

DELI BUSINESS

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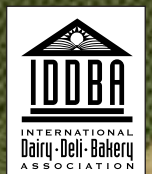
the economy and the deli:

A LOOK AT THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET

ALSO INSIDE

HISPANIC FOODS
CHICKEN
GREEK FOOD
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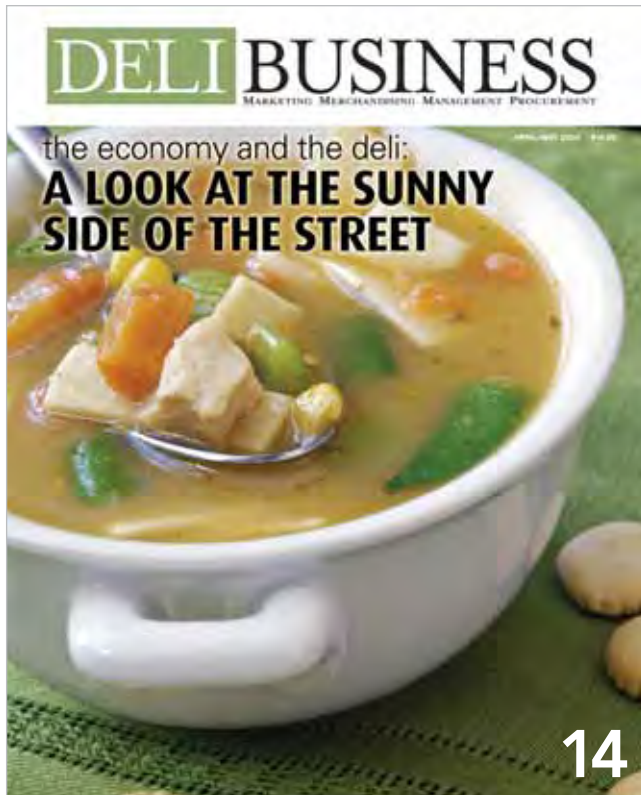
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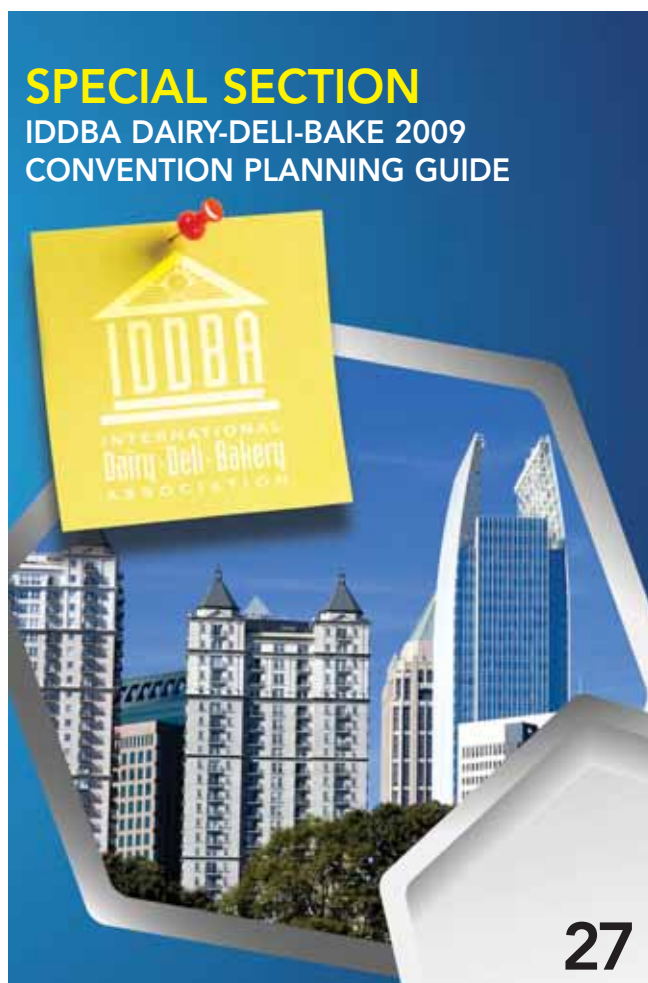
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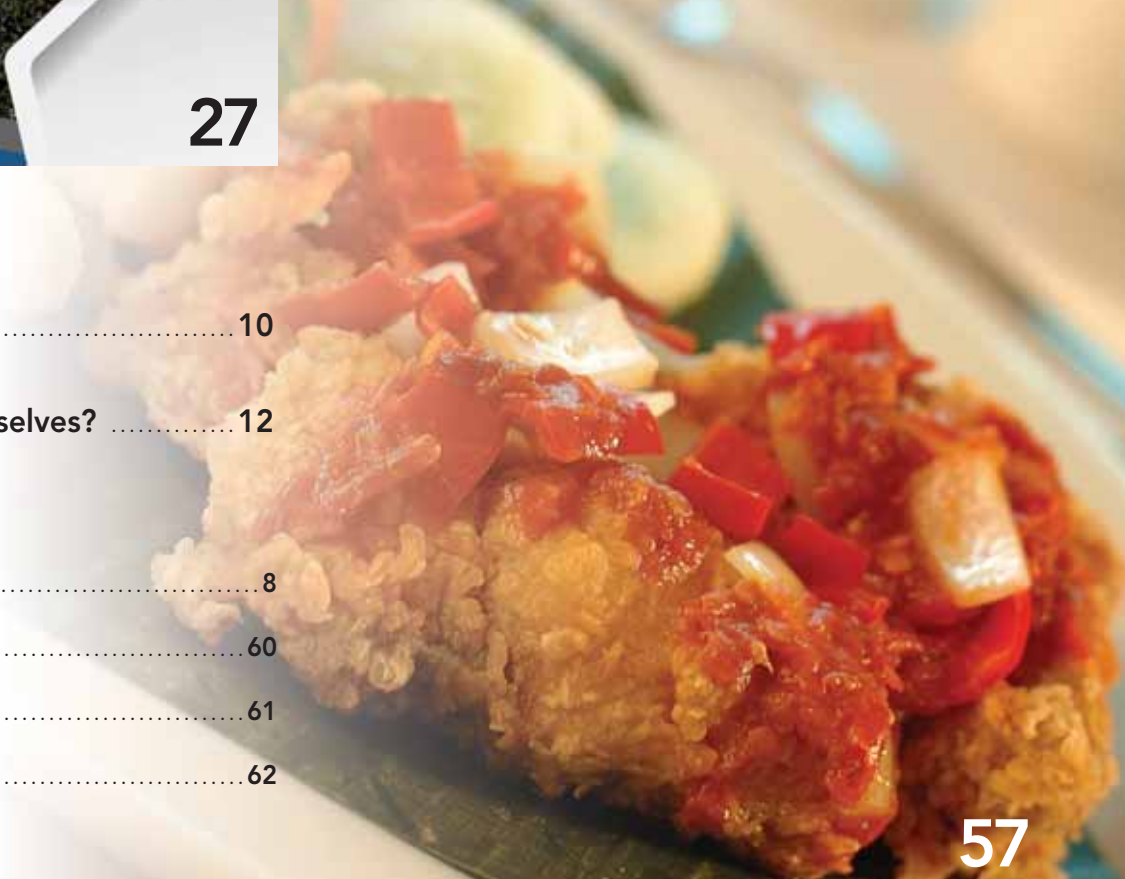
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26TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Now's the time to sign up for the 26th Annual American Cheese Society Conference. This year's event will be held in Austin, TX, Aug. 5-8, 2009. Attended by farmstead, artisanal and specialty cheesemakers; academicians and enthusiasts; marketing and distribution specialists; food writers and cookbook authors; and specialty food retailers from the United States, Canada and Europe, this is a premier learning, tasting and networking venue. The Society also hosts an annual world-renowned cheese competition, which culminates in the Festival of Cheese Saturday evening.

www.cheesesociety.org

COMING NEXT ISSUE IN JUNE/JULY 2009

5TH ANNUAL PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS

Each year, DELI BUSINESS honors members of the deli industry whose outstanding contributions have been nominated by their peers. They come from all aspects of the industry – retailers, cheesemakers, manufacturers and distributors. Learn which superlative individuals will take home this year's awards.

ANNUAL DELI MEAT GUIDE

The industry's annual guide to understanding the trends, food-safety initiatives, marketing and business opportunities to increase sales and profits for the No. 1 sales sector of the deli department.

FEATURE STORIES

Ethnic Foods
Foods From Italy

PREPARED FOODS

Ribs & Wings
Breakfast

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Cross-Merchandising
Spreads
Foodservice Meals
Indian Foods

DELI MEAT

Dry-Cured
Roast Beef
Ethnic Salami

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Breads
Salads & Sides

CHEESES

Goat Cheeses
Cheese Merchandising
Wisconsin Cheese

COMING IN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2009

Sustainability has been a hot topic for several years. How is it standing up under the economic downturn? Learn whether sustainability and economizing are mutually inclusive or exclusive.

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Transitions



Sara Lehmann is the latest addition to the guacamole team at Yucatan Foods, Los Angeles, CA. She will hold the new position of sales and marketing coordinator. She brings a plethora of experience to Yucatan Foods; her knowledge and experience are a great fit for both the company and its customers and broker network. She was most recently with Wm. Bolt-house Farms, Inc. where she held the position of East Seattle territory merchandising director.
www.yucatanfoods.com



Randy Haap has joined Creta Farms EVOO Gourmet Deli Meats, Lansdale, PA, as vice president of sales. He earned his bachelor of business administration from Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio, and previously worked as director of sales for Armour-Eckrich Meats (formally ConAgra Foods). His first job in sales was for Oscar Mayer and Company. All total, Haap has 17 years of experience in deli meat sales.
www.cretafarms.com



Eric Girard has been named central regional sales manager at Van Holten's, Waterloo, WI. He has 13 years of sales and marketing experience in the food industry, most recently with Road Ranger convenience stores. He will coordinate the efforts of outside brokers to drive sales of Van Holten's pickle-in-a-pouch and pouched olive snack lines within the central United States.
www.vanholtenpickles.com



Denis Neville has been named vice president, commercial and technical development, at MCT Dairies, Inc., Millburn, NJ. He will be responsible for creating and commercializing dairy ingredient solutions as well as helping develop MCT Dairies' overall business strategy on customer-preferred value-added products. He previously held positions with Kerry Ingredients & Flavours as well as Irish Dairy Board.
www.mctdairies.com

Announcements



SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE LAUNCHED
King's Hawaiian, Torrance, CA, has launched its Green Vision initiative, an operational campaign to enhance its global sustainability. From maintenance to production line procedures, King's Hawaiian has developed measures to impact the environment through financially sound alternatives and eco-friendly solutions. The campaign will also include a consumer awareness element to promote sustainable lifestyles with its customer base.
www.kingshawaiian.com



SABRA TO OPEN NEW FACILITY
Sabra Dipping Company, LLC, Astoria, NY, will open a 110,000-square-foot state-of-the-art food processing plant in Chesterfield County, VA. The plant will produce Sabra branded dips and spreads including hummus and vegetable dips. Sabra makes a wide range of refrigerated dips and spreads, all certified kosher and vegetarian and available across the nation.
www.sabra.com



WALKING THE WALK
Hilarides Dairy and Three Sisters Farmstead Cheese, Lindsay, CA, are using the methane gas generated on their dairy farm to fuel natural gas trucks to haul their milk. They have been using methane gas to provide electricity for the dairy operations since 2005. The project, which generates electricity to meet the needs on the dairy, helps reduce the strain on the California power grid. The electricity generated from biogas reduces the need to purchase power from power plants that run on fossil fuels.
www.threesisterscheese.com



NEW PACKAGING
Wyke Farms, Bruton, Somerset, England, has unveiled a new line of re-designed, re-sealable packaging for its farmhouse Cheddar. The new packaging features a zip-lock seal designed to preserve freshness and contemporary colored labels with a landscape of its Somerset farm. In terms of aesthetic stimulation, the range of bold colors and horizon landscape portrait were chosen to help the packaging stand out on the shelf and increase the products' overall in-store presence.
www.wykefarms.com

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

DELI WATCH

New Products



IMPORTED AGED GOAT CHEESE

Finlandia Cheese, Inc., Parsippany, NJ, now offers Black Label Premium Aged Goat Cheese, a velvety, semi-firm cheese. Its slightly sweet, rich flavor is perfectly punctuated by ripe salt crystals that melt in the mouth. Produced in an ancient village in the Dutch province of Friesland, Black Label Premium Aged Goat Cheese gets its unique flavor from the fodder of the region and its traditional cheese making process.

www.finlandiacheese.com



PREPARED AIOLI

Unilever Foodsolutions, Lisle, IL, introduces Hellmann's Real Aioli in three flavors — classic, sun-dried tomato and wasabi — to help delis create unique signature sandwiches, composed salads and entrées. Real Aiolis are made with extra virgin olive oil and bits of real garlic. Shelf-stable with no artificial flavors; ready to deliver fresh taste out of their easy-to-store 64-ounce jars with no need for mixing or blending, so no waste.

www.unileverfoodsolutions.us



NEW DELI PACKAGING

Placon Corporation, Madison, WI, introduces "scround" — neither square nor round — bowls and lids in its Fresh 'n Clear line. They are Placon's first food packages made with food-grade recycled PET. Available in clear or black, in seven sizes ranging from eight to 64 ounces. A common lid is available for each set of sizes — small, medium and large. The tight fitting, leak-resistant lids can be embossed with name or brand. When packed and closed, they offer nestable stacking.

www.placon.com



READY-TO-USE CRISPY ONIONS

Sugar Foods Corporation, Sun Valley, CA, introduces Fresh Gourmet Crispy Onions. Ready-to-use straight out of their fresh-lock, resealable bag, Fresh Gourmet Crispy Onions are ideal toppers for sandwiches, wraps and salads. Available in easy-to-store 10-ounce packs; 100 percent yield and no prep time needed.

www.freshgourmet.com



MARIO BATALI SELECTION

Chef Mario Batali in partnership with DCI Cheese Company, Richfield, WI, has expanded his line to include Spanish and Italian cheeses. Mario Batali Selection Spanish cheeses include Iberico (a blend of cow, sheep and goat milk), Valdeon (cow and goat milk blend) and Etxegerai (100 percent raw sheep milk). The Italian cheeses include Mountain Gorgonzola (100 percent cow milk), Organic Parmigiano-Reggiano and Mandarini-shaped Provolone Picante.

www.dcicheeseco.com



PRE-SLICED CARROT SHEET CAKE

Love and Quiches Desserts, Freeport, NY, now offers citrus carrot sheet cake with rich citrus cream cheese frosting, lemon curd drizzle and chopped walnuts. This unique twist on a classic dessert is pre-sliced into 36 perfect portions for effortless handling and valuable time savings in the kitchen. Four 5.18-pound trays contain 144 portions per case; kosher dairy. Available through Dot Foods, Inc.

www.loveandquiches.com



NEW CHEESE COLLECTIONS

Of Course Foods, Hoboken, NJ, now offers The Cheese Ambassador Cheese Collections in distinctive 5-ounce single packages. The American Artisanal Collection has aged Gouda from central Wisconsin, 3-year-old Cheddar from Pennsylvania Amish Country and cave-aged Blue from southern Minnesota. The Mediterranean Collection has Topsy Goat from La Mancha, Spain; Port Salut from Brittany, France; and Piave from the Alpine region of Italy.

www.thecheeseambassador.com



CONVECTED DRAWER WARMER

Hatco Corp., Milwaukee, WI, introduces the CDW-3N Convected Drawer Warmer. Using dry heat only, the unit is designed to keep a variety of food products hot, flavor-fresh and crisp until served. Energy efficient with insulated top, sides, and back. Narrow width and low profile, with 2" locking casters. Each drawer fits a standard or perforated food pan 12.75" wide by 20.75" high, and up to 6" deep. The unit uses 120 volts with no special wiring.

www.hatcocorp.com

CORRECTION:

In the *Delicious Watch* that appeared in the Dec./Jan. issue of *DELI BUSINESS*, we incorrectly described Wilkinson Industries' FreshServe cup as tamper proof; it should have been described as tamper resistant. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused.

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

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Trade Wars And The Deli

The days are long gone when supermarkets had a sign reading "international" to highlight the few imported specialty foods they carried; today's supermarkets have become veritable international bazaars carrying foods from every corner of the world.

The specialty cheese case, although lately featuring a wide assortment of American originals, is also a European geography class all by itself, with cheeses from Ireland to Italy, from Scandinavia to the Iberian Peninsula.

It ought to be of no small concern to the industry that the world may break into another trade war, since the prospects of high tariffs or unavailable products would impoverish the shopping experience and make retailers less able to satisfy customers.

