermarket deli departments have evolved in such a way that there is almost a bifurcation between traditional sliced-meat-and-cheese deli programs, where the highlight in innovation is the fried chicken program, and more upscale, more diverse foodservice programs, with copious amounts of prepared foods, multiple food bars, wok stations, pasta stations, sushi programs, upscale sandwich offerings, etc.

This author facilitates a number of food industry share groups, including one for retail deli executives, and it is interesting to note there is a commonality between operators for retail produce or meat departments, whereas deli has developed so that the top operators are now almost in a different business.

Yet this progression — which has followed the industry trend in which some retailers pursue a low-cost/low-price model as Wal-Mart has done, while others have pursued a differentiator model in line with Target — is not likely to be sufficient to address the needs and desires of consumers in the decades to come.

There is a terrible temptation, because we sell the most essential of products — food — to think we have exhausted all ways of selling the products. Indeed, there is a tendency to focus too much on the day-to-day task of selling products instead of value-creation.

Ron Johnson left Target in 2000 and joined Apple as senior VP for retail to go on and build the wildly successful Apple store operation from scratch. The Apple stores defied conventional wisdom that computer-makers couldn't successfully operate retail outlets and that computer sales would all move to the Internet. The stores currently sell over \$40 million per store per year.

Mr. Johnson, now CEO of J.C. Penney, gave an intriguing interview with Gardiner Morse of the *Harvard Business Review*. In it, Mr. Johnson debunks the notion of a strict separation between online sales and sales through physical outlets: "In reality, what's growing is physical retailers' extension into a multichannel world. It's not as though there's a physical retail world and an online retail world, and as one grows, the other declines. They're increasingly integrated."

He may be speaking of the kind of integration where online retailers let people pick up at the stores and kiosks in stores allow customers to order products that aren't stocked physically at store level. He may be talking about people feeling confident to order online because they know they can get product support or do a return at a local store. These are all issues relevant to food retailers.

At how many supermarket delis can I order my sandwich on my smart phone app and have it waiting for me at the store? Few stores have the volume to support a good kosher cheese program — but why can't consumers order the product when they do their shopping

and have it shipped to their homes or have it waiting at the store for pick-up with their next shopping trip?

Yet even these approaches seem too modest to define retailing in the 21st century. When Mr. Johnson is asked how a retailer can take the lead, he suggests a different way of thinking about retailing: "A store has got to be much more than a place to acquire merchandise. It's got to help people enrich their lives. If the store just fulfills a specific product need, it's not creating new types of value for the consumer... if a store can help shoppers find outfits that make them feel better about themselves, for instance, or introduce them to a new device that can change the way they communicate, the store is adding value beyond simply providing merchandise."

A comparable idea would be for a deli to introduce consumers to foods that help them stay healthy or that offer new tastes or flavors and thus make them happy. Mr. Johnson goes on to explain how they rethought retailing at Apple: "We reimagined everything. We completely rethought the concept of 'try before you buy': You can test-drive any product, loaded with the applications and types of content you're actually going to use, and get someone to show you how to use it. If you buy it, we'll set it up for you before you leave the store. If you need help after that, you can come back for personal training. If there's a problem, you can usually get it fixed faster than a dry cleaner can launder your shirt. We also reinvented the sales associates' job... Apple store associates are not on commission, and they don't try to sell you anything. They have one job: to help you find the product that's right for you... All those things create value beyond the transaction."

One thing that Mr. Johnson unwittingly points out is the crucial contribution service deli makes to the supermarket: It is the one place where consumers interact with people. In discussing the "Genius Bar" at Apple stores, Mr. Johnson makes a key point: "...the intuition there wasn't simply 'How do we best help people fix their computers?' ... Apple is in the relationship business as much as the computer business. And the only way to really build a relationship is face-to-face. That's human nature. That gets at the essence of what retail stores have to be about: deepening connections with people."

The deli department is the ideal forum for a supermarket to deepen its relationship with people. But too many retailers are too focused on selling more sliced meat to see the opportunity.

DB



James F. Prevora

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Without Borders™

by Lee Smith, Publisher

The Cost of Cheap Food

Personally, I think “pink slime” has gotten a bad rap. Before half the readership falls over dead as door nails or calls me a hypocrite, let me be upfront about my own habits.

In general, I’m much better educated about our food supply than the vast majority of consumers, yet I had never heard of pink slime. To be honest, it sort of freaked me out. And I don’t want to buy it.

But I’m not the typical consumer. I buy organic when practical, read every label with eagle eyes, rarely go to any restaurant other than a local restaurant where I’m reasonably assured they prepare everything from scratch. I do buy deli meats and adore specialty cheeses. I purchase prepared foods if I approve of the ingredients. In fact, I often purchase fully prepared foods even though we more often than not cook from scratch.

All that said, I wouldn’t hesitate to eat ground beef made with pink slime nor do I think it’s unsafe. It’s safe, wholesome, and utilizes beef scraps that would otherwise be discarded or sold for pet food. By allowing the use of pink slime, the industry has offered a lower cost ground beef. In a country where we strive for lower cost product — in every category — we should be happy.

So what is this stuff? It’s lean, finely textured beef (LFTB) or boneless lean beef trimmings (BLBT). It’s inexpensive 100 percent beef that has been made by taking beef scraps and trimmings that have been mechanically removed and heated in a centrifuge to separate the protein and the fat. The protein is then treated with ammonia hydroxide or citric acid as a kill step to insure the product is not contaminated with pathogenic bacteria.

While it can’t be sold directly to consumers, it can constitute up to 15 percent of ground beef without being labeled. Prior to the disinfection process, it couldn’t be used in food for human consumption in the U.S. Today, ammonia hydroxide treated beef isn’t allowed in Canada or the European Union and, consequently, LFTB can’t be sold there.

It’s being used in ground beef in the United States because we place a priority on delivering food to consumers at the lowest price possible. It’s what the vast majority of people have voted for by voting with their pocketbooks. When consumers want food at the lowest price, aren’t educated about food in general, and refuse to take any responsibility for their own decisions, ammonia hydroxide treated beef scraps are the result.

Consumers want to eat undercooked meat and chicken, raw seafood and eggs and unwashed produce

without risk. They want to leave egg salad in their car while they pick up the dry cleaning on a hot summer day. They want to eat everything year-round, which necessitates long transportation times. They want it to have enough shelf life so it will last at least a week. They don’t want government interference with their decisions but they do want guarantees that everything available for sale is 100 percent safe regardless of what they do. Oh, and we all want to continue having the lowest cost of food in the world.

We need to congratulate ourselves, because the miracle has been achieved. Mostly.

But with everything there is a price. In Europe, the food standards are higher but food isn’t nearly as inexpensive. People eat more food that’s locally produced and in season. Often beef is reserved for special occasions or eating out. Soups, stews, and casseroles are important parts of the daily diet. Many people have their own gardens. Some have chickens or a cow. Diets have limited variety and locally produced makes up most of the daily fare. Bread is made at the local bakery and is absolutely delicious but not as cheap as white bread in the bread aisle. It is usually stale after 24 hours.

For all of this, it still isn’t a retailer’s job to make choices for consumers unless it’s made clear in a mission statement. Consumers must make those choices for themselves. However, it would be better for everyone if there were more transparency, more honesty and more education about the true cost of choices.

I think it would be great if the cost of food increased. Maybe people would cook more. Maybe more people would look for fresh ingredients. Maybe we wouldn’t eat as much beef, but more hummus, pasta, fruit and vegetables. Maybe deli departments wouldn’t be afraid to charge what they must for freshly made, preservative-free foods.

All maybes — but it does seem as if more people are questioning what they eat and getting outraged when they’re surprised — or disgusted. Knowing your customers and delivering the goods is getting more complicated, but let’s not make rash decisions based on crowd-control tactics. The cost of cheap food isn’t free. It isn’t always about better logistics or transportation. And isn’t wrong to have the least expensive food system in the world.

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5 Ways To Increase Take-Out Sales

Easy steps to capitalize on a growing trend

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD



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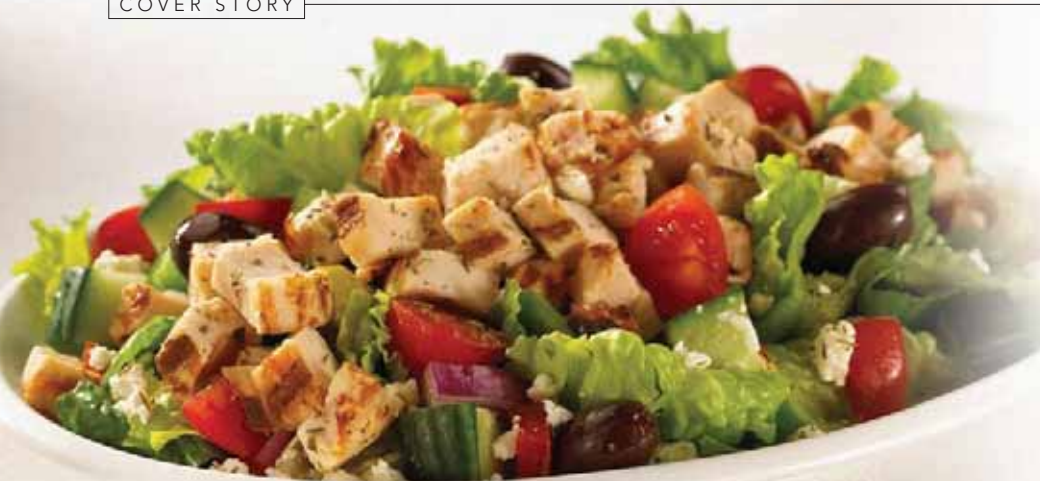


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Taking out and eating in remains a hot trend. Yet today, it's not just restaurants that diners look to for their meals. According to a 2010 report published by the Arlington, VA-based Food Marketing Institute, supermarkets supply 20 percent of all take-out meals, with 55 percent of shoppers interested in ready-to-eat and 47 percent of shoppers attracted to heat-and-eat meals. What's more, according to survey research published in 2010 by the Chicago, IL-based NPD Group, consumers choose supermarkets for their prepared foods over quick-serve restaurants (QSR) because of convenience, good prices, variety and healthier choices — all key points deli operators should consider in creating and sustaining a register-ringing take-out meals program.

According to Maria Brous, director of media and community relations at Publix Super Markets, a 1,034-store chain based in Lakeland, FL, "Many customers are looking for either meal solutions or convenient and creative ideas to answer the question, 'What's for lunch or dinner.'"

1. Offer Hearty Entrées

Shoppers can choose among several meal solutions at Publix, says Brous. "Some of our stores offer as many as nine themed meal venues such as the Carvery, Pacific Wok, Grill, Mediterranean Kitchen and Handcrafted Sandwiches. Here, shoppers can find everything from the traditional rotisserie chicken with two sides and Hawaiian rolls to weekly-changing menus featuring entrées, such as lamb chops and herb-crusted roast beef, and sides, such as grilled asparagus and sweet potato fries."

