

ALSO INSIDE

FOCUS ON FRESH
MEDITERRANEAN FOODS
SPANISH FOODS
SANDWICH PROGRAMS
HISPANIC FOODS
MOUNTAIN CHEESE
PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO



THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Organic, local and natural foods confront consumers who must decide if this path best meets their wants and needs.

SPECIAL SECTION



Starts on page 29



Home Style Goodness

Pilgrim's Pride Deli Products – Solutions for Today's Consumers.

Today's consumers are demanding high quality, ready-to-eat salads in the deli. They want fresh homemade flavor without all the work. When it comes to salads, the best choice is the freshest choice – Pilgrim's Pride Gourmet Deli Salads. Our patented process holds freshness 2 to 3 times longer than other brands – to deliver the maximum in food safety. Pilgrim's Pride's delicious salads are perfectly blended with tender portions of chicken breast,

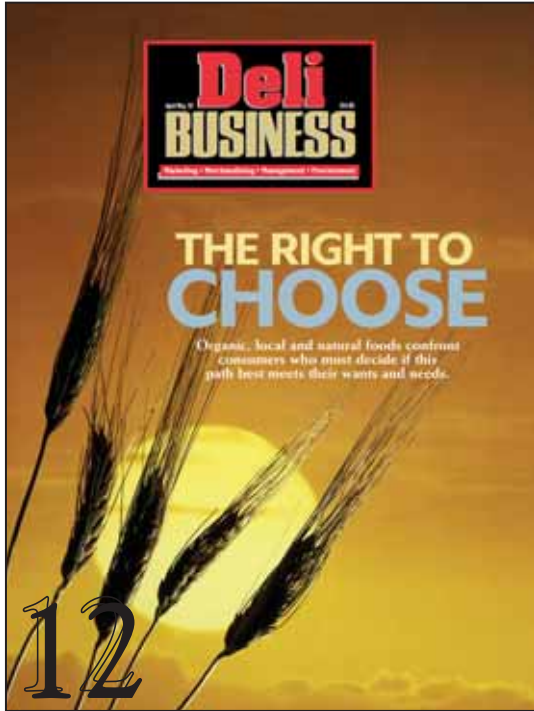
or albacore tuna and selected seasonings for a distinctive made-from-scratch flavor.

You know that deli protein salad sales are sure to continue to grow. That's why it is so important to team up with a manufacturer who can consistently deliver the quality your customers demand. With Pilgrim's Pride Gourmet Salads, you'll be selling the best choice – the freshest choice. For more information about our complete line of Gourmet Salads, call us at 800-824-1159.



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DELI BUSINESS QUIZ



BETTY-JO ARLINGTON

Assistant Buyer Deli/Bakery Division
Stop & Shop
Assonet, MA

Betty-Jo has recently been promoted to her position at Stop & Shop, a division of Ahold USA, headquartered in Quincy, MA. She joined the company 2½ years ago. She is currently balancing her new position with college studies and will receive her associate's degree this summer.

She is a new reader of DELI BUSINESS; her vice president recently started giving her the magazine to read and pass along to other colleagues. The contest she entered was in the second issue she read.

"I like the information about products from the different vendors we deal with," she explains. "I don't get a chance to see everything we buy. When we see something we like, we ask the vendors for samples. Of course, they go to the buyers, not the assistants, but we are the start of the recommendation chain."

As the winner of the DELI BUSINESS quiz, Betty-Jo will receive an iPod Nano.

WIN AN IPOD NANO 2ND GENERATION

2 GB with 1.5-inch backlit color LCD, anodized aluminum body, holds up to 500 songs/25,000 iPod Nano viewable photos, up to 24 hours playback when fully charged, skip-free playback, Mac and Windows compatible, silver finish.

HOW TO WIN

To win the DELI BUSINESS Quiz, the first thing you have to do is enter. The rules are simple: Read through the articles and advertisements in this issue to find the answers. Fill in the blanks corresponding to the questions below, and either cut along the dotted line or photocopy the page and send your answers, along with a business card or company letterhead, to the address listed below. The winner will be chosen by drawing from the responses received before the publication of the Aug./Sept. 2007 issue of DELI BUSINESS. **The winner must agree to submit a photo to be published in that issue.**

Quiz Questions

- 1) What is the e-mail address for Conroy Foods? _____
- 2) What is BelGioioso's slogan? _____
- 3) What is MDS Foods' IDDBA booth number? _____
- 4) When is Dairy☆Deli☆Bake☆2007? _____
- 5) What is the Web address for Costanzo's? _____
- 6) What is the toll-free number for Hormel? _____

This issue was: ☐ Personally addressed to me ☐ Addressed to someone else

Name: _____

Company: _____

Position: _____

Street: _____

City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ Fax: () _____

Please send answers to:

DELI BUSINESS QUIZ: April/May 2007 Issue

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Tesco's Hard Road Ahead



By
Jim Prevor
Editor-in-Chief of
DELI BUSINESS

Rarely has a study been as apropos as the Olson Communications study on freshness, which is the subject of an article by Sharon Olson on page 16.

The power of freshness as a marketing tool is amply illustrated by the fact that Tesco, the United Kingdom's largest retailer and one well known for doing its research, elected to name its new American concept Fresh&Easy. Look at Tesco's web site and under a banner reading "Everyone deserves fresh healthy food," you'll see how they

describe their stores:

Smaller than the usual supermarket, our 10,000 sq ft shops will be easily accessible and offer everything from everyday staples to gourmet items. Lots of fresh and delicious food choices, including pre-prepared and organic foods, will make healthy eating convenient and affordable. In particular, our own fresh&easy line of products will have no added trans fat and no artificial colors or flavors. The simple packaging and labels on our private brand will help you see exactly what you're bringing home — great food you can trust.

To some extent, Tesco's positioning is similar to Whole Foods Market — an organic, natural, environmentally friendly, healthy sensibility — but it also has a gastronomic positioning similar to Trader Joe's with its heavy emphasis on private label and gourmet items. And it proposes to do all this at a price that will be recognized as mainstream.

It won't be easy. And freshness is a big part of the reason why.

The concept Tesco proposes to open in the U.S. is loosely based on the Tesco Express stores in the U.K. These stores focus on prepared foods sold under a private label and are very successful. But the concept is heavily urban in the U.K., and the model customer is the woman getting off the Tube and stopping to pick up dinner on the way to her flat.

In the U.S., the concept is opening in Phoenix, Las Vegas and parts of southern California. This is more suburban territory, and it will be a real challenge to get people to stop, get out of their cars and pick up dinner at these 10,000 square-foot stores. Even if they succeed, the density of population in the U.S. is so much less than that in the U.K., it will be hard to sustain sufficient movement of a wide variety of prepared foods to keep them all fresh.

People who have tried ventures focused in this way often find themselves in a death spiral: The sales are insufficient to support the hundreds of SKUs of Thai, Indian and many other cuisines in the bountiful section filled with fresh prepared foods. Thus shrink numbers start killing the store.

To reduce the shrink, two logical steps are taken: The assortment is "rationalized" to eliminate many slow moving items, while the quantity of each item ordered is reduced. Predictably, the assortment is now not so outstanding and the out-of-stocks are annoyingly frequent. This further

reduces sales, pushes shrink numbers up again and leads to the cycle repeating.

By the time you're done, they have rotisserie chicken, a pizza program and a sub shop and no reason for anyone to go there anymore.

Freshness is very easy to aspire to, but very hard to implement. This author remembers visiting the first Eatzi's and being enormously impressed by the fantastic assortment of fresh foods. The store had an arrangement with the Culinary Institute of America to provide chefs and they were plentiful. A quick walk through the store, and one could easily assume you had found the fresh nirvana.

However, whenever one tried to actually buy fresh food at an Eatzi's in the normal course of life, one quickly

learned that it was something of a fresh bait-and-switch. During lunch hour, for example, it was almost impossible to wait for your food to be freshly made and get back to the office in any reasonable amount of time. Attracted to the store by its fresh salads, sandwiches, etc., inevitably, the long lines were frustrating and one wound up buying one of the pre-prepared and packaged salads and sandwiches.

They weren't bad, but they weren't freshly made and they weren't why people were coming to Eatzi's. This may explain why Eatzi's, which was supposed to be the next big thing, fizzled out.

The Tesco concept also seems a bit contradictory. When people read that Tesco will have "lots of fresh and delicious food choices," the heart leaps but when they next say "including pre-prepared and organic foods," one senses confusion. Pre-prepared isn't fresh; it is the opposite of fresh. And organic, well that refers to the nature of ingredients or products, but a two-week-old head of organic lettuce is just as wilted as a two-week-old head of conventionally grown lettuce.

Also tied into notions of freshness are notions of authenticity, and in the U.S., where ethnic food is common, authenticity comes from buying from an authentic place — Italian food from an Italian restaurant, Chinese food from a Chinese restaurant and so on. In rural areas where ethnic restaurants may be scarce, some supermarkets, such as Wegmans Food Markets, have filled the gap and a few supermarkets have identified themselves with particular ethnic groups such as Waldbaum's in New York and Genuardi's Family Market in Philadelphia.

In the U.S., though, restaurants have a significantly higher share of stomach than they do in the U.K., and Tesco is likely to find restaurants a difficult competitor. No matter how high its quality, a chain supermarket like Tesco, relying on centrally located prepared foods suppliers, is likely to struggle with both freshness and authenticity.

Tesco's concept is new for America and thus truly fresh, but implementation is unlikely to be very easy.

DB

Freshness is very easy to aspire to,
but very hard to implement.

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The Art Of Science



By
Lee Smith
*Publisher of
DELI BUSINESS*

"Figures don't lie but liars figure," a quote from Samuel Clemens (alias Mark Twain) was my father's favorite. It was his explanation when I asked him how he managed to persuade my mother to buy a new car every other year and it was his answer when my brother and I tried to persuade him of the educational value of a color TV and our resultant higher life-time earnings.

My father was an accountant and banking executive and, later on, an independent business owner. He loved to debate and he took great pride that he could take either side of an argument and win based on his ability to use statistics, science and numbers. And, his closing piece of advice was always, "Just remember, with science and numbers you can win any argument, but it doesn't mean you're right."

Such is the case of "good science" when it comes to food safety, global warming and a multitude of complex issues. I always think of my father when I hear someone say, "But good science tells us..." or "We need to make decisions based on good science..."

Of course, no one wants to make a decision based on bad science or conjecture or someone's personal opinion, but it also is important to remember that science answers questions using what we presume to be true, not actual truth. While my father had his favorite saying, mine has always been, "The earth was flat until it was round," meaning people believed in a flat earth, science proved it true and consequently it was flat — until it wasn't.

Today, once a product has been thoroughly tested, the results are true until proven wrong. While the approval process for new ingredients, preservatives and additives is quite complicated, once a product is deemed safe the difficulty of proving otherwise is far more complicated, costly and time consuming. Often times, negative outcomes are placed in the anecdotal category of unsubstantiated urban folklore.

Unfortunately, good science is often used interchangeably with test results. So, we hear comments like, "Using good science, it has not been proven that product X presents a problem and until it has been proven otherwise this product has been thoroughly tested and found to be safe." Unfortunately, it is the test procedure itself that often poses the problem, which inadvertently hides the problematic actual performance.

Trans fat is a good example of a tested and approved product. When doctors realized the danger of saturated fat consumption, trans fat products soared. Coupled with a host of other benefits, including longer shelf life and stabi-

ty, it was off to the race track until trans fats became ubiquitous in our diets. The American public has been gorging on trans fats thinking they were doing their bodies well by avoiding butter.

Now, we know the rest of the story and it wasn't a good trade-off. It can be argued that the danger of trans fat consumption has been overblown, especially considering animal fats have naturally occurring trans fatty acids, but, for right now, many people think science and industry stabbed them in the back.

Scientific testing is often not wrong, just limited in scope. Time is often a key element of testing. Ideally, something new would be tested for a couple of generations, but obviously that is not possible, so tests are conducted for a limited time. For

example, ethoxyquine is a carcinogen that was widely used as a preservative in pet food and absolutely forbidden in food for human consumption. It was approved for use in animal fodder (food) and the testing was done with cattle up until about three years of age or until the age in which cattle are slaughtered and no problems were found. But, what are the consequences for pets that are often fed only pet food that is not supplemented by wild or natural foods and are expected to live for many more years? Many pet advocates feel ethoxyquine should not be allowed in pet food and most pet food companies no longer use it.

Pesticide residue in apple juice was another issue. The product was tested using adult males and found to be safe. The objection occurred when people pointed out how much apple juice young children consume and questioned whether the same results should apply to toddlers.

Unfortunately, today, consumers are being inundated with information and recalls about previously safe foods becoming deadly — trans fat, found in products that consumers thought were better for them; food born illness outbreaks that result in people across the country falling seriously ill or dying from foods thought to be absolutely safe, such as peanut butter and spinach; and now multiple brands of dog and cat food pulled for melamine contamination. Technically, only 16 pets have died, but unofficially tens of thousands have died and many, more have suffered. The list of recalled brands is still growing and now rice protein concentrate and corn gluten is involved.

When combined with the threat of global warming and the accusations that the government hindered research, threatened scientists and demanded watered down results, people are going to become even more skeptical about good science protecting them. Companies that acknowledge their concerns and pursue initiatives that promote a concern for the environment, clean labeling and a strong commitment to quality will find a ready audience. **DB**

As my father used to say, "Figures don't lie but liars figure."

Its sales potential
is as rich as its taste.


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The complex, European flavors of Fiorucci's new Rostello premium roasted ham were heralded by focus groups, who appreciated the care and attention that went into each slice. That same careful approach has been applied to our Retailer Marketing Support Program—which offers impactful point of sale, plus comprehensive sampling and couponing efforts. It's a true recipe for success.

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or contact John Jack at Fiorucci Foods:
jjack@fioruccifoods.com | 800-524-7775



DELI WATCH

Transitions



Dominique Delugeau has been appointed president of DCI Cheese Company's Import Division in Moonachie, NJ. He has an extensive knowledge of cheese, spanning more than 20 years, and will be sharing his time between the New Jersey office and corporate headquarters in Richfield, WI. DCI is a supplier of high-quality, specialty cheese.

www.dcicheeseco.com



Jennifer Convery has been named general manager of Griffith Laboratories USA, Alsip, IL. As a 14-year veteran of Griffith, she brings to this position strong leadership and managerial experience. She will be responsible for the management of commercial and manufacturing operations. Griffith is a global manufacturer of food ingredient blends.

www.griffithlaboratories.com

Announcements



Pre-Sliced Parma Ham

In 2006, U.S. imports of Parma ham totaled 5.5 million pounds for the year, about 15 percent of which was pre-sliced. Three-ounce packages are sold in specialty food stores, supermarket chains such as A&P

Fresh, Harris Teeter, Wegmans and Trader Joe's. Warehouse club stores such as Costco sell 12-ounce packages.

www.prosciuttodiparma.com

Reader Service No. 401



Cheese Awards

Fiscalini Cheese Company, Modesto, CA, was honored at the 2007 World Cheese Awards in London. Fiscalini 18-month Bandage Wrapped and Fiscalini Cheddar won gold medals, 30-month-aged Bandage

Wrapped Cheddar took a silver. Fiscalini's San Joaquin Gold has won three consecutive years at the World Cheese Awards.

www.fiscalinicheese.com

Reader Service No. 402

New Products



All-Natural Turkey

Willow Brook Foods, Springfield, MO, offers Lifestyle Premium Deli All Natural Turkey to provide foodservice customers with a variety of flavorful, healthful products for their menus. Lifestyle All Natural Turkey contains no allergens and has 0 g trans fat. It is available in Smoked, Kettle Fried, Oven Roasted and Herb Roasted flavors.

www.willowbrookfoods.com

Reader Service No. 403



New Convenient Packaging

BelGioioso Cheese, Denmark, WI, now offers convenient BelGioioso Perline Fresh Mozzarella (snack-size balls sold in 1- and 3-pound foodservice size tubs) and BelGioioso Pre-Sliced Fresh Mozzarella, a version of the Fresh Mozzarella that won Best of Class at

the 2007 Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association contest.

www.belgioioso.com

Reader Service No. 404



Repackaged Spreadable Cheese

Norseland, Inc., Stamford, CT, is revitalizing its Norwegian Snofrisk brand. A unique goat's milk/cow's cream blend, this mild, spreadable cheese — the name means Snow Fresh — is delicate with a touch of tanginess. The redesigned Snofrisk package has colorful, snappy new graphics with plenty of eye-appeal to grab consumers' attention.

www.norseland.com

Reader Service No. 405



Antibiotic-Free Sausages

Applegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ, has launched three pre-cooked, classic sausages: Smoked Bratwurst, Andouille and Smoked Kielbasa. Each is made

from 100 percent natural, humanely raised antibiotic-free pork with no artificial ingredients, preservatives or fillers of any kind. Sold in 12-ounce packages (4 links per package) packed 12 to a 9-pound case.

www.applegatefarms.com

Reader Service No. 406



Salami With Wine

Volpi Foods, Inc., St. Louis, MO, announces the newest addition to its premium line of artisanal, dry-cured meats — Volpi Wine Salami. Volpi's Pinot Grigio and Chianti

Wine Salami are made with all-natural fresh pork and traditional spices and infused with high quality Pinot Grigio and Chianti wines from Italy. Dry-cured and aged to perfection.

www.volpifoods.com

Reader Service No. 407



Natural Meats

Hormel Foods, Austin, MN, has added Hormel Natural Choice Roast Beef, Chicken Strips, Canadian Bacon and Uncured Bacon to its line. Hormel Nat-

ural Choice meat products have no preservatives, no artificial colors or flavors and no added nitrites or nitrates. They are also gluten free, low in fat and trans-fat free, with no MSG added.

www.hormelnatural.com

Reader Service No. 408



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

DELI WATCH

New Products



Oven Roasted Potatoes

ConAgra Foods' Lamb Weston, Eagle, ID, presents Oven Roasted Potatoes, made from redskin and russet potatoes. Available in baked wedge cuts and tri-cut dices, they are low in fat and have 0 grams trans fat. These french-fry alternative may be served alongside sandwiches and entrées or as an appetizer with dipping sauces.

www.lambweston.com

Reader Service No. 409



Irish-Inspired Cheeses

Roth Käse, Monroe, WI, introduces The Irish Range, a collection of imported and Irish-inspired, Wisconsin-made cheeses. The four flavor selections are: Donovan's Double Diamond Darby (slightly sweet with a tangy finish), Emerald Swiss (mild and nutty), Kelly's Cow (mild and mellow) and imported Donovan's Auld Irish Cheddar (rich, robust and buttery).

