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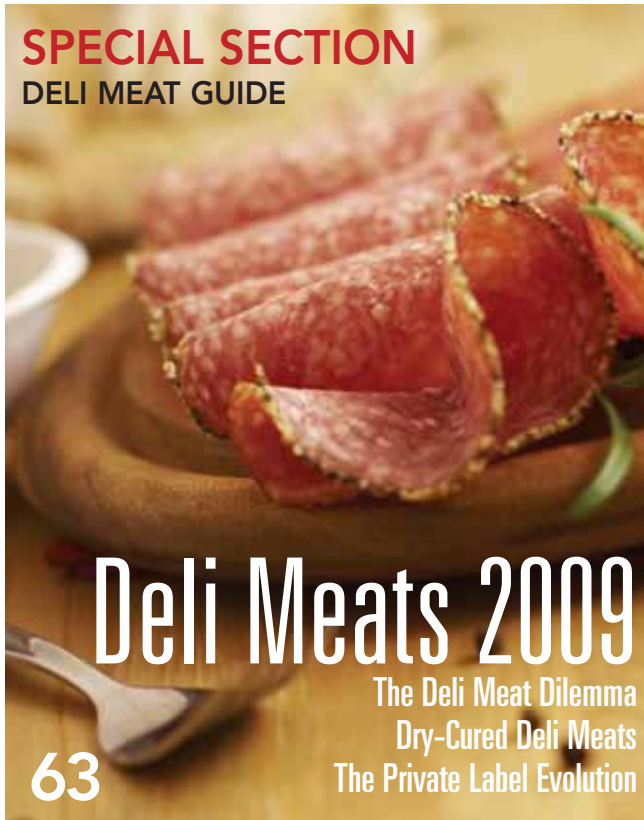
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## "LETTUCE CREATE" INTERACTIVE CHILDREN'S EVENT

Salyer American Fresh Foods and The Culinary Center of Monterey, both of Monterey, CA, hosted "Lettuce Create" at the Culinary Center in May, which is National Salad Month. Chef Mary Pagan, owner of the Culinary Center, held an interactive education class where children ages 6 and up learned firsthand how to create the ultimate salad.

After the class, the children and their parents sampled the salads the children made. Each parent received recipe cards from the Culinary Center and an organic shopping tote. They also had a complimentary shopping opportunity at the Salyer American Fresh Foods Farmer's Market Stand set up in the Culinary Center. Parents filled up their tote with lettuce to take home, and the kids received a mini-gardening kit so they can plant seeds and grow their own lettuce.

## COMING NEXT ISSUE IN AUG/SEPT 2009

### SUSTAINABILITY

DELI BUSINESS examines the latest developments in sustainability and how current economic conditions are impacting the movement. We look at the issue of how cash-strapped companies and consumers are reconciling economic and environmental concerns.

### FEATURE STORIES

Entrées  
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### PREPARED FOODS

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### MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

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### DELI MEAT

Turkey  
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### PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Holidays  
Back-To-School

### CHEESES

Italian Cheeses  
American Specialty Cheeses

## COMING IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009

Technological advances have forever changed the way businesses react to and respond to food-safety challenges in general and foodborne illness breakouts in particular. What preparations for the inevitable has your company made?

### SUBSCRIPTION & READER SERVICE INFO

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# DELI WATCH

## Transitions



**Marisa Churchill** has joined G.L. Mezzetta, Inc., American Canyon, CA, as executive chef. She had been a consulting chef with the company. Recognized in the San Francisco Bay area for her work at Rubicon, The Slanted Door, LuLu, Ame and Yoshi's, Churchill also competed in the second season of Bravo's *Top Chef*. She will oversee all Mezzetta's brands and ensure its specialty products, sauces and marinades are produced with exceptional flavor, quality, and consistency.  
[www.mezzetta.com](http://www.mezzetta.com)



**Fran Haddix** has been appointed quality assurance manager at Venus Wafers, Inc., Hingham, MA. In this newly created position, she will ensure top-to-bottom production quality, including supplier approvals, establishment and enforcement of good manufacturing standards, online checks and responsive customer support. With Venus for almost 20 years, she has led the company through several successful audits since 2002, including achieving Superior AIB GMP rating and QAI organic certification.  
[www.venuswafers.com](http://www.venuswafers.com)

IDDBA Booth #2569  
Fancy Food Show Booth #1747

## Announcements



### CONTROLLING FOODSERVICE COSTS

USA Rice Federation, Columbia, MD, says U.S.-grown rice is an ideal option for balancing food costs and delivering meals that are on-trend, profitable and appealing. Foodservice operations can increase value to their customers and boost profit margins by including U.S. rice in menu options. At less than 10¢ per serving, rice helps offset the cost of more expensive proteins on the plate and revitalizes leftover ingredients.  
[www.usarice.com](http://www.usarice.com)



### CONSUMER SWEEPSTAKES

Nonni's Food Co., Inc., Tulsa, OK, has launched the New York Style-brand Broadway! New York Instant Win Sweepstakes, which will run until Nov. 30. Grand-prize: 4-day trip for four to New York City, round-trip air transportation, hotel accommodations, four tickets to two Broadway shows and \$1,000. Ten first-place winners: 3-day trip for two to New York City, transportation, accommodations, two tickets to one Broadway show and \$750.  
[www.newyorkstyle.com](http://www.newyorkstyle.com)

IDDBA Booth #1955

## Announcements



### ALL-NATURAL & PORTION CONTROL

Just Desserts, Oakland, CA, has been baking trans-fat free since 1974. Its all-natural desserts use no artificial ingredients or preservatives. The company offers a range of portion-control options including assorted mini loaves, glazed mini bundts, frosted cupcakes, chocolate-dipped Madeleines, brownie bites, oatmeal raisin bites, pecan blondie bites and single serve cakes. Many are available in bulk and in grab-and-go packaging.  
[www.justdesserts.com](http://www.justdesserts.com)

IDDBA Booth #3477



### HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Roth Käse USA, Monroe, WI, announces that Bob Constantino, vice president of retail sales, has been inducted into the California Cheese & Butter Association Hall of Fame. A dairy and deli executive with 30 years experience, he joined Roth Käse USA in April 2008 and leads all sales-related activities for the company's cheeses in the retail sales channel. He will be honored for his leadership, integrity and contributions to the dairy industry during his career.  
[www.rothkase.com](http://www.rothkase.com)

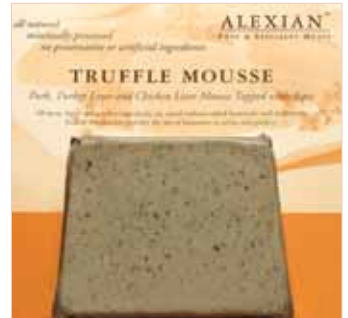
IDDBA Booth #2225  
Fancy Food Show Booth #176



### MARKETING PROGRAM

Land O'Lakes, Inc., St. Paul, MN, has launched a new shopper marketing program, featuring memorable moment meal occasions throughout the year. The shopper marketing program, developed and executed by MarketingLab of Minneapolis, will run in select Northeast retailers in their service delis and independent delis. The program will feature a counter card, static cling, high-value coupon and cross-category signage linked to the specific meal occasion.  
[www.landolakesinc.com](http://www.landolakesinc.com)

IDDBA Booth #2539



### SMALLER SIZE PACKAGING

Alexian Pâté & Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ, is seeking to broaden the market for pâté with new smaller-slice serving sizes. The new 5-ounce sizes are available in Alexian's six most popular varieties. In addition to providing added retailer versatility in the case or on the shelf, the smaller serving sizes are intended to increase consumer trial and add to usage occasions. The new sizing also appeals to smaller households.

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

IDDBA Booth #1961  
Fancy Food Show Booth #954

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## New Products



### MIX & MATCH MINIS

Roth Käse USA, Monroe, WI, has introduced Mix & Match Minis, a line of 4-ounce pre-cut, individually wrapped artisan cheeses. More than a dozen cheeses are offered, including many of Roth Käse's most popular and award-winning cheeses such as Buttermilk Blue, Grand Cru Gruyère, GranQueso, Red Spruce Cheddar and Van Gogh Gouda. They're the perfect avenue for building a high-end cheese tray for sampling, snacking or parties.

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

IDDBA Booth #2225  
Fancy Food Show Booth #176



### UNWRAP & ROLL

BelGioioso Cheese, Inc., Denmark, WI, has launched Unwrap & Roll, made from BelGioioso's award-winning fresh Mozzarella formed into a thin, ready-to-use sheet. Distinctive packaging includes easy-to-read instructions and explains the uses, giving consumers simple ideas on how to create and serve. All-natural with no preservatives and no added hormones. Available in 8-ounce retail pack as well as food-service or club-store pack.

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

IDDBA Booth #2129  
Fancy Food Show Booth #3237



### HEAT AND EAT SANDWICHES

Stefano Foods, Charlotte, NC, offers four new sandwiches to meet consumer requirements for economical, quick, easy meals, while addressing retail needs for compelling merchandising, adequate refrigerated shelf life and attractive retail pricing. The line includes Chicken Caesar Stuffed Grilled Sandwich, Italian Stuffed Grilled Sandwich, Pepperoni & Cheese Stromboli, and Sausage, Pepperoni & Cheese Stromboli.

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

IDDBA Booth #1357



### AVOCADO HUMMUS BLEND

Yucatan Foods, Los Angeles, CA, has launched Yucatan Avo-Hummus, 50 percent avocado and 50 percent classic hummus in a re-sealable 8-ounce tub. It combines golden ripe Hass avocados with rich, creamy hummus. Sold in the deli section, each clear tub emphasizes freshness and quality. Halal and Kosher certified, it can be used as a complement to any dish or eaten as a healthful snack. Suggested retail: \$3.19 to \$3.99 per tub.

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

IDDBA Booth #3260



### TAMPER-RESISTANT LIDS

Wilkinson Industries, Ft. Calhoun, NE, announces a new tamper-resistant, leak-resistant lid innovation for its deli square packaging line — the EcoServe tamper resistant lid, made with earth friendly NaturesPLastic with Ingeo biopolymer. This results in less fossil fuel used and fewer greenhouse gases for producing plastic biopolymer than traditional oil plastics. The new tamper-resistant lid fits all sizes of EcoServe Square containers and eliminates the need for shrink bands.

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

IDDBA Booth #4083



### AGED GOAT CHEESE

Finlandia Cheese Inc., Parsippany, NJ, has added Black Label Premium Aged Goat Cheese to its line of specialty cheeses. A premium, all-natural cheese imported from Holland and aged 14 months, it has a velvety, semi-firm texture with a complex, slightly sweet, caramel flavor and slightly crumbly texture. No hormones added.

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

IDDBA Booth #3331  
Fancy Food Show Booth #2771



### GREEK YOGURT DIPS

Santa Barbara Bay, Buellton, CA, introduces All Natural Greek Yogurt Dips made with Voskos Greek yogurt. Greek-style yogurt is one of the fastest growing categories in the dairy industry. Available in five flavors — Cucumber Dill, Thai Three Pepper, Roasted Red Pepper & Asiago Cheese, Zesty Ranch and Spinach. Available in 12-ounce containers that retail for around \$4.99.

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

IDDBA Booth #2059



### SEA SALT BLENDS

Old World Spices and Seasonings, Kansas City, MO, is launching five new Sea Salt Blends: Sea Salt & Cracked Pepper, Chile & Lime, Bayou BBQ Sea Salt, Chesapeake Bay Sea Salt and Asian Sea Salt. The company's new program gives managers an easy way to produce flavorful, upscale chicken, fish and pork entrées using traditional ovens or rotisseries.

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

IDDBA Booth #3954

## New Products



### FINE CORSICAN CHEESES

Fromagerie Ottavi, Ghisonaccia, Corsica, will present its newest products — a grated ewe's milk cheese and a flavorful spread of combined goat's milk and ewe's milk cheeses — at the Summer Fancy Food Show. The company has a deep history in cheesemaking in Corsica. Many generations of the Ottavi family have lived in the Corsican mountains, raising sheep and goats. The company offers a wide range of traditional hard and soft cheeses rich in regional flavor.

Fancy Food Show Booth #728



### FROZEN TORTILLA STRIPS

Sugar Foods Corp., Sun Valley, CA, introduces Fresh Gourmet Tortilla Strips, ready-to-use tortilla strips. Versatile crunchy toppings eliminate labor and prep costs, save time and energy, and add texture and crunch to your menu. Shelf-stable with 100 percent yield — no need for refrigerated or frozen storage, no oil to prepare and no waste. Just open the bag and toss onto whatever you're making. Available in stay-fresh 1-pound bags.

[www.foodservice.freshgourmet.com](http://www.foodservice.freshgourmet.com)



### DIAGNOSTIC TOOL KIT

PakSense, Inc., Boise, ID, has introduced a cold-case diagnostic tool kit to monitor cold cases at store level. A predictive maintenance tool, Ultra TK provides data on how cold cases are functioning, if proper temperatures are being maintained, and if corrective action is needed. This proactive approach enables retailers to reduce product loss due to cold case failures, to increase food safety and product quality, optimize cold case maintenance schedules, and to reduce energy expenditures.

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



### MAV-WICH SANDWICH PREP

Maverick Cuisine, Waldwick, NJ, is the U.S. distributor of a patented system from Orequip, Bouc-Bel-Air, France, for the preparation and presentation of fresh, nutritional sandwiches under the Mav-wich name. It produces cold or hot fillings in fresh baked warm bread. Fillings are pre-assembled on small metal trays to fit the bread size. Bread is kept separate, fresh and warm. Customer chooses filling and bread, then the sandwich is assembled to order in less than 10 seconds.

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



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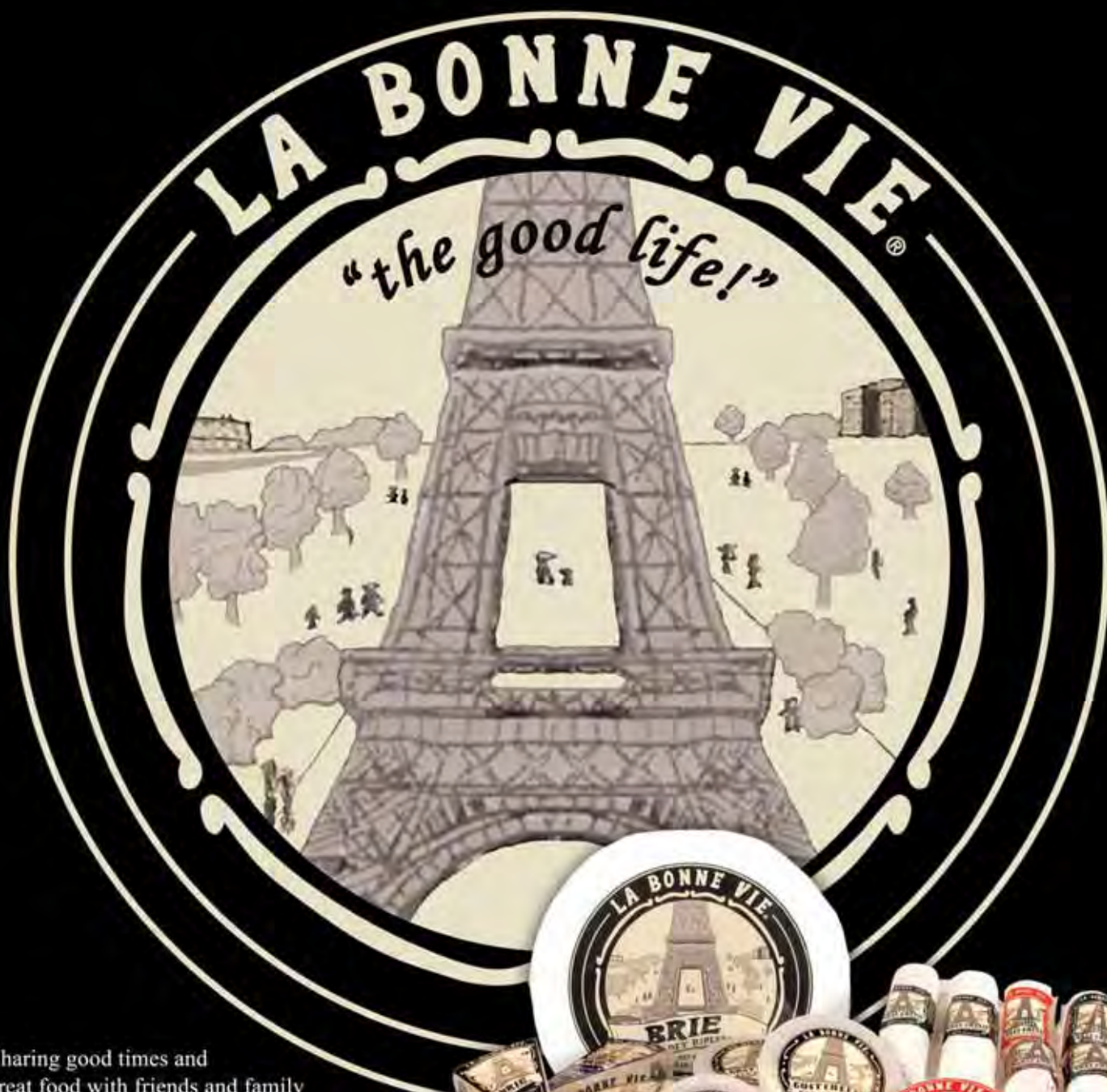


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[www.atlantafoods.com](http://www.atlantafoods.com)

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# True Values

As the industry gathers in Atlanta for the annual International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association Convention and Exposition, it finds itself, as America and the world find themselves, in a startlingly different position from last year.

Those whose businesses survived the financial implosion now find themselves in a nasty recession. Although some see signs of a recovery or at least stability, there is also a sense of fragility in the world. That a state such as California or a country such as Iceland could go bankrupt is not beyond the realm of possibility. If the federal treasury acts to support all the weak players, many worry about the prospect for inflation as massive amounts of money are created to fund the bailouts and to stimulate the economy.

Much effort has been expended this year as executives — on both the buy side and sell side — have searched for opportunities amidst the ruin. The most obvious one has been an attempt, particularly with prepared-food offerings, to capture the business of those consumers who have been “trading down” to retail from restaurants.