Eric Le Blanc, director of sales development for Tyson Foods, Inc., in Fayetteville, AK, says that in addition to rotisserie, "Fried chicken meals are also quite common, with mashed potatoes or potato wedges. Some

retailers have also put together meal options with chicken tenders."

Beyond chicken, according to Gene Pritchett, national sales manager for Southern Pride Distributing, LLC, a manufacturer of commercial smokers based Marion, IL, "Restaurant-quality, ready-to-go barbecue and hot smoked foods are very popular right now. The first thing that catches you is the aroma and it draws attention and lets customers know you're in the business. Ribs are popular. Brisket and half chickens, pulled pork, corn, salmon and trout — there are so many possibilities."

Deli operators can reduce shrink and increase profit, Pritchett recommends, by using the company's smoker to pull any meats that are nearing sell-by dates. For example, one retailer grinds beef, makes patties and prepares signature smoked hamburgers as well as ribs and pork chops.

In addition to entrées, Pritchett adds, "Deli operators can use our smokers to make a lot of side dishes that incorporate the barbecue flavor. We have delis that use pulled pork leftovers in baked beans and then put the recipe into a disposable aluminum pan and place it in the smoker to heat up and stay warm while infusing barbecue flavor into the beans. Pan drippings from bacon-wrapped products can be used for roasting potatoes or flavoring baked potatoes. Corn on the cob in husks and all types of vegetables can be roasted in the smoker while barbecue is cooking. Some people use the top of the oven as a warmer for dinner rolls, beans, corn and other sides."

To package these meals, "The trend now is to put entrées and sides in separate containers rather than together as a pre-made meal," says David Fosse, director of marketing for Lindar Corporation, Baxter, MN. "This way, customers can mix-and-match to purchase the selections they enjoy most. Many retailers are gravitating to a common

look for this packaging, for example, black bottom and clear top, so the prepared foods have a unified 'family of products' look."

2. Enhance Pizza Programs

Take a slice of business away from pizza parlors by offering pie hot-to-go out of the deli. "The deli pizza segment continues to perform well and we project that trend will continue through 2012," says Peter J. Smith, marketing manager for Champion Foods, New Boston, MI. "Retailers are continuing to embrace the profit opportunity in this segment and it will only get bigger as new flavors and varieties are developed."

Adding specialty gourmet pizzas can enhance pizza programs, says Weyd Harris, national sales manager for Conroy Foods, in Pittsburgh, PA. "Our Beano's-brand White Pizza Sauce and Classic Garlic Sauce are the perfect sauce base for pizza that uses seafood, chicken, asparagus, broccoli, and other higher end toppings."

The two biggest areas of focus for pizza sales in the deli are price and merchandising, explains Smith. "In terms of price, you have to be very competitive and maybe take slightly less profit per unit because they're plenty of pizzas places out there selling a \$5 pizza. In terms of merchandising, 'bake while you shop' is a great idea. Consumers can place their order when they walk in and have a baked pizza 10 minutes later. In addition, by-the-slice programs are a way to bring customers in, charge a premium and also reduce shrink by using close-to-code product."



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3. Focus on Sandwiches

[EDITOR'S NOTE: For an in-depth look at sandwich programs, please see Not Your Earl's Sandwich on page 28.]

Sandwiches are experiencing a resurgence, says Tom Buddig, executive vice president of marketing for Carl Buddig & Company, Homewood, IL. "This has been due to the downturn in the economy coupled with the popularity of QSR chains such as Subway and Jimmy John's."

According to Conroy's Harris, "Some supermarkets are doing a great job in creating more upscale sandwiches. They're using gourmet cheeses, breads, and condiments to make restaurant quality offerings. To this end, we offer some very unique flavors. For example, in our new Deli Bistro line we offer mesquite smoked, roasted chipotle, sweet chili pepper, and cilantro and lime. These are the flavors that are showing up on restaurant menus. They can be used to enhance the made-to-order sandwich program beyond the typical offerings of mayonnaise and yellow mustard. A great example would be the signature sandwich program at Safeway."

Dressing choices for sandwiches at Harris Teeter, a 207-store chain based in Matthews, NC, include Dijon horseradish, ancho chipotle spread and roasted red pepper basil spread. The chain features sandwich meal options. Its deli department offers a half sub-of-the-day sandwich, 2-ounce bag of potato chips and 16-ounce iced tea or lemonade for \$4.99. Sub choices include hot Philly cheesesteak, pork BBQ and breaded chicken breast and cold choices include roast beef, turkey, ham or club.

4. Serve up a Combo

A family of four can dine for only \$9.99 by purchasing one of the Family Dinners offered at Giant Eagle, a 200-plus-store chain headquartered in O'Hara Township, PA. The meal deal includes a an entrée, such as pot roast or meat loaf, with two large side dishes, and rolls or cornbread.

Combo meals, or an entrée and sides marketed for a single price, contributed 2.2 percent of all deli prepared food dollar sales or approximately \$128 million, in the 52-week period ending Sept. 25, 2011, according to the International Deli Dairy Bakery Association's FreshView database.

"We stress the 'bundled' meal idea to retailers and to include pizza, breadsticks and wings or dessert sticks in one price," explains Champion's Smith. "You see this trend more and more with the major pizza chains and we see it starting to catch on at retail. In addition, we have retailers that have had huge success doing bundled deals around big events. An example would be: Buy a pizza, and get a



PHOTO COURTESY OF BUDDIG



breadstick, 2-liter of soda and a salad kit free. Or buy a pizza and get a breadstick free. It's also important to stress the convenience of being able to buy your dinner and do your grocery shopping in one stop."

Another way to bundle a meal is in an ad circular, notes Buddig of Carl Buddig & Co. "For example, we recommend advertising a free loaf of bread and condiments when consumers buy five of our 2-ounce sliced deli meat products.

"There's a supermarket chain on the West Coast that runs a multi-item ad with extra hot prices up to 50 percent off one day of the week," he continues. "The items are all grouped into an eating occasion such as a chef's salad with lettuce, tomatoes and toppings such as our Fix Quix on ad. Fix Quix is a 4-pack of 1½-ounce cups of pre-cooked cubed meat and poultry."

5. Think Outside the Box

Capitalize on the never-ending what's-for-dinner question by offering meal solutions for every night of the week. For example, Dinners for Two are heat-and-serve meals available in the grab-and-go cases at Central Markets, an 8-store chain of gourmet groceries owned by the San Antonio, TX-based H.E.B. Grocery Company. There's a new daily menu each month. Selections in March included beef Bourguignon, thyme-baked potatoes and green beans amandine as well as spinach lasagna, Caesar salad and Parmesan focaccia bread. Wine selections are also recommended.

"There's a Northeast retailer that has done an excellent job with a 7-day program rotating meals throughout the week, including a variety of proteins," relates Tyson's Le Blanc. "They publish their menu prominently in the weekly circular and they've trained their customers to visit on the days their favorite entrée is available. Two important things work with this program. First, they've addressed the awareness issue and sustained the program over time so the shopper has had time to adopt it. Second, they've solved the balance between expanded assortment and shrink management by limiting the assortment to one meal per evening in addition to rotisserie and fried chicken."

To attract a substantial lunch crowd, advises Conroy's Weyd, "I'd suggest a sandwich of the week or day. Make sure everyone gets a listing of the next sandwich special to draw them back. Make sure everyone is well trained so that a consistent product is being created. Keep account of what specialty sandwiches do best in repeat sales and offer them on a more frequent cycle. These things will build a steady and repeat customer base."

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Hispanic Foods Go Mainstream

Building a bridge to a wider consumer base

BY JAN FIALKOW

Hispanic foods live in a dual universe; they're still representative of the cultures from which they sprang but they're also gaining considerable traction within mainstream culture. While items such as mofongo (the fried plantain dish emblematic of Puerto Rico) and ropa vieja (the shredded beef dish associated with Cuba) may still be classified as ethnic foods in communities without large Puerto Rican or Cuban populations, empanadas, burritos, tacos, salsas and guacamoles have all but lost their ethnic identification.

Guacamole, says Kristyn Lawson, vice president of sales, Yucatan Foods, Los Angeles, CA, "is like pizza or spaghetti — it's no longer an ethnic food. It's become very American, very mainstream. People love it as a dip and a condiment."

Travel and television cooking programs are broadening the mainstream palate. And since Hispanics are the fastest growing demographic in the country, the likelihood of living near a significant Hispanic population is exposing an increasing number of mainstream consumers to the foods of their neighbors' cultures.

"I have five grandchildren," says Edgar Soto, president, Cibao Meat Products, Inc., Bronx, NY. "One has an Irish parent, one has a Dominican parent, one has a Mexican parent. They're taking their family's Hispanic cuisines into the kitchen. A fusion is going on. If they like a dish, they'll cook it."

When flavors are inviting and quality high, many consumers are willing to try something outside their comfort zones. "A consumer is a consumer," states Jorge Aguilar, deli manager, Select Store Brands, Haliburton International Food, Ontario, CA. "Quality sells to everyone no matter what their heritage is. The next time you go to a Mexican restaurant, look around and see who's sitting at the tables. You'll see a great many non-Hispanic customers. Everyone wants to eat high-quality food. Because of this, Select Store Brands has a proprietary fire-roasting technology that gives vegeta-



PHOTO COURTESY OF HALIBURTON INTERNATIONAL FOOD

bles, shrimp and fruits a flavor you just can't find anywhere else. It looks better and tastes better. We encourage our non-Hispanic customers by putting a twist on the ordinary."

Guacamole and Salsa

These two Hispanic mainstays have lost their ethnic identity to the extent that salsa is now the most popular condiment in the U.S. and guacamole has undergone flavor extensions rivaled only by hummus, another ethnic food that has gone mainstream.

Yucatan has gone so far as to combine guacamole and hummus, perhaps the ultimate in fusing two ethnic cuisines to create something new. "Our guacamole hummus really speaks to the mainstreaming of Hispanic foods," notes Lawson. "All that avo-

cado goodness is blended 50/50 with hummus so it's lower calorie, lower fat and higher protein than traditional guacamole, and has all of the essential nutrients and minerals of the avocado."

Using traditional foods in non-traditional ways helps increase penetration in non-Hispanic populations. "Guacamole is so popular now — it's everywhere," reports Lawson. "It transcends its ethnic beginnings. It's very popular as a sandwich condiment, especially with turkey or added to your favorite egg dish. Our resealable cups allow the consumer to use it as a condiment — and not just as a dip — every day.

"Yucatan prides itself on value-added guacamole products and top-of-class innovation," she notes. "About six months ago we

changed to a PET cup. It provides the ultimate in recyclability and is crystal clear, so you can see the beautiful color of the guacamole. It's very visually appealing and drives a lot of new grab-and-go business. We've also launched some new flavors — spicy and ranch. Spicy is flavored with garlic and jalapeño and the ranch with a delicious buttermilk seasoning. Our flavors are available in 8- and 16-ounce sizes."

