

## The Advantages of GOING GREEN



### ALSO INSIDE

HUMMUS  
CHARCUTERIE  
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HOLIDAY MEAT GUIDE

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## The Advantages of **GOING GREEN**



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DELI BUSINESS IS PUBLISHED BY  
PHOENIX MEDIA NETWORK, INC.  
P.O. BOX 810425,  
BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0425  
PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610  
www.delibusiness.com  
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**PUBLICATION AGREEMENT NO. 40047928**

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business  
media**  
The Association of Business Information Companies



# Uniekaas Sells Facilities To Doc Dairy Partners

Uniekaas B.V., Purchase, NY, has completed the sale of its aging, packaging and cut and wrap facilities in Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands to the Germany-based DOC Dairy Partners B.V., the largest Dairy Cooperative in Germany. As part of the sale, Uniekaas B.V. will now be called Best Cheese Global Inc. (BCG) and will have focus in Europe, Asia and North America. BCG will feature its Parrano brand Italian-style cheese, Tjezi Brand dairy snacks for children, Melkbus crafted farmstead cheeses, Vintage Gouda, The Hollandse line of cheeses, Coach Farm goat cheese and other specific specialty cheeses. In addition, the Uniekaas brand name will remain with Best Cheese USA for a period of two years. Best Cheese Corp. will remain a U.S. subsidiary of Best Cheese Global. They will continue to focus on sourcing award-winning cheeses from Holland and producing award-winning goat cheeses at Coach Farm.



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## COMING NEXT IN DEC/JAN ISSUE

### COVER STORY

Retail Trends

### DELI MEATS

Organic

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### PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

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DELI BUSINESS will be taking a look at Italian Foods

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Photo from: Visit Huntington Beach

## TRANSITION ..... ANNOUNCEMENTS



### WMMB HIRES DIGITAL CONTENT MANAGER

The Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Madison, WI, has named Ben Kroepin as its digital content manager. He has more than a decade of experience in marketing, communications and broadcast journalism, including reporting for Wisconsin-based WQOW and producing and anchoring for KIEM-TV in Eureka, CA. In his new role, Kroepin will develop strategies for the organization's digital marketing campaigns, including acting as lead in the development and production of its new Wisconsin to Table recipe video series.

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



### TRIBE RELAUNCHES HUMMUS LINE

Boston-based Tribe has relaunched its hummus product portfolio with no artificial preservatives. The removal was a decision influenced by consumer research showing clean, recognizable ingredients to be a top purchase driver within the hummus category. Its new packaging features simplified illustrations and a collaboration of color. In addition, the labels reflect enhanced positioning of important product attributes. The hummus has no artificial preservatives or GMO ingredients and is gluten free.

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



### NEW PERDUE PROMO

Perdue, Salisbury, MD, has introduced a fourth-generation of family advertising spokespersons in new national TV ads promoting its USDA-certified organic chicken. Chris and Ryan Perdue join their father Jim, chairman and long-time advertising spokesperson, in two new commercials for its Harvestland line. Company founder Arthur W. Perdue appeared in TV spots with his son Frank, Jim's father. The new ads are shot on a farm raising organic chickens and comically capture generational differences between Jim and his sons.

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



### SCHUMAN CHEESE CEO HONORED

Schuman Cheese, Fairfield, NJ, has announced that its CEO Neal Schuman has received the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year 2017 Award in the Family Business category. The award recognizes entrepreneurs who are excelling in innovation, financial performance and personal commitment to their businesses and communities. The award was presented at a recent gala event hosted by Emmy Award-winning broadcaster, author and syndicated columnist, Steve Adubato, Ph.D.

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



### ANCHOR PLANT HIGH HYGIENE CERTIFIED

Anchor Packaging, Inc., St. Louis, has earned "High Hygiene" certification from NSF International for the BRC (British Retail Consortium) Global Standard for Packaging. BRC is the preeminent food safety standard, created to promote consistency across the supply chain by ensuring delivery of safe food to consumers. The NSF Certificate of Conformity for BRC Packaging-High Hygiene is awarded following annual audits of Anchor Packaging's rigid container manufacturing facilities in Paragould and Jonesboro, AR.

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



### MURRAY'S CHEESE EARNS ACS HONORS

Murray's Cheese, New York City, took home three honors at the American Cheese Society Conference. Greensward, developed with Jasper Hill Farm, Greensboro, VT, was recognized for the second straight year as the #1 Soft-Ripened Washed Rind Cheese in America. Also returning as a winner was Hudson Flower, recognized as the #1 flavored sheep's milk cheese. Project X, a collaboration with Vermont's Spring Brook Farm, took home a #3 honor in the Aged Washed Rind Cheese category, its first ACS recognition.

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



### ZINGERMAN'S CREAMERY WINS AT ACS

Zingerman's Creamery, Ann Arbor, MI, has announced its Manchester was honored with a second place award in the Soft-Ripened Cheese category at the 2017 American Cheese Society competition. The annual event, which takes place in conjunction with the ACS Annual Conference, had more than 2,000 entries from 281 companies this year. This is the eighth award that Zingerman's Creamery has won at the ACS competition.

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



### LITEHOUSE RECEIVES ACS TOP HONORS

Litehouse Inc., Sandpoint, ID, has received top honors for two of its Simply Artisan Reserve products at the 2017 American Cheese Society (ACS) competition. The Litehouse team won first place for its Simply Artisan Reserve True Gorgonzola and second place for its Simply Artisan Reserve Rindless Blue Cheese category. Litehouse has held the top spot in the ACS Competition category for three years running.

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

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## NEW PRODUCTS



### REDUCED SODIUM BUTTERS

Finlandia, Parsippany, NJ, has introduced two new premium spreadable butters. The Spreadable Butter with Canola Oil and Spreadable Butter with Canola Oil 25 percent Reduced Fat contain more than 55 percent less sodium than other brands, while still offering full flavor. Crafted with pure, wholesome milk from family-owned farms in Finland, the butter contains only four ingredients — butter, canola oil, water and milk minerals or ValSa, a patented milk mineral salt and ingredient in lowering salt intake in butter. [www.finlandiachese.com](http://www.finlandiachese.com)



### A TASTE OF ITALY

Kayco, Bayonne, NJ, has introduced Tuscanini Parchment Crackers. The paper-thin treats are imported from the island of Sardinia, off the sunny Italian coast. The crackers are baked, not fried, to be an ideal swap for flatbread, chips or calorie-heavy snack crackers. Olive oil, olive oil with rosemary, and olive oil with oregano are GMO free and made from an authentic Italian recipe using time-honored techniques.

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



### PILLOW BAGS DEBUT

Saputo Cheese USA Inc., Lincolnshire, IL, has launched Stella Parmesan and 3-Cheese Blend Italian Pillow Bags. The three new 8-ounce pillow bags are available in Shredded Parmesan, Shaved Parmesan and a 3-Cheese Blend of shredded Asiago, Parmesan and Romano cheeses. Stella Parmesan is aged more than 10 months for a slightly nutty flavor and hard, granular texture, while the 3-Cheese Blend combines the flavors of Asiago, Parmesan and Romano.

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



### CHEESE HAS NEW LOOK

Emmi Roth, Fitchburg, WI, has introduced a new look for its Roth brand of specialty cheese. The new labels are designed to help consumers navigate the cheese case and learn more ways to incorporate cheese into everyday cooking and entertaining. Each cheese's label features usage suggestions for consumers, such as "Add to a sandwich" or "Melt over nachos"; pairing ideas, like "Pairs well with lager or fruit" as well as tasting notes like "Mild & Buttery" or "Spicy & Creamy."

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



### AN ORGANIC INTRODUCTION

Les Trois Petits Cochons, New York City, has launched a new line of organic pâté and mousse varieties. The new products are Organic Pâté aux Pommes et Cidre (Organic Chicken Pâté with Apples and Cider), Organic Pâté de Campagne (Organic Country Pork Pâté) and Organic Mousse aux Cèpes (Organic Chicken Liver, Pork & Wild Mushroom Mousse).

[www.3pigs.com](http://www.3pigs.com)



### CONTAINERS ARE MICROWAVABLE

Placon, Madison, WI, has introduced HomeFresh Entrée microwavable plastic containers for hot and cold food presentation. Constructed of polypropylene, modular stacking features allow the products to double stack and inter stack together. The line is sized to fit into standard small and large carryout bags. Deep snap grooves allow the lids to close securely with an audible snap, while still opening easily. Additionally, the containers are reusable and recyclable. Sizes from 8 to 32 ounces are available with a variety of lid options.

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



### NEW FLAVORS DEBUT

TH Foods Inc., Loves Park, IL, has introduced new flavors for its Crunchmaster and Harvest Stone lines. The Crunchmaster brand now offers Protein Snack Crackers and the Tuscan Peasant Cracker. Multi-Seed Artisan Cheesy Garlic Bread, Multi-Seed Signature Buttermilk Ranch and Dill, and Multi-Grain Applewood Smoked Barbeque flavors also have been added. Crunchmaster's 2017 seasonal product is a Pumpkin Harvest cracker in Savory Pumpkin. The Harvest Stone line now offers Sprouted Hummus and Sprouted Native Grains Crackers.

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



### A PREMIUM OFFERING

Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA, has unveiled Noodle & Rice Bowls for retail and foodservice. Made with wholesome ingredients, like chicken raised without antibiotics, and meeting dietary benchmarks like high-in-protein, vegan and gluten-free, the new rice and noodle bowls come ready-to-heat with separately packaged and shelf stable noodles that are easily added to the broth. Varieties include Chicken Ramen Bowl, Hibachi Chicken & Rice Bowl, Coconut Chicken & Noodle Bowl and Asian-Inspired Vegetable & Rice Bowl.

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

# Millennials Fuel Sit-down Meals At Supermarkets



By  
**Jim Prevora**  
Editor-in-Chief

If you can't beat them, join them — what else is there to derive from Kroger's announcement that it will open its first restaurant, Kitchen 1883 — named after the year Kroger was launched by Barney Kroger — and that Hy-Vee would become the largest franchisee of Wahlburgers, the chain developed by actor Mark Wahlberg and his family. These announcements follow the blossoming of the trend toward the so-called "Grocerant" — combining grocery and restaurants.