It is common for hard times to lead many to focus on beggar-thy-neighbor policies. The infamous Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act is considered by most scholars to have played a significant role in spreading the Great Depression to Europe, and many believe it deepened the intensity and extended the length of the downturn.

Most recently, there were numerous attempts to sneak protectionist rules into the stimulus bill by prohibiting the use of foreign steel, for example, in stimulus bill projects. Although many of the clauses were removed before final passage, the world began to realize the sentiment in the United States was turning against trade.

We now stand on the precipice of a trade war with our next-door neighbor to the south, Mexico.

President Obama recently signed into law a spending bill that zeroed out all funding for a pilot program allowing certain pre-approved Mexican truck companies to bring freight from Mexico to various U.S. destinations without changing trucks or drivers.

The pilot program was necessary because the United States has been dragging its feet on honoring its treaty obligations for almost 15 years. In 1995, as part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the United States agreed to quickly permit Mexican trucks to cross the border and deliver anywhere in the four U.S. states that border Mexico — California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

The powerful Teamsters Union threw its weight around and the clause was never put into practice. Under NAFTA, Mexican trucks were supposed to be able to deliver anywhere in the United States by 2000. The United States didn't honor its obligations there either.

This clause would ensure better-quality product, delivered more quickly and less expensively to U.S. businesses and consumers, as opposed to the time-consuming, product-deteriorating and expensive procedure currently followed. Today, trucks in Mexico go to special zones set up near the border. The freight is unloaded

and then reloaded on a U.S. truck with a U.S. driver.

Mexico steps gingerly in its relations with the United States but, eventually, the injustice of America's unwillingness to honor its agreements led Mexico to request the formation of a special arbitration panel as outlined in NAFTA. Two Americans, two Mexicans and a British chairman ruled unanimously that the United States had failed to honor its agreement. It authorized the Mexican government to impose retaliatory tariffs.

Over 80 percent of Mexican exports go to the United States so Mexico was not looking for a trade war. It held off on the tariffs when the United States agreed to launch a pilot project in which 103 trucks from 26 Mexican carriers could bring freight to U.S. destinations. These 103 trucks would be carefully monitored to see if they were as safe as American trucks and drivers.

Several studies, both independent and by the U.S. Department of Transportation, found the Mexican trucks were safer than their U.S. counterparts. This has not stopped efforts to attempt to defund the pilot project in the past, and, in fact, President Obama voted to defund the project when he was a U.S. Senator.

The Mexicans showed remarkable forbearance during all these efforts to get the United States to honor its word. Yet in the end, they got slapped in the face when the U.S. Congress passed and the U.S. President signed, without comment or apology, the bill that terminated the pilot program.

Mexico finally retaliated with tariffs, carefully avoiding items the poor in Mexico depend on, such as rice and corn, but hitting hard at items perceived as more luxury-oriented: wine, dog food, bottled water, juices, nail polish, onions, pears, strawberries and cherries plus other items — about 2.4 billion dollars worthy of trade.

It is a skirmish hurting those industries affected but not big enough to affect the general economy — for now. There are principles at stake — economic principles, such as not making ourselves prosperous by making our neighbors poor, and political principles, such as honoring our agreements even when politically inconvenient.

If we forgot these principles, this won't be the last trade skirmish and, ultimately, our ability to bring the cornucopia of the world to the people of the United States will be compromised. That would be bad for our businesses, bad for consumers, bad for America and bad for the world.

DB



James F. Prevor

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by Lee Smith, Publisher

Why Do We Demean Ourselves?

The supermarket industry lacks a supportive culture. Supermarkets have never had the best image with the public. The public doesn't think of them as great places to work and customers view them as a necessity to be tolerated.

Anyone who has worked in the business knows that is not true. I, for one, have had a wonderful career in retail, working my way up from a part-time produce clerk to where I am today. In fact, I hope to someday end my career back in a store working behind a cheese counter or packing out a produce department. When I tell people I really enjoyed working in a store and wouldn't mind doing it again, I often get a look of complete disbelief.

I remember a good job that was never boring, had enough physical activity to keep me in great shape and offered flexible hours, minimal stress and lots of fun. I liked dealing with the customers and I enjoyed my coworkers. Over the years, I worked next to some incredible people. I loved the customers — they were always interesting, sometimes difficult and, at other times, funny and kind. The best companies had a terrific culture that gave their employees a sense of belonging, shared goals, self-respect and pride in a job well done.

Somehow we've failed to promote this great culture of ours, and many, if not most, companies have failed to develop anything but a banal work environment that offers nothing special. It's almost as if we are apologetic for who we are, bribing customers with low prices and insipid messages such as "We're your hometown store" or "Families are important to us."

A strong work and family culture can carry us forward in difficult times. A positive culture allows for expression of ideas and sense of purpose. A positive culture allows us to prosper regardless of hardship. Yet, retail rarely has a positive culture. The issue extends beyond employees; it extends to customers. Do they see you as a unique entity? Do they understand your sense of purpose? Can they buy into your mission statement? Does your mission statement ring true?

We should consider the maxim, "We judge ourselves by our intentions; others judge us by our actions." Very few people start off with bad intentions. Even Bernie Madoff said he thought he was going to pay everyone back as soon as things straightened out. He intended to be honorable but ended up the creator of nightmares.

In this world of instant communication and absolute transparency, companies need to develop a message that translates into actions people can applaud. I'm constantly amazed at the new tools at our disposal — YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook and new apps being developed faster than I can write. Social networking is

the most up-to-date way of sharing and getting instant feedback, yet I see very few of us doing much of it.

There are some great examples of building a corporate culture and drawing customers in through consistent in-store design, promotions, the Internet and social networking vehicles. One of the best is Wawa, a convenience-store chain based in Pennsylvania. With over 500 stores, it has created a culture that has customers as enthused as employees. Go to its website, www.wawa.com, or just Google Wawa and see what comes up. A lot of the credit must go to president and CEO Howard Stoeckel, who posts his own blog on the website and is a long-time human-resources guy. It's hard to leave the website without a clear feeling for what the chain is about — its values, the products it sells, and the people who work and shop there. This chain boasts a clear message and has champions spreading the word about "My Wawa."

Another favorite of mine is the Whole Foods' website, www.wholefoodsmarket.com. Whole Foods has always been about developing a unique culture around food and staying true to its vision, and its website offers a clear message. Whole Foods has obviously embraced not only the message and culture of its stores but also the contemporary psyche of its customers. I love the social networking elements seamlessly woven into the website. Not only does Whole Foods have its own blog, but it's also on Facebook, Twitter and Flickr. There are extensive videos and podcasts of cooking demonstrations, in-store promotions and suppliers. Regardless of where you look, you see a clear appreciation of store associates and a passion for excellence.

A positive culture is more than just a website or blog. From the minute you walk into a Wawa or Whole Foods store, the message you get from the employees you meet and the products you buy is clear. Whether you want to work for these companies or shop in their stores, the message is unambiguous. They are more than stores; they each represent a unique culture.

With hard times upon us, sullied executives being exposed, people getting sick or dying from contaminated products produced by companies that knew of the dangers, and a sense that the people and institutions we once trusted are now ripe with greed and avarice, people are looking for more than promises. Companies need to be more than just products and services; they need to have a culture that represents their values to all their stakeholders. **DB**



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THE CHEESES OF FRANCE



SAVOR THE EXPERIENCE™

the economy and the deli: **A Look At The Sunny Side Of The Street**



How to use the economic crisis as an opportunity to reorient your business

BY JIM PREVOR

Doing business in the midst of a major recession is fraught with challenges, but retail deli executives can look optimistically at the strategies ahead.

The course to operating expediently may involve changing a merchandising approach, marketing program or product offering, for example, to focus on value for consumers. Or it may involve accommodating realities such as reduced or eliminated lines of credit, less profitable or unprofitable operations or cash-flow reduction. This may mean layoffs or salary reductions and other unpleasant necessities.

The course to operating strategically may involve maintaining a marketing proposition at the moment, thus watching sales drop and profits disappear. Operating strategically may also call for a continuation to invest in new facilities, upgrade equipment, recruit, hire and train intensively.

Few organizations have the luxury of walking just one of these paths. Most have to conduct business strategically in an age of expediency. They have to endure, do what is necessary to survive both their company's financial situation and the demands of suffering customers. Yet they must prevail, prepared to lift off when the recession winds down and better times return.

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Know Thy Customer

Doing business in difficult times starts with understanding consumers. To some consumers, economizing means buying more at warehouse club stores and stocking up at supermarket sales. Others drop the warehouse club membership and stop stocking up so they don't have to shell out as much money at one time. Some use up their household inventory; others lay in a supply of frozen.

Recessions tend to reshuffle the cards. The Nieman-Marcus customer finds herself at Wal-Mart, which means Wal-Mart has a customer with different expectations from its traditional customers. But these new customers also represent new opportunities.

For the deli department, economic flux translates into a schizophrenic consumer profile. On the one hand, delis will lose customers. People traditionally turn to the deli because they're time-starved; someone who gets laid off may have more time to prepare foods and less money to buy prepared foods.

On the other hand, trading down may take many forms. If consumers used to eat out every night and now go out only on weekends, they may see deli department prepared foods as an economical alternative for weekday meals.

For retailers and suppliers, the culture itself has transformed. A purchase at an upscale-retailer, which once communicated food knowledge and prosperity, now has a very different message. After six months of stock-market and housing-price dips, that same purchase now seems showy. As value shopping becomes a competitive sport, upscale shopping can be seen as foolish.

In general, retailers are now experiencing incessant consumer demand for value. Although individual consumers may be willing to pay premiums for certain products, the trend is clearly for consumers to seek products that meet basic needs, that involve staying at home and that forgo variety and convenience in the name of achieving value.

Follow The Value Road

Consumer desire for value has a specific and not always beneficial impact on retailer procurement policies. For well over a decade, the deli department and its supply chain have ridden a wave of continually higher standards, part of a concerted effort to produce "restaurant quality" food. Variety and convenience have proliferated due to a razor-sharp focus on meeting consumer needs as well as on staking a position as the "anti-Wal-Mart" — offering an assortment of specialty, organic and high-service goods and services the Bentonville behemoth can't



match. A massive focus on supply chain responsibilities has had retailers demanding allegiance to food safety, sustainability and traceability.

Today, retailers are increasingly willing to set aside their professed standards to offer a "value." During a conference call with suppliers, a British retailer, long a force in sustainability — even while claiming it was reconfirming its commitment to sustainability — advised its vendors that due to the current situation, "All sustainability efforts must be immediately accretive to earnings."

In other words, if a vendor could reduce carbon output or water waste and offer the retailer a lower price, the retailer was thrilled, but it had no interest in paying higher prices to act in accordance with its professed values.

The retail universe is turning a careful eye toward assortment. With its focus on cost-reduction through rationalization of SKU count, Ahold's Value Improvement Program has established a model for retailers that believe an abbreviated SKU count will allow them to increase velocity, ensuring freshness and rapid inventory turns while maximizing retail leverage to get the best price. Many specialty vendors and those who offer secondary or tertiary brands find themselves in danger of being rationalized right out of many retail outlets.

The more urgent concern now is the rise of the "hard discounter," such as Aldi. U.S. retailers are looking to markets such as the United Kingdom and noting chains such as Aldi, Lidl and Netto posing real competition to mainstream supermarkets. Aldi just opened its 1,000th U.S. store, but if it acquires the same market share in the United States it has in, say, Australia, it could justify over 3,000 U.S. stores.

Despite all the hullabaloo related to Tesco's entry into the U.S. market with its troubled Fresh & Easy concept, remember

that Wal-Mart had to withdraw from Germany because it could not acquire a position of low-price leadership as it has in the United States.

Bright Spots Ahead

While these market disruptions are probably not permanent, this recession is expected to be deep. Just as the Great Depression defined the mentality of a generation, the effects of this economic decline are likely to be long-lasting, affecting how consumers and retailers think for some time to come.

For the immediate future, we can expect a triumph of tactical efforts over strategic thinking, especially among public companies managed for the next quarterly earnings release. Similar focus can be expected from companies owned by private equity groups focused on their own exit strategy as well as from highly leveraged players managed to meet the next interest or principle payment on their debt.

There are always bright spots even in generally gloomy times and there are many opportunities on the sunny side of the street. To name a few:

- In an age of deferral of gratification, there are multiple places for the small indulgence. The tendency of consumers not to buy big-ticket items can increase the disposable income available for deli department purchases.

- This is a big country. Few have market shares so large as to be driven primarily by macroeconomic trends. The success or failure of most companies in the industry depends far more on what they do than what the government does.

- It is a bigger world. The recession has led to empty boats and cargo planes with concomitant reduction in freight rates, making it possible to find opportunities beyond our national borders.

- Labor is available. Quality labor, often with specialized training, is available at a reasonable price.

- Real estate is available. New concepts have an opportunity to bloom. You can expect a flowering of ethnic and discount concepts, and all businesses have opportunities for expansion as the recession transfers available assets to new uses.

Yet beyond the specifics, perhaps the best advice on how to do business in troubling times was given by President Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, speaking before his appointment: "Never let a serious crisis go to waste. What I mean by that is it is an opportunity to do things you wouldn't do before."

The most useful advice is to use the crisis as an opportunity to reorient your business.

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Use the crisis to think through issues such as strategic positioning, capital investment and brand development.

An important aspect of a severe recession is to strategize on your competitive position. Well-capitalized organizations can adopt a "last man standing" strategy in which they continue to grow and invest, confident they will be there to pick up the business left by under-capitalized competitors and to profit from the eventual recovery.

Time For A Tune-Up

Using the crisis can simply involve cleaning up your own mess. During years of growth, companies tend to acquire inefficiencies, and a recession is an opportunity to act.

- You can often identify departments or functions with excessive staffing. In other cases, staffing levels may be fine but the compensation structure is not sustainable.

- Most organizations have a few people who may not be desirable staffers or whole business units that may not be contributing. Businesses are often filled with people and units that have been expected to perform better "next year" for 20 consecutive years.

- Look for any activity done simply by "force of habit." It is shocking how often a company continues exhibiting at a regional

trade show long after the person who championed it left and long after anybody in the organization cares.

- Facilities and policies may be overly grand. Do fancy headquarters serve a business purpose? Do they send the right message to the staff? Can your business sustain executives who fly business class internationally and single rooms for all convention attendees?

- Can you reexamine vendor agreements? Can vendors help your operation?

- Have you built up layers of complexity in middle management or regional distribution and do they pay?

Dealing with these issues is difficult but a crisis can provide the impetus for everyone to do so. FedEx, for example, imposed a companywide pay cut — 20 percent for top executives, 10 percent for many others and 5 percent across the board — and dropped its 401(k) match. Some employees are surely unhappy, but many others accept it as necessary to keep the business strong and provide employment.

A crisis is also a PR dream. Need to close a division, close stores, lay off staff, cut pay? You can blame it on Alan Greenspan and the sub-prime mortgage crisis — and the media will mostly nod understandingly.

On The Horizon

There will be victims in this downturn — those that are undercapitalized or without a viable business model, that sacrifice long-term strategic positioning to achieve short-term survival. The winners will offer something compelling. On the vendor side, this may mean superior taste that results in repeat purchases or powerful brand equity.

Both vendors and retailers should be mindful of the need to continuously provide evidence of their value proposition. They need to continuously market that evidence and be on the lookout for niche opportunities to serve customers or pick up margin.

The whole industry should try to encourage a broader perception of value in which food safety, sustainability and traceability are seen as important components of value.

Businesses close because they run out of cash, so watching cash is crucial, but only watching cash is a guarantee other operators will exit the recession in a position to pick off your customers.

Live to fight another day — that is prerequisite to success but success requires us both to endure and to prevail. Let us draw on our deep reserves of talent and resourcefulness to position ourselves for a brighter day we know will dawn. **DB**

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¡Comida Muy Deliciosa!

The hot Hispanic food segment provides meaningful opportunities for deli profits

BY LISA WHITE

The Hispanic food segment offers great opportunity — and much room for improvement.

According to a recent study from Unilever United States, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, only 35 percent of Hispanics are satisfied with their grocery shopping experience, compared with 58 percent of general market consumers. Supermarket delis that recognize the potential can benefit from this growing demographic.

Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States, with 44.3 million people as of July 1, 2006, representing 14.8 percent of the total population, according to Packaged Facts, a New York, NY-based market research firm. This demographic is projected to encompass 15.5 percent of the total U.S. population by 2010, and, by 2030, one of five people will be Hispanic, according to U.S. Census Bureau

projections. Those of Mexican origin comprise two-thirds of the total.

In its most recent report, Packaged Facts estimates that the U.S. market for Hispanic foods and beverages was almost \$5.7 billion in 2006, an increase of 4 percent from the previous year and an increase of 21 percent from \$4.7 billion in 2002. This segment is expected to grow to nearly \$8.4 billion in 2011.

