

**DELI** BUSINESS  
MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

DEC./JAN. 2014 \$14.95

# Specialty Cheese Guide

## ALSO INSIDE

UPSCALING WITH OLIVES  
YEAR ROUND ENTERTAINING  
THE HISPANIC MELTING POT  
RIBS & WINGS  
HEALTHY SNACK ATTACK





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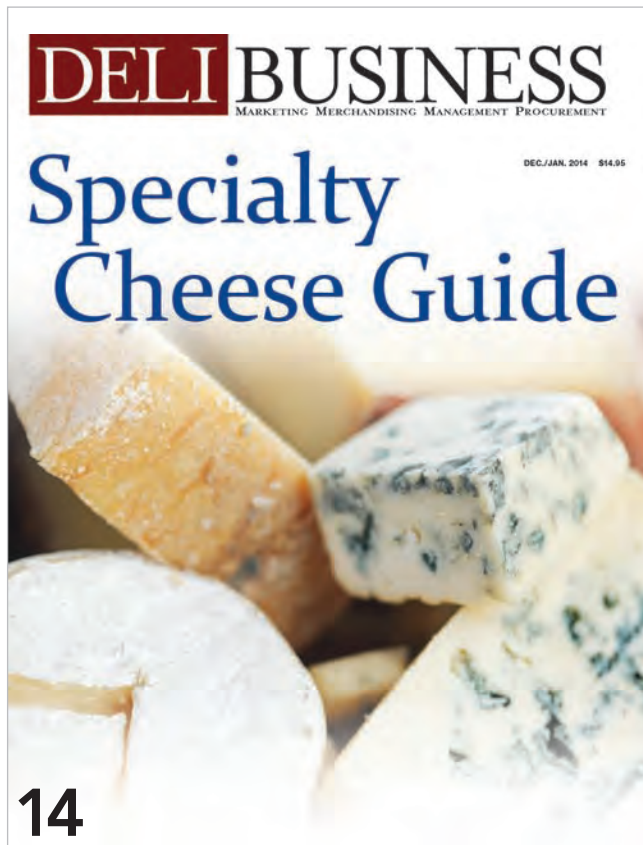
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## UNDERSTANDING GENERATION NEXT



Read about the most important topic for long term planning in this proprietary research project prepared exclusively for Deli Business.

The Millennial generation is growing up and presenting new opportunities for delis. The Culinary Visions Panel and Y-Pulse (ypulse.org) collaborated to conduct a survey with over 1,000 consumers to better understand how consumers in different age groups and life stages approach food choices and the factors that drive their purchase decisions. The focus of the study was on snacking behavior because younger consumers in particular eat more small meals or snacks throughout the day rather than traditional meals favored by their parents and grandparents.

The Millennial generation includes consumers 19 to 36 years old today, and there is real value to understanding the varied lifestyles within this group.

## COMING NEXT ISSUE IN FEB./MAR. 2014

### COVER STORY

Understanding GMOs and their relationship to the deli department

### DELI MEATS

Roast Beef  
BBQ Deli

### FEATURE STORIES

Consumer Research  
Asian Foods

### CHEESES

Mozzarella  
Grana Padano

### MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Packaging  
Food Bars  
Soups

### PREPARED FOODS

Pizza

### COMING IN APRIL./MAY.

It's the Annual IDDBA Dairy-Deli-Bake Seminar & Expo 2014 Planning Guide. Read all about what's coming up at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver, CO, June 1-3. It's never too early to start preparing to make this year's show of shows the best business decision of your life.

### SUBSCRIPTION & READER SERVICE INFO

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## Announcements



### SPREAD RECEIVES AWARD

FoodMatch Inc., New York, NY, has announced its Dalmatia Fig Spread has been awarded Bon Appétit magazine's Seal of Approval as a top 25 must-have food product for the 2013 holiday season. The selection process included a blind taste test that judged on taste, flavor, consistency, value and usability. Dalmatia figs are hand-picked, sun-dried to a golden color and prepared into an all-natural and fat-free spread. An ideal cheese condiment, the spread also is used as a sandwich topper, meat glaze, and ingredient.

[www.foodmatch.com](http://www.foodmatch.com)



### UNIBAKE CONSOLIDATES BRANDS

Lantmännen Unibake USA, Lisle, IL, has announced changes from a global, strategic restructuring effort in the first quarter of 2014. A streamlining of the Lantmännen Unibake brand structure will bring all pastries, including a new, improved croissant, under the Schulstad Bakery Solutions brand as the Pastridor brand name for the croissants is retired. All breads and rolls will continue under the Euro-Bake brand. The larger, flakier croissants will be produced using an enhanced proofing process.

[www.lantmannen-unibake.com](http://www.lantmannen-unibake.com)



### HEALTHCORPS TEAMS WITH TOUFAYAN

Toufayan Bakeries, Ridgefield, NJ, has partnered with HealthCorps, founded in 2003 by heart surgeon and Daytime Emmy Award-winning host Dr. Mehmet Oz and his wife Lisa to teach kids about the benefits of proper nutrition, exercise and mental resiliency. Toufayan and other healthier lunch options will be featured in multiple HealthCorps in-school and community activities, including its Teen Battle Chef competitions, annual Gala and two flagship "Highway to Health" health festivals in New York and Sacramento.

[www.toufayan.com](http://www.toufayan.com)



### SAPUTO KICKS OFF THREE PROMOS

Saputo Cheese USA, Lincolnshire, IL, recently kicked off three new consumer promotions for its lines, including Joan of Arc French Brie, King's Choice Danish and Dutch cheeses, and Lorraine premium sandwich cheeses brands of specialty cheeses. The new campaign was launched in tandem with the New Year's ball drop in Times Square. These brands also will be unveiling a series of new recipes on the websites that are custom-designed for easy entertaining.

[www.saputo.com](http://www.saputo.com)

## New Products



### HUMMUS LINE EXPANDS

Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Taunton, MA, has launched another new addition to its extensive flavor lineup, Extra Smooth Classic Hummus. To make Tribe's signature Classic flavor creamier than the original, the company employed its Lead Chickpea Innovator to add a touch more tahini and other secret ingredients to the hummus recipe. This new hummus version has a smoother texture than the company's original variety that facilitates use as a spread as well as a dip.

[www.tribehummus.com](http://www.tribehummus.com)



### CHEVRE LINE UNVEILED

Woolwich Dairy, Lancaster, WI, has introduced the Wholesome Goat Fresh Chevre line. Lower in sodium and fat and free of fillers and preservatives, the line comes in two varieties, including Plain 'N' Simple and Big Kick Herb & Garlic. Both are made with fresh goat's milk and blended to a light, soft and spreadable consistency. The chevre can be used as a dip or spread or ingredient in dressings and sauces.

[www.woolwichdairy.com](http://www.woolwichdairy.com)



### BRAND GETS AN UPDATE

The John Morrell Food Group, a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, Cincinnati, OH, has updated its Healthy Ones Deli line. The brand is debuting a new look that will include an updated logo, easy-to-read packaging graphics and fresh, new varieties of deli meat. One of the changes is a refreshed approach to Healthy Ones Deli packaging that includes a clean design, contemporary logo, and a focus on highlighting fresh ingredients.

[www.johnmorrellfoodgroup.com](http://www.johnmorrellfoodgroup.com)

## Transitions



### NEW VICE PRESIDENT

Kristyn Lawson, formerly of Yucatan Foods has joined Good Foods Group, LLC, Pleasant Prairie, WI. The company produces dip and salad items using High Pressure Processing (HPP) to protect the nutritious integrity of the product while naturally extending shelf life. The line includes items like guacamole, gourmet chicken salads and Greek yogurt dips that are available in a variety of sizes, including single serve.

[www.goodfoods.com](http://www.goodfoods.com)

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



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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# Sell The Deli Story

As we begin 2014, here is a resolution that could do a lot of deli departments good: Tell a story! Whether the assortment is vast or narrow, most deli operations today don't do a very good job of telling a culinary story. We all too often sell wonderful foods but as disjointed individual items to be appreciated or rejected as a consumer may choose.

That is not the consumer trend, though. Today, what is attracting consumer interest is issues such as where food comes from, what happens to it along its journey, how are the people who work the food treated, how are the animals we are eating treated, etc.

Today's delis also do not follow the culinary trends. For example, the sustainability movement and a desire to reduce waste has turned chefs on to "Nose-to-Tail" eating, in which every part of an animal gets used. The movement is even spreading to produce, where chefs are focused on what to do with the broccoli stalks when the florets have been cut off, or similar challenges.