www.rothkase.com

Reader Service No. 410



California Avocados

The California Avocado Commission, Irvine, CA, recognizes salad lovers anticipate the arrival of fresh California Avocados, with their mellow taste and rich texture. Foodservice operators find the avocados an ideal complement to baby lettuces and other produce favorites. Fresh and flavorful salad recipes abound for this versatile spring offering.

www.avocado.org

Reader Service No. 411



Mini Display Warmer

Hatco, Milwaukee, WI, introduces its Model MDW, a Mini Display Warmer. Its three shelves are magnetically adjustable for horizontal and slanted display. This gives owners more flexibility in displaying products such as sandwiches, cookies, croissants, scones and muffins. The units are designed to draw attention and spur profits in convenience stores, coffee shops, restaurants, recreational facilities and theme parks — anywhere with limited counter space.

www.hatcocorp.com

Reader Service No. 412



Fruit Pouch

Dole Fruit Co., Westlake Village, CA, has packed its premium quality Tropical Gold Pineapple, Pineapple Tidbits and Tropical Fruit Salad in a handy, shelf-stable pouch. Ultra-convenient Dole Pouch Packs deliver juicy, fresh-tasting fruit appeal without the hassle. Dole packs quality, consistency and convenience in an easy-to-use pouch.

www.dolefoodservice.com

Reader Service No. 413



Onion & Fig Jam

Mt. Vikos, Inc. of Marshfield, MA, presents something for lovers of caramelized onions: Mt. Vikos Onion & Fig Jam, a perfect condiment for cheese. The sweet and savory spread, made with sautéed onions, imported figs, and Zante currants is all natural and great with panini and all sandwiches. Mt. Vikos Onion & Fig Spread is also available in foodservice sizes for caterers and restaurants.

www.mtvikos.com

Reader Service No. 414



New Soups

Unilever Foodsolutions, Lisle, IL, has launched a new line of Knorr Easy Bistro soups. Combining state-of-the-art packaging and manufacturing with Knorr flavor expertise, this new line delivers fresh-tasting, chef-inspired soups with incomparable operational ease. Each pouch yields approximately 64 ounces and can be heated in as little as 11 minutes on the stovetop, boil-in-bag, microwave, combi-steamer or steam table.

www.unileverfoodsolutions.com.us

Reader Service No. 415



Packaging Solutions

International Paper, Memphis, TN, announces Infinity stock design for foodservice disposable packaging products. The new design provides foodservice operators a fresh and modern packaging design for their eating establishments. Infinity packaging offers three color schemes that distinguish hot drink, cold drink and food packaging. These unique and color complementary designs make it easy to differentiate between types of packaging.

www.ipfoodservice.com

Reader Service No. 416



Shrimp Offerings

Tampa Maid, Lakeland, FL, announces the addition of peeled and deveined Central and South American white shrimp, both raw and cooked, Mexican shell-on white shrimp and cooked tail-off salad shrimp to their line-up of seafood offerings for foodservice operators.

Tampa Maid has a proven history of innovation and production of quality value-added seafood and seafood specialties.

www.tampamaid.com

Reader Service No. 417



Mexican Snacks

Jay's Potato Chips, Chicago, IL, introduces a new line of Mexican snack foods that offer authentic taste and a unique blend of bold spicy flavors. The new line includes seven unique flavors: Salsa Verde Tortilla Chips, Salsa Roja Tortilla Chips, Yellow Corn Tortilla Chips, Hot Stuff Corn Chips, Jalapeno Potato Chips, Hot Stuff Cheezlets and Salsa Verde Pork Skins.

www.jaysfoods.com

Reader Service No. 418



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THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Organic, local and natural foods confront consumers who must decide if this path best meets their wants and needs.

BY YAHIA LABABIDI

The appeal of natural foods — organic and/or local — harkens back to a pre-global food economy. Given an increased awareness of health issues and confronted with food scares around the world, people tend to crave a time innocent of such interdependence and complicated choices. A time before things were Bigger, Better, Shinier! When produce simply looked and tasted like it was supposed to. Prior to all this novelty of the old, and fetishization of the natural. And, back to basics: the live jolt of fresh fruit or vegetables and the emotional connectedness that accompanied them.

Not too long ago, choosing organic food was part and parcel of an ideology, a personal ethos. Today, it is an alternative lifestyle on the verge of being adopted by the mainstream. Just as with any trendy practice or belief system, there are the die-hard adherents willing to make life-altering sacrifices to align their choices with their values, and there are those merely attracted to the skin of things. The allure of the organic lifestyle, superficially stated, revolves around the perceived health benefits of natural living and foods that are free of the synthetic or toxic — fertilizers, pesticides, preservatives, hormones, antibiotics, irradiation or genetically modified organisms.

But, for those more committed to the cause, and its attendant ethical



Smooth meets tangy

New Ile de France® Le Brie de Chèvre

The smooth, creaminess that's the hallmark of Ile de France imported cheeses has long been a favorite of your customers. Ile de France Le Brie de Chèvre is no exception. Not only our new Goat's Milk Brie is extraordinarily creamy, but it also has the freshness and tanginess that are characteristic of Ile de France goat cheeses. Now you can indulge your customers with the best of both worlds. New Ile de France Le Brie de Chèvre is sure to generate trial, repeat purchase and profits.



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issues, it is the difference between yoga as a physical workout and yoga as spiritual exercise. Which is to say, the philosophy of going organic encompasses broader issues, such as: the health of the planet (environmental issues), humane animal treatment and slaughter (animal rights), welfare of farms and farmers (farmland preservation and promoting small business) as well as a host of political and global implications.

Still, if food activism is not for everyone — consumers and retailers alike — there is an argument to be made that even those flirting with these ideas might stand to get more than what they bargained for if they commit. Namely, that what began as a pat on the back by the privileged, curious and entrepreneurial few could develop into an expanded collective consciousness of the role consumers play in influencing markets, and perhaps the world.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

The prevalence of organic food, and its virtues, is a topical and hotly debated issue. The U.S. market for organic food has more than doubled over the last six years, and now nearly a quarter of American shoppers buy organic products once a week, up from 17 percent in 2000. This is still a niche market, but the profile of the organic food customer less strictly resembles the description provided by the Organic Trade Association, Greenfield, MA, two years ago — 35 to 65 years old, with high education and income level. With people more health conscious and better informed than before, as well as organic food more readily available to people of all socioeconomic levels, it is not unlikely today that a 12-year-old child from a middle income family is just as likely to be susceptible to the romance of organic.

Predictably, there have been cries from purists that standards are being diluted, and that by this alternative lifestyle going mainstream, organic food has sold its soul. Which is to say, the rise of "Big Organic" (large-scale production of organic food to meet growing demand) is producing concern that the organic movement's original ideals have been forgotten as large companies move in.

nies move in.

But, it has always been so — the mainstream co-opting (and possibly corrupting) the fringe — which is perhaps all the more reason the fringe must remain eternally vigilant, on the lookout for alternatives.

KEEPING IT LOCAL

"Local is the new organic" seems to be the unofficial slogan of the local food movement of the past couple of years. Yet, the definition of "local" appears to be slippery. For ethnobotanist Gary Paul Nabhan, who inspired many local activists with his 2002 memoir, *Coming Home to Eat*, it means eating within a 250-mile radius of his Arizona home.

Meantime, on his blog, John Mackey, president of Whole Foods, based in Austin, TX, has used a radius of 200 miles to mean local. (Many who blog at a site called eatlocalchallenge.com aim for a stricter "100-mile diet.")

In an intriguing research report cited by Sharon Olson in this issue (please see *Focus On Fresh* on page 16), 77 percent of consumers surveyed associated freshness with local products, versus 57 percent who said organic. By the same token, there seemed to be an increasing skepticism regarding the credibility of organic labels on processed and frozen foods (with people wondering aloud if organic labeling, with all the different classifications allowed for by federal regulations — was not really a 'myth' to justify higher prices).

Stephen McDonnell, founder and CEO of Montclair, NJ-based Applegate Farms, does not see organic and local foods as being opposed but rather complementary. "Often this is seen as a debate of organic vs. local, and we firmly believe it should be framed as organic and local. Our goal is to offer the best, freshest food available to the consumer. When sourcing and supplying organic and natural meat, which is what our company does, local isn't always an option. We are proud to purchase antibiotic-free and organic meat and milk from over 300 family farms."

Applegate does, however, see the value in small-scale family farms versus large-scale industrial, for the health and environmental benefits as well as more the humane practices and sustainable agriculture employed. "Although sourcing from smaller farms sometimes presents logistical challenges, we're firmly committed to making it work," McDonnell elaborates.

There are considerable benefits to raising livestock on smaller family farms compared to large-scale conventional farms. The practices used on small scale, sustainable

farms are healthier for the animals as well as the environment and have a positive impact on the agricultural communities where the farms are located.

All of the farms that produce organic and antibiotic-free meat and milk for Applegate maintain incredibly clean and humane environments with plenty of fresh air and sunlight for the animals."

Phil Meldrum, president of FoodMatch, Inc. New York, NY, recognizes that organic currently is utilized as an umbrella term. Moreover, he broadens the definition of local food to include "local communities who are tied together by agriculture." FoodMatch strongly supports these types of local farming communities even though they may be overseas. Regardless of where they are, family farms and smaller scale agriculture are worth supporting and help preserve the local character of their villages. So for us organic and local are part of a bigger [picture]."

Which brings the focus back to farms and farmers, and local character. Meldrum continues, "Family farms and not industrial farms define local as it supports local traditions. A core part of our philosophy is to support family farms — farms that are large enough to support a family but not too large for a family to actively farm. In Greece, for example, this would be between 2,000 and 5,000 olive trees.

"This is what lead us to organic years ago, as organic in Europe is typically a smaller operation with a high degree of care and a great quality crop," he concludes.

ORGANIC: TO CONVERT OR NOT

Science cannot tell us conclusively that organic food is better for us, just as it cannot definitely state that conventional foods are worse for us. Toxicity appears to be in the dose, and risks of long-term exposure to toxic residues remain uncertain. So, foods are assumed innocent, after rigorous testing, until they are proven guilty.

For example, it is not evident that low levels of pesticide found on conventional produce cause cancer. But, while the powers-that-be — FDA, toxicologists, etc. — wrangle over minimum residue limits (MRLs) and lethal-dose-50-percents (LD50s), what is fit for human consumption, how much and for how long, the intuitive mistrust of tampering looms large (coupled with a lingering distrust of science or, at least, manipulating science for a profit).

In this air of uncertainty, more and more people are preferring to err on the side of caution in the belief that to tamper is to upset the balance of things — in this case the integrity of soil, food, animals and plan-

For those more committed to the cause, and its attendant ethical issues, it is the difference between yoga as a physical workout and yoga as spiritual exercise.

et. This means taking the time to read the labels, eliminating additives from their diets and seeking out foods grown without those pesky chemical pesticides, hormones or antibiotics.

Yes, it takes longer and costs more to raise animals without hormones or antibiotics, but consumers are also considering the ethical dimension, as well as the well-being of animals and the environment, in the process.

Peter Melchett of the Bristol, England-based Soil Association, Britain's leading organic lobby group, says environmental concerns, rather than health benefits, are now cited by British consumers as their main justification for buying organic. Likewise, in the *Focus on Fresh* survey, "environmentally friendly" was what came to the minds of 53 percent of consumers when asked to define organic, while only 45 percent thought to describe it as "healthy."

In other words, on both sides of the Atlantic, the perception appears to be that going organic is the noble and high-minded thing to do; and that by endorsing organic food, people are thinking of the planet before themselves.

ENLIGHTENED COMPROMISE

Practically speaking, a shift to 100 percent organic ingredients for all products is not immediately foreseeable, since organic sources — specifically dairy — are scarce. The transition to organic is even trickier for the meat industry, for instance, and entails raising livestock on organic feed and requiring a mother to be on organic feed for three months prior to a calf's birth.

After a rancher has contacted a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) certifier, the transition can take up to three years, since the organic label includes ethical criteria as well, such as humane treatment and humane slaughter.

In addition to the perceived health and environmental benefits, perhaps people are opting for natural, organic and local foods as a means of registering a protest against genetically modified foods, a way of pushing back against the the decision by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve genetically modified crops that are part of the American food system. Genetically modified foods in the United States do not require any specific labeling, whereas organics do.

For consumers, short of growing their own food or relying on local farmers to stock their pantries — and in turn, determine their menus — making food choices entails enlightened compromises. Increasingly,

this seems to translate into an interest in natural products — products that contain no artificial colors, flavors or preservatives — that are cheaper than organic as they do not have to observe the strict requirements of organic certification.

For retailers, this new sensibility means providing consumers with more choices — local, natural and organic. One of the primary challenges regarding organic foods and farming will be to see to it that large-scale production does not sacrifice quality

control — or the principles behind the trend — and to try to wed opportunity with accountability.

In short, it comes down to satisfying the consumers' need to know where their food comes from and thus enabling them to make ethical food choices. For at least part of this equation, FoodMatch's Meldrum offers this neat formula: "Family sustainable versus industrial scale... delivers better products to the retailer and better experiences to the consumer." **DB**

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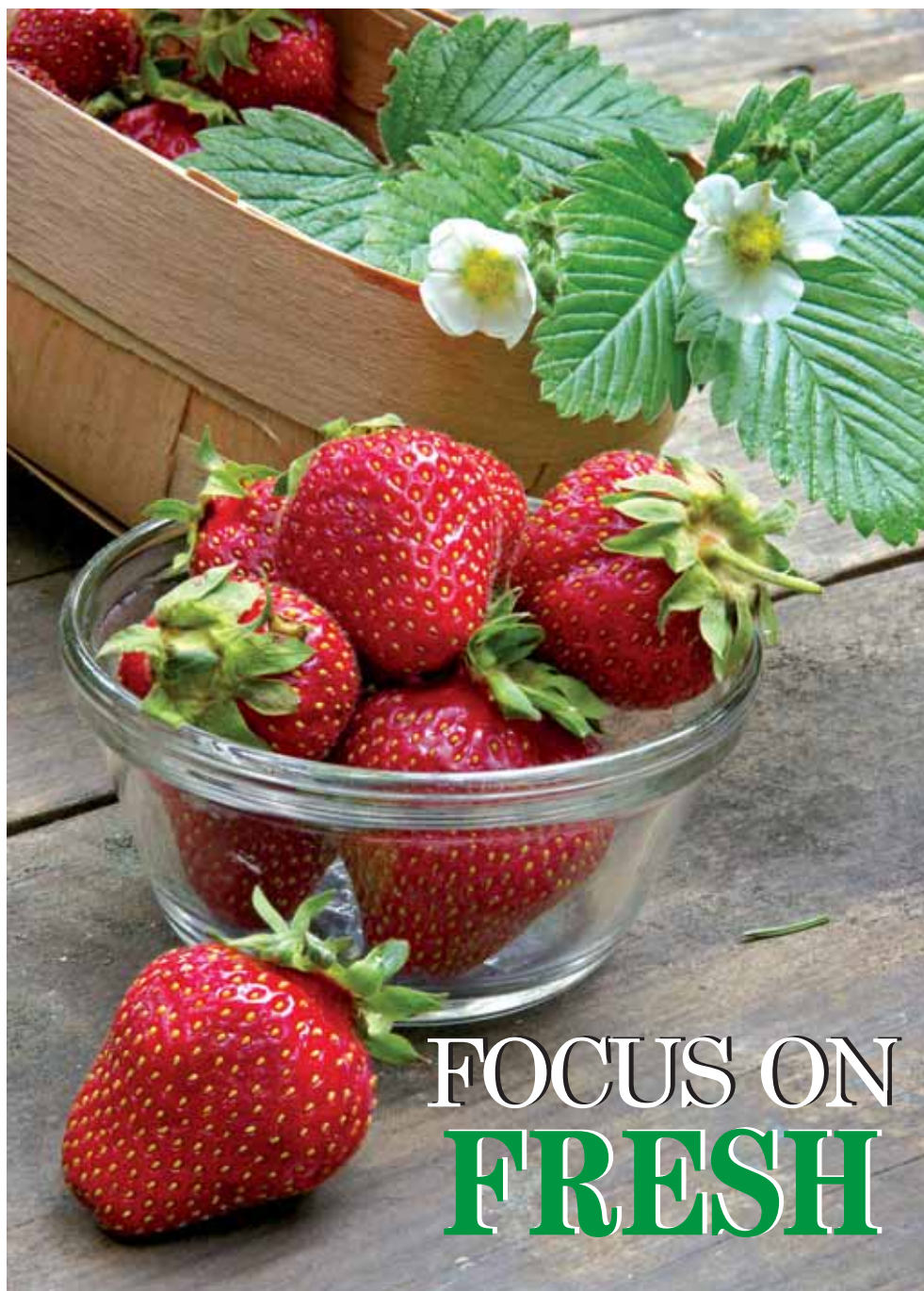
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Fresh may be the most powerful word in food merchandising today, but how do consumers define it, and how can delis deliver it in a way that is relevant, believable and cost effective? These are the questions this year's consumer survey set out to explore.

In a survey conducted by Olson Communications, a Chicago, IL-based food marketing firm that specializes in trend spotting in the food business, 297 con-

Consumers have definite perceptions on what makes a deli department “fresh” — and they are unwilling to compromise.

By Sharon Olson

sumers were asked questions regarding their attitudes about freshness and how their shopping experiences measured up.

Researchers were then sent to visit stores across the country to spot fresh merchandising tactics that worked and some that missed the mark according to the consumers who were surveyed.

Defining Fresh

Key terms consumers use to define fresh are: healthy, high quality and tastes best. They were given the opportunity to choose their top three words or phrases that best defined



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fresh. Locally produced was the most commonly associated phrase that defined freshness, noted by 77 percent of consumers; 57 percent said organic and 47 percent said sustainable. Sixty-nine percent of consumers noted "made to order" as an important descriptor of fresh.

Trans-fat free did not emerge as an issue related to delis, but it was clearly on the consumers' radar screen as a danger sign for prepared foods. Nearly 58 percent of con-

sumers said that in relation to delis, they would never compromise on freshness.

Organic Loyalists

There are true believers as well as skeptics when it comes to organic. This year's study probed into consumer attitudes and beliefs about organic as well as specific product categories where it is most relevant.

"Environmentally friendly" was noted most often by 53 percent of consumers

when they were asked to define organic. This was followed by "expensive" and "healthy" with 45 percent of consumers using each of these words to describe organic. Only 25 percent described organic as "high quality" and 7 percent as "sustainable."