Eater, the Vox Media-owned website devoted mostly to dining trends and restaurant openings in major cities, recently ran a piece titled, "The Rise of the Grocerant" and subtitled, "How the local supermarket became your new favorite restaurant." The piece opened with important insight:

*While sitting in the food hall section of New York City's newest Whole Foods location, Natasha Beylis points out that most of the other people eating lunch in the packed space don't have shopping bags. Like her, many have come to the supermarket solely to dine in.*

The article points out data that is confirming this interesting trend:

*Revenue for prepared foodservice at supermarkets grew an average of 10 percent a year from 2005 to 2015, according to Technomic Inc., a research and consulting firm. And when dining out, **more consumers are choosing their local grocery stores over traditional fast food and restaurants**, the firm showed.*

Of course, prepared foods and in-store foodservice are nothing new. These have been around for decades, but now these foodservice offerings are the actual draw.

It is not grocery shoppers sitting down for a bite; it is the foodservice option drawing consumers to the venue, and those consumers often leave without shopping at all. As the article continues:

*Essentially, the grab-and-go salad bars and prepared foods counters are evolving and **looking more like fast-casual restaurant spaces**, designed to keep shoppers in the store. Some offer massive food court seating areas with booths and dark, cozy atmospheres, while others feature enclosed full-service spaces.*

*They often include free Wi-Fi, bars, host stations, even menus for made-to-order meals. They are designed to encourage customers to linger, as a restaurant or comfortable coffee shop might. And this is what consumers will likely see more and more in their local markets.*

The piece goes on to explain that, although some of this is high end urban fair — Mario Batali's and Lidia Bastianich's Eataly is a prime example — this movement is not solely an upscale phenomenon.

*But for people in less congested communities, the grocerant experience has **become more of the norm** and isn't as stuffy. The Midwest-based Hy-Vee grocery chain has incorporated Hy-Vee Grille, a full-service restaurant, into dozens of its locations since 2012.*

The driver seems to be changing consumer expectations:

*This trend is largely driven by millennials, experts say. Forty years ago, baby boomers purchased food from grocery stores. Today, those places are competing with farmers markets, apps, home delivery, websites, and other options. Still, the concept of a "retail meal" is nothing new. Malls and department stores like Macy's have had food courts for years. Then there is IKEA and its famous meatballs and cafeteria. Either in spite of or because of this progression, millennials have developed higher expectations for prepared foods at supermarkets.*

According to a recent Technomic survey, 52 percent of respondents said they see prepared foods as healthier alternatives to fast food. Meanwhile, a study by the NPD Group, which researches consumer behavior, showed that consumers rate prepared food higher in freshness and quality, turning to standard quick-service for affordability and convenience.

Although a local spin on many of these concepts is *de rigueur*, there is one unifying concept:

*While specific experiences may differ at grocerants, one thing most of them do have in common is booze. **Alcohol plays a major role** in the grocerant concept...*

*But happy hours, chef partnerships, and food courts might be just the beginning of the grocerant takeover. Supermarkets like Whole Foods are pushing the boundaries to keep communities and young shoppers engaged with their brands. And competition between grocery chains will only drive more experimentation.*

The supermarket deli has evolved from a vendor of sliced meats and cheeses into a vendor of prepared foods and in-store eating service for store customers to a concept that is expected to draw consumers and build the brand while building the bottom line. **DB**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "James F. Prevora".



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# The Greatest Cheese Festival on Earth



By  
**Lee Smith**  
*Publisher*

**C**heese festivals are popping up all over the United States. Widely attended, they are not only fun and delicious, but millions of people are being re-introduced to the wonders of local agriculture. For some small farmers, getting into cheesemaking is a way to keep the family farm alive and prosperous for generations to come. Festivals just spread the joy.

Which brings me to the largest and greatest cheese festival — CHEESE! This event is held every other year in the Northwest corner of Italy's Piemonte, called Bra. In the cheese world, the festival is often referred to simply as Bra. Located just south of Turin, it is usually a quiet, quaint, commuter city. Winding cobblestone streets, clay-tiled roofs with small shops and great food, Bra is the lit-

**Raw milk cheeses are gaining in importance, as scientists and doctors realize that eating highly processed and virtually sterile food negatively impacts long-term health.**

tle-known city that people dream of living in. With its low cost of living and tremendous food and wine, it is where Slow Foods originated and is now its headquarters.

During the Bra festival, the streets are closed to all but human traffic, and restaurants are open late. The town is filled with tents offering artisan cheese made by talented cheesemakers from around the world for attendees to taste and buy. Of course, most vendors are Italian, but there are others from various countries.

The American importer/distributor GFI is under the big top, along with some of the finest

cheesemakers in the United States. And it is not just cheese. Makers of jams, honey, vinegars, biscuits and crackers, as well as booths selling local specialties, abound. Everything is for sale.

To give an idea of the size, more than 150,000 consumers, buyers, importers, distributors and journalists attended. Although exact attendance numbers were not available at press time, it is growing every year. The next edition will be in 2019, and I highly recommend it to any cheese professional. You will be surprised at how many friends you will run into.

For those who didn't attend and who will not be able to go in the future, this is still a festival worth following because, in addition to vendors, there are seminars on just about every subject related to cheese, from scientific lectures on microbes and health benefits to transhumance, pairings, wines, organic farming, milk composition, climate considerations, etc.

Each Bra festival has a focus, and this year it was all about raw milk cheeses. Thus, all exhibitors' cheeses were made from raw milk. Many are allowed into the United States, but many others that are aged less than 60 days are not and are relatively unknown in this country.

Raw milk cheeses are gaining in importance, as scientists and doctors realize that eating highly processed and virtually sterile food negatively impacts long-term health. Food processors have battled to eliminate microbes from our food supply. Yet, scientists have only recently realized that humans are symbiotic organisms, and without our tiny living friends, we will not survive.

While nutritionals long declared fat as the enemy in combating obesity, the tide is changing, and science now knows fat is needed in our diets. Cheese is an excellent source of nutrition, protein and fat as well as micronutrients and beneficial microorganisms.

So let's celebrate cheese and, maybe next time, I'll see everyone at CHEESE! in Bra. **DB**

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Lee Smith.



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# The Advantages of GOING GREEN

## A look at how sustainability and earth-friendly measures are affecting the deli space

BY KEITH LORIA

**A**wareness of the conservation of the world's resources has grown exponentially in the last few decades and continues to pervade the thoughts and actions of people globally. As this mindfulness continues to increase, so will practices and methodologies to increase conservation throughout the business world.

"The deli industry must respond to consumers demanding greater transparency, simpler products with fewer artificial additives taking sustainable/ethical sourcing to the next level," says Tara Sands, fresh marketing promotions manager for KeHE Distributors, LLC, based in Naperville, IL. "Consumers, Millennials in particular, want to do their part to save the planet by purchasing items packaged with recycled materials and demanding ethically produced products from companies."

Monterrey/KeHE's Fresh Solution has made a strong commitment to be environmentally conscious and consistently executes on its sustainability goals with projects like energy-efficient LED lighting retrofits, Ecobee smart thermostats and a company-wide recycling and repurposing program, which includes soft plastic recovery.

When it comes to sustainability practices, Francis Plowman, cheese narrator and director of marketing for Rogue Creamery, headquartered in Central Point, OR, says the company takes the approach that it can make an impact within the company, industry, town, county and state. In fact, the company's owner/president David Gremmels, serves on the Oregon Sustainability Board, which encourages activities that best sustain, protect and enhance the environment, economy and community for the pres-





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ent and future benefit of Oregonians.

"We try to set the best example possible of a socially responsible and community-oriented business," says Plowman. "Our cheese is made using traditional environmentally friendly practices. Sustainable agriculture integrates three main goals — environmental health, animal welfare and social and economic equity. Stewardship of natural, environmental, herd and human resources is of prime importance in a sustainable organization."

Reducing plastic waste reduction, using more sustainable (compostable ware) materials, while balancing the needs of the grab-and-go Millennial generation, are just some of the ways in which companies dealing in the deli space can do their part to help.

Peggy Cross, CEO/founder of ecotensil, based in Corte Madera, CA, says its eco-friendly utensils replace plastic, which are used for a few minutes, then will languish in landfill and oceans likely through

the year 3000.

"EcoTasters use half the amount of material, are made from renewable resources and are fully compostable," she says. "We're focused on helping to reduce one-taste plastic waste at delis for in-store/sampling and demos, at farmers' markets, county fairs, and at other food sampling, tasting and eating events."

Rogue Creamery has pledged to be a zero-impact food producer by 2021 and has done a great deal to honor this commitment. It has achieved a 50 percent waste reduction over the last 10 years through its "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" program; provided more than 55 percent of its energy needs through solar installations and has two more solar projects in the planning stages; it recycles 100 percent of its whey; and uses no synthetic fertilizers or pesticides on the pastures at its dairy farm.

It also rewards employees if they can get to work using any mode of transportation that gets 50 mpg or more. Over half

of its team members are participants in the Nellie Green Pedal Power commuter program, which was created by the company in 2009 in partnership with a local brewing company. Members are offered a monthly incentive if they bike, walk, carpool, use public transportation or utilize a vehicle getting 50 mpg or greater commuting to work. With these transport modes, they must make 45 round trips during a one-year time period.

"We have inspired many other companies to develop their own bike commute programs by sharing our templates and contracts, which include Rogue Ales, Rogue Credit Union, Cowgirl Creamery and Vermont Creamery," says Plowman.

### Packaging Matters

Steve Olk, college category manager and U.S. rep for Planglow, headquartered in the UK, says that with reports of oil running out and estimates suggesting there are around 50 years left at current levels of usage, it is unsustainable in the long term.

"Plastics and other oil-based materials take decades, if not centuries (depending on the item), to break down in a landfill. Oil-based plastic packaging is widely used across all industries, and the deli industry is no different," he says. "For some products—such as imported goods and perishables—it is often the only option, but there are many areas where oil-based plastics can be avoided, and a growing number of alternatives are being brought to market to support a more earth-kind approach."

The company avoids oil-based plastics wherever it can, so packaging is made from entirely compostable, oil-free materials.

"Even our laminate film, which protects from leaks and seeps and forms the clear-viewing windows, is made from a compostable, plant-based film," says Olk. "The laminate is derived from renewable plants and is fully certified to the European (EN13432) and American (ASTM D6400) norms for compostable packaging by Vincotte, Din Certco and BPI as well as being certified for home composting."

Olk notes that paper or card board is widely used for packaging, labeling, POS and other display items and, while this can be a very eco-friendly choice, the paper stock needs to be sourced from sustainably-managed forests.

"As an organization, we have a policy of only sourcing paper-based products from sustainable and renewable plantations," he says. "We use PEFC (Programme for the





Endorsement of Forest Certification) certified paper or FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) stock, with which international non-governmental organizations ensure forests are managed environmentally, socially and economically.”

Cross says it will be beneficial to delis to let consumers know about their great green efforts via labeling and packaging and also things like signage for compost, landfill and recycle bins.