It won't be hard for supermarket delis to play in this arena. Salinas, CA-based produce supplier Mann Packing started selling broccoli coleslaw to supermarket delis more than two decades ago. Others now sell similar products, but they are always marketed autonomously. The product stands alone, to succeed or fail based on taste or perhaps its health benefits. But which deli department has ever marketed broccoli coleslaw as part of a sustainable food movement where the world is a better place because the consumer makes choices that have consequences?

A modern deli/foodservice department is a pinnacle of western civilization that gathers incredible foods and flavors from all corners of the globe and brings them to communities all across the country. Yet we would submit that the marketing is of another era — a time when the opportunity for indulgence was viewed as a blessing. That is no longer the case. Perhaps it was the "great recession" that caused the shift — a longer and deeper recession than our country has ever sustained. Perhaps the internet has made clearer the impact of our actions and made it easier to know there are options.

Whatever the cause, if you talk to young people, they want variety, but they have other interests and they view themselves as actors in the great value struggles of our time. How they eat and what they eat does more than fill their bellies. Food consumption helps them leave an imprint on the planet; it helps them change the world. This, of course, means they feel differently about themselves depending on what choices they make.

This presents lots of opportunities. Companies can promote their own brands and products or arrange for retailers to promote their brands and products not merely as delicious but as contributors to a better planet. Yet the

issue also pertains to retailers themselves, for private-label product obviously but, also, for the retailer's policy on what branded product to procure and sell.

What values do the retailers reflect in their procurement? Are they willing to sell any product, or can consumers count on the fact that if they select their retailer carefully, the retailers will procure foods that reflect values in line with their own?

British retailers have engaged more deeply with this concept. Marks & Spencer puts it this way:

"M&S customers in particular want great tasting food they can trust, which has been ethically sourced and carefully produced. We have always aimed to source quality ingredients and we're proud of the relationships we have with our many dedicated producers and growers.

Being a 100% own brand label gives us a unique ability to control the quality of our food. We also have an unrivalled team of experts — Agronomists, Farmers, Chefs, Winemakers, Animal Welfare experts and even a Marine Technologist — to help source the best tasting foods which are produced to the highest standards. Our new range of specialty foods — from Smoked Wild Salmon from Alaska to Oisín Venison from the Finnebrogue estate and Greek Halkidiki olives from Mount Athos — all comes from people who truly care about their craft, whether it's our experts who source our food or producers who are passionate about the ingredients they use or grow."

Since it only sells its own lines of product, Marks & Spencer has an advantage. It can more easily monitor and control issues such as animal welfare and labor concerns. But it is not as much an advantage as you think. Marks & Spencer doesn't typically own the factories, butchers and whatnot that produce its products, so it still has to monitor private companies.

The difference is that Marks & Spencer has decided that there is a standard that shopping its stores should guarantee clients. This means it is not going to try to be everything to everybody — usually a good business move anyway — and it is going to try and not merely feed its customers calories, but feed their spirits as well and to help them not merely buy food that is delicious and nutritious but also food that they will be proud to consume.

If our customers think the same of us when they shop our stores, we will have achieved much in 2014. **DB**



*James J. Prevor*



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by Lee Smith, Publisher

# The Year of Prepared Food

**T**he economy is improving and housing prices rising. It looks like we may well be looking to a New Year that will bring relief from the recessionary economics of the last six or seven years. It's also time to look to the future and get away from the conservative doldrums that have plagued the supermarket industry the last few years.

If I could make one recommendation to anyone in charge of deli departments, it would be to concentrate on foodservice in 2014 and make your deli departments the epitome of fresh and convenient. Don't worry so much about being the cheapest guy in town. Your shoppers will spend a little more for fresh foods that aren't laden with additives, preservatives, artificial colors, trans-fats or corn syrup. Don't eliminate the macaroni and cheese and you don't have to add upscale ingredients like blackened shrimp to the recipe, but make sure it is really macaroni, cheese, milk, etc., and not loaded with artificial orange coloring and cheddar cheese powder. If you ask and are willing to pay the difference, your supplier will work with you.

If there is one area to concentrate on, make it chicken. Build your rotisserie program with additional flavors and appropriate side dishes. Add fried chicken, tenders and wings. Go out and visit the high volume club stores and check out their key products. You'll probably find chicken pot pie and an outstanding chicken salad. Chicken is the key protein to concentrate on. It adds volume and that means less shrink. It also makes money.

If your chicken program is outstanding or you want to take on another category of prepared foods, look at your sandwich program. Research is not as difficult as some people would like you to believe. Go visit the sandwich shop that won "Best Of" in your local newspaper. Go visit the shops your employees like to go to for sandwiches. The variety is endless — hot or cold, regional specialties and old favorites. Revamp your sandwich program to compete with your top competitor. Go for the gold because just being convenient doesn't cut it anymore. In fact, most supermarkets are no longer the convenient choice, so better you make it the best choice.

When it comes to sandwiches, be creative. Develop a few signature offerings. Try a contest with the winner getting his or her name on the sandwich and 100 free sandwiches, limited to two a week. Contact the local newspaper and work with the community. Take the same approach a good independent deli with great marketing sense would do. In other words, compete one-on-one.

When it comes to foodservice, no deli sub-department stands alone. There is nothing better than a hot, rotisserie chicken sandwich with sliced cheese, a special topping, lettuce and tomato or a crispy fried chicken sandwich with hot sauce, melted cheese and salsa. My varieties are just ideas, but the key is to spice up all prepared foods with new ideas.

Specialty cheese is the other really trendy, hot department for 2014, but we tend to think of specialty cheeses as stand-alone products even though good cheese is rarely eaten that way. Specialty cheese is also a favorite among younger, better-educated customers — a demographic that needs to be targeted and courted.

Look around and you will find that most cheese shops that started off just selling individual pieces of cheese have added a foodservice component. People want to try new cheeses, but there are only so many times per week someone wants to eat cheese with crackers.

A good cheese department should be offering individual cheese plates with condiments. Add specialty cheeses to your sandwich board, such as English Cheddar and chutney. In your cheese case, offer a selection of soups with a cheese focus, such as broccoli Cheddar with real shredded Cheddar or French onion soup with toasted croutons and shredded Emmentaler.

Then there is fondue. Thanks to the Melting Pot chain of restaurants, many consumers have been introduced to fondue and an old favorite has become new once more. When I worked in France, fondue was a dinner favorite. We always served it with a glass of wine, a fresh green salad with a homemade dressing and lots of crusty bread. Sometimes we had little French cornichons to go with it. But, it was the fondue itself that was the center.

One of the interns I was working with was from Switzerland and he would bring back bags of fondue mix of shredded cheese, flour and seasonings that we threw into the freezer. We would bring some wine to a slow boil, add the cheese and it was glorious fondue. Can you make this happen? How innovative can you become?

Strive to be convenient, fresh and creative. Stick to key areas, don't get lost in minutia and success will be yours in 2014.

DB







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# Specialty Cheese Guide



If you are the type of buyer who likes a creative challenge and using your knowledge of the industry and your customers, then specialty cheese is your type of food. It's a category that is as complex as wine, maybe more so because the cheese production areas around the world are much larger than the wine growing regions. The world's classic cheeses are as long in the tooth as the old historical wines and the cultural complexity is just as intense.

We have chosen three special articles as well as a few book selections that our editors think are great reads. Many people, including professionals, consumers, doctors and

health care providers, are unaware of the new research indicating the many health benefits of cheese consumption.

With spring approaching very rapidly, there is a wealth of seasonal cheeses and marketing opportunities awaiting retailers who understand the first cheeses of the year.

The third article is about the group of cheeses often called, "The Winklies." These are the cheeses with the geotrichum rinds that look a bit like creviced brains and are rapidly growing in popularity.

**DB**

BY LEE SMITH



# IT HAS TO BE BORN IN SWITZERLAND TO BE CALLED LE GRUYÈRE AOP\*

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# Healthy Cheese Benefits

BY SUSAN SHERIDAN



**C**heese is one of the most cherished foods on earth, but for many it is a guilty pleasure. However, the scientific evidence tells a very different story. Studies reveal that cheese has a multitude of health benefits, including protecting against cavities and cancer. Perhaps the best news for many of us is that cheese and other dairy products definitely have a place in diets as weight loss tools.