Packaged Facts categorizes Hispanic foods and beverages into three segments, including Mainstream Mexican — foods that have become a part of American culture, such as tortillas, tacos and salsa; Authentic Hispanic — products imported from Hispanic countries or produced domestically using traditional recipes; and Nuevo Latino — traditional American foods made with spices and flavors that are associated with Hispanic countries and islands.

The Top 10 Hispanic Food and Beverage Categories

1. Tortillas/Taco Shells including kits
2. Salsa
3. Entrées, Handheld Items
4. Beans, refried
5. Cooking Sauce, Marinade, Miscellaneous Sauce
6. Bakery Items
7. Seasoning, Spice Mixes
8. Cheese
9. Picante
10. Rice, Rice Mixes

Source: Packaged Facts

they could be, but I think that will change, as more restaurants create authentic recipes utilizing these cheeses,” Jensen says.

Because of the large number of Hispanic restaurants offering authentic recipes, Americans are becoming familiar with these cuisines. “For instance, 20 years ago, no one knew what a churro was,” relates Albert Martinez, vice president of sales for California Churros, based in Colton CA. “Now they’re advertised all over the place.”

This segment can benefit from the economic downturn, since the Hispanic food and ingredients now popular in the United States are typical of “peasant” cuisines. The word peasant is not a value judgment but rather a descriptor used for the foods eaten by common people as opposed to foods eaten by wealthy elites.

“In the last three months, there has been more of a focus on value items, so we’re emphasizing our line of 11-ounce enchilada dinners,” Signorino notes.

Cibao Meat Products, based in Bronx, NY, has focused on its value salami lines in response to the current economic climate. Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing, says more stores are requesting Hispanic meats because a growing number of consumers are trying them.

Hispanic food is not only modestly priced, but these dishes are also easy to prepare and offer many options. “There are more Hispanic influences being incorporated into American cuisine. For example, people are using guacamole and salsa as toppings for sandwiches, omelets and burgers,” notes Kristyn Lawson, national sales director at Los Angeles, CA-based Yucatan Foods, which currently offers three types of guacamole types and is looking to add more flavors.

Even in this economy, La Española Meats, based in Harbor City, CA, has experienced rising sales. The company supplies meat, cheese and charcuterie from Spain as well as Spanish-style products. It’s in the midst of a major expansion to double its capacity in the next two years. “We mainly deal with smaller chains but predict a surge in sales from larger supermarket operations,” relates Alex Motamedi, general manager.

American consumers may be buying in smaller quantities, but they’re still looking for high-end products. “People may not purchase large amounts of our products, but they are willing to spend more for it,” La Española’s Motamedi explains. “Consequently, we’re seeing a lot of non-Hispanic businesses carrying a wider variety of these meats.”

Developing Trends

Mexican-inspired ingredients popular in restaurants, including cilantro and chipotle, are now commonplace in today’s supermarkets and increasingly prevalent in what were once considered “traditional” American dishes.

Although new flavors and spices are propelling the trends in this segment, it is difficult to ignore the solid niche Hispanic foods has carved in the United States. “We’re seeing Hispanic foods influence Americans’ eating habits, because these foods have become as mainstream as Italian,” says John Signorino, president of Anaheim, CA-based Don Miguel Mexican Foods. “Even in markets that are not heavily Hispanic, we’re seeing an increased interest in our products.” The company is using increased amounts and varieties of Mexican cheeses in its foodservice lines, in addition to authentic spices that have become more accepted.

The Hispanic cheese segment has evolved in recent years. According to Cindy Jensen, who handles sales and marketing for Denver, CO-based Queso Campesino, second- and third-generation Mexicans are beginning to seek these cheeses at supermarket delis. To broaden its demographic, the company provides informational cards with its cheeses to help educate Americans on how the different types can be used. “People are still not as educated about their use as

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Regional Differences

There are definite pockets of the country where Hispanic food is more prevalent. Packaged Facts reports California has the largest Hispanic population with approximately 13.1 million, followed by Texas with about 8.4 million and Florida with close to 3.6 million. In New Mexico, Hispanics comprise the highest proportion of the total population at 44 percent. California and Texas each are 36 percent Hispanic.

Local preferences, distribution reach and marketers' strength contribute to a diverse Hispanic food segment, according to the research firm. The more authentic the food or brand, the less popular it typically is with Northeasterners and the more popular it is with those in the Pacific and Southwest regions, and vice versa.

"Hispanic foods have typically always been strong on the West Coast as well as the Southwest," Don Miguel's Signorino says, noting they are picking up speed in the Midwest and Northeast. "This is currently where we're looking at more growth potential."



The Hispanic-heavy region known as the Burrito Belt originally comprised Southern California but grew to include the Southwest and Pacific Northwest. "This area was an 'L' shape, but Hispanic influence and culture changed the Burrito Belt to a 'U' shape. It now extends to Chicago and the north-eastern states," Yucatan's Lawson explains.

Even in Middle America, more consumers are becoming more familiar with Hispanic food, which has led to differences in product identification. "What we call frescos in the West are called blancos in the East, even though these are the same cheese types," says Jensen of Queso Campesino.

Regional population differences also impact the popularity of foods. "For example, there is more understanding and familiarity with Spanish-style chorizo in Florida than there is in Wisconsin. We also see stronger sales in places such as California, Texas, Florida and New York, where there is a greater concentration of Puerto Ricans and Cubans," according to Motamedi.

Flavors also are regional. California Churros found increased interest in Florida for dill churros, but "Unfortunately, it wasn't cost effective for us to offer this variety in one region," Martinez says.

Fresh And Healthful

In the '70s, Hispanic food was typically a greasy concoction of cheese, beans, lard and high-fat ingredients. Now, dishes are more likely to include tomatoes, chipotle, black beans, guacamole and fresh vegetables. Healthful Hispanic-influenced ingredients, such as guacamole and salsa, are being incorporated into more American dishes, as well.

Taking a cue from the popularity of fresh Mexican fare at restaurants such as Chipotle and Baja Fresh, supermarket delis would be well served to incorporate more healthful dishes and ingredients into their Hispanic offerings.

In addition, more Hispanic consumers also are taking note of healthful options. "These consumers have become more aware of their diets and are now educated on the benefits of healthful foods. As a result, Hispanics are making more healthful choices," notes Cibao's Soto.

To satisfy this demand, suppliers are offering a wider variety of more healthful Hispanic food. One example is Yucatan Foods' Cabo Fresh line.

Don Miguel Mexican Foods recently developed an all-natural line. The entrée line has been well received, claims Signorino. "We see fresh and healthful as a growing trend that has slowed down a bit due to the economy. But even as people go back to basics, over the long term these products will remain popular. In the past, Hispanic foods weren't associated with all-natural or health, but now they are."

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A Chicken On Every Plate

Delis are well positioned as the go-to option for this popular protein source

BY BOB JOHNSON

Chicken from the deli is a natural in a difficult economy. It's a familiar and comforting food for uncertain times — and few proteins fill the center of the plate more economically than chicken.

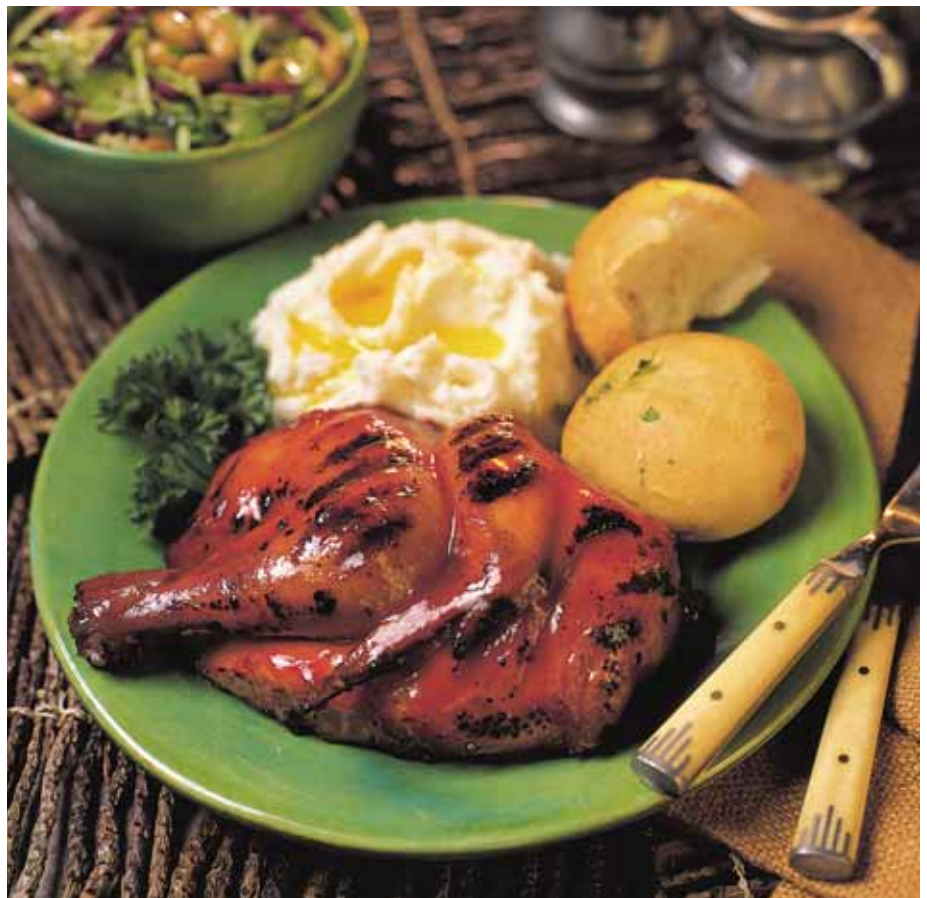
"It's probably one of the least expensive meals you can buy," according to Ed Sussman, co-owner of Merit Paper Corp. in Melville, NY. "For around the \$5.99 area, you can make a salad at home and serve three or four people."

But even in the current economy, many consumers are too busy to make that salad at home. That's where there are opportunities to fill out the rest of the meal. Delis are not just selling the chicken; they're selling entire meal choices that are affordable, convenient and delicious, adding to the total ring and making the entire package more attractive.

"Bundling is perceived as a better value," notes Andy Seymour, vice president of sales and marketing, deli and frozen food sales at Perdue Inc., Salisbury, MD. Chicken can be merchandised along with, or bundled with, fresh artisan bread and a choice of sides or salads. "The core products have to be good," he stresses. "The potato salad, macaroni salad and the cole slaw all have to be good."

A well-conceived hot bar should include a variety of economical and convenient choices in addition to the chicken and side dishes. "When you look at the hot table, it helps if you have other types of meals," Sussman says. He believes the hot table should include items such as stuffed cabbage, stuffed shells and macaroni and cheese, because these broaden the appeal and allow consumers to think of chicken as the center of many different kinds of meals.

This trend born during the boom economy has not lost its steam. "Shoppers are most interested in ready-to-eat solutions such as rotisserie chicken: 53 percent of shoppers are very interested in adding to or expanding the ready-to-eat section in their primary stores, including 18 percent who are



very interested," according to the *U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2008* from Food Market Institute (FMI), Arlington, VA.

Variety Sells

Fried chicken offerings, which over the last few years have proliferated to include tenders, wings, drums, breasts and nuggets, now seem to be fairly static. "I don't see any additions. I don't see anything unusual," Sussman notes.

However, rotisserie chicken has recently emerged as a major player in the ready-to-eat meal category, primarily because of

growing consumer interest in nutrition and health. This is a boon for poultry, which is already perceived as more healthful than most other meats.

Consumer demand for more healthful food options can be met with a range of preparations in a range of prices. "There's a trend toward more healthful ways of preparing chicken," explains John McBride, vice president for sales and marketing at Magic Seasonings Blends, Inc., New Orleans, LA. "People are looking for flavor in their food and they don't want to load up on salt or fat to get it. Consumers are talking about sodium."

Alternatives that take salt, fat and calories out of chicken can be easy and inexpensive. McBride notes people are looking for grilled chicken because it has less fat and fewer calories than fried. This trend has made salt-free Poultry Magic the No. 2 product at Magic Seasonings.

In many areas of the country, the market for organic, free-range or all-natural poultry is substantial and still growing. Consumers of these products have a mind of their own and may not adhere to traditional concepts of price and value. The products cost more, which would seem to be a problem in hard times, but many people looking for organic or free-range poultry tend to overcome the pricing differential by eating less meat and more vegetables and/or grains.

"The natural and organic meat business is unique in that the price points for our chicken products are not inexpensive," says Gina Asoudegan, communications manager at Applegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ. "However, there is a great deal of price elasticity in our industry because it is a belief-driven segment. For example, if a person eats meat but feels strongly about the way animals are treated when being raised for food, he or she will not switch to conventionally produced

meat based on price. Instead, consumers will switch from organic to natural or will simply eat less meat."

Perdue is introducing a new line of all-natural chicken products to serve this market.

The interest in a lifestyle more harmonious with nature is even extending to the packaging that carries the poultry from the deli hot bar to the customer's kitchen. Sussman finds, for example, that sustainability is the major selling theme for Merit's microwaveable bag as an alternative to the hard plastic shell container. The bags take about one-fifth the space to ship in the truck and save on fuel, emissions and pallets.

Different Strokes

It is essential to identify consumer demographics; knowing who customers are, what types/forms of chicken they prefer and what they will do with chicken once they get it home is the key to a successful program. Perdue has been test marketing its bourbon rotisserie chicken in selected markets to determine the most receptive audience.

A growing consumer base is now using poultry sparingly as part of a diet that features more produce than protein. "The latest trend in sandwiches treats deli meats as a

part of the flavor component of a great sandwich, not the main feature," Applegate's Asoudegan explains. "These sandwiches use grilled seasonal vegetables and fruit to add flavor and texture."

Some consumers are moving toward using deli poultry as an ingredient in a salad, and chicken salad itself is enjoying a renaissance. Leftover rotisserie chicken that has been properly maintained can be turned into chicken salad — mayonnaise based, Caesar, oriental or otherwise. The resulting salad appeals to a large audience and cuts shrink.

If a deli's customer base includes a large number of people who will use the poultry in burritos, tacos or enchiladas, including a chipotle-spiced chicken offering makes sense. "Understand who your customers are, what they purchase, and how they're using the products," Asoudegan urges.

Whatever the customer base, the food-service sector is the competition. "The deli is positioned very well to take advantage of the problems in foodservice," Perdue's Seymour says. "Kentucky Fried Chicken gets \$9 for eight pieces of chicken, but the deli can sell it for \$6.99 or even \$5.99. We need to promote more the value difference compared to restaurants."