There has also been a revival of interest in private label, with more and more stores looking to offer an alternative to consumers looking to trade down from branded product in order to economize.

One also sees a change in promotion, with many more supermarkets offering draws such as 3-day specials over the weekend on large-size packs as they fight desperately to dissuade consumers from shopping at a club store.

Aldi opened its 1,000th store in America while Wal-Mart and McDonald's proved consumers were still buying, maybe just not where they were buying before.

If we view the IDDBA as an opportunity for a collective huddle, we may come out of Atlanta with an industry game plan that leads to success in the current environment. We would suggest three useful points:

### 1. Reacquaint ourselves with the consumer.

“Focus on the consumer” may sound trite, but it is very possible one's vision of the consumer is wrong or out of date.

In the bagged salad category, Dole Fresh Vegetable Company did a study of consumers of bagged salads. Conventional wisdom said the category was driven by “convenience,” with the predominant user being a harried working mother throwing dinner together for the family or a secretary stashing a bag of salad for lunch in the office fridge.

It turned out bagged salads are a rather upscale product and convenience purchasers are more epicure-

an; they valued that they didn't have to buy seven different lettuces to get the base for their salad. They typically did not eat just the bagged salad but added many favorites to the base.

Their biggest frustration? They couldn't open the bag without everything bursting out or having to use scissors! With this vision of the customer, Dole is launching new “easy-open” packaging for its bagged salads.

### 2. Reconsider the meaning of value.

It is easy to think value and price are identical terms but, in fact, consumers have many different concerns and look to their retailers to ensure everything from food safety to the fair treatment of employees all down the supply chain.

If consumers seem to value only price, that may tell you as much about your communication program as it does about the consumer. If you don't differentiate between products based on values beyond the weight, it is hard for consumers to do so.

### 3. Try to sell quality in small quantities.

So often we think of the housewife with a bunch of kids as our best customer. Yet that consumer, very price-conscious and buying a lot of food, is likely to cherry-pick sales, use every discount and coupon, and thus produce small margins even if she buys a lot.

The effort spent pursuing this low-margin business may be better spent promoting opportunities to sell a nice piece of specialty cheese, a little smoked fish or a signature prepared entrée.

With obesity a big problem in America, we need to switch our value perceptions from a lot of cheap stuff to small amounts of good stuff, and this creates opportunities for retailers to jump on board the bandwagon.

There is, of course, no one answer. In a nation as diverse as ours, the offering of a uniform assortment across all demographics is bound to be a loser.

Today, though, we have tools to understand our customers better, and the sea change in the economy gives us a reason to reexamine old assumptions.

If we leave Atlanta as an industry more focused on our customers, prouder of the value our supply chains create and deliver, and more intent on aligning with quality and health, we will remember, long after memory of this recession has faded, the new burst of energy we derived from the annual conclave. **DB**



*James P. Prevor*



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by Lee Smith, Publisher

# We Need A New Food-Safety Outlook

The numbers are scary. Even with the recent spate of recalls for products previously thought of as very safe, the last year is just a touch of what is coming down the pike. Unfortunately, we are about to enter a public relations nightmare.

The opening paragraph of *Food-Related Illness and Death in the United States*, a 1999 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reads as follows: "To better quantify the impact of foodborne diseases on health in the United States, we compiled and analyzed information from multiple surveillance systems and other sources. We estimate that foodborne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths in the United States each year. Known pathogens account for an estimated 14 million illnesses, 60,000 hospitalizations, and 1,800 deaths. Salmonella, listeria, and toxoplasma are responsible for 1,500 deaths a year, more than 75 percent of those caused by known pathogens, while unknown agents account for the remaining 62 million illnesses, 265,000 hospitalizations, and 3,200 deaths. Overall, foodborne diseases appear to cause more illnesses but fewer deaths than previously estimated."

This 10-year-old national study, the most recent and most quoted, relies heavily on estimates because most people with foodborne illnesses don't go to the doctor and most of those who do are not reported to health authorities nor is further testing ordered. The study estimates "1.05 episodes per person per year of acute gastrointestinal illness characterized by diarrhea, vomiting, or both."

When the numbers are adjusted for other factors, the final estimate yields 76 million illnesses, including "62 million cases of gastroenteritis of unknown etiology due to foodborne transmission each year."

So that occasional 24-hour "bug" is not the flu — it's due to something ingested. While it's logical to assume some of the findings have changed in the last 10 years, there's nothing to say the overall gross numbers have changed in a way that is statistically significant.

However, two factors are changing the face of the industry and affecting both industry and consumers in positive as well as negative ways.

The first is the ability to "DNA" bacterium and get a fingerprint for individual strains, allowing scientists to connect seemingly unrelated incidents. Increasingly important in a world where products may be sold nationally or internationally and ingredients may be used in multiple ways often not readily apparent in the finished product, this allows researchers and health officials to distinguish between different cases of the same

pathogen. This methodology led to the discovery of products previously thought to be safe food sources, such as peanuts and peanut butter, and to the recognition they were sources of a foodborne illness outbreak.

However, without a national reporting agency to gather information and quickly find similar cases, the science lacks practicality. And that leads to the second factor — the development of PulseNet, a national network of public health and food regulatory agency laboratories coordinated by CDC. The network includes state and local health departments as well as federal agencies. PulseNet agencies perform the fingerprinting (molecular subtyping) of bacteria that is then entered into a national database. This link allows seemingly unrelated incidents to be recognized as originating from a single source, thereby allowing health officials to get to the core of an outbreak.

The expanding network will give doctors a reason to test patients for foodborne illnesses. In the past, unless a rash of people, all complaining of severe stomach pain, diarrhea and/or vomiting after eating the chicken noodle casserole at the church potluck, went to a local doctor or emergency room, no connection would be made. Even if someone were tested, there would be no correlation to sufferers who got sick from the same product hundreds of miles away.

As PulseNet becomes more widely used, the industry is going to find itself in a difficult place. Our food supply will get safer as mysteries about why people get sick are solved, but there will also be a temptation to paint companies and individuals as criminals. Some of the people recently found to be responsible for large outbreaks are despicable and deserve the full wrath of the law for their deliberate oversights and cover-ups, but other companies run by stalwart citizens who are stellar examples of what executives should be will also get caught up in this new era.

Approximately 38 million incidents foodborne illness from unknown sources occur each year; bacteria, parasites or viruses we may not know about are transmitted along unknown pathways. This can become a public relations debacle.

Transparency is key, but it's important government agencies don't hold businesses up to public blame before concrete results are in. The recent recalls are just the beginning of a new era of safe food.

DB



A stylized handwritten signature in black ink.



# FRENCH CHEESE A DAILY SLICE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET



It's time to tell the world about French Cheese and good health. Cheese has always been a daily part of the traditional Mediterranean Diet — now recognized as one of the world's



healthiest eating patterns. Because cheese is a "nutrient rich" food, a little goes a long way toward providing important daily essentials like calcium, protein and vitamins. Simply put, this is health news French Cheese lovers will eat right up!



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON  
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OF FRENCH CHEESE, VISIT  
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THIS MEDITERRANEAN FROMAGE PLATE features bread, wine and French Cheese — a healthy trio that may explain the "French Paradox." You'll find fromage plate recipes and more at [CheesesofFrance.com](http://CheesesofFrance.com).

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# The Publishers Of DELI BUSINESS Are Proud To Announce The Launch Of A New Magazine



CheeseCONNOISSEUR magazine is a lifestyle publication providing sophisticated, well-educated foodies and industry professionals with information about specialty cheeses, celebrity cheesemakers and chefs, wines, travel opportunities and complementary foods and beverages.

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## SALUTING INDUSTRY LEADERS

Errico Auricchio  
Steve Ehlers  
Craig Inabinett  
Bob Nectow  
Jerry Shafir  
J.K. Symancyk





# Errico Auricchio

PRESIDENT

---

BelGioioso Cheese Inc.  
Denmark, WI

## How did you get started in the industry?

I was born into the cheese business in Italy and was part of the fourth generation of family members who were part of the business. In 1979, I moved my family to the United States to start a company that would create great Italian cheeses.

## How has your career evolved over the years?

My move to the United States was a big change and a totally new adventure. I was the first employee and now we employ around 350 people, so my career has progressed and evolved with each new initiative to grow BelGioioso.

## What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I am too outspoken to be a part of industry organizations, but I was a founding member of the Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute and have donated time and resources to help host the American Cheese Society Conference in Green Bay in the past.

## What's your leadership philosophy?

Pay attention to details, lead by example, do your job efficiently and learn from your mistakes.

## What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I enjoy antiquing with my wife, boating and biking to relieve stress.

## What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you tweet? Have a Facebook page, etc.?

These can be good for certain people, but not for me.

## What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

My dream is that everyone can eat good cheese — BelGioioso — at a reasonable price!

## What charity is your personal favorite?

The Catholic Church and St. Norbert College.

## What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

You need patience because it takes a long time to succeed and a total commitment to quality.

## What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Convenience has always been a driving factor to success in the deli. Items like pre-sliced fresh Mozzarella and our new Unwrap & Roll Fresh Mozzarella Sheet will be winners.

## What's your favorite read?

Current financial/business magazines and newspapers such as *The Economist*, *Forbes* and *Financial Times*.



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## Steve Ehlers

PRESIDENT

---

Larry's Brown Deer Market, Inc.  
Brown Deer, WI

### How did you get started in the industry?

My father was in the traditional grocery business. I remember taking inventory — counting cans of corn — at the age of six. I worked on and off while going to school. I traveled to France in the early '70s and came back with a very different outlook about food. Up until then, we were the typical corner grocery store.

When you grow up in the grocery business it becomes a way of life. My father is 85 and still comes to work every day.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

We had a decision to make in the early '70s when the first big-box stores started to appear. Over the last 35 years, we've transitioned our 1600-square-foot traditional grocery store into a cheese, gourmet, deli, catering and gift business in the same space. Over the last eight years, we've been very active in promoting American artisan cheese in general and Wisconsin producers in particular. Even though we've evolved, my father's motto, "Quality, service and a fair price," has always been constant. We've always stressed customer service and satisfaction so what has changed was only the product and how it was delivered.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I'm currently on the board of directors of the American Cheese Society and also on the board of directors of the Dairy Business Innovation Center in Wisconsin, which works with Wisconsin cheese producers.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

I always try to treat people with respect whether employees or customers.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Reading, computers and petanque.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you tweet? Have a Facebook page, etc.?

We have Facebook and Twitter sites for our business. Right now

they're not the best for business and leave a lot to be desired but I think they'll continue to evolve and become a viable tool for business. Internet-based business networking sites will be an important tool to the upcoming generations.

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

I'm fortunate to have the time and opportunity to be able to give back in some manner. Working with our local cheesemakers and local food producers is very rewarding. I always try to take time to sit down with emerging producers and explain what I know about the food business — from production to packaging to distribution. More often than not, I tell people they need to raise the prices they charge or they won't stay in business.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

Pretty much anything that's food related, whether it's product for food pantries or fund-raisers for local groups. We try to donate time, product and knowledge whenever we can.

I also like to work with our local Alliance Française because I believe we need to be open to other cultures and ideas.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Work hard and sell a great product — one that you can have confidence in. Give great service, go to food shows, network with people who have been successful and get involved with trade groups.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

More locally produced, higher quality food. People want to know where and how their foods are produced and have that information to make the decision they can support that product with a purchase.

### What's your favorite read?

*Food Matters* by Mark Bittman. A great book about food and choices we can make. A very honest book without being preachy.

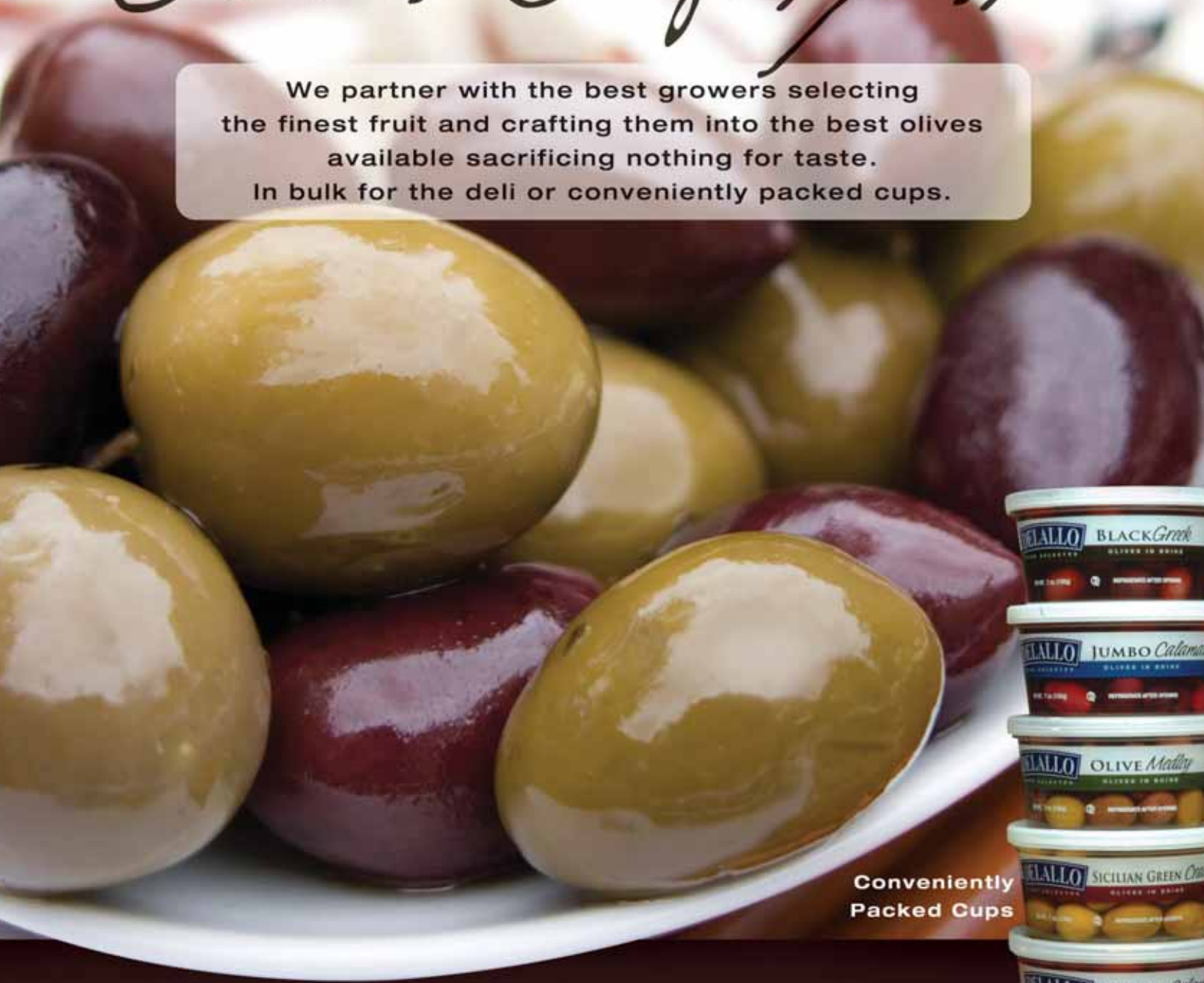


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# Craig Inabinett

DIRECTOR OF DELI/BAKERY OPERATIONS

---

Piggly Wiggly Carolina Company  
Charleston, SC

**How did you get started in the industry?**

I started in the industry part-time in high school. I've had the opportunity to work in different departments of the grocery industry and as my career progressed, I found myself in the deli/bakery department.

**How has your career evolved over the years?**

Each experience has been a steppingstone to learn and grow for my future. The people I've worked with and opportunities I've had helped my career evolve.

**What positions have you held in industry organizations?**

I've participated as requested with various organizations and companies such as Rich's Round Table and DELI BUSINESS's Prepared Meal Round Table.

**What's your leadership philosophy?**

I plant seeds to help others grow with knowledge, training, leadership opportunities, and people skills.

**What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?**

I enjoy spending time with my family, the church, as well as reading and playing golf and tennis.

**What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you tweet? Have a Facebook page, etc.?**

I prefer face-to-face conversations or talking over the phone — but I have to admit, I do have a Facebook page.

**What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?**

The people who have helped me over the years have inspired me to make a difference. This includes my family, friends and business partners. I pray I can give as much as I have received.

**What charity is your personal favorite?**

United Way.

**What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?**

Use the resources available to you to help you expand your knowledge and be true to your word.

**What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?**

Call-ahead restaurant-quality meal solutions.

**What's your favorite read?**

Of course, DELI BUSINESS! And all of Sidney Sheldon's novels.



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## Bob Nectow

VICE PRESIDENT DELI SALES  
& MERCHANDISING

---

Stop and Shop/Giant of Landover Supermarkets  
Quincy, MA

### How did you get started in the industry?

I started in the retail industry growing up in my family's businesses in Massachusetts. Our stores were smaller specialty stores known for high-quality perishables. The work ethic and expertise I learned from my dad and grandfather prepared me for what has become a personal passion for great food and exceptional customer service.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

My career has taken me through many aspects of the retail business, from store level department positions, overall store management to a specialized focus on deli, prepared foods and specialty cheese. In between were leadership roles in supply chain/procurement, perishable sales & marketing, strategic development and meat operations. In each area of responsibility, I enjoyed success developing retail solutions that are relevant to my customer's needs.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

The IDDBA does great work supporting the industry so I've applied my available time to that organization and served on the board for a number of years. I believe retail representation is critical to be sure the work is user-friendly and pertinent to the needs of the customer.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

I believe in empowering your team to develop consumer solutions within a defined strategy. I'm always at risk of flying too low, but I like to get my hands in the weeds. Having a focused and resilient team is a primary element to one's success.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I love the theater, cooking and playing in the garden. I've also developed quite a passion for exercising regularly. I've been the chair of the local school committee for a number of years. I don't see that as a hobby but as doing my part to ensure our children are receiving or

being offered educational opportunities to prepare them for the future.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you tweet? Have a Facebook page, etc.?