Worth The Price

When asked about product characteristics that would warrant paying a premium price, most shoppers are willing to pay extra for fresh, but 71 percent of them said it would depend upon the product. The organic certification did add tangible value more than any other certification.

The study identified 8 percent of consumers as organic loyalists — absolutely willing to pay more for organic products. Another 49 percent said it would depend on the product. When asked about the value of fresh, far more consumers are willing to pay extra for products they perceive as fresh, almost 3 to 1 over organic.

The Fresh Value Proposition

Consumers noted that freshness is more important for some categories than for others. Produce, dairy and seafood ranked highest as foods where fresh is critical to the purchase decision. Deli ranked higher than bakery for importance of freshness — 87 percent for deli, 79 percent for bakery.

Bread ranked among the bottom three choices when consumers were asked to associate foods with degrees of freshness. Prepackaged white bread was noted frequently as the opposite of fresh.

Consumers said that fresh, healthy and nutritious were the most important characteristics in purchasing food. Organic, fair trade, farm raised and sustainable rated comparably with about 11 percent of consumers who said these characteristics would drive a purchase decision.


Trusted Fresh Venues

The individual store experience means more than claims or labels to the consumers surveyed. Many consumers shared the name of their local retailer as a trusted source based on their experience. Consumers were asked to choose their three favorite locations to buy fresh food. Supermarkets were among their top three. Not surprising, farmers markets ranked high as the best place to find fresh food, by 79 percent of consumers. Local retailers fared extremely well and were noted by 55 percent of consumers as a great place to find fresh food.

National and local supermarket chains were listed alongside Bentonville, AR-based Wal-Mart, as places consumers would trust

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to buy fresh products. Consumers shared reasons that were based more on personal experience than perception of brands.

Fresh Brands

Sixty-two percent of consumers said they do not look for brands when they look for fresh food. Of the 38 percent who said brand was important, they noted store brands with which they had personal experience rather than manufacturer or producer brands.

The store as a brand is emerging as more important than the brands within the store. When consumers offered up store brands as favorites, they described characteristics related to the total store experience, not just specific products.

Consumer Relevance

Consumers want credible information on the foods they purchase. This information goes well beyond product labels. They indicated frustration in their ability to get the information they wanted for many food items. Particularly frustrating were house-made salads. Although these products were often listed as favorites for taste, there were equally as many negative comments such as, "not always fresh," "don't have any idea what's in it" and "Have you ever tried to get nutrition information from the person behind the counter?"

Favorite Fresh Foods

When consumers were asked about their favorite fresh foods in the deli, the response often related to a particular recipe of a prepared chilled food offering or a made-to-order sandwich. There were no surprises when consumers noted meat, cheese, salads, and made-to-order sandwiches as fresh deli favorites. Notably absent were rotisserie chicken and prepared hot entrées.

Fake Fresh Claims

The deli patron is a savvy consumer, and these consumers enjoyed sharing some of their favorite fake fresh claims. Products of international origin labeled as fresh caused a disconnect for many consumers. A visual presentation that contradicts signage was another issue consumers noted. In particular, consumers cited moldy berries in the fresh produce department as a definite detraction to claims of freshness. Consumers also found it difficult to believe that pre-sliced deli meats were fresh. Packaged products with shelf-life dates far too long to be considered fresh made consumers wonder what kind of preservatives were in them to make them last that long. Dairy products caused concern for many consumers with products

such as milk that was good for three weeks and eggs that would last over a month.

Organic Skepticism

Consumer scrutiny is growing due to the proliferation of organic labels on processed foods. Even though federal regulations allow for different classifications of organic products in stores, consumers simply do not find organic claims on frozen food and processed snack foods to be believable.

Organic labeling was characterized as a

"marketing myth" by consumers who felt it was an unsubstantiated claim used by some retailers to justify a higher price. Consumers do not automatically perceive organic products as being fresher and more healthful than conventional products.

Fresh Merchandising

According to researchers who surveyed stores for fresh merchandising tactics, poor store-level execution contradicted fresh claims all too often. Virtually, all stores fea-



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Store experience is becoming more important to consumers than specific brands or claims

tured language and promotions that highlighted the freshness and great taste of their offerings. Beautiful, appetizing color photography on translights over the deli case added appeal in some cases, but in others where the graphics were old, faded and dull, it gave the exact opposite impression.

Display cases with great serving pieces filled with fresh product in the morning enhanced the appeal of freshness. Late evening surveys found some displays that

were kept clean, even though nearly empty, gave a positive impression of freshness and a desire to purchase the product. Other cases with spilled products, dropped signs and messy utensils gave the opposite impression of freshness.

Although pre-sliced and piled deli meats looked pretty, no one considered these fresh. The attitude of the deli attendant about slicing fresh to order had the power to change that perception or validate it.

Employee appearance also played a role in fresh perception of freshness. Some delis' employees wore clean, fresh uniforms or even chef's jackets; they were perceived as fresher than those where appearance was haphazard.

Fingerprints on the case were noted as an indication that employees did not have time to keep the department fresh looking and that impression transferred to the food.

Although pre-sliced and piled deli meats looked pretty, no one considered these fresh.

The attitude of the deli attendant about slicing fresh to order had the power to change that perception or validate it.

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The Fresh Zone

What can retailers do to create an irresistible fresh zone inside their stores to build confidence, credibility and sales with their customers? Research provided just as much insight into practices that ring true with consumers as efforts that seem outrageous and unbelievable to consumers.

Best Fresh Zone Practices

1. Products that look fresh, displayed in sparkling clean areas, well stocked in the cases.

2. Made or sliced to order — not pre-sliced put out in the morning for all day.

3. Realistic code dates — Consumers do not want to know the product has extended shelf life; they want short dates that still leave them time to enjoy the products at home.

4. Deliver on taste claims — Consumers want great taste and are unforgiving when a product does not live up to a claim.

5. Share information — Many customers want to know where a product comes from, why it is labeled a particular way and what is in it. House-made products are not exempt from this scrutiny and when employees can share this information with customers, it builds trust.

It seems so simple — and it is.

DB

Make A Splash With Mediterranean Foods

Drive customers to the deli by creating a Mediterranean destination.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

Mediterranean foods are steadily increasing in popularity throughout the United States. "It has just exploded over the last five or six years," says Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Bradford, MA, makers of hummus, salads, wraps, spreads, pita chips and desserts and, recently, importers of Greek Feta cheese. "We've been in double-digit growth, predominately with hummus, but now some of the customers are starting to branch off."

Much of the cuisine's popularity is owed to the buzz about the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet. "Overall, consumers are looking for more healthful alternatives," says Frocione. "Our customer demographics are still skewed towards female, health-conscious, 20-to-40 somethings, but it keeps crossing over."

"People are saying, 'I want to eat foods that have properties that are good for me,'" notes John McGuckin, executive vice president, Sabra Go Mediterranean, Astoria, NY.

"Everyone wants to eat more healthfully, but they don't want to do so at the expense of flavor," observes Sheree Cardoos, president, Mt. Vikos, Inc., Marshfield, MA, importers of Greek cheeses, spreads, mezes (Greek appetizers) and olive oil toasts and biscuits. And, she notes, "As people travel more and they have these foods in Greece or in a restaurant, then they look for them."

"Mediterranean foods offer bold flavors but are also appealing because they're so versatile," offers Paula Shikany, senior brand manager, Northbrook, IL-based Churny Company, a division of Kraft Foods that includes the portfolio of Athenos products.





Mediterranean foods are both healthful and versatile, making them popular with a wide range of consumers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MT. VIKOS, INC.

"For example, Feta can be used to add flavor to salads, pasta, pizza, burgers, dips or spreads."

In keeping up with the growing trend, Cedar's wants to offer a little of everything Mediterranean, says Frocione — "to be in Mediterranean what Goya has been in Spanish food."

Cedar's is not the only company expanding its Mediterranean offerings. Until now, Tribe Mediterranean Foods has been known mostly for its hummus, while offering a small line of tabbouleh and tahini. Although he will not get into specifics, Rick Schaffer, vice president of sales and marketing for the Los Angeles, CA-based company, says that in late 2007/early 2008, Tribe will unveil several new Mediterranean products, some of which are for the deli and some of which may be destined for other departments. "We're a refrigerated products company, but we can go outside of refrigerated products," he says.

In June, Sabra Go Mediterranean, also known primarily for its hummus and some Mediterranean salads, will introduce a new "Mediterranean salsa," flavored with Mediterranean spices and vegetables. "We think it will quickly rival the hummus, in terms of total volume," McGuckin predicts.

"The Mediterranean category is hot," says Schaffer. "It's all about health, nutrition. It's got sizzle, romance."

"It has some sex appeal to it," claims Eric Moscahlaidis, president, Krinos Foods, Inc., Long Island City, NY, an importer, distributor and manufacturer of Greek specialty foods. "It harkens back to warm climates, beautiful beaches — there's a romance to it."

Greek foods make up a large part of the

Mediterranean trend. "Some of the most popular Greek foods sold in supermarket delis are olive oil, yogurt and stuffed grape leaves. Especially the last one became very popular because it is a common pleasant dish offered in many restaurants, and this is how it became mostly known," says Alia N. Papanastasiou, vice consul, economic and commercial affairs, Consulate General of Greece Trade Office, New York, NY, speaking for the head of the office. "The Greek foods that have recently become more popular in the United States are mainly Kalamata olives and Feta cheese."

"Greek foods have a lot of potential and the demand may well continue to grow because of the success and beneficial effects of the Mediterranean diet, which has proved to be one of the most healthful ones even through medical research the last few years," says Papanastasiou. "Greek food products are great ambassadors of the Mediterranean eating habits."

Expect to see more Greek foods promoted in the near future. "HEPO — the [Athens, Greece-based] Hellenic Foreign Trade Board, the official Hellenic organization for the promotion of Greek exports — is currently running an international campaign on Greek gastronomy.

The success of the campaign and its continuation through advertising, PR and coordination actions — e.g. events, tastings, road shows, etc. — will help greatly to the establishment of brand names of Greek foods to the United States," says Papanastasiou.

"The Mediterranean category is hot. It's all about health, nutrition. It's got sizzle, romance."

— Rick Schaffer

Tribe Mediterranean Foods

McGuckin of Sabra believes that with the right mix of products, retailers can create a Mediterranean destination in the deli. "Now it seems, with olive oil, with Feta cheese, if you look at category after category, the Mediterranean item in each category is the one that's growing the most." And, he continues, "It's a very profitable category for retailers, because of the premium nature of the products."

Little Bites

Snacking drives much of the Mediterranean category. "Greece is really known for its appetizers, or mezes.

Those are based on the local ingredients, such as olives, roasted red peppers and eggplant. These are little dishes of food that have big, big flavor," says Cardoos of Mt. Vikos.

When entertaining, "It's no longer cool to serve cheese and grapes and a plain water cracker," says Cardoos. "Rather than put out a little plate of cheese, it's so much more fun to put out an appetizer platter."



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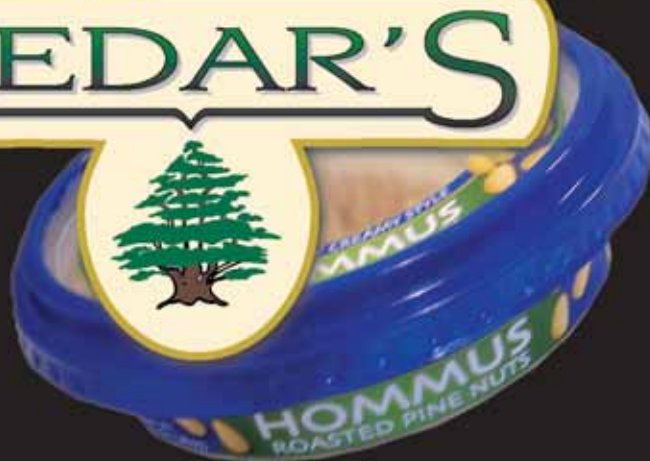
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Items such as stuffed grape leaves, eggplant dip and Mediterranean salads are doing well. “We’re getting a significant number of requests for a Greek caviar spread called

“As these olive bars start to expand and proliferate, people put in items like roasted red peppers and stuffed grape leaves.”

—Eric Moscahlaidis
Krinos Foods, Inc.

taramasalata,” reports Moscahlaidis of Krinos Foods. “Olives are exploding,” he adds. And while olive bars account for much of that growth, “One of our biggest things is sliced olives that go into olive bread. They’re also going into cheeses, spreads, olive salads, tapenades.”

Olive bars have made their impact on other foods, as well. “As these olive bars start to expand and proliferate, people put in items like roasted red peppers and stuffed grape leaves,” notes Moscahlaidis. A new item called Peppadews — sweet, sour and slightly spicy red peppers — is making a splash. And, he says, “You’re going to be seeing a lot of delis carrying mushrooms in sauces and marinades.”

Dairy

Perhaps partly because they are used as snacks and appetizers, as well as an ingredient, Mediterranean cheeses are also gaining popularity. “There’s a long history of cheese-making in that part of the world, so there’s a lot of variety,” says Cardoos. The company imports Feta (including a Feta with mint and oregano), Kasseri, Manouri, Kefalotiri and Halloumi, all of which are made from a blend of sheep’s and goat’s milk. Some, such as the Halloumi, can be breaded and fried. “It’s absolutely delicious,” notes Cardoos. “It’s a really fun cheese and people love it when they try it.”

“Feta is the one Greek cheese everyone knows,” notes Cardoos. Feta is a designated origin cheese in Europe, which means that, in the European Union, only Feta made in

Accompaniments

Opportunities to cross-merchandise Mediterranean foods abound. For example, says Paula Shikany, senior brand manager, Churny Company, Northbrook, IL, “Cross-promoting Feta with complementary products such as bagged salads and salad dressing, chickens and pasta, is an excellent way to help consumers ‘find’ the product in the store and realize its versatility. Pita chips, cut veggies, crackers or pita are ideal cross-promotion partners for hummus.”

Valley Lahvosh Baking Company, Fresno, CA, makes lahvosh, an Armenian cracker bread, in a variety of shapes and sizes, as well as a few flavors — plain, cinnamon and cracked pepper. “It’s a great product to encourage cross-merchandise purchases,” notes Jenni Bonsignore, marketing coordinator.

Bonsignore describes the bread as “crunchy. It’s got pretty good body to it, with a bubbly surface.” The smaller sizes sell well as crackers, while the larger sizes make an interesting addition to breadbaskets. “You can do anything with it that you can do with a bread or a cracker.”

Traditionally, the bread is softened with water to make it pliable, then rolled up with fillings for a pinwheel-style sandwich. (A pre-softened “Valley Wrap” is also available for this use.) But the possibilities are endless, says Bonsignore.

For instance, she says, “You can use it as a pizza crust. It’s sort of like a thin-crust pizza.” While the flavored lahvosh is great on its own, the plain-flavored lahvosh is an

equally good carrier for sweet and savory toppings. “You often see it above the cheese in the deli. It’s the perfect cracker for cheese and wine hors d’oeuvres.”

Mt. Vikos, Inc., Marshfield, MA, imports olive oil toasts and biscuits from Greece, in a plain flavor and rye. “In Greece, they’d put out some cheese and olives and appetizers and little toasts,” says Sheree Cardoos, president. “The olive oil toasts are pretty plain. It’s really just the perfect accompaniment for cheeses and spreads. What’s nice is that they have a good, clean flavor.”

What flavor they do have comes from olive oil. “Olive oil is the fat of choice for many of these Mediterranean countries. In the United States, the appeal is that it’s good for you, and, of course, it gives it great flavor,” says Cardoos.

Complementing its line of Greek cheeses, Mt. Vikos offers traditional cheese accompaniments such as glazed roasted figs, apricot-almond spread and sweet olive jam. “It’s really lovely, the sweetness from the fruit with the tartness and pungent qualities of the cheese. They bring out and make the cheese taste so much more interesting. What I do is put out a couple of these cheeses and I put out a dish with a little spoon, so they can scoop a little bit of the spread on top of their cheese or on their bread before they put on the cheese,” she concludes.

By placing these items near the Mediterranean cheeses, it becomes possible to sell more of both.

DB



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Greece can go by that name. “The United States obviously doesn’t follow E.U. rules, so you will see cheese labeled feta that isn’t from Greece,” she says.

When buying Feta, it is important to note where the cheese comes from and what it is made from. “Feta, traditionally, is made with sheep’s and goat’s milk,” says Cardoos. “Ninety percent of U.S.-made cheese called Feta is made from cow’s milk. It’s a different product.”

“People are looking for more flavor. Feta

certainly imparts a lot of flavor and you don’t need a lot of it,” according to Lind Hook, vice president of marketing for DCI Cheese Company, Richfield, WI. “The consumption of Feta in the United States is growing by leaps and bounds. It’s relatively low in fat, so I’m sure that’s another factor that drives consumption.”

DCI is also witnessing growth in the flavored Feta category. “Feta is still No. 1, but flavored Fetas are getting more popular all the time,” according to Hook.