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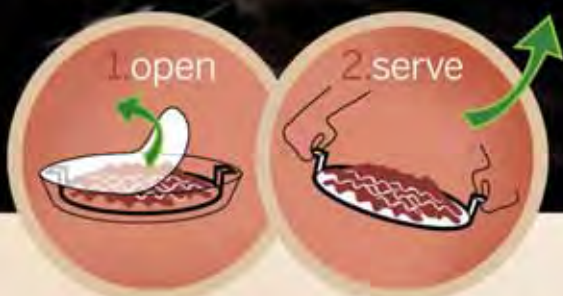
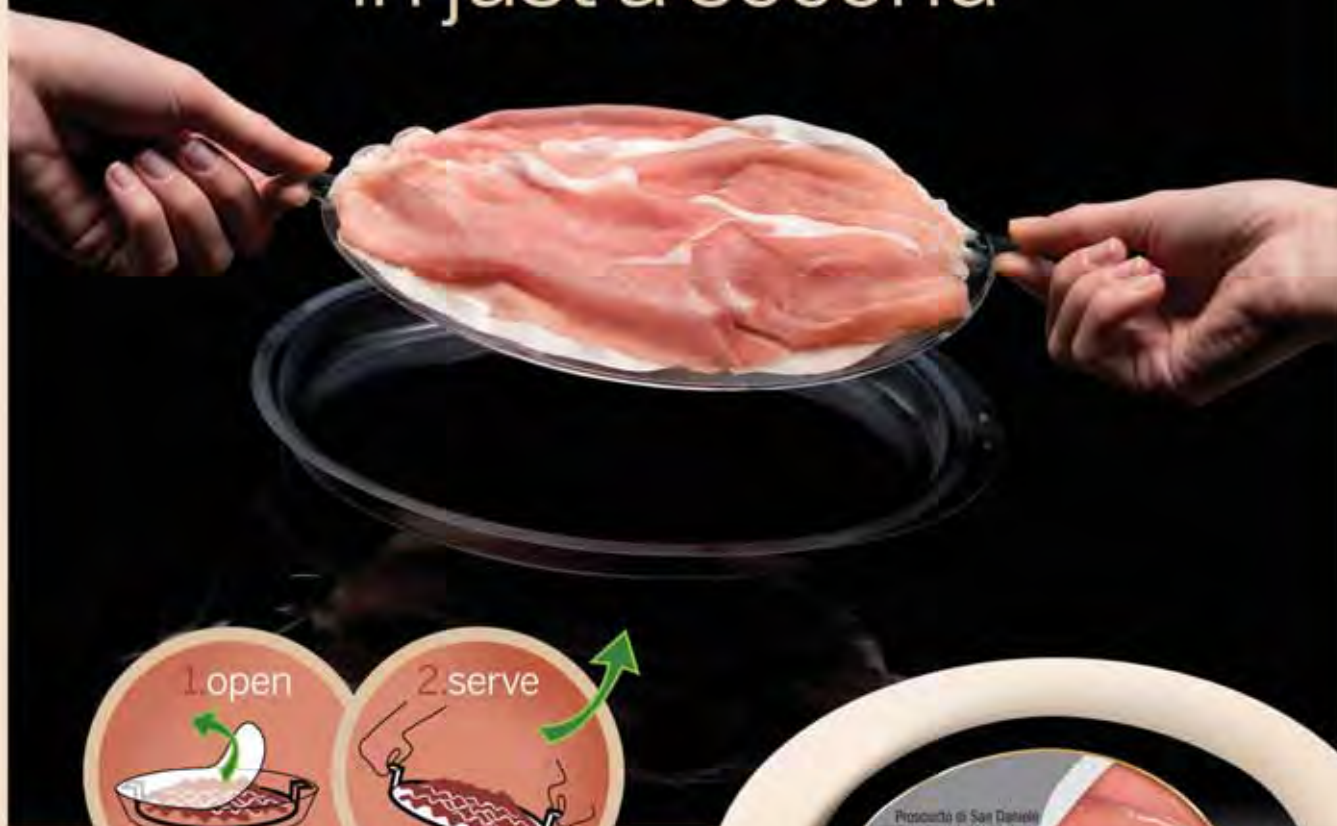
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schedule

The International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA) will hold its 45th Annual Seminar and Expo June 7-9, 2009, in Atlanta, GA. The theme for this year's gathering is "The Show of Shows."

The IDDBA continues its tradition of program excellence with another world-class seminar lineup of top-rated speakers from an impressive array of disciplines. This year's featured speakers include: Alton Brown, Jim Gaffigan, Bob Knight, Martin Lindstrom, Jeff Noddle and Gen. Colin Powell.

speakers



Alton Brown



Jim Gaffigan



Bob Knight



Martin Lindstrom



Jeff Noddle



Gen. Colin Powell

seminars

Sunday, June 7, 2009

The New Value Shopper

8:00-8:30 AM

Brian Darr, managing director, Datassential, will show the current consumer economic picture, a macro view of the economy, projected food category growth rates for supermarket spending, specific deli, dairy, and bakery tactics and applications, retailer strategies and innovations, and actionable marketing innovations and solutions.

Holey Donuts, Batman! Two Dozen Ways to Raise Dairy-Deli-Bakery Sales Without Spending Too Much Dough

8:30-9:15 AM

In today's economy, you need to be a superhero or a great marketer with lots of money-raising ideas to stay in the game. The irrepressible Harold Lloyd offers his take on getting consumers to spend more and to become loyal, card-carrying, flag-waving customers.

The Economic Behemoth: The Final Frontier

9:15-10:10 AM

Dr. Lowell B. Catlett, Regent's Professor at New Mexico State University and Dean of the College of Agriculture and Home Economics, is a futurist with keen insight and knowledge of technological issues, the economy, and the environment we live in. He will show us the drivers of change and how to prepare for, if not the final, then the next frontier.

Buy-ology and The Future of Branding

10:30-11:30 AM

Martin Lindstrom, author of *Brand Sense*, *Brandchild*, and *Clicks, Bricks & Brands*, will show you how to use contextual branding (when brands turn intelligent) to reach the next generation of interactive marketing and media planning.

Beyond the Pale: The Ultimate Foodie

11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Jim Gaffigan is the ultimate "foodie." As a writer, actor and stand-up comedian, he has entertained millions with his edgy approach to all things food. His clever observations are funny and offer extreme insight into the eating habits and taste preferences of consumers.

Monday, June 8, 2009

Live to Eat; Eat to Live

8:00-8:20 am

Ray Burke, president, In-Store Bakery and Foodservice Divisions, Rich Products Corporation, and 2008-2009 president of the IDDBA, will share

insights on how this category is growing and how sustained consumer interest will make it a strong trend for years to come.

Food Trends: The People's Choice

8:20-9:20 AM

Carol Christison, executive director of the IDDBA, tracks the trends and innovations that impact our choices. From technology to new products to merchandising to consumer lifestyles to economics, she tracks it.

Leadership: Taking Charge in a New World Order

9:20-10:20 AM

One of the most admired men in America, General Colin Powell discusses the many styles and strategies of leadership and their execution. Drawing on examples from his experience as a leader on the world stage and as an eyewitness to leadership in action, he will provide strategies for "taking charge" during times of great change and crisis.

The Future of Food Retailing

10:40-11:40 AM

Jeff Noddle, Chairman and CEO, Supervalu Inc., shares his views on new formats, new eating behavior, changing consumer tastes and dynamic merchandising changes. By understanding the challenges facing our industry, we can better understand the opportunities that will open up as we change and grow.

Break from the Pack: How to Compete in a Copycat Economy

11:40 AM-12:30 PM

Dr. Oren Harari, a professor at the graduate school of business at the University of San Francisco and former consultant with the Tom Peters Group, will show you how to "break from the pack" while your competitors stay stuck in a rut.

Tuesday, June 9, 2009

A Little Knight Magic

8:00-9:00 AM

His leadership style taught players to be unselfish, disciplined and effective. Bob Knight, former head basketball coach at Texas Tech and at Indiana University, shares his strategies for winning, his passion for teaching and his love for the game.

Good Eats — It Doesn't Get Better Than This

9:00-10:00 am

When we asked members what speakers they wanted to hear again, Alton Brown was a clear hands-down favorite! He is the "People's Choice" and is back for an encore performance with new topics and insight.



Carol Christison

“For many, it’s not a matter of growing the business but staying in business. And that involves reinvention and change.”

IN MARCH, DELI BUSINESS PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR LEE SMITH SPOKE WITH CAROL CHRISTISON, executive director of the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, about the upcoming *The Show of Shows Seminar and Expo* in Atlanta. Their conversation focused on coping with the current economy and on the speakers, programs and products you’ll find at this year’s event.

DELI BUSINESS: Hi Carol, our annual pot of coffee is brewing and I’m looking forward to discussing the upcoming IDDBA Dairy-Deli-Bake. You’re a fountain of knowledge about the industry and there has never been a more important time in recent history for retailers to pay close attention to the state of the industry and the consumer mindset.

This year’s show is more important than ever; there is no doubt times are troubled and consumers are looking for retailers to make changes that reflect the economic hardships being played out in their everyday lives. With budget cuts a way of life, how do you think attending the Dairy-Deli-Bake ‘09 will help retailers?

Christison: In a paper titled *Innovating through Recession: When the Going Gets Tough the Tough Innovate*, Andrew Razeghi, Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, said, “The key to flourishing in today’s economic downturn is to challenge convention.” He says recessions provide fertile ground for launching new businesses, developing disruptive new products and strengthening customer loyalty. The key element in all of those tactics is “ideas.” And that’s the value IDDBA brings to the party. Ideas are cheap but seeing them in execution, seeing new products, new marketing strategies, and new merchandising methods is priceless.

Retail buyers, merchandisers and executives attend the IDDBA show year after year because they know they’ll get lots of ideas and actionable tools that can make small and big differences in their business, not only for today but also for the future. Hearing speakers with a timely message that can impact marketing and consumer buying behavior is an added benefit.

Our goal is to help retailers sell more and to help them sell better. It’s that simple and that difficult. They keep coming back to the IDDBA show because we consistently create new ways of delivering on that promise. Attending the IDDBA’s Dairy-Deli-Bake show is a good business decision because it makes their business more valuable. We’ve heard from retailers who have had their travel budgets cut, but they’re still coming to the show and many are driving in order to bring more staff. That’s a commitment we value and a loyalty we work hard to deserve.

Attending this show is a positive way to get innovative ideas to help reach customers. You don’t always have to spend money to solve problems, but you do have to spend time and be willing to seek out solutions. It’s well documented that brands — and less face it, supermarkets are a brand — that increase advertising and promotions during a recession when competitors are cutting back, can improve market share and return on investment, and lower costs. One study during the 1981-82 recession showed firms that maintained or increased advertising and promotions during the economic downturn grew 275 percent in the mid-’80s while those that cut back grew only 19 percent. Those that will not only survive but also come out ahead understand the necessity for learning about the issues and how to deal with them and for developing strategies to reach customers at every stage.

The retailers who will be in Atlanta are making the necessary strategic changes for today at the same time they’re planning for the recovery. They’re not waiting. They’re looking for the ideas and products that will meet current customer needs and attract new ones.

These retailers are redefining value and responding to the



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recession but they're not so focused on cutting price that they're ignoring what made them so good in the first place.

DELI BUSINESS: Focusing on positive strategic changes in the face of adversity is what makes me admire people like General Colin Powell. My staff is already kidding me because I'll be one of the first 10 people to enter the auditorium so I can get a front row seat, but on the other hand, they're the first ones to ask who the speakers are going to be. I always feel inspired when I hear the great leaders of our country speak, even if I disagree with their policies. Over the years, I've listened to some of the world's most impressive people at the IDDBA. How does the IDDBA plan the speakers?

Christison: Lee, we love that you get there early, that you're in the front row, and that our speakers inspire you. That's exactly the message we want to send. We have a Program Committee that works with the Board of Directors to identify key people who have a message that is timely, motivational or interesting. When you can find a speaker with a strong message that explains or interprets what's going on in our society, can give us new insight into consumer buying or can motivate us to grow and develop personally and professionally, then you have a winner. Many of our speakers come right out of the news or make the news. They are researchers, business leaders, political leaders or celebrities who have their finger on the pulse of the world.

Before we can take steps to change our business or ourselves, we must first understand the issues, the opportunities and the pitfalls that we face. Listening to experts who understand the economy, research buying behaviors and develop marketing tactics makes it that much easier for us to grasp the issues — in short, if they can interpret it for us, we don't need to spend time on translation. We don't have to agree with someone in order to learn from him or her. But we do have to be present and we do have to listen. That's the key.

DELI BUSINESS: I agree. In this world of almost instantaneous communication, what's your take on the value of face-to-face contact and social interaction?

Christison: The key word in "Internet" is "net," short for network and, by extension, networking. Add the speed of almost instantaneous communication and you can see why sites such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, Wiffiti and others appeal to the masses. MySpace has over 70 million visitors and is the equivalent of hanging out at the mall for today's teens. They reach their "friends" with photos, e-mails, instant messages, blogging, texting, music and videos. MySpace ranks second behind Yahoo in pages viewed and time spent on the site. This

instant connectivity is attracting older crowds and may drive younger consumers to a different site. By the time mom has her own page on Facebook, many have already moved on to the next phase.

As popular as these sites are and will continue to be, they won't replace face-to-face relationships. The good news is they can enhance it by providing instant answers, feedback and data. In today's society, time and speed are the currency of business. You still need that "face time" to develop a relationship that leads to trust and repeat business. Social networking has its place but it's a step in the relationship path and not the entrance. The innovative changes yet to come will make today's technology seem like child's play.

DELI BUSINESS: Change. Wow! We're living in a world with changes all around us, and new technologies just keep speeding up the learning curve. Of course, the message of being leaders and dealing with change isn't new, but for many companies the ability to take charge with strength, courage and optimism is vital for their survival. What are some of the industry initiatives you see companies engaging in and how is the IDDBA, other than the show, helping retailers?

Christison: The key words in that question are strength, courage and optimism. Those words are an action plan for recovery. They'll show us how to take small successes and turn them into long-term victories. In this current economy, our members are challenged with cutbacks, energy costs, price reductions, food safety and huge financial losses. As stocks plunge, they look for ways to cut labor and training costs, get information to multiple constituent groups and understand the consumer. For many, it's not a matter of growing the business but staying in business. And that involves reinvention and change. Consumers are adjusting to the new economic reality by cutting spending and increasing savings — the savings rate hit 5 percent in January, the highest rate since 1995. They're looking to the retailers for value through special deals, alternative meals, alternative shopping and discounts.

Just as consumers seek social networking, so do retailers seek social shopping opportunities. Social shopping can be Internet ordering, group buying platforms such as WujWuj, PayParade, Kazowie and Boomj for Baby Boomers. In-store messaging to a consumer's phone, interactive carts, floor ads and shelf-talkers are also ways of getting the customer's attention. It doesn't matter what your message is — if you can't get their attention, you won't be heard and you won't sell product. Some companies are using webinars or the Internet for meetings or testing virtual trade shows as a passive approach to selling.

To help retailers and manufac-





turers understand the change in consumer mindset and to develop marketing strategies to reach them, IDDBA has just completed a study on the New Value Shopper. We had Datassential look at buying behavior and shopping patterns for consumers at all income levels, ages, ethnic groups, regions and lifestyles. Over 3,500 consumers were surveyed in January 2009, and the results show the lifestyle and purchase-behavior changes they're making to deal with the economy. The study is being printed right now and will be ready for distribution in a few weeks.

IDDBA is just rolling out a series of online learning programs with Learn Something, Inc. This allows 24/7 learning from any location and has been adopted by several national supermarkets. We've also developed a series of audio and video podcasts that are available free on the IDDBA Website. The topics include cheese, meat, bakery, customer service, etc. Our newest project is still in development. It's a series of downloadable job aids that teach associates about specific products — bakery, cheese, meat, etc. The job aids will also be free and can be e-mailed, printed, viewed online and shared with associates. And, of course, we offer *free* registration to qualified retailers who want to attend our show. When you look at the full package of speakers, that's an incredible deal. We know retailers make an investment with their time in attending the show and this is our way of helping support them. We don't know of any other show anywhere, with this caliber of program — or even close to it — that does this. We think it's win-win.

DELI BUSINESS: Moving forward, one of the big questions for any company is the question of relevance. To be blunt, what relevance does the deli industry have today?

What areas do you think retailers should be looking at for growth opportunities? Are the key initiatives going to be a lunchmeat and salad revival or growing prepared foods for customers cutting back on restaurant visits?

Christison: To measure relevance, you need to create a tool or yardstick. If you don't know what you're measuring or why, then any tool will do. For a deli or bakery to be relevant, it has to relate back to daily lives or daily eating behaviors. It has to reflect the consumers' lifestyle and buying power. When retailers show they understand our issues, feel our pain, and care enough to help us create meal solu-

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tions, then they're relevant or, in some cases, essential. And this applies to upscale or every-day-low-price operations.

When it comes to food, consumers want it all — they want taste, freshness, variety, value and price. I called out value and price separately because they mean different things to different people. One thing not often mentioned in that list is trust. Trust. Trust the price is fair, the product is fresh and the food is safe. Recent events have given consumers a reason not to trust the food industry. All of these things are relevant.

In today's supermarket environment, the deli and the bakery are the showpieces of the store. There's a reason we call this the Power Alley. For consumers, being able to order only the amount of product they want is a huge selling point. It always amazes us that, in Europe, consumers will order just two or three slices of meat or cheese; we order by the pound. Their reference point is not the same as ours when it comes to quantity but it's extremely high when it comes to taste.

A real growth opportunity can be found by looking at what consumers are buying or not buying from fast-food or quick-casual restaurants. They haven't lost their taste for these foods but want to cut back on cost or calories. The daypart area that continues to grow is breakfast. Lunch has

a huge opportunity matrix as consumers look for brown-bag alternatives. If we do it right, we'll keep these customers once the economy rebounds and not lose them to foodservice. While consumers may be cutting back on restaurant visits, it doesn't mean they want to do all that much cooking. Being able to offer a value-meal or suggest an entrée or side dishes with a lower-cost protein sells product and helps the consumer.

“It's when times get hard and you have to do battle for every dollar and every customer that the word ‘value’ takes on new meaning.”

I believe consumers are looking for a way to be a “hero” to their family and if a retailer can do an up-front cooking

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Dairy-Deli-Bake 2009 will feature the theme, The People's Choice, throughout the show, including the Show & Sell Center, an idea center that focuses on meals, deli, cheese, and bakery. Committed to creativity, the Show & Sell Center highlights new products, themes, and merchandising ideas to help retailers increase sales and customer retention.

Consumers choose the store they shop, the products they buy, the meals they cook (or don't cook), and the money they spend. Recognizing that for consumers it is about choice helps retailers build alternative menus and marketing strategies. Looking at lifestyle and economic categories can help create new strategies that leverage what is offered and reach consumers up and down the economic scale.