My daughter is an avid user and is pushing me to get involved. Being "good old Dad" though, I'm still concerned about some of the security issues. I do believe they've opened up a lot of doors to educational and professional connections, and that is very exciting.

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

What drives me to make a difference in today's world is my daughter. I believe part of my personal and professional success is having the ability to support her in all her personal goals.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

I primarily focus on supporting local smaller charities with specific needs helping children. They're our future!

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Understand that the retail food industry is an ever-changing and fast-paced industry. Your ongoing success is primarily linked to your ability to be totally focused on your customer and to have the ability to develop solutions for their future needs.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

I think in many cases new trends are old successes packaged in different ways. Great food and innovative convenient solutions is the key for the future!

### What's your favorite read?

I spend a lot of time seeking out new recipes so reading "foodie" magazines is fun for me. I also like a good suspense novel on the beach now and then, but that doesn't happen too often.



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## Jerry Shafir

PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER

Kettle Cuisine  
Chelsea, MA

### How did you get started in the industry?

My first jobs in the industry were as a busboy and waiter in a chain restaurant during the summer after college. I liked the pace, the intensity during peak times, the interaction with customers, and, ultimately, the money. The schedule and lifestyle were grueling, though, and I was not sure I would work in food again when I went off to law school. Ten years later, however, following law school, a 5-year stint as an attorney in the corporate world, and an MBA, I went to work at Legal Seafoods' corporate offices.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

At Legal Seafoods, I was an in-house consultant to the president and received broad exposure to many facets of the food industry. I worked on site location, retail market concepts, commissary models, direct response opportunities and a variety of other food business issues. In my third year there, I started working on a business plan for Kettle Cuisine, and I left to start Kettle in August 1986. While I've been president since Day 1, I was the sole salesperson until 1992. I drove the refrigerated truck picking up ingredients and making deliveries for two years and did all of the jobs I could not afford to pay someone to do until sales grew to higher levels. I continued to run the sales, marketing and finance functions until the late '90s, when the business became able to support professionals in these areas of leadership. As an entrepreneur, you do almost all of the jobs in the early days and hire people as you can afford to.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I recently finished my 2-year term as president of the Refrigerated Foods Association, where I've been on the board of directors for the past six years.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

I believe leadership is built on integrity, transparency and trust. It's not about what you say, but what you do — how you interact with and treat customers, vendors, employees, community, etc. It's also about vision and communicating that vision. If people are going to follow you, they must have a sense of where you're taking them, and the better you can delineate that, the stronger your support will be.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I work out regularly, usually early in the morning, because I think exercise brings positive energy, and I want to bring that energy to

work with me. I also referee rugby matches on Saturdays in the spring and fall, which is a way to stay in the game I passionately played for many years — it's a lot safer to referee than play at my age! Also, I'm a big music buff and go to hear live music of all kinds regularly.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you tweet? Have a Facebook page, etc.?

I hate to admit that I'm from the pre-social networking generation, and while I think I understand the concepts, I don't have the energy to add all of these relationships to my already too cluttered life.

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

Making a difference in today's world and for future generations seems to me to be the principal reason we're here. I think we have a responsibility to advance the plight of humanity in ways we see fit. Of course, I acknowledge there are wide differences of opinions as to how we go about that, but I'm a big believer in individual responsibility and action.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. My amazing niece Stephanie suffers from this disease.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

My advice is to be ready to work long and hard and to be resilient when things don't go well, but to enjoy the action and the highs of success. It's an exciting and dynamic industry, and it's a marathon, not a sprint, so you must be prepared to be in for the long haul. And you'll meet some amazing people and build lifelong friendships.

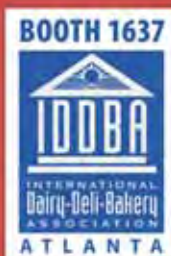
### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

I think the deli could become a formidable alternative to the fast-casual foodservice segment, offering sandwiches, salads and soups for take out and immediate consumption. The array of foods available in the deli to make interesting lunch, dinner and snack offerings is a huge competitive advantage — however, creatively coming up with menus and merchandising execution will be the key to success.

### What's your favorite read?

I love *The Wall Street Journal*, from the basic business reporting to the off-the-wall stories covering human activities of all kinds from all over the globe.





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## J.K. Symancyk

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,  
MERCHANDISING

Meijer  
Grand Rapids, MI

### How did you get started in the industry?

My love of the food business formed early as part of growing up in a family restaurant operation with my grandparents. I started my retail career working in warehouse/distribution while at the University of Arkansas. Upon graduation, I was promoted into my first merchandising role in Wal-Mart International.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

International assignments presented a very entrepreneurial environment early in my career. I had the chance to be a part of startup operations in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and China, with each providing unique responsibilities and growth opportunities. I worked my way up through buyer and category director roles before running the fresh business at Sam's Club as DMM. I joined Meijer in 2006 as group VP of perishables, moving into my current role in 2008. Through it all, I have been very fortunate to work with a variety of peers/mentors who have invested in my development and given me the opportunity to grow.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I have been a part of IDDBA retail advisory committee in the past and am joining the board of IDDBA this year. Other organization memberships include RILA, FMI, and PMA.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

My father worked in a leadership role with Timex when I was young. When I asked what he did, he replied that his responsibility was to help his team to do their jobs "willingly and well." That thought has remained with me as I have grown in my career. Surround yourself with talented people and continue to invest in their development. Create an environment where roles and accountability are defined, people are empowered to make decisions, and both risk and healthy conflict are embraced by team leaders. Above all, listen to your team, recognize their efforts, and find ways to have fun.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Spending time with my wife Jennifer and our children, Emma and Turner, is the top priority. I also enjoy theater, travel and a variety of sports, most notably basketball and golf.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you tweet? Have a Facebook page, etc.?

I'm amazed by the level of interaction that goes on within these communities. I don't participate, but my wife and many other family members are modest users. Their ability to keep up with extended networks of friends as a result is impressive. Watching the continued evolution of this world and the inevitable impact of marketing within this space will be interesting.

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

My kids are my biggest motivator. Global connectivity continues to make the world a smaller place and to exponentially accelerate pace of change. Knowing the number of issues my children are likely to face leads me to make a difference.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

I support a number of worthwhile charities, but my personal favorites are the Boys and Girls Club and the United Way. I serve on the board of the Boys and Girls Club of West Michigan.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Be willing to step out of your comfort zone by pursuing roles that will broaden your experience. Retail is one of the best industries for providing that level of career variety, and the perspective you gain along the way will be invaluable.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Value will be top of mind in the near future, but health and wellness will work its way back to the top of the list in time. Great food will always be desired. The team that can deliver on all three of these will ultimately be most rewarded by their customers.

### What's your favorite read?

I try to balance my entrée with some dessert. My most recent developmental favorite was *The Post American World* by Fareed Zakaria, a good examination of the globalization of our economy. For pure entertainment, I enjoy James Lee Burke and John Sandford.





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# Cross-Merchandising Builds Sales

Building a higher ring is the name of the game

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Cheese and crackers. Sandwiches and chips. Rotisserie chicken and rolls. These hand-in-glove food combos entice consumers to move from a single item to a multiple item purchase. The key to cross-merchandising is pulling items from other departments into the deli.

A second, perhaps even more important benefit to cross-merchandising is actually pulling customers into the deli. That's important because only 70.5 percent of supermarket shoppers visit the deli, according to *What's In Store 2009* from the International Deli-Dairy-Bakery Association's (IDDBA), Madison, WI.

People are eating out less due to the economy. The October 2008 *Consumer Spending Indicator* study from Port Washington, NY-based NPD Group says 57 percent of respondents were looking to spend less money on dining out.

Tom McGlade, CEO, Rubsclager Baking Corp., Chicago, IL, sees this trend as a positive. "More people are also entertaining at home, whether it be family parties or holiday entertaining, and that's been an opportunity for us. Sixty percent of our sales volume is in cocktail breads."

McGlade suggests retailers merchandise 1-pound loaves of pre-sliced cocktail breads in counter-top shippers, baskets, racks or shelving adjacent to sliced meats, cheeses, spreads, chicken salads, cheeses, hummus and pâté. This side-by-side placement helps consumers make the usages connection. Last year the company partnered in a promotion that featured its breads, Old Wisconsin-brand meats and a brand-name mustard, all tied together with a recipe/coupon book.

Other 'carriers' are ideally cross-merchandised in a similar fashion. For example, earlier this year The Snack Factory, Princeton, NJ, ran a promotion featuring its Pretzel Crisps along with a \$2 coupon for Tribe-brand hummus at the Ralphs supermarket chain in southern California. Milt Weinstock, marketing director, explains, "There's a bar code on





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both products and consumers don't get the discount unless they buy both products.

"We'll sometimes run demos to kick off a promotion. We've also done a joint shipper that's cross-merchandised in other departments. Each bag of Pretzel Crisps is labeled 'in the deli section' and this ultimately drives traffic back to the deli. The more turn-key we can make the cross-promotion for the deli, the better," Weinstock continues.

The ideal place to cross-merchandise cheese sticks is in the cheese aisle of the deli, says John Macy, president, John Wm. Macy's CheeseSticks, Elmwood Park, NJ. "Or, they can be positioned next to hummus and dips or even olives and wine. The back of each box features a picture that calls out serving suggestions."

According to Cathy Cunningham Hays, president, Bodacious Food Company, Jasper, GA, extending the party theme to picnicking and including her company's cheese straws "would be a great way to put together several items all around a common theme and tie it together with coupons. Although considering the number of brands involved, it would have to be a chainwide promotion and run at least four weeks to be effective."

### Build The Sandwich Ring

Mini sandwiches are one of the hottest foodservice trends. Witness Burger King's introduction of BK Burger Shots and BK Breakfast Shots and McDonald's test-marketing of its Snack Wrap Mac, a mini version of its signature Big Mac.

Sliders or mini burgers, says Shelby Weeda, president of King's Hawaiian Bakery, Torrance, CA, "are a rising trend in super-market delis, too. For example, one of our national supermarket retailers merchandises three sliders in a box to-go. As a result of this popularity, we'll be launching a new mini slider bun this summer."

## Real World Cross-Merchandising Success

**R**easor's Groceries, a 15-store chain based in Tahlequah, OK, started cross-merchandising dinner rolls as part of meal deals about a year and a half ago. "We serve King's Hawaiian rolls as part of a family-style heat-and-eat meal program that we offer on a weekly basis and for holidays," says Mel Hall, director of deli and bakery.

Two examples that sell for \$16.99 each are the Chicken Fried Steak Dinner that serves three to four and includes chicken fried steaks, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans and King's Hawaiian Rolls; and the BBQ Rib Meal that offers a slab of St. Louis style ribs, coleslaw, BBQ beans and King's Hawaiian Rolls.

A menu board lists the weekly meal specials so customers know exactly what to pick up.

In addition, continues Hall, "We'll offer daily hot meal specials and sell a lot of the

4-pack King's Hawaiian rolls at the same time, especially with fried chicken."

Both the 4-pack and 12-pack of King's rolls are merchandised in three locations within the deli. One is a display rack next to the hot case, another is at the end of the specialty bread and cracker rack, and the third is adjacent to the specialty sandwiches.

"We'll also sell pre-made sandwiches on King's Snacker Rolls and merchandise these out of the cold case. We put a King's Hawaiian sticker on the sandwiches as a value-add, then also use these in our sandwich meal deal promotions with a drink and chips," says Hall.

The result? In spite of the sagging economy, Hall says he has not seen any drop off in sales. "I think rolls get lost in the grocery. That's why we merchandise both the rolls and our specialty breads in the deli. Everything's in one place and convenient for the customer."

**DB**

Go-withs are ideal cross-merchandising ingredients to boost the deli's sandwich program's ring.

Lee Whiting, national sales manager for Deep River Snacks, Old Lyme, CT, says, "Our unique-flavored chips are best merchandised near the deli counter. The ideal spot is just off to the left or right where customers wait for made-to-order sandwiches. The worst place is behind the deli counter. If a customer has to ask you for them, likely you're losing sales." The benefit of merchandising an upscale chip, rather than a chip

from the grocery's salty snack aisle, he explains, "is margin. You can get \$1.50 rather than 99¢ for a bag of upscale chips and make a 30 to 40 percent margin."

A customer who buys chips to go with a sandwich may pick up additional items if presented in a 1-stop display, explains Pierre Crawley, vice president of sales, Peppadew USA, Basking Ridge, NJ. "For example, Peppadew-flavored potato chips draw customers to the display, enabling them to be exposed to other value-added products." Kroger and Giant are marketing Peppadew Piquante on the olive bar and other Peppadew products in nearby displays, he adds.

Pickles are another traditional sandwich side. Step Espiritu, vice president of sales and marketing, Van Holten's, Inc., Waterloo, WI, notes, "Our single-serve individually packaged dill pickles have found success in convenience stores next to pre-made sandwiches and are now moving into the supermarket deli. We also suggest merchandising them by the deli check out register for impulse sales."

### Make A Meal

Chicken is the top prepared food category in the deli, with a 22 percent share of sales and 7.3 percent growth over the year prior, according to IDDBA's *What's In Store 2009*.

John McBride, vice president of sales for Magic Seasoning Blends, New Orleans, LA,



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believes delis can add value to their rotisserie chicken program by offering out-of-the-ordinary flavorings. "Chef Paul now offers 10 seasoning blends to marinate chicken in overnight before cooking on the rotisserie. We offer delis a kit that comes with a header card to sign the program and branded stickers to seal the chicken bags."

Products that hitch their wagon to chicken can enjoy increased sales while deli operator's benefit from the added ring. "Our rolls are an ideal meal solution. Many delis start with selling either the 4-pack or 12-pack as part of a rotisserie or fried chicken program and then branch out to include them with other center-of-the-plate items accompanied by side dishes, salads and offer meal deals," notes King's Weeda.

Rolls can definitely be a deli driver. According to a *Usages & Attitudes Survey* conducted by PERT Survey Research, Bloomfield, CT, for King's Hawaiian, and released in March, 61 percent of the company's loyal consumers seek their products in the in-store deli.

Pasta is a blank canvas and the ultimate cross-merchandising vehicle, says Carl Zuanelli, president, Nuovo Pasta Productions, Ltd., Stratford, CT. "Consumers today



look to recreate a restaurant experience at home. This provides an opportunity to pair pasta with ingredients such as prosciutto, cheeses, olives, sauces, vegetables and proteins to make a complete meal."

Marcel et Henri Charcuterie Française, South San Francisco, CA, has introduced two new fully cooked, pork-free, nitrite-free sausage products — duck sausage with cranberries, orange and ginger and turkey sausage with cranberries — that pair perfectly with pasta. "The sausages are easy to heat and eat and toss with bow tie pasta or any flat pasta such as linguini in an Alfredo

sauce or au naturel with just butter and herbs," explains Yvette Etchepare, director of marketing.

Deli operators can take the idea of cross-merchandising all ingredients for a meal in one location one step further, says Zuanelli, and select ingredients, for example, that will allow them to promote feeding a family of four for \$25.

The bottom line for success "is to treat cross-merchandising as a strategic element in your marketing mix rather than a tactical execution for an immediate sale," adds The Snack Factory's Weinstock. **DB**

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# Foods From Italy

American consumers may be spending less, but many are still willing to pay a higher price for Italy's amazing deli foods.

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

Who says Americans don't know great food? Not Dennis Panozzo, president and managing partner of Chicago, IL-based Monti Trentini USA, which imports cheeses made only by the family-owned Monti Trentini company in Italy. "I do believe that the American consumer is the best consumer in the world," he says.

Americans have especially come to love fine imported products from Italy over the past several years. It's all about great taste, according to Nancy Radke, a representative of Parmigiano-Reggiano and Fontina Valle d'Aosta cheeses and president of Ciao, Ltd., Syracuse, NY. "Taste is the most important thing to people. When people taste these cheeses, their eyes light up."

Products such as these have been made in the same tradition for hundreds — sometimes a



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANIELE FOODS

thousand — years. They simply would not have survived this long if they did not taste as amazing as they do.

According to Ruth Lowenberg, spokesperson for the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, Italy's famous prosciutto di Parma has a thousand years of tradition behind it. "It can't be produced anywhere in the world the way it is produced in Parma. The terroir makes it unique," she says.

In addition, "Special attention is given to this product all along the production line. In every production facility, there is a master salter who salts by hand. It's lovingly prepared and it's long-aged — sometimes 18 months. Not just any pigs go into the making of prosciutto di Parma, either. They're specially bred. They're specially fed. They're large." As a result, she says, "Anybody in the know perceives prosciutto di Parma as being the gold standard against which all other dry-cured hams are prepared."

Another well-known, traditional Italian artisan ham, prosciutto di San Daniele, is also carefully watched over as it is lovingly prepared, "San Daniele prosciutto is a limited-produced dry-cured ham from a small town in the northeast of Italy," explains Alberto Minardi, general manager, Principe Foods, whose U.S. office is in Long Beach, CA. The company makes and exports a number of Italian foods, including prosciutto. "San Daniele hams are more delicate and less salty than other prosciutto," he says. As with prosciutto di Parma, a consortium regulates pro-

sciutto di San Daniele production. But production of San Daniele is much smaller, with only 30 producers.

Another Italian ham — speck — is gaining popularity in the United States. "One of Italy's most interesting cured meats, speck represents a fusion between two ancient methods of preserving pork — Northern European smoking and the Southern Mediterranean method of salting and air-drying," explains Dario Chiarini, a representative of Speck Alto Adige IGP and Gorgonzola Dolce DOP.

Speck offers flavors not found in hams that are dry-cured alone. "Unlike with pro-

sciutto, the meat from the pigs' hind leg is deboned and filleted. It is rubbed with salt and spices, lightly smoked, and air-dried in the fresh breezes of the Dolomite Mountains, which impart a unique flavor to the meat," explains Chiarini. "Speck's sweet, long finish and deep smoky notes are a perfect match for a dark hearty bread, a nutty mountain cheese and a crisp and refreshing glass of white wine."