Yucatan sees guacamole sales expanding beyond pre-pack. In that vein, it's introduced fresh-in-store guacamole programs for the service deli. "Guacamole can be displayed behind the glass and sold by the pound," says Lawson, who notes the average retail is \$6.99 per pound. "In-store fresh guacamole can also be cupped in store and sold as a grab-and-go item. We sell a variety of guacamole components to create the perfect in-store fresh blend."

Shelf life is an important consideration for behind-the-glass guacamole. According to Lawson, "Our pre-packaged guacamole in the tub can have over 45 days of shelf life. The made-fresh, in-store guacamole has a shorter shelf life. If a deli cups it in store with no headspace for oxygen, it should have a shelf life of up to five days. Conditions for bulk, behind-the-glass fresh guacamole vary too much to be able to predict the shelf life."

According to Aguilar, "The deli case is overcrowded with the same old thing — fried chicken, pasta salad and macaroni and cheese. At Select Store Brands, we want to refresh the senses with color and flavor. With our vast experience working with America's leading restaurants, we have the insights to know what stays and looks best behind the glass. One of our most popular products is our salsa line. We have unique salsa flavors because we fire-roast our vegetables and fruits. Customers are usually shopping for a red or green salsa, but we offer many more options such as fire-roasted chilies, fire-roasted fruit salsas and fire-roasted corn and black beans that are great with chips and a good marinade for meats."

"For our salsa line, we have a variety of serving options depending on the space allowed inside of the deli case," adds Aguilar. "We have clear plastic trays, molcajete bowls [chunky style] and retail cups."

The Multi-Talented Tortilla

The ubiquitous tortilla is the base of many Mexican food items, but it also can be used in other Hispanic cuisines and in non-Hispanic dishes. According to Robin Tobor, director of marketing, Mission Foodservice, Irving, TX, "The versatility of tortillas has pushed Mexican foods and ingredients into mainstream cuisine beginning with sandwich wraps,

breakfast burritos/wraps, and most recently, snack-sized wraps and street-style tacos.

"Mission's complete line of 100 percent whole grain corn and flour tortilla products are the perfect ingredient for a variety of ethnic cuisines and fit all menu day parts and menu opportunities beyond traditional Mexican applications," Tobor continues. "We offer a variety of heat-pressed and stretched-style flour tortillas, pre-fried chips, taco shells and pre-cut unfried chips and strips that are made for traditional Mexican applications, but are also ideal for sandwich-style wraps, appetizers/small plates and popular breakfast applications. Our line of artisan-style tortillas, whole-wheat and multigrain tortillas and our flavored wraps are great bread replacements for classic items like sandwiches, quesadillas and deli-style pinwheels.

"We're very excited about this year's launch of two new deli-specific products — the 12x14-inch rectangular flatbreads and deli wraps," Tobor adds. "The flatbreads are perfect for making pinwheels and a variety of thin crust pizzas, and our deli wraps are retail-packaged 10-inch diameter products that are available in seven delicious varieties: Cheddar cheese & jalapeño, seven grain, spinach herb, sun-dried tomato basil, 100

percent whole grain and traditional flour."

Hispanic Cheeses

Queso Campesino, Denver, CO, is a minority-owned company that began some 14 years ago. At that time, says Cindy Jensen, sales and marketing, the company made large, bulk Mexican cheeses that were sold in Mexican supermarkets. When the company decided to make smaller format cheeses — what it refers to as random weight 1-pound packages — for mainstream markets, the decision was made to sell the cheese in the deli department because the dairy department wasn't equipped to weigh the packages.

All the company's cheeses are made from 100 percent whole milk, which makes them both more authentic and pricier than other Mexican cheeses on the market. For food-service, using Queso Campesino cheeses in prepared foods can justify a higher ring, says Jensen.

"Mexican food has grown by leaps and bounds in the 'Anglo' world," Jensen relates. "It's in magazines and on television. These folks go to mainstream markets, not Mexican markets to buy cheeses so they can make Mexican meals at homes. Mexican

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cuisine is being absorbed by the mainstream culture. To make authentic dishes, you need authentic ingredients."

Hispanic Meats

In the realm of sausages and salamis, each country in the Americas has its own traditions. First generation immigrants tend to stick with the familiar, but second generation and beyond are generally eager to try new items. "Our primary consumers have traditionally been Caribbean Hispanics, mostly Dominican and Puerto Rican," says Cibao's Soto. "Since we've been expanding our promotions, we've increased our reach to include many South American cultures.

"We're creating items these folks enjoyed in their native country. For example, the Dominican Republic cannot export meat to the United States, so we've recreated some of their favorites," Soto continues. "We have products we label as being Puerto Rican-style or Dominican-style to target those groups. This is especially true with sausages. Each different ethnic group has its own recipe for chorizo and longaniza."

Although Cibao has promoted heavily to Hispanics in the past, the company has expanded its outreach to mainstream con-

sumers. "The key is sampling. Get a product into the mouths of people who don't know what it is. Mainstream consumers are looking for food that is highly seasoned but not spicy — not hot. Many of them think all Hispanic foods are Mexican spicy. Mexicans are a large ethnic group and they're entrenched in Texas, California and Chicago. There are many other cuisines — such as Argentinean and Colombian — that are not spicy. They're just well-seasoned," he adds.

Reaching Out

Bringing Hispanic foods to a non-Hispanic audience requires the deli to be proactive. Sampling is the No. 1 method to introduce a product to someone who is unfamiliar with it or has never tried anything like it. It's also important to provide consumers with usage ideas — both traditional and contemporary recipes.

Soto says Cibao offer recipes in English and Spanish on its website and provides them as handouts at demos.

Select Store Brands' Aguilar notes, "We invest a lot of marketing efforts and it seems to help with the customers. We provide marketing tools for promoting the flavors, heat level and cost in the form of labels, signs and



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISSION FOODS

posters. Demonstration and sampling areas are always available."

"At Mission," relates Tobor, "we offer several recipe-based programs that were developed with the intent to inspire operators and help them take advantage of our full line of products as well as mainstream menu and consumer trends. We also have a monthly recipe program called *5 Fresh Ideas* that features our products in unique recipe applications, each month's theme being based on a trend, flavor profile or ethnic cuisine. We understand the importance of keeping up on food, menu, flavor, consumer and general foodservice trends so we feel confident any recipe we develop or program we launch helps our operator customer better appeal to the dynamic palate and wants of their customers."

According to Jensen, Yucatan "offers little cards to go with the cheeses. They give the name, the pronunciation and usage ideas for each cheese we make. We also have recipe pads of Mexican dishes in English and they tell which cheese to use in which recipe. The recipes are only in English because people of Mexican descent know how to use the cheeses. Retailers can also get our small paperback book of recipes by Doña Margarita, a Mexican event planner. This food is transcending its ethnic roots and moving out into other communities."

So where is this category heading? According to Soto, "We're in New York, so I can comment only on East Coast trends, but I see more delis getting into prepared foods and that includes more rice dishes, more plantains, more highly seasoned chicken dishes."

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NEW ORIGINS FOR *Mediterranean Food*

The Middle East offers a wide variety of foods to lure consumers to the deli

BY BOB JOHNSON

As the Mediterranean category continues its meteoric rise, new foods from new locales are coming to the forefront: Fresh olives, Italian cheeses, meats, and antipasti are being joined by flatbreads, falafels and enough different hummus products to form a category of their own.

"Hummus started the consumer interest in Middle Eastern products over 20 years ago, and it continues to be one of the fastest growing and heavily SKUed categories in retail delis today," says Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales at Cedar's Mediterranean Foods Inc., Ward Hill, MA. "As hummus gained shelf space and awareness, other items like salads — tabbouleh and lentil and chick pea — became line extensions of our brand. Greek yogurt has exploded on to the

scene in dairy and is still trying to find its niche in the deli as a base ingredient for traditional dips. Falafel is another new item that has started to become a favorite among traditional American consumers."

The variety of new dishes can be intimidating but Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisines share much, both in the dishes and in the basics of merchandising. "The Middle Eastern countries share strong similarities to the Mediterranean, focusing on hummus, tabbouleh, and baba ganoush, along with pita bread, as well as cheese. Many of the dishes are the same across multiple countries, with perhaps a different seasoning used by various ethnicities. Virtually every country in the Mediterranean region enjoys olives with every meal, whether it be Kalamata olives in Greece, Castelvetrano olives in Italy, or oil-cured olives in Morocco," says George Christodoulou, director of sales — retail at Castella Imports, Inc., based in Hauppauge, NY.

Show Them, and They Will Eat

From pastries to main dishes, the expanded Mediterranean category means there's a new array of exciting healthy options for all courses of the meal.

"You may start seeing things such as cheese borags, cheese-filled pastries that are

a savory appetizer and can be easily frozen. Also more dishes — soups, stews, rice — made with lentils as an ingredient," says Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager at Valley Lahvosh, Fresno, CA.

Moroccan, in particular, may be the next cuisine to gain a spot in the mainstream. "Morocco is especially popular right now. Moroccan cuisine features exotic flavors that are still approachable. Our preserved lemons, preserved lemon spread and charmoula (preserved lemon spread with harissa, a fiery pepper paste) are now on olive bars and in deli prepared foods," says Mary Caldwell, marketing director at FoodMatch, based in New York, NY.

The expansion of the Mediterranean category to include foods from the Middle East is both a challenge and an opportunity. Many consumers are open to trying new-to-them healthy foods from that part of the world, but they may be unfamiliar with these foods. Sampling, recipes and promotions can take Middle Eastern foods to a new level: Show them, and they will eat.

"Start with featuring a daily special item based on a specific country of origin in prepared foods," recommends Caldwell. "Once shoppers have had an opportunity to try a sample, they'll be encouraged to cook with the ingredients themselves. At that point

cross-merchandise grab-and-go ingredients as a kit."

Since the Mediterranean category embraces foods from a wide geographical area, it's possible to introduce exciting new products and combinations through cross-merchandising. "Cross-merchandise and create a Mediterranean marketplace, as opposed to the consumer perception of 'It's just the olive bar,'" suggests Christodoulou. "It should be a destination for a consumer to experience the Old World flavors and tastes. One of the methods we've found successful is to suggest a trio for consumers who may want to expand their culinary experience. For example, our Greek Table Trio would suggest Kalamata olives, Feta cheese, and stuffed grape leaves [also called dolmas] to bring the essence of Greece right to your dining room table."

Consumers want convenience, regardless of the flavor profile, so a grab-and-go section is a natural. According to Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at George DeLallo Co. Inc., Jeannette, PA, "The newest trend in this category to take off that we have experienced is related to the consumer's ever-growing demand for convenience. In response to this, we're working with retailers to expand their Mediterranean grab-and-go selection, expanding from self-serve bars to



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prepackaged offerings of olives and antipasti.”