Fortunately, these benefits are starting to be better known, but there are still many consumers who think of cheese as fattening and a source of “empty” calories. Knowing the benefits of cheeses and sharing the news with customers will go a long way to ending the misconceptions of cheese as unhealthy.

## Preventing Tooth Decay, Tastefully

In a recent study conducted by the

Academy of General Dentistry and published in the May/June 2013 issue of *General Dentistry*, cheese significantly outperformed both milk and sugar-free yogurt in cavity-protective effects. Investigators divided 68 participants into three groups; the first group ate cheddar cheese, the second sugar-free yogurt and the third drank milk. Each group consumed their assigned dairy product for three minutes and then orally rinsed with water. Participants’ dental plaque pH levels were measured before food was taken and then again at 10 minutes, 20 minutes and 30 minutes after ingestion.

Investigators sought to determine if dairy promotes higher pH levels in the mouth, which correlate with a lower risk of cavities.

The milk group and the yogurt group showed no changes in their pH levels after eating, but the cheese group did. Rapid pH increases occur at all three





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time intervals, indicating that cheese had definite, measurable anti-cavity effects that remain active at least 30 minutes after consumption. The researchers commented that the rising pH levels in the cheese group may be due to increased saliva production that occurs naturally with chewing. They also suggest that cheese's outstanding performance in the study may have to do with the ability of various compounds in cheese to bind directly to tooth enamel, thereby creating a further defense barrier against enamel-destroying acidity.

### Cheese and Cancer Prevention: It's the Vitamin K2

Cheese should be on everyone's list of cancer-fighting foods, right along with broccoli and kale, according to Dr. William Li, president and medical director of the Angiogenesis Foundation. Angiogenesis is the process of blood vessel formation and growth in the body. What does cheese have to do with angiogenesis and why is it on Dr. Li's favorite foods list?

It's because cheese contains Vitamin K2, which has been shown to suppress blood vessel growth (or angiogenesis) in tumors. In effect, Vitamin K2 starves tumors of their blood supply, thereby hastening tumor death. In a major European dietary study by The European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC), those subjects who consumed the most cheese (at least 41 g or about one and one-half ounces) each day were found to have a significantly

reduced risk of dying from cancer during the study when compared with those who consumed the least amount of cheese (less than 14 g or one-half ounce) each day.

In addition, higher Vitamin K2 consumption from cheese has also been associated with significantly lower risks of lung cancer and prostate cancer. Cheeses from northern Europe, specifically Swiss, Emmental, Dutch Gouda and Jarlsberg, are particularly rich in Vitamin K2. A veritable workhorse of a vitamin, Vitamin K2 also promotes cardiovascular health and protects against osteoporosis.

### For Dieters: More Cheese, More Weight Loss?

Although the high fat content in dairy products has historically been linked to weight gain in the public's mind and among nutritionists, there is now cumulative evidence to challenge that perception. After a review of observational evidence, clinical trials and in-vitro studies, Marta Van Loan of the USDA Agriculture Research Service at the University of California concluded in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* that "the preponderance of scientific evidence supports the beneficial role of dairy foods in weight management." And she added that most studies indicate an inverse relationship between dairy

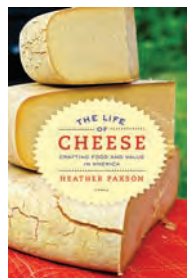


## Reading List



**CHEESE AND CULTURE:** A History of Cheese and its Place in Western Civilization. Paul Kindstedt. Embark on a journey that begins in the Neolithic Age and winds its way through the ensuing

centuries to the present. A useful lens through which to view our 21st century attitudes towards cheese and our attitudes about the food system more broadly. Chelsea Green Publishing. [www.chelseagreen.com](http://www.chelseagreen.com)



**THE LIFE OF CHEESE:** Crafting Food and Value in America (California Studies in Food and Culture). Heather Paxson. Cheese is alive, and alive with meaning. Dairy farmers and arti-

sans inhabit a world in which their colleagues and collaborators are a wild cast of characters, including plants, animals, microorganisms, family members, employees, and customers. University of California Press. [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu)



**MASTERING CHEESE:** Lessons for Connoisseurship from a Maître Fromager. Max McCalman and David Gibbons. Max McCalman, a frequent contributor to Cheese Connoisseur, shares his

expertise. Complete with helpful charts and an invaluable index of more than 300 cheeses, this is the definitive course you can use in your own home to pursue your passion for cheese. Clarkson Potter. [www.clarksonpotter.com](http://www.clarksonpotter.com)





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and body weight.

One study showing that "more dairy is better" was conducted at the Curtin University School of Public Health in Australia, where overweight subjects who consumed five servings of dairy a day lost more weight than those consuming three servings a day. All participants were on low-calorie diets. At the end of 12 weeks, the five-servings-a-day participants experienced not only higher mean levels of weight loss, but higher mean levels of fat mass loss, and—some really good news—a greater total percentage of abdominal fat loss.

Here, at last, is scientific corroboration of those maddening "French Paradox" statistics showing that, despite a per capita cheese consumption of 57 lbs., only 11 percent of the adult French population is considered obese. This compares to 33 lb. per capita cheese consumption in the U.S. where 34 percent of Americans are considered obese. Finally, there's the common-sense notion shared by all weight loss experts—and by anyone who has ever tried to lose weight—that satiety is key to successful dieting. And full-fat cheese, which contains protein and fat, is very satiating. As a result, eating full-fat cheese while dieting can mean less hunger between meals and may even contribute to smaller portions at mealtimes. **DB**







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# Preparing for Spring Seasonality

BY MAX MCCALMAN

There was a time when the cheese selections available in spring offered little to choose from or less than ideal quality. The dearth of top-quality cheeses at this time of year could be attributed to simple seasonality. Northern-hemisphere dairy animals would be well into their lactation cycles so excellent milk would be available for cheese making. Although a few fresh cheeses were made, and made quickly available, the cheeses requiring a little aging simply would not be ready.

A raw-milk cheese crafted in February would not be available until April at the earliest, due to the 60-day minimum aging requirements for raw-milk cheeses. Historically, February is more closely associated with birthing at dairy farms than with cheesemaking. That's not to



say cheesemaking grinds to a snail's pace in February, only that with a little less diversity in the pasture, the milk headed into cheesemaking might be a bit less flavorful.

Fortunately, today many fine cheeses, both raw and pasteurized varieties, are available in spring. For aged cheeses this is less of a problem: A cheese requiring six or more months aging usually has a long peak-ripeness phase, so cheeses could be produced in September or May, and either would likely be in great form. The vegetation would be relatively lush both months.

Fresh, young cheeses produced in late February and early March begin to come available a few days or weeks after they're made. The use of frozen curd to produce young cheeses outside their normal seasons may somehow sound wrong, but many fine such examples exist,

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especially goat varieties. After all, the demand for fresh, young cheeses is still present in late winter and early spring. It reminds me of the demand for fresh tomatoes in January. Advances in agriculture have stretched growing seasons, and this includes advances in dairying. Part of the expansion of seasons may be attributed to climate change but staggered lactation cycles and the increasing use of blended milk cheeses have given us more varieties to choose from in the spring than ever before.

One family of cheeses reliably available in spring is the alpage, aka alpine, variety. Cheeses crafted the previous year will have had enough aging to reach their optimal levels of ripeness; it's almost a guarantee some nice alpage cheeses will be available in spring, a better guarantee than in winter. I've often ordered more alpage cheeses in the spring than during any other season. They arrive in good form and should only improve in proper cellar conditions. Cheeses purchased in winter may be in top form if over a year old but many of them may be a bit young.



The younger alpine cheeses can be delicious but for most of them, their fuller flavors require more aging to develop.

Among the disappointing categories in spring are many of the sheep milk cheeses. Staggered lactation means milk is available to produce a pressed sheep cheese that will be four months old in spring, but the milk may not be nearly as rich as that

produced when the ewes have more fresh vegetation to eat.

Part of what influences spring cheese preferences is the aura associated with the season, the aura of freshness: fresh flowers and grasses, warming weather, and new beginnings. This makes fresh, young cheeses desirable. I still wait until late spring to select the fresh, young goat cheeses and younger sheep cheeses.

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I usually skip the aged, pressed sheep-milk cheeses; the thistle-rennet sheep cheeses you see are generally a bit long in the tooth. For the most part, this magnificent family is best left until later in the year.