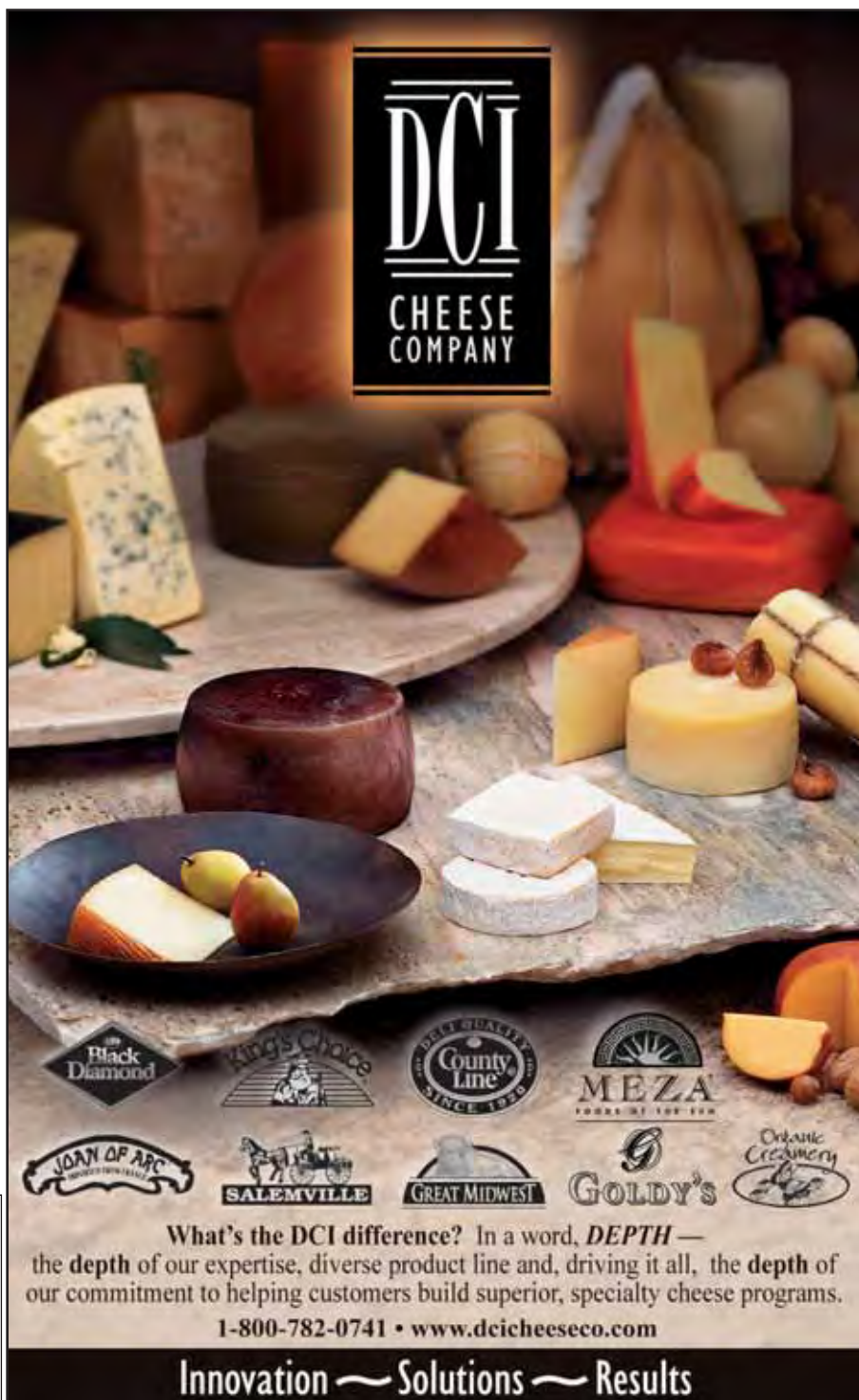
In addition to cheese, Papanastasiou of the Greek Trade Office notes that Americans have been discovering Greek yogurt during the last four or five years.

“There’s certainly a big trend with Greek yogurt,” agrees Moschallidis. “It’s more con-

“People are looking for more flavor. Feta certainly imparts a lot of flavor and you don’t need a lot of it.”

—Lind Hook

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centrated, creamier, thicker, richer than American yogurt. It’s more healthful for you in that it has more protein and calcium in it.”

“People have discovered what authentic, real yogurt tastes like,” says Moschallidis. While most American yogurts are sweetened, Greek yogurts are sold unsweetened, sometimes with toppings such as walnuts in honey or fruit sauce. “The traditional way to serve it is to drizzle a little honey over it,” says Moschallidis, and it is a main ingredient for sauces and dips, such as tatziki.

Moschallidis believes Greek yogurt is just at the beginning of its popularity. “You are going to see an explosion in the Greek-style yogurt category,” he predicts. “Any time you have a product that is vastly superior to what people are conditioned to, they’re going to switch. As it gains popularity, it will become more affordable.”

Hummus

One product in a category all to itself is hummus. “Hummus is really the next salsa,”



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says Frocione of Cedar's. "Nobody knew what salsa was 20 years ago."

"It's very similar to what the salsa revolution was," agrees Tribe's Schaffer.

McGuckin of Sabra compares hummus in the United States to hummus in Israel 20 years ago. "Hummus in Israel today has a 95 percent household penetration," he says. "It's only been 25 years since manufacturers in Israel started making hummus for distribution."

Based on the data he has seen, Schaffer believes hummus has penetrated a mere five percent of American households. "There's no sign of letting up. It's going to be huge. It's going to be a gigantic category," he says. "Hummus is really in its infancy. The category is growing over 30 percent a year. Most of that increase is new consumers every year," he notes, rather than consumers switching from one brand to another.

"In this country, when we started adding roasted red pepper or tomato-basil, it created a new type of product," says Frocione. He believes that, as the number of flavors and styles increase, so do the number of people who try and ultimately become regular consumers of hummus.

Companies are adding flavors to hummus such as horseradish, artichoke and chipotle, in addition to bestsellers like roasted garlic, pine nut and red pepper, as more Americans are showing preference for high-flavor foods. "What is really hot now are literally hot flavors," notes Schaffer. "Warm, hot, spicy flavors are doing better than the dills and lemons."

Hummus, like salsa, can vary not only in flavor but also in texture and appearance. "Our product tastes very different from our

competitors'," says McGuckin. "Consumers tell us that it is the most authentic in the category. There's a secret formula that gives us the smooth texture. Then there's the swirl, the garnish and the packaging," which he describes as vibrant, appealing and classically Mediterranean. The clear lid allows consumers to see the various garnishes on top. "The garnish gives it a very fresh look," he notes.

Hummus also varies in nutritional appeal. While some

nished with various toppings for a ready-to-serve look and sold in European-style packaging. In addition to the upscale packaging, the new hummus will be smoother and creamier than its original line. Cedar's will also offer a full line of Mediterranean salads, including bruschetta and chickpea salad, in the same style of packaging.

As companies create more and more hummus products, "The big issue is space," says Frocione, who notes many supermarkets in the Northeast have dedicated a larger amount of space to hummus. "This is why I think it has really taken off in the supermarkets in the Northeast."

In other parts of the country, he adds, "They're starting to wake up and see that this category does well, and maybe we should have a few more SKUs."

"Dedicate more space to it," urges Tribe's Schaffer. "You can count on one hand how many categories grow over 30 percent on a 52-week basis. I can guarantee you what is adjacent to hummus isn't growing 30 percent."

While many retailers are aware of hummus sales and dedicating space accordingly, says McGuckin, "I also think the category might be growing at such a rate that this might be an area that requires a review more than once a year."

Schaffer also recommends keeping the price of hummus low and to make money on volume, instead. "The category is very price sensitive," he notes. Price promotions, along with demos to introduce the product to new consumers, are great ways to increase sales.

"Sampling helps drive traffic and spark consumer interest. Once consumers try it, they like it," notes Shikany of Churny.

Demos can also show customers the many ways to incorporate hummus into their lives. "There are so many things you can do with hummus," says Frocione, who has seen it used as a condiment, a dip and even thinned out with oil for use as a dressing.

"If Americans begin to do what folks in the Middle East are doing — using hummus instead of mayonnaise or mustard — and it becomes a condiment in addition to its current usage, then I think the doors can be blown off," says McGuckin.

Schaffer believes spring and summer are the perfect seasons to promote hummus, because this is peak snacking season and the time of year when hummus sells best. "People consume meals much more heavily when it's cold out. In the spring and summer, people are doing things. They're on the go. Any kind of snacking food does better in the summer," he says.



"If Americans begin to do what folks in the Middle East are doing — using hummus instead of mayonnaise or mustard — and it becomes a condiment in addition to its current usage, then I think the doors can be blown off."

***— John McGuckin
Sabra Go Mediterranean***

companies are offering a hummus that is higher in fat and more decadent, Tribe recently took a step in the other direction, re-positioning its products as all natural and adding an organic line of hummus, as well.

In an effort to appeal to a wider range of consumers, beginning May 1, Cedar's will introduce an additional line of hummus, gar-

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BOOTH  REVIEW

A TO Z

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Pre-Show Guide

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ **Untold Stories: Frontline to Nightline**
Ted Koppel
- ▶ **Inside Looking out: A Global Perspective**
Madeleine Albright
- ▶ **Building an “Innovation Machine” in a Disruptive Age**
Tom Peters
- ▶ **Go Deep and Keep Your Eyes on the Ball**
Terry Bradshaw
- ▶ **Food Trends: From Easy to Extreme**
Carol Christison
- ▶ **A Championship Vision**
Emmitt Smith
- ▶ **It's Not Easy Being Green**
Dave Peterson
- ▶ **Eating Patterns in America**
Harry Blazer
- ▶ **Double Digit Growth: How Great Companies Achieve It — Not Matter What**
Michael Treacy
- ▶ **All Marketers are Liars, Purple Cows, and Free Prize Inside**
Seth Godin
- ▶ **Liars and Tyrants and Bores! Oh My!**
Harold Lloyd
- ▶ **I'm Just Here for the Food: Innovation, Gadgets, Science, and Trends That Will Change the Way We Cook, Live, and Work**
Alton Brown



Ted Koppel



Madeleine Albright



Tom Peters



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- ▶ Extreme Retailing concepts that are innovative and actionable.

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Interview

In April, DELI BUSINESS publisher/editorial director Lee Smith sat down with Carol Christison, executive director of the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, to discuss the organization, the upcoming Seminar & Expo, industry trends and other issues that affect deli operators.

DELI BUSINESS: Once again, the entire industry is looking forward to the next IDDBA convention and it's obvious that you and all your associates have worked long and hard making the show terrific. So, what can you tell us about the show?

Christison: Today, more than ever, our industry is in a frenzy of change. It's hitting us from all sides. Consumers are more demanding than ever, the government is looking at systems and protocols to expand tracking and food safety, and the shareholders are looking for a better return on their investment. The forces of change are outside the control of most of us. We're in a cyclonic stage of growth and faced with explosive changes that can obliterate or innovate.

The surprising thing isn't change but how fast it's coming. If you stand still today, you're two feet behind tomorrow. It's fascinating and terrifying at the same time. You have to be prepared and have the vision to see that the forces are unrelenting and extreme.

In fact, that's the focus for our show — Extreme Retailing. We've put together a list of speakers who can help us identify the issues, wade through the junk and develop

a vision for the future. Tom Peters will speak to us about innovation in a disruptive age — that's a huge concept to get around. Growth is good, but it's bad. Innovation is good but it destroys. Knowledge is power but power may not be enough.

We have to look at the global issues and how to sustain growth, hopefully double-digit growth, in a tight economy that's faced with mergers and consolidations on all levels. That's what Ted Koppel, Madeleine Albright and Michael Treacy will show us. "Think global — act local" is a great slogan, but how do you execute it?

If you look at product development and consumer changes, you begin to get a feel for how they're changing retailing and pushing extremes. Everything is over the top and in your face. It's all about me. It's Myspace. It's YouTube. It's a customer of one. It's a throwaway society that wants the latest gadgets, the newest foods and the most convenient items. That's what Seth Godin, Alton Brown, Harry Balzer, Dave Peterson and I will be talking about.

And then there's the experience itself. Harold Lloyd, Emmitt Smith and Terry Bradshaw will share the thoughts and actions that got them where they are today — up close and personal but with a twist that pulls you into the center of their universe.

DELI BUSINESS: I have to admit, the speakers are always terrific. There's something special about listening to people you usually just get to see on TV talk about their experiences and making it relevant for our industry. This is going to be the 44th year for the IDDBA. How have you seen the show change over the years?

Christison: The show has changed along with the interest levels of our attendees. Many years ago, our program was a "how-to" program that taught basic concepts, provided training for managers and talked about how to make or sell products. As our audience grew in stature and sophistication, they didn't need to know how to frost donuts or cut and wrap cheese. They wanted to understand the economics of the busi-

ness, what drove consumers and how to identify trends and buying behavior. They wanted to hear people from other industries who were successful and had ideas that could help them grow personally and professionally. That's when we started bringing in professional speakers and top business leaders.

We started with one big name keynoter and then went to a daily keynoter. The response was so great that we started adding other speakers who had an important message. This is in addition to the sessions that focused on the selling and marketing of the dairy, deli, bakery and cheese categories.

DELI BUSINESS: Meeting with people and companies I know is always fun, informative and great business, but I know I also like to find new companies, especially the up-and-coming shining stars. Do they add another dimension to the show?

Christison: Do they ever! In fact, retailers from the smallest entrepreneurial ones to the giant conglomerates of our industry are all looking for that next great product or innovation that will delight their customers. In our society, you have to be able to stock the staples that consumers want but you also need the fun new items that create excitement and taste experiences.

Without a trade show like ours, those products wouldn't get seen by the high volume of retail buyers and merchandisers that show up to sample, compare and buy. Each retailer has a unique customer base (or even many customer categories) and some send in teams of buyers to hunt for specific items. They hit the show floor with a search-and-conquer mission and really look for the new and innovative as well as the major brands.

DELI BUSINESS: Can you give us a sneak preview about what you are going to talking about in your presentation?

Christison: I'm still researching and writing it but you can expect to hear about products and innovations that are changing



Carol Christison, executive director of the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI.

how we go to business, easy to extreme merchandising ideas and a lot of detail on consumers and how they view not only the grocery world but also the entire food consumption arena. To get them into our world, we have to understand the pressures that influence their eating habits, buying behavior and purchase triggers.

DELI BUSINESS: Something I never really thought much about is the nonprofit status of the IDDBA, but I know there must be implications for the industry.

Christison: As a nonprofit, the IDDBA doesn't have to worry about paying dividends to shareholders. Because we don't have to pay out or share any profits, we can use these resources to underwrite programs and products that are important to our members. For example, each year we hire an independent research house to conduct a new study on consumer behavior. Most recently we've studied the deli and bakery consumer, the aging consumer, perishable brands, sandwiches, the Hispanic consumer and foodservice opportunities.

Our study this year is on Environmental Sustainability. These studies typically cost more than \$100,000 to research and produce. We publish those results and give them to our members. Some groups charge thousands of dollars for similar research that we give away. The top-line results are sent free to every member and, if they want the entire study, they can buy it for less than one-half of one percent of our development costs. We couldn't do that if we were a for-profit organization.

DELI BUSINESS: Is this the reason the IDDBA has been able to produce such high-quality information and research? And, I might add, at a reasonable, if not free, price?

Christison: I think so. It's that commitment to protecting the member's equity that allows us to offer consumer studies and employee training programs for the cost of duplication, not the cost of researching and developing the programs.

Even more telling is how we control costs on dues and fees. We have not raised our membership dues or our conference registration fees since the mid-'80s. And, we haven't raised our exhibit fees since 2002. Now, that doesn't mean our expenses haven't gone up — they have and in the same way that for-profit companies have seen costs rise.

We're just very fortunate that we've been able to cover costs through sustained and continual growth and not by increasing fees. I don't know any other organization that can (or would want to) make that

claim. Our Board of Directors is adamant about conserving resources and returning value to the membership. We say to our members that their dues dollars are well spent — by them and by us.

DELI BUSINESS: Carol, I think you travel more than I do and I'll bet you visit more retailers every year. So, what are the key trends every retailer should be aware of?

Christison: When retailers think about trends, the first thought is what will the customer be eating and how can we deliver it? Riding a trend wave is important, but we need to understand consumers are fickle. They're not loyal and the latest diet or food fad is just that, a fad, and a passing one at that. Consumers are balancing health and nutrition needs with time pressures that force them to eat food fast, eat fast food and seek answers to an on-the-go lifestyle. They talk a better diet than they eat.

Anyone or anything that sells food is the competition and trends tend to mirror what's in the news. Consumers seek out products that address issues, but please don't make the mistake of thinking it's a permanent change. Most consumers are looking for quick fixes.

Major trends include foods for at-risk kids. Parents want their kids to eat better and they look for products to cut the sugar and food allergens while boosting calcium and whole grains. Smaller servings and limited calories are trending up as are better-for-you foods with green tea, antioxidants and no- or low-trans fats. Value-added foods with omega-3s, calcium, probiotics, whole grains, gluten-free, etc., are hot. Foods that can cut calories and/or provide better digestive health or stronger bones are keys to getting the older shopper. Natural and organic foods are "in," especially for kids. Performance and lifestyle foods, including bottled waters and meals in a bottle, are growing.

It goes back to the convenience and time issue. Consumers want things that are better for them but it still has to taste good. They're quick to make dietary tradeoffs in order to satisfy their sweet tooth but they're not willing to sacrifice taste.

To understand the supermarket shopping trends, we need to look at other segments such as foodservice, vending, institutional eating, fast food, snacking, home delivery, everything. But, while tracking the trends is important, it should not be the primary focus. The real question is "What do I have to do to stay in business?" The answer is not "everything." It starts with defining the business they're in.

A retailer has to be able, in 25 words or

less, to define its business, strategy and customer profile. Understanding the customer base is the key to satisfying their needs and growing the business.

DELI BUSINESS: Do you believe "thinking green" will translate into healthful eating?

Christison: Thinking "green" is a lifestyle choice of which just one element is food. It's all about conserving resources and making choices that will improve our lives now and for generations to come. It covers reducing, recycling and renewing resources. It's waste reduction, including recyclable or minimized packaging. Food is an extremely important part of that concept and it's dependent on agricultural and environmental sustainability.

We're working on a research project right now — being conducted for us by the Willard Bishop Company — that will help identify best practices that will reduce costs while protecting water, energy, fuel, transportation and manufacturing resources. Finding the balance between renewable fuels for energy versus renewable food sources will be important. Controlling costs by building or remodeling with green concepts will allow us to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

DELI BUSINESS: What steps can deli retailers take to address consumers' concerns and bring them products and services they desire?

Christison: Consumers want to feel their purchases have made a difference. The retailer can build on its corporate image by using signage or special green stickers that let the consumer know products have been grown or manufactured using green policies or production facilities.

Retailers who have adopted green or sustainable practices such as energy-saving lighting, water recycling or cleaning, or other recycling programs can tell consumers what they've done. There are lots of sources that can define how much was saved by switching from fossil fuels to wind or solar power. It's important to get out the message because doing business with a good corporate citizen creates a positive image.