“Along with our Mediterranean items, our Middle Eastern product has seen increased popularity — items such as our stuffed grape leaves, oil-cured Moroccan olives and our olive mix with harissa sauce,” continues Pozzuto.

The newer items in the category are ripe for promotion, including price promotion. “The challenge we see at retail is how to bring new customers to the category,” says Cedar’s Frocione. “New items need to be given a chance to be accepted and we typically like to enter a market with introductory pricing. It would really be nice to have more retailers want to join us with introductory margins, and believe it or not, there are still a few that are willing to do so.”

A handful of Middle Eastern foods have already gone mainstream and are the anchors of the category. But education can benefit even these items. Hummus and flatbreads entered the mainstream many years ago, but a variety of flavors are taking both of them to new levels. And consumers who only recently learned of Greek yogurt are starting to see just how versatile it can be.

“Greek yogurt is being used in products such as dips and spreads. You’re seeing Greek yogurt used with other things to make spreads. It’s just blowing up. The major Greek yogurt producers are all expanding their US facilities,” says Jeff Derr, senior manager for retail marketing and sales at Grecian Delight Foods, Inc., Elk Grove Village, IL.

Recipes can speed the expansion of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern category. “I think that offering recipes and serving suggestions is key for foods that may be new to a consumer. Most of these foods are not only delicious but also good health-wise so retailers can capitalize by educating consumers to their benefits. A lot of Mediterranean foods are also a great vegetarian option,” Valley Lahvosh’s Bonsignore says.

Hummus has gained such a mainstream following that it’s worth taking a close look at offering variety of hummus products. “We came out with a line of hummus products that do not have chickpeas. They’re made from edamame, white beans, lentils or black beans. The response has been phenomenal. Some of the retailers are putting pita chips next to the hummus,” explains Bob Ferraro, vice president for sales at Tryst Gourmet, Port Washington, NY. “We’re a premium-priced product, so we’re after customers who are willing to pay for quality.”

Hummus has become one of the anchors of a good deli Mediterranean food section. “Hummus builds brand awareness and drives



sales. Some of the healthy salads of the region are gaining popularity, but the challenge for any retailer is to find a manufacturer that can deliver quality product that has enough shelf life to be saleable,” Frocione says. “It always comes down to making Mediterranean a destination. Keeping new Mediterranean-themed items mixed into the hummus sets will typically spur new trial by customers loyal to a brand or product category.”

Flatbreads have also entered the mainstream, and consumers are exploring their versatility. “The versatility of flatbread has helped it grow, and the convenience has helped it grow. Flatbread has been in restaurants forever and it’s really gone mainstream the last five years,” Derr says. “Our flatbread category is growing very strong. Our growth

has been in the last two or three years.”

Many consumers are open to trying foods from this part of the world. “We’ve found most consumers welcome new products and trends. In general, consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of their health and eating habits and have turned to diets that have been traditionally known for health benefits, such as the Mediterranean diet. In addition to olives and cheeses, popular products, such as our Zesty Pepps, which were a tremendous success as a standalone, are now being stuffed with cheeses merging great flavors. Also, grilled garlic, as opposed to the roasted garlic, is a crisp and surprisingly refreshing flavor,” says Castella’s Christodoulou.

As the category grows, suppliers are

coming out with new and interesting combinations. “We are putting Blue cheese and Feta in the olive bar. I have some customers who have been putting them in the olive bar since we came out with it two months ago,” says Jose Zaragoza, olive bar representative at Mezzetta Fine Foods, Napa, CA. “We have been selling pitted green olives and delis are making their own mixes to go with them, like minced garlic and fennel.”

It's About the Flavor

As with all Mediterranean foods, health has had a lot to do with bringing more consumers to Middle Eastern cuisine. But while health concerns may pique interest, when it comes to developing loyal customers, it's all about the flavor.

“In our case flatbread is becoming more popular because of the flavor. We have chocolate, cherry vanilla yogurt, Italian herb, roasted garlic and sun-dried tomato flatbreads. We do custom flavors and it looks as

if everyone is coming on with a set of flavors,” Grecian Delight's Derr says.

Hummus first gained a toehold as a source of vegetarian protein, but good taste has launched it into the mainstream. “It's a healthy food that tastes good. The thing about hummus is that it does taste good. It has olive oil and other tasty ingredients. We all like to enjoy our food,” says Tryst's Ferraro.

The combination of taste and nutrition drives sales in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern category. “Foods such as falafel, hummus, baba ganoush, tagine, grain salad, and pita are healthy and flavorful and provide great variety to everyday meals,” relates FoodMatch's Caldwell. “They're simple to enjoy on their own, or shoppers can add to them with other products, such as olives or peppers, and build upon the base.”

A certain elegance comes with many of the foods from this part of the world. “Our Valley Lahvosh products have all the attributes that make Mediterranean foods desir-

able to the consumer. Our crackerbreads are versatile, have no trans fat or cholesterol, taste great, and can really add easy elegance to a consumer's table,” Bonsignore says.

Healthy Growth

The entrance of Mediterranean food into the mainstream began when people came to learn its health benefits. “It started a little more than 15 years ago when Oldways [Boston, MA] published the first Mediterranean Diet Pyramid. Since establishing the Mediterranean Foods Alliance [MFA], the exposure and awareness of all Mediterranean foods has grown. They were the first to track, report and analyze the Mediterranean lifestyle and diet and the resulting longer, healthier lifespan. After identifying these trends, Oldways and the MFA began showing consumers how easy and delicious this diet is to incorporate and follow,” Caldwell says.

These foods continue to trend upward, as the desire for a healthier diet continues to grow. “Foods such as hummus, tabbouleh, and baba ganoush, along with pita bread are definitely trending upward,” says Castella's Christodoulou. “The consumer has become more aware of the Mediterranean Diet, and its associated health benefits, of which these foods are staples.”

This trend has largely avoided any impact from the recent economic doldrums. “The economy hasn't affected us that much. It's been a steady flow except for a little bit of a slump right after the holidays — Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's and even the Super Bowl,” Mezzetta's Zaragoza says.

The food and cooking shows on television are bringing attention to the healthy and varied foods from this part of the world. “As consumers become ‘foodies’ by watching cooking shows and following celebrity chefs, their palates grow more varied and demand for gourmet and specialty foods will expand,” says Bonsignore. “I think it started a couple of years ago when the Mediterranean diet began getting attention for being a healthy and flavorful alternative for people who wanted food that was good for you without sacrificing taste.”

Just as the attention on healthy living isn't going away, the growth in this category of healthy, tasty foods is also not going away. “Mediterranean food is continuing to grow as a category. The concern about health is driving it. Mediterranean food is going to benefit from the emphasis by the media and government on healthier life styles, including healthier eating,” Ferraro notes. “It's still an exciting category and it doesn't seem likely to be slowing down soon because more people are learning about it.”

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE DELALLO, INC.

Not Your Earl's Sandwich

Sandwiches help delis differentiate themselves from the competition

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

The “Me Generation” might have officially left the American vernacular at the same time as Rubik’s Cube and *The Love Boat*, but when it comes to food choices, it’s still alive and well. The ability to customize, to make a dish that caters to a particular individual, is what’s driving today’s deli departments — and much of the foodservice segment, for that matter. The customization factor is exactly why that old standby — the sandwich — has made a tremendous comeback and is very much on-trend once again.

“We’ve turned into a society that really wants our products customized for us,” says Jason Chin, senior marketing manager, food-service, Reser’s Fine Foods Inc., Beaverton, OR. “We don’t want something that’s just plain off the menu. We want to be able to customize our particular yogurt dish, our particular entrée, our particular sandwich.”

A far cry from the bare bones concoction that was originally dubbed a sandwich, today’s creations are limited only by the chef’s or the consumer’s imagination. From the vast array of potential carriers to a plethora of meats, cheeses, veggies, spreads, and condiments, the modern-day sandwich bears little resemblance to the meat and cheese nestled between two slices of bread inadvertently invented by the card-playing 4th Earl of Sandwich, John Montagu, in the mid 1700s.

“People get bored with the same-old, same-old,” says Heather Innocenti, director of marketing, Mezzetta Specialty Foods, American Canyon, CA. “They want something different and exciting. That’s led [deli operators] to experiment and give them more exciting alternatives in order to enhance the experience.”

Increasingly, “enhancing the experience” comes in the form of high-end, upscale ingredients, such as artichokes, sun-dried tomato spreads, and non-typical carriers such as tortillas, pitas, rolls, and exotic fare such as lahvosh, an Armenian cracker bread that





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dates back to biblical times. Once moistened, lahvosh can be rolled around meats and cheeses, creating an upscale wrap with an ethnic flare. To make it easier for deli operators to make sandwiches using lahvosh, Valley Lahvosh Baking Co., Fresno, CA, produces the Valley Wrap, a pre-softened version of its traditional product, thus eliminating the need to moisten the cracker bread.

According to marketing manager Jenni Bonsignore, Valley Wraps are ideal for making pinwheel sandwiches. "It's really great

because you can use fewer ingredients and still get a lot of flavor because the rolling puts the flavor throughout the sandwich," says Bonsignore. "It has a low profile flavor-wise, so it takes on any flavor you want."

Increasingly, ethnic flavors are providing opportunities for deli operators to create sandwiches that differentiate them from the competition. In particular, Asian-themed offerings are growing in popularity, according to Judy McArthur, channel marketing manager, Unilever Food Solutions, Lisle, IL.

Bold and Healthy

Regardless of what carrier, meat, cheese, and veggies you choose to incorporate into your signature or made-to-order sandwiches, the question inevitably arises of what to slather on your creation and what to serve alongside it. The trend toward bold, upscale – and often-times ethnic – flavors most definitely continues here, as evidenced by the latest sandwich spread offerings from Mezzetta Specialty Foods, American Canyon, CA. The seven-item line is bursting with unique flavors such as sun-ripened tomato with cilantro, lime and jalapeño; chimichurri with cilantro, parsley and garlic; jalapeño with Mexican-style cheese; roasted red bell pepper and chipotle; peperoncini and Feta; Mediterranean olive with sun-dried tomato and lemon; and Kalamata olive Mediterranean blend.

Unlike many sandwich spreads, the Mezzetta line does not have a mayonnaise base. That alone is a major selling point, according to director of marketing Heather Innocenti. "Because they're made with olive oil and don't have a mayonnaise base, that makes them a more healthful alternative," she says. "They add tons of flavor, but with just half the fat and calories of mayonnaise."

In contrast, Unilever Food Solutions, Lisle, IL, embraces the creamy condiment. In fact, channel marketing manager Judy McArthur claims mayonnaise remains "the top sauce of choice by far for sandwiches of all types." That said, McArthur concedes some consumers are looking for a lighter alternative, but stresses that a healthier option can still be found without having to say "Hold the mayo!"

"Over 80 percent of consumers surveyed couldn't tell the difference between our light mayo and our regular mayo," says McArthur. "It all comes back to offering the consumer the choice to have that variety. Having good quality lighter options is really what's key."