The following strategies and marketing tactics will be demonstrated on the expo floor and in the Show & Sell Center.

1) The New Value Shopper. Today's value shopper is sometimes incorrectly confused with a budget shopper. Today's shoppers are looking for value alternatives to food purchases made outside the home with price as a consideration. Highlighting foods and techniques to add value through taste, convenience, portion control, or protein alternatives can teach the consumer how to use the supermarket to enhance total meal planning and add value at many levels.

2) The Aspirational Food Shopper. Beyond function and taste, brands must now be aspirational — that is, they must represent a goal the consumer hopes to achieve — and offer intangible values that help consumers develop their identities. Customers are attracted through image advertising, co-branding, sponsorship, fanzines, websites, virtual communities, ethical growth, and intercommunity events. Lifestyle marketing on packaging and in advertising identifies different cohort groups (like attracts like).

3) Experiential Enchantment. This is where eating (including shopping, preparing, etc.,) creates a rewarding experience on multiple levels (as cook, as consumer, as meal provider). Experiential elements include advertising, in-store animations, built-in experiential products or concepts, store “tainment”, street marketing, collectibles or event marketing (celebrities, characters, etc.), one-to-one, co-creation, and recognition or service. It also includes fund-raising events, cooking classes, sampling, biggest-of-its-kind, etc.

4) Functional Satisfaction. The functional shopper is looking for product quality, product advantage, trial promotions, samples, post-purchase promotions, loyalty programs, etc. Price/value is an element but may not be the sole driver, although this can include the budget shopper. The February *Consumer Reports* magazine listed tips for dieting on a budget. Articles like this can be used to create special promotions or displays to attract this consumer. Highlighting foods that show price vs. nutrition can help consumers make smart choices and let them know the store “feels their pain.” Don't focus solely on price. Show that quality, taste, and service are very important. Value, quality, and consistency are keys to satisfying customers.

5) Teaching the customer your business. If you can lower the price or add value by cutting costs or reformulating a recipe or suggesting alternative foods, then do so. And do it big. Ask customers what they want and then involve them in your own People's Choice. Let the customer know you're in this with them and you both benefit from savings or cost-reductions. Don't get so focused on price or value trade-offs that you forget our job is to create products that attract attention and invite customers to buy. Don't ignore the economy, but don't let it be the driver in all decisions. Focusing on the People's Choice will help you deliver new products and great merchandising.

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demo — not a sampling demo — that teaches them how to take a basic product and enhance it with little effort and minimal cost, consumers will buy it. Over and over, we hear consumers don't know how to cook or don't want to learn. There's a reason the Food Network is so popular. We have the tools, the products, and the skills to teach 5-minute meals. We should do it.

DELI BUSINESS: How about quality? Is it taking a back seat to price?

Christison: It's not just about quality — it's about value. So, it's really a price/value issue. Consumers expect to pay more for gourmet foods than for fast food. They expect to pay more for service items than self-service. They expect to pay more for homegrown or fresh than frozen or processed. But that doesn't mean they don't want value and they won't hunt for a bargain. Consumers are trading down for commodity items. They're choosing private label, store brands, and discount stores to save money. For many, it's a necessity.

Over time, we have taught consumers that if they wait long enough, items will go on sale. As a result, they believe the true cost or value of an item is the sale price. While an article of clothing may go out of style if you wait for a price drop, you can't wait that long for a food item. That's why we have the sell-by and use-by dates — to protect consumers who may wait a little too long.

Consumers are smart. They know that it takes time and

money — yours, if not theirs — to cook and prepare a meal. They know it's a trade-off and the trade-off's name is convenience. In the end, it's all about choice. When consumers are faced with financial choices, many of them cut back on food. When things get better, they'll start upscaling their diet and food choices. By recognizing the issues and providing alternatives, retailers and manufacturers can help all their customers.

DELI BUSINESS: You bring up an interesting point about the definition of value and it is the value equation that is changing, but how does someone define value? How has its meaning changed over the last year?

Christison: In boom times, it's easy to have an "attitude" about your product and the value that the customer places on it. It's when times get hard and you have to do battle for every dollar and every customer that the word "value" takes on new meaning. How each of us defines value determines our personal spending plan and our commitment to the future. During the good times, prices are influenced most by the high-cost or upscale producer. In a recession, the low-cost producer takes over as consumers try to control costs and add value. Removing costs and deadwood from the supply chain is important. But so is product development and marketing that excites and motivates customers. For some, value is a cheaper product, a smaller portion, an alternative meal or home cooking instead of eating out. For others, value is a trusted brand, a new product, a lesson or an opportunity to please someone I care about.

DELI BUSINESS: As we all begin our preparations to attend *The Show of Shows*, what are your last words until June 7th?

Christison: Knowledge is power. Understanding what is going on in today's economy, understanding how it's impacting your customers, understanding the pressures placed on you, your business and your family is the key to change. Without knowledge, you have no power. Don't let "no power" be in charge. Use "know power" to gain control and to build a better future. See you in June!

DELI BUSINESS: Thanks for taking the time to speak to me about the upcoming Dairy-Deli-Bakery Seminar and Expo as well as insight into the issues facing today's retailers. We're all facing a time of challenges and difficult choices. It's important everyone takes every opportunity to learn, grow and prosper, regardless of the economic environment. It's events such as this that give us the tools to inspire not only ourselves but also others to succeed. Thanks for your insight and I'm looking forward to seeing you in June! DB

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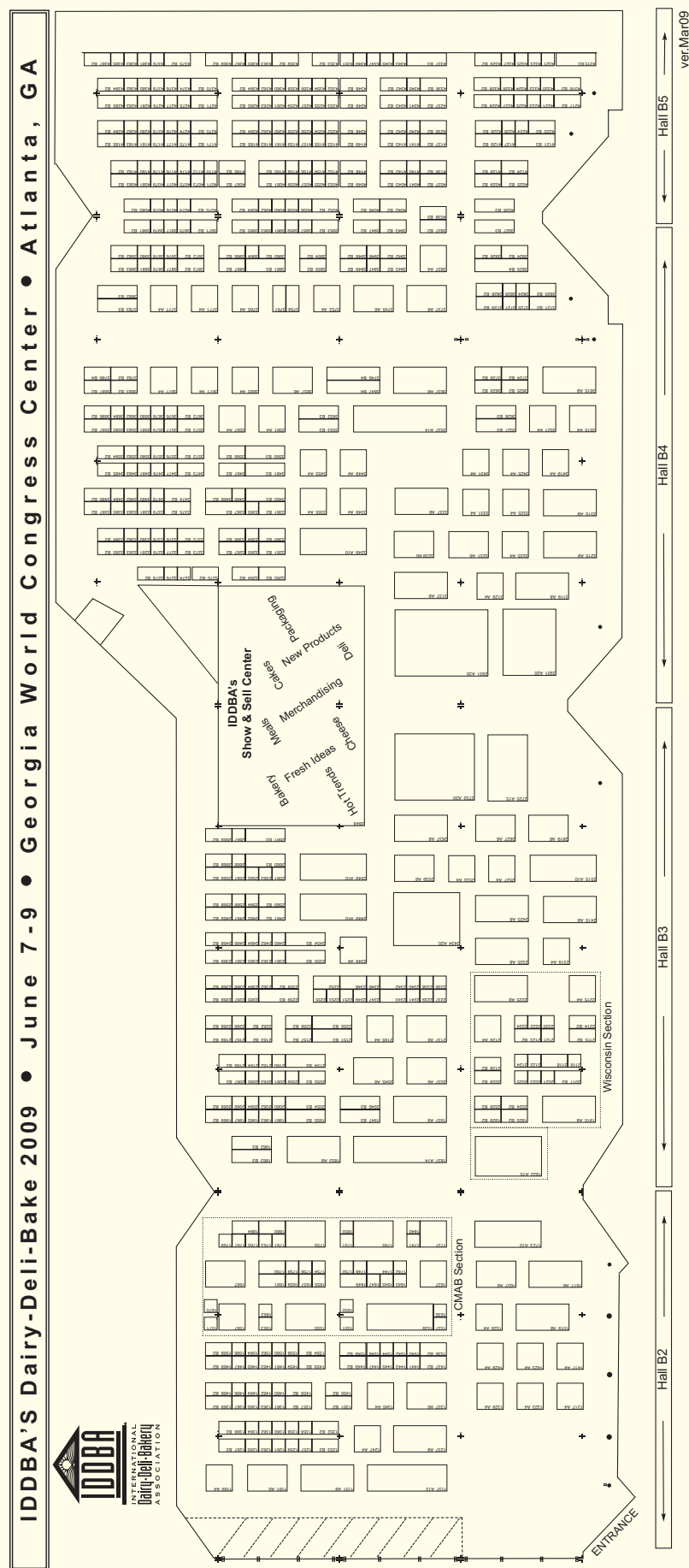
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Greece Is The Word

Deli operators can draw consumers with this healthful Mediterranean cuisine

BY HOWARD RIELL

A rising tide lifts all boats, and the rising tide of Americans' love of ethnic cuisine — particularly healthful ethnic cuisine — continues to spark sales of Greek foods.

American-made and imported Greek specialties in the deli, from cheeses and olives to grilled vegetables, flatbreads, hummus and the four primary dips of Greek cuisine — tzatziki (yogurt and cucumber dip), taramosalata (fish roe dip), melitzanosalata (eggplant dip) and skordalia (puréed potato and garlic dip), continue to ignite shoppers' imaginations and translate into brisk sales.

Greek salad is highly popular at retail salad bars. Consumers are also showing great interest in different types of meze, served alone or with other mezethes. In Greece, mezethes are often served as accompaniments to drinks as an eating experience distinct from a meal, but in the United States, they are often served as appetizers. Akin to Spanish tapas, mezethes can be hot or cold, spicy or savory, and often salty. Consumers are also scooping up dolmades — grape leaves stuffed with rice — Feta cheese and Greek yogurt, which is thicker than standard American yogurt.

The best part for deli operators is that with some savvy product selection, sourcing, merchandising, promotions and employee training and education, an impressive amount of room for continued growth remains.

Respect The Heritage

Whether a particular product actually comes from Greece or not may well prove important to some consumers "depending on what they're actually making," says Anthony DiPietro, vice president of George E. DeLallo Co., Inc. in Jeannette, PA. "You have items that are designated to be grown only in Greece, like a Kalamata olive or a Koroneiki olive or the Megareitiki olive, which comes from a particular region in northern Greece. Those types of things are specific to Greece,



PHOTO COURTESY OF DELALLO CO., INC.



and have to be in [an olive mix] because of the authenticity.”

Greek food has not yet become so ubiquitous that Americans consider it part of the national cuisine, so it is imperative to honor its roots. “The important thing here is to respect the part of that product’s profile that identifies it originally as Greek,” points out Mary Caldwell, marketing and merchandising manager for New York, NY-based Food-Match, Inc., a supporting member of Mediterranean Foods Alliance (MFA), part of Oldways Preservation Trust, Boston, MA. “If you take something like tzatziki, you wouldn’t necessarily expect to have Greek cucumbers and Greek dill, but you would expect it to be Greek strained yogurt.”

Cedar’s Mediterranean Foods in Ward Hill, MA, has introduced Greek-style tzatziki, which Dom Frocione, vice president of sales, believes will be “the next big thing in Mediterranean.” Originally used as a sandwich dip, tzatziki has done well on the East Coast and is scheduled to debut nationally with Safeway soon. “We see people using it like hummus. It’s a thicker consistency than

some domestic companies making it here with sour cream.” Tzatziki was recently hailed as one of the top convenience foods in the nation by *Good Housekeeping* magazine.

Preparation is key. “When it comes to how prepared dishes are made,” DiPietro explains, “you can use the same ingredients used in Greece to cook Greek-style foods here. You might combine farmed-raised lamb from the United States with Greek ingredients. You might have some specific differences in flavor between a Greek-style lamb from the United States and an actual Greek lamb dish, but you’re still using a quality product as far as the meat goes.”

Even though Greek cuisine has not been absorbed into “American” cuisine — how many young consumers today regard pizza or tacos as ethnic? — most consumers have been exposed to Greek food and know it to be a “very traditional food. I think the American consumer, who is embracing more of the cultures of ethnic food, has found it to be very inviting and pleasing,” notes Food-Match’s Caldwell. They’re also “expecting more above and beyond just what they’ve already been introduced to,” and deli opera-

tions can capitalize on this by offering a variety of hot and cold options.

Offer Prepared Dishes

With the economy in the doldrums, consumers are becoming more value conscious and need a compelling case to be made for a new or impulse purchase. They’re turning to delis for prepared foods that offer flavor and nutrition at a reasonable price, and this is where Greek food should be positioned. Many of the most popular Greek dishes are “comfort” foods — those cooked by mothers and grandmothers of an earlier time, foods that stretched the budget and fed the family. They are also dishes that hold well and do not need to be eaten immediately upon preparation.

A popular Greek item in delis across America is moussaka, a traditional eggplant-based dish comprised of layers of ground lamb, sliced eggplant and tomato topped with a white sauce and baked. Another is pastitsio. Commonly called Greek Lasagna, it consists of a base layer of pasta and ground beef with tomato sauce, topped with a creamy cheese béchamel sauce and cooked to a golden brown. Yet another item that is quickly becoming more mainstream is spanakopita, a Greek spinach pie made with layers of phyllo dough and a filling of seasoned spinach, onions and scallions, feta, and sometimes eggs.

Falafel — spicy, fried chickpea fritters — is the fast food of the Mediterranean, and throughout the area people eat pita bread filled with falafel, salads and tahini sauce. For the past six or seven months Kontos Foods, Inc., Paterson, NJ, best known for its authentic hand-stretched flatbread and phyllo dough, has been marketing two varieties of pre-made falafel, according to Demetrios Haralambatos, corporate executive chef. One is a frozen scoop-and-fry item; the other is pre-formed and fried.

“For the first time you are seeing a lot of these new retort meals,” relates Nassem Ziyad, general manager of Ziyad Bros. Importing in Cicero, IL. “It’s a bag-format finished product that takes two minutes in a microwave or five minutes in boiling water.” For the record, a “retort pouch” is a heat-resistant bag made of laminated plastic films or foil, heat-sealed and sterilized by pressure-cooking in a retort (autoclave) to yield commercially sterilized foods. The pouch’s heat-treated food is safe from microorganisms.

“What you’re starting to see are new technologies coming out of Europe that have been around for a while there starting to penetrate here in the United States,” Ziyad explains. Like its Indian and Asian counterparts, Mediterranean foods in bag formats —

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mostly rices thus far — are beginning to become more common. “You literally take the pouch out of the box, tear the corner, put it in the microwave and you’ve got a ready-made meal in two minutes with no additions to it.” Ziyad markets Souk, a complete line of ready-to-serve products created solely for foodservice operations, including delis. The Mediterranean line includes falafel, taboulleh, hummus and baba ganoush products.

Some deli operators are melding their Greek offerings into a more encompassing

‘Mediterranean’ category that includes many different pasta bases with feta cheese. Taken together, Mediterranean foods are among the hottest of today’s hot cuisines.

Promote A Mediterranean Diet

Deli operators cannot go wrong promoting the healthfulness of Greek cuisine. The MFA has long recognized the health benefits of Mediterranean food and is trying to educate consumers about healthful eating through a Mediterranean diet. Research con-

tinues to support the Mediterranean food pyramid as a healthful model to follow.

“I believe Greek yogurt has been showing the most growth and continues to do so because Greek yogurt is a part of a healthful Mediterranean diet,” says Rostom Baghdassarian of Karoun Dairies in Los Angeles, CA. “It boosts the immune system, alleviates sleep disorders and may increase the body’s fat-burning ability.”

The relative merits of imported and domestic Greek yogurt, Baghdassarian suggests, “really depend on the manufacturer and the product.” There are manufacturers who use the authentic way of straining the yogurt to produce Greek yogurt, he says, “and it tastes as good as the yogurt made in Greece. But there are others who do not, and when they make Greek-style yogurt, you can taste the difference right away. The main difference, I would say, is taste.”

Prepare The Department

Any marketing activities centered on the deli require the department itself be prepared to impress. “First of all, the display case and display window have to be absolutely spotless and clean,” suggests Tony Falletta, vice president of marketing and sales for The Fillo Factory in Dumont, N.J.

Signage and other informational literature is crucial, says Falletta, but make sure to use language consumers will respond to. “In most cases you want to be persuasive to mass-market consumers,” he adds, “so rather than use the word ‘fusion’ when combining cuisines, for example, stick to ‘mix.’ “In a Stop and Shop or Shop Rite mass-market setting, ‘fusion’ doesn’t really work.”