Dry-cured hams are not the only Italian meat products with long-standing traditions, as Marella Levoni will tell you. She is the head of communication and external relations, Levoni S.p.A, Castellucchio Mantova, Italy. The company, which makes a variety of salumi, including cotechino, porchetta and mortadella, as well as prosciutto, prides itself on its meats made in the grand Italian tradition. "The products have an unmistakable, unique taste," says Levoni. "In addition, the products' aromas derive from the rigorous respect of ancient recipes linked to their area of origin, not to mention the use of natural ingredients only."

Cheeses, too, go a long way back. Parmigiano-Reggiano, Grana Padano and Fontina Valle D'Aosta are just a few of the cheeses Italy exports for American connoisseurs. Another is Gorgonzola. "Produced in Lombardy for centuries, Gorgonzola is Italy's most beloved blue," notes Chiarini. "Historically stored in caves to cultivate its characteristic mold, today Gorgonzola is inoculated with a culture during the cheesemaking process and punctured to allow air flow and to encourage the development of its characteristic blue veins. This world-renowned cheese is available in two distinct styles — dolce and piccante. Dolce means sweet, and this 2- to 3-month-old semi-soft Blue has only a slight bite. Because of its higher moisture content, Gorgonzola Dolce is milder and more luscious than the older Piccante."

This milder Blue is flavorful and simple to use, adding incredible depth to simple meals, according to Chiarini.

In addition, he says, "Gor-



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gonzola Dolce DOP is a classic after-dinner cheese paired with fresh fruit like figs or pears, and it melts beautifully stirred into rich sauces for gnocchi or pasta.”

Other Italian products are more recent innovations that, nevertheless, are made with the same traditional care and scrutiny. Monti Trentini — a family-owned and -run cheese producer in Asiago, Italy — makes two kinds of DOP Asiago cheeses that were developed during the 1960s. These Asiagos — one fresh, the other aged — differ from traditional Asiago in that they are made with calf rennet instead of sheep rennet. They taste very different from the Asiago cheeses made in the United States, says Panozzo.

Monti Trentini also makes six kinds of smoked Provolone and a fresh cow's milk cheese called Panarello that Panozzo describes as “really clean, like drinking a fresh glass of cold milk. It's really good at a cool temperature. It melts in your mouth like ice cream and there's no residual butterfat left on the roof of your mouth. This is a really interesting cheese. It's great with a sparkling wine, like Prosecco.”

Caciotta cheeses are another Monti Trentini specialty. These flavored cheeses include a style with Umbrian black truffles, one with five herbs and another made with some of the few red peppers grown in Southern Italy. “The peppers are spectacular. They're hot but not habanero hot,” says Panozzo. “The cheese has a little bit of strength to it, so you're not just tasting red pepper.”

The company's newest creation, called Lagorai, is a pasteurized whole-milk cheese aged 90 days. “It has a softer texture that Americans like,” says Panozzo.

### Maintaining Popularity

Production and distribution costs for many Italian foods rose last year as the cost of raw materials and fuel rose. Today some costs have evened out, although “God only knows” how high they could become in the coming year, according to Ciao's Radke, “I think prices aren't going to go crazy-high. They're probably going to hang in there about where they are.”

The exchange rate between the dollar and the euro is much more favorable for Americans this year. That's good news because, as we all know, the current economy has Americans watching their wallets. Fortunately, consumers here do not seem to be giving up their favorite Italian foods, despite their often relatively higher prices.

“Our sales have slightly decreased as far as the U.S. market is concerned, but the loyalty of our customers has made the sales results much better than expected compared to the average of the food sector,” notes



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSORZIO DEL PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA

Levoni of Levoni S.p.A. “Blogs and chef shows on TV have increased the domestic use of high-quality products.”

Consumers cutting back on restaurant spending but increasing their retail budgets may also explain some sales of high-end Italian foods in the deli. “I think we've seen a certain amount of people eating at home more and eating at home better,” says Radke.

“Maybe that helps explain why our numbers are getting better — because people are eating at home more,” notes Lowenberg of the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma. “Even though, overall in the first quarter, we're down, we're definitely not down that much.”

Many of the Italian products offer high flavor satisfaction so consumers need buy only a small amount, making them affordable luxuries. When it comes to Italy's cured meats, “Most consumers buy a quarter pound at a time,” explains Principe's Minardi.

Some American consumers have come to consider a few of these foods as important as milk, bread and eggs. In the case of Parmigiano-Reggiano, “I think we've worked so hard to make it a staple cheese that people feel like they have to have it in their refrigerator,” says Radke. Still, she confesses, sales did not grow much last year.

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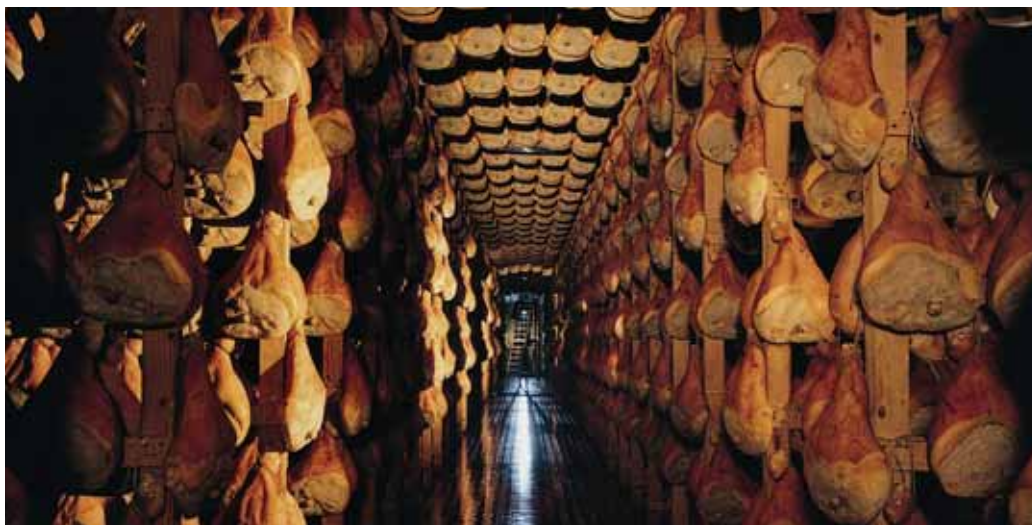


PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSORZIO DEL PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA

may not be as popular with consumers as they have been, but major distributors seem to be shying away from these higher-priced cheeses, according to David Neuman, president, Miami, FL-based Lucini Italia, producers and importers of a limited-production organic Parmigiano-Reggiano aged at least 36 months. As a result, the company has chosen to work closely with independent stores.

Although it's not a great time for artisan cheeses like these, Neuman tells us, "Not everybody's being cheap. People will still spend \$30 for a bottle of wine, so why not cheese? Quality still has a place in this world. We stand behind our Parmigiano-Reggiano and we continue to sell it."

### Increase your sales

By educating consumers about the myriad of superior Italian products available in the deli, it may be possible to increase sales despite the current economic climate. Industry experts offer some advice.

"Having a special cheese of the week helps people broaden their palates," suggests Ciao's Radke. "Doing promotions around the place of origin is always helpful."

Offering recipes or recipe suggestions encourages consumers to learn more one use for each product. Radke says that when she talks about the cheeses she represents, "People love them for their versatility in the kitchen, especially in the case of Parmigiano-Reggiano. Parmigiano-Reggiano is a flavor-enhancing food. It makes all the foods you put it with taste even better. Fontina Valle d'Aosta is a great melting cheese. It's great on a toasted sandwich. It makes a great fondue. I like it in place of Mozzarella on pizza, especially if it's pizza with caramelized onions."

Cross-merchandising is an excellent way to introduce consumers to new food combinations and recipe ideas. "Prosciutto offers a lot of opportunities for cross-merchandising with cheeses," says Principe's Minardi. He notes the ham goes especially well with Mozzarella. "Our innovative packaging is such that you can put it on the typical tag holder or in the cheese case."

Italian meats, especially, could use a boost in the area of education. "One of the things that's special about having a specialty cheese department — over just having the deli counter where you go to get the specialty meats — is that at the specialty cheese counter, people want someone to actually talk to them. There's usually enough staff and nobody's taking numbers," says Radke. She would love to see a similar department for specialty meats. So far, she has seen only one store with such a setup — one Giant Eagle Market District store that has a separate charcuterie section.

"It sets up a real challenge for people selling specialty Italian meats because people want to be educated about them but they don't feel they have the time because they're conscious of the people waiting in line behind them," continues Radke. "I think the meats deserve an opportunity to have people be better educated about them."

Signage is often abundant among the cheeses but lacking among the specialty meats, she notes. As a result, "I think people's cheese knowledge has been growing exponentially while their meat knowledge has not. I think cheese just has this 'counter-culture,' to use a cheese word. You often have a label with all this information that you just don't have on the meat."

While Levoni of Levoni S.p.A. hopes delis will teach consumers the histories and traditions of salumi, "Most of all, educate the public on how to taste the products, learning how to appreciate quality. In this regard, in Italy we hold workshops named 'Il Maialino d'Argento' — the Silver Piglet — dedicated to our best customers with exactly this purpose." She believes delis should also help consumers become more aware of the importance of eating good-quality food for both their health and personal satisfaction.

Videos are available for some products, including Gorgonzola Dolce DOP and Speck Alto Adige, at [Dipaloselects.com](http://Dipaloselects.com). Lou DiPalo, Italian foods expert and owner of Di Palo Fine Foods Inc., an Italian deli in New York's Little Italy, hosts the videos.

In addition to educating consumers, it's important to educate staff. In the case of prosciutto, "Make sure that whoever is slicing the ham knows how to slice it. If customers care enough to pay \$25 a pound or more for a product, they deserve the best service," says Lowenberg of the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma. She believes sampling is still the best way to sell the product. "Give them a taste. I can't emphasize that enough. It's well worth the investment."

Neuman is so convinced of the power of taste that for new orders, he is offering one free case for each purchased case of Lucini Italia's handcrafted organic Stravecchio Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, with the hope that retailers will use the free case to demo the cheese in their stores.

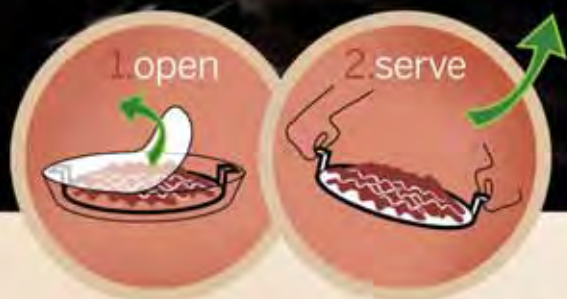
Panozzo of Monti Trentini says a good product will sell itself if the consumer has the opportunity to try it. "What could be better? Talk is cheap."

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# The New Alternative To Restaurants

Top-quality deli offerings can be positioned as a way for cash-conscious consumers to indulge their yearnings for restaurant dining

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

Consumers reining in their spending are visiting restaurants less frequently, making now the perfect time for delis to provide them with the foods and convenience they have come to love at the prices they can afford to pay.

Experts agree restaurants are suffering during this current economic downturn and grocery stores are already benefiting from that. "In general, we're seeing consumers going to supermarkets more because of the economic situation," says Joyce Friedberg, senior marketing manager, Camden, NJ-based Campbell's North America Foodservice, makers of foodservice products including Campbell's Restaurant Quality Soups, StockPot soups, V8 soups and entrées and Pace and Prego sauces. "Consumers are going to casual or fine-dining restaurants less and, instead, visiting quick-service restaurants and retail foodservice or cooking at home. The deli section of a supermarket offers convenience and value, since consumers can stop by while they're grocery shopping."

Friedberg is not the only person in the industry to notice. "We have absolutely seen evidence consumers have been shifting their dining spend from restaurants to supermarkets," notes Todd Griffith, vice president sales and marketing, Menomonee Falls, WI-based Alto-Shaam, makers of foodservice cooking equipment. "This can be supported by the growth in deli and prepared-foods sales over the past 12 months among retailers, in addition to the subsequent decline in restaurant sales. Consumers have been carefully monitoring their dining expenses and more are dining at home in lieu of dining out. We have also seen an interesting shift in the dynamics of restaurant category sales, noting that customers have 'traded down' in order to be more frugal with their dollar as relating to perceived value. When gasoline was almost \$5 a gallon not that long ago, consumers combined daily tasks, including

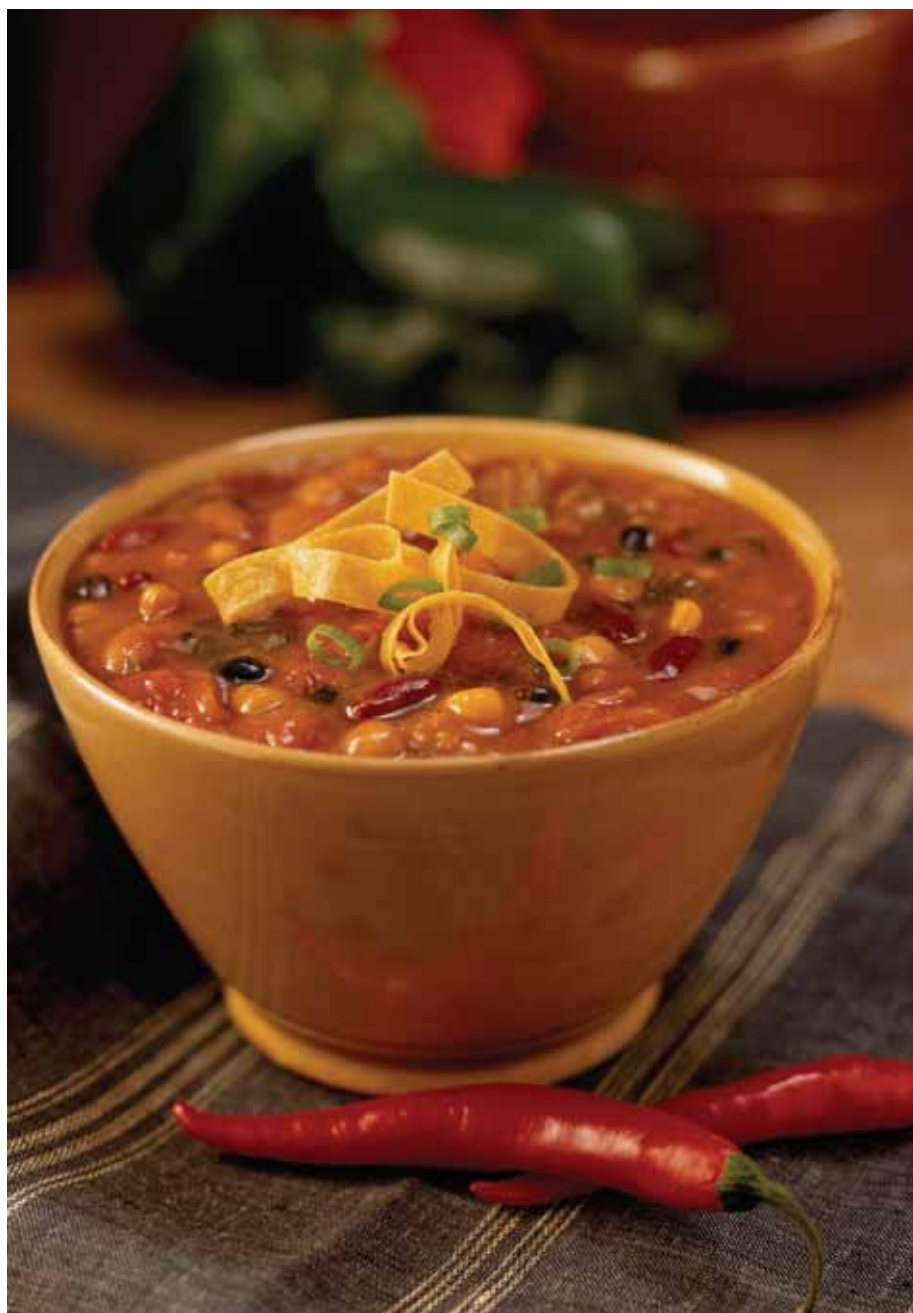


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meals, in order to conserve resources and better manage time/convenience. Lastly, there are many supermarkets that have been offering — and continue to offer — restaurant-quality food, earning their business by taking it away from local restaurateurs.”

Many manufacturers have noticed this, and much of the marketing they once directed to restaurants is now directed toward retailers. Carl Zuanelli, president, Stafford, CT-based Nuovo Pasta Productions, makers

of artisan-style specialty pastas known for their handmade fillings, believes many consumers are finding ways to bring that restaurant experience home, often paying half the price or less for similar meals by buying prepared foods at supermarkets. They may take in prepared food and serve it on good china, perhaps with a bottle of wine that cost one-third at retail what a restaurant would charge for the same bottle. Instead of meeting friends at a restaurant, they may enter-

tain at home using these foods. “They’re still looking to have that restaurant-quality food on the Saturday nights they don’t go out,” he explains. Delis can attract these consumers “by offering items they’re used to seeing in restaurants — lobster ravioli, the dramatic items,” says Zuanelli.

Delis may be the best-poised supermarket department to pick up the business restaurants are losing. “I think there’s an opportunity, without question,” asserts Zuanelli. “There’s a reputation of fresh in the deli that frozen foods don’t have. There’s that feeling they’re buying it fresh.”

**“THE FOOD HAS TO BE GOOD, THE MENU DIVERSE BASED ON THE CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHIC AND DEMAND, AND THE OPERATION HAS TO BE CLEAN AND MARKETING WITH SIGNAGE, AND FOOD DISPLAYED EFFECTIVELY AND WITH IMPACT. THERE HAS TO BE A VALUE FOR THE DOLLAR AND A CONVENIENCE THAT IS NOT OFFERED BY THE RESTAURATEUR.”**

— Todd Griffith  
Alto-Shaam


But quality is only part of the equation, according to Griffith of Alto-Shaam. “The food has to be good, the menu diverse based on the customer demographic and demand, and the operation has to be clean and marketed with signage, and food displayed effectively and with impact. There has to be a value for the dollar and a convenience that is not offered by the restaurateur.