When it comes to sandwich sides, it may be time for chips, potato salad, cole slaw and other traditional

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favorites to step aside – the 21st century belongs to the pickle. Even *The New York Times* dedicated an entire article to the burgeoning pickle trend. Not surprisingly, pickle companies, such as Commack, NY-based Farm Ridge Foods LLC, couldn't be more pleased.

"Pickles are incredibly hot right now," says Jeffrey Siegel, CEO. "The demographics fit everybody. Whether they're young or old, everybody loves pickles."

The popularity of pickles can easily be explained simply by looking at the healthful attributes of the product, says Stef Espiritu, vice president, sales and marketing, Van Holten's Inc., Waterloo, WI. Not only are they naturally fat free, cholesterol free, and gluten free, they're also diabetic friendly and contain zero calories. What's more, they don't require refrigeration in storage, although most people prefer a pickle be chilled before they eat it.

Responding to their growing popularity, Farm Ridge recently introduced a new line of gourmet pickles, including Mexican, hickory-smoked, wasabi and ginger, sweet horseradish, and "atomic spicy" varieties. In addition, the company "upped the ante" on its more traditional offerings, using fresh dill sprigs and cutting whole garlic cloves rather than using dehydrated garlic.

According to Siegel, customers have begun to ask for single packs that can be readily sold alongside sandwiches in the deli case.

And Espiritu reports a virtual explosion in pickle sales over the past five to six years. Van Holten's likes to call its pickles a "side kit to the sandwich" and actively seeks to have its pickles displayed as a grab-and-go item alongside the sandwiches. Increasingly, it's working with deli operators to bundle pickles together with sandwiches and soft drinks.

DB

These include bánh mì, a traditional Vietnamese sandwich named after the baguette-like bread on which it is made. It typically contains meat and soy fillings, such as steamed, pan-roasted or oven-roasted seasoned pork belly, Vietnamese sausage, grilled pork, spreadable pork liver pâté, grilled chicken, canned sardines in tomato sauce, fried eggs, and tofu. Accompanying vegetables include fresh cucumber slices, cilantro and pickled carrots and daikon. While Vietnamese vendors use spicy chili sauce in their bánh mì sandwiches, western sandwich-makers typically replace it with sliced jalapeño peppers.

According to McArthur, striking a balance between old favorites and trendy new offerings is a smart move for a deli looking to differentiate itself from the competition. "Having the standard or classic favorites, along with these newer, on-trend selections is really what's key to the success of any sandwich program," she says. "If you look at places like Panera, you can still get a tuna sandwich, but then they also have some interesting, ethnically inspired flavors and toppings as well."

Cautiously Creative

Generally speaking, the overarching trend

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New

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in deli sandwiches is creativity. As McArthur says, “The only limitation is whatever the chef’s imagination might be.” This has led many deli operators to flex their creative muscles and play around with different ingredients and combinations.

“The trend in sandwiches is to bring bolder flavors and textures to the table,” says Eric LeBlanc, director of sales development, deli and convenience store, Tyson Foods Inc., Springdale, AR. “The bolder flavors are partially a function of the aging market, but there have also been some tremendous improvements to the deli sandwich in artisan breads and gourmet condiments.”

Economic factors are still huge, of course, and while sandwiches are largely perceived as a value, deli operators must be careful not to get too “out there” or they might scare off the very consumers they’re trying to attract. Take cheese, for example. While high-end cheeses such as Manchego and Chèvre are certainly popular, they aren’t necessarily the ones driving the category, according to David Leonhardi, director of education and events, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI. Rather it’s different variations on traditional cheeses — such as Smoked Gouda, for example.

“People are discovering not so much the

ASIAN CHICKEN SUB WITH HELLMANN’S LIGHT MAYONNAISE

2 1/2	lbs chicken breast, skinned, boned, and flattened
1	tsp sugar
1/4	cup soy sauce
1/4	cup fish sauce (Vietnamese)
1	Tbsp ginger, ground fresh, grated
1/2	oz garlic
10	pcs French baguette
10	fl oz Hellmann’s Light Mayonnaise
1	cup marinated daikon and carrots
1	cucumber, seedless English, sliced thin longways
1	oz cilantro
1	oz basil
1	tsp mint
2	tsp chiles, jalapeño sliced, optional



1. Marinate chicken in sugar, soy sauce, fish sauce, ginger and garlic about 2 hours.
2. Grill chicken to an internal temperature of 160° F.
3. Spread bottoms of baguettes evenly with 1 ounce mayonnaise. Top with chicken breast, 1 1/4 ounces carrots, 2 slices cucumber, leaf of basil, leaf of mint and jalapeño, if desired. Serve immediately.

Courtesy of Unilever Food Solutions

high-end cheeses but the other flavors,” says Leonhardi. “The old standbys such as Swiss, Cheddar, Pepper Jack and Provolone are still being used, but we’re seeing more smoked cheeses and Goudas and Edam and even things like Brie included in deli sandwiches.”

Leonhardi cautions deli operators to tread cautiously with one cheese type — Blues. Even a dedicated cheesehead like him admits there’s just something about Blue cheese that tends to scare or polarize people. “Everyone seems to understand a sandwich cheese or a pizza cheese, but when you get into the Blue arena, it’s like, ‘Whoa, time out!’” says Leonhardi. “If you have a sandwich with Blue in it, you’re automatically going to lose everybody who doesn’t like Blue.”

Thus, it’s critical deli operators know their consumer base well. Companies such as Unilever offer their deli customers a host of insights, trends, and data intended to help them determine what kinds of sandwich offerings will prove popular. The company goes one step further, working closely with deli customers to develop menu items and recipe ideas. According to McArthur, such attention to menu development is imperative for delis looking to differentiate their offerings and become a destination.

“It’s important for us to help operators be different in their offerings because sandwiches are a tried-and-true lasting trend,” says McArthur. “There’s no doubt about it — the sandwich is here to stay.” **DB**

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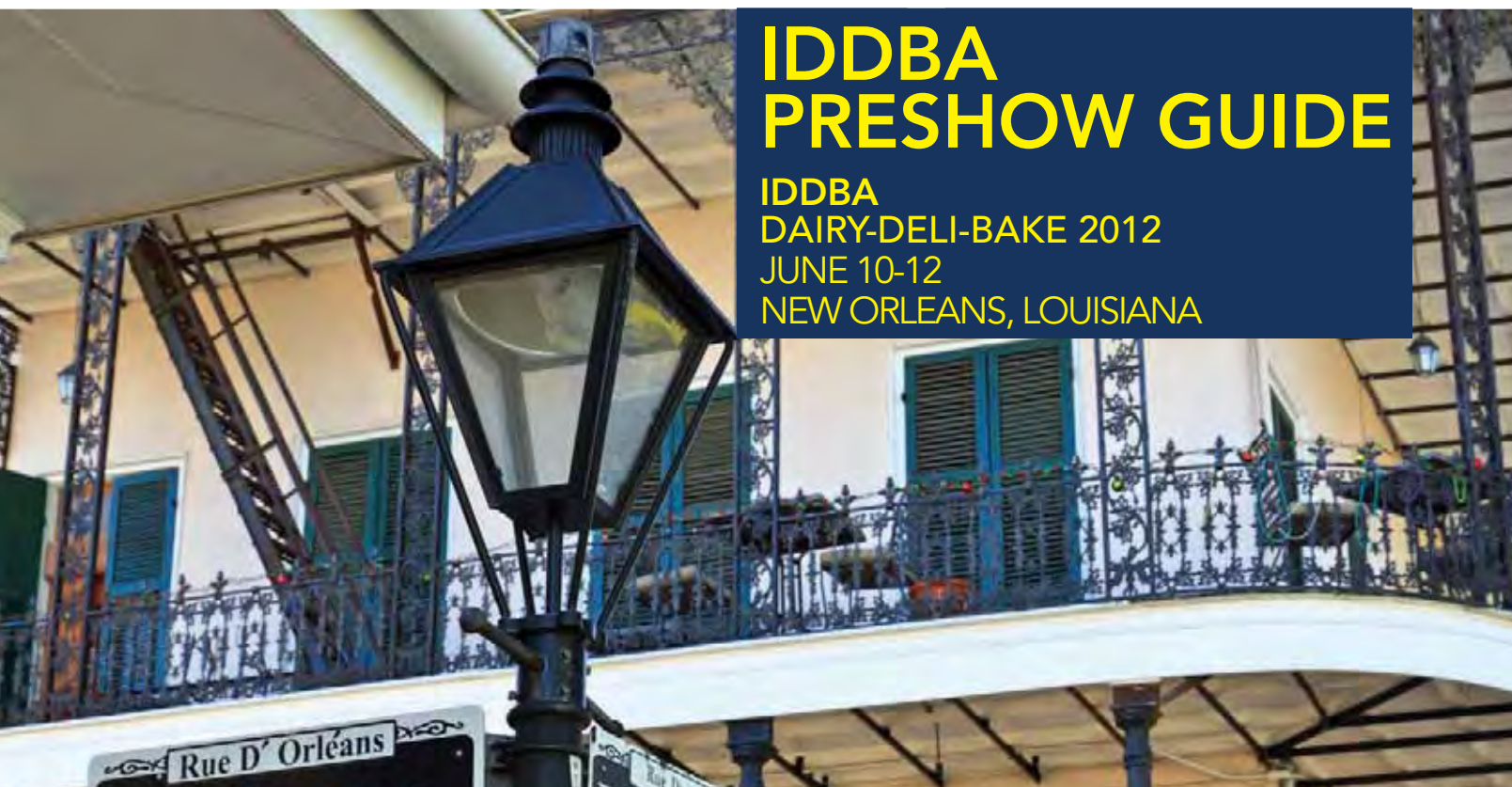
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IDDBA PRESHOW GUIDE

IDDBA
DAIRY-DELI-BAKE 2012
JUNE 10-12
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA





Carol Christison

IN APRIL, DELI BUSINESS publisher Lee Smith spoke with Carol Christison, executive director of the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, Madison, WI, about the upcoming 48th Annual Seminar and Expo in New Orleans, LA.

DB: It's great to be talking to you again. It looks like I'm going to be flying to New Orleans in June to attend the IDDBA's 2012 Dairy-Deli Bake. What's the theme for this year's event?

CHRISTISON: Our logo is a silhouette composed of food and music items with the mummer-style parade umbrella. It ties in to Mardi Gras, Carnivale, and other parades that celebrate special events. In our case, it's Foods on Parade. Combine the wonderful city of New Orleans with the IDDBA show and you have an impressive business and cultural package that grabs attention, delivers incredible food, and ties it all up with music. We like to say, come for the food — stay for the music.

DB: Wonderful! The show never seems to get old. You and your team always manage to make it fresh and exciting. Fresh — that seems to be the operative word this year. Or is it healthy?