Also, make sure signs invite customers to sample and have plenty of small spoons and a trash container available “so they’re not putting trash all over the place, and the area stays neat. Sampling promotions work only when they’re contained and not dragged through the store,” Falletta says, adding consumers tend to try a product if given a chance.

Many deli managers are using themes to drive sales because they catch the consumers’ attention and spark their imagination. Manufacturers are usually eager and well equipped to offer advice on setting up a themed promotion.

Retailers can provide a wealth of attractive and informational point-of-sale materials that should certainly include preparation tips and even suggested recipes. One way to transmit valuable information is to put photos and descriptions on tags identifying Greek and other ethnic items in the merchandising case and at the antipasti bar. Letting customers know which items are imported and which are domestic is also important. **DB**

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Programmed To Sell

Distinctive sandwich programs offer delis a sure-fire way to increase sales

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Convenience. Customization. Combos. These are among the most profitable sandwich selling points. Delis that offer both pre-made and made-to-order sandwich programs stand to reap the benefits of repeat purchases because they have the opportunity to appeal to any consumer looking for a sandwich.

"Sales are split fairly evenly for us, about 50 percent of the business is made-to-order and the rest is pre-made grab-and-go," explains Scott Zoeller, director of deli merchandising, Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ. "Pre-made sandwiches include cold prepared tuna salad, chicken salad and cold cuts, while our made-to-order sandwiches feature items such as hot panini."

Whether a deli offers pre-made, made-to-order or both, Rich Wright, vice president of sales and marketing at Dietz & Watson, stresses offering a limited selection and doing these sandwiches really well before expanding the offering. "Then you can build the program by adding variety. There's often a tendency to offer too much."

Finding the right sandwich mix for a store's demographics and concentrating on making those sandwiches the best possible quality is crucial to a successful program. Erik Waterkotte, director of marketing for John Morrell & Co., Cincinnati, OH, advises deli operators to "find a good niche and execute it well. If you make it something you can hang your hat on, consumers will come to your store to find it."

A sandwich of the day or week is a good merchandising option, according to Jim Conroy, president, Conroy Foods Inc., Pittsburgh, PA. "Make sure that all customers get a listing of the next sandwich special in order to draw them back. Keep account of what specialty sandwiches do best in repeat sales and offer them on a more frequent cycle. These practices will build a steady and



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repeat customer base.”

Harris Teeter, a Matthews, NC-based chain that operates 178 stores, exemplifies this program with its special Sub Club Menu. The weeklong menu offers daily made-to-order 6-inch hot and cold subs specials priced at \$2.99. Hot subs consist of pork barbecue, meatballs and marinara, Philly cheese steak, sausage and peppers, and breaded chicken breast, while cold sub choices include roast beef, turkey, ham, club

and tuna. Customers who purchase subs with the chain's loyalty or VIC card earn points redeemable for a free sub. In addition, the chain runs a weekly Foot Long Friday promotion in which all 12-inch hot and cold subs are only \$3.99 when purchased with the chain's VIC card.

Suppliers offer a number of tips and techniques to assure sandwich programs are a success. For example, says Wright of Dietz & Watson, “We offer a 1½-pound pack of



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pre-portioned inner-leafed meats in 23 varieties that we call our sandwich kit. Each slice is ¾ ounce and there are two slices per leaf. This cuts labor and helps in cost control.”

A polyethylene bag with tear strip or wrap keeps pre-made sandwiches at their best quality, notes Ken Burke, vice president of sales and marketing for Costanzo's Bakery, Inc., Cheektowaga, NY. “Clamshells are more expensive and allow in air that will dry out the bread. Display sandwiches filling side up, not flat in the case, so customers can easily make their selection.”

“One of our retail partners has installed condiment stations in its stores so that the customer can apply the condiment they prefer in the amount they prefer,” explains Conroy Foods' Conroy. “If you sauce sandwiches when making them, the sauces will soak into the bread. By offering the condiment bar, the customer gets a better product.”

John Morrell offers a merchandising program that includes labels and stickers “that can help improve the visibility of pre-made sandwiches on the shelf,” adds Waterkotte.

Upscale To Up-Sell

Upscale ingredients are the key to increasing the average price of a sandwich, according to Conroy. “I would not pay more for a sandwich that has a description of say, ham, American cheese, turkey, lettuce, tomato and mayonnaise — but I would for a sandwich with hickory-smoked ham, natural turkey breast, imported Asiago, lettuce, tomato and a roasted chipotle sauce on ciabatta bread. The food cost may be slightly



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEL BRANDS

higher but the margin of profit would be much greater."

In the last few years, sales of premium sandwiches at quick-serve and fast-casual restaurants have risen faster than the overall sandwich category. According to *What's In Store 2009* from the Madison, WI-based International Deli-Dairy-Bakery Association (IDDBA), premium sandwich sales rose 10.8 percent to \$4.1 billion in 2007, compared to overall sandwich sales, which grew 7.1 percent to \$18.2 billion.

"Supermarkets found that if they want to compete in the prepared-foods arena, they have to match the quality and variety of restaurant menu offerings," explains Conroy of Conroy Foods. "Quality means everything. Recent studies showed consumers are willing to pay more if they know they're getting the quality they pay for. Some supermarkets are doing a great job in creating more upscale sandwiches. They're using gourmet cheeses, breads and condiments to make restaurant-quality offerings."

John Morrell's Waterkotte offers this caveat, however. "Differentiate your program from quick-serve restaurants and your retail competition. Create a signature look for your sandwiches whether they be pre-made or made-to-order."

Kings Super Markets has created a line of signature sandwiches. "We use brand-name meats and domestic and imported cheeses along with breads and condiments to create seven to eight varieties of made-to-order sandwiches unique to Kings and matching what our demographic of customers are looking for," says Zoeller. "Even in our pre-made — what we call our Bistro Sandwich-

es — we offer something unique, for example, roast beef and Colby on pumpernickel rye with wasabi mayonnaise. It offers customers something familiar, but with a twist."

Safeway, a 1,738-store chain headquar-

tered in Pleasanton, CA offers 14 choices in its Signature Café Sandwich program. They include new additions such as the Big Easy, made with Black Forest ham, salami, Provolone, olives and mayonnaise on crusty artisan bread; long-time favorites such as Hail Caesar, filled with pan-roasted turkey breast, Havarti, garlic spread, tomato and green leaf lettuce on Italian bread; and three hot choices, such as Philly Cheese Steak with chopped beef steak and white American cheese served on a white roll.

Bundling A Combo Meal

A growing number of consumers are looking for convenience coupled with a price advantage. Quick-casual restaurants have always catered to this segment at lunch time and fast-food restaurants raised the anytime combo meal to a marketing juggernaut. Deli departments have been slow to jump on the bandwagon. Combo meals make up only 1.7 percent of all deli prepared-food dollar sales, according to *What's In Store 2009*. So this is an area ripe for exploitation.

"Combining a sandwich with soup or salad is still limited, but it's a big opportunity," opines Wright of Dietz & Watson.

Jerry Shafir, president of Kettle Cuisine,

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Pre-Sliced Cheese Goes Upscale BY ELIZABETH BLAND

Producers have expanded their pre-sliced cheese lines to include name-controlled European cheeses and unforeseen varieties. Advances in packaging and production have resulted in a new category of cheeses — high-quality products with immense merchandising potential for retail or foodservice.

Retailers should emphasize the benefits and applications of pre-sliced specialty cheeses as they introduce them to curious consumers, suggests Kirsten M. Jaeckle, marketing manager of Madison, WI-based Roth Käse USA, Ltd. One way is to quantify the value proposition. She suggests

emphasizing the time savings as a counterbalance to price points that are higher than those for sliced commodity cheeses.

One broad portfolio of pre-sliced specialty cheeses comes through Anco Fine Cheese of Fairfield, NJ. Among the offerings are Brie slices from France, Fol Épi, slices from Holland and the Italian duo of Il Villaggio brand Parmigiano-Reggiano and Valpadana Provolone Piccante. Anco's Frico line from Holland boasts not only Gouda and Edam but also an aged Frisian cow Gouda, a smoked Gouda, and Chevrete goat's milk Gouda. Emmanuelle Hofer Louis, director of marketing, describes these cheeses as aged, from spe-

cial areas and made with special care.

Jamie Wichlacz, marketing manager at BelGioioso Cheese, Inc. in Denmark, WI, notes an increase in varieties in its line of pre-slices. "BelGioioso has recently introduced pre-sliced Fontina to complement our line of other pre-sliced cheese, Asiago, sharp Provolone, mild Provolone and fresh Mozzarella."

This "sliced" Mozzarella is not a slice but rather an entire sheet of flattened pasta filata called Unwrap & Roll. "It's a great idea for kids for cookie cut-outs," notes Francis W. Wall, BelGioioso vice president of marketing. "It's also very popular with chefs." The sheets let consumers and chefs custom-design Mozzarella rolls with prosciutto, basil and other fillings.

One California producer stands out for its slices. "Rumiano Cheese is the only company in California that pre-slices California cheese," says Carissa Tourtelot, communications coordinator of the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) in San Francisco, CA. Owned by brothers Baird and John Rumiano, it's California's oldest family cheese company.

"About one third of all our sliced cheese is Provolone," says John Rumiano. "The balance is made up of Cheddar, Swiss, Monterey Jack, and imported cheeses such as Havarti, smoked Gouda, imported Swiss, and Jarlsberg."

Rumiano Cheese has modified the shape of the cheese into longer loaves for more efficient production runs. Each slice is interleaved, and the packages are filled with a modified atmosphere of carbon



Chelsea, MA, believes the successful pairing of sandwiches and soup relies on offering "the right portion and price, for example, a half sandwich and 8-ounce cup of soup for \$4.99. That's a value in this economy."

"Offer at least three to four choices of soup, and something on the lighter side, such as a broth-based chicken noodle, vegetable or cream soup," he adds. "Something like a hearty beef stew is too filling to pair with a sandwich. Also, serve soups hot, such as from a soup bar. If customers have to buy cold soup and re-thermalize it, the combo quickly loses its convenience factor."

Publix, a 1,000-plus store chain head-

quartered in Lakeland, FL, offers customers the option of purchasing a sandwich or hot and cold specialty subs and wraps along with a 32-ounce fountain drink and bag of Dirty brand potato chips for one value price.

The challenge of combo-ing, adds Wright of Dietz & Watson, "is to tie it all together and make it convenient, meaning making sure customers can pick up all items and move quickly."

One way to do this, says Rod Steele, director of category planning for deli at Sara Lee Food & Beverage, Downers Grove, IL, "is to create a sandwich center or pod that customers see immediately upon entering

the deli. This could be a refrigerated case in front of the deli counter, for example, where pre-sliced meats and cheeses can be displayed along with condiments. Bread can be placed at the end of the pod. We've even seen retailers add produce — lettuce and tomato — to offer the entire solution."

The goals, he continues, are "to let customers know this solution is available, bring customers into the deli and expand usages by offering customers opportunities to trade up and purchase add-ons. Offering recipes is a great way to make this suggestion."

Another concept is to bundle sandwiches and go-alongs around a theme. Aurora Gon-

dioxide to prevent mold or spoilage. A zipper and tear strip add further consumer convenience. "The improvement of the equipment and the packaging keep the quality of the cheese at a high level," Rumiano adds.

"You have to keep [the pre-sliced cheese] as fresh as possible," explains Sebastien Lehembre, product manager of Anco's French line. "To get the product fresh, you cut and wrap. The product tends to lose its freshness, but with the processing our vendors are using, it keeps the freshness through the shelf life of the product. You want to find the same kind of taste that you get in a freshly cut wheel."

Teri Lauretti, senior account manager of Zullo Associates, an advertising and design firm in Princeton, NJ, representing Finlandia Cheese Inc., Parsippany, NJ, attributes some of the recent pre-slice growth to a shift in demand toward thin-sliced deli meats. She reports "phenomenal growth" in Finlandia's deli slices, noting the company has added new products to the line such as thin-sliced Swiss, Havarti, Gouda and Double Gloucester.

Pre-sliced cheeses can be displayed in the deli, usually with pre-packaged deli meats, advises Frank Belfiore, marketing manager at Finlandia. "Pre-sliced cheese is even growing in markets where consumers primarily make behind-the-glass deli purchases," he says. Furthermore, the slices play into pre-packaged, fresh grab-and-go sandwich programs in the deli, providing the benefits of portion control, less waste and less overhead in preparation.

Some cheeses are naturally sliceable, while others present challenges because of composition, shape and texture. "We don't do Parm in our market because it is so difficult to slice," says Tourtelot.

Other producers have opted to work with hard cheeses and create successful slices. One such product is Bertozzi Parma Slices, genuine, all-natural, preservative-free PDO (protected designation of origin) Parmigiano-Reggiano from Italy in a tray pack. "Making the slices is very difficult because it flakes very easily," explains Carlo Bertozzi, president of Management Resources of America (MRA), parent company of Bertozzi Corporation of America, Inc. in Norwalk, CT. "We use a perfect Parmigiano-Reggiano. We take the slices from the heart of the wheel. It is like the culatello of prosciutto." Culatello is a variety of prosciutto made from the major muscle group of the full ham.

He says the Parmigiano-Reggiano should be under the age of 18 months for better sliceability. Youthful cheese has a smoother texture than extra aged cheese, but it still has the classic Parmigiano-Reggiano flavor. "Any panino that includes cheese, I would also include Parmigiano-Reggiano," he states. "Come on! It's the king of cheeses!"

Soft cheeses have their own issues. How might one turn a flat wheel of extra creamy Brie into perfectly sized sandwich slices? The cheesemakers behind the Coeur de Lion brand have found a way. According to Lehembre, the producers of Les Tranches Crèmeuses Brie slices "change the shape of the cheese. You can-

not produce it as a wheel. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to slice it. They produce it as a loaf." What is missing visually is the thick white rind. "They don't spray any penicillium. There's no reason to have a rind."

The slices, which come separated by interleaves for easy peeling, have the requisite buttery and mushroomy flavor, but their texture allows them to be folded or melted. The slices are sized for sandwiches but they could just as easily be wrapped around asparagus spears and served as appetizers. "People are looking to 'gourmetify' their sandwiches," says Lehembre. "They're looking for something a little bit different."

With restaurant traffic down, consumers are turning to deli departments for both restaurant-quality prepared foods and ingredients to prepare some of their favorites at home. Using high-end pre-sliced cheeses in the prepared meals and sandwiches can save time and expand options while promoting the retail packages can draw in additional customers.

Hofer Louis partially credits creative chefs for the increased interest in specialty sliced cheese; when consumers enjoy a gourmet sandwich in a restaurant, they want to reproduce the same thing at home, and the slices make this a convenient option.

Bertozzi believes the slices fit well into the American way of eating. "Because of the number of foodies, we believe the market is right for a more upscale, natural panino, a more sophisticated panino. This is the consumer we're catering to." **DB**

zalez, spokesperson for Frito-Lay, Plano, TX, a unit of PepsiCo, which markets Stacy's Pita Chips, suggests, "Build off interest in different culinary experiences plus health and wellness by pairing pita chips with themed Mediterranean sandwiches."

Paul Bulman, vice president of marketing for Creta Farms USA LLC, Lansdale, PA, adds, "Our olive oil-infused meat products are best to merchandise as an entire Mediterranean concept. This could take the form of themed sandwiches or sandwiches where customers can order add-on ingredients such as Feta cheese or roasted red peppers."

Last year, he explains, "One retailer with

over 100 stores in the Northeast displayed our meats in the bottom of its service case and items such as olives, Feta, marinated artichokes and roasted red peppers on the top. The result was a 10 percent increase in sales of the Mediterranean products, which added profit to its overall deli sales."

Vendor Offerings

What's In Store 2009 reports turkey, ham, roast beef, salami and bologna are the most popular deli meats. Individual vendors say offering bold and ethnic flavors in both proteins and sandwich condiments as well as offering a variety of bread options is key to

growing a successful sandwich program.

"Our best sellers are oven-roasted turkey and hardwood-smoked ham," notes Bulman. "We offer the twist of having removed much of the saturated fat in the meats and replaced it with extra virgin olive oil for a flavorful product certified by the American Heart Association. In April, we'll launch honey turkey, honey ham, oven-roasted chicken breast and bologna."

Test marketing in a northeast retail chain last year "showed the introduction of our innovative products brought 20 percent new users into the deli as measured through loyalty card data of people who hadn't shopped

the deli the previous 90 days," he continues.

Bold flavored meats are in demand, states Sara Lee's Steele. "We've seen nice growth of flavored items such as our Cajun roast beef. In addition, our Steakhouse Ultra Rare roast beef, which we introduced last year, is taking off in the Northeast where people like their beef on the rare side."

Chicken sandwiches are surging in popularity, growing at a faster rate than any other menu item offered at American restaurants, according to *What's In Store 2009*, and the trend appears to be mirrored in the deli.