“Successful supermarket delis are expanding outside of their traditional scope of business,” he continues. “What used to be called home meal replacement or HMR is back under a new banner — grab-and-go. Cater-

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ing and delivery programs are growing with many retailers. Menu expansion and quality of food make the retail offering much more attractive to consumers, not to mention effective marketing of pricing and menu concepts. The first step is making the commitment. The second step is to look at what

those successful operations are doing right and integrate those best practices into their own concept and operation. As for what else can they do — never be satisfied with what they offer, never stop looking for something better and different to set themselves apart from their competitors. Everyone, no matter

who they are, can be better at what they do for their customers!"

According to Carol Adams, sales and marketing manager, Hissho Sushi, Charlotte, NC, "It's easy to sum up what today's shoppers want in three words — fresh, healthful and affordable. Supermarket delis are taking

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full advantage of these trends by expanding fresh food offerings, and sushi is the perfect item to drive these sales. It's a triple win — for our company, for our customers and for consumers. We provide a means for expert sushi chefs to display their art daily. Supermarkets benefit from superior sales — sushi weekly sales per square foot can be in excess of \$50 compared to an industry average of around \$11. Sushi consumers win because they can get their 'sushi fix' at extremely reasonable prices. In fact, our average price is in the \$6 range, less than even many drive-thru dining options."

Many supermarkets, including Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets, have taken these ideas to heart. In 2007 and 2008, Publix opened three stores under its new Publix GreenWise Market concept. The stores, which carry a wide variety of organic and natural items not found in other Publix stores, offer a large selection of restaurant-quality prepared foods. At the 39,000-square-foot Tampa location, for example, 4,500 square feet are dedicated to prepared foods from 10 venues, including Custom Salads, Handcrafted Sandwiches, Pan Asian, The Grill (offering items such as steak and burgers), Mediterranean Oven (with thin-crust pizzas and



oven-roasted pasta dishes) and The Soup Bar.

"Publix GreenWise Market is about providing our customers with fresh, restaurant-quality food options to satisfy every palate in the convenience of one location," says Maria Brous, Publix spokesperson. "Customers have chosen to look to Publix for meal solutions whether it be in our Apron's Simple

Meals, our traditional deli offerings or our new extended deli offerings. We offer our customers the convenience of a one-stop-shopping experience to meet the demands of a hectic lifestyle. We're all time-starved and looking for quick solutions. Meal planning can be consuming — we've simplified it."

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designed to compete with restaurant offerings. "All our recipes are created by our in-house chefs in our meals department," explains Brous. "Many of our associates have come from the foodservice industry and worked in five-star hotels and restaurants. They bring with them a wealth of knowledge coupled with our Publix culture. Our goal is to

offer our customers the highest restaurant-quality food in a convenient location at an affordable price point. We've received positive feedback from our customers and continue to expand our concept and refine our meal selections based on customer feedback."

Other supermarkets are offering similarly high-quality foods, often from manufacturers

that understand consumers still crave the quality they once sought in restaurants. Campbell's StockPot soups are one example. "StockPot's fresh-refrigerated soups are made with exceptional, high-quality ingredients and real stock and are slow cooked one kettle at a time. Because the cooking process replicates how you would make soup at home — but on a much larger scale — these soups provide the great taste you'd get from a home-cooked soup without spending time making it yourself," notes Sheri Oppenheimer, communications manager, Campbell's North America Foodservice.

Manufacturers such as Campbell's are paying attention to consumer trends and adjusting their recipes accordingly. "During these difficult economic times, consumers are turning to comfort foods and going back to basics," notes Oppenheimer. "For consumers looking for a premium twist on familiar favorites, Campbell's StockPot soups offer gourmet takes on the most classic comfort foods we all know and love, with products such as StockPot Creamy Tomato Basil Bisque and Fully Loaded Baked Potato and Cheddar soups.

"Because StockPot soups are on-trend,

**Continued on page 50**

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## Packaging Delivers Convenience BY BOB JOHNSON



**C**onvenience, a major reason customers come to the deli, begins with the packaging used to carry out the food. To be convenient, deli packaging must be leakproof, tight-sealing and reheatable.

Since many deli customers reheat their food when they get it home, being able to heat in the package is a selling point. "It's very important that the packaging be microwavable as families are purchasing more and more 'ready to make' home meal replacement meals," says Steve Enustun, corporate director of sales for the specialty packaging division of Clark National Inc., Elk Grove Village, IL. "It's also absolutely important it be heatable in the oven since some prefer to wait a little longer for oven-prepared meals."

The microwave may be the most common reheating method, but manufacturers recognize it's not the only method. "The trend is to continue microwaving. I saw a recent market survey and there is still a need for 'ovenability,' but microwavability is by far the most important," notes Karen Roman, senior marketing manager, Reynolds Food Packaging, Richmond, VA.

If the carryout container can be used for reheating, it saves the consumer prep and clean-up time. Bob Saric, national sales manager, Placon, Madison, WI, believes, "Microwavability is extremely important for reheating food in the container it was purchased in. Consumers want convenience and aren't looking to dirty more dishes in the process. Polypro-

pylene is a microwavable material great for foods that need the quick and easy convenience of reheating."

Rotisserie chicken is frequently not finished in a single meal. Some of the packages used to take home chicken can also be used to refrigerate and microwave the leftovers. "If people don't eat the full contents and put it in the refrigerator, it's very important to be able to put it in the microwave to reheat it," explains Ed Sussman, co-owner of Melville, NY-based Merit Paper Corporation, which produces a laminated microwavable rotisserie chicken bag.

A new reheating option is on the way, according to Cheryl Miller, marketing manager for Appleton, WI-based Flair USA, which is introducing a self-venting, microwavable pouch with a ziplock. "The self-venting package can be filled at the deli, taken home and steamed or microwaved in the same package," she says.

### MAKE IT EASY

Another essential aspect of packaging is that it not leak on the way home or between uses.

"Most packaging leaks out the sides — use a clamshell as an example — if treated improperly. However, leaking out the sides or the popping open of a fiber clamshell can be minimized by sheer attention to design. Leaking out the bottom is a durability issue regarding the fibers and the pulping or manufacturing processes used," explains Megan Havrda, senior vice president, Be Green Packing, Santa Barbara, CA.

The answer to leak problem lies in a strong package. "The solution to the leaking problem is pretty easy — it takes a sturdier container," says Glen Wiechman, national sales manager, Pactiv, Lake Forest, IL.

The seal between the lid and the package is important. "Leaking depends on the package. Some inferior products were not designed properly and generally have leaking issues. Placon's packaging was designed to address this issue and has a leak-resistant seal to keep food and liquids contained. Our packages won't pop open unexpectedly," Saric notes.

Package shape can influence the security of the seal. "To my knowledge, there's no completely leakproof packaging out in the marketplace," says Hanna Sjolund, marketing manager, food service plastic, Innoware Inc., Alpharetta, GA. "Round or octagonal containers tend to have a better seal than square. Our leak-guard lock containers offer a great seal and take into consideration the importance of ease of opening and re-sealing for leftovers."

The seal has to be secure, but it also has to be easy to open, reseal and then open again. "A good lid fit is still very important. People want to be able to open the lid easily, close it easily and know that it's tight," Roman says.

Rotisserie chicken containers generally have a fair amount of grease on the bottom, which can leak into a shopping bag, car seat or refrigerator. "A rotisserie chicken is sometimes sold in a dome, and some



of those domes move and the grease leaks out. Some markets supply plastic bags to put the dome in; we provide a laminated bag that is reclosable, microwavable and does not leak," notes Sussman.

Sliders can be an answer to the question of keeping a good seal while repeatedly opening and closing a package. According to Leon Chang, general manager, Fantapak International, Troy, MI, "A lot of consumers prefer the slider mechanism because it's easy to open and close. The top-loading slider bag is easier for the deli staff to load."

In tight economic times, it's important to know which package to buy. "Cost efficiency is important. You have to have a product of maximum quality for the price structure," explains John Alexanian, sales representative, Cube Plastics, Toronto, ON, Canada. He recommends determining the use of the packaging before making a decision on the most cost-efficient choice. Relatively low-quality packaging can do for lightly handled dry goods or for single-serve items, but a sustainable and reusable package is important for packages that will be taken home and repeatedly put into and taken out of the refrigerator, freezer, microwave or dishwasher. "Sometimes prepared food items aren't eaten right away. They'll be frozen or microwaved after they're taken home. We've come up with an upscale product that uses less material than our competition. It is sustainable, strong and rigid."

#### GREEN IS HERE TO STAY

A large and still growing number of consumers have an interest in or commitment to the environment, which is evidenced in their desire for environmentally friendly packaging – and they will know if you've made responsible choices.

Jeff Cole, marketing manager, Genpak Corp., Glens Falls, NY, believes some consumers need to claim some sort of sustainability for the packaging they use. "This trend has been growing for the last two or three years." Genpak makes a line of hinged deli containers made of recyclable #1 PET, at least 50 percent of which is post-consumer material.

"Consumers want to see some conscientious effort and we've seen studies that show people are willing to pay a little more to do their part for the environ-

ment," relates Karla Bendel, director of corporate marketing, Nestle USA Food Services, Glendale, CA.

Even though consumers are watching their wallets, they're still concerned about the environment, a concern that figures to become even stronger as the economy recovers. "Our research shows eco-friendliness tops the list of social responsibility issues in foodservice and is highest in the beyond-restaurant segments such as colleges and universities. The top influence is consumer demand for greener packaging alternatives," notes Sjolund.

The strength of the green movement is clear, but the best answers to the environmental issues require considerable thought. "What is green?" Wiechman asks. "If it's made of corn, is it green? Corn-based material is not recyclable, and if you put biodegradable materials in a landfill environment, they're not going to degrade."

The issue becomes more complicated if you factor in the environmental toll of making and shipping the package. "I don't think sustainable packaging is going away. It's not just the package – it's the amount of energy it takes to produce it and the amount of fuel it takes to transport it," Miller says.

A growing number of customers appreciate a sincere effort to minimize the environmental impact of making, transporting and disposing of packaging. Havrda sums up the issue this way. "The 'green trend' is here to stay and both green packaging and triple bottom line – environment, community, profitability – business practices are a necessity, given our country's waste management challenges, overstuffed landfills, the sea of garbage floating in the Pacific Ocean, and our nation's growing personal sense of responsibility to 'do the right thing' for the environment." **DB**



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**Continued from page 47**

they offer consumers a way to enjoy culinary flavors they'd experience in a restaurant at home," Oppenheimer continues. "So a busy consumer looking to save time and money can go to the grocery store, pick up a salad and pasta to assemble at home in the main section of the store and add a fresh, restaurant-quality StockPot soup from the retail deli section to turn an ordinary dinner into an exceptional meal."

**In-Store Dining**

A few supermarkets are taking this "steal the business from the restaurants" theme one step further with ever-fancier in-store dining areas. With less overhead than restaurants and a scale that only mall food courts can compete with, these areas offer shop-

**"WE ALSO OFFER THE LUXURIES OF HOME WITH FREE Wi-Fi SERVICE. IT'S A LOCAL MEETING PLACE WITH EXTENSIVE OPTIONS. HOWEVER, THE FOOD IS ALSO MEANT TO TRAVEL WELL AND REHEAT TO FIRST-QUALITY FOOD."**

—*Maria Brous*

*Publix Supermarkets*

pers the convenience of enjoying a variety of quality foods while doing their shopping.

"Many retail-store operations currently offer in-store dining areas in order to capitalize upon in-store dining traffic," states Grif-fith of Alto-Shaam. "Several chain retailers that have established themselves with pro-

gressive foodservice programs that set the benchmark for in-store dining. However, they're still among the minority. There's certainly an opportunity for others to take advantage of this business strategy."

"In-store dining is an area where stores can differentiate themselves, and they can





help drive traffic,” says Campbell’s Oppenheimer. But this isn’t as simple as setting up a few tables. “Operators must make a commitment to the space and to having the appropriate staff with the skill level to service these areas.”

Supermarkets such as Rochester, NY-based Wegmans Food Markets, Austin, TX-based Whole Foods Markets and Publix GreenWise are meeting that commitment.

“The great part about our Publix GreenWise Markets is that we offer a relaxing and soothing environment for our customers to enjoy their meal selections,” notes Brous. “We also offer the luxuries of home with free Wi-Fi service. It’s a local meeting place with extensive options. However, the food is also meant to travel well and reheat to first-quality food. The customer has the option to

eat-in or takeout.”

Operations like these are not for everyone. “A significant commitment is involved on behalf of the retailer,” notes Griffith of Alto-Shaam. “Space is the least of the actual commitments, but there is a space requirement that must be made in order to successfully implement an in-store dining area. This includes a corporate commitment in terms of store design and development, construction, etc. Of course, the commitment to foodservice is a must. Operating a restaurant within a retail supermarket has the same operational challenges that any other restaurant has. It takes a quality menu that the consumer will accept, a marketing strategy to develop the business, the tools and equipment to execute the menu, and the personnel and resources to successfully deliver the

program. There is a commitment!”

Impacts on personnel and space can vary. “It all depends upon how substantial the program is,” says Griffith. “Many retailers have implemented branded foodservice concepts. Staffing requirements here are completely dependent upon the size of the operation and the flow of business. There is dedicated labor required but, at the same time, the savvy operator will fully evaluate equipment technologies that will simplify the demand upon labor, space and facilities. Space considerations are also completely dependent upon the scope of the foodservice program.”

The commitment can be worth it, Griffith believes. “From a couple of small tables to a full restaurant-style seating area, foodservice is still the highest margin and return department in the retail supermarket.” **DB**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WHOLE FOODS MARKETS

# Life Of The Party

Dips and spreads offer the at-home entertainer something special, easy, and affordable

BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE

**D**elis should position themselves to benefit from the at-home-entertaining pendulum swing. From potlucks to cook-outs, low-cost, at-home entertaining is on the rise, and specialty dips and spreads from the deli are perfect for these functions. The role of dips and spreads has expanded; people are using them as ingredients as well as using them in the traditional manner. With more options and more demand, it's time for delis to join the party and get more out of their selection of specialty dips and spreads.

"The economy is affecting higher-cost goods and services, but people still need to eat and they still want to entertain, so less costly products that offer value and great taste should flourish even in a weak market," says Dominick Frocione, vice-president of sales for Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Bradford, MA.

The specialty dips and spreads category has maintained popularity regardless of the economy — and in some cases has grown. Chuck Santry, national sales manager for all brands of Santa Barbara, CA-based California Creative Foods, Inc., estimates refrigerated dips sales have increased around 20 percent, while grocery dips and spreads have "flatlined."

Rick Schaffer, vice-president of sales and marketing, Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Taunton, MA, believes the deli specialty spread and dip category presents substantial opportunity for growth, noting, "It's a high-turn category. It's not a staple, but it's highly consumed."

Since specialty dips and spreads add a big flavor at an affordable price, consumers are going beyond these items' obvious uses and using them as ingredients in traditional or reimagined dishes.

Mexican lasagna made with specialty salsa, tortillas, and cheese from the deli is a quick and easy party meal, notes Santry. Creativity is key. "People want to be cre-



ative," he says, citing cheesecake topped with mango peach salsa as another example of creative versatility.

"With the introduction of salsa into American culture followed by guacamole then hummus, the dip category has opened

up for everyone to get creative and make their own little specialty," says Howie Klagsbrun, vice-president of sales, Sonny & Joe's, Bronx, NY. He suggests promoting the health benefits to drive sales of these foods, especially hummus.



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Delis are also using the spreads in sandwich trays, especially to meet the demand for more vegan, vegetarian, organic, kosher or other dietary restrictions. Hummus and salsa, for example, can be used as a dip or spread by consumers who follow specific dietary guidelines. Because they contain neither meat nor dairy, they appeal to vegetarians, vegans and those following religious constrictions. In the dairy-based spread and dip arena, tzatziki can transform salads or sandwiches into something new and different to impress guests.

According to Brenda Donahe, director of sales and marketing, Mrs. Gerry's Kitchen, Inc., Albert Lea, MN, the company's Southwestern Dip can be used as a stand-alone, with tortillas, for taco salad, on wraps, in baked potatoes and as part of recipes, several of which are listed on the company Website. "Think outside the box in regards to versatility," she recommends.

"Our regional Taste the Mediterranean advertising campaign is all about the ability to have the delicious experience of the Mediterranean without leaving home. We're also launching a North American sampling tour, where we're building a Mediterranean Café in 12 cities," notes Kimberly Rom, brand manag-

er for Sabra Dipping Company, Farmingdale, NY. "We're listening to what consumers want and releasing new on-trend flavors. Offering a variety of flavors and sizes allows consumers to have single serving options for lunches and snacks or full size, garnished containers for entertaining at home.

More dip and spread choices than ever before means consumers can find something to match the theme of any party. In addition to savory dips, sweet dips for fruit and crackers as well as an increased number of ethnic offerings can fit the bill. Delis can create party themes throughout the year to coincide with established holidays and gatherings — Memorial Day, Independence Day, Cinco de Mayo, Super Bowl Sunday, even Halloween — or create promotions geared for their particular clientele — Chinese New Year, Graduation, Marathon Day, whatever is likely to draw in a given community.

### Party Package

Manufacturers are quick to point out the category's celebratory appeal. Tribe has created a party platter so consumers can simply grab a tray for their entertainment needs.

"Eight-ounce packages may have started the category's growth with individual con-

sumers but for entertaining, bigger packages mean bigger values," says Cedar's Frocione.

Retailers would do well to broaden their offerings to customers looking for entertaining ideas, for example, larger sizes and a wide variety of flavors to impress guests. "Be innovative," advises Tribe's Schaffer. "People want what's new — new flavors, new concepts."

Dips and spreads don't have to have holiday-specific packaging, and that can help control shrink. In addition, the resurgence of casual at-home entertaining suggests dips and spreads have lost any seasonality they once had. Maintaining — and promoting — a party or entertainment section in the deli can establish the department as the place to head whenever guests are expected.

Sonny & Joe's Klagsbrun suggests planning regular celebration promotions "very much the way [retailers] do for Super Bowl parties. Have prepared party platters or menus suggesting how many each one will serve. Take the thinking and planning out of it for the consumer, and she will appreciate the store 'planning the party.'"