DELI BUSINESS: Carol, there's no more coffee in the pot and I don't want you to give away all the secrets we're going to find at the show, so I'm going to say good-bye and be one of the eager people waiting to get to Anaheim, listen to great speakers, see new and innovative ideas, visit with friends old and new and, especially, listen to you speak about what's "really" going on in the industry. **DB**

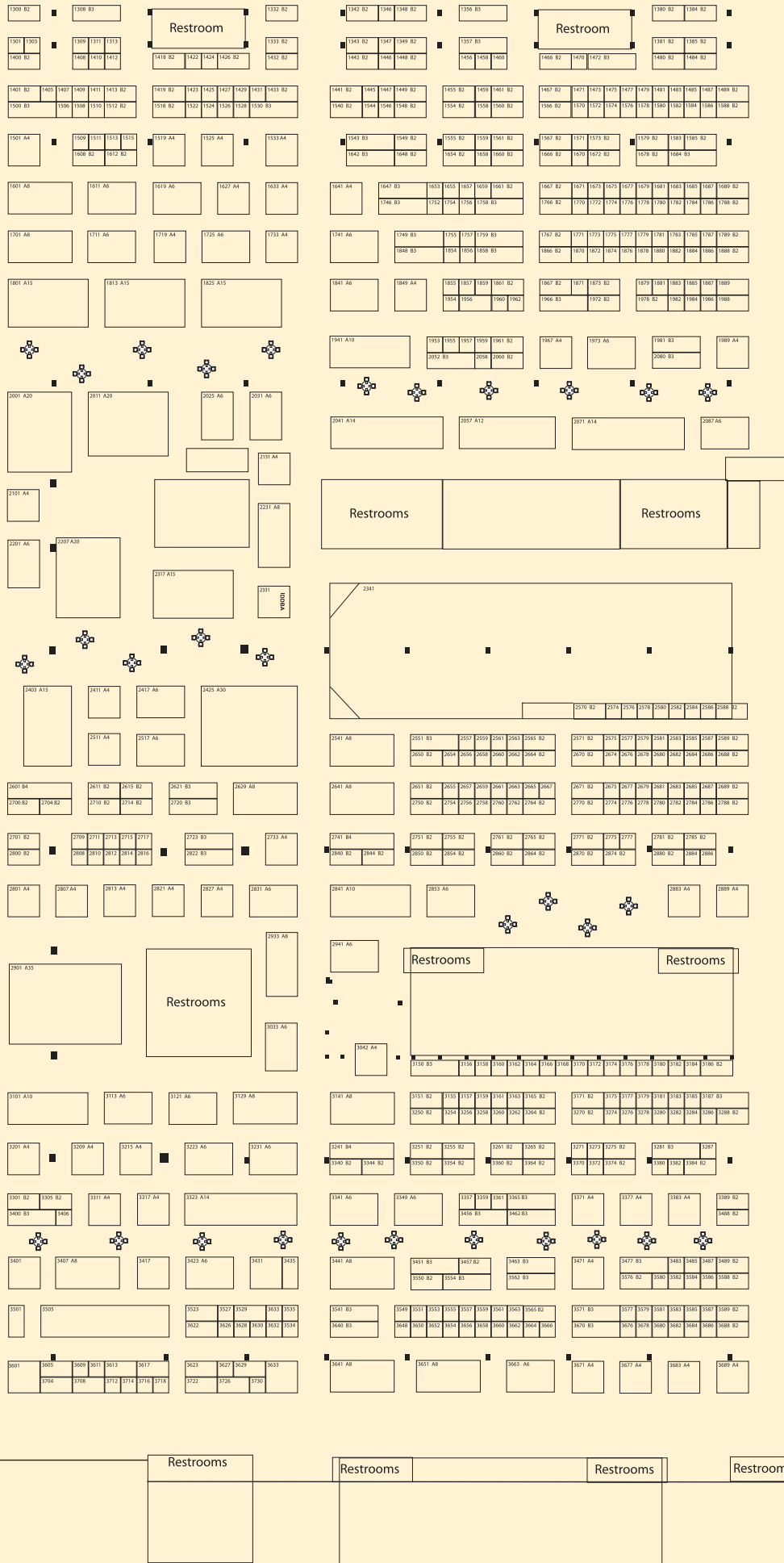
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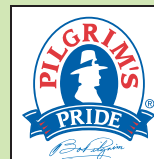
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The Growing Popularity of Spanish Foods

Americans are discovering the high-quality, highly flavored foods Spain is known for.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

Spain has laid claim to becoming one of the hottest culinary destinations within Europe today," says Mercedes Lamamie, associate marketing director, Foods from Spain, New York, NY. "Spanish foods and wines are finding a place at the American table, and we are only beginning to enjoy the depth and beauty this cuisine has to offer."

"There's an increased interest in the products because of the popularity of the Mediterranean diet," adds Richard Kessler, vice president, Fromartharie, Inc., importers of Spanish cheese, based in New Fairfield, CT. "It is getting a lot of play in the media."

"Tapas bars are becoming really popular," notes Jennifer Drezga, co-owner, Elizabeth, NJ-based Epicure Foods Corporation, importers of Spanish foods. As more people enjoy these small bites at restaurants, they are replicating the experience at home.

This insight is seconded by Joe Moskowitz, general manager of Redondo Iglesias, which produces Serrano ham in Spain and is based in Long Island City, NY. In Spain, "Serrano ham, typically, in many homes, is left out on the counter with a slicer. Just as you or I might walk by and take a handful of pretzels or peanuts from a jar, they'll take a slice of Serrano ham." Or, he notes, "It can be served as an appetizer — sliced and served on a plate by itself or with cheese."

"Tapas," explains Daniel Incaudo, vice president of sales at Smithfield Global Products, Cudahy, WI, "means 'small food.' It's finger food." Smithfield, which imports Serrano ham, chorizo and lomo, has a pre-sliced "tapas" pack that includes these three, all of which are common on tapas plates.

Kessler believes much of the popularity of tapas-style eating is due to a gradual shift in



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHEESE FROM SPAIN



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAMPOFRIO

the American lifestyle. “People are realizing that more is not better. What they figured out a long time ago in Spain, Italy and France is that eating food that has a lot of flavor satisfaction, you don’t need as much.”

“With the Food Network and the famous chefs, we’ve seen more interest in products that are unique and products from Europe,” Smithfield’s Incaudo adds,

Spain’s dry-cured meats and sausages are a fine example of foods that offer a lot of flavor in a small bite. Serrano ham — a cured ham made in a style similar to prosciutto but often drier and more strongly flavored — is making its way into more delis. Carefully controlled by the Consorcio del Jamon Serrano Español, it is very common in restaurants and tapas bars, as well as homes. “If you go into a tapas bar, you’ll see the legs hanging from the ceiling,” notes Incaudo.

Chorizo, too, is finding its way into delis. A dry-cured sausage from the foothills of La Rioja, it can be hot or mild and is also used in Spanish dishes, such as paella. “The chorizo we sell in a 2½-pound stick, as well as sliced, is made with Spanish paprika and dry-cured,” Incaudo elaborates.

Lomo — a dry-cured sausage made from

pork loin, garlic and smoked paprika — is known as the finest of all Spanish sausages, according to Lamamie of Foods from Spain.

“You’d use it in a similar way to Serrano ham,” volunteers Incaudo. “It’s a leaner piece of meat, whereas with Serrano you’d have the marbling and the fat around the edges.”

In addition to being served as tapas, these items work well in recipes and in sandwiches.

More Than Manchego

Spanish cheeses also fit in well with tapas-style eating. “The Spanish consume 90 to 100 pounds of cheese per person per year,” says Fromartharie’s Kessler. “So much of their

cheese is not used as an ingredient but on the table to complement the meal.”

“There’s probably a 20 percent increase every year as to what’s coming into this country, I think,” says Kessler about Spanish cheese. “That’s just the tip of the iceberg. I think it’s only just begun. Consumers are poised for this. Where the difficulty lies is in getting buyers to take a chance on it. Those who are willing to take the risk will find themselves in a favorable position.”

Because so many Spanish cheeses are made from goat’s and sheep’s milk, says Kessler, “Once you’ve tasted them, you’ll find it hard to eat other cheeses that are kind of bland and boring.”

Manchego, a slightly piquant sheep’s milk cheese, is the Spanish cheese Americans know best, but Kessler hopes to educate retailers and the public about Spain’s more common cheeses. “Manchego is more of a special-occasion cheese,” he explains. “Most people think Manchego is the Spanish cheese, and it’s not. It’s used for weddings, holidays. It’s very expensive. The Iberico is a more interesting tasting cheese and it’s more widely available.”

Iberico — Spain’s everyday cheese — is

made from a blend of cow’s milk, sheep’s milk and goat’s milk. While it is a DO cheese in Spain, meaning it can only be made in a specific area, the exact proportion of each milk may vary.

“The real intriguing Ibericos use less cow’s milk,” explains Kessler. Fromartharie’s Iberico is made from 50 percent sheep’s milk, 30 percent goat’s milk and 20 percent cow’s milk. “You get more personality in the cheese from the mix of sheep’s and goat’s milk. Cow’s milk doesn’t generally have the depth of flavor that sheep’s and goat’s milk has.”

Fromartharie also imports a cheese called Winey Goat — its version of the traditional Murcia al vino — which is aged 60 to 90 days in red wine, and Rosey Goat, which is covered in Spanish rosemary. “We’ve had

“People are realizing that more is not better. What they figured out a long time ago in Spain, Italy and France is that eating food that has a lot of flavor satisfaction, you don’t need as much.”

***— Richard Kessler
Fromartharie, Inc.***

great success with Rosey Goat in Costco and with large supermarket chains around the country,” notes Kessler.

“All Spanish cheese is hot,” says Michele Buster, vice president, Forever Cheese, Long Island City, NY, which imports of specialty cheeses and foods from Europe. “As we focus on originals and unknown cheeses and we educate distributors and retailers about them, the growth of these artisan products is more moderate but there, nevertheless, and they give our customers room to be different. Naked Goat, in the raw milk category, for example.”

Forever Cheese also offers “Montcabrer, goat cheese from the Pyrenees aged in charcoal; Lenora, a soft ripened goat cheese covered in natural mold that has layers of citrus and an amazing finish; PataCabra, a washed rind goat cheese from Aragon, which is sup-



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ple and flavorful; Miticrema, milk cream cheese; and Capricho de Cabra, a fresh goat log that is an explosion of flavor and is selling like hotcakes in delis and restaurants alike," says Buster.

Drezga says that some of Epicure Foods' more popular Spanish cheeses include Picon,

*When eaten together,
Spanish cheeses,
meats and other
specialties are more
than the sum of their
parts. A tapas platter
can easily be
assembled by
combining several
Spanish ingredients
from the deli.*

a creamy pasteurized cow's milk blue cheese; Valdeon, which is similar to picon but slightly drier; Nevat, an aged goat cheese; and Tatilla, a mild creamy cow's milk cheese.

Lamamie of Foods from Spain also mentions Zamorana, an aged sheep's milk cheese with a slightly grainy texture and rich, salty bite; Majorero, from the Canary Islands — an acidic, piquant and buttery cheese often served as a dessert with quince paste; and Mahon, a cow's milk cheese massaged with olive oil and pimenton, which results in a



PHOTO COURTESY OF EPICURE FOODS CORPORATION

soft, fragrant, buttery, sharp and nutty cheese that can be grated or sliced.

"You can actually do an incredibly diverse cheese platter just based on Spanish cheeses," says Kessler.

Tapas Foods — They're Better Together

When eaten together, Spanish cheeses, meats and other specialties are more than the sum of their parts. A tapas platter can easily be assembled by combining several Spanish ingredients from the deli. Drezga recommends a plate with Manchego cheese, Picon cheese, fig bread, Spanish guindilla peppers, Nevat cheese, Tatilla cheese and a variety of Spanish olives, such as salt-and-oil cured pasa olives and delicately flavored dark-purple cuquillo olives.

"Cheese is really interesting, but when it is paired with something else, that's where it really stands out," she says.

"We have made fig cakes and fruit bars and accompaniments in general popular in the stores," says Buster of Forever Cheese. "Years ago I saw a few jams here and there, but we really focused on this aspect of the business as a value-added product starting about four years ago and it has taken off."

Pairing a jam with a strongly flavored cheese will make it taste mellower, notes Drezga. "If you put a sweet jam with a strong blue cheese, it takes away that strong kick. You're

not overwhelmed by the huge, fiery taste of the blue." Along with fig jam, Epicure Foods markets a Spanish fig bread with a slightly sweet flavor. "It's great with table cheese. Any goat cheese with this fig bread is delicious."

Merchandising Spanish Foods

Because many of these products may be unfamiliar to customers, education is key to making the sale. "Demos can be very effective," notes Kessler of Fromartharie, "in the right channel and with the right people behind the demo table. Passive tastings work pretty well, too." He recommends having the products near the deli counter for people to try as they wait in line. When they reach the front, they can ask questions, if need be.

"Cheeses are sold on an impulse," believes Drezga. "The old-fashioned way is the guy behind the counter lets you try a piece. That way, they could almost sell the whole case. Give customers a sample, and give them a reason to buy it. Let them know how to use it. Can you put it on a steak? Can you put it on pasta?"

"You have to get it in front of customers. You have to get some signage. They just need a little bit of help learning how to apply this to their everyday lives. The signage has to be simple — they just need a couple of bullet points," says Kessler. "How do I use it? What wine does it go with? And make sure the wine you're recommending is accessible to them." He also recommends telling customers what kind of milk a cheese is made from and any unique facts about it, such as Iberico is enjoyed daily in Spain. **DB**



PHOTO COURTESY OF FROMARTHARIE, INC.

Sandwich Programs — Bring On The Quality

Consumers will seek out tasty, convenient and healthful sandwiches at the deli department.

By Bob Johnson

The challenges and opportunities for supermarket deli department sandwich programs figure to be defined for years to come by the competition from the convenient national sandwich chains.

"The biggest challenge facing supermarket delis is the excitement that some chains are bringing to the sandwich market," says Catherine Priolo, senior brand manager at Hellmann's, a division of Unilever United States, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Hellmann's is introducing a line of five new sandwiches sauces that will be available exclusively at the deli. "People are more interested in the sandwich category, but supermarkets need to spruce up their own offerings in order to compete."

From 2003 to 2006, deli sandwich sales increased nationwide from less than \$750 million to more than \$900 million, according to statistics from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), based in Madison, WI.

In order to compete with the sandwich chains, delis must first and foremost offer better quality. "Consumers are getting smarter and demanding more variety and higher quality," claims Steve Byrnes president of Waterloo, WI-based Van Holten's, which produces a premium pickle in a pouch suitable for merchandising as a side item in a sandwich program. "They also want more junk-food alternatives, which is one of the reasons our 109 year old company continues to grow."

If producers agree on one insight, it is that the key to deli department success is offering an upscale sandwich that cannot be found at the quick-serve competition.



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNILEVER FOODSOLUTIONS



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNILEVER FOODSOLUTIONS

Comforting, convenient, popular and delicious — sandwiches appeal to a wide variety of consumers and draw them to deli departments.

"We believe upscale sandwiches are here to stay," says Jim Conroy, president, Conroy Foods, Pittsburgh, PA. "We see new ingredients being incorporated in sandwich recipes at a rapid pace. Some of the hot flavors include ginger, cilantro and chipotle. Not only is this trend in the upscale casual segment but it also gaining increased frequency in fast-casual and quick-serve restaurants."

Many suppliers are concentrating their energies on supplying products that will allow supermarket delis to raise the bar on quality. "In July, we will begin shipping the Sara Lee 'Gourmet Selections' line of super premium meat products," says Derek Bowen, director of marketing for Sara Lee Deli, based in Cincinnati, OH. This new line will include five all-natural products — glazed honey turkey breast, oven roasted turkey breast, seasoned Angus roast beef, honey ham and smoked ham.

"These five SKUs will be available at the service deli counter," Bowen says. "We're seeing a premiumization of consumer preferences, and we want to make sure we're competitive with that."

Numerous other producers have introduced, or are preparing to introduce, products intended to provide higher quality sandwiches. "We currently have some exciting new products in development that are being tested specifically for use on high-end sandwiches that contain many upscale ingredients," says Conroy. "We are planning on focusing on these exciting new products at this year's IDDBA show in Anaheim."

For the foreseeable future, it appears the deli will be attracting a different consumer. "The trend is toward the whole upscaling of

the deli department," Hellmann's Priolo says. "People no longer want just a turkey sandwich with lettuce and tomato. They want artisan breads, specialty sauces and more interesting lettuces."

But that does not mean they do not want lettuce and tomato at all. Mills Family Farms, Salinas, CA, offers ready-to-use lettuce leaves and iceberg cups. "We are one of the largest suppliers to the deli departments of washed and ready-to-use whole leaf lettuce," says Dave Adams, director of business development. "We're the only Heart-Association-approved lettuce product in the sandwich program." Mills has POP hangers that include the Heart Association approval and nutritional values.

Make It New And Exciting

Higher-end products must also offer newness and variety. "At Conroy Foods, we constantly watch restaurant menus and restaurant trends to identify consumer demand for new exciting flavors," Conroy explains. "We develop our products to meet these demands. Our products enable our customers to duplicate restaurant recipes for upscale sandwiches."

Others agree variety is the order of the day. "The trends we're seeing in the quick-serve restaurants are migrating to in-store sandwiches," says Bowen. "Those trends are toward more exotic sauces, flavorful meats and more variety. The variety is the biggest trend — having something new constantly."

"There is more sandwich demand, but they must be bolder and better," Priolo says. "We've tried to stay on trend with that." Hellmann's new line of sauces includes

Ancho Chipotle, Red Pepper Basil, Creamy Pesto, Horseradish Dijon and Sweet Curry. Delis "can take a turkey sandwich and turn it into different items by using the sauces," she notes. "They are generating a lot of interest."

The sauces can also be used to add variety to other dishes commonly made in the deli department. "Those same delis are making pasta and potato salads and they can use these sauces there too," Priolo says.

Conroy's has a new line of dipping cups — Beano's "Little Dippers" Horse Radish Sauce, Honey Mustard & Southwest

"The trends we're seeing in the quick-serve restaurants are migrating to in-store sandwiches."

— Derek Bowen
Sara Lee Deli

Sauce — that can be an addition to the grab-and-go sandwich department, placed in sandwich rings or merchandised with the rotisserie chicken or hot appetizers.

What's On the Side?

A complete sandwich program includes items that go with a sandwich, and delis do well to include an interesting variety of sides. The quality of the side items is essential to a quality sandwich program.

"We continue to focus on our bread-and-butter — the pickle-in-a-pouch," Van Holten's Byrnes explains. "We know what our niche is and we do it bigger and better than anyone else. There is nothing better than biting into a cool, crisp pickle with your sandwich. Dill is always our biggest seller followed by hot. Regionally kosher and sour do very well."

"We have a unique line of character pickles. These are our largest pickles and the most animated pickles with stylish cartoon pickle characters and names like Big Papa, Hot Mama, Garlic Gus and Sour Sis. Customers are sure to be drawn to them. At the same time, retailers enjoy the low mainte-

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A quality sandwich program can make the deli department a mealtime destination for hungry and harried consumers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNILEVER FOODSOLUTIONS

nance, better sanitation and higher cash register ring than pickles from a jar," he adds.

Even firms that specialize in traditional products, such as Van Holten's, are looking to bring new variety to their offerings. "We are not ready to reveal them yet but we are working on a couple of on-the-go snack pouch items that will be a great addition to

existing products and the perfect accompaniment to any sandwich program," Byrnes says. "We anticipate launching the first in about six months."