CHRISTISON: Fresh is always at the top of the list, followed by convenience, innovation, healthfulness, and value. As we follow the trends, we're seeing variations that combine all of these attributes to create targeted

meals for different consumer segments. There's no "one size fits all" when it comes to food, thank heaven. We're fortunate to have so many cultural and lifestyle influences that offer new tastes, merchandising options, and flavors. The focus on healthful foods is being seen in portion control, alternative ingredients to control or reduce sodium, fat, and sugar. As obesity concerns keep growing — no pun intended — expect to see more food as medicine, but it won't be called that. Consumers may not totally believe that you are what you eat but they do believe it can have a positive or negative effect on total health.

DB: I've heard it said that supermarkets are the new restaurants and it seems as if deli departments around the country are moving toward more foodservice-style offers. Will retailers be able to find out more about this exciting trend?

CHRISTISON: Just like restaurants, supermarkets all across the country are being considered destination locations for meals all day long. It's not just lunch or dinner. The economy has certainly impacted eating out. A recent Harris Poll surveyed 2,499 adults. Sixty-one

percent plan to decrease spending in restaurants and 58 percent plan to cut the amount they spend on entertaining. Both entertainment and dining out are considered "non-essential" spending. Supermarkets are poised to step in and fill the gap with a great value-added advantage. Time-starved consumers can multi-meal shop in a single trip. Steve Beekhuizen, president of IDDBA, will be covering this topic in his presentation.

DB: Talking about speakers, the IDDBA has snared one of the most interesting and controversial political figures — Sarah Palin. Love her or hate her, she seems to get people excited. What led to the decision to get her as a speaker?

CHRISTISON: Our speakers and session topics are suggested and voted on by a large committee and the IDDBA Board of Directors. We've had "controversial" speakers and political speakers. And as a result, we sometimes get letters asking about the decision to have them at the IDDBA.

We actually invited Sarah Palin last October, way before the movie about her came out. The IDDBA programs have included speakers that we might

never get to see otherwise. And while we may not agree with their points, politics or actions, it has been an experience to hear their message.

By selecting someone who has impacted or had influence on our lives and our future, we're inviting our attendees to become "critical consumers." Listening to their message helps us to make informed decisions as voters and citizens.

If it weren't for the IDDBA show, we wouldn't have the opportunity to see many of these speakers. We believe that, while a particular viewpoint may not be popular to all, these are speakers who are interesting to our members and have an impact on our industry and the country.

DB: I noticed that the Show & Sell Center seems to be growing. Can you give us some insight into what will be new and relevant? From the brochure, it seems there will be a number of innovative categories that reflect current trends.

CHRISTISON: Retailers love the Show & Sell Center because it encapsulates new trends, products, merchandising ideas, signage, and innovation. They



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understand that some of the ideas are beyond what they might be able to execute at retail but they can be segmented in such a way that they can pick up actionable ideas that are relevant and lead to more sales. Our goal is to show them how to grab customer attention, increase manufacturer exposure, and create displays that act as magnets to keep shoppers coming back, time after time. We translate current lifestyle trends, news events, new product intros, and theme merchandising into experiential shopping ideas. It starts with form and function. In fact, we put the fun in function and transform the ordinary into extraordinary. Retailers know they can get more ideas than they can execute from the IDDBA show. They also use the photo CD we give them after the show to run their own seminars and training events for their associates. The after-market value of the IDDBA show and, in particular, the Show & Sell Center, goes on and on.

DB: While I'm always interested in the speakers and topics that are going to be discussed, it's the exhibitors and the show itself I find the most exciting. Every year I find new items and companies just starting out or expanding their products lines with products for the deli, dairy and bakery segments.

CHRISTISON: Because this is the biggest show in the world for dairy, deli, and bakery, it's gained a reputation and cachet as the best place to introduce new products. Many of our exhibitors plan their new product introductions to coincide with the IDDBA show. They know that not only will it get the attention of the buyers and merchandisers but it will also grab a lot of press attention. All you have to do is look at the number of trade publications running special show issues to see just how big this event has become. One of the best displays we have is the New Products Display. It just keeps growing and growing and grow-

ing. Attendees will use it to identify new products and exhibits they want to visit. And it's free to exhibitors. Some shows charge a fee to have an item included; we only require that it be a new product introduction.

DB: How many booths did you say there were? There are so many people to see! It seems as if I never have enough time even to say hello to everyone, much less stop at every booth. As the trade show expert, what pointers can you give our readers so they can plan their time and get the best results for their companies?

CHRISTISON: The size of the show just keeps growing. That's a good problem. Right now, we have 1600 booths on the show floor and it's growing. We sold out our original floor plan and had so many more requests that we had to add another whole row of booths. And they just keep coming.

To solve the problem of seeing all the exhibitors they want to see, many companies send multiple people and they divide up the floor. Others use our online expo planner to target their must-see companies. They also use the new product list to identify new items. Many attendees tell us they use the program and buyer's guide as a year-round reference to follow up on even more products. This is good for the buyer and the seller.

The best advice I can give anyone walking the show floor is to wear comfy shoes. And to bring multiple pairs. I'll change shoes three or four times a day and you'll almost always find me in sneakers, unless it's a social event. My philosophy is that at a trade show, you need to look good from the ankles up and be comfortable from the ankles down. Tired feet will bring you to your knees.

DB: And please, help us find the new products! It sounds like an impossible task.

Again, the program and buyer's guide highlights the new

products. Spend a few minutes cross-checking against the exhibitor list. Use the floor plan to highlight the booth numbers of the "must see" products. Use the expo planner to create a target list on line. Look for the "New Product" sign given to every exhibitor that has a new item introduction. Most proudly display this sign in a prominent place in their booth. We also give exhibitors lapel buttons that read "Ask me about my new product." It's a conversation starter. Of course, you can always say, "Tell me what's new."

Last but not least, check out the New Product Display and use the checklist to help target exhibitors to visit. It's important to do a little pre-show planning; you'll be glad you did.

DB: Before we say goodbye, I'd like you to comment on "Dance with the one that brung ya." Trade shows are expensive ventures and an enormous amount of time and energy goes into making it exciting and worthwhile.

CHRISTISON: "Dance with the one that brung ya" reminds retailers to do business with the people who are paying the piper — in other words, the exhibitors. IDDBA is the ONLY show I know that doesn't charge retailers a registration fee or charge a separate fee to attend seminars. That is just unheard of in this day and age. We can do that because the exhibitor fees are subsidizing the cost of the speakers and the retail registration fees.

In the past, we've had non-exhibiting companies host large events off site and syphon off the retail buyers and merchandisers. This is unfair to the companies who have paid for the exhibit space and followed the rules. By "dancing with the one that brung ya," we're asking retailers to ask manufacturers if they're an exhibitor before accepting an invitation to an off-site event. This puts the non-exhibitor on alert and reinforces the expectation that we're supporting the companies that pay the bills.

In fact, the IDDBA Board of Directors put teeth into this last year when they instituted a policy that limited the number of people a non-exhibiting manufacturer could register for the show. The limit is three people. Exhibitors can register as many as they want — there's no limit — but non-exhibitors can bring only three people. This has created a lot of frustration from companies who worked outside the rules but we think it's very fair to our exhibitors. We've lost registration revenue but many of those companies have come back to exhibit this year — another reason we sold out early.

IDDBA is committed to providing the best value at the lowest price. We haven't raised exhibit booth fees since 2002. We haven't raised registration fees since 1984. We haven't raised membership dues since 1985. In any other business plan, that would be the kiss of death, doom, and destruction. There are two ways to grow your business: You can raise prices or you can get more customers. We didn't raise our prices! And don't forget, we've been able to get more customers in a time period that has seen more mergers, consolidations, and companies going out of business than at any time in recent history. That's our value-add proposition. It also helps that we're a nonprofit organization with a Board of Directors committed to protecting member equity by providing programs that are relevant, focused, and, in many cases free — just check out the list of almost 100 free education programs on our website.

DB: Carol, it's time to shake hands and say goodbye until June 10th, when I'll see you next. You probably won't have enough time to do anything but wave hello, so thank you and your team for all your hard work.

CHRISTISON: Lee, I look forward to seeing you in June. I'll share your kind words with my team.

DB

Foodies on Parade



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SCHEDULE

The International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association will hold its 47th Annual Seminar and Expo June 10-12, 2012, in New Orleans, LA. The theme for this year's Show of Shows is Food on Parade.

The IDDBA continues its tradition of program excellence with another world-class lineup of top-rated speakers from an impressive array of disciples. This year's featured speakers include: Sarah Palin, Paula Deen, Terry Bradshaw, John Pinette, Jeremy Gutsche, Adrian Slywotzky, Jim Carroll, Jane Buckingham, Harold Lloyd, Steve Beekhuizen, Jack Li, and Carol Christison.

SEMINARS SUNDAY, JUNE 10, 2012

8:00-8:30 AM

Consumer Shopping Dynamics – The Decision Tree



Jack Li, relevance strategist at Datassential, will present results of the study commissioned by IDDBA to understand consumer buying triggers. The combined factors create a Consumer Decision Tree consumers use when they shop, compare, and analyze purchase decisions. Most consumers make buying decisions automatically and don't think about why they choose one item over another or make a choice at all. This combination of conscious and unconscious factors makes up the Consumer Decision Tree and the ultimate selection of what goes in the shopping basket.

8:30-9:15 AM

How Strong is Your Magnetic Field? The Craveability Factor



Harold Lloyd, president of Harold Lloyd Presents, explains why consumers are passionate and vocal about some stores and not others. Is the store the pull or is it the products, the service, and the atmosphere? What? The restaurant industry calls this magnetism "craveability." He will showcase "craveable" examples and offer effective and affordable ways to develop "customer magnetism" and grow your business in a more meaningful way.

9:15-10:10 AM

How to Make Your Brand Matter by Exploiting Chaos and Unlocking "Cool"



Jeremy Gutsche, founder of TrendHunter.com, shows how leading innovators are dominating the world of social media and viral marketing to capture customers. Creating a culture connection with your consumer is the most powerful way to elevate your brand into iconic status with staying power. It requires a level of authenticity and depth that can only happen if customer obsession is deeply rooted in your firm's culture and part of a 'culture of innovation' framework.

10:30-11:30 AM

Best Dishes



Paula Deen is a best-selling author, TV show host, food star, wife, and mother. She is regarded as the "Queen of Southern Cooking" and her love of butter is world-renowned. Deen's life is a success story that shows how will, determination, and pure grit can take you to the top. Today, she has three TV shows, a line of signature cookware, kitchen accessories, and a line of housewares. Her high energy, enthusiasm for life, and devotion to family and friends have made her a fan favorite. In short, she is her own brand. She will share her life's journey on the road to success.

11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Get Outa the Line!



John Pinette has been giving the gift of laughter for over twenty years through his stand-up routines, acting gigs, and, most importantly for us, his corporate appearances. He isn't a stranger to IDDBA. In fact, we're his favorite group because he embraces all of the foods that we make. John refers to us as "his peeps." His insight into food, eating, buying, and merchandising will bring tears of hilarity as he takes us on an incredible food journey.