### Miscellaneous Favors

Marketing to customers who are entertaining at home sets the deli as regular destination. The department can do a number of specific and simple things to appeal to this growing demographic.

In-store demos should be used to introduce both new and established products to consumers. You have to get an item into a consumer's mouth before you can get it in his or her shopping basket. Not many people will serve an item they've never tried themselves to guests. Demos that show different ways to use the product and offer recipes can increase overall ring. Showcasing simplicity and versatility goes a long way.

Cross-merchandising and cross-promoting — especially with a demo to highlight a particular recipe — solidify the deli as a must-visit destination. Marketing chips, crackers, breads, fruits, and vegetables with dips is ubiquitous, but what about other party pleasers? If a supermarket has a wine and beer section, putting together beer, salsa, and guacamole creates an instant fiesta theme. Tribe has had success working promotions with hummus and wine. Even offering specials across different items or flavors from the same brand can increase sales. After all, a host or hostess is unlikely to offer guests only one dish.

The deli is also a great place for cross-merchandising with other departments. For example, Garlic Delight, which is normally merchandised in produce, is often found in delis as a sandwich dressing and sold with deli specialty dips and spreads. "With consumers

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# HUMMUS

By Howard Riell

**T**asty, flexible and still exotic enough not to have gone completely mainstream, hummus remains an increasingly popular choice for consumers hungry for something out of the ordinary. Consumers enjoy dipping poultry, meats, vegetables and bread into hummus. Restaurants, which often set the tone for retail when it comes to innovative or exotic products, are using hummus as a side dish with fish and falafel.

"The category is still so hot, everywhere I turn there is new opportunity," notes Howard Klagsbrun, vice president sales for Sonny & Joe's, Brooklyn, NY. "The growth is all coming from the premium side of the category." Klagsbrun, who exhibited his brand at the winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco, recalls attending that same show six years ago "and having to convince people to try hummus. Most attendees had no knowledge of hummus. Not so today. Everyone eats hummus, and as the category matures, people want quality."

Over the last two or three years, many retailers around the country have given it a prominent presence on the shelf, which embeds hummus further in shoppers' minds. The profusion of flavors intrigues them and spurs trial. Some industry insiders believe hummus will follow yogurt, which had similar attributes and ultimately garnered its own section.

Like all successful products, hummus is finding its way into the American culture. According to Chicago, IL-based Information Resources, Inc. (IRI), household penetration of hummus was 12.5 percent in the United States two years ago and is probably closer to 15 percent or 16 percent now. In Israel, however, household penetration stands at about 95 percent. Israelis regularly consume hummus as a part of meals and dine in hummus bars. Some in the industry believe American consumers can move, and indeed are moving, in that same direction. The deli's responsibility, according to one manufacturer, is to help consumers understand what they can do with the product aside from simply sticking pita in it.

This past Thanksgiving, Sonny & Joe's distributed recipe cards for Hummus Turkey. Brochures highlight hummus soup and Moroccan Chicken with hummus. Americans are getting "very creative with what they are trying with hummus," adds Klagsbrun. The category has gone "way beyond hummus and pita. What's driving the growth is twofold. From one side, hummus just tastes great, and it's not a major 'life change' to use another kind of dip or spread. Then there's the health angle. Hummus is a more healthful spread than everything we've been accustomed to using. It has more protein per ounce than ground beef, iron, fiber, no added sugar and no cholesterol. What else could you ask for without it being someone's chemistry project?"

Here is some of what's happening in this vibrant category:

**NEW FLAVORS:** "New flavors are coming into the category, however the top two or three flavors continue to do the majority of the business," according to John Curran, director of sales and customer service at Churny Company Inc., Glenview, IL. While there's no shortage of all-natural and organic offerings, he adds, "The base flavors and formulas that continue to be preferred already are viewed and perceived by consumers as a 'better for you' product."

**SMALL IS BIG:** Portion-controlled products have been spurring trial at the deli counter. The 2-ounce packages are convenient. "You just eat it and toss the packaging," says Rick Schaffer, vice president of sales and marketing for Tribe Mediterranean Foods, LLC, Taunton, MA. Rolled out about a year ago, the single-portion package is being snapped up not only by retailers such as Costco, he reports, but also by school systems because kids love it. "It meets the caloric and traditional requirements in schools, which are going crazy over it."

**ON THE GO:** Kimberly Rom, brand manager for Sabra Dipping Company, LLC, Farmingdale, NY, points out that hummus is very much "on trend with consumers" because it has become "less of a niche item

and has grown into the mainstream in the marketplace today." Being part of the mainstream increasingly means being portable. Sabra has introduced a pack containing hummus, cracker and pretzel crisp.

**HEALTHFUL, BUT:** Organic hummus has not grown as much as some insiders thought it would. At least one executive confesses he and his colleagues tend to think organic should be a bigger part of the business than it is, but consumers don't seem willing to pay the premium for organic. The additional cost, given the nation's economic climate, is translating into a 'no' vote at retail.

**USAGE IDEAS:** One of the best things deli personnel can do to increase sales of hummus is to share different ways to use it with consumers.

"People are starting to use it as something besides a healthful dip with pita bread or chips," notes Dom Frocione, vice president of sales for Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Ward Hill, MA. For instance, people are starting to use it on bagels instead of chive cream cheese. Others are using it instead of cream cheese or mayonnaise in other preparations.

"We have customers writing in and saying they mix sun-dried tomato [hummus] and basil with olive oil and make a sauce out of it," relates Frocione. "We're advocating a lot of different usages. Some retailers put horseradish hummus in the meat department as a topping with a filet. It's only limited by lack of imagination as far as what you can do with the product."

The economy has had little if any effect on Cedar's business, says Frocione. "We're still relatively inexpensive compared to other things. We've had price increases like everyone else due to cost of materials and transportation, but for the most part, you can still buy an 8-ounce package of hummus from us for around \$2.99."

Consumers are eager for relatively inexpensive yet convenient foods to add flavor and variety to their meals. Hummus is still reasonably priced and features a wide variety of flavor profiles. It remains a category on the way up. **DB**

spending more of their food dollars at the supermarket, they're looking for easy and delicious ways to make meals and entertaining at home more flavorful," says Karen Caplan, president and CEO of Frieda's, Inc., Los Alamitos, CA. Garlic Delight was designed for at-home parties after an employee

brought it to Caplan's attention.

Pricing deals increase sales, and delis can be creative here, too. According to Santry of California Creative Foods, many stores have two or three major sales a year, but he believes they can draw more customers over the long term by offering small-value

coupons frequently. Because specialty dips and spreads are perishable, consumers aren't looking to stock up. But they are looking to save money wherever they can, so coupons offering even 10¢ or 15¢ off every few weeks can increase impulse sales and build long-term loyalty. **DB**



# World Cuisine Offers World Of Opportunity

Ethnic foods can help retailers drive their business instead of losing out

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

While some retailers fear the effects of a lingering recession, savvy ones are seizing a multitude of opportunities, including a growing interest in ethnic foods. The recently released *Food Flavors and Ingredients Outlook 2009* by Packaged Facts (PF) of Rockville, MD, notes expected continued growth in consumer interest in new ethnic cuisines and flavors. The report outlines how the range of ethnic food varieties is expanding at a rapid pace.

"While we are experiencing a recession and growth has slowed, we're still growing with many prospects coming on board in the second half 2009," says Mark Phelps, president/COO of InnovAsian Cuisine Enterprises in Kent, WA. "We're considered a good value for the consumer, many of whom are going back to staples rather than convenience foods and restaurants."

The growing popularity of ethnic foods finds its base in two factors, the growth of the ethnic demographic and the evolving

mainstream consumer palate. U.S. Census Bureau reports show more than 14 percent of the U.S. population is Hispanic, 12 percent is African American, 4 percent Asian, and more than 6 percent 'other' race. Combined, this represents more than 36 percent of the U.S. population.

"Demand has increased for two reasons," notes Alfredo Lardizabal, vice president sales for MIC Food, Miami, FL. "The first is related to the fact that delis, and retailers in general, want to drive more traffic through their stores, and one way of doing that is considering the changing demographics. If you bring in more ethnic foods, you're catering to everyone's taste buds and you have a better probability of getting people to buy what you have to offer including 'mainstream' items they used to buy elsewhere as well as these 'ethnic' items."

"The second reason may be directly, or even indirectly, related to the economy as many retailers with declining sales feel a

greater sense of urgency to drive traffic than they used to. One way of making that happen is to look for nontraditional ways to get people in your store. If you start carrying items appealing to a greater demographic, you have a better chance of getting people in your doors," he continues.

According to the PF report, trends in new cuisines include Rustic French, which reflects consumers' desire for comfort foods, a wide variety of Asian and Mediterranean (especially Spanish) cuisines, and newcomers from Peru, Laos, Algeria, Ethiopia and Somalia. The report further purports ethnic-oriented retailers will experience significant growth as they serve both immigrant and mainstream consumers.

"In today's economy, many people are choosing to eat out at restaurants less than they used to," reports Lardizabal. "The local supermarket deli presents a more economical way to eat as if you were in a restaurant. Even though someone else still did the cook-





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ing for you, you aren't paying restaurant prices and mom or dad can still take a day off from cooking. The deli concept is something Hispanics in the U.S. have been used to for years, however, until recently, choices were limited to small neighborhood ethnic stores selling our favorite ethnic foods by the pound. Now, more delis are getting involved and we can do our grocery shopping and our food-by-the-pound all in the same place."

### Focus On Quality

Quality is a primary focus in any ethnic foods program. "Replicating the meal you can no longer afford to eat in a restaurant is probably the deli's greatest opportunity in ethnic foods," says David Grotenstein, general manager of Union Market in Brooklyn, NY. "However, if we're talking prepared foods, this concept *will not* work for you unless what you're dishing out is at, or close to, restaurant quality."

"Delis have a major opportunity to expand ethnic foods especially as consumers look for more affordable alternatives to restaurants and takeout," adds Phelps. "Convincing consumers that deli is now a viable, quality offering will steal a share of their stomach and even when times get better, they may continue as loyal customers of the deli."

Knowledge about the products is paramount to quality. "Learn about the foods you're bringing in," advises MIC's Lardizabal. "Know how to prepare them and what to serve them with. If the food is meant to be served hot, keep it hot. If it doesn't have a long holding time, then don't keep it out all day because it may lose taste or texture. Offer other items that go well with that particular food so your customers can take a full meal home."

Regardless of ethnicity, retailers should always consider the bottom line of quality and value. "Customers are looking for comfort foods, and value, price and quality are important," says Marilyn Bennett, deli manager for Vallergas Market in Napa, CA, an independent hometown single store.

### Promote Value

As consumers increasingly look for value, ethnic foods can present a complete package for them. "Many foods considered as ethnic tend to be less expensive and present a good value," says Lardizabal. "Additionally, not only are many ethnic products a good value but many also have additional qualities such as taste and health, and many are 100 percent natural. These additional attributes add to the appeal of these cuisines to the mainstream market as well."

"Ethnic foods can be positioned as a great value by promoting combo plates," sug-



gests InnovAsian's Phelps. "For example, rice or noodles bring the cost of a meal down as well as completing the meal. Retailers should also put together family meal offerings."

The deli can offer real value in terms of cost and benefits to consumers. "This is an opportunity to show off your breadth of knowledge and to offer your customers something they can't find anywhere else or prepare for themselves at home," adds Union Market's Grotenstein. "That said, you must back it up with real value, which includes good taste and ease of use or preparation. It has to be worth what you're charging."

### Show Commitment

A solid ethnic food offering will reflect the retailer's commitment. "Delis need to commit to a section everyday, religiously, so consumers feel the store is committed to the category and they don't have to guess when it will be out," states Phelps.

Variety shows commitment and provides additional opportunities for sales. "Retailers should sell in multiple applications, such as hot case, cold salad case and cold grab," explains Phelps. "Again, this allows consumers to see your commitment and gives them options."

"The whole key is variety and to change it up so you're not offering the same thing day after day," says Bennett. "People like trying and having new things. Our hot bar has a lot of different varieties. I'm also a believer that you should always revisit items. For example, if something didn't work in December, you should always try it again in April. I wouldn't put a lot in the budget — and it also depends a lot on your community and what you know your community likes."

However, the variety must fit your demographic. "Choose wisely," advises Lardizabal. "Cater to the ethnic makeup of your neighborhood. Bring in items appealing to your customer base. Do the research as far as your neighborhood's demographics."

### How Far Do We Go?

Many ethnic foods are already staples in our culture. Old-world favorites from Germany and Italy are now considered American foods although they were ethnic when first introduced decades ago. "The deli has always been largely composed of ethnic foods such as Italian products or German-style cured meats and even French ham," Grotenstein explains. "Spanish cured meats took a leap when Serrano ham was introduced years ago and again when Iberico ham entered the scene."

If delis look at these 'new' ethnic products as the next generation of old-world favorites, the question becomes whether to Americanize them or retain their traditional aspects; the answer is as diverse as the cuisines.

"There's no point in dumbing down a food or product you believe in," says Grotenstein. "All you end up doing is compromising the quality and lessening the value. I'm in favor of authenticity."

However, others contend that if your goal is to reach the masses, some ethnic products may need to be somewhat Americanized.

Lardizabal offers a suggestion. "Since part of what makes most ethnic products special is their uniqueness, why mess with them? Something that has worked well for us is making people realize you can keep it authentic and Americanize at the same time. For example, with our plantain slices or yuca fries, we simply suggest you keep your plate the same and substitute an ethnic side such as yuca fries in place of a more Americanized side like potatoes. So you still have a more American version of meat, steak, chicken breast or fish, but you have replaced a traditional side with an ethnic one. Many restaurants are doing this."

"By introducing an item as a side or appetizer, people are more likely to try it because the portions are generally small and the commitment level is low. More often than not, people end up liking these items and keep coming back for more," he continues.

Indian cuisine has not reached mass penetration but it is showing growth potential. The increasing Indian population in the United States and the accompanying proliferation of Indian restaurants has sparked an interest in the cuisine by mainstream consumers. And since many Indian foods are vegetarian-friendly, they appeal to a segment that might not ordinarily frequent the deli with its heavy concentration of meat-based products. *[Editor's note: For a more detailed look at Indian food in the deli, please see Passage To India on page 60.]*

Most of the products available in this country are Americanized versions of Indian ones. According to Vars Inijian, vice presi-



dent of sales and marketing, Karoun Dairies, Inc., Sun Valley, CA, the company has recently developed an authentic-style Paneer cheese, which is used as the protein source in many Indian vegetarian dishes. "It's perfect for a meatless diet," he explains. Karoun offers "a whole package" that includes Indian yogurt and lassi, a yogurt-based beverage.

As always, the decision of how "authentic" to be must fit with the store's philosophy and demographic. "We just try to use the best quality products," says Bennett of Valler-gas Market. "For our chicken enchiladas, we don't make our own sauce but we do use our roasted chicken. It has our twist on it."

"I incorporate product lines and categories within the overall mix," shares Union Market's Grotenstein. "I don't keep my French cheeses together, but instead have the Blues with the Blues, Cheddars with the Cheddars, from all around the globe. I'd be cautious not to isolate an ethnic foods program from the rest of the pack, no matter what department. Use it to demonstrate your appreciation of foods worldwide."

### Learn And Teach

A thorough understanding of the products is essential to success. "Like anything you introduce, you should only do it if you're behind it and can promote it," says Grotenstein. "This means you understand the foods or the category well enough to explain it to your staff so they can inform your customers. Don't simply plunk something exotic down in the showcase and expect it to sell, especially if these items are new your customers. Without product knowledge to back it up, you'll turn away customers rather than attract them."

InnovAsian's Phelps suggests looking at good examples, "Stores should benchmark the successful ethnic players. For example in the Asian category they can look at PF Chang's, Panda Express, etc."

Karoun's U.S. versions of Greek, Armenian and Middle Eastern yogurts and cheeses have traditionally been niche products targeted to specific ethnicities but the increasing interest in ethnic foods indicates more mainstream consumers are ready to try them. Injijian believes packaging is crucial to getting them to take the plunge.

"One of our products in labne, which is strained spreadable yogurt. U.S. consumers are not familiar with it so if we just put labne on the package, it wouldn't have legs. We added the terms kefir cheese and spreadable yogurt to the package to target many consumer segments. Labne appeals to the ethnic audience, kefir cheese to the health-food crowd and spreadable yogurt to the mass audience," he explains.


Promotion to and education of customers are also key. "If you're new to this, you need to let people know you now carry these items," says MIC's Lardizabal. "So spending some effort to get the word out through advertising and introducing ethnic food offerings makes sense. If your customers or even potential customers don't know you have these items, they won't go to the deli looking for them. The more people that know you have a particular item, the better your chances to increase sales."


"Mostly it comes down to getting it in the customer's mouth," says Bennett. "When we have had Indian food, most of our customers didn't know what it was and it was about getting the customer to taste it."

Ensuring the appearance of the products is a way to promote sales. "Make sure the product always looks fresh and the display is full to capitalize on as many impulse sales as possible," advises Phelps. "Supermarkets have great foot traffic and this is a natural way to build incremental sales."

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# PASSAGE TO INDIA

Once hard-to-find Indian foods now make regular appearances in mainstream delis around the United States and Canada

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

Over the past several years, supermarket delis have seen tremendous growth in the sales of Indian foods. An influx of Indian immigrants, the broadening of the mainstream U.S. taste palate and increased interest in vegetarian meal options have contributed to the uptick in this ethnic cuisine.

Sanjog Sikand, marketing director for Sukhi's Gourmet Indian Food, Hayward, CA, says her mother Sukhi Singh started the company's foodservice offerings 15 years ago "thanks to Bill Gates. Lots of Indians were coming to Silicon Valley. They brought their lunch to work and a large high-tech company wanted to convert them to the cafeteria. We developed spice mixes to create authentic Indian flavors." About 10 years ago, Sukhi's foodservice products became avail-

able in universities and colleges, grabbing the next generation of shoppers early.