As flatbreads continue to increase their appeal, pita chips may be the next healthful side item. "People believe it will be the next fast-growing salty snack," says Steve Sears,

vice president for marketing at Stacy's Pita Chip Company, Randolph, MA. "There are a lot of new companies coming into pita chips."

Pita chips have a leg up on health because they start with bread that is baked, not fried. "We make the bread and then cut it into chips," Sears explains. "We have modified the bread recipe to make for the best chip." Stacy's has been producing pita chips for a decade and offer six different flavors. "We're trying to build trials and get household penetration," Sears says. Only around 10 percent of the public has ever tried pita chips. "We are now reaching the level of availability that it makes sense to build national awareness."

The Bread Is The Package

Before customers taste the ingredients inside a fine sandwich, they see and taste the package, which is to say the bread.

One undeniable trend is that the consumer wants a more healthful sandwich that utilizes more healthful bread.

"According to IDDBA's latest consumer behavior research piece, *Foodservice Opportunities*, the top three bread varieties consumers would like to see in supermarket

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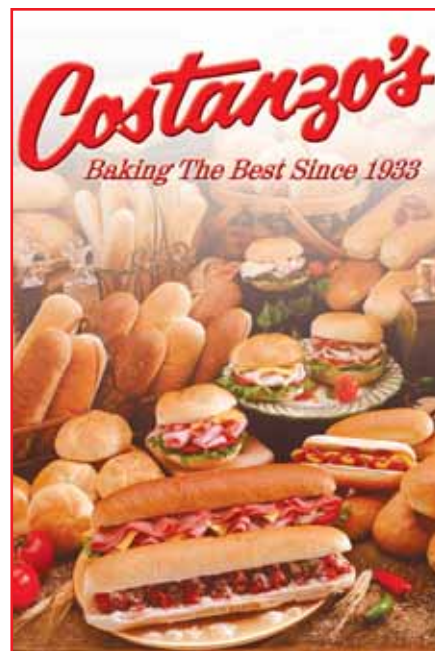
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delis are, in order: wheat, sub roll/French and multigrain," says Alan Hiebert, IDDBA education information specialist. "The bottom three are white, focaccia and ciabatta. To me, the rankings indicate white bread is no longer the default sandwich bread for many, but the top three do not indicate particular adventurousness. Instead, they seem to indicate a desire for more whole grains."

Consumers are looking for unprecedented levels of quality and variety. "There is a trend toward 'no sacrifice,'" according to Alan Haimmer, vice president for sales and marketing at Charlotte, NC-based Stefano Foods, which produces a variety of stuffed pizza and flatbread sandwich products. "Consumers desire quality regardless of the channel or whether it is hot, cold or frozen."

Stefano's paninis deliver a consistently satisfying eating experience because of high component quality, such as sliced meats in a very high bread-to-protein ratio and unique packaging. Haimmer says. "This year we have seen tremendous growth in the panini category. Our offering includes Italian, Cuban, Monterey Turkey, Chicken Caesar and Muffuletta paninis. Each item features a generous amount of filling and features stylish grill marks on top. Refrigerated merchandising

positions this item as a great addition to any in-store sandwich program."

Many producers see increasing demand for flatbread products. "We have a new line of whole grain and soy protein fortified flatbreads that can be used for more healthful options," says Brian Jacobs, vice president of Tumaro's, Los Angeles, CA. "This new line contains at least 16 grams of whole grains, is vegetarian, cholesterol- and trans-fat-free and available in either 8-grain or wheat soy and flax. Today's consumers are looking for more healthful options and seem to want variety and flavor without sacrificing quality."

Tumaro's also produces a line of flour tortilla products that can add variety to a sandwich program. "We sell a lot of traditional flour tortillas, sun-dried tomato and basil, garden spinach and honey wheat tortillas," Jacobs says. "In addition, flavors like chipotle, chili, pesto and garlic, and roasted red pepper are gaining a lot of momentum and growing in popularity."

Costanzo's Bakery, Inc. in Cheektowaga, NY, has learned from its own retail deli that today's customer wants a more healthful sandwich product. "We are expanding our line in part because of our experience within our own sub shop," says Ken Burke, vice



PHOTO COURTESY OF COSTANZO'S BAKERY, INC.

president for sales & marketing. "As you see with our new product introductions, which will make their appearance at the NRA [National Restaurant Association] show, we believe there is a trend toward higher-end

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SLICING CHEESE

Slicing Cheese — Make Mine Unique

Many delis are looking for new and unusual cheeses to offer their customers. “The delis are looking for something unique and different to bring people into the deli,” says Kaylin Schmitz, co-owner of family-owned Henning’s Cheese in Kiel, WI. “That’s why we are coming up with new flavors for our Cheddar, and other unique cheese products.”

Industry figures indicate that deli customers are being drawn to more upscale cheese products. Although the dollar value of deli cheese sales increased less than four percent from 2003 to 2006 to a little more than \$2 billion, according to statistics from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, that modest increase came while the pounds of cheese purchased at the deli actually dropped by 10 percent to a little over 330 million pounds.

The key to a successful slicing cheese program is offering a wide variety of upscale cheeses. “Swiss is a flagship item with us,” says Mari Meriluoto, marketing manager of Parsippany, NJ-based Finlandia Cheese Inc., which produces a number of cheese products that can be retailed in the deli department in loaves, including Swiss, light Swiss, Muenster, Havarti and Gouda cheeses.

BelGioioso Cheese of Denmark, WI, introduced a pre-sliced Mozzarella, according to marketing manager Jamie Wichlacz. “It’s a high-quality American product.” BelGioioso produces a full line of Italian-style cheeses that are made in the USA.

“Tillamook Cheese was one of the first producers of natural cheese slices, and since we got into the market a few years ago, it has become quite a growth area overall, including for Tillamook,” says a spokesman for Tillamook, OR-based Tillamook Cheese, a 98-year-old farmer cooperative based in the Tillamook Valley.

Valley Cottage, NY-based Switzerland Cheese Marketing USA supplies Emmentaler Switzerland and Emmi Swiss as slicing cheeses in the deli department, according to marketing manager Thomas Hauswirth.

“We do a lot of cheese wheels,” says Schmitz. Henning’s is an independent dairy producing cheese from milk purchased from 25 neighboring dairy farms. The firm supplies cheese wheels ranging from the familiar 3-pound size to a 1,200-pound size for customers looking to hold a very large wine and cheese party.

“We try to bring things to the deli other than just ordinary

cheese,” she says. The company produces a growing list of flavored Cheddar cheeses, including tomato basil, chipotle, onion and chive, horseradish and cheese and garlic.

The tomato basil cheese won first place in the flavored hard cheese category at the most recent national contest sponsored by the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, based in Madison, WI. Henning’s also received a first place for its Colby cheese at that contest.

Although flavored Cheddars are its most renowned product Henning’s also produces Jack, Colby, string cheese, Mozzarella whips and cheese curds, a 1x1½-inch snack item.

Swiss, Cheddar, Provolone and Mozzarella, in that order, are the most frequently mentioned cheeses on restaurant menus, according to IDDBA statistics. Frequency of mention on menus is one indication of how well a product will move in the deli department.

To maximize sales of quality slicing cheeses, customers must be able to see them.

“Display them in the deli so they are visible,” says Meriluoto. “If they see the cheese, the customers might ask for a brand by name.”

There are also many opportunities to cross-promote cheese with other products in the deli or other departments.

“We love to see retailers cross-promote,” says a spokesman for Hiram, OH-based Great Lakes Cheese Co. Inc. “If they have Great Lakes cheese in the deli, we like to see them also include it in their pizza program, or their sandwich program.” Great Lakes produces an award-winning array of Provolone, Mozzarella and Cheddar along with Colby, Swiss and Jack. The firm also provides popular imported cheeses, such as Danish Havarti and Blue, Dutch Gouda and Swiss Gruyère, Boursin Garlic & Herb and Jarsberg.

Signage can also help to promote cheeses, which can easily be lost from view in the cold case. “They show the product in the deli case with the packaging,” Wichlacz says. “Sometimes retailers use signage to draw attention to it. Most of our product is sold in the deli section of the cheeses. They can be carried in the deli department, but our products need to be refrigerated.”

Visibility for high-quality cheeses may also help sales in the sandwich program. “Sandwiches featuring specialty meats, cheeses and sauces/condiments have experienced increased popularity in the past few years,” says Alan Hiebert, IDDBA education information specialist.

DB

sandwiches. We also see a trend toward grilled or toasted sandwiches.”

Costanzo’s produces 8- and 12-inch Cuban rolls, oat-topped wheat rolls, Asiago cheese-topped rolls, Italian herb topped rolls, 8-inch whole-grain rolls, 4-inch round rolls with 117 percent of the recommended daily allowance of fiber as well as corn-dusted kaiser rolls.

“We’re expecting the new introductions to be a pretty big deal,” says Burke. “Younger kids are demanding more healthful foods. That’s why Costanzo’s is offering a new line of whole-grain sandwich rolls.”

King’s Hawaiian Bakery, Torrance, CA, has produced deli sweet rolls for years. More recently the firm increased its line to include 100 percent whole-wheat and honey-wheat buttered rolls. “They pack up our rolls with meat and cheese,” says Shelby Weeda, president. “A lot of customers want packages for smaller portions.”

What Time Is It?

The sandwich has long been associated with lunch, but there are opportunities opening for sandwich products during other day parts.

“Sandwiches are still the pre-eminent grab-and-go deli item for lunch but we’re also seeing an increase in sandwiches for dinner and snacks,” says Weeda of King’s Hawaiian Bakery.

Morning also presents new sandwich opportunities. “We think that for delis, breakfast is an untapped opportunity,” says Stefano’s Haimar. “This year we will roll out a full selection of breakfast sandwiches that can be merchandised cold or hot. As quick-serve restaurants move to breakfast all day, the deli needs to be ready to ride this consumer trend.”

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Getting To Know Hispanic And Latino Customers

*Recognizing the diversity of these groups
provides insights for serving them at the deli.*

By Duane Craig

The growing Hispanic and Latino populations continue to show that marketing to this diverse sector is an exercise in flexibility. Second and third generations of these ethnicities are showing up in the marketplace as bilingual, hungry for old and new tastes and more brand aware than their parents and grandparents.

When people emigrate to another country, the process of assimilating into the new society takes generations to complete. Because of both the size of this population segment and the diversity of the countries and cultures from which they come, the United States is undergoing an immense challenge. At the heart of this effort, deli operators are tasked with providing familiar products to all customers while integrating a wide variety of new offerings.

As various forecasters announce constantly changing numbers for population growth and dollars waiting to be harvested, those who understand how to engender friendliness and familiarity are reaping the rewards of serving these customers.

This group is often referred to as “Hispanic” but there is considerable disagreement among members of the group as to their acceptance of that name. This is a complex topic relating to who assigned the names and how the names reflect heritage, nationality and language. While a wave of popular consensus is yet to come ashore, supermarket delis would do well to at least be aware of this issue.

Q&A Research in Novato, CA, reports

a survey that showed the term Hispanic was preferred by a 2-to-1 margin among members of these groups. Those who preferred the term were more likely to have been assimilated into the U.S. culture, to hold conservative views and to be younger than those preferring the term Latino.

In the publication *Hispanic/Latino Market Profile*, the New York, NY-based Magazine Publishers of America, the industry association for consumer magazines, defined Hispanic as being associated with Spain or Portugal and Latino as describing people of Latin American descent. The publication also referenced the Latino National Survey in which 35 percent of respondents preferred Hispanic, while 13.4 percent preferred Latino. Perhaps more telling was that 32 percent of those who responded thought either



Late Generations Advance Assimilation

The children and grandchildren of immigrants are more adventurous when it comes to trying mainstream foods and blending them with familiar ethnic foods.

"The first generation is more traditional — it takes longer to persuade them to try a new brand or a different product," says Frank Pocino, president, Pocino Foods Company, City of Industry, CA. "The second generation is more willing to try something new."

"The difference that I notice is that the second generation likes Mexican food already done due to limited time and not having the experience in preparing the food," adds Maria de Lourdes Sobrino, founder and CEO, Lulu's Dessert Factory, Los Angeles, CA. "This is why the individual portion category from yogurts, gelatins, juices, 'lunchables,' sandwiches, and sushi are ready to go. The second generation is buying what they see at home and is also moving to national brands compared to the ethnic brands."

"The third generation has no idea how to cook a tamale," says Dennis Oratowski, owner, Crown Bakery, Inc. in Los Angeles, CA. "They're becoming more Americanized."

Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing for Cibao Meat Products, Inc. of Bronx, NY, also sees the third generation as the one that is most assimilated into the culture at large. Then, too, Hispanic and Latino foods continue their assimilation into the larger mainstream food offerings.

"In California, Hispanic and Latino foods have been a staple for many years," says Pocino. "Almost all ethnic groups have considered these foods as part of our regular food chain. I have to believe that with the expansion of a growing Latino population throughout the country, Hispanic and Latino foods will continue to integrate."

"They become more and more mainstream instead of ethnic," adds Gabriel Robles, president, Queso Campesino, Denver, CO.

"I believe that these foods have to be approved first by the Latino taste before going to the mainstream market in order to be authentic," says Sobrino.

"The timing is right to attract these buyers because their population is growing," concludes Robles. "Creating the environment and atmosphere the Hispanic or Latino buyer likes is the main ingredient for retailers to appeal those customers." **DB**

term was acceptable and 18.1 percent said they did not care which term was used.

Other surveys have shown respondents often identify with multiple names. For example, a person from the Dominican Republic might see both Hispanic and Latino as acceptable and someone from Cuba may embrace Cuban as well as Hispanic, American and Latino.

Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing, Cibao Meat Products, Inc., Bronx, NY, relates the word Latino is often used among those in the group while Hispanic is used to refer to the group by others.

"We've done a lot of studies and been involved in focus groups and the word Hispanic really offends many of the Latin folks," adds Tim Conway, director of sales and marketing, Caribbean Food Delights, Inc., Tappan, NY, makers of Jamaican beef patties popular with the Latin community. "We try to make our marketing very specific."

"From my experience of being born in Mexico and being here in the States for the last 30 years, being called Hispanic is by far more accepted," relates Gabriel Robles, president of Queso Campesino in Denver, CO. "The Central Americans and South Americans are OK with being called Latino. It all depends who you are referring to and who you are talking to."

Once again, the often cited advice, "Retailer, know thy customer," is at the root of navigating these waters and at being successful with this market. The stories of the Hispanic and Latino immigrants are one way to get to know them.

Quality And Recognized Brands

Maria de Lourdes Sobrino, founder and CEO of Lulu's Dessert Factory in Los Angeles, CA, remembers her early days in the United States after moving to Los Angeles from Mexico City in 1982. "It was very hard for us to find our traditional food. At that time, we could find only tortillas and salsas in the supermarket so we had to drive to Tijuana on the weekends and bring our food from Comercial Mexicana, a large chain of supermarkets in Mexico. Now it is amazing to see all the Mexican brands in the United States. I can find anything I need to prepare a traditional meal."

After not being able to find traditional Mexican gelatin desserts in her new country, she borrowed her mother's recipe and founded Lulu's. During those early days, she relied on neighbors to guide her food purchasing choices. "The way I started buying new brands and American products was by learning from my neighbors the food they prepared at their homes and by them show-

ing me the packaging. Then I went to the market and bought it, too."

Today's customers still rely on brands for consistent quality. "We have found the Hispanic customer is very brand loyal," says Frank Pocino, president of Pocino Foods Company in City of Industry, CA. "This is true locally and nationally."

"We'd rather spend money on food for our kids — good quality food — rather than buying a shirt or a TV," emphasizes Jorge Trujillo, vice president for marketing and sales at Reynaldo's Mexican Food in Downey, CA, manufacturers of chorizo and an authentic rice pudding made with milk. "The Latina woman looks for freshness but also for brands that she can trust."

Cibao's Soto agrees brands are important, especially for the quality these customers associate with the brand.

"It's important to have brand recognition among your target market both nationally and regionally," adds Conway. "We like to deliver a high quality product at a good value to the consumer. We find the Latin folks, as well as the Caribbean people, will pay extra for consistent quality they can count on day in and day out. We find them to be very loyal to a brand once they like it."

The importance of brand can be affected not only by the type of product but also by who is buying it. Crown Bakery, Inc. in Los Angeles, CA, makes a tres leches cake it sells to stores unbranded so the stores can put their own names on it. "Branding is important depending upon what it is and what generation you're talking about," says Denis Oratowski, owner.

"If you're talking national brands from Mexico, of course they are important," adds Robles, "but for the Hispanic community in any given part of the United States, regional brands in Spanish are going to be in favor, especially if they are available in the deli."

Brands may answer the question on how to attract these shoppers to the store, but at a minimum, providing a selection of products that are sought after by the local Hispanic and Latin populations is most important.

"There are people who try to market to the Hispanic consumer and they don't have anything on their shelves for them," says Alfredo Lardizabal, vice president of sales and marketing, MIC Food, Miami, FL, producer of Latin gourmet products for the prepared foods section of delis. "I think the key is to carry the types of items that will bring them into the store to begin with."

Signs Lead To Sales

Once the customers are in the store, signage is a critical factor in the deli. "Do not forget to put up a sign," says Oratowski.

"Hispanic people don't like to ask. If they don't see it, or they don't know what it is, they just move on. Make sure signs are bilingual, are nice and big and include the price."

Pocino Foods' Pocino advises making sure the signs are easy to read and colorful. Meanwhile, others provide tips to make signage appropriate and functional.

"We have done bilingual signage and they are definitely Latino compared to Hispanic in the colors, phrases and grammar we use," relates Conway. "We try not to use slang and to keep it traditional to the Latin languages. It's very, very important to make sure our labeling is of a really high quality design and that we use very vibrant colors, especially in our Latin packaging. The colors are very true, very rich, very saturated and our color selection is right on track."

"One mistake made is using the flags from different countries," says Robles. "We also believe it's really important to have recipes, especially when serving the second and third generations. Make a big deal of new items as they are added to the stores."

Soto emphasizes bilingual signs and puts special emphasis on having bilingual people to wait on the customers.

According to Oratowski, these customers tend to cook at home more, especial-

ly the first and second generations.

"Because of larger family size, they seem to feel it's more economical to take items home and cook for their families," notes Soto. "This is also more about tradition and family time." He sees prepared foods as more attractive to second and third generations.

"They are buying more into the prepared foods," adds Robles, "but I think the thing that is changing is the place it is done. The first generation, those people born outside the United States, for the first 20 years they're going to go to the local mom-and-pop places. After that, and also in the second and third generations, they're going to try to find the same items at the deli."