### The Perfect Selection

Some enterprising cheesemakers are rising to the demand to produce cheeses outside their typical seasons. It's worth trying them because they can be quite lovely. I'll include any one of several cheeses from Vermont Butter and Cheese Creamery, on my early spring cheese plate; they taste as lovely at this time of year as they do in October. They may even seem to be a little more "appropriate" in spring than in the fall. The lovelies from Nettle Meadow are delicious year-round but they seem to be especially attractive in the spring.

Keep in mind that some of the aged cheeses reach their zeniths in the spring, even though the idea of a well-aged Gruyère or Comté may not fit your definition of "new beginnings." I find it hard to imagine any time of year when one of those splendid specimens would not find a spot on my plate. Blue cheeses, such

as Stilton, are often associated with winter. Yet Stiltons and most blues are just as delicious in spring as they are in winter. The dedicated blue cheese lover likely won't forgo a blue just because the jonquils are blooming outside the dining room window.

Part of what shapes cheese preferences any time of the year is what accompaniments are available. When most any fruit or vegetable can be acquired at any date on the calendar, this may be less relevant than it once was, unless, like me, you cling to the traditional seasons and buy fresh local produce. One fruit available in the early spring is an excellent accompaniment for many cheese types — the fresh strawberry. The image of a Triple Crème cheese — such as Brillat-Savarin or Chaource — accompanied by one plump strawberry and a glass of champagne is a romantic classic.

The idea of the one "perfect" cheese for the day, month, or season — has its merits but I've always wanted more varieties in my selection. Three is fine; nine is divine. To cover most of the basic categories of table cheeses, I don't see how you can settle for less. Instead of just offer one special, offer multiple cheeses that would the perfect cheese plate.

Try including a young goat cheese, a mixed-milk cheese (or two), a bloomy-rind cheese, a pressed sheep-milk cheese, a semi-soft washed-rind cheese, a milled cheese, an alpine style, a Gouda type, and a blue. There may be some crossover among these types but this selection of nine cheeses will cover quite a few bases. Many additional distinct cheese styles, such as pasta filata, flavored and smoked, are available in the spring.

This may sound like gluttony but the suggestion is to have a little bit of many cheese types. This is one of the great things about cheese: a little goes a long way. Some people express fear of eating too much cheese. Quite frankly, it's almost impossible to

overeat cheese. Cheese brings a feeling of satiety. Variety is more important than quantity, and variety will bring on satiation more quickly than eating just one cheese.

One reason to have an extra cheese or two in the spring is to start getting in shape for bathing suit season ahead. A diet that includes cheese on a daily basis has been shown to have its "thinning" effects and provides a little extra CLA (conjugated linoleic acid) to protect skin from increasing exposure to springtime sun. Different cheeses contain differing levels of nutrients. Some have a more zinc than others, while some may have more vitamin D. Some have a great deal of CLA, while others have very little.

Another driver of spring cheese success is elevated fat content in many types of milk. Cheeses crafted during winter when many animals spend more time indoors eating hay can be especially flavorful and satisfying. The wide diversity of plant species available during the warmer parts of the year contributes to bigger flavors, yet the relatively high fat content of winter milks gives those cheeses available in spring their own special appeal. This makes springtime a bit of a get-in-while-you-can time of year. Fans of those "plump" cheeses like Winnimere should know those cheeses' days are numbered in the spring. Enjoy them now, but be willing to wait until late fall for many of those styles to come around again.

DB





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# Wrinkly Cheese Wonders

Introduce this category with caution and glee

BY JANET EASTMAN

**W**rinkled, crinkled, rippled and convoluted — not words generally associated with cheese. But when the cheese is a “wrinkly” — one inoculated with *Geotrichum candidum* — these are exactly the words that pique cheese lovers’ appetites.

When *Geotrichum candidum* is set loose on cheese, it creates a bloomy surface that is not Brie smooth, but shriveled enough to resemble a wrinkly brain. As geo-rind cheeses get older, their sides droop, their thin rinds take on an earthy, piquant flavor, and the slightly sweet, slightly nutty, slightly tangy interiors become runny.

These are the qualities prized by the devoted fans of obscure, strange-looking wrinklies. Culinary judges bestow awards on wrinklies. Chefs chase them down at boutique creameries and fromage aficionados stalk them in specialty stores or hunt for them online. Now, with new packaging and special care and handling, these boutique cheeses are turning up in stores around the country.

Never heard of wrinkly-rind cheeses? That’s because they’re hard to make and even harder to ship. They continue to age until consumed and, if not properly taken care of, these little luxuries can dry out. Allison Hooper of Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery packs each of her small cake-, dome- or button-shaped wrinkled goat cheeses in individual, crate-like “micro-caves.”

Another well-known wrinkly is Italy’s luscious La Tur from Caseificio dell’ Alta Langa. This rich triple creme is a blend of pasteurized cow, goat and sheep milk from the wine- and truffle-rich region of Piemonte. La Tur is a small, creamy cheese with a bit of tang and a mushroomy aroma. Its straw-colored paste is soft and spreadable; when it ages, it can be quite runny.

France’s Crottin de Chavignol goat cheese may well be the most famous cheese from the Loire Valley. It’s been made in the village of Chavignol, near Sancerre — known for its wonderful

wines — since the 16th century. When it’s young, it’s creamy with a rustic, tangy taste; as it ages, it becomes meaty and intense with a strong barnyard aroma. Crottin de Chavignol is the classic choice to be served warm in a salad.

In Sonoma County, family-owned Redwood Hill Farm produces an artisan geo-rind cheese called California Crottin, which

has twice received the American Cheese Society’s top award for Best Farmstead Goat Cheese. Cheesemaker Jennifer Bice used Crottin de Chavignol as the inspiration for her American organic version. It has a fluffy texture and a robust, earthy flavor and, like its French progenitor, it becomes drier and harder as it ages.

Many of wrinklies’ appreciators think the cheeses are best eaten — fresh or slightly aged — on their own, or, in the best French bistro tradition, with a simple salad. For retailers, the majority are small format cheeses, so each cheese represents a single sale.

Wrinklies’ beautiful but strange appearance and almost off-the-radar status don’t daunt Hooper, a cheese pioneer credited with helping to introduce Americans to French-style butter and cheeses three decades ago.

She first wriggled her hands in curds when she was a college student spending a summer at a dairy in Brittany. She returned to the U.S. and in 1984, she and business partner Bob Reese started what is now known as the Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery (VBCC).

Back then, few Americans had tasted or even heard of goat cheese. Undeterred, Hooper and

her small crew made cheeses from fresh milk collected that day from local farmers. Slowly, her efforts were supported by chefs and well-traveled consumers. Today, it’s hard to imagine a restaurant that doesn’t have goat cheese on the menu.

Now, with an award-winning line of geo-rind cheeses, perhaps Hooper can do for wrinklies what she did for goat cheese: get more Americans to try it, love it, buy it.

“We’re in such a cheese frenzy now with this foodie population,” says Hooper.

**DB**





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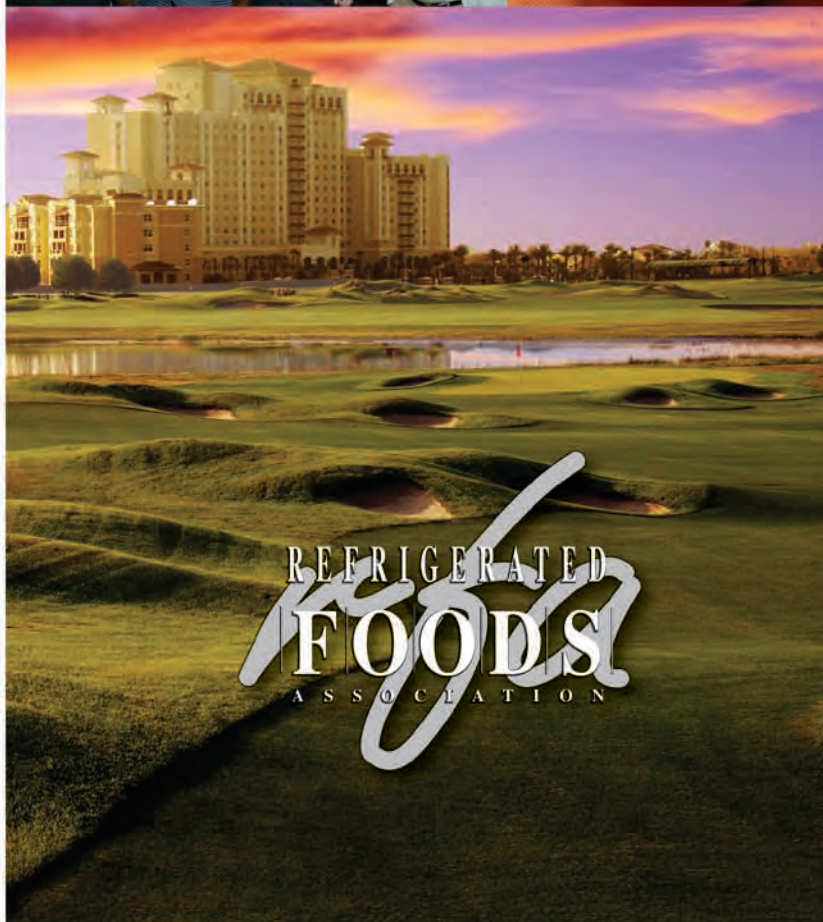
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# *Year Round Entertaining*

Party platters offer profit opportunities.