"Chicken as a deli meat has enjoyed good double-digit growth in recent years, although it's not yet reached the popularity of turkey and ham," relates John Morrell's Waterkotte.

What's In Store 2009 also noted a trend toward recreating familiar entrées in sandwich form. To capitalize on this, Morrell introduced an off-the-bone rotisserie-style chicken breast for sandwich making, and Dietz & Watson Co. now offers southern fried chicken deli sliced meat.

Cheese remains an integral part of the American sandwich. "Standbys continue to be Provolone, Munster, Colby, Swiss and American, in addition to more flavorful Havarti, sharp Cheddar and Jalapeño Monterey Jack," adds Steele.

Soft rather than hard and crusty bread is leading the demand, according to Ken Burke, vice president of sales and marketing for Costanzo's Bakery, Inc., Cheektowaga, NY. "Last year we worked with a retailer in the Northeast that makes its deli sandwiches on ciabatta bread. Customers said they wanted something softer, so they added our product. At first we were 20 percent of the sales compared to 80 percent for ciabatta. A year later, we're 90 to 95 percent of the sales."

As for white versus wheat, Burke notes, "People say they want to eat healthfully, but they don't necessarily do so in practice. Sales of our whole-grain wheat have not taken off and in some markets it's been discontinued."

Burke also sees retailers downsizing sandwiches. "The 9-inch sandwich rather than the 12-inch is the new benchmark in order to lower costs and maintain an attractive price point," he contends.

Mayonnaise remains the favorite sandwich spread, according to *What's In Store 2009*, followed by dressings, mustard and barbecue sauce.

Megan Warmouth, product manager at Chicago, IL-based Gordon Hanrahan and spokesperson for Lisle, IL-based Unilever Foodsolutions, the parent company of Hellman's mayonnaise, reports, "Hellman's has

recently introduced a line of sandwich sauces. Flavors include ancho chipotle, which is great for ham and shredded pork sandwiches; red pepper basil, which is a great accompaniment to oven-roasted chicken or turkey breast; creamy pesto, which partners well with Italian cold cuts; and horseradish Dijon, which is ideal for roast beef and corned beef sandwiches."

Conroy Foods offers some uniquely flavored bread spreads. In the Beano's line, says Conroy, "We offer Southwest sauce, wasabi, deli mustard, honey mustard, all-American sandwich spread, horseradish sauce and, of course, our signature item, Beano's Original Submarine Dressing. In our new Deli Bistro line we offer mesquite smoked, roasted chipotle, sweet chili pepper, oriental mustard, cilantro & lime, and oriental mustard. These are the flavors that are showing up on restaurant menus. They can be used to enhance the sandwich made-to-order program beyond the typical offerings of mayonnaise and yellow mustard."

A good example of this is the Signature Café Sandwich program at Safeway. Its Great Western sandwich is made with smoked turkey and pepper jack cheese served with Conroy Food's roasted chipotle dressing. **DB**




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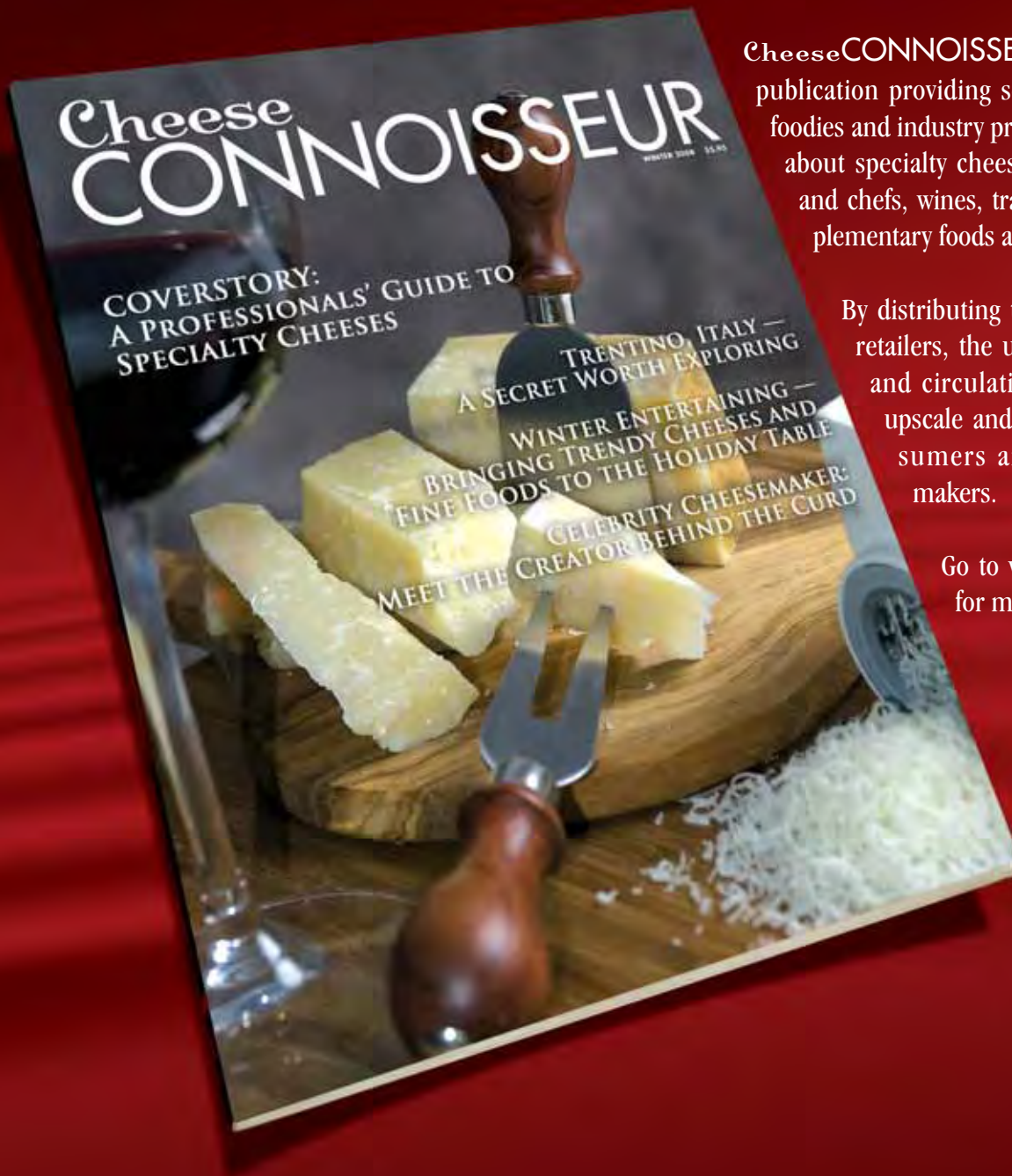
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Formaggio Delizioso

Familiar and exotic cheeses from the length and breadth of Italy remain favorites of American consumers

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

Every corner of Italy from Trentino Alto Adige to Sicily boasts cheeses of character. “You can go from one town to the next and find completely different products. Not just the shape, but a different taste, too, from fresh types such as Crescenza, Burrata or Mozzarella that are produced and eaten within 24 hours, to very old cheeses such as Bitto PDO [protected designation of origin] from Valtellina, aged seven years,” says Cesare Gallo, president of

Savello USA, Wilkes Barre, PA.

While Parmigiano Reggiano PDO, Grana Padano PDO, Pecorino Romano PDO and Mozzarella account for the vast majority of imported Italian cheese purchases, many lesser known cheeses — at a variety of price points — are growing in popularity. With many supermarkets focusing on big sellers and competitively priced alternatives, less space is available for high-end specialties, but the unique and the rare can still have success.

“When bringing in large quantities of the core cheeses, it’s easy to put a few cases of other specialties in the container,” explains Tom Gellert, vice president of Elizabeth, NJ-based Atalanta Corporation, importers of a broad selection of Italian cheese. “We have great people looking for great products, we know where to go and we have customers who want them. We never want to look at cheese of lesser quality. It is not coming down on quality. It is a different selec-



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tion. Italy offers such a wide variety — more than 500 cheeses — that it allows us to select things that hit the right price point. At the same time, we recognize consumer tastes have been evolving, and consumers desire high-quality specialty product.”

Piedmont cheeses newly available in this country include three pasteurized-milk varieties — three-milk Robiola della Rocca, goat-milk Robiola pura Capra — each weighing approximately 300 grams — and Cappelletto, a delicate little cheese made in both a pure goat- and a three-milk version, weighing about 150 grams. “For centuries, farmers in lower Piedmont have been turning their milk into delicacies. These are fine examples of the fresh cheeses from the

Langhe, perfect on cheese plates, a sophisticated buffet addition, or high-end specialty cheese retail counter,” according to Margaret Cicogna, specialist in Italian cheese and consultant to Atalanta. Robiola di Roccaverano PDO, a young, soft raw-goat-milk cheese — esteemed but not imported — inspires these cheeses.

Fresh cheeses from Caseificio Alta Langa, a Piedmont dairy, are popular in stores and restaurants. Two of the best are La Tur and Rocchetta. “Not long ago they were new to the U.S. market and now we sell more of them than other cheeses that have been imported for many years,” says Doug Jay, president of Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA. “We fly them in every

week. They’re approachable and subtle, and the sizes work well on cheese plates.”

Italy’s PDO cheeses are quite special and not to be missed. “These marks help buyers to select products and buyers believe these marks guarantee good quality, high standards and tradition,” relates Andrea Berti, product manager for Atalanta.

Grana Padano And Parmigiano Reggiano

More than one-fifth of the cow’s milk produced in Italy becomes Grana Padano. “Grana Padano is the top selling PDO cheese in Italy, selling over 4 million [75- to 80-pound] wheels a year, and exports to the United States have nearly tripled over the past 10 years,” notes Elisabetta Serraiotto, director of marketing and communication for the Consorzio Tutela Grana Padano, based in Densignano del Garda, Brescia, Italy. The United States is Grana Padano’s second largest export market.

Parmigiano Reggiano is the top selling PDO cheese in the United States. “Parmigiano Reggiano is one of the cheeses that has a lot of tonnage and makes up the majority of sales, but the specially selected and matured Reggiano niche is growing, with types such as Red Cow and White Cow gaining in popularity. The Red Cow [called Vacche Rosse or Razza Reggiana] is sweet, nutty, and the story is very compelling. A fine balsamic or a balsamic glaze is often served to complement the mature Parmigiano Reggiano,” says Jay.

Nearly all Parmigiano Reggiano in Modena was made from milk of Bianca Modenese cows from 800 CE to the 20th century, when the breed declined in favor of higher-producing imported breeds. By the end of the 20th century, only a few hundred white cows remained. “In April 2005, one dairy in the Modena hills revived this recipe,” says Emmanuelle Hofer Louis, director of marketing for Anco Fine Cheese, Fairfield, NJ. “Beginning with the milk of 35 cows, the dairy could make only one wheel per day. Bianca Modenese milk is exceptionally rich and calls for the cheese to be aged longer. We recommend a minimum of 30 months. The cheese has a finer texture, smoother grain and more complex flavor. It is a seasonal item, so when it arrives, it is very celebratory. Americans do understand the different value of small-scale, artisanal production.” Only Anco is bringing in “white cow” Parmigiano Reggiano.

Lucini Italia Organics, Miami, FL, has introduced Organic Parmigiano Reggiano aged for 36 months. “Parmigiano Reggiano aged 36 months is hard to find in Italy, much less in the United States. To add the organic



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CONSORZIO TUTELA GRANA PADANO

status — certified to National Organic Program USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] standards by both an Italian certifier and QAI [Quality Assurance International] — makes this a rare and unique treat, much like an estate bottle of wine,” says David Neuman, president, Lucini Italia Organics. “It is made by one family near Emilia Romagna. They’ve made four or five wheels a day for 27 years. Their cheese is revered. The wheel is hand-cut and hand-wrapped in Italy to maintain its organic integrity and is kept under refrigeration so it is not compromised in any way.” Hand-cut to a perfect 8 ounces so stores can sell it as an individual SKU, it must be kept under refrigeration. The trademarked box carries the endorsement of Dr. Andrew Weil, the renowned health advocate.

Remind consumers to save any Parmigiano Reggiano rinds to flavor soups — every bit is edible, advises Nancy Radke, director of the U.S. Information Office for Parmigiano Reggiano and Fontina Valle d’Aosta, and president of Ciao Ltd., Syracuse, NY. She calls it the “vegetarian soup-bone.” Rub the rind with a 50/50 solution of water and white wine vinegar and then rinse it under running water before tossing it into the soup pot. Let the rind soften, cut it into

small cubes and return the cubes to the soup for surprising cheesy bites.

Gorgonzola And Taleggio

Gorgonzola PDO and Taleggio PDO are produced in Lombardy and Piedmont with Taleggio production extending to Veneto. Some cheesemakers make both varieties.

Gorgonzola is offered in two varieties — the more intense variety is Gorgonzola Piccante, aged 90 days, and the more delicate, softer Dolce, aged 60 days. “Gorgonzola Dolce was created in the 20th century to appeal to the American palate. Now sales of Dolce are very close to sales of Piccante in Italy as well as in the United States,” according to Jay of Atlanta Foods.

“Good Gorgonzola has to be fresh. Pink on the borders is over the hill,” says Atalanta’s Cicogna. “Gelmini is recognized as one of the finest producers.” Atalanta offers Gelmini Gorgonzola in whole, half and one-eighth wheels.

Lactalis Deli, a division of Lactalis USA, New York, NY, offers Galbani Gorgonzola Erborinato, a gold medal winner at the 2008 World Cheese Awards held in Dublin, Ireland. It is available in one-eighth wheels weighing 3.5 pounds. “At retail, it can be eas-

ily cut into wedges and rewrapped. Chefs slice it and crumble it and it is ideal for food-service usage as well,” says Antoine Troegeler, product manager for Lactalis Deli.

Taleggio has a soft texture, fragrant aroma, and buttery flavor. It dates back to the 10th century in Valtaleggio in the Taleggio Valley in Bergamo. Patches of mold on the surface occur naturally during aging. They can be cleaned with salt water or gently scraped. Consortium regulations allow dry salting or brining, followed by washing during maturation; they prohibit any other rind treatment.

“Taleggio sales are growing. Washed-rind cheeses are accepted more and more, partly because some consumers are more educated and partly because of the changing palate,” explains Jay. “Five years ago, we wouldn’t expect this response to washed-rind cheeses. Cheeses with high quality and unique or complex flavors are still a growing market.” Atlanta offers Gorgonzola and Taleggio from Ciresa, a family-owned company in the Lombardy region.

“Taleggio arrives ready to cut and eat. Rotation has to be fast. It should be cut to order and used quickly. It’s an outstanding cheese, but delicate — it’s not a Parmigiano



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Reggiano,” says Gallo of Savello USA, which imports Carozzi “La Baita” Taleggio.

Other Cheeses

Asiago cheese dates back 1,000 years. Asiago Pressato, aged 20 days, is made from pasteurized whole milk, while Asiago d’Allevato, aged 4 months to a year or more, is made from raw skimmed milk. Both are excellent table cheeses.

Enego is a fresh mountain cheese made year-round from the whole milk of cows grazing near Enego on the Altopiano di Asiago. The soft, sweet, full-flavored paste of the 30-pound wheels is light in color with irregular holes throughout. “We cook Enego at a slightly higher temperature than Asiago Pressato and then age it over 40 days, a bit longer than Asiago Pressato. The holes become more pronounced in this cheese, as does the taste,” explains Dennis Panozzo, president of Chicago, IL-based Monti Trentini USA LLC, the importing subsidiary of Caseria Monti Trentini SpA, Grigno, Italy, producers of Grana Padano PDO, Provolone Valpadana PDO and Asiago PDO. Monti Trentini’s Asiago d’Allevato Mezzano won a gold medal at the fourth Olympics of Mountain Cheeses in 2005 in Verona, Italy.

Pannarello is a cheese that has cream — panna — added. “We start with pasteurized whole milk and add about 15 percent very high-quality cream from Grana Padano production,” notes Panozzo. “Pannarello is light and fresh on the palate and ‘cleans up’ at the finish, meaning there is no residual taste of butterfat, as in Brie, for instance. The texture is what makes this unique. On the second taste, the flavor becomes recognizable — just like a glass of cold, fresh milk on a hot summer day. This is a great cheese on a baguette or with a sparkling wine such as Prosecco or Champagne.”

Sardinian Cheese

Sheep have always outnumbered people in Sardinia, a region boasting three PDO sheep-milk cheeses. Flocks freely graze wild herbs and grasses throughout unspoiled inland Sardinia.