“There’s a halo effect when supermarket delis offer compostable utensils and other items,” she says. “We’re starting to see more labeling in the deli highlighting compostable, organic, non-GMO, gluten-free, etc. This shows the deli cares about their consumer/customer by providing what they are looking for.”

### Waste Not

Most food waste can be redirected from landfills, and many providers are taking action to do just that. Some of the most common and effective methods include monitoring portions and stock levels to avoid over producing or over purchasing; boxing up leftovers for customers to take away; repurposing peelings and off-cuts, where appropriate; and discounting stock close to expiring.

“Where food waste is unavoidable, we would recommend composting the scraps, along with our packaging and labeling post-use; the end-product may then be used to help grow more crops,” says Plangllow’s Olk. “Our packaging can also be shredded to speed up biodegradation and added to home composters.”

KeHE’s Sands notes that from a food distributor’s perspective, proper transport and storage are vital for decreasing the amount of food waste.

“If refrigerated items are delivered and then sit on a loading dock for eight hours, shelf life has been greatly reduced,” she says. “It is imperative that foods are in their proper temperature zone during every step of the supply chain.”

A perfect example of this in the deli department is cheese. Delivering the right assortment and amount of cheese for each particular store is vital. Also, recent innovations in packaging are dramatically increasing shelf life.

“Consider Bitchin’ Sauce, one of our favorite items,” says Sands. “This almond-based hummus manufacturer switched to an HPP (High Pressure Processing), [a cold pasteurization technique], improving

their shelf life and decreasing shrink or the chance of ending up in a landfill.”

Ecotensil’s Cross says there’s lots more compostable and sustainable materials available out there, and companies need to make sure this all goes through the complete cycle of composting.

“Composting is key in the deli space,” she says. “There needs to be involvement with the municipalities to promote composting within retail businesses. In the U.S.,

there is a positive, ever-growing awareness and concern about the incredible pace at which we are going through our limited resources. At this time, that movement of our culture in this direction is challenged by a convenience-based lifestyle.”

Cross believes continued education of consumers and companies is needed by business, government and non-governmental organizations to make people aware of the problems of excessive waste



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with the growing population and increasing consumption.

### Rise of Organics

Organic food sales have become a \$47 billion market, and organics increased more than 8 percent in 2016 compared to an increase of less than 1 percent for the overall food market.

Rogue Creamery became USDA Certified Organic in 2016 and understands that many of its retail customers, such as Whole Foods Markets, demand organic products.

"It was part of the plan for the future from the time David took over ownership of Rogue Creamery in 2002," says Plowman. "We have experienced double-digit growth at our company. Also, even though the organic market is approaching \$50 billion, it still only represents 5 percent of the total market, so there is great growth to come."

Consumers are looking for foods and beverages that deliver on both health and convenience, and there is a growing consumer perception that organic produce and

other fresh products are more wholesome and have reduced carbon footprints.

"The demand for organic foods in the U.S. has exceeded the output from U.S. organic farms for quite a while," says Sands. "Public demand will drive the process. More farms are becoming organic, thus aiding in the conservation of resources."

Growing awareness of health issues in society has certainly been a catalyst of organics going mainstream. Large chains like Walmart and Costco have also helped to make organic mainstream.

Generally speaking, there seems to be a

negative perception of GMOs and also a debate about the scientific consensus regarding the safety of GMOs.

### The GMO Debate

Some argue that GMOs don't have any impact, while others refuse to have anything to do with them.

"Our focus is on natural food, and GMOs, by definition, cannot be considered natural," says KeHE's Sands. "For us, it's simple — the customer wants non-GMO food. We respond with countless items that are non-GMO verified."

All cheese produced by Rogue Creamery is non-GMO and free of hormones and antibiotics.

"Oregon may be ahead of the curve in this area, as both of the Oregon counties—Josephine and Jackson, where we operate our dairy and cheese-making facilities—are legislated GMO free," Plowman says. "Customers are just beginning to understand what non-GMO means."

Ecotensil's Cross believes that the GMO movement is not so much that people want to outlaw GMOs, they just want



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labels so they can make the choice as to what they are putting into their bodies and the bodies of their children.

"This is similar to the earlier movement for labeling of organic produce and now organic ingredients," she says. "It's my understanding that people would just like to be informed about what's in their food and how it was grown, so labeling—organic, non-organic, GMO or non-GMO, gluten-free — makes sense for the consumer."

### The Local Movement

In all departments, deli included, customers want local because there are inherent feelings of trust and loyalty towards local companies.

"People like to keep dollars in the local economy, plus there is a perception that a local brand will be cleaner because you know where it came from," says Sands. "For the deli, local cheese means that the animals are locally raised and milked, and the cheese is produced locally; it's like buying the product directly from the farmer. It is interesting to note that the definition of 'local' varies between retailers. For one chain it might be regional, with border

states included; for another, it could be any farm within 400 miles."

As a manufacturer, it's part of Rogue Creamery's company mission to buy local. Plowman says this means that it tries to buy as many cheese ingredients as possible from local suppliers, such as feed from Grange Coop.

"We also use local service providers wherever possible," he says. "All our suppliers go through a rigorous evaluation to ensure that they are socially responsible and support local companies as we do."

# In all departments, deli included, customers want local because there are inherent feelings of trust and loyalty towards local companies.

Planglow's Olk says that most deli offerings are a mixture of local and imported produce and have been chosen precisely because they showcase the very best of home and away. A strong offering strikes a good balance between the two—what works best for the customer in terms of price points, demand and ethos.

Shifting to compostable goods in the deli is becoming easier and easier, but consumers must also do their part if they purchase take-out grab-and-go materials, which must be composted or recycled. **DB**

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# Dipping into Hummus' Promising Future

**A tantalizing spread with untapped potential**

BY MANDY ELLIS

**F**rom scarce to prevalent, hummus has transitioned from ethnic comfort food to widespread supermarket deli success. Although this humble recipe category had sales under \$100 million a decade ago, it's bumped up to a cool billion-dollar empire.

"Our research shows hummus is going to double in the next five years, and there are a lot of opportunities in the snacking department," says Sami Demnati, director of sales at Fontaine Santé Foods Inc., headquartered in Saint-Laurent, Quebec, Canada. "We're also seeing growth in non-chickpea hummus, like white and black bean, and the need to get a cleaner product to consumers."

With the hummus division not fully mature, Demnati says household pen-

etration hovers around only 30 to 35 percent. This provides a huge opportunity for expansion even beyond the 35 percent sales growth in dips and sauces that Chicago-based IRI's February 2016 Top Trends in Fresh: Prepared and Specialty Foods webinar reports.

"It's a food packed with protein, a great alternative to meat, and you can use it to make sandwiches, soup thickeners or a lot of things," says Michael Miscoe, CEO of Lilly's Hummus, based in Portland, OR. "Get a clean, good-for-you product that your customers will enjoy, and move away from preservative-laden varieties with unhealthy oils."

Executives in the supermarket deli who provide consumers with the hummus they're searching for, fresh and clean labels with different varieties that follow the bet-

ter-for-you trend, plus different packaging sizes and cross merchandising options will see a super smooth surge in sales.

## Honest Ingredients

"Consumers are more health-conscious and savvy shoppers nowadays more than ever before," says Jennifer Dixon, vice president of marketing at Salinas, CA-based Green Giant Fresh. "They're reading labels and educating themselves on ingredients, fat content, nutritional values and the antioxidant capacity of foods."

As the clean label trend sweeps over the hummus category, all-natural ingredient lists without preservatives, GMOs, artificial colors or flavors, or cholesterol are a must.

"If customers see a short, simpler list of ingredients that are pronounceable and





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recognizable, it's a synonym for a healthier product," says Demnati. "We're seeing retailers like Costco, Kroger, Walmart and Publix willing to unite with manufacturers for healthier, cleaner products and support them by offering shelf space."

### Shelf Life Considerations

Additional shelf space is always a plus, but what happens to shelf life when the ingredients become cleaner?

Fontaine Santé Foods' product lines' shelf life varies between 60 and 80 days, as the company doesn't use any additives or preservatives.

For Taunton, MA-based Tribe Mediterranean Foods, LLC, its new clean label is 60 days from point of manufacture, and Lilly's Hummus, made the old-fashioned way, stays fresh for up to 24 weeks, thanks to its recent effort to extend shelf life without adding anything unhealthy.

Prolonged shelf lives do garner more attention to the category, but clean label varieties typically have higher price tags. Yet consumers, particularly everyone's target market, Millennials, are willing to pay more for superior goods.

"Mothers are a big reason for our success, but Millennials are, too. Millennials spend more than the average person on food, and they care about what they're eating," says Miscoe. "They're willing to spend more money for a particular item than their older counterparts because they want to read the ingredients, identify with



blended and doesn't allow for eye-catching toppings. Demnati says this flaw opens up a large opportunity for companies to draw more consumers to the category with topped, organic hummus varieties.

At Baruvi Fresh, LLC, in New York City, vice president of sales, Brian Stuckelman, says the company has already created an organic, clean label, shelf-stable hummus called Hummustir. "There's nothing really

As shoppers look to experiment and embrace exotic foods, hummus has seen rapid growth, especially when it comes to new and innovative flavors.

### Factoring in Flavors

In addition to being used as a chip or veggie dip, hummus has now become a popular spread for grilled meats and a replacement for ketchup with fries and mayo when it comes to sandwiches. Because of the varied usage and combination with other supermarket deli selections, flavors have to keep up with consumers' desire for variety.

Roasted beet, horseradish, roasted pine nut, Sriracha, pickle and jalapeño are a few of the unique flavors on the rise, as are the unique pumpkin and chocolate. Also shifting from the traditional chickpea to a base of carrot, edamame, cucumber and lentil has been beneficial for brands like Austin, TX-based Lantana Foods.

These spicy, sweet and savory types are making an impact on buyers, but they're still not as sale-strong as the staples. "We know garlic, roasted red pepper and classic make up almost 70 percent of total sales," says John McGuckin, CEO of Tribe Mediterranean Foods. "Companies are playing with spicy and smoky, and trying to identify the next breakthrough, but these flavor enhancements haven't been instrumental. Until the category better

**Prolonged shelf lives do garner more attention to the category, but clean label varieties typically have higher price tags.**

a brand and have a lifestyle that lends itself to health and helping the food world."

Working in partnership with clean labels is the rising organic trend. Like other grocery store perimeter products, shoppers expect their hummus to come without pesticides or additives.

To help maintain freshness, flavor and food safety, manufacturers going organic brought on High Pressure Processing (HPP), a cold pasteurization technique, to help. However, with HPP, hummus is

like it on the market," he says. "Hummus is best eaten when just made, and when you go out to eat, since the hummus is always freshly made, it's never cold."