Kontos Foods Inc., Paterson, NJ, began offering its Indian-style breads and yogurt during the 1990s. At that time, these products appeared mostly in New York and Toronto. Today, they are popular in "the majority of the Northeast — ShopRite, Tops, Giant, Demoulas, Key Food, Wegmans — Dierburgs, Fiesta Markets, Treasure Island, selected Krogers, all Safeway markets through out the United States, as well as Canadian retailers Loblaw's, Metro and Sobey's" according to Demetrios Haralam-batos, Kontos corporate executive chef.

"We find greatest penetration in the Northeast," relates Jim White, co-founder and partner, FGF Brands, Concord, ON, Canada. The bakery, which began produc-

tion in 2006, produces traditional, authentic ethnic flatbread under the brand name International Fabulous Flats. Its Tandoori naan was named Best new product in the U.S. by *Prepared Foods*, a leading U.S. food industry magazine.

"Consumers feel that bagels are 'so 2007.' What used to be a 'hot' hand-held is now ho-hum. Consumers were looking for a new bread, and we met this pent-up demand with the first commercial tandoor-baked naan in America," says White. "We freeze our fully baked naan and ship to every corner of the United States. At present, we're in more than 10,000 supermarket locations and thousands of delis. We manufacture and sell one million hand-stretched, tandoor-baked naan each week."

Karoun Dairies, Sun Valley, CA, which





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saw its Indian-style yogurts and cheeses take off in ethnic Indian and Middle Eastern delis when it began production in 2000, now sells to mainstream delis and supermarkets around the country. “I see tremendous opportunities for growth in the American mainstream market both retail and foodservice,” reveals Rostom Baghdassarian, COO.

Kontos’ Haralambatos attributes the vast growth of Indian foods to a number of factors, including an influx of immigrants and “the increase in consumers’ demand for vegetarianism. Secondly, the romance of Asian foods — there is an increase in Asian restaurants such as P.F. Chang’s — where not only is Chinese offered but there are also Indian dishes on the menu.”

FGF’s White believes the increased travel undertaken before the market meltdown expanded American palates. “Americans have traveled heavily these past 10 years and many have discovered the tasty ethnic foods of India, Vietnam, Cambodia, and they want to be able to replicate their traveling table experiences back home in America.”

A proliferation of Indian restaurants has also sparked interest in Indian cuisine. “Nationwide, there are lots of Indian restaurants that American consumers go to and try different types of Indian food,” says Baghdassarian. “Some of the dishes are simple and quick enough for people to try it at home.”

Many delis are finding ways to incorporate Indian foods into their offerings. “Many independent delis and supermarket in-store delis now receive our naan as IQF product in cartons. They thaw and use the flatbreads for sandwiches, for party trays, for tasty roll-ups or wraps or for panini-like sandwiches,” he continues.

Indian foods attract health-conscious consumers, as well, according to Baghdassarian. “It’s most popular with American consumers who are health conscious, because most Indian dishes are vegetarian, where they use variety of vegetables that contain protein. Paneer cheese, for example, is a high-protein food. It’s an excellent substitute for meat in an essentially vegetarian diet. The yogurt and the yogurt drink lassi that are served and consumed with Indian dishes are a very good source of calcium. The live active and probiotic cultures in the yogurt and yogurt drink boost the immune system and enhance digestion. Also, [Indian foods] use lot of herbs and spices that have health benefits. For example, turmeric is believed to help reduce the risk of getting Alzheimer’s.”

### A Panoply Of Foods

The foods of India’s many regions vary



but they all share some characteristics. “Indian food is more complicated and very different from European cooking, which is based on precision,” explains Sukhi’s Sikand. “Indian food cooks for a long time.”

“We educate the buying staff about regions and pronunciation. Our focus is always mainstream but we never dumb it down. We never give up quality. The American palate has expanded to include more flavors, bold flavors, vegetarian options and global cuisines,” she continues. Sukhi’s provides 5-pound foodservice bags of 14 Indian entrées as well as grab-and-go NaanViches — convenient, handheld Naan bread with fresh Indian fillings — to such high-end retailers as Whole Foods, Fresh Market, Harris-Teeter, Bristol Farms and Earth Fare. The company also offers food-bar schematics showing what to serve and what to serve it with.

India is famous for its dairy foods, and Karoun Dairies offers some of the most popular types for American delis in sizes for both foodservice and consumers under its GOPI brand name. Paneer — a fresh cheese used in many popular dishes — is made with recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST)-free milk. Plain and mango lassi is available in 1-pint containers or half-gallons. It contains live and active cultures and is certified KSA kosher. Indian-style yogurt, which is also rBST-free, is certified OU kosher and contains live and active cultures.

Kontos also offers an Indian-style yogurt. “This yogurt has been strained so that the curd has remained,” explains Haralambatos. “It’s used widely in Indian and Eastern Mediterranean cuisines. For example, it’s used to make Chicken Tikka, as well as to marinate chicken and pork before grilling.”

Of the Indian breads, naan is perhaps the most well known. “Our first flatbread, and our most successful to date, has been the International Fabulous Flats Tandoori Naan,”

says White. “Our oven bakes our naan at 1400° F in 35 seconds, just as they would be baked in a restaurant tandoor oven. Our naan are blistered, just as the ones found in an Indian restaurant, and they have that smoky, sultry aroma you expect to find in naan. We use ghee — clarified butter — and buttermilk to moisten and flavor our naan, just as they do in India. We hand-stretch every single naan we make.”

Kontos reports its Tandoori Naan is one of its most popular Indian flatbreads, as well. “A most versatile oval flatbread that can expand your menu, it’s featured in many Indian, Pakistani and Pan-Asian restaurants through the United States and Canada,” explains Haralambatos. He says Kontos uses the dough ball method when making all of its breads, resulting in high-quality flatbreads.

Kontos makes other variations of naan, as well, including Roghani Naan (known for its softness and flexibility), Onion Naan (made with chopped onions and a blend of kalunji, ajwan, cumin, coriander and sesame seeds), Kulcha Naan (a staple in Central Asian cuisine, oil is added after the baking process to add flavor and softness) and Massala Naan (flavored with a blend of fresh chopped hot chilies and onions with oriental spices).

In addition to naan, Kontos also offers other Indian-style flatbreads, including Missy Roti made with chickpea flour, herbs and spices, “for those who appreciate tangy, spicy food,” says Haralambatos. He describes Missy Roti as having a hot, but not overpowering, flavor.

Kontos also hand-makes Barbari Flatbread (an over-21-inch long oval-shaped soft flatbread featuring sesame seeds), Chapati (classic 7-inch round flatbreads separated by waxed paper interleaves) and a very thin flatbread called Handkerchief Flatbread, also known as Roumali or Markook.

All of the Kontos’ flatbreads are certified halal as well as kosher, which adds appeal not only to religious Muslims and Jews, but also to vegetarians and others who are concerned about the ingredients in their foods, notes Haralambatos.

Look forward to an even greater variety of flatbreads to become available from manufacturers in the near future. “We believe America is ready for a series of tasty authentic ethnic flatbreads,” says White. “Naan is just the start for FGF Brands. Think back to the early ’80s when bagels were a novelty item in many parts of America. Last year — 2008 — was the dawning of the ‘naan age,’ and I suspect that in 10 years they will have become as ubiquitous as bagels have since their debut in the ’80s.”

DB



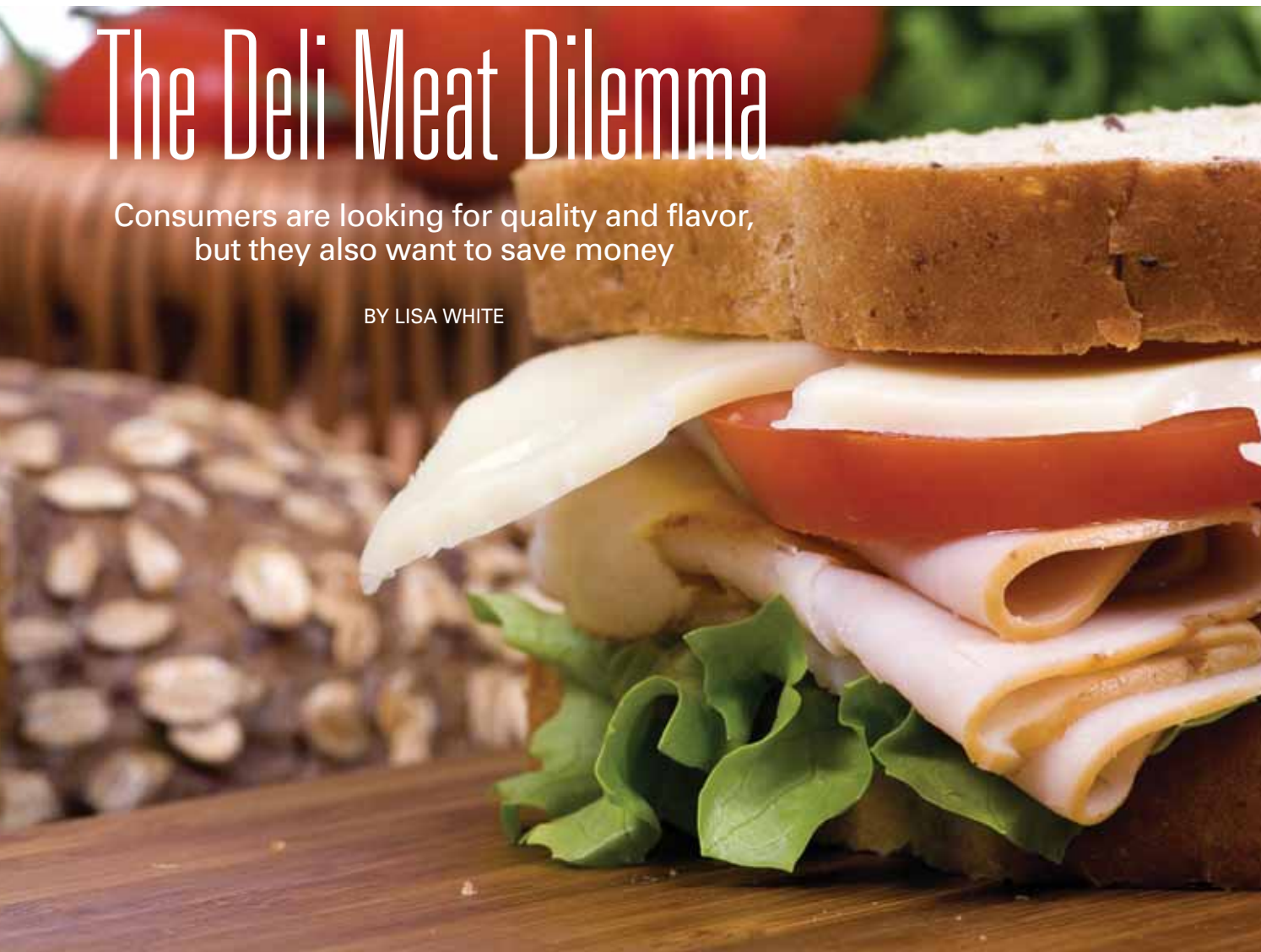
# Deli Meats 2009

The Deli Meat Dilemma  
Dry-Cured Deli Meats  
The Private Label Evolution

# The Deli Meat Dilemma

Consumers are looking for quality and flavor,  
but they also want to save money

BY LISA WHITE



**T**he deli meat category is a series of contradictions. Consumers are still looking for quality, but in this unstable economy, value has become a necessary part of the equation.

Many consumers who are reining in their discretionary spending by eating out less often are turning to the deli department as an alternative. Legions of workers who thought nothing of eating lunch out on a daily basis are now brown-bagging it, but they still want taste and convenience. Many are bringing a sandwich to work. For those making sandwiches at home, deli meats are fast and easy, offering an almost endless variety of options while being far less expensive than going out to lunch. Picking up a sandwich at the deli department still has a lower price tag than the local sandwich shop, albeit there's no delivery option.

For consumers who couldn't afford to dine out daily during the boom times, the current economy presents a serious chal-

lenge. These shoppers are turning to less expensive versions of the lunches they've always eaten, but they still want quality in the foods they prepare for themselves and their family. They may be primed to receive the private-label message.

Sandwiches are also more likely to show up on the dinner table than in the past few years. Fewer young people actually know how to cook, but families are still time-pressed and money is tight, so a quick run to the local fast-food or pizza joint is rapidly becoming a treat rather than the modus operandi of a busy work night. A sandwich seems a logical option. And if the deli can educate consumers about other uses for sliced deli meats, the result can be only greater sales.

According to The Nielsen Co., New York, NY, prepackaged refrigerated lunchmeat accounted for \$5.23 billion in sales via U.S. food, drug, and mass merchandiser stores during the 52 weeks ending March 21, 2009, up 4.8 percent from a year ago. Man-

ufacturers report value-tiered deli meat is not experiencing growth at the same rate as premium items. "We believe this is due to the continued consumer focus on bringing value, taste and freshness to their home-prepared meals, and the recent propensity of the consumers to exchange eating-out occasions for in-home solutions," says a spokesperson, who wishes to remain anonymous, for Sara Lee Food & Beverage U.S., based in Neenah, WI.

## The Economy's Effect

The value proposition — high quality at a reasonable price — looms large in the deli meat segment. Consumers are unwilling, thus far at least, to trade one for the other.

According to Paul Bulman, vice president of marketing at Creta Farms USA, based in Lansdale, PA, "In this economy, everyone is being more frugal. Consumers are demanding more value. We're seeing coupons being redeemed at a much higher rate than in the



past, reaching the 20 to 25 percent mark."

Shoppers don't want to sacrifice quality for a lower price, so they're steering toward deli meat they perceive as the best value for the cost. The Madison, WI-based International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's (IDDBA) *What's In Store 2008* report states value, health and wellness, preferred tastes and convenience drive consumers to deli purchases.

"We don't consider these consumer behaviors trends but view them as evolutionary changes," notes Gina Asoudegan, communications manager at Applegate Farms, based in Bridgewater, NJ. "Consumers have raised their standards when it comes to deli meats."

There also has been an uptick in supermarket deli sandwich programs, which have benefitted from the sluggish economy. "In general, prepared foods in the deli have been selling well, as people trade down from restaurants," relates Bob Ruth, senior vice president of sales and marketing at Hatfield, PA-based Hatfield Quality Meat.

Retailers are capitalizing on this trend by expanding store sandwich programs and capturing more foodservice dollars.

### Private-Label Prevalence

The emphasis on value has resulted in an increased interest in private-label deli meats from both retailers and consumers.

To a generation of consumers, deli meat means whole-muscle meat; they may not even be aware of some of the processed meat alternatives that previous generations grew up on. For others, high-quality ethnic salami is the closest they've come in decades to processed meat. These are the consumers supermarket delis should target with their private-label programs.

"There continues to be a strong interest in high-end deli meats, specifically with retailers looking to add private-label programs," says Kyle Maas, product marketing manager at Grand Rapids, MI-based Michigan Turkey Producers. "There's clearly a much stronger emphasis on product quality now, as retailers are beginning to see the payoff. This, coupled with a sluggish economy, has nudged consumers toward the less expensive store brand over the national brand. I believe this will only gain momentum as people's perception of store brands continues to shift."

Many supermarket delis are now splitting their cases equally between high-end premium brands and value-priced private-label deli meats. "More recently, in this economy, we've seen more of a hit on premium brands. Folks are trading down to private label," says Ruth.

The focus on private-label products has resulted in volume growth, according to one major deli meat supplier. In response, a growing number of retailers is escalating private-

label products to the premium tier.

"Premium deli meats are driving more sales dollars and increased conversion of shoppers to the deli," says the Sara Lee spokesperson. "Value-tiered items still have a place in the case, but consumers still look to premium deli meats for value and consistency, as well as true meal solutions for their families."

### A Healthful And Flavorful Focus

Consumers may be contending with shrinking budgets, but they're not ready to sacrifice flavor or their health when shopping for deli meats. Short of something catastrophic, the I-want-it-all mentality is likely to weather this current economic storm.

"Great taste and wellness are becoming more inseparable in this category," Bulman says. "Deli meat manufacturers who understand consumer needs are pairing taste and wellness to provide a good consumer proposition for retailers to deliver to their customers."

Several companies are focusing on both taste and health. Creta Farms' gourmet deli meats are produced with first-pressed extra virgin olive oil. By creating a more healthful profile, "We've been able to absolve deli meats from their former reputation in the marketplace," adds Bulman.

In an effort to target consumers focused

on more healthful eating, Hatfield recently debuted a new deli meat line that replaces animal fat with olive oil. The line has been tested in the Northeast where it garnered a great deal of interest. Also targeting consumers looking for a more healthful deli meat profile, Sara Lee now offers a lower sodium line.

The continued focus on health doesn't circumvent flavor. Flavor still trumps everything else. If deli meat doesn't provide the taste consumers are looking for, they won't purchase the product a second time.

Consumers have not given up looking for new varieties and unique flavor profiles in all food items, including deli meat. "It's the consumers who dictate to the market the things they want to see," explains Bobby Yarborough, CEO of Manda Fine Meats, Baton Rouge, LA. "For example, Cajun isn't just a fad any longer. Spicy is here to stay."

Consumers want to enjoy quality deli meat but they remain focused on value and more healthful product profiles. Today's economy offers retailers a great opportunity to differentiate themselves. Supermarket delis that provide a wide selection of products, including premium brands, private-label meats, more healthful selections and a choice of flavors, will reap the rewards of repeated rings at the register. **DB**

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*"Flavor Says It All"*



# Roast Beef's Resurgence

With more healthful varieties and high quality lines, roast beef sales are holding steady

BY LISA WHITE

*Photo courtesy of Dietz & Watson*

**T**urkey may have reigned supreme as the deli's top meat in the past, but it now appears a roast beef revival may be in the works.

In the 52 weeks ending Feb. 2, 2009, roast beef sales totaled more than \$452 million and accounted for 79 percent of deli beef sales, ahead of pastrami and corned beef, according to FreshLook Marketing Group, Hoffman Estates, IL.

"The roast beef segment has been trending up for the last five years, but now it's at a little slower pace," says Joe McMurtrie, director of operations, Dietz & Watson, based in Philadelphia, PA.

According to Ken Hoffman, head of Dietz & Watson's advertising and sales promotions, the category has experienced about 15 percent growth so far this year.