BY BOB JOHNSON



With more people entertaining at home and looking for affordable party food options, there is still a large untapped potential for supermarket deli platters. While most supermarket delis do a pretty good job of offering both grab-in-go and made-to-order party platters, it is year-round programs that can boost sales. In fact, a year-round program often helps boost seasonal sales because customers are aware of their

favorite store's offerings.

Consumers seek deli platters because they're convenient when feeding groups of people at social gatherings and social gatherings occur all year long, not just during the holidays. With high margins and added value, successful operators can add not just dollars but also gross profit margins by increasing entertaining sales. Offering some unique creations are also a way to test new concepts and flavors during a purchasing occasion that gravitates to new, fun food.

Deli platter sales totaled more than \$17.6 million in supermarket delis in the 52 weeks ending March 24, 2013, according to the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association's 2013 What's In Store report.

Although deli platters only encompassed 3.3 percent of deli prepared food sales in the 52 weeks ending March 30, 2013, this was a more than 4 percent increase from the year prior, according to Nielsen's Perishables Group FreshFacts report.

Unique platters can make a deli more of a



destination for party throwers, yet the tried and true foods are still the biggest sellers.

More than 50 percent of deli platter sales come from meat and cheese or sandwich platters, according to Nielsen's Perishable Group's FreshFacts report. Meat and cheese make up 39 percent of these sales, while sandwiches encompass 13 percent. While percentages give a statistical look at what's selling, remember that statistics are a reflection of what was available and not necessarily what will sell if offered.

### Positioning the Platters

According to Dave Brandow, director of sales and marketing, corporate foodservice and export at Piller's Sausages, located in Ontario, Canada, "Deli departments can capture sales by providing options for consumers, and if this can be achieved in grab-and-go formats — even better."

With consumers' more sophisticated palates, deli departments can take platters one step further by incorporating gourmet and high-end products.

"One example would be a charcuterie plate," Brandow says. "With the evolution of shared plates/platters for as little as two or three people, delis can include a variety of sliced charcuterie products on a tray with some olives or Asiago cheese and provide an



all-in-one-packaged food adventure that can be promptly served and shared by family or guests.

Taking the traditional and making it healthier is another way to increase sales. Healthier breads and crackers have become a selling point for platters and manufacturers offer a wide range of options for deli departments.

"We have a 100 percent whole-grain, all-natural and baked cocktail bread that can be

used instead of crackers. People are looking for healthier options — that trend still holds — and we're 100 percent whole grain," says Mike Di Cristo, national sales manager at Rubschlager Baking Corp., based in Chicago, IL. "One of our core products is cocktail bread. It's been incorporated into deli platters and it is a great carrier for cheeses, meats or spreads. Smoked salmon with cream cheese is a great fourth quarter entertainment item and it is perfect on cocktail bread."

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Di Cristo also sees an increasing demand for gluten-free products as a part of deli platters. Deli departments should offer the options of gluten-free, low-salt and low-fat as part of a custom platter program.

"Retailers need to know the demographics in each of their marketing areas and provide the high-quality, value-added platters that meet the consumer demand," says Jim Pierson, head of retail and private label programs at Pocino Foods, headquartered in City of Industry, CA.

Because regional preferences extend to every prepared foods category, the specific products to emphasize in platters can be determined by demographics. For example, in some areas vegan or vegetarian entertaining options are very popular. Ethnic varieties also add another dimension. Italian may mean one thing in a non-Italian neighborhood, while authentic imported Italian products may be the right approach, regardless of price in other neighborhoods.

Proper marketing and merchandising are keys for successful entertaining programs, since even the finest platter imaginable must still be presented and



sold effectively. This includes point-of-sale material such as appealing photos in addition to detailed information about custom

platter programs.

Customers are used to being on-line and posting pictures of everything from their new puppy to the hamburger they ate for lunch. Using pictures to promote entertaining options is a must in today's marketing savvy media market.

Megan Havrda, eco advisory board chairwoman and senior national accounts executive at Be Green Packaging, based in Santa Barbara, CA, says, "Signage and customer outreach go a long way in building customer loyalty, especially when customers are waiting for service in metropolitan areas and have time to read signs and consider the content."

Ordering information, platter sizes and the number of people each platter will feed should be easily accessible to customers. Having pre-made platters readily available also is a must.

During the holidays or for occasions such as the Super Bowl, appropriate signage can further enhance sales by providing targeted entertainment and catering ideas. Provolone goal posts or a football shaped cheese dip is appropriate for Super Bowl, but ridiculous for Easter. Be festive, be fun and create in-store excitement.

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## Presenting the Platter

To ramp up platter programs, supermarket delis can incorporate the latest trends in food items, broadening the appeal. For example, by substituting tortillas for traditional breads, the platters become healthier, while also capitalizing on the popularity of sandwich wraps. By creating attractive displays of fanned tortillas, meats and cheeses, this option provides both eye and stomach appeal.

The popularity of ethnic foods provides the potential for creative platters that feature items like Middle Eastern hummus and pitas; Mexican quesadillas and tamales; or Asian pot stickers and satays.

The more widespread appeal of appetizers and small plates also provides endless opportunities for unique party platters. Foods like Buffalo wings, sliders (small hamburgers), mini Reubens and other finger food are just a few options that can help create a deli department destination for large gatherings.

## Appropriate Platter Packaging

Platter packaging is as important as merchandising and signage, since it will help market and position the product.

In recent years, catering packaging has become more high-end and more consumers are becoming cognizant not only of the look but also of value-added and environmentally-friendly packaging options. Ideally, platter packaging will be cost efficient and sustainable, and still be reusable. This is where function trumps form, especially where reheating foods is concerned.

The growing consumer interest in natural foods extends to an interest in packaging that is easy on the environment. "Platters are very important in differentiating the deli. Consumers across the country are turning away from foam and requesting packaging alternatives at their local grocery stores and delis," says Havrda. "At an Earth Day event in Santa Barbara, I spoke with a gentleman who was outraged that Trader Joe's is packaging organic veggies on foam. This translates to deli settings, as well. Why would someone want to eat an organic chicken cutlet with farm fresh veggies off of a foam tray? It makes no sense, and more and more consumers are getting educated not only about the health issues related to foam but also the disposal issues related to foam and other oil-based packaging."

Be Green emphasizes packaging that is safe for both the environment and the food. "Our fiber trays are freezer-, microwave- and SGS lab-tested-safe for the oven. We did this because food-to-go often ends up in one of those three places, and we owe it to our customers' customers to make sure our packaging will perform well.

How many foam and petroleum-based packaging manufacturers are concerned about what happens to their packaging in the microwave and oven? Even if they emboss on the packaging 'not for oven or microwave use', people do it anyway and put themselves and/or their food at risk. Good health in this country is as much about consumer education as it is business ethics," Havrda says.

Easy transport is a packaging issue that is important for consumers taking food home and then to a party. Handles and a secure

lid are conveniences that will go a long way.

Decorative features, such as embossed lids with brands or store logos, not only are eye appealing, but also offer marketing opportunities for retailers. If the packaging is reusable, the brand message will remain for longer periods.

If positioned correctly, party platters provide retailers with added profit opportunities and a way to get creative with prepared food programs. It's a win-win for deli departments and the customers. **DB**



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# Upscaling With Olives

When positioned correctly with the proper accoutrements, olive bars can provide supermarket delis with a discernible edge.

BY LISA WHITE

*T*here was a time when the olive selection at the supermarket was limited to a select few canned and jarred black and green varieties.

With the advent of more sophisticated palates, gourmet offerings and ethnic fare, this fruit has made its way to the forefront of an increasing number of deli departments.