Because Hummustir highlights healthy attributes customers desire and the components are separated giving it a shelf life of eight to 12 months, supermarket deli executives can place it in different areas to entice customers to purchase a new-to-them item or sell it near other deli products for cross merchandising.



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Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Inc



addresses ingredients and removes artificial preservatives, colors and flavors, I think we're on a treadmill."

### Packaging Possibilities

"Millennials have changed the dining balance. It's not about three meals a day; it's about snacking," says Demnati. "Millennials will eat six or seven times per day, and the way to answer their needs is to give them protein- and fiber-based snacking options like hummus." Snack packs from 2 to 3 ounces, with some lasting up to six months without refrigeration, piggyback on the growing grab-and-go eating trend.

Due to their portability and convenience, snack packs are the up-and-coming package option that's become a must for school and work lunches, sporting events, travelers, health-minded eaters, moms and Millennials. "We have a snack pack with hummus on the bottom and crackers on the top," says Miscoe. "Our cracker is gluten-free with brown rice, quinoa and flax seed, and our hummus comes in classic and roasted red bell pepper flavors. We're also looking to add more like black bean with plantain chips and chocolate with graham crackers."

McGuckin advises though, to play the whole game from something ready to eat to a family pack. Supermarket delis that offer various brands with a chip and a dip together or snack pack, multipacks of 2- to 3-ounce portions, a 6- or 8-ounce tub and a 10-ounce tub will see the most sales in the category.

And exceptional package designs don't hurt, either. Colorful, rugged tubs or brands that differentiate the product from the everyday flat, round tub have a better chance of breaking into that five- to 10-second span that a customer considers a purchase.

### Captivating Cross Merchandising

Because hummus is rarely eaten alone, it's a star when it comes to deli cross-merchandising opportunities and growing basket sizes.

Although tying hummus to veggies, fruits, pita chips, crackers, beer and pretzels is effective, McGuckin believes the future is marrying hummus up to the better quality deli selections.

"Get engaged with uses like sandwiches, and tie in turkey or rotisserie chicken," he says. "It provides for a much larger basket size and a one-stop destination for retailers



to bring customers into their deli."

Customers knowing these items are available fresh and together creates a grab-and-go spot that makes shopping easy and their return to the section more likely.

When it comes to marketing hummus in the supermarket deli, phrases like 'local', 'small-batch' 'handmade' or anything that emphasizes how eating it is good for you sticks out to purchasers.

Additionally, displays with recipe books featuring colorful imagery of how hummus can be used are best advertised near cross-merchandised items or on meat and seafood counters.

But the leading way to increase the number of households that purchase hummus is to set up demo stations where consumers can be educated on the wealth of uses.

Fontaine Santé Foods does a back-to-school demo where hummus and tabbouleh salad are stuffed into pita bread to create a

complete lunch, plus a demo where hummus replaces the mayo in a ham sandwich.

"Anything can be used with hummus, because this is the new ketchup," says Demnati. "A lot of retailers want price only, but I think they're missing the boat, because the category isn't mature yet. Once it's mature, then yes, get more volume, but we're not there yet and need to invest in demos."

In addition to demos, creating an eye-catching shelf display is critical to enticing more customers to purchase. Retailers should have at least four brands available, with one being private label. Review the category annually or bi-annually to remove the lowest performers and replace them with higher-achieving types.

Continuing to assess the hummus category's product performance allows it to grow, meaning more interest from today's health-minded customer and better bottom-line profits.

DB





# THE ART OF



PHOTOS COURTESY OF (LEFT) COLUMBUS CRAFT MEATS, (RIGHT) LES TROIS PETITS COCHONS

# CHARCUTERIE

## Catering to the evolving tastes of consumers

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

**‘W**hat’s old is new again’ is certainly a saying that applies to charcuterie. Literally translated from the French chair (meat) cuit (cooked), charcuterie is a class of meat products, primarily pork, preserved by age-old techniques, such as salt-curing.

While the Romans are credited with creating laws as to how pigs should be raised, killed and cooked, it was 15th century French guildsmen that brought the greatest ingenuity to pork preparation, according to the book, “Charcuterie: The Craft of Salting, Smoking and Curing,” by Brian Polcyn and Michael Ruhlman. These skilled tradesmen, called charcutiers, couldn’t sell uncooked pork, so they made a wide variety of products, such as hams, sausages and patés.

Fast forward to today, and house-made charcuterie ranked fourth in the top 20 food trends identified by nearly 1,300 professional chefs that contributed to the

*What’s Hot 2017 Culinary Forecast* by the Washington, D.C.-headquartered National Restaurant Association.

“Supermarket delis are catering to evolving taste trends, while also providing easier solutions for entertaining,” says Todd Wehmann, director of marketing for Columbus Foods, Inc., the Hayward, CA-based manufacturer of Italian-style, dry-cured salami products. “As a result, many are focused on Millennials who entertain more often than older generations. They also love trying new things and sharing with friends. Charcuterie is a perfect fit for their needs; it’s easy to prepare, ideal for entertaining, more sophisticated than chips and salsa, and there are a wide range of salumi products that allow them to try new flavors.”

### The Meat of the Matter

Charcuterie, while nothing new in the Old World, has expanded rapidly in U.S. supermarket delis in the past five years

from a standard range of cooked items and one style of salami to a range of salami flavors, shapes and producers, and a few varieties of prosciutto or Serrano ham, according to Vanessa Chang, a Sausalito, CA-based food marketer who has worked for companies selling major charcuterie brands. “Consumers are looking for better-quality meat and more artisan methods in production, whether it’s something that’s sliced by the pound behind the counter or sold in prepared food menu items or grab-and-go cases.”

A good example is mortadella.

“When most Americans think of mortadella, they think ordinary bologna,” says Carrie Blakeman, managing director of the Rogers Collection, a Portland, ME-based importer of artisan food products. “Last year, we started to import Golfera-brand mortadella to our product line. This is a classic salumi from Bologna, Italy, that’s traditionally seasoned with Sicilian pistachios or with pieces of black winter truffles





PHOTOS COURTESY OF (LEFT) COLUMBUS CRAFT MEATS, (RIGHT) LES TROIS PETITS COCHONS

from the local mountains. We can barely keep it in stock. I think demand is being led by its use on charcuterie platters.”

Prosciutto di Parma, another Italian staple, is also a popular charcuterie board ingredient, says Jason Stemm, the New York City-based marketing representative for the Consorzio del Prosciutto de Parma, headquartered in Parma, Italy. “What’s driving this is that prosciutto is no longer available only at specialty retailers, but coming to the delis of large supermarket chains, such as Kroger and Walmart. We’re even seeing multiple aged product now; 400 days, the minimum age that can be sold into the United States; 16 to 18 months; and even more 24-month is available.”

Beyond Italy, “we see growth in a wide variety of Spanish meats for charcuterie boards, such as chorizo and Iberico as well as Serrano ham,” says Mari Meriluoto, director of marketing and brand development for the Atalanta Corp., an Elizabeth, NJ-headquartered importer of deli meats, cheeses and charcuterie.

Terrines, galantines, confit and paté are all commonplace in a charcuterie offering.

“For paté, we suggest including at least one mousse style and one coarse style on the board as well as a vegetable variety for an added pop of color,” says Alexandra Groezinger Tierney, vice president of operations for Alexian Patés & Specialty Meats, headquartered in Neptune, NJ, which manufactures nearly two dozen dif-

ferent types of paté, including mousses, coarse cuts, vegetable and vegan. “Our 5-ounce slice package can be unwrapped and simply placed right on the board as is for ease and convenience. Or, it can be cut into cubes or even cut with mini cookie cutters for fun shapes.”

Consumers want foods with a simple ingredient list or clean-labeled, according to a December 2015 report from the NPD Group. This is true for charcuterie products, too, and it’s what inspired Les Trois Petite Cochons, Inc., a paté and charcuterie producer in Brooklyn, NY, to launch its newest products, a three-item organic line, according to Camille Collins, marketing director. The line features organic Chicken Paté with Apples

## ZINGERMAN’S DELI MANAGER OFFERS THREE TIPS TO SELL CHARCUTERIE

Customers who’d like help in creating the perfect charcuterie board know just who to seek out at Zingerman’s Deli in Ann Arbor, MI. Retail manager William Marshall, who last December offered his charcuterie-making tips during an in-store promotion for Prosciutto di Parma, says this is something he assists customers with on an everyday basis.

◆ **Know Your Guests.** “I first ask them to tell me about their guests. For example, do they prefer the familiar or are they adventurous eaters? This lets me know how to best make suggestions. For the first, I’d recommend summer sausages. For the second, something like elk salami with dried blueberries or nduja, a soft spicy pork salumi from Calabria in Italy. Nduja is really hip now,” says Marshall.

◆ **Sample, Sample, Sample.** “I sample everything with my customers. After all, if they don’t love it, why would

they want to serve it to their family and friends? This includes accompaniments like pickles, crackers and jams. We have all our jarred and bottled products open and ready for sampling at any time. Sampling is also a good way to upsell something like a \$13 jam or preserve. I’ll give customers ideas, as they sample, too. For example, take a round of Brie, spread about a half-inch of fruit jam on the top, cut into wedges and add to the charcuterie board. Simple and easy,” he says.

◆ **Serve Up Convenience.** “Many customers like for us to put a charcuterie plate together for them, so, on our latest menu, we offer the Meat Monger’s Choice. This consists of four daily-changing cured meats served with bread, pickles and mustard that retails for \$19.99. The daily selections are written on a chalkboard menu in-store. As a bonus, we offer a 10 percent discount at the meat counter on any of the meats they tasted and wanted to buy more of.”

DB





and Cider, Organic Country Pork Paté, and Organic Chicken Liver, Pork & Wild Mushroom Mousse. Each comes in 4-ounce packs, while the Country Pork Paté also comes in a 3-pound size for behind the deli service counter.

### Perfect Pairings

Educating shoppers on how-to build a DIY charcuterie platter at home is a deli cross-merchandising match made in heaven. It's a real basket builder, too. This is because, beyond an assortment of meats, staples additionally include cheeses; breads and crackers; spreads; fruits (berries, figs, grapes); and olives, says Columbus Food's Wehmann. "For a unique touch, suggest adding something sweet, like chocolate."

The key point for deli operators to inform customers is there is no right or wrong way to make a charcuterie platter, says Brandon Gross, vice president of marketing for FOODMatch, a New York City-based producer and importer of Mediterranean foods, which has recently launched several new antipasto items, such as Greek olives, Calabrese salami and Asiago cheese mix that can be served on a snacking or charcuterie platter.