"For many families, going to the supermarket is a special place to go on a Sunday," explains Sobrino. "They may spend hours in the store and have a meal together. It is important to have a clean food area with music where they can sit and buy the food around them as they want. Make sure the food is well done and at the right price. They will also take this opportunity and buy it to take home."

Freshness continues to dominate the desires of Hispanic and Latino customers. "Fresh is always preferred over frozen," says Pocino. "They tend to shop daily."



"The quality is what's going to survive in this fast moving world," says Robles. "These customers would rather buy bulk — it gives the sense that it's fresher. Product sampling is a major factor. They like to have the atmosphere and they like to have the tasting of the products and that really makes a difference as to whether or not they are going to buy."

"We have a saying that we have to put our product into the consumers' mouths," reveals Trujillo. "The only way of doing that is through demos. If you are launching a new product, Latinos will be excited about the packaging, they will be excited about the ingredients, because we actually read what is in it, but they won't buy it unless they taste it."

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Mountain Cheeses

By Karen Silverston

Over the centuries, cheesemakers in the Alps, Juras, Pyrenees, Picos de Europa, Apennines and other European mountains learned to use nature and the seasons to their advantage, and their legacy of great mountain cheeses is unsurpassed.

By virtue of topography, any cheese made from milk of a herd or flock grazing in mountain pastures is a mountain cheese. All styles and types produced at 600 meters or more above sea level qualify for the Mountain Cheese Olympics, which will hold its 5th competition in October 2007, this year in Oberstdorf, Germany.

Mountain cheese also denotes the subcategory of large-format cheeses made from raw milk in highlands near the source of the milk, manually tended during maturation, durable and practical enough to survive transport and long keeping.

Fontina Valle d'Aosta PDO from Italy's Alps, Comté PDO and Beaufort PDO from France and Gruyère AOC from Switzerland are splendid examples of cows' milk mountain cheeses. Of course, where sheep, goat, mixed milk or even yak milk is available, it, too, is used for cheese.

Nomenclature battles persist, especially concerning Gruyère. "When something

becomes popular, everybody starts to make it. Before the political borders existed, there were the cheeses, and they're being copied.

Specific geographic conditions are responsible for some of the world's great cheeses.

There's nothing sacred anymore," says Fred Chesman, cheese department vice president of Atalanta Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ.

When merchandising mountain cheese, communicate the origins — the dramatic mountain and lush pasture, cheese name, origin of the milk, logo or certification (such as PDO seal) and age or season.

Characteristics

"Mountain cheeses are made in the short growing season of spring and summer, when there is grass, then aged and sold over the next year," notes Chesman.

Summer grazing implies exceptional terroir and high quality milk. "The alpage is under snow for half the year, pristine, protected and unpopulated. Each spring, as the

snow recedes and the grass is growing, it is all completely new," explains Daphne Zepos, owner of Essex Street Cheese Company,

New York, NY, where she selects and imports a cheese marketed as Essex Street Hand-Selected Comté. The former director of affinage at Artisanal Cheese Center, New York, NY, she judged the competitions at the three most recent Mountain Cheese Olympics, consults and teaches cheese professionals and consumers.

"On mountaintops without electricity or refrigeration, cheese is made in the way

"MOUNTAIN CHEESES ARE MADE IN THE SHORT GROWING SEASON OF SPRING AND SUMMER, WHEN THERE IS GRASS, THEN AGED AND SOLD OVER THE NEXT YEAR."

— Fred Chesman
Atalanta Corporation



PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMI USA

Mountain cheeses are produced in locales 600 meters or more above sea level.

it was always made. They still light a fire and swing a cauldron. The cheese still dries in the room in which it was made. The cheeses are kept, salted and preserved in the way they have always been. They tap into a tradition that is hundreds of years old, and the flavors are actually what they are supposed to be," Zepos explains.

These hard and semi-hard wheels are made by cutting the curd to the size of a grain of rice or wheat, cooking, pressing out the moisture, building a protective rind and

aging. The cheese develops a smooth, solid texture, some supple, some drier, sometimes with eyes.

Over time, subtle and complex flavors emerge. Tiny crystals may also form. "This is tyrosine, an amino acid, common in Gruyères and Alp cheeses. It is neither sugar nor salt. During maturation, proteins break down into amino acid. This process is called proteolysis. As the cheese ages out, the amino acids crystallize," explains Mike Gingrich, co-owner of Dodgeville, WI-based Uplands Cheese Company and cheesemaker of the company's Pleasant Ridge Reserve.

A flavor wheel that groups more than 80 descriptors into six families (lactic, fruity, roasted, vegetable, animal and spicy) is available from Comté Cheese Association through Carbonnier Communications in New York, NY.

Fontina Valle d'Aosta

Fontina Valle d'Aosta dates back to 1270 in the Italian Alps, where even the valleys are situated 6,000 feet above sea level. Valle d'Aosta shares Monte Cervino (the Matterhorn), the mountain outlined on Fontina's logo, with Switzerland.

Fontina is a semi-hard, washed-rind 15-pound wheel with concave sides. The fra-

grant, supple paste has widespread eyes.

**"SUMMER CHEESE
IS COMPLEX, WITH
HERBAL OVERTONES
OF ALPINE PASTURES,
AND IS AVAILABLE
MID-SEPTEMBER
THROUGH
MID-FEBRUARY."**

— Nancy Radke
Ciao, Ltd.

Fontina Valle d'Aosta is made twice daily, immediately after each milking.

In June, herders guide the Valdaostan cows to pastures at elevations up to 7,600

feet where cheese is made in stone houses. Aging can vary from 90 to 120 days, depending on the butterfat content of the milk. Daily care alternates between dry salting and salt water brushing.

"Summer cheese is complex, with herbal overtones of alpine pastures, and is available mid-September through mid-February," says Nancy Radke, president of Ciao, Ltd., Syracuse, NY, and director of the United States information offices for the Consorzio Parmigiano Reggiano and Cooperativa Produttori Latte e Fontina.

"The pastures, abundant with grasses and multicolored flowers that seem to exist in a cooperative relationship, are located in a national protected wildlife area, naturally irrigated by glacial melt. The ecosystem depends on the grazing," she continues.

Several times a year, grasses are cut and preserved for winter feeding. When pastures are completely blanketed in snow, the cows eat the dried grass, which changes the milk in color and flavor.

"Winter cheese may appear whiter because the carotene in summer flowers isn't present in the dried grasses. Winter cheeses may be milder, and some find them a little fruitier. All pasture is respected because that varied diet is what allows the cows to have such rich, flavorful milk," concludes Radke.

Comté

Comté production methods have endured for a thousand years. Comté is a hard cheese, made in the Jura Mountains from raw milk of Montbéliarde cows fed fresh grass or hay. Flavor and aroma complexity year-round is attributed to natural microflora of the soil and the air, preservation of pasture and the care given each cheese.

"Comté AOC law limits the distance between farm and fruitière [cheese dairy] to

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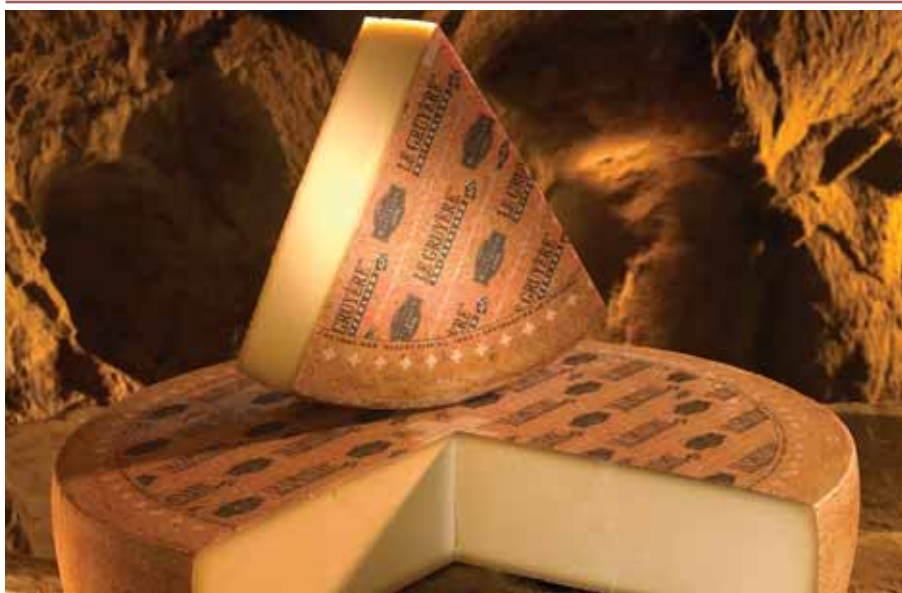


PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMI USA

The origins of Gruyère can be traced back nearly 900 years.

15 miles," notes Jean-Louis Carbonnier, president of Carbonnier Communications in New York, NY, which represents the Comté Cheese Association, which is based in Poligny, France.

During the pre-maturing process at the fruitière, the rind is nurtured while the paste develops its structure. The 80-pound wheels rest on spruce boards where they are turned, salted with sea salt and rubbed with salted liquid daily.

"The affineurs buy young wheels from multiple fruitières scattered all over the region and age the wheels in their own facilities up to 18 months or more. Artisanal production and aging and the seasonality of the milk make it a very diverse cheese," according to Carbonnier.

"The aging facilities are spectacular places. Fort Saint Antoine and Fort des Rousses are gigantic underground caverns, but the sense you get when you visit is all 60,000 cheeses are alive. It is breezy, cold, damp, and it smells wonderful. A crew takes care of the cheese to protect the crust and help it age. It is a slow, concerted process, full of life," concludes Carbonnier.

Beaufort

The subtle flavor of Beaufort, nicknamed the "Prince of Gruyères" by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, is a result of the milk production in the French Alps, the Tarine and Abondance breeds of cattle and the cheese-making and aging tradition. Wheels weigh upwards of 80 pounds and age from five to 12 months.

"Summer" Beaufort is made from June to October. "Chalet d'Alpage" designates summer Beaufort made in mountain chalets

above 4,900 feet from the raw milk of a single herd.

Gruyère

Gruyère, which dates back to 1115, originated in the Fribourg area of Switzerland. It is made from raw milk in cheese dairies in the cantons of Fribourg, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Jura and Bern.

"AOC law limits the distance between farm and cheese dairy to 12½ miles (6 miles, for Gruyère d'Alpage). Milk must be used within 24 hours and cannot have undergone any treatment," explains Thomas Hauswirth, marketing manager for Emmi USA, Valley Cottage, NY. Lucerne, Switzerland-based Emmi is a cheese maturer, exporter and producer. Emmi USA is an importer.

Wheels are aged in a humid environment, carefully washed and brushed, becoming uniformly brownish. The smooth, firm paste, usually ivory but yellowish in summer, has a slightly damp feel. It may have pea-sized holes or small interior cracks. Seventy-five-pound wheels are typical.

"Producers cure Gruyère according to AOC regulations, and at four to five months, we select wheels for refining in our facilities. If we select it for cave aging, it will be aged for a longer time. As Gruyère matures, the texture becomes harder, the taste stronger and the smell more aromatic. Both the texture and aroma are important," explains Hauswirth.

Less well known than Gruyère are L'Etivaz AOC, made in Vaud from May to October, Vacherin Fribourgeois AOC from Fribourg, and Appenzeller, known for 700 years in eastern Switzerland.

"In Switzerland, there is only one Gruyère. L'Etivaz, Vacherin Fribourgeois and Appenzeller differ from each other and from Gruyère by virtue of the pastures where the milk was produced and the process used to make and age the cheese. Each has its own specification," adds Hauswirth.

Pleasant Ridge Reserve

Pleasant Ridge Reserve is an original cheese made by Uplands Cheese Company using characteristic mountain cheesemaking practices. It is the only cheese twice named Best of Show by the American Cheese Society (ACS), Louisville, KY, and the only ACS Best of Show to be named Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (Madison, WI) U.S. Champion.

"We were drawn to the processes used for mountain cheeses because we pasture-feed our cows all summer long, as they do. We cook to those temperatures, we use those cultures and we press under the whey — techniques not used for cheeses other than the mountain cheeses," explains Uplands' Gingrich. "We cave age and wash Pleasant Ridge Reserve with brine as mountain cheeses are."

Gingrich does not make large format cheeses. Pleasant Ridge Reserve is made in 10-pound wheels for ease of handling and retailer convenience.

Roth's Private Reserve

New to the market, Roth's Private Reserve from Roth Käse USA, Ltd., based in Monroe, WI, is a pressed, cooked, washed-rind cheese made in an imported copper vat using raw milk from southern Wisconsin farms.

The 18-pound wheels age on wooden boards in temperature- and humidity-controlled cellars for at least six months. Roth's Private Reserve won Best in Class in the Smear Ripened Cheeses category at the 2007 Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association U.S. Championship Cheese Contest in March in Milwaukee, WI, and was named first runner-up to the overall competition champion from a field of 1,158 entries.

"Aging is an art and a craft. The wheels are brined and smear-treated to develop the rind and we age it until we think the flavor is perfect. Washed-rind cheeses have gained popularity because of their distinctive flavor profile," says Kirsten Jaeckle, marketing manager for Roth Käse USA, Ltd.

With roots in Switzerland, Roth Käse has an affinity for handcrafted, alpine-style cheeses. The flagship Grand Cru Gruyère, produced in Monroe, WI, since the company's founding in 1991, has won numerous awards.

DB

Parmigiano-Reggiano

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

Parmigiano-Reggiano has long been popular throughout the world, often imitated yet never quite duplicated.

"The reason is undoubtedly coming from the fact that it has been recognized as a product of excellence from the very start for its unique qualities, for the flavor and preciousness that made it a most welcome present to kings and emperors," says Cristiana Clerici, spokesperson for the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano, based in Reggio Emilia, Italy. "The method of production has remained almost unchanged from those times and the qualities of our cheese — a 100 percent natural product — in a world where additives are dominating the food business make Parmigiano-Reggiano something even more rare and precious."

When compared to what she calls "industrial" cheeses, Clerici says, "You quickly realize the incredibly high gap in flavor."

"I think it really is the king of Parmesans. It has a unique flavor, because there's no milk anywhere in the world that's like the milk used for this cheese," says Joan Allen, director of marketing, Arthur Schuman, Inc., Fairfield, NJ, importers of fine hard cheeses. "If people want to use the premium cheese in the category, then Parmigiano-Reggiano is the cheese."

Nancy Radke, president of Ciao, Ltd., Syracuse, NY, and director of U.S. information office, Consorzio del Formaggio Parni-

In a world of additives and adulteration, this highly desired cheese stands out for its adherence to time-honored manufacturing techniques.

giano-Reggiano, Syracuse, NY, believes that perhaps the biggest reason Parmigiano-Reggiano is so well-loved is because it is rich in umami — the flavor that is best identified as "savory" and that brings out the flavors around it. "No matter what you put it with, Parmigiano-Reggiano helps enhance the flavors of other foods," she says.

And, says Radke, despite having about eight grams of fat per ounce, "A lot of dieticians recommend it for people on low-fat diets because it's high in flavor," so you only need a little.

"It performs," agrees Allen. "It contributes a high amount of flavor for a small

amount of cheese." She notes many Americans are discovering new ways to use Parmigiano-Reggiano in their cooking, such as shaving it in addition to grating it, and that many are learning to enjoy it as a table cheese, as well.

"It has a limited production and is done as a cottage industry, which gives it romance," Allen adds.

Parmigiano-Reggiano's long shelf life helped the cheese gain popularity throughout the world from the very beginning. "It was a staple on a lot of sailing vessels because it was a good source of protein and durable," says Radke. (A similar practice exists today, as Russian cosmonauts have found that the calcium-rich, high-protein cheese is an ideal food for space missions.) Because much of this cheese went through Parma, it took on the name "Parmesan."

"If people want to use the premium cheese in the category, then Parmigiano-Reggiano is the cheese."

— Joan Allen
Arthur Schuman, Inc.



The aroma of a freshly opened Parmigiano-Reggiano wheel delights customers and drive sales.

"Soon the noble families around the area came to appreciate it and thought, 'We'll make that, too,'" says Radke. "In the 1700s and 1800s, it moved beyond the nobles and monks and began being produced by common farm families."

Today, the production of Parmigiano-Reggiano is one of the strictest in the world. Both the cheese and the cow's milk it is made from are produced only in the Italian provinces of Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena, Bologna to the west of the Reno River and Mantua to the east of the Po River. Accord-

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUND FOOD HOLDINGS, INC.



ing to Radke of the Consorzio, only about 3 million wheels are made each year. "We have slightly under 500 cheesemakers, and approximately 6,000 family farms that feed the milk to the cheesemakers."



Splitting of the Parmigiano-Reggiano wheels is great theater.

Parmigiano-Reggiano can only be made once a day. It is still made in small batches almost exactly the way it was made 800 years ago by Benedictine monks, barring a few improvements. The process begins with the evening milking. "The milk must arrive at the cheese making facility within two hours of milking," notes Radke. "Overnight, the cream will naturally surface." The next morning the cream is skimmed from the top. Whole milk is added from that morning's

dron produces only two forms of cheese each day. These two forms are the only two that are exactly alike. "Every single cheese maker and every single cauldron will result in a slightly different product," says Radke.

The cheese is aged for a minimum of 12 months. At that time, a certifier from the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano inspects each wheel to determine if is good enough to be sold as Parmigiano-Reggiano. Those that pass are then marked as either a good candidate for aging or as a cheese that should be eaten young. Those that are aged continue to be evaluated throughout the aging process, with the average wheel being aged about 24 months. A truly exceptional cheese will be aged longer and marked "extra" or "export."

"It's pretty rigorous," notes Allen of Arthur Schuman. "This is the tricky part. Not every 24-month cheese is going to be a great 36-month cheese."

An Honest Cheese

"This cheese is called the most honest cheese in the world," notes Allen. "The date of production is on it, the factory number is on the cheese. When you buy a wheel, all of these markings are self-evident."

Each wheel is marked with a code that makes it completely traceable back to the field the cows grazed in that day. "That adds a certain level of consumer comfort," according to Radke.

In addition to these markings, a stamp on each wheel indicates that cheese's level of maturity — lobster-colored for more than 18 months, silver for more than 22 months and gold for more than 30 months.

Radke notes Parmigiano-Reggiano aged

PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO CAN ONLY BE MADE ONCE A DAY. IT IS STILL MADE IN SMALL BATCHES ALMOST EXACTLY THE WAY IT WAS MADE 800 YEARS AGO BY BENEDICTINE MONKS, BARRING A FEW IMPROVEMENTS.

milking and the mixture is placed in large copper cauldrons and gently heated.