Today, the ubiquitous olive serves as both a cultural staple and a gourmet specialty in supermarkets.

"People now know more about olives, and the retail offerings have completely changed," says Alice Toomanian, vice president of operations at Sun Valley, CA-based Nicola International Inc.

The United States purchased \$150.5 million of prepared olives in 2012, a 10 percent decrease from the year before, according to the USDA's Ag Marketing Resource Center. Spain, Greece and Morocco accounted for approximately 75 percent of prepared olive imports, while fresh olive imports from Mexico totaled nearly \$7.1 million.

California is currently the only U.S. state to commercially produce olives, with 50 percent processed for canning and 46 percent pressed into olive oil, according to the Ag Marketing Resource Center.

Olive bars, which have become the main vehicle for a variety of imported types, have helped expand the demographic for these products.

"The olive bar continues to extend its reach beyond just one type of consumer," says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at George DeLallo Co., based in Mt. Pleasant, PA. "Snacking is a new occasion that is popular in all grocery departments — the olive bar is no exception."



PHOTO COURTESY OF DELALLO



### What's Selling

There was a time when the majority of consumers purchased olives in jars or cans. With olive bars, people have more of a choice and can mix and match varieties. This format also provides greater eye appeal, which is enhanced by the varying colors and sizes of olives. The freshness aspect also is appealing to more discriminating consumers.

Yet, the trends in fresh olives have been impacted by production problems where some varieties are concerned.

"Mediterranean Greek olives, mainly Kalamata, are having problems with imports," says Toomanian. "Last year, we imported 140,000 tons and this year only 40,000 tons came in during the same time period due to weather issues."

As a result of this shortage, olive prices have increased for authentic Kalamatas. Fortunately, consumers of these products typically are not price conscious. This hole in the market is expected to be filled by other countries exporting cheaper Kalamata-style olives, including South America and Egypt. These Greek olive substitutes have impacted sales of authentic olive lines in the past.

"We had a situation like this years ago, so it will be interesting to see what happens this

time around," says Toomanian. "Kalamata-style olives have become more popular in the last six years."

Although the appearance and taste of these substitutes are different than the original, they are commonly sliced and chopped for use as an ingredient or added to tapenades and pastes. In addition to Kalamata olives, stuffed green olives remain popular, including those with sun-dried tomato, blue cheese and feta.

The Olive Branch, a division of Farm Ridge Foods in Com-mack, NY, has seen emerging varieties of this fruit. The company has recently introduced Caribbean Black, Tropical Blend, Hot Latin Medley and Classic Moroccan Citrus olive lines.

"The heat is on when it comes to driving the emerging olive varieties," says Patty Amato, Farm Ridge Foods' director of sales.

The company also has launched Mediterranean Pickle Spears in Balsamic Brine and Greek Style Cucumber Salad Pickle Chips, both geared for olive bar displays.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEL'ALLO

While a variety of salads and medleys are offered within olive bars, antipasti that include cheeses have seen a spike in popularity.

"Our most popular antipasti, Greek Feta Salad and Provoloni Antipasti, feature savory cheeses along with complementary olives and herbs," says Pozzuto.

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## Marketing & Merchandising

The healthful attributes of olives have been one of the main focuses of marketing campaigns and promotions. Olives are not only a good source of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory phytonutrients, but also are touted as a good source of monounsaturated fat, iron, copper and dietary fiber.

In terms of merchandising, there are staple varieties that should be fixtures in all olive bars. These include Kalamata, Greek black,

green, Moroccan and stuffed olives. These displays should include a variety of larger-sized and soft types. Red, green and black Italian olives, such as Cerignola, also should be included in the mix. In addition, smaller French olives, like Nicoise, Nyon and Picholine, which are available in green and black varieties, are popular additions.

Olive bars have become fixtures at a number of supermarket chains across the country, including Wegman's on the East

## OLIVE VARIETIES

**B**elow are some of the more common olive types utilized in supermarket deli department olive bars, including the countries of origin and different characteristics.

- **Arbequinas:** *Originating from Spain, this is small with a crisp texture and slightly bitter taste.*
- **Beldi:** *Originating from Morocco, this small, fruity-tasting olive is commonly used in mixes.*
- **Bitetto:** *Originating from Southern Italy, this olive has a sweet taste.*
- **Cerignola:** *Originating from Italy, these large, green olives are commonly stuffed.*
- **Gaeta:** *Originating from Italy, this black olive is cured with dry salt, then doused with oil and packed with herbs.*
- **Kalamata:** *Originating from Greece, these purple olives are cured in a red wine vinegar brine and have a salty, rich flavor.*
- **Lugano:** *Originating from Italy, this black olive is extremely salty.*
- **Manzanilla:** *Originating from Spain, this green olive can be stuffed or unpitted and is cured in lye.*
- **Nicoise:** *Originating from France, this black olive is small with a nutty flavor.*
- **Nyon:** *Originating from southern France, this small black olive is dry-cured, packed in olive oil and has a salty, bitter flavor.*
- **Picholine:** *Originating from France, this green olive is salt-brine cured and has a less salty flavor than Kalamata.*
- **Ponentine:** *Originating from Italy, this black olive is cured with a salt brine and packed in vinegar.*
- **Sevillano:** *Originating from California, this salt-brine cured olive has a crisp texture.*

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Coast, which offers a Mediterranean olive bar with a wide selection of varieties.

Manufacturers have centered many of their efforts and promotions on olives and olive-based products to provide added visibility for these products.

Tasty Trios, a new promotion from The Olive Branch, is designed to drive sales and educate consumers. Each quarter, the company will feature a trio of theme-related olive products from around the world and provide various merchandising materials to retailers.

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# The Hispanic Melting Pot



Variety leads to successful growth.

BY MARGARET CLAYTON

**W**hile Italian dishes are the most popular of the ethnic culinary fares and Chinese is the second most popular, Mexican cuisine is in third place and it is a firm favorite with Americans across the country. Burritos, nachos and even taco salads are much loved for their spicy kick to the taste buds, for the liberal use of cheese and

for its ability to still even the biggest hunger pangs with consumers. But as US demographics change, it's worth noting that Mexican foods are only a part of the more flavorful, variety filled and rapidly growing Hispanic grouping.

In fact, "Mexican" dishes served almost everywhere in the US have been transformed and adapted from what would be considered traditional Mexican fare. The US

versions are almost unrecognizable to Mexicans, as our local dishes incorporate the Americans love of, and heavy dependency on, melted cheese and sour cream. We call our burritos, tacos, enchiladas, quesadillas, fajitas, nachos and chimichangas Mexican food, but to be completely honest and correct, these dishes should be classified as Tex-Mex or Southwestern cuisine.

Even in US cities that don't claim a signif-



icant Hispanic population such as Seattle, WA, or Detroit, MI, (6.6 percent and 6.8 percent respectively), Tex-Mex sells well. Overall, Hispanics make up a total of 16.7 percent (52 Million) of the US population according to the 2010 US Census. Based on these census figures, Hispanics are now the largest minority group in 191 out of 366 metropolitan areas in the US and the projected Hispanic population of the United States for July 1, 2050 will be 132.8 million people, or 30.2 percent of the nation's total projected population by that date.

But Hispanic food isn't Tex-Mex tacos or Southwest Chili. Hispanic cuisine is a multi-faceted, multi-cultural classification which depends on a variety of produce and products in yet to be discovered ways by the non-Hispanic consumer, and by even some Hispanic consumers as well. With so much to recommend Hispanic cuisine, the diversity of flavors and dishes, its influence is certainly poised to continue to grow exponentially in retail stores across the country as consumers embrace its fresh, flavorful and authentic tastes and take Hispanic cuisine from an ethnic specialty to mainstream.

#### A melting pot

Some delis have already adopted many



Hispanic inspired dishes into its offerings and a wider public, not just Hispanics, is consuming them with interest and increasing frequency. Cuban sandwiches, with their pork, ham and melted cheese; salsas, that become an ingredient rather than just a snack to be dipped with tortillas; saffron rice and black beans; the addition of mango to complement meat or fish; empanadas, those convenient little hand held pockets of seasoned meat;

tapenade and even tortilla crusted fish all find their inspiration from traditional Hispanic tables.

Convenience always drives the consumer at the deli and expanding offerings with a Hispanic twist can drive sales. Some ideas from Puerto Rico that will find favor are pasteles, a much loved specialty of green bananas stuffed with ground beef and root vegetables, or asopao, a gumbo like soup made with either chicken or shell fish that is claimed as a national delicacy by both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans alike.