"However, I recommend a few guidelines to share with customers. First, if serving a crowd, tastes vary. They'll want to have some spicy and some mild options. Deli operators can assist by merchandising items as pairs. Featuring a few house-cured pairings will give the shopper confidence in what they're serving and lead to more items making their way into the basket," he says.

Charcuterie ingredients see a significant bump in sales during the winter holidays as well as around key three-day weekend holidays throughout the year and other festive entertaining occasions, ranging from

the Super Bowl and March Madness to Thanksgiving, according to Columbus Food's Wehmann. "Retailers that are effectively addressing shoppers' needs for convenient, stress-free entertaining are doing a couple of things. One is creating dedicated charcuterie stations, especially in premium stores. Providing suggestions both for variety as well as for pairings will inspire shoppers and make the process easier. This type of solution-oriented merchandising is a best practice that we see in some of our key customer accounts."

Secondly, adds Wehmann, retailers should offer ready-made charcuterie platters in the deli.

"Party platters are being converted into charcuterie plates that hold an assortment of craft meats. An example is all-in-one products like our Charcuterie Sampler, which offers four pre-sliced salami: Italian Dry, Calabrese, Sopressata and Genoa. This can be purchased, unpacked for a party and easily set out with complements like gourmet cheeses, crackers, beer and wine," suggests Wehmann. **DB**

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# Delis Compete In Crowded Pizza Market

**Healthier pies provide appeal to this department's consumers**

BY BOB JOHNSON

**D**on't look now, but the competition for a slice of the lucrative pizza pie has seriously stepped up its game.

From the specialty shops where you build your own, the restaurant appetizer menu and even the frozen food section, suppliers are enticing consumers with higher quality pies and more interesting ingredients.

"High-end restaurants will have a fancy flatbread pizza as an appetizer," says Warren Stoll, marketing director at Kontos Foods, Paterson, NJ. "Thirty to 35 percent of all restaurants have some form of pizza on the menu. They're offered in different shapes; it doesn't have to be round, it can be square or rectangular."

The stakes in meeting this competition are high because pizza accounts for 3.1 percent of all deli sales, according to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy

Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) *What's In Store 2017* report.

This challenge calls for an aggressive merchandising strategy for delis that extends from the warming case to the information super highway.

"Bundling and re-positioning warming cabinets to the front end of the store, with coupons attached to pizza boxes prompting the consumer to place an order while they shop, are ways to market pizza," advises Jim Viti, vice president for sales and marketing at Deiorio's Frozen Dough, Utica, NY. "Online marketing to help draw Millennials is important; it's more difficult to get past the white noise. Customer loyalty is crucial. Delivery service is becoming very important, as well."

It is not enough to market with gusto, however, if the product pales in comparison to the standards set by the competition.

"If we don't offer products with unique

flavor profiles that people have gotten used to, they'll go elsewhere," says Peter Cokinos, executive vice president at Palermo's Pizza, based in Milwaukee. "Millennials are growing up with pizza available on every street corner. They've grown up with pizzerias where you can build your own pizza and have it cooked for you right then."

Palermo's has built a reputation in the frozen pizza department, but has more recently developed a line of premium supermarket deli pizza products, including uncured pepperoni and chicken sausage; pesto and Mozzarella; chicken sausage and roasted yellow peppers; mushrooms and truffles Alfredo; and eight cheese with creamy Alfredo.

"We're just getting our feet wet in the deli," says Cokinos. "We're trendsetters in the frozen space, with super premium offerings in our Screamin' Sicilian and



Urban Pie brands.”

Young people, in particular, expect pizza to be both interesting and packed with a nutritional punch.

“Targeting the healthier versions of pizza is a big hit with Millennials,” says Mary Shepard, director of retail and foodservice at Fortun Foods, Inc., headquartered in Kirkland, WA. “The quality has to be comparable to restaurant quality. The competition is fierce and the deli departments have to kick it up to get and keep that customer interested. Fresh clean ingredients are always trending. Mediterranean flavors for our finishing sauces seem to be a big hit with the Millennials.”

Fortun Foods has a Spanish Romesco with saffron sauce that is all fresh, gluten free and has no preservatives.

### Eat Your Vegetables

The first thing consumers notice is what’s on top of the pizza, and more people these days want to see healthy but interesting vegetables leading the way.

“More and more vegetable-based toppings are popular,” says Joe Tedeschi, president of Venice Bakery, Torrance, CA. “Consumers are looking for protein, just not from meat sources anymore.”

This trend could be with us a while, because it is the younger customers who are leading the way in scrutinizing the offerings for nutritional value.

“Consumers of all ages, especially the Millennials, are requiring healthier options,” says Tedeschi. “They are probably the biggest demographic of label readers that we have ever seen. As a result, food manu-

facturers are forced to provide healthier options, even in the pizza category.”

Other producers are also finding strong demand for products with protein that does not come from meat.

“There is considerable interest in meatless protein,” says George Sarandos, CEO of Alpha Foods, Waller, TX. “It’s just the times we live in, from the basic cheese pizza to exotics with everything from artichokes to anchovies. The toppings just depend on where you live.”

“We are doing considerable business with delis,” says Sarandos. “Our business is growing like wildfire.”

Pepperoni and sausage still have their place, but many consumers want to have a choice of healthier, but still tasty, options.

“The traditional toppings are still popular, but now you see more ingredient choices that are gourmet and/or healthier,” says Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager at Valley Lahvosh, Fresno, CA. “I think you see the marketing to Millennials in delis offering healthy crust and topping options and, in some cases, the ability to create a personalized pizza. Customization and health-consciousness are both appealing to that demographic.”

This is still pizza we’re talking about, however, so good nutrition cannot overpower the pleasure of the food.

“There is a dichotomy of what we would like to call healthy indulgences,” says Viti. “It has become a much more varied approach, responding to the health halo with plenty of veggies and ethnic-based toppings, such as hummus and Feta. We’re seeing trending toward smaller portions

and larger portions at the very same time.”

A fresher, healthier pizza that also has strong mouth appeal can bring customers back for more on a regular basis.

“Consumers are embracing much healthier versions, thinner crust or flatbreads,” says Shepard. “Fresh ingredients on top, flavor with spices and a real wow factor encourage repeat business.”

### The Matter of the Crust

The crust may not have the visual impact of the toppings, but it is another important area where consumers are looking for healthy alternatives.

“The crust is the basis of innovation for those interested in better health, clean ingredients and uniqueness,” according to IDDBA’s *What’s In Store 2017* report. “Ancient grains, ground rye and sprouted wheat offer a boost in nutrition and also unique flavors.”

Lighter, thinner crusts may be the most popular innovation in this segment to make healthier pizza products.

“I think there is always going to be pizza traditionalists, but there is a growing segment that wants different choices, like lighter crusts, healthier ingredients and gourmet or unique toppings,” says Bonsignore at Valley Lahvosh.

There are many options for offering thinner crusts, which carry the ingredients with fewer calories and lower carbs.

“Pizza is using what I call lahvosh. Restaurants are using very thin flatbread pizza,” says Stoll. “We sell the flatbread crust in bigger sheets, and they cut it to suit their needs. I’ve seen it as small as 6





inches-by-8 inches on an appetizer menu.”

Crusts, thick or thin, that are made from healthier grains are also gaining favor among health-conscious consumers.

“Whole grains with seeds and spicier varieties, with things like red pepper, have been trending to give some extra pop to the finished product,” says Deiorio’s Viti. “We also have a new cauliflower-based crust we’re working with. It’s very low carb. They make it with flour from the cauliflower. Traditional pizza styles with thicker crust will always have a home, but thin crust varieties carry a healthier connotation, which is more on-trend. Both healthier and thinner pizza crusts have been out there for a few years, but they are still trending.”

The new crusts that are made from vegetable-based flour and have no grains are worth watching.

“We are seeing lots of demand for plant-based pizzas and pizza crusts,” says Venice Bakery’s Tedeschi. “Specifically hot right now is cauliflower pizza crusts, however, we are getting many requests and are working in R&D for other plant- and vegetable-based pizza crusts.”

There are also crust options that attempt to bridge the gap between good nutrition and mouth appeal.

“Ironically, we are seeing a bit more demand for gluten-free thick crusts,” says Tedeschi. “Additionally, our customer is always looking for differentiation from what is on the market. For instance, Italian-seasoned flatbread, a cheese-flavored pizza crust or a raised-edge gluten-free pizza crust are more common.”

Some supermarket delis are having success offering just the crust, which customers can take home and finish with their favorite pizza ingredients.

“More and more retailers and supermarkets are private labeling either a pizza or pizza crust pack in the deli section,” says Tedeschi. “At Venice Bakery we make and sell a two-pack 8-inch gluten-free or plant pizza crust pack under our brand or the market’s brand.”

But the crust has to be more than just trim and healthy; it has to feel good in your mouth when you take a bite.

“People want flavor for the crust,” says Viti. “Customization is trending, not just for the crust, but for all the pizza ingredients. We have a red pepper or black pepper within the crust that people try for a limited time. If they are popular, they make it a regular item.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEIORIO

There are even crusts coming to market that include cheese on the bottom of the pizza.

“We have recently introduced new flavored crusts,” says Palermo’s Cokinos. “We have added cheese and other flavors to the bottom of the crust. So far, consumers have really liked these products, and we have a patent pending.”

### Quality Matters

The deli has fared well, so far, in the face of ever stronger competition for the growing pizza market.

Deli pizza sales reached \$282 million in the year ending in March, 2016, as the category increased a robust 7.2 percent in just one year, and was up 12 percent from just two years earlier, according to IDDBA’s *What’s In Store*.

But the new wave of pizzerias that let people choose their own ingredients to build a custom pie that is ready to eat in minutes is doing even better.

A sign of this growth is Blaze Pizza emerging as the fastest-growing restaurant chain of 2015, with year-over-year sales up by 205 percent, along with MOD Pizza sales climbing 182 percent and Pieology Pizzeria gaining 67 percent, according to a recent article in *PMQ Pizza* magazine.

“There has been a trend toward new pizzerias,” he says. “The entire fast-casual segment experienced 11 percent growth in a recent year.”

To meet this competition, the deli must

remain focused on offering pizza that is consistently interesting and of high quality, in addition to offering good nutrition.

“Increasingly, people are looking for products that are clean and authentic,” says Mark Snyder, national sales manager at ItalCrust, Belmont, MA. “Clean ingredients are one of the hottest trends. People want food, not chemicals.”

Snyder believes large chains face a challenge in developing a pizza program that can be pulled off efficiently and with consistency in all of their delis.