MONDAY, JUNE 11, 2012

8:00-8:20 AM

Are Supermarkets the New Restaurants?



Steve Beekhuizen, president of IDDBA, and senior vice president of sales, Dawn Food Products, Inc., will share how purchase drivers such as health and nutrition, portion-control, and changing demographics affect where, what, and how often consumers eat. It's no secret that eating habits are changing faster than we can coin a new phrase or identify the next cohort group or generational drivers.

8:20-9:20 AM

Leading the Food Parade: Consumers, Trends, and New Products



Carol Christison, executive director of IDDBA, seeks out new ideas, watches consumer buying behavior, and analyzes industry trends to identify the issues that are changing our business. Foodies love parades. They love the excitement, the noise, the fun, and the crowds of people. Our business is like a float in a parade. Some are happy "watching the parade as it passes by," some want to help build the floats, and some want to get out in front and lead the parade.

9:20-10:20 AM

The Heart of a Rogue Trailblazer



In 2006, Sarah Palin became the youngest person and the first female to be elected as governor of Alaska. A short two years later, she was tapped to be the vice-presidential running mate for Sen. John McCain. She has since endorsed and campaigned for the Tea Party movement. Known for the meteoric rise that captured the hearts and minds of a global audience, Palin is a groundbreaker who speaks on her vision for energy independence, national security, fiscal responsibility, health care, and small government.

MONDAY, JUNE 11, 2012 (CONT.)

10:40-11:40 AM

Bridging the Generational Divide: Reaching Tomorrow's Consumer



Jane Buckingham, president, Trendera.com, will define Gen X and Gen Y, providing clear examples that allow you to visualize their needs and how they relate to you. She will also examine methods for targeting your appeal to each generation individually or constructing a unifying message to reach all. You'll emerge understanding your parents, your kids, your siblings, your employees, your customers, and what will happen next!

11:40 AM-12:30 PM

DEMAND: Creating What People Want Before They Know They Want It



Adrian Slywotzky was named one of the top fifty business thinkers by *The Times of London* and *Industry Week* named him one of the top six most influential management thinkers. He will unravel the demand secrets that create what people love before they know they want it. See how the new rules of value migration are creating sustained profitable growth for today and tomorrow. Learn how to create something that strikes an emotional chord with buyers and how to use those triggers.

TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2012

8:00-9:00 AM

The New Normal: Innovation, Hyper-niching, and Transformative Change



Futurist and trends and innovation expert Jim Carroll says the "new normal" means nothing will ever be normal again. Instead, deep substantial change is transforming nations, markets, industries, jobs, and knowledge. He will show new ways to uplift product in retail space, how to change customer loyalty through new forms of interaction, and how to enhance one-to-one conversations through hyper-niching. Jim will give you the edge to get out in front and stay there.

9:00-10:00 AM

Personal Power to the Max, Terry Bradshaw



Legendary Hall of Fame quarterback Terry Bradshaw, a success on and off the field, shares his strategies for maintaining success through persistent self-improvement. It's the incremental changes, the little improvements, that form the foundation for great skills, leadership, and, when called for, superhuman effort. Bradshaw gives examples of how to focus the power of dreaming, thinking and strategizing towards goals and success.



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The Many Layers of Premium Deli Meat

This complicated category has many challenges — and much profit potential

BY LISA WHITE

Retailers may be missing out on a deli meat opportunity. Consumer palates are increasingly sophisticated; people are traveling more than in the past and many are seeking the high-end food items enjoyed at restaurants and shown on food shows. This means the potential for growth in premium deli meat is on the rise.

It's not an easy sell, especially in today's economy, but retailers can capitalize on this category by becoming familiar with the trends and products available.

Although no concrete definition of premium deli meat has been established, some industry professionals categorize these products by production method and ingredi-

ents. "I believe the premium meat segment has three layers," says Chris Bowler, president of Creminelli Fine Meats, based in Salt Lake City, UT. "Branded meat is the first layer. Super premium is the second layer and includes deli meats that command a premium price because of special claims about nutrition, craft or authenticity. The third



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layer, which is where Creminelli fits, is artisan meats or charcuterie, where meats are produced in small batches using traditional recipes and methods of production.”

Another way to categorize these meats is by distinguishing features and origin. “Premium deli meats would include imported meats, organic meats, all-natural meats with no nitrites or nitrates, and meats with little or no added ingredients, which also could

include meats that are cooked in the deli and hand-carved for the customer,” explains Alberto Minardi, general manager at Principe Foods, headquartered in Signal Hill, CA.

No matter what the definition, this category of deli meats is perceived to be higher grade than the standard deli meat fare. According to Dave Brandow, director of sales and marketing at Piller’s Sausage, headquartered in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada,



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premium “is a wide-encompassing description that can mean many things, including higher protein, lower fat, minimal processing, natural ingredients, traditional curing methods, dry curing, etc.”

With the increasing number of premium meats available and the increasing claims of being high end, some are concerned consumers have difficulty distinguishing between these products and traditional items. “The premium section has been watered down and become more middle class,” says Robert Dickman, co-president at Vernon, CA-based Charlie’s Pride Meats. “The category has been diluted because the choices of 20 years ago have changed drastically from the branding of today.”

Today, it is more about how retailers define premium, since manufacturers are less likely to distinguish these products. “Nobody says their meat is not premium,” notes David Biltchik of Washington, D.C.’s Consultants International Group, an advisor to Italy’s Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma. “It’s more about marketing than price point and trying

to attract customers.”

Overcoming Challenges

Along with the blurring of the lines between traditional and premium meats, the premium deli meat segment has seen a number of challenges. “One issue is that, although the supply of premium meat production is on the rise, it still needs to keep pace with the increasing demand,” says Creminelli’s Bowler. “The other challenge is communicating the value proposition to customers.”

Overcoming the latter may be as simple as getting these meats into people’s mouths via sampling at the store level. “These meats appeal to people from their 20s to their 50s,” Dickman notes. “Although the segment is growing, it’s not for everyone or for all stores. Only certain demographics can handle product that is \$2 to \$3 more [per pound than traditional deli meats].” The company offers the Snake River Farms brand; beef under this label is from crossbred Kobe and Black Angus cattle. The highly marbled meat is produced without growth hormones.

With very high retails, the big challenge for retailers is to keep sales strong while maintaining profit margins. “The retailers know the cost of beef items has been very high for the past two years and will remain so through 2012,” relates Bruce Belack, executive vice president, sales and marketing, at Vincent Giordano Corp., based in Philadelphia, PA. “I’ve noticed some retailers recently have begun to react to this and are lowering their profit margins to offer more attractive retails for premium roast beef items.”

The cost of premium deli meats and the retails necessary to maintain profitability can be difficult to balance. “The higher retails limit the sales potential, which contributes to the lower dollar profit as opposed to the percentage profit for the item for the category in relationship to the deli meat category as a whole,” according to Principe’s Minardi. “These products become more profitable due to the larger volume.” The industry is also contending with the demand-driven rising prices of imports.

And the added costs of maintaining food safety standards must also be considered. “The other area of concern to all of us who make or sell meat products is the issue of food safety,” says Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian Pates & Specialty Meats, headquartered in Neptune, NJ. “It hurts all of us every time there’s a national recall. I urge everyone in commercial production and in retail sales to give sanitation and safety protocols the attention they deserve, from cleanliness of the equipment we use to the grooming practices of all of our employees and being constantly mindful of opportunities

for cross contamination.”

Talking Trends

The premium deli meat category is gaining steam, as judged by the number of new products and line extensions. “One trend we see is that customers want to know more about the ingredients, including where the meat came from,” Bowler relates. “This will continue to drive growth in the category, as

manufacturers respond with simpler ingredients statements and more transparency.”

Premium deli meats also have benefited from the creative use of these items. “On our end of the segment, the trend is toward trying new things and using deli meat not only for sandwiches but also as tasting items the way fine cheese is used for an hors d’oeuvres or antipasto,” he adds. Creminelli has introduced a low-sodium, skin-on, slow-

Shape Up Your Deli

The advertisement displays four large, round deli meat slices in various shapes: a flower, a circle, a diamond, and a heart. Below these, a plate shows several smaller, similarly shaped meat pieces. The Black Kassel logo, featuring the text "Black Kassel" and "Pillers" with the tagline "The art of good taste", is prominently displayed. At the bottom, a text box reads: "Your customers deserve the best when entertaining their guests. Black Kassel line of products not only offer great taste & superior quality based on the time-honored traditions of Central European craftsmanship but provide this in unique shapes that show impressively as hors d'oeuvres, meat trays or sandwich platters. Black Kassel deli products can really 'shape up your deli'!"

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roasted Italian ham, called prosciutto cotto, which utilizes the whole leg muscle.

"In premium deli, the chicken category continues to grow," says Steve Riley, marketing director, Dietz & Watson, Philadelphia, PA. "As far as flavor profiles go, bold turkey and ham saw double digit growth last year."

The emphasis on healthy eating has grown the all-natural and organic premium deli meat categories and brought them into the mainstream. "Mass communication has been the catalyst for this," according to Principe's Minardi. "The world has become smaller, and people are traveling not only abroad but also to big cities where high-quality, upscale imported deli meats are generally available. The Food Network also contributes to this awareness, since the chefs

and cooking hosts use them and talk about them." Principe has introduced pancetta arrostita, a smoked pancetta traditionally made in Trieste, as well as cotechino, a fresh pork sausage that needs to be cooked.

Minardi predicts the premium category will grow at two to three times that of conventional deli business, given the right venue.

Adding to their visibility, premium meats have recently come from behind the deli counter to join traditional meats prepackaged on racks. "Some customers want this convenience food with a longer shelf life," Consultants International's Biltchik says. "For us, it is difficult to find space on the shelves."

"High premium cuts such as Angus and USDA Choice are still very prevalent in most retailers' deli cases across the country,"

Giordano's Belack explains. "We do see growth for all-natural and organic deli meats, but overall the consumer is seeking lower sodium, minimally-processed deli beef items."

Production methods help set these products apart. Piller's offers Pannonia Ham, which is a traditional product from hogs selected for their leanness and thin fat layers. It's a whole ham, meaning it's a deboned leg from a single pig. The mild flavor is created by the low brine injection that cures the ham providing it with a high meat protein and low sodium level.

"I believe we'll continue to see double digit growth over the next three years," Bowler says. "The trend of people wanting to know more about what they eat is going to work its way through all [the challenges]." **DB**



Aye, There's the Rub

Rubbed-rind cheeses offer intriguing flavors and impressive visuals

BY PATTI ORTON

Fresh, inventive rubbed rind cheeses are gaining momentum in the marketplace. What's more, this niche category may be an underrated force in a big-picture sales strategy.