Other ideas from Cuba are slices of roast pork shoulder or loin with cumin, garlic and orange juice marinade, or steak rubbed with cumin, paprika and chili powder called adobo. Seasoned rice and beans is the traditional and perfect accompaniment. Black beans are preferred by Cubans, southern Mexican and Central Americans, while pinto beans are favored by Northern Mexican, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans.

Salvadorians have brought their love of chilles rellenos, peppers that are stuffed with ground beef, cilantro, cumin and other spices before roasting, and their fried plantains to our tables. Other ideas already being adopted from Hispanic tables are paella from Spain, tamales and empanadas from Guatemala, passion fruit sauce from Colum-







bia and coconut milk and fish stew from Honduras.

### Is it healthy?

There's a rumor that Hispanic food isn't healthy and the Tex-Mex, Americanized take on Spanish inspired dishes is likely to blame. The reality is that Hispanics have the longest life expectancy, nearly three years longer than non-Hispanic people in the US, according to a 2008 study by the US Department of Health and Human Services. While many influences affect the statistics, there are a lot of healthy reasons and ingredients to woo health conscious consumers with Hispanic themed dishes.

The Ecuadorian Hispanics include avocados in almost every dish. Avocados, which are now being touted as "nature's butter," are loved by all for their creamy consistency and for their 100 percent natural health properties. Another excellent and healthy super food that consumers are embracing in droves is quinoa (pronounced Keen-wa). This low-fat and high protein whole grain comes to us from Peru and is a firm favorite with consumers looking for vegetarian options.

One supplier, Cibao Meat Products, producer of a variety of Hispanic flavored

salamis and sausages, has found very favorable response to its new line of Don Filo chicken and turkey based products to meet the growing demand for healthier options. According to Edgar Soto, VP of Sales and Marketing for Cibao, the big box stores have at last recognized the Hispanic market and are placing significant orders in most major regions of the US.

But Soto is also buoyant about his on-line sales from individual consumers all across the country. He attributes these orders to the "flow of the population" and the increasing trend in intermarriage of Hispanics with Hispanics of a different culture. "They have similar lifestyles and foods, but each brings their favorite tastes and dishes to a new family and this leads to an expansion of Cibao's sales," Soto says. His next goal is to expand business west of the Mississippi from the company's Brooklyn based hub, after recently solidifying growth in the Southeast.

### Lines are blurring

While the Mexican Hispanic population is concentrated in the Southwest (Texas, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah) and on the West Coast (California) of the US, the Southeast and Plains

States are home to significant Cuban populations, especially in Florida. But populations are on the move these days and US census figures now show that Mexican, Dominican and Puerto Rican Hispanic populations have also been rising in the Southeast since the 1990's.

In the Northeast, significant Hispanic populations can be found in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. These populations are mainly Dominican and Puerto Rican Hispanics. South American Hispanics also tend to be settled on the East Coast, while Central Americans gravitate toward the West Coast. It's worth noting that a recent trend in population shows many Mexicans moving to Miami and Philadelphia.

While expansion and movement in the US Hispanic population will drive influences and changes in deli offerings, adoption and adaption of a wide variety of Hispanic dishes will find a much larger consumer base and bring a new zest to prepared options for every table.

While deli buyers are wise to understand the specific cultural influences in individual regions, the smart buyer will introduce bold, clean and nutritional Hispanic foods to all the customers.

**DB**



# A Profitable Foodservice Option

Ribs and wings programs offer unique profit centers for delis looking to capture more foodservice dollars

BY LISA WHITE

**W**ith a growing number of consumers seeking meal solutions at supermarkets, an increasing number of delis are emphasizing their profitable ribs and wings programs. When implemented properly with products geared toward the store's demographics and merchandised appealingly to promote impulse sales, these programs provide added opportunity for retailers' foodservice revenue.

"Consumers today are searching for restaurant-quality products that are a value compared with restaurant prices. This can easily be achieved by focusing on the type of products offered in the deli," says Eric Le Blanc, senior director of marketing, foodservice retail solutions, Tyson Foods, Inc.,



Springdale, AR.

Ribs and wings can be offered cold in the grab-and-go section or service deli case or hot and ready to eat as part of a deli's foodservice program. "For delis that provide hot service or hot grab-and-go programs, wings that are fried on site and then sauced are the best way to achieve restaurant quality," he adds. "For programs that focus on cold sales,

a fully-cooked glazed wing works best."

Because shoppers seek out rib and wing products, some deli areas will be more effective in reaching a store's consumers than others. Regardless of the merchandising site, retailers need to focus on product appearance, communicating restaurant quality and food safety, Le Blanc says.

Tyson's wings and ribs lines include ready-





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to-cook products for on-site preparation and fully cooked items that can be prepared in deli kitchens or sold cold without additional preparation. "The key to offering a quality program is understanding who the deli's shopper is and what is important to them," says T FuQua, brand manager at Tyson Foods.

Tyson has identified two shopper segments. "Habit shoppers" value predictability. Consequently, they will adopt and retain a pattern, seeking out favorite products, such as barbecue or Buffalo flavors. "What appeals to these shoppers is a consistent product offering that is always merchandised in the same location," FuQua says. If the items they seek are not available, these shoppers will leave the deli without making another purchase.

On the flip side, "promotional experimenters" include shoppers that are very responsive to in-store messaging and gravitate to any new news in a category. "Limited-time offers, value promotions and innovative product packaging or tie-ins will bring these shoppers to the ribs and wings category," he explains.

Although understanding these shopper dynamics helps identify what drives consumer decisions, consumer attitudinal and behavioral understanding is just as critical. FuQua says the primary user segments for wings are "sensible short cutters" and "out-and-about fuelers." One segment chooses the wing category primarily on the functional qualities of the food, and the other focuses on the social occasion around the food. "The same product mix can service both consumers, but the messaging will be different for each group," FuQua explains. Although it's possible to appeal to both types of consumers, it takes some creativity.

#### Components To A Successful Program

Along with identifying a store's demographic, the keys to a successful ribs and wings program are quality and selection. "When we look at the deli, the consumers skew toward mainstream products," according to Le Blanc.

Signature programs, including limited-time offers, help drive impulse sales in this category, while increasing sales of core items. Tyson recommends retailers start with a core line of six of its items: breaded bone-in wings, Buffalo bone-in and boneless wings, barbecue bone-in and boneless wings and barbecue ribs. "After this initial product offering, we recommend expansion of the program through limited-time offerings, which can be a new flavor or item to meet a specific customer need," FuQua says.

Delis need to be aware that successful rib



and wing flavor profiles are less risky than what is available in restaurants.

Although the more traditional flavors, including honey, lemon, chipotle, Dijon and mesquite are still popular, other varieties, such as Thai, jerk and garlic, are emerging.

It's important to recognize that each region of the country has a different taste preference when it comes to barbecue sauce. "Everyone has their own idea of what barbecue sauce should taste like," says Keith Wilcox, director of cooked meats for Edina, MN-based Curly's Foods, a division of John Morrell, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Smithfield Foods. Generally speaking, the Carolinians like vinegar-based sauces, Georgians prefer a mustard base and those in the Midwest favor sweeter barbecue sauce. Sauces need to lend themselves to the region, while still offering a great taste.

Ford's Food, based in Raleigh, NC, is seeing the popularity of half-gallon size barbecue sauce increase because it's easier to handle than the full gallon. The company offers original, hot, thick regular and thick hot sauce varieties, in addition to seasonings and dry rubs. "Supermarket delis need to decide how much room they can dedicate to ribs and wings programs. It should be dependent on the store's foot traffic," says Pat Ford, co-owner. He recommends

## Tips For A Successful Ribs And Wings Program

- Start small to gauge interest from shoppers.
- Focus on product appearance, quality and food safety.
- Understand the demographic before choosing the product lineup.
- Decide whether to offer hot, cold,

grab-and-go and/or takeout programs.

- Merchandise from outside in, using store circulars, signage and customized material.
- Demo product so customers can sample what's available.

retailers start small and not overbuy.

Equipment manufacturers provide a number of options for retailers' ribs and wings programs.

This includes convection ovens with and without smoking capabilities. Retailers should be aware that different oven models provide different results. For example, electric ovens will provide a chewier rib, while smoke and steam units result in a more tender rib meat. Units with automatic hold options allow busy delis more flexibility when servicing customers.