“The deli needs something that can be done across all their units keeping space, training and labor to a minimum,” he says.

The success of outlets that allow each customer to build a custom pizza by choosing their favorite combination of ingredients points to an important new development.

“The consumer trend I’m most interested in is individualism,” says Kontos Foods’ Stoll. “I’ve seen pulled pork with caramelized onions; I’ve seen steak on some; and I’ve seen just vegetables. The idea is you don’t have to buy a big pie with all the same toppings. We’re all familiar with buying a bigger pie with different combinations of toppings.”

There are many details to consider, but the reward for creating a pizza program that checks all the boxes is customer loyalty, even at a slightly higher price point.

“We think there is a premium the deli can get,” says Cokinos. “And it’s probably 10 percent more than for a basic pizza.” **DB**



# Gruyère Elevates Cheese Offerings



PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMI RÖTH

## Why this classic variety has become a department staple

BY DIANA CERCONI

**A**ny supermarket deli and cheese counter worth its curds will offer Le Gruyère AOP to its customers, says Laure Rousseau, head of marketing and promotions for America at Interprofession du Le Gruyère, headquartered in Pringy, Switzerland, in the heart of Gruyère country.

Okay, maybe Rousseau wasn't so blunt with her answer, but her message is clear. And with good reason. Gruyère is one of

the world's classic cheeses. And not just as a table cheese, but in cooking and baking, as well. Gruyère is essential when making a fondue, and it's what gives a croque monsieur its oozy and taste explosion as well as elevates a mac and cheese to sophisticated dining.

Gruyère is the perfect example of taste, quality, handmade and terroir, says Rousseau. The cheese has been proudly produced in Switzerland since the early 12th century — tracing its history to

the small village of Gruyères in the canton of Fribourg. Today, Le Gruyère AOP Switzerland is recognized as the only true Gruyère cheese. Its AOP (the equivalent of POD or Product of Origin) designation ensures that each wheel of the cheese has been produced in Switzerland and only from the consortium of approved dairies (164 Village Gruyère AOP dairies and 55 Gruyère D'Alpage AOP dairies), nine affineurs and eight exporters. AOP also means that the cheese's recipe cannot be



changed or additions made, making it truly an authentic original.

Interprofession du Le Gruyère is the association that oversees each aspect of producing Gruyère AOP. Among its duties are quantity and quality control as well as marketing and promotion, both in Switzerland and around the world. “Le Gruyère AOP is much more than a cheese,” says Rousseau. “It is also a philosophy. We wish to keep our many small, family-owned dairies and cheesemakers so that we may continue the tradition, knowledge, terroir and taste of our cheese.”

### Profiting from Gruyère

So how can today's supermarkets capitalize on this great cheese in their deli and cheese departments?

One of the best ways, says Rousseau, is for supermarkets to have the cheese in its “cheese cutting section, so the client can have the freshest piece of Gruyère.” Another, she says, is to offer different refinings or ages of Le Gruyère AOP — from five-month-old to 20 or more. That way, she says, customers can taste the difference between a young Gruyère and those aged longer. It's also a great way for supermarkets' cheese counter staff to promote the building of a cheese plate for entertaining, she adds. As a bonus to customers, staff members can point out that any left-over cheese can be used the next day to make fondue or grilled cheese sandwiches, or be used in a salad or as a substitute in any dish calling for cheese.

Le Gruyère AOP is a semi-hard raw cow's milk cheese with a smooth pate with no holes (or, at the most, only a very few tiny ones) and borders from a pale cream color to a deep ivory. Though Gruyère is produced year-round, Le Gruyère d'Alpage AOP is made in the high pastures of the Alps and Jura regions from May to October and is aged 10 to 12 months.

Its unique flavor comes from the cows grazing on the wide variety of grasses and flora that grow in the mountains. All Gruyères, however, exhibit a taste that is sweet, slightly salty and with some fruity notes. The intensity of flavors varies according to its aging. A young five-month-old (the least amount required by Swiss law) Gruyère will taste creamy and buttery, while those aged longer will take on a wider flavor profile and linger longer on the palate. Those aged for more than a year develop lovely pockets of cheese crystals that crunch and pop with savory notes.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRUYÈRE AOP

“It is like eating four cheeses at once,” says Joe Salonia, national sales manager of marketing at Switzerland's Gourmino, which has three of Interprofession's accredited dairies and one of its affinages as well as being one of its approved exporters. Taste profiles can be anything from mild to strong, depending on age, he says, from sweet, custard notes to roasted artichokes, beef broth, cashews, white truffles, shiitakes and melted leeks. In addition, underlying is that not quite definable, but nonetheless desirable, umami taste, he says. As such, he adds, “Le Gruyère AOP's taste profile is chased by many cheesemakers around the world.”

Which brings up an important point. It doesn't matter what a cheese label claims. “A real Gruyère AOP has a mark on the heel [or rind] of the cheese that says ‘Le Gruyère’ with the [iconic] Swiss red cross enclosed in the AOP sign,” says Rousseau. “The label should also say ‘Switzerland’ underneath the AOP logo.” If not, it's just a Gruyère wannabe. This, however, is not to say that there aren't many fine Alpine-like cheeses being produced outside of Switzerland. Still, these are not considered true Gruyères.

Case in point is Emmi Roth, which has its U.S. base in Monroe, WI, and

produces both Emmi Le Gruyère AOP, Emmi Le Gruyère AOP Reserved and Kaltbach Cave-Aged Le Gruyère AOP in Switzerland as well as producing Roth award-winning Alpine-like cheeses in Wisconsin.

### Proper Positioning

According to recent market research data, the popularity of Gruyère cheese continues to be on the rise. Heather Engwell, director of marketing at Emmi Roth, explains its growing demand. “Consumers are seeking more flavorful, aged products, which is contributing to the growth of Gruyère nationwide.”

This is good news for the supermarket deli and cheese counters. Plus, there are many ways for the department to tap into Gruyère's growing popularity and increase sales in this segment.

For starters, Engwell says, because of Gruyère's versatility, it should be positioned as a “go-to” cheese for both the novice home cook and the experienced entertainer. “Gruyère's versatility and subtle flavor profile make it easy for anyone to incorporate it into dishes or serve on a cheese board. Deli-sliced Gruyère can also elevate the flavor of any burger or sandwich.”

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Corp., which distributes Mifroma Le Gruyère AOP cheese and Le Gruyère AOP Cavern, Cave-Aged 11 months, Mari Meriluoto, director of marketing and brand development, sees it as a supermarket staple. As consumers learn to view it as an important ingredient in recipes, she says, its popularity will continue to grow, not only as a great table cheese, but also as an “upscale cheese perfect for melting.”

Few experts would disagree. As a melting cheese, Gruyère is incomparable. This also makes it an ideal cheese for supermarkets to incorporate into menus. Says Engwell, “Gruyère has almost endless opportunities in the supermarket deli. Deli managers can use the cheese’s versatility to their advantage by creating new store items using the cheese.”

For example supermarkets can easily add Gruyère to their prepared foods or frozen food sections as an ingredient in everything from gourmet pizzas to cheese-stuffed baked fish, chicken, meat and pasta dishes to a myriad of creations in between, such as those featuring wild mushrooms and potatoes. And because Gruyère is a high-protein food, it’s a healthy match for vegetarian dishes.

Recipe cards are another way to not only promote the cheese, but also other products in the store. Likewise, cheese

board suggestion cards are another marketing tactic, especially when placed next to products in the store, such as charcuterie, olives, crackers, specialty chocolates, mustards and fruit preserves. They would also work well in beer and wine departments.

### Cross-merchandising Options

Using the same mind set, supermarkets can capitalize in cross merchandising Gruyère in other departments. Meriluoto suggests positioning Gruyère cheese next to pizza dough, flatbreads, fresh pastas and with produce.

According to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA), Gruyère pairs nicely with apples, figs and pears, potatoes and peppers.

Cross merchandising in wine and beer sections should also be considered, espe-

cially with today’s savvy customers who look for cheese pairing suggestions for themselves as well as to feel more confident when entertaining. “Gruyère pairs well with delicate, fruity white wines, lighter reds, full-bodied beers and herbal spirits (scotch and gin), making it a wonderful cheese to promote in the liquor and/or wine and beer section of the supermarket,” says Engwell.

Cooking demos and tastings are still among the tried and true ways to promote the cheese. They also serve to educate consumers to Gruyère’s range in flavor profiles and to its versatility in recipes. Though Gruyère is an all-year-round cheese favorite, winter and its holidays are prime times for supermarkets to promote it as an essential cheese for holiday entertaining or for those warming and fun “fondue nights.” Tastings and fondue demos would underscore these messages.

Tastings for the supermarket’s deli and cheese counter staff are just as important, says Kathryn Pereira, education and research coordinator at the IDDBA. “Shoppers want to talk to someone knowledgeable about the cheese they are interested in purchasing. Staff can better describe — and sell — a cheese if they have tasted it and are able to use their own words to describe it to the customer.” Everyone loves a back story, she says. So supermarkets should make sure staff can tell the history and story of where and how Gruyère is produced.

Still, it’s true that because of how it is made, Le Gruyère AOP commands a higher ticket price. Nonetheless, it also attracts a higher-spending customer with more disposable income, says Meriluoto.

At Emmi Roth, Engwell finds that “Gruyère is most often sought out by cheese enthusiasts or those who are passionate and knowledgeable about cheese. However, once people sample the cheese and learn about its versatility and flavor profile, it becomes more appealing to a much broader audience.”

DB

## Cooking demos and tastings are still among the tried and true ways to promote the cheese.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRUYÈRE AOP



# Crunch Time for Crackers

**Trending varieties and cross merchandising opportunities abound**

BY JEFFREY STEELE

Supermarket shoppers are looking for more interesting and unique flavors. They're seeking clean labels and fewer artificial ingredients. They're increasingly shopping the perimeter of stores. And they're also snacking more often and more healthfully.

So what's the result of this trend convergence? Taste-tempting, unique, upscale and thoughtfully-merchandised deli crackers are coming through in the crunch.

Crackers sold in the deli department are typically baked in a style and with subtle flavors intended to perfectly accompany other deli items, according to Steve Lorenz director of marketing at Seattle-based La Panzanella, who points to his company's Croccantini artisan crackers as a perfect example. The supermarket deli items to which Lorenz refers are products like flavorful cheeses and cheese spreads, hummus, dips and charcuterie.



"The crackers and the topping complement each other in flavor and texture to create a wonderful pairing and are the perfect items to enjoy as an appetizer or light meal," he says. "Therefore, marketing these items together through live demos or cross merchandising and/or combined coupons or specials is a great way for deli managers to showcase these items and suggestive sell to their customers."