"At that point they add a natural whey starter," says Radke. Rennet is added to cause the mixture to form curds. Each caul-



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Parmigiano-Reggiano kept at room temperature needs constant monitoring.

18 months is delicious as a table cheese and that it melts well when used in recipes. As the cheese ages, more and more calcium crystals form, giving the cheese its rather distinctive crunch.

"The moisture draws out of the cheese as it ages," says Schuman's Allen, making the older wheels better for grating. "It becomes extremely hard as the moisture comes out of the cheese," she says. The flavor also intensifies — a 24-month-old cheese will have a nutty, sharp flavor.

At the bottom of each wheel is a code with three letters and two digits, indicating the day, month and year the cheese was made. Noting the month can be especially important.

"The thing that's really nice about it is the milk actually reflects the season in which the cheese is made," says the Consorzio's Radke. In the spring, the cheese is more yellow, and the flavor reflects the grass, herbs and flowers the cows are grazing on. "Those cheeses are very tender and delicate and sometimes complex," says Radke.

In the summer, as the grasses become drier and more concentrated, "These cheeses tend to have a bigger flavor profile," adds Radke. Because of the warmer weather, they also tend to sweat out more butterfat as they age, so the result is a drier, more crumbly cheese that grates especially well. Summer's Parmigiano-Reggiano is highly prized in Italy, and therefore harder to find in the United States.

Autumn Parmigiano-Reggiano tends to have a more balanced flavor. "The rains come back and a new flush of wildflowers come back. The protein content of the milk is at its highest," which makes these cheeses

especially good for aging, notes Radke. Autumn cheeses "have a lot of toasted flavors in them. They tend to be a bit sweeter than spring and summer cheeses."

Cheese made during the winter, when cows are feeding on dried grasses, can be distinctly different from Parmigiano-Reggiano made in other seasons. "It takes on all these fruity notes," explains Radke. "Sometimes you'll crack a winter wheel and it will smell of pineapple." Winter cheeses also tend to have a higher fat content, because less of the fat is sweated out during aging, resulting in a more tender mouth feel. "For me," says Radke, "that's my favorite table cheese."

Sell More

"First of all, I would suggest that Parmigiano-Reggiano is kept clearly separate from imitation cheeses, making the difference clear to consumers," says Clerici of the Consorzio. "Instructive labels are a very good method to educate consumers about the product — labels indicating the maturing, area of origin and correct denomination 'Parmigiano-Reggiano.'"

"I think that telling the story is very helpful," advises Allen. "Each Italian cheese that's a DOP cheese has an interesting background, and I think consumers enjoy learning about that."

"Signage is really important," says Radke. "It's nice if the sign has the specific origin of the cheese, some sort of description of what the cheese is like and usage."

Allen recommends demonstrating the cheese with pairings, such as wine or prosciutto. "It's an area that retailers can use wonderful creativity with," she says.

"A lot of success has been had with hav-

ing Parmigiano-Reggiano out at room temperature," says Radke. But, she notes, someone needs to keep a close eye on the display. While the cheese can safely be stored out of refrigeration, "Aesthetically, it can suffer. When it sits out at room temperature, it can mold. If you decide to put it out as a room-

"IT'S NICE IF THE SIGN HAS THE SPECIFIC ORIGIN OF THE CHEESE, SOME SORT OF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE CHEESE IS LIKE AND USAGE."

**— Nancy Radke
Consorzio del Formaggio
Parmigiano-Reggiano**

temperature display, you really must turn it over." The maximum she recommends leaving a cut piece out is two days. And, she says, keep the grated cheese refrigerated, as it can become moldy much more quickly.

Radke recommends taking advantage of Parmigiano-Reggiano cutting tools, which can help show off the crystalline structure of the cheese.

"Once you're exposing it to air, it will dry out a little bit," notes Allen. "You would need to cut the cheese and wrap it to show it — you can't leave it open-ended."

"The prepared wedges should be vacuum-packed, because simple wrapping allows air in and dries the wedges too much, changing the flavor of the cheese," says Clerici.

"A lot of retailers build beautiful displays with the wheels," notes Allen. Often, she says, they will use olive oil on the outside of the wheels to keep them moist and shiny.

"If they wish to display whole wheels, I would suggest they change them from time to time — dry air is the worst enemy to our cheese, as it dries out quite quickly. Therefore, replacing the cheese in displays from time to time could be useful," says Clerici.

Allen believes sampling can go a long way to boost sales. "Getting people to taste the cheese is really the best thing you can do. It's just joyous to see people's reactions when they taste a really good Parmigiano-Reggiano."

DB

How To Rock In-Store Sampling Programs



By
Barry Lynn
"The Cheese
Impresario"

Cheese is my life and bringing its ambrosial joy to others is what I do. I host cheese-tasting events at unique venues throughout the country.

As "The Cheese Impresario," I create environments in which others can uncover the rich, versatile flavors of cheese. Retailers have a natural venue for cheese discovery.

Their operations are ideal for cheese-tasting and sampling events, offering consumers the chance to savor the world of cheese and to experiment with an array of partnering possibilities. Hosting in-store cheese sampling events builds your credibility as a knowledgeable food retailer and increases your cheese sales potential.

Serving a superior tasting cheese with a fine wine and a crusty loaf of bread is fabulous. For purists, this is THE way to enjoy cheese. However, there are many other flavor profiles to enjoy with cheese. Adding condiments to a cheeseboard can up the "wow" factor. I encourage you to reach beyond traditional pairings when sampling cheese and entice your customers with a few of these sensational options.

Olive and nut oils are marvelous with cheese. I love the contrast of a peppery olive oil, such as an Arbequina extra virgin olive oil, with a buttery Blue, such as Roth Käse's Buttermilk Blue. The Arbequina olive is a Spanish varietal, but it is also grown and processed by high-end California producers. Wisconsin is the country's leading Blue cheese producer and its artisan cheesemakers have created an exceptional collection of gourmet Blues spanning from bold and piquant to toothy and mild. One of my favorite full-flavored Wisconsin Blues is the Amish Blue from Salemville Cheese Cooperative. Pair it with a smooth Italian extra virgin olive oil.

Walnut oil is another tempting Blue cheese pairing. Try mixing a bit of walnut oil with some walnuts and then drizzle this mixture over Blue for a heavenly combination.

Cheese and chocolate have similar traits; both are creamy and delicious, varying in taste from sweet to bold to bitter. When sampled together, the flavor notes of cheese and chocolate play off each other.

I love to pair a Venezuelan Araguani dark chocolate (a fine bitter chocolate that blends two rare cocoa beans and features a 72 percent cacao content) with an Aged Cheddar. In general, dark chocolate marries well with Aged Cheddars; its sharpness can stand up to their powerful punch. Or try Gouda with a dark chocolate infused with fruit, such as black currants. The sweetness of the cheese and the fruit play off the intensity of the chocolate and highlight one another.

I encourage you to reach beyond traditional pairings when sampling cheese and entice your customers with a few sensational options.

Honey has been described as the "nectar of the gods" and Clifton Fadiman declared cheese to be "milk's leap toward immortality." The sweetness of the honey and the saltiness of the cheese create a divine taste sensation. More than 300 varietal honeys and a bounty of cheese types, (Wisconsin alone has more than 600 varieties, types and styles of cheese) mean the possible alliances are infinite.

I find honey and Parmesan enchanting. Try a savory chestnut or floral lavender honey with a nutty Parmesan. I encourage you to sample a number of varietal honeys with cheese. From the light zing of an orange blossom honey to the toothy luxury of a Tupelo, you just can't go wrong with honey and cheese.

Dried fruit, quince paste and jam are splendid accompaniments for cheese. I tell my students that dried fruits are easy and beautiful on a cheeseboard. Stuff Golden Calimyrna and Black Mission figs with Blue cheese, drizzle with honey and watch customers clamor for more. Or try my "Cheese Taco" — wrap a piece of Cheddar, Gruyère, Swiss or Parmesan in a slice of dried apple. As with honey and cheese, the sweet dried fruit contrasts with the salty cheese.

Fruit pastes and jams are excellent with an array of cheeses. Membrillo (quince paste) pairs well with Spanish and Hispanic cheeses, such as a Cotija and Queso Fresco, and fig jams are a beautiful complement to Blue cheese.

Many of us think nothing of drinking coffee with milk or cream but would never dream of pairing coffee and cheese, but cheese and coffee drinks, such as espresso and cappuccino, are a good match. For a surprising dessert treat, take a scoop of Mascarpone, drizzle it with honey and sprinkle with finely ground coffee beans.

Artisan breads are now widely available. I love whole-wheat loaves, French baguettes and walnut breads with cheese. Why not offer your customers a rosemary olive oil loaf with Parmesan cheese and topped with a bit of olive oil? Each item adds to the flavor experience and help customers travel the vast world of cheese. I always say, "It's a big world, explore it."

The wide flavor range makes cheese the ultimate food and beverage complement. Present your customers with the opportunity to experience cheese with a variety of unique eats and they will ask for more! You will be teaching your customers to create high-impact entertaining centered on beautiful cheeses.

Barrie Lynn writes the Cheese Matters monthly column in The Beverly Hills Times and has been featured in USA Today, Variety, The Hollywood Reporter, Daily Candy and E! Entertainment.

Martin Mitchell, technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) and managing director of Certified Laboratories compiles TechNews.

The information has been compiled from press releases, news articles and government announcements and policy clarifications. Additional information may be obtained by contacting RFA by phone at 770-452-0660 or online at www.refrigeratedfoods.org.



RFA Releases "Operation Food Safety: Everyone's Mission" DVD Training Program

The new RFA Training DVD is now available!

Created and produced by the RFA Technical Committee and RFA Technical Director Martin Mitchell, the RFA Training DVD covers critical topics and tasks to help refrigerated plant workers ensure food safety. Trainers can use the DVD to create awareness and then discuss plant-specific policies and procedures. RFA Manufacturing members will be sent one copy automatically. Associate members must request a copy through the RFA Office at info@refrigeratedfoods.org or 770-452-0660.

Use of octanoic acid as a post-lethality treatment to reduce *Listeria monocytogenes* on ready-to-eat meat and poultry products

1.feb.07

Journal of Food Protection, Volume 70, Number 2, February 2007, pp. 392-398(7)
Burnett, Scott L.1; Chopskie, Jocelyn H.1; Podtburg, Teresa C.1; Gutzmann, Timothy A.1; Gilbreth, Stefanie E.1; Bodnaruk, Peter

The anti-listerial efficacy and organoleptic impact of an octanoic acid (OA)-based treatment for ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products were investigated. Whole-muscle and comminuted RTE products were inoculated with a 5-strain mixture of *Listeria monocytogenes*. The OA treatments were applied to the surface of RTE products by dispensing a specific volume of solution directly into the final package prior to vacuum sealing.

Once sealed, the vacuum-packaged RTE products containing OA were immersed in water heated to 93.3°C (200°F) for two

seconds to effect adequate film shrinkage. Extending the time at which the packaged, treated RTE products were exposed to water heated to 93.3°C was also evaluated with a commercial cascading shrink tunnel fitted with a modified drip pan.

Once treated, RTE products were examined for survivor populations of *L. monocytogenes* after 24 hours of storage at 5°C. Sensory evaluation was conducted with a 60-member trained panel on 11 uninoculated, treated RTE products. The OA treatment of RTE products reduced *L. monocytogenes* numbers to between 0.85 log CFU per sample (oil-browned turkey) and 2.89 log CFU per sample (cured ham) when compared with controls.

The anti-listerial activity of OA was improved by increasing the duration of the heat shrink exposure. Specifically, reductions of *L. monocytogenes* ranged from 1.46 log CFU per sample (oil-browned turkey) to 3.34 log CFU per sample (cured ham). Results from the sensory evaluation demonstrated that 10 of the 11 treated RTE products were not perceived as different from the untreated controls.

Panelists detected reduced smoke flavor intensity with treated mesquite turkey, although the treated product was viewed as acceptable. Results demonstrate the effectiveness of OA as a post-lethality treatment meeting U.S. Food Safety and Inspection Service regulatory guidelines for RTE meat and poultry products with minimal impact on sensory quality.

FSIS Clarifies What To Expect When Contacting Technical Service Center With Technical Questions

FSIS recently posted a document to its Web site confirming its commitment to customer service and outlining what

customers should expect when they contact the Technical Service Center (TSC) with technical questions.

The document is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/TSC_Response_to_Calls_and_Emails.pdf. It can also be accessed by clicking the link under the "Contact TSC" section near the bottom of the TSC home page, www.fsis.usda.gov/about_fsis/technical_service_center/index.asp.

The document outlines and clarifies a number of issues, including the following:

- 1) The TSC is part of the Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development (OPPED) and is located in Omaha, NE. The hours that the TSC staff is available to take calls or respond to e-mails are 6 am to 5 pm Central Time, Monday through Friday.
- 2) The TSC may request and take steps to get both the inspected establishment and FSIS personnel on a call together to more clearly define the question, and for all relevant stakeholders to hear the answer.
- 3) The submitted questions and the TSC-provided answers will be captured as text data and will be analyzed for timeliness, completeness and accuracy.
- 4) The TSC will attempt to provide answers as quickly as possible within 24 to 48 hours.
- 5) The TSC will take certain management actions when TSC employees learn of instances in which inspection personnel believe they have been advised by their supervisors not to follow national policy.

OPPED, including the TSC, continues to seek means for addressing the needs of stakeholders.

DB

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Fax: 412-781-1409
Website: www.conroyfoods.com
See ad on page 51

Constanzo's Bakery

30 Innsbruck Drive
Cheektowaga, NY 14227
Phone: 716-656-9093
Fax: 716-656-9218
Website: constanzosbakery.com
See ad on page 52

DCI Cheese Company

PO Box 282
Ridgefield, WI 53076
Phone: 800-782-0741
Fax: 920-387-2194
Website: www.dcicheese.com
See ads on pages 15 and 26

George E. DeLallo Co.

6390 Route 30
Jeanette, PA 15644
Phone: 800-433-9100
Fax: 724-523-0981
Website: www.delallo.com
See ad on page 72

Fiorucci Foods, Inc.

1800 Ruffin Mill Road
Colonial Heights, VA 23834
Phone: 804-524-7775
Fax: 804-520-2681
Website: www.fioruccifoods.com
See ad on page 9

Food Match

575 8th Avenue
New York, NY 10018
Phone: 800-350-3411
Fax: 212-334-5042
Website: www.foodmatch.com
See ad on page 18

Genpak Corp.

68 Warren Street
Glens Falls, NY 12801
Phone: 518-798-9511

Fax: 518-798-6201

Website: www.genpak.com
See ad on page 19

Hormel Foods Corporation

One Hormel Place
Austin, MN 55912
Phone: 800-523-4635
Fax: 507-437-5119
Website: www.hormel.com
See ad on page 17

IDDBA

313 Price Place, Suite 302
Madison, WI 53705
Phone: 608-310-5000
Fax: 608-238-6330
Website: www.iddba.org
See ad on page 41

Innovasian Cuisine Enterprises, LLC

7611 South 180th Street
Kent, WA 98032
Phone: 425-251-3706
Fax: 425-251-1565
Website: www.innovasiancuisine.com
See ad on page 35

Manda Fine Meats

PO Box 3374
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Phone: 800-343-2642
Fax: 225-344-7647
Website: www.mandafinemeats.com
See ad on page 52

MDS Foods, Inc.

PO Box 732
Massillon, OH 44648
Phone: 330-833-8358
Fax: 330-833-1252
Website: www.mdsfoods.com
See ad on page 54

MIC Food

8701 SW 137th Avenue, Suite 308
Miami, FL 33183
Phone: 786-507-0540
Fax: 786-507-0545
Website: www.micfood.com
See ad on page 59

Norseland, Inc.

1290 E. Main Street
Stamford, CT 06902
Phone: 203-324-5620
Fax: 203-325-3189
Website: www.norseland.com
See ad on page 43

Nuovo Pasta Productions, Inc.

125 Bruce Street
Stratford, CT 06615
Phone: 800-803-0033
Fax: 203-380-4091

Website: www.nuovopasta.com
See ad on page 33

Parmigiano-Reggiano & Prosciutto di Parma c/o Lewis & Neale, Inc.

35 East 21st Street, 10th floor
New York, NY 10010
Phone: 212-420-8808
Fax: 212-254-2452
Website: www.prosciuttodiparma.com
Website: www.parmigiano-reggiano.com
See ad on page 65

Pilgrims Pride

2777 North Stemmons Freeway
Dallas, TX 75207
Phone: 800-824-1159
Fax: 214-920-2396
Website: www.pilgrimspride.com
See ad on page 2

Redondo Iglesias USA

47-55 Twenty Seventh Street
Long Island City, NY 11101
Phone: 718-729-2763
Fax: 718-937-3250
Website: www.redondoiglesias.com
See ad on page 71

Rubschlag Baking Corp.

3220 West Grand Avenue
Chicago, IL 60651
Phone: 773-826-1245
Fax: 773-826-6619
Website: www.rubschlag.com
See ad on page 20

Sabra Blue & White Foods

24-20 49th Street
Astoria, NY 11103
Phone: 718-GOSABRA
Fax: 718-204-0417
Website: www.sabra.com
See ad on page 27

Saputo Cheese, USA

25 Tri-State International Office Center
Lincolnshire, IL 60069
Phone: 800-824-3373
Fax: 847-267-0224
Website: www.stellacheese.com
See ad on page 55

The Snack Factory

PO Box 3562
Princeton, NJ 08543
Phone: 888-683-5400
Fax: 609-683-9595
Website: www.pretzelcrisps.com
See ad on page 39

Stacy's Pita Chips

633 North Street
Randolph, MA 02368
Phone: 781-961-2800
Fax: 781-961-2830
Website: stacysnacks.com
See ad on page 53

Unilever / Bestfoods

2200 Cabot Drive
Lisle, IL 60532
Phone: 800-272-1217
Website: www.unileverfoodsolutions.com
See ad on page 5

Blast From The Past

A

pplegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ, is turning 20 this year. In 1987, Stephen McDonnell bought a small smokehouse in New Jersey and soon began transforming it into a natural meat company. No one was offering organic or antibiotic-free meats back then, so he and Chris Ely, son of the original founder of the smokehouse, worked closely with farmers to develop practices that allowed animals to be raised in healthy, humane conditions without antibiotics.

Shown here are the original smokehouse and current members of the Applegate Farms team at company headquarters.



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

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