### Positioning Products to Sell

"The focus needs to be on the products, merchandising, price structure and promotional/awareness programs. So many retailers focus on the food rather than the messaging," says LeBlanc.

Focusing on the message is just as important as the preparation of the food. Ribs and wings must be appropriately priced for the demographic. Also, consumers must be made aware of the meal deals and limited time offers in such a way that these are difficult to pass up.

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# Healthy Snack Attack

The popularity of unique, transportable and healthy snacks is on the rise.

BY BOB JOHNSON

**A** newly-emerging deli opportunity exists for snacks — those grab-and-go items that can be conveniently eaten between meals. “Data that will be published in IDDBA’s What’s in Store 2014 indicates that snacks make up just under 4 percent of the deli prepared foods category—more than 2 percent of total deli department sales. Compared to the previous year, however, it marks a 23.4 percent increase,” says Alan Hiebert, senior education coordinator at the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association, based in Madison, WI.

## Healthy Convenience

Snacks are the latest category reaping rewards from the mega trend toward healthier eating. The market is expanding for deli snack items that offer nutritious between-meal alternatives. Additional interest in ethnic snack food items also is on the rise.

“The total snack category may be growing, but hummus snack use is booming. As people become more familiar with hummus, they see more uses. We see it growing rapidly, as people who understand hummus are starting to use it as a snack,” says Ken Kunze, chief marketing officer at Sabra Dipping Co., located in New York, NY.

Transportable packaging and pairing combinations also have given the category a bigger boost in recent years.

Over the last five years, Sabra has expanded its snack category offerings to

include 2-ounce containers of hummus in four or 16 packs, and a grab-and-go combo of 3.5-ounces of hummus and 1.5-ounces of pretzels. The company also recently introduced a salsa and Tostitos grab-and-go combination.

Hummus is an example of a deli snack food that is on trend. It’s healthy, low in calories, affordable and high in fiber with a robust taste profile. And it is a vegetarian product for the I-want-to-eat-less-meat crowd.

Eating smaller portions more frequently also looks to be a growing trend because of the apparent health benefits of small meals.

“Research shows that eating more, smaller meals throughout the day — particularly early in the day — can be more healthful than eating two or three larger meals,” Hiebert says.

Low-calorie, high-protein grab-and-go snack items look to be the next big thing.

“We offer chilled, healthy, grab-and-go products. We had a 20 to 30 percent increase this year,” says Jason Carroll, president of Lifestyle Foods, headquartered in Breil, PA. “We are going to introduce two new products in the next month, because of the success of our current grab-and-go products.”

Carroll believes the essentials in quality healthy snacks are calorie count, nutritional ingredients, price point and presentation. Packaging is important because consumers are first drawn to how a product looks on the shelf. And, packaging gives the opportunity

to tell the story. “We put the calories right on top [of the package], and we do the same if it’s a vegetarian-friendly product.”

Healthy can be a relative term, but luckily for the deli, the nutritional competition in the snack category is potato chips and candy bars. As a result, there is an opportunity for delis to capitalize on growing interest in healthier, more nutritious snack options.

Van Holten’s, located in Waterloo, WI, recently introduced snack-sized dill pickle popcorn to complement its pickle in a pouch line. Van Holten’s has been a national pickle supplier for years. “We’ve had the very successful Original Pickle In a Pouch [a single-serve pickle], and we just introduced dill pickle popcorn. They are both junk food alternatives. They are better for you than a candy bar or a potato chip,” says Steve Byrnes, president of Van Holten’s.

Adding protein to snack items is another growing trend and, since most deli items are refrigerated fresh products, the deli department is the natural place to introduce new products to consumers.

Many of the new, healthier snack options include significant amounts of protein, like Lifestyle Foods’ two newest products Buffalo Snack with grilled chicken, celery, whole-wheat oyster crackers and reduced-fat buffalo ranch sauce; and Aloha Snack with pineapple, dried fruit mix, whole wheat thin crackers and turkey ham cubes.

“We came up with these after listening to our customers and what [consumers]





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thought were the voids in the products being offered,” Lifestyle’s Carroll says.

Other producers agree that protein is now a vital part of the snack category.

### Proper Positioning & Merchandising

For convenience, snacks must be both portable and at least modestly stable after processing.

“Three characteristics we have noted in popular snack items are portability, modest but satisfying portion size and added nutritive value gained by adding protein. Stefano has recently launched Pepperoni and Applewood Bacon Rolls. The product has sliced meat rolled up in moist chewy pizza dough,” says Alan Hamer, vice president for sales and marketing at Stefano Foods, located in Charlotte, NC.

“A challenge for the deli and other perishable products departments is the portability, or lack of portability, of many of their products. The shelf lives of many products have increased thanks to today’s technology, but many consumers are still reluctant to let a cup of chef salad sit in their cars for very long in the summer, IDDBA’s Hiebert says. “When it comes to snacking in the office, many people have access to refrigerators, so the deli department can be a more attractive option. As for people who work outside,

snacks pretty much have to fit into a pocket. Energy shots and packaged foods that can stand a bit of abuse seem to be the preferred choices.”

Since snacks are usually spur-of-the-moment buys, visible displays located in high-traffic areas can ramp up sales.

“When it comes to snack foods, it’s all about impulse. If you’re in line waiting for your number to come up for the sliced cheese and you see pickles on display, it’s easy to pick one up. It’s primarily convenience; people are trying to make life easier. It’s easy to add on a snack if it’s right there. The best place [for impulse sales] is going to be on the perimeter of the store, especially in the deli,” Byrnes says.

Fast food chains have done their part to drive the deli snack category by enlarging their own variety of offerings.

“The category is most certainly expanding. Retailers are taking their clues from the significant expansion of product and marketing by the quick-service restaurant industry,” Hamer says.



“What’s in Store 2014, published in September, 2013, also reports that new products falling into the snack category have been growing steadily for the past three years or so. As people look to eat between traditional meal occasions, they need to find something that fits into their other activities, like driving, sitting at their desks, or even physical labor,” Hiebert says. “For driving, there are many products, from candy and nuts to cheese and crackers that can fit into a car’s cup holder.”

Delis that become destinations for healthier snack options that are easily transportable and mess-free can profit from this segment and its unlimited potential. **DB**

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# Blast From The Past

# A

## Over 800 Years of Tradition

As of December 21, 2013, the Wensleydale Creamery, based at Hawes in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, has been successful in achieving Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status from the European Commission for its Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese. Achieving PGI status will ensure no other cheese-maker outside the designated area can produce a cheese and call it Yorkshire Wensleydale.

The Wensleydale Creamery at Hawes is the home of Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese. It uses traditional methods to handcraft cheese to time-honored recipes, using milk from local farms as well as being innovative with the development of new recipes.

The Wensleydale Creamery achieved Protected Geographical Indication for its core product, Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese. The PGI status differentiates Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese from other Wensleydale cheeses produced in other counties. No other cheesemaker outside the designated area can produce a cheese and call it Yorkshire Wensleydale.

It was thanks to a management buyout in 1992, following the closure of the creamery, that cheese-making in Wensleydale was reborn. Owned by Wensleydale Dairy Products Ltd, the business now employs over 200 people across two manufacturing sites. The business supplies a broad range of customers including major multiple retailers, exporters, wholesalers and the food service sector.

Wensleydale Cheese has a historic pedigree with it first being made in the Dale in 1150 by Cistercian monks.

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



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Atlanta Foods International .....	19	Cheese .....	404-688-1315
BD&K Foods .....	44	Sides .....	334-728-0020
Beemster .....	21	Dutch Cheese .....	908-372-6024
BelGioioso Cheese, Inc. ....	17	Cheese .....	877-863-2123
Castella Imports .....	31	Sandwich Toppers .....	866-CASTELLA
Cheeses of France/Sopexa USA .....	25	Cheese .....	212-386-7446
Conroy Foods .....	7	Condiments .....	412-781-1446
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European Union .....	5	Cheese & Prosciutto .....	
Farm Ridge Foods, LLC .....	45	Pickles .....	631-343-7070
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Interprofession du Gruyere .....	15	Cheese .....	41-26-921-8410
Mifroma .....	20	Swiss Cheese .....	239-498-0626
Piller Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd. ....	36	Deli Meats .....	800-265-2628
Refrigerated Foods Association .....	29	Refrigerated Foods Organization .....	770-303-9905
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Sartori Food Corporation .....	51	Cheese .....	800-558-5888
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