### Distinguishing Differences

So how do cracker makers distinguish their products in the deli aisle from crackers sold in grocery sections? We turned to Boston-based Effie's Homemade co-owners Joan Macisaac and Irene Costello for an answer. The company's line of not-too-sweet crackers is found in the deli departments of more than 2,000 retailers from coast to coast.

"We know our products need a little special handholding," says Macisaac. "I see products in the deli cheese area where you usually have more natural ingredients

and more clean labels, but crackers are not necessarily being promoted as organic. More importantly, these products are being marketed as clean labeled, with more interesting ingredients."

Scott Frank, vice president of sales for Petaluma, CA-based Rustic Bakery, which makes sourdough flatbreads, shortbread cookies and cheese bites, among other cracker-type items, has a different take. "We like to be in the deli area or cheese or specialty area," he says.

"If you look at what's there, the packaging is a nicer style. And it's sort of artisan-grade crackers. You get to build creative displays, merchandise it differently than in the aisles, where it's packed in tight. You can build a display through a counter-top or tables."

Appearing to agree with that assessment is James R. Anderko, vice president of sales and marketing for Hingham, MA-based Venus Wafers, a long-established family-owned company manufacturing both crackers and flatbreads.

"The deli has more of an opportunity to visually show [products], through pictures of cheese boards and other displays," he says. "When you go down the aisle, stores will have them in different subcategories, but in the deli you have the chance to showcase crackers and flatbreads and pair them with cheeses."

Primizie Flatbread Crisps, formerly Primizie Crispbreads, in Austin, TX, has recently changed its name due to the trend in flatbreads. Its product is made from Italian Piadina dough used for paninis.

"We are not a pita chip, we are not a cracker, nor are we a tortilla chip," says CEO Shawn Sweeney. "Our offering creates a significant point of differentiation to a set containing much duplication."

When it comes to new products, multiple experts say the snack packs are growing quickly. "These are the new products, and they're coming in hotter than ever," says Frank. "One reason is the retailers are asking for them. In return, there are a handful of people starting to make them. But we're also seeing the mega companies doing them. We're partnering with salami companies or dip companies, whether private label or branded. You're getting hummus and a cracker, or cured meats and a cracker — a lot of different applications and upgrades."

Lorenz, too, is seeing an increase in the number of healthier, single-serve snack packs to respond to the trend toward healthier eating and the increase in snacking occasions.

Trending flavors and ingredients include whole grains, ancient grains, nuts and nut flowers as well as basics, such as olive oil and rosemary. Where once cracked pepper was promoted heavily, today it has been supplanted by sea salt, says Anderko.

Other new products being seen in supermarket deli departments include increasing numbers of gluten-free, non-GMO and organic crackers.

Lorenz reports seeing a decidedly healthful trend, particularly as snacking occasions increase and consumers eat more often throughout the day.

The Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) *What's in Store Report 2017* found 53 percent of consumers in 2016 snacked between meals, compared to 41 percent in 2014. A full 30 percent reported snacking only on healthy foods.

One way consumers are focusing on health and nutrition is to be more observant of clean labels as well as organic and





“free from” claims, says Lorenz.

“Because crackers tend to be part of snacking occasions, being mindful of the healthier choices consumers are looking for is paramount to being successful. La Panzanella crackers are aligned well with those needs,” says Lorenz.

The company’s Original Croccantini Mini lists three ingredients — enriched flour, two oils and salt. Its products are all non-GMO and are low fat, cholesterol-free and 100 calories per serving.

For her part, Macisaac says she’s finding consumers “absolutely” read labels. She finds most people are watching their fat, sugar and sodium more than ever. How does she know?

“You can’t do a demo without someone getting their readers out, reading the label and making sure,” she says.

### Getting Noticed

There’s general agreement that one of the best ways to market and merchandise crackers is through sampling.

“Sampling is huge,” says Effie’s Homemade’s Macisaac. “It is interesting that we went through this exercise recently. The items that stack around a cheese case really fly off the shelves. It just so happens our product is undergoing a packaging change this fall to a box that stacks. Our experience is that the deli cheese people have a lot to do, so you want to make it as easy as possible on them to gain incremental sales by selling crackers. Crackers have one-year shelf lives amid other products that might have six weeks. They don’t have the time.”

Pairing crackers with other complementary items makes sense.

“We have one account that will put a basket of our flatbreads out when they have a hummus promotion,” says Venus Wafers’ Anderko.

“Items that work well should be merchandised next to each other,” says Lorenz. “Obviously, the snack packs have taken this to the next level by pre-pairing items that taste great together, but those are for individual consumption. Beyond that, it is up to the deli to pair items visually or through demos and suggested selling.”

Of course, demos and suggestive selling aren’t always an option, but there are a few effective ways to market and merchandise items that work well together.

First, allowing signage to handle the suggestive selling enables delis to sell when a staffer is not there to make the sale.

## There’s general agreement that one of the best ways to market and merchandise crackers is through sampling.

“By creating signage that either describes how the product tastes or what it pairs with, delis take the guesswork out of the shoppers’ minds,” says Lorenz. “They can feel confident they are making good choices.”

A second approach is merchandising items together. La Panzanella’s folks love to see their Croccantini directly above or below the cheese case.

“This serves a few purposes,” says Lorenz. “It reminds the shopper when they are buying cheese to not forget the crackers. It gives the endorsement of the deli that it is great with cheese. It makes it easy for the person working the cheese case at the

time to suggestive sell to shoppers.”

Finally, feature support is vital. On the retailer website, through an e-blast or in the store circular, cross promoting and featuring complementary items together is a strategy that helps shoppers visualize crackers with say, a cheese platter or light meal, he says.

According to Frank, there is surging interest in cross-merchandising deli department crackers with alcoholic beverages. “All of a sudden, we’re getting calls to cross merchandise a cheese, cracker and some sort of spirit or wine,” he observes. “It’s come from all over, and particularly from supermarket delis in Texas.”

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Cross merchandising has been a focus for Effie's Homemade's in merchandising its sweetened crackers, says MacIsaac.

Company officials consider themselves fortunate their products go very well with tasty artisan cheeses like aged Gouda or a Chevré from Vermont. "Or a jam or marshmallows," she adds. "Crackers have been the perfect cross-merchandising item. I've seen different varieties used in breadings or coatings for chicken and fish. They're very versatile."

### Memo on Demos

Experts in selling crackers in the deli department report demos still are very effective. "We rely heavily on passive sampling," reports MacIsaac. "People feel free to grab it by the sample, but the problem with demos is you can't control the weather, the day and the event. It could be the worst weather and not a person in the

supermarket, but you have paid someone \$150 to stand there and sample. It happens all the time."

Asked if demos work for his company, Anderko responds in no uncertain terms. "Yes they do, and they work well if the person doing the demo knows about the product, including the benefits and attributes," he asserts.

"Demo-ing organic flatbread, [samplers] need to know the attributes — with ours, organic grains — and they need to talk about what products they go best with, including a million different cheeses from goat cheese to Cheddar to Gouda."

Lorenz at La Panzanella is another industry representative who sings the praises of the demo approach.

"Demos work extremely well for us," he says. "The deli is a place where shoppers are looking for meal solutions or entertaining ideas. Because La Panzanella

Croccantini are sold in the deli, we benefit by letting shoppers see and taste our crackers first hand with an item or two that pair well together. This creates an immediate impression and brings to life [patrons'] entertaining ideas. We try to support these demos with signage that tells the story of our family-owned company, and our commitment to the traditional Italian recipes and simple ingredients that make our crackers unique. On many occasions, we also provide manufacturer coupons to help entice purchase. As much as possible, we also support retailers that are featuring our items by providing in-store demos."

Lorenz's only reservation is that sampling is a very expensive strategy. That makes it imperative the company is strategic in planning when and where it stages demos, he says.

### Shoppers and Shippers

In conclusion, how can delis become a cracker destination? Anderko says, "You have to have shippers and promotions at certain times, particularly the holidays."

He says if crackers are visible, well-promoted and cross merchandised with other deli items, shoppers will not walk across the store to shop the cracker aisle. "The trend these days is for folks to shop the perimeter of the supermarket rather than the inner aisles," he says. "That's the growth area."

Lorenz says, to become cracker destinations, delis need to think about shoppers' needs and their changing eating dynamic. Offering healthier snacking options, snack kits and meal kits are all ways to help them meet their frequent small meal needs.

"People are busier and more on the go, they need easy solutions, but healthy solutions," he adds. "Crackers work great with cheese, fruit and charcuterie as a healthy, light-meal alternative. CPG companies are addressing this with pre-packaged options."

Delis can take this a step further by creating these snack packs fresh, in-store, with customized options for people to grab and go. "During the busy holiday season, they can continue to offer easy cheese platter options that are customizable and include artisanal crackers like La Panzanella Croccantini," he says.

For delis to become cracker destinations, it's essential to always be distinctive.

"Carrying interesting, out-of-the-ordinary crackers not found in the middle of the store is one way of standing out and staying on trend," says MacIsaac. **DB**





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# BECOMING A HOLIDAY DESTINATION

**How to put your best deli meats forward**

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

Gathering with friends and family is an essential part of the winter holidays. The good news for deli operators is that, during this time, many people are getting together at home.

For example, 48 percent of Americans eat Thanksgiving at home, while 44 percent fork into this festive meal at someone else's house, according to the Nov. 22, 2016-released *Cultural and Societal Shifts Shape New Thanksgiving Traditions*, by the Port Washington, NY-based NPD Group and research partner CultureWaves, based in Chicago.

What's more, New Year's Eve is also a big eating-in occasion, especially for Gen X and Y. In fact, 60 percent of respondents who planned to host or attend a house party were under 35 years old, according to a recent NPD Eating Trends research report. What this means is that consumers will be decking the halls as well as filling their fridges this upcoming holiday season.





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It's deli operators' opportunity to serve as inspiration for these gatherings.

"The holidays are a time for indulgence", says Jonathan Whalley, education coordinator for the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA), based in Madison, WI. "Delis should up their game and put their best products, services and customer experiences on display to bring in new customers."

### A Center-plate Solution

Now is the ideal time to tout holiday offerings in the deli.

"Different than other times during the year, the holidays represent entertaining occasions that are thought of well in advance," explains Brett Johnson, deli brand manager for Hormel Foods Deli by Design in Austin, MN. "Getting on the radar early is key for deli operators. A sweet spot tends to be the mid-October timeframe, as the back-to-school rush has tapered off, and consumers are settling into cooler fall weather."