Fiore Sardo, the “crème de la crème” of Sardinia, pre-dates 2,000-year-old Pecorino Romano and is the only Italian PDO cheese made from raw sheep’s milk. The shepherds’ tools were a pot and wood fire. They carved chestnut wood molds with initials and a flower — fiore — to imprint the cheese, which aged three to six months in their mountain huts and acquired floral, peppery flavors and lightly smoky aromas.

In 2008, 38 farm dairies produced Fiore Sardo with production totaling less than one million pounds, according to Dr. Antonio Pirisi, representative of Assessorati Agricoltura e Riforma Pastorale, Sardinia, Italy, at the 2009 Winter Fancy Food Show, San Francisco, CA.

Pecorino Sardo Dolce PDO is made from pasteurized sheep milk and aged less than two months. Pecorino Sardo Maturo PDO, also made from pasteurized sheep’s milk but aged more than two months, is pleasant and pungent.

“There are several producers of cheeses in Sardinia. The large majority process sheep’s milk. Ferruccio Podda SpA is the company we selected to import, based on its consistency in quali-

ty and assortment,” says Cesare Gallo, president of Savello USA, based in Wilkes Barre, PA.

Podda Classico Misto is slightly pungent, made from pasteurized sheep’s and cow’s milk. The rind is rubbed with salt and water. The consistency resembles a grana. Color varies depending on age and percentages of milks. “It’s a fantastic table cheese with a fruity taste, aged at least five months, and we have a product aged over a year,” explains Gallo.

Podda Bello di Sardegna is a mild, semisoft whole sheep’s milk basket-style cheese, aged 90 days. The paste has a few holes and the rind is rubbed with a blend of olive oil, wine vinegar and salt.

Podda Smeraldino, a soft, sweet, delicate sheep’s milk cheese with an intense aroma and aged for at least 40 days, is ideal as a table cheese or sliced for roasting or grilling.

Sardinia makes 98 percent of all Pecorino Romano and also produces goat’s and cow’s milk cheese, such as Capradero, aged 120 days, from Sardaformaggi.

Complement Sardinia’s cheese with its olive oil, bottarga (grey mullet roe), shepherd’s bread (pane carasau) or honey. Pair Fiore Sardo with a structured red wine such as Cannonau di Sardegna or a dessert wine such as amber colored Moscato di Sorso Sennori. **DB**

Caciotta Tartufo is made from pasteurized milk and black truffles from Umbria. “Many cheeses with truffles use goat or sheep milk and/or goat or sheep rennet. The

cheese taste is, then, very powerful. Our cheese is much milder, allowing an elegant aftertaste of black truffle. It really lends itself as a table cheese and is a very good melting cheese in any application where one is looking for a taste of mushrooms,” he adds.

Brenta, a sweet, full-bodied mountain-style cheese named for the Brenta River in northeastern Italy, is made in 13-pound wheels from pasteurized whole cow’s milk. Normally aged two months, it is also available matured between four to six months.

Crowning the Mozzarella category is fresh Mozzarella di Bufala Campana PDO. Campania Felix Tartufella is buffalo milk mozzarella with Umbrian truffle. Tartufella garnered its second World Cheese Award in 2008 in Dublin. “It’s not only Americans who like it. We found great success in Germany, Belgium and England, too,” says Enrico Parente, owner of Agrozootecnica Marchesa, Grazzanise, Italy, maker of Campania Felix Mozzarella di Bufala Campana. **DB**



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTI TRENTINI USA

Cooking Oil Enters A New Age

With the switch to trans fat-free almost universal and disposal becoming a profit center, the world of cooking oil has fundamentally changed

BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE

The partial hydrogenation process that gave oils a longer shelf life and a higher smoke point also created trans fat, which has been linked to heart disease, obesity, and other health concerns. At the same time this link was being explored, an environmental spotlight was directed at recycling and proper disposal of waste materials. While waxing and waning support of health and environmental concerns has affected the cost and ability to cater to both causes, overall demand for healthful, environmentally friendly products over the past five years has expanded the options for both trans fat-free oil and cooking oil disposal. And it appears that recent economic turmoil is not going to have a negative effect on the equation.

Healthful Choices

Trans fat-free oil options have become numerous enough and affordable enough so most delis have already become almost, if not entirely, trans-fat free. Most of the leaders in supermarket delis began this transition about three years ago, if not earlier.

Grocery has reflected the phasing out of trans fats for a number of years now. Most items proudly display "Trans fat free" or similar verbiage on packaging.

"As consumers, we've been hard pressed to find stuff with trans fats for a while. Delis had to follow suit with the rest of the store," explains Mike Castagna, senior category marketing manager for Ventura Foods, Brea, CA. "Ventura Foods sells a lot of oils to the deli segment, and easily, 90 percent of our deli customers are trans-fat free."

Research and development into the plants from which oil is derived have expanded the variety of available trans fat-free oils. Any commodity oil starts out trans fat-free; however, its acids can cause the oil to degrade quicker and smoke at a lower tem-



perature than is commercially desirable. Partial hydrogenation strengthened these oils, making them break down over a longer period of time and at higher temperatures. Adjusting the acids in the plant — often at seed level — can produce an oil that does not require partial hydrogenation for stability. Sometimes the altered seeds produce an even more stable product than partial hydrogenation could produce.

Additionally, some companies are using different methods of purification to achieve higher stability. Stratas Foods in Memphis, TN, uses “ultra-purification” to add stability to the Mazola ZT Soy Select, notes Tom Bandler, general manager for branded products. Soy is grown all over the United States, making it an affordable option for oil, but it needs added stability for storage and use longevity in foodservice applications.

He contends delis have gone beyond converting to trans fat-free oils and are trying many options to see which is the best fit. The variety means delis can shop around to find an oil that suits their needs and flavor profile while offering the best value.

The two top cooking oil choices are still canola and soybean oil, engineered or adjusted to be trans fat free, according to Ventura’s Castagna. Canola edges out soybean in delis because it has a lower saturated-fat content.

Bill McCullough, director of marketing for Bunge Oils, Inc., St. Louis, MO, says the company’s Nutra-Clear NT is canola oil with omega-9 fatty acids, making it a superior nutritional value. Canola oil, he adds, is the only oil that can use a qualified Food and Drug Administration (FDA) health claim suggesting it may be beneficial for reducing heart disease risk. In addition, Nutra-Clear NT has a fry life that is equal to or better than hydrogenated oils.

There is still demand for high-oleic (a stabilizing fatty acid) sunflower oil, Bandler notes. Corn oil or blends of vegetable oils are also options. Just about any oil delis frequently use can now be obtained in a trans fat-free form, often at a price comparable to the higher value.

Most trans fat-free oils cost more per case than commodity trans-fat oils. However, their value may be significantly better. For example, if a commodity oil costing \$20 per case lasts 2 days, it costs \$10 per day. However, if a specialty oil altered to be stable without trans fats costing \$30 per case lasts four days, it costs \$7.50 per day. Since it also meets consumer demands for a trans fat-free food, the value increases even more.

Beyond The Deep Fryer

Although deep-frying is the first

cooking method that springs to mind in any discussion of cooking oil, it is certainly not the only preparation method to utilize cooking oil. Pan-frying, sautéing, and grilling are increasing deli options, and for those preps, aerosol or liquid sprays are often more appropriate choices than jugs of oil. Besides allowing cooks to use less oil, sprays are often available in flavored and seasoned varieties. Furthermore, spray cans may extend the oil’s shelf life.

“Oils in aerosol containers are hermetically sealed during the manufacturing process,” explains Ginny Bales, marketing manager for Par-Way Tryson Company, St. Clair, MO. “That means oils are not exposed to light or air as with liquid oils, which can cause degradation and reduced shelf life.”

Bunge’s Nutra-Clear NT can be used in any application where salad oil would traditionally be used, from aioli to vinaigrette, explains McCullough. This enables operators to reduce the number of oils they carry.

The grade of olive oil that would be inexpensive enough to use for deep-frying has too low a smoke point for this use. But consumers are seeking olive oil because it’s high in omega-9 acids the body needs to maintain good cholesterol levels. Savvy deli operators can promote its use in a number of non-fry applications, such as steaming, grilling, preparing salads, or adding to a sandwich.

Steve Kaufman, executive vice president of De Medici Imports, Elizabeth, NJ, recommends Al’Olivier spreadable olive oils, which can be used in foodservice for pan frying and to prepare a variety of dishes, such as steamed fish and vegetable sides. They can be used to “eliminate the butter or mayo on a sandwich and offer a healthful, tasteful

alternative,” he explains.

Disposal Issues

Oil disposal has emerged as a significant environmental issue and recently disposal options have expanded.

Traditionally, grease dumpsters — enclosed bins for cooking oil emptied by a company hired for that purpose — have been the most common disposal route, says Castagna. The removal companies made money through repurposing. Oil reclamation companies are now reselling or reprocessing for biofuels, so used cooking oil pickup can either be free or a source of income — some companies are paying for used cooking oil.

Bunge’s Website offers operators a list of discard services in their area. Of course, McCullough adds, whether these pickup services will continue to be free or profit-generating depends on the price of crude oil.

Three-and-half to four billion pounds of cooking oil are disposed of each year, according to Castagna. A major chain probably discards 10 to 15 million pounds a year. Options for its repurposing include fueling the chain’s own trucks; a chain with this much used cooking oil could replace 5 percent of its total fuel usage with repurposed cooking oil.

“Right now, biofuel makes up less than 1 percent of the entire fuel consumption, but it’s in its infancy stages,” he adds. “It doesn’t have to take forever to change, and it doesn’t have to be a big change, such as 50 percent consumption [being biofuel]. Five percent is a big change. Ten percent is a huge change.”

When fuel was at some of its highest prices last year, the demand for used cooking oil to make biofuel spiked. However, now that the price of crude oil has gone down, the biofuel demand has also gone down, slowing the industry’s growth and profits.

Regardless of the current lull in biofuel demand, “The green initiative is No. 1 on a lot of people’s plates,” Castagna continues. “There are no bad consequences to going green. It saves money in the long run, and you feel good about the changes. And this is not just for oil and delis — everyone is looking to reduce their carbon footprint and their impact on the earth.”

Finally, Bunge now offers operators its Fry Station Training video, a dual language (Spanish and English) training DVD that instructs deli associates in everything from proper cooking temperatures to cooking techniques to cleaning and discard procedures. “It helps operators get the most out of the oil,” McCullough says. “In the past, many operators treated oil as part of the equipment, not part of the cooking process.” **DB**



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NCFST Receives Regulatory Acceptance Of Novel Food Sterilization Process

Summit-Argo, IL
Feb. 27, 2009

The National Center for Food Safety and Technology (NCFST), Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and Avure Technologies, Inc., announced that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has accepted the research institute's filing of a new food-sterilization process. The NCFST filing is the first-ever petition to FDA for the commercial use of pressure-assisted thermal sterilization (PATS) processes for application in the production of low-acid foods.

PATS is a promising new technology that significantly improves the quality of thermally processed foods while simultaneously eliminating the food-safety risks associated with dangerous bacteria such as *Clostridium botulinum* and its toxins. The novel process, which combines mild heat with high pressure to produce commercially sterile low-acid food products, underwent a rigorous validation process and safety assessment by NCFST researchers and its Dual Use Science and Technology (DUST) consortium members. The 7-year multimillion dollar collaborative effort included scientists and engineers from Avure Technologies, U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center (RDEC), Baxter Health Care, ConAgra Foods, Hormel Foods, General Mills, Basic American Foods, Unilever, and Mars Co.

FDA requirements for registration, manufacturing and process filing of low-acid canned foods (LACF) are codified in Title 21, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 108 and 113. Filers must provide extensive information regarding critical factors and processing steps showing, with a high degree of confidence, that the process used to manufacture a food will not permit the growth of microorganisms of public health significance. NCFST demonstrated the PATS process is capable of verifiable and reproducible inactivation of *C. botulinum* spores from ambient, stable low-acid foods. The NCFST team established process efficacy through an inoculated pack study using a multi-strain cocktail of *C. botulinum* spores and mashed potatoes.

NCFST worked closely with its process authority, Seattle, WA-based International Product Safety Consultants (IPSC), and FDA to establish validation procedures, protocols and testing for PATS and in developing the requisite reports for the LACF filing. Process validation testing began in 2006 and the

application was submitted to FDA in September 2008.

"The threat of botulism makes low-acid food production especially challenging for food manufacturers," says Larry Keener, DUST validation team leader and president of IPSC. "With this FDA LACF filing, NCFST and its industry collaborators have demonstrated proof-of-process efficacy for this exciting new technology. Essentially, PATS combines a non-thermal technology, high-pressure processing (HPP), which has been used successfully for many years to pasteurize a variety of refrigerated foods, including meat as well as high-acid and acidified foods, with mild heat to achieve sterilization temperature. It is truly a breakthrough process in terms of reducing the risk of *C. botulinum* contamination in these types of foods."

The PATS process, added Keener, is a big step forward for the food industry in providing an alternative to retort processing, which involves extensive exposure of the food to high temperatures. "PATS offers food manufacturers an opportunity to provide consumers value-added foods with higher nutritional content, as well. HPP has traditionally provided quality improvements in foods such as avocado, juice and some deli meats. The PATS process extends the quality improvement benefits of classical HPP with the benefit of mitigating the food-safety challenge posed by *C. botulinum*."

Pat Adams, CEO of Avure Technologies, the Kent, WA-based global experts in HPP technology, says regulatory acceptance of this innovative process is an important step for the food industry. "This technology may provide food producers with an alternative processing means that utilizes less energy and creates better-tasting products than some current offerings. Avure is developing the systems to commercialize the process with the expectation we will further reduce the thermal requirements and enable production of products that equal or exceed frozen foods but that can be distributed without the need of refrigeration."

Chair of the DUST Microbiology Committee Phillip Minerich, PhD, vice president of research and development with Hormel Foods Corp., notes the new process will have a big impact on food safety and quality assurance for the low-acid foods processing sector. "Any time you can combine an innovative processing technology and food safety is a win for the consumer and industry. The PATS process produces very high quality, commercially sterile foods using a technology that has been studied for decades

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.

and is currently used as a food-safety intervention for select sliced deli meats, shellfish, avocado, fruits, jams, jellies and juices."

Salmonella Outbreak Could Last Years

25.feb.09

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Craig Schneider

www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2009/02/25/georgia_peanut_salmonella.html

The national salmonella outbreak linked to more than 2,600 peanut products could last as long as two years, as contaminated foods sit like ticking time bombs on store shelves and kitchen cabinets, federal health officials said Wednesday.

Identifying those products and ensuring their removal has been complicated and confusing, said Dr. Stephen Sundlof, director of food safety at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"We're really concerned. This is not over yet," Sundlof said. He said the outbreak could last as long as products are available, possibly as long as two years.

That's because peanut products, seemingly harmless as they linger in homes and the marketplace, can have a relatively long shelf life, officials said. Vegetables and meat that spoil relatively quickly must be thrown away.

The recalled products that officials said were produced by Peanut Corp. of America — peanut butter, peanut paste, granulated peanuts and others — became ingredients in thousands of other foods distributed across the United States and about 20 other countries.

Despite one of the largest food recalls in U.S. history, including 2,670 foods as of Feb. 24, up to two dozen salmonella cases continue to be reported each week. That represents a decline from the peak in December when as many as 60 new cases were reported in a week.

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King's Hawaiian	17	Bread	800-800-5464	310-533-8352
Kontos Culinary	43	Greek Foods	410-798-5090	410-798-5092
Magic Seasoning Blends	26	Seasoning Blends	504-731-3519	504-731-3576
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Wilkinson Industries, Inc.	36	Packaging	800-456-4519	402-468-5124

Stefano's Foods

S

tefano Grizaffi (pictured right), was born in 1896 in Valledlunga, Sicily. Together with his wife, Lucia DiMaggio Grizaffi, he worked hard preparing good-tasting, Italian meals for their family.

After immigrating to the United States in the 1960s as children, Enrico Piraino, president of Stefano's Foods, Charlotte, NC, and his brothers longed for their grandparents "Old World Italian" cooking, so Piraino learned their secret family recipes.

In summer 1976, he opened his first store, Stefano's Delicatessen and Pizzeria in New York. Customers came from New Jersey and all areas of New York to eat pizza, calzone, stromboli and a variety of stuffed breads.

In 1979, Piraino started manufacturing Stefano's products for the northeastern and southeastern U.S. market from a small manufacturing facility on Long Island. Wanting to honor his grandparents cooking as the company grew, he dedicated himself to maintaining family traditions of authenticity, quality and delicious taste. The company used hand-stretched dough stuffed with real cheeses and fresh meats and vegetables.

Today, the company serves most U.S. cities from its manufacturing facilities and headquarters in Charlotte. Stefano's Foods is now an independent operating company of Smithfield Food, Inc., Smithfield, VA.



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