Rubbed-rind cheeses have rinds that are buffed with a flavoring agent during the aging process. Partly driving the rise is the race to be unique. "Whatever can be done to milk

has been done to milk," asserts Max McCalman, dean of curriculum, maître fromager and director of affinage at New York, NY-based Artisanal Premium Cheese Center, and author of several cheese books. "Cheesemakers are looking to do things to make it different," he says. Rubbing the rinds with eclectic ingredients is one such approach.

And the awards rubbed rinds are winning

are boosting consumer awareness. "We know consumers and critics love our hand-rubbed products — as evidenced by the multitude of awards at the U.S. and international scale," says Sue Merckx, retail marketing manager for Sartori Cheese, Plymouth, WI. Sartori's Salsa Asiago, whose rind is massaged with sun-dried tomatoes, onions, garlic and ancho peppers, took first place at the



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEEHIVE CHEESE COMPANY



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEEHIVE CHEESE COMPANY

2011 U.S. Championship cheese contest. The company's cinnamon-rubbed BellaVitano claimed "super gold" status at the 2011 World Cheese Awards.

Barely Buzzed from Beehive Cheese Company, Uintah, UT, is taking the niche to new heights. Featuring espresso and laven-

der buds, the rub's influence adds balanced complexity to the paste. "Our rubbed-rind cheeses outsell our traditional cheeses," discloses Patrick Ford, Beehive's self-titled "sales guy." The company's latest entry into the category is Teahive; its rind is lightly rubbed with black tea and bergamot, an

orange essence.

"Barely Buzzed has been a spectacularly successful cheese," lauds Kurt Beecher Dammeier, of Beecher's Handmade Cheese, Seattle, WA. He uses three adjectives to illustrate what makes the cheese so spot-on: tasty, visually appealing and consistent.

Carr Valley Cheese Company, La Valle, WI, crafts several rubbed cheeses, including Cocoa Cardona, Applewood Smoked Cheddar with Paprika, and Vanilla Cardona. "These cheeses sell well," according to cheesemaker Sid Cook.

Although the new varieties are gathering accolades, cheese departments should not overlook the Italian classics. Pecorino Marzolino Rosso "is a fabulous, semi-hard little disc that has been rubbed with tomato paste," explains Zoe Brickley, sales manager for the Cellars at Jasper Hill, Greensboro, VT. "The coating is beautiful with a very subtle flavor." She also likes Pecorino Senese, "an ancient, cracked-pepper coated little wheel from Siena — made available these days in the U.S. by the lauded Guido Pinzani. Finally, the famous Pecorino Ginepro or Pecorino Romagna is rubbed with balsamic must and juniper berries, giving it a handsome deep brown to black-looking rind and a very subtle accent to the often animal /barn character of the raw sheep milk paste."

Succulent as these Italian treats are, McCalman states only the Pecorino Marzolino Rosso is chugging along. "The others you don't see very often," he reports.

How the Flavoring Agent Works

With a steak, a rub is intended to enhance a fine cut, not cover up a mediocre one. Likewise, rubbed-rind cheeses must first start with a high-quality paste that can stand

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on its own. The base cheese “must remain beyond reproach,” Sartori’s Merckx maintains, suggesting the practice of rubbed cheeses is much more tenuous and delicate than it might first appear. “It takes years of work to ensure that it enhances the base cheese in a very subtle manner and that the combination delivers a unique and incredible flavor. But the additional flavor element is never to dominate the greatness of the base cheese.”

In other words, the rub should amplify a favorable characteristic of the cheese. Jasper Hill’s Brickley applauds Beehive for doing just that — using its award-winning Promontory Cheddar as a platform for exciting new rubs. “The complexity of the base manages to be complemented by, instead of masked or overwhelmed by, the added ingredients,” she relates.

Carr Valley’s Cook says the effect of a rub varies from product to product. For example, “Rubs can turn the paste sweeter, saltier, or more acidic. In our Applewood Smoked Cheddar with Paprika, it’s a combination of the smokiness and the paprika that flavors the cheese. In Cocoa Cardona, we add a pinch of paprika to brighten the cocoa. The alkalinity of the cocoa actually sweetens cheese.”

Merchandising Tips

Rubbed rinds offer a palette of color that naturally attracts the shopper’s eye. This unique attribute may be leveraged to develop

the specialty cheese customer base. “As a service cheesemonger, you’ll notice any rubbed cheeses slipped into the line-up will attract the freshman cheese shopper,” observes Brickley. “As far as the average consumer may be concerned, these cheeses may serve as a gateway cheese — something that has an apparent ‘differentness’ from the wall of seemingly identical cheeses on a cheese counter. They offer consumers a measure of diversity they could wrap their head around before understanding more subtle differences that cave aging and curd handling technique can make,” she explains.

One of the selling advantages of these multihued cheeses is they break up an otherwise monochromatic display, according to Cook. Warm colors such as bright orange, dark brown, red, or tan are derived from paprika, cocoa, tomato paste or cinnamon, respectively. Colorful textures arising from vanilla bean speckles or the pointille design from a coarse-crushed spice mix are also visually appealing.

“With the Sartori Line, the hand-rubbed items separate themselves visually,” adds Merckx. “The full wheels are meticulously hand-labeled and when merchandised in the cheese cooler, can draw consumers over to the set. Using the in-cooler merchandising materials — giving a brief outline of what the cheese is and the awards it has won is also very beneficial. We also provide these products in exact weight, precut pieces for shops that do not do their own cut and wrap.”

Handling Tips

Some say the care of rubbed-rind cheeses is no different than other cheeses, others cite a characteristic messiness that requires special handling. Beehive’s Ford goes right down the middle and recommends specialized care on a product-by-product basis. “Care is similar to most other cheeses, but some of the rubs will promote the growth of a white mold,” he says. “Retailers should try to cut an amount that they can sell through in a week or so.”

It’s very easy to splotch the paste with glove-prints from powdery rubs in stores with a cutting program. But is this deleterious to the presentation? “We don’t see that as an issue,” states Cook. “We feel people will understand it will be messy that way, and it will happen when the customer gets it home, anyway.” For retailers concerned about this, he offers, “If you care about it, then you will take the time to scrape it off.”

Fastidious retailers should put down paper on the cutting surface and then discard it, so as not to comingle flavorings with other cheeses. Also, using a clean knife or wire goes a long way toward preventing the flavorings from getting pushed or dragged through the paste.

As rubbed rinds entice new customers to the world of specialty cheese, cheesemakers continue to explore what’s possible. To this end, Cook exclaims, “We’ve had great success and are looking to do more in the future!” **DB**



Embracing an International Perspective



By
Jeffrey Spear
President

STUDIO SPEAR
JACKSONVILLE
BEACH, FL

When was the last time you performed an audit of your product offerings and compared that list to the latest in consumer trends and preferences? It doesn't take perfect vision to realize there's tremendous demand for new, exciting, flavor-forward and exotic gastronomic experiences. If you're willing to act, this translates into a wonderful opportunity to further engage with your existing customers and win over new ones.

The obvious proof is in the surge of ethnic restaurants opening up all over the country. The culinary landscape that was, not too long ago, dotted with basic food options such as diners, burger joints and the occasional Chinese restaurant is now crammed with a diversity of ethnic choices from all over the world. There's also the glut of nationally televised, food-oriented programs and a significant number of people engaging in international travel with culinary agendas.

What's important is that, once consumers experience and embrace new culinary options, most notably in restaurants or on vacation, they'll seek ways to repeat their encounter at home. This is obvious in the ever-expanding selection of shelf-stable products on the international foods shelves, and similarly, in the prepared-meal section of the frozen food aisle. Similarly, a growing number of salad bars and prepared-meal departments offer a veritable United Nations of foods.

This being said, I find it curious that deli departments are still limiting their offerings at the service counter to a relatively narrow range of meat and cheese selections.

Sure, consumers prefer beef, ham and turkey. And when it comes to cheese, American, Swiss, Jack and Cheddar still rule. While all this will influence inventory choices, it remains surprising the most international of product offerings at the deli counter are focused on Italian-style dry-cured meats. From a cheese perspective, the assortment fails to adventure very far from U.S. borders.

When you consider that just about every culture on the planet has its ethnic interpretation of these food-stuffs, each embracing distinctive ingredients, production methodologies, flavors and texture profiles, the opportunity to include something new and exciting in the deli department is huge.

And while buying a diversity of single-branded SKUs from one distributor or producer may make the day-to-day logistics, inventory management and merchandising a

much simpler affair, the practice overlooks growing consumer interests and demands for new and more engaging food choices and experiences.

Fortunately, deli managers have plenty of resources at their disposal to help them identify and improve upon the variety and quality of products they include in their meat and cheese cases.

To start, numerous annual trade shows in the United

States prominently feature meat and cheese offerings from all over the world. These include the Fancy Food Show, National Restaurant Show and Dairy-Deli-Bake show. Assuming you can find time to attend them, you'll encounter producers with an amazing variety of spice, flavor and texture profiles as well as other complementary foodstuffs such as condiments, packaged sal-

ads, crackers and flatbreads that would make wonderful additions to your refrigerator case or open display.

Should adding SKUs prove too cumbersome or contractually prohibitive, you can always bring international flavor to the deli counter with single-origin food celebrations. These events would feature the products you regularly stock with a focus on one ethnic point of origin. Considering the abundance of Italian products in the deli department as well as other parts of the store, implementing a "Taste of Italy" event would not be that difficult. And with an estimated 196 countries on the planet, retailers could easily implement a different ethnic promotion every month for the next 16 years!

As part of these offerings, you could prepare special recipes, tastings, demonstrations and, if your store is licensed, wine and/or craft beer pairings. If you'd like to attract media attention, you could invite accomplished chefs from neighborhood ethnic restaurants to facilitate the demos and tastings. You may also be able to partner with neighboring culinary shops, travel agencies and bookstores in the area, creating cross-promotions for cookware, cookbooks and travel adventures.

The bottom line is that, while it's easy to maintain the status quo and offer one line of products day after day, consumers are not that complacent. Food retailers cannot afford to sit idle, especially in an economy that's seeing lots of operators losing touch, failing to maintain relevancy with shoppers and going out of business. The more you work at engaging with your customers, offering fresh, new and exciting offerings and delivering emotionally engaging and memorable experiences, the more they'll enjoy shopping at, and remain loyal to, your store. **DB**

While it's easy to maintain the status quo and offer one line of products day after day, consumers are not that complacent.

Blast From The Past



Vermont Butter and Cheese Creamery

ermont Butter and Cheese Creamery, Websterville, VT, began life in the small milk house pictured here. When Bob Reese approached Allison Hooper in 1984 about making fresh Chèvre for a Vermont Department of Agriculture dinner, it set in motion what would become one of East Coast's most respected artisan cheese operations. Although butter has been part of the company name since its inception, it was not until the late '90s when they moved into a larger facility that they were able to get a butter churn. The milk house was too small to accommodate one. The company now makes over a dozen cow's milk and goat's milk cheeses and butters.



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