As for deli meats, suppliers say there are three top trends driving consumers' holiday purchases — variety that goes beyond the traditional and every day; bold flavors and artisan quality that are sure to be conversation starters; and most of all, ease of preparation and elegance in presentation. These key points apply equally to holiday meals, small plate and appetizer entertaining, party platters and even food gifts.

Eating at home doesn't mean Americans are doing all the cooking themselves. In fact, 29 percent of Thanksgiving meals include a ready-to-eat item from a restaurant or foodservice outlet and 57 percent include food items that were 'completely home-made' from these same sources, according



PHOTO COURTESY OF NUESKE'S HILL FARM'S MEATS

to the NPD Group' and CultureWave's *Cultural and Societal Shifts Shape New Thanksgiving Traditions* research.

"During the winter season, people look to center-of-the-table classics for their holiday meals," says Megan Dorsch, marketing manager for Nueske's Hillcrest Farm's Meats in Wittenberg, WI. "We see a surge in sales of our Applewood Smoked Hams, especially the variety that we spiral slice and honey glaze by hand. Our hams

are all pre-cooked and simply need to be warmed gently and served. We suggest deli operators tell customers how easy these products are by offering samples and discussing the prep tips with them."

Smoked turkey breast sales also swing up during the lucrative fourth quarter, according to Dorsch.

"We encourage deli operators to take orders in advance from customers. This ensures they feel good about getting what



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they want without last-minute worries, and it helps delis stock an appropriate quantity of hams and turkeys,” says Dorsch.

Beef is always a favorite, with Americans forking into an average 55.6 pounds per person in 2016, up from 54 pounds in 2015, according to U.S. Department of Ag statistics.

“The product receiving the most interest is our heat-and-serve prime rib roast,” says Brett Erickson, director of value-added

products for Certified Angus Beef (CAB) LLC in Wooster, OH. “It makes this hol-

## Beyond the entrée, meat also stars as an elegant appetizer at holiday meals.

iday classic easier to prepare with savory results. Our roasted beef strip is equal in quality and convenience, while offering shoppers a competitive pricing option this time of year.”

Erickson says it's important for deli departments, just like meat departments, to educate customers about beef quality.

“Angus’ is a breed of cattle, not a quality grade. We have 10 exacting quality standards, and only three in 10 Angus cattle earn the Certified Angus Beef brand name and logo,” he explains.

Beyond the entrée, meat also stars as an elegant appetizer at holiday meals.

“Foie gras products show significant growth in popularity and sales during the holiday timeframe,” says Ariane Daguin, founder, owner and CEO of D’Artagnan, LLC, in Union, NJ. “One of our most popular holiday products is the Foie Gras Medallion, which reaches its largest number in sales during the last two months of the year.”

With truffles in season this time of year, there is always demand, because they complement meat very well, adds Daguin. “More specifically for us, it’s truffle butter, which is an excellent alternative to fresh truffle without the sticker shock.”

Merchandising-wise, says the IDDBA’s Whalley, “the focus should be on meal solutions and entertaining, not simply individual components. For example, co-promote fresh meat, bakery and produce department products through convenient deli meal solutions. This can include pre-roasted or pre-seasoned and ready-to-cook meats and meal kits with heat-and-eat or ready-to-cook ingredients.”

A good example of this is the holiday meal program at Bristol Farms and Lazy Acres, both part of a 15-store chain based in Carson, CA. Meals offered include meats, such as spiral hams, whole turkeys and boneless turkey breasts, prime rib and more in a variety of sizes to accommodate small or large family gatherings. The chain pairs these main dish meats with a variety of sides like stuffing, potatoes, vegetables and relishes in addition to dessert — a pump-



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# Party platters are a popular and staple seller in the deli during wintertime celebrations.

kin crumb pie. The sides come in eight- to 10-person servings and are sold à la carte so customers can customize their holiday meal to go. Both entrées and sides come fully prepared with reheating instructions.

## Small Plates & Appetizers

Variety is the spice of the festive season's entertaining.

"So many meals at this time of year are centered around a whole ham or turkey, and consumers tend to pick different types and cuts of meat for their more casual entertaining needs. Bold flavors and easy-to-make finger foods are crowd pleasers. Thus, we see our dried sausage and specialty cheese products increase in sales. We love ideas like prosciutto-wrapped figs, bite-sized skewers, meat and cheese crostinis and bountiful charcuterie platters," says Hormel's Johnson.

Dry-cured meats like Mangalica Ham,

Jambon de Bayonne and Saucisson Sec are often used for hors d'oeuvres during the holidays, according to D'Artagnan's Daguin. "Consumers are also using these meats as tapas or small plates, sometimes instead of meals. These are complemented with other foods, such as sourdough bread, rice crackers or simply topped with a dollop of chutney or sliced cornichon."

Indeed, tapas-style small plate sharing or snacking remains en vogue. In fact, according to the Washington, D.C.-based National Restaurant Association's *What's Hot 2017 Culinary Forecast*, 60 percent of chefs surveyed called this concept a hot trend and an additional 20 percent called it a perennial favorite.

Beyond this, there are more traditional snack-style entertaining solutions.

"Our meatballs and cocktail frankfurters make great appetizers. They're easy to prepare and cross merchandise with a vari-

ety of sauces, from sweet to spicy. Other options could be meatball subs, Philly steak or Reuben platters, where slider buns or crackers are included with the meats, cheeses and toppings. Deli operators can suggest that the host assemble and serve these ingredients on a platter or allow guests to participate in the preparation if they prefer and make their own," says the CAB's Erickson.

## Party Platters

Party platters are a popular and staple seller in the deli during wintertime celebrations.

"Deli meat and cheese trays please many guests at once by offering a variety of choices. The host can serve them with buns, wraps, crackers or finger foods, all of which the deli can cross merchandise in-store," says Erickson.

Shelf-stable sausages and liver paté work well on platters, according to Nueske's Dorsch. "We see summer sausages sliced and served with cheeses, crackers and breads, mustards and picked vegetables. A smooth, spreadable liver paté is popular with crackers, fruit, chutneys and wine."

Companies such as Olli Salumeria Americana, in Mechanicsville, VA, are developing a pre-made compartmentalized tray with premium spicy and Genoa salami and Fontina and Asiago cheeses. The tray



PHOTO COURTESY OF HORMEL FOODS



MAKE ENTERTAINING EASY







will come wrapped in a bright red sleeve for eye-catching merchandising. Delis can sell these trays out of the grab-and-go case and shoppers can unwrap and serve these immediately, according to Marco Terenghi, chief commercial officer.

Some customers prefer hands-on involvement in serving their guests. The 'build your own' deli platter concept allows these shoppers to customize offerings to their own tastes and price preferences, according to the IDDBA's *What's in Store, 2017* report.

Pre-sliced, shaped, artisan-style salami is an ideal ingredient for this 'no work entertaining' trend, according to Stephanie Egan, who serves as marketing manager for Piller's Fine Foods, a division of Premium Brands Operating Limited Partnership

(PBOLP), headquartered in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. "The Black Kassel brand is known for its signature-shaped salamis, including Old Forest and Picante (flower shapes), Mustard Seed (square/diamond) and D'Amour (heart shape). Delis can offer suggestions for garnishes, crudités, interesting flatbreads and crisps to add to deli platters, even cross merchandising these items in the deli to build the whole picture for the consumer."

Today's shopper is seeking more choices and more flavors; therefore, delis may want to offer non-traditional platter options, suggests the CAB's Erickson. "Ideas might start at home with dishes a customer's family enjoys assembling at the table, like tacos. The deli could assemble the tortilla shells, salsa, cheese and deli

meat for serving on a platter."

Consumer and corporate food gifts approached \$18 billion in 2016, up 3.5 percent from 2015, according to the August 15, 2017-released report, *Food Gifting in the U.S.*, by Packaged Facts. In addition, and by occasion among adults age 18 plus, the winter holidays are the top time for food gifting.

"Foie Gras Torchon is a luxurious appetizer, plus it is common to give this variety as a gift. Foie Gras becomes more popular during the holiday season because traditionally in France this is when the ducks and geese are ready to be processed," says D'Artagnan's Daguin.

### Try It On For Size

"Sampling is important for getting customers to try a new product or serve a product in a new way," suggests the CAB's Erickson.

Publix Super Markets, a 1,000-plus-store chain headquartered in Lakeland, FL, does just this at the retailer's annual Taste of the Holidays Event. The whole store, including the deli, gets involved in early December. The Saturday event features not only in-store product sampling, but also recipes and meal ideas.

"Retailers can effectively showcase how their deli meats can be used. To do this, the next time a sampling station is set up, use the meat in a recipe and offer that recipe on a card to customers, along with a coupon to encourage purchases," suggests Hormel's Johnson.

Another way to do this is via pictorial point-of-sale signage.

"Party food ideas that are very visual work best. For example, simple images of table and tray set-ups work well in this world of Pinterest-minded home cooks. Showing customers how great a simple party tray can look and offering them several sample tastes are two things that go a long way towards customer purchase," says Nueske's Dorsch.

A holiday cooking class or deli event is a great avenue for in-house chefs to help customers simplify festive meals and choose restaurant-quality meat products, suggests the CAB's Erickson. "The chef can share easy, fun ideas from the deli. A handout with solutions for the holidays gives customers more options and more reasons to shop the deli. The key is having someone willing to engage the shopper and think outside of the case to discuss ideas," says Erickson.

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As a child, the brand's founder was struck by the strength of the mining community and the sense of camaraderie from the miners who worked in very harsh, dangerous conditions during this time.

Just as coal fueled Wales' economic growth, it was cheese that was an important part of the miners' diet. It was nutritious, tasty, and simple to pack, with no waste.

It was this proud industrial heritage that sparked the idea for the Collier's brand, and the cheese exudes the characteristics of the Welsh coal miner: reliable, powerful and imbued with integrity.

The cheese is a single creamery Cheddar made exclusively in the rolling hills of North Wales with a single recipe. All the milk used in its production comes from local, grass-fed cows that can roam freely on Wales' famously lush pastures. The cheese is then slowly matured for a minimum of 14 months, and only packed when deemed ready by a professional grading team.

Cheese aficionados will appreciate the open texture and the calcium lactate crystals in the cheese, a testament to the aging process.

Collier's was the first cheese to use black packaging and the look,



complete with miner and colliery, helps ensure stand-out shelf appeal for a product that has stood the test of time.

Its marketer, Fayrefield Group, was established in 1982 and has grown to include seven companies under the guidance of founder and chairman John Kerr. Core activities include dairy commodity trading, cheese packing, and retail brand and own label management.

Taste, quality and respect for history, these are the factors that set Collier's Powerful Welsh Cheddar apart.

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