A number of notable trends in this segment have helped propel this category's growth in recent years.

## What's Selling

With many consumers continuing to focus on more healthful eating, more retailers are focusing on roast beef products with minimal added ingredients.

"The main trend in this segment is that manufacturers are creating cleaner labels," relates Guy Giordano, president, Vincent Giordano Corp., Philadelphia, PA. "Specifically, retailers don't want to see allergens in these meats." In response, the company has created a new Angus top-round roast beef

line with all natural seasonings and is offering it at a lower price point than high-end natural and organic roast beef lines.

Consumers demonstrating increased interest in where food comes from and how it's produced are looking for minimally processed products. "At the deli counter, shoppers want products that are less processed with short ingredient statements," notes Gina Asoudegan, communications manager, Applegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ.

In today's economy, consumers also are looking for higher-quality roast beef at a value price. "We're constantly being asked to provide retailers with a high-end private label roast beef under the store brand or our brand [which are at more affordable price points than our competitors]," Giordano adds.

Charlie's Pride Meats, a roast beef supplier based in Vernon, CA, has seen a 10 to 15 percent drop in its sales in this meat category, according to Robert Dickman, president. "Our middle- and low-tier roast beef lines are selling the best," he says. "Still, our high-end Kobe beef is doing very well."

The company recently tried launching natural and organic lines, but the timing was off. "Today's environment is the worst to launch these types of products, because they're pricey," Dickman explains. "My prediction is the natural roast beef segment will thrive three years from now."

Applegate is seeing consumers migrate from organic to less expensive antibiotic-free meats. The only difference between the two

is in the animal food. Organic meat comes from animals fed 100 percent organic feed.

Consumers who feel strongly about the humane treatment of animals will continue to seek out natural and organic products that may have stricter standards in this regard. If prices increase, these shoppers will buy less but still remain loyal to this category.

"The feedback we receive from stores is that natural and organic meat products have much more price elasticity than conventional products, so consumers continue to buy them in the current economy," Asoudegan says. This is largely because the natural and organic meat customer is motivated by beliefs and values in addition to price.

Although Kathy Endicott, marketing specialist, E.W. Grobbel Sons, Detroit, MI, is noticing a trend toward minimally processed rare roast beef, she says ingredient changes have helped improve product shelf life and quality. "For example, there are ingredients that improve shelf life by actively minimizing bacterial growth."

Roast beef plants have made significant strides in sanitation and the reduction of cross-contamination through new processing equipment and enhanced process review. "With the post-pasteurization process, some products are briefly reheated after final packaging to reduce any cross-contamination that may have occurred during final pack," she explains.

Roast beef is more conservative in terms of flavors than other meat categories. "Flavors





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make up only about 5 percent of our business," notes Charlie's Dickman. "Old fashioned roast beef is still the biggest seller."

Current economic conditions have provided added opportunities for delis selling roast beef as part of a meal replacement program. "Roast beef sandwiches in the deli are faring better than center-of-the-plate products," according to Giordano of Vincent Giordano. "People are eating value consciously, so they would consider purchasing a deli sandwich before investing in a more costly meal."

As a result, retailers are becoming more creative with deli sandwich programs. To capture more of the foodservice business, many are creating signature programs or upscaling product, such as roast beef Reubens. These unique touches are helping to revitalize sandwich programs at retail.

Dietz & Watson's Hoffman says roast beef is a big player in sandwich programs because roast beef is more affordable in sandwiches than when purchased by the pound.

Still, with consumers' disposable income continuing to shrink, value is the focus. "In terms of foodservice, it's all about providing the best price possible," notes Charlie's Dickman. He predicts roast beef prices will stabilize and retailers will be able to pass on these savings to consumers.

### Marketing To Move Products

In the deli, roast beef is often placed on special alongside turkey, yet there are other effective and more proactive methods of merchandising these meats.

"Although in the past, retailers had been trending toward one brand across all items in the deli, recently there has been renewed interest in the best-in-class specialists like Grobbel's roast beef, corned beef and pastrami," claims Endicott. "This allows deli operators to create a more distinct identity, which is obviously advantageous."

Manufacturers have become increasingly creative in their marketing efforts. Vincent Giordano has been running a consumer video chef contest that will end June 15. Targeted toward college kids, it asks consumers to submit a video showing how they would create a sandwich with the company's deli meats. Winners will receive a \$4,000 prize. Based on the results, the company will donate up to \$40,000 to a children's charity. "In the past, we sponsored a Culinary Institute scholarship where we received creative sandwich ideas that we passed on to retailers," Giordano says.

Cross-merchandising also is an effective way to highlight roast beef products. Dickman believes that offering two-for-one spe-

cials and merchandising roast beef with sandwich fixings work well. "Retailers need to think outside the box," he says.

In conjunction with its roast beef lines, Dietz & Watson offers retailers point-of-sale materials and sandwich and party platter programs. "Customers are looking for new products, so it's imperative to make the deli a point of destination for roast beef," Hoffman adds.

Fortunately, with its price decreasing in recent months, roast beef will be on a more even keel with chicken and turkey. "Roast beef will continue to flourish," according to Dickman. "Manufacturers need to put out consistent product at a great price, and it will sell."

Supermarket delis that pay attention to trends, incorporate roast beef into innovative sandwich programs and properly merchandise a variety of roast beef items will experience increased revenues in this category. DB

### Roast Beef Trends

- Clean labels
- Minimal processing
- High quality at value prices
- Antibiotic-free
- Cooked rare
- Signature sandwiches

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# Dry-Cured Deli Meats

These “luxury” foods remain popular, despite the economy

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

**D**uring the past several years, Americans — inspired by travel, television shows, magazines and restaurant experiences — have discovered a wide range of cured meats from around the world. “People are eating more sophisticated foods with more sophisticated tastes. The time is right for these products for a lot of people in a lot of ways,” says Jim Carfrae, vice president marketing, Toronto, ON, Canada-based Santa Maria Foods Corporation, makers of Italian-style products including prosciutto and dry-cured salami.

Despite tighter budgets, consumers are still willing to purchase them. “I think part of it

is the excitement of discovering something new and delicious. European-style dry-cured meats are still new to many parts of the United States,” notes Davide Dukcevic, sales representative, Pascoag, RI-based Daniele, Inc., makers of “the whole spectrum of dry-cured meat products, from prosciutto to jamón Serrano, sopressata to chorizo, pancetta to Hungarian salami.”

At the same time, Carfrae notes, these foods are not so exotic that they scare people away. “It’s just one comfortable step away” from what they know, he says.

Dry-cured meats also offer an easy way for strapped consumers to have one small

taste of luxury, according to some. “You’re not eating a pound of it. A small portion goes a long way,” points out Ruth Lowenberg, a New York, NY-based spokesperson for the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma.

Many are unwilling to give up the foods they came to love during richer times. “So far, so good, thank goodness,” Dukcevic says of Daniele’s recent sales. “One reason we’re doing okay is because people can usually avoid the electronics store or the furniture store, they can’t avoid the supermarket. Daniele’s salami and prosciutto are still a very affordable reward for most people.” And, he notes, “People tell me they’re bored with the



conventional bologna, cooked ham and pepperoni they grew up with. I can understand that. When you taste mortadella for the first time, you usually don't go back to bologna."

Dry-cured hams, in particular, have gained popularity during the past several years. According to Alberto Minardi, general manager, Principe Foods USA, Inc., Long Beach, CA, "Consumers are becoming more aware of prosciutto in general." The company makes and exports a number of Italian foods, including prosciutto. "We aim to educate continuously through demonstrating the product at retail level as well as through trade media."

As Americans become more educated about these products, they not only become familiar with the taste of cured meats but also understand how to use them. "It's just great how versatile the products are," notes Santa Maria's Carfrae.

Spain's Serrano ham — though not as well-known as prosciutto — is reaping the rewards of a more food-educated America. "Spanish cuisine in general, and Serrano ham in particular, have become more popular and better-known in the last five years," says Kate Whittum, director of sales and marketing, Garden City, NY-based Redondo Iglesias USA, makers of Serrano ham. "Serrano will

really break into the gourmet mainstream when there's a line of grab-and-go products for pegboard walls in deli departments. We're actively working on this at Redondo USA."

Packaging has played a huge role in the continuing success of dry-cured meats in the deli, according to many in the industry. "The pre-sliced product is driving a lot of trial," says Carfrae. "People are a little nervous about asking for it at the deli counter."

The packaging allows more stores to carry a variety of cured meats without additional staff education or space. When pre-sliced prosciutto di Parma became widely available in the United States in 2003, it suddenly became possible for any store to carry it. A recent decision by the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma to approve an increase for the shelf life of some pre-sliced, packaged prosciutto di Parma from 90 to 120 days has opened the market even more. In the past, "A lot of smaller retailers were reluctant to get the pre-sliced prosciutto because they didn't want to be stuck with it," explains Lowenberg.

The Consorzio made the decision to allow a 120-day shelf life for prosciutto from hams weighing between 15.5 and 19 pounds, with corresponding curing times of 15 to 19 months, after extensive laboratory analysis



PHOTO COURTESY OF  
CONSORZIO DEL PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA

demonstrating that the quality and safety remained unaltered for that time. This is because, as the curing time increases, the moisture content of the ham decreases, resulting in a product that is more stable microbiologically and less susceptible to deterioration that could lead to changes in appearance, taste and aroma.

### Imports Still Strong

Consumers may still be buying imported cured meats, but that doesn't mean business is as strong as it always was. "As with any high-end luxury item, the economy has slightly affected sales, although retailers as well as foodservice operators understand the importance of providing a high-end choice for their consumers," notes Minardi.

Prosciutto di Parma felt a little bit of the sting in 2008. "We had a little setback, as any other specialty foods did, but no more so than other specialty foods," he says, adding that in March, sales had started to come back.

The slowdown is only natural considering how fast the growth rate was during better economic times. "Cured products, per se, during the past 10 years have seen double-digit growth in both foodservice and retail," Minardi notes. With many restaurants suffering during the economic downturn, sales of these items to foodservice are down. "But, funny enough, in terms of retail the slope has not been as much. Retailers are still holding up." One reason comes back to foodservice — prosciutto has become an important ingredient for retail sandwich programs.

Whittum notes an interesting trend. "There has been an interesting shift in the breakdown of the product mix in sales. Our younger boneless Roja jamón has become a smaller percentage of sales, while our trimmed and pressed Deli Loaf and the more aged Reserva Oro have increased. I believe this reflects two trends that have become apparent in the economic slowdown. First, operations are looking to be more efficient and decrease labor. The Deli Loaf is high-yield and



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very easy to use, so it cuts down on labor and has low shrink, even though it is more expensive per pound than the Roja jamón. The second trend is that businesses are looking to get good value for money, which doesn't necessarily mean using a cheaper product. The Riserva Oro is the best jamón Serrano available in the United States and consumers will still pay for quality. It's no bargain to decrease quality but leave pricing the same. The consumer knows what you're doing and feels

you're 'putting one over' on them."

Still, there are high-quality imported products with lower price points for those looking to cut back. Principe offers a prosciutto called Estero — under the brand name Bora — made using pigs raised outside of Italy. The raw material is premium, Minardi insists, but not as heavily regulated as Italian — the animals could be smaller, for example — and therefore less expensive. "The processing is done in the same plant

where we produce San Daniele, which means we use the same amount of salt for curing," he says. "Although the taste of Bora is not the same as San Daniele, it's still a very sweet product and a very velvety product. It's high-quality and value-driven at the same time."

### North America's High-Quality Alternatives

The comparatively low price point of cured meats produced in North America may explain why some of them are seeing growth while European versions remain steady.

"Our dry-cured salamis are up 6 percent this year and prosciutto sales are up 14 percent," reports Santa Maria's Carfrae, which prides itself on making high-quality cured meats in the Italian tradition. "What really makes them special is how they're made, in traditional ways with traditional recipes."

Some will argue these are not authentic European foods, but many companies strive to come close. "I think people respond to the authenticity of our dry salami products, their appearance which speaks to Italian traditions and perhaps a nostalgia for some among our customers," explains Paul Bertolli, founder and curemaster, Berkeley, CA-based Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi, makers of traditional Italian-style fermented salamis.

Daniele, a U.S.-based company, got its start in Europe. "In 1976, it was not allowed to bring prosciutto to this country from Italy. So my dad built a plant in Rhode Island. He found wonderful raw materials to work with — American hogs are corn-fed and second to none," says Dukcevic. Daniele now creates cured meats in a variety of European styles, including Spanish, in addition to the Italian and German-style products it began with.

But Europeans are not the only people whose cured meats are steeped in local tradition. Sometimes called "country ham," American-style dry-cured ham evolved from European recipes to become a traditional food in its own right. Most of these are made in the South, where the terrain is best suited for the job — the winters are cold but not so cold that the meat freezes, and summers offer perfect conditions for curing. Just as in Europe, smoky hams emerged in areas that tend to be more humid.

Most country hams are sold cooked or ready-to-cook (usually by frying or baking), possibly because of an old, unfounded fear of trichinosis. But as more raw cured hams are consumed by Americans, artisan producers are making country hams specifically to be eaten that way. These hams are much more expensive than commodity products, yet they're often a bargain compared to similar European products — something to consider these days when "value" has become an important word.

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# The Private Label Evolution

As retailers strive to distinguish their stores and offerings, private-label deli meats are becoming a point of differentiation.

BY LISA WHITE

Even before the economy took a turn, the private-label segment displayed healthy growth that many attribute to the multiple changes this category has undergone in recent years. Specifically, private label has expanded to include mid- and top-tier products.

Two trends — retailers' attempt to keep pace with recent price increases by national brands and the proliferation of new and high-value private-label items, especially in broad-based premium tiers — reveal increased consumer perception of store brands on equal terms with national brands and growing acceptance of premium and value-added private-label products across more categories.

"For the most part, store-brand products can be excellent alternatives to their branded counterparts," explains Alan Hiebert, education information specialist for the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI.

Many chains have begun offering several tiers of private-label deli meat products to appeal to a wide range of consumers and budgets. As full-color packaging has become more economical, chains can easily differentiate the tiers of private-label products and make them brands themselves, he notes.

Given the current economic conditions, more delis are using value private-label products to create price differentiation. "Up until late summer and early fall of 2008, the trends were moving toward more premium private-label meats," says Michael Gloyne, vice president and general manager of Smithfield, VA-based Smithfield Foods' deli group.

Now, stores are more likely to include both a higher-end and a value private-label deli

meat in the mix. "Stores used to have premium and mainstream branded products with a value private-label offering. Now, retailers are moving toward a two-tiered private-label deli meat program that includes either a mainstream and value offering or a more upscale line coupled with a mainstream or value line, both of which are offered along with a single manufacturer brand," explains David Gerle, senior director of lunchmeats for Tyson Foods in Springdale, AR. The two private-label meat tiers are distinguishable and segregated as are their branded counterparts.

"The fact that some retailers provide a two-tier private-label offering is a testament to the difficult economic times," notes Mark Ruth, national sales director at Hatfield Quality Meats, Hatfield, PA. Yet, these programs offer added opportunities. "Retailers can provide sound private-label products available only at their stores. These signature store brands have a closed audience."

The flexibility of these programs attracts many delis. According to Kristin Clemmer, director of marketplace strategy, Fresh Mark, Massillon, OH, "Each store has its own specs in terms of the meat and ingredients."

Offering more store brands also expands deli offerings, gets the store's name or brand out to consumers and helps solidify shoppers' relationship with the store. "Not only do these programs allow us to go outside our core, but we can also offer retailers more items," Ruth explains. "It's a nice way to get our foot in the door with a new customer."

The potential of these products has more retailers incorporating private-label programs into their service deli programs. "Even before the economy soured, private label was gaining

momentum in the service deli," Gerle adds. "This is because delis want customers to pick up something with their store name on it."

In the last six to 12 months, notes Bud Downing, Tyson product manager for deli meats, even smaller retailers are expanding their private-label deli meat programs since they can now tap into a working private-label production line or copy an existing formula, allowing them to match a current price point.

"If the private-label product is using an off-the-shelf formulation that's already in production, retailers can tie into existing production schedules and batch requirements," Gerle explains. "However, if retailers want to develop custom recipes, then minimum batch requirements and production restrictions come into play. These can drive up the cost or restrict a retailer's ability to offer all of the items it wants."

There are options, however, since retailers often source private-label products from multiple suppliers. "Retailers are typically looking for more than one private-label supplier," says Clemmer. "They generally seek lower-cost alternatives. For example, they may have a branded bologna line and are looking to take cost out of the product by switching to a private-label meat."

Suppliers usually bid for private-label contracts, so it's a price-oriented arrangement. "This may be why more commodity private-label products, such as bologna, are growing. It is really a price issue," she explains.

Typically, private-label sales are strongest for products that don't have a great deal of differentiation. For example, private-label bologna may sell better than higher-end meats. "Consumers are more likely to switch to

a private-label brand when the risk is lower in terms of compromising quality," Fresh Mark's Clemmer says. "They're more loyal to unique or high-quality brands. Shoppers also are willing to try private-label products that offer significant cost savings over branded items."

Most consumers are more likely to purchase a branded specialty deli meat than a private-label alternative. "Higher-end retailers, such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's, have their own higher-end private-label meats, but most chains wanted branded

products," relates Riccardo Mapelli, product manager and buyer of meat, cheese and Italian specialty products for Elizabeth, NJ-based Atalanta Corp., which imports products from more than 60 countries. "Upscale retailers and larger supermarket chains are private-label oriented for certain deli meats, but not so much for cured meat."

Whatever the product, it can be tricky for high-end retailers to private-label upscale brands. "Quality is not always equal, even with higher-priced brands," he adds. "We

teach retailers how to distinguish between quality and different prices."

### Marketing And Merchandising

Because private-label deli meats can be a good, lower-cost alternative to branded deli meats, supermarkets may benefit by emphasizing the price and quality of their private-label offerings. "In some stores, private-label products may benefit from front-and-center positioning. Others may have many customers looking for specialty products often not available in the store-brand line," explains IDDBA's Hiebert. "I think most stores should emphasize the value for the money their private-label products can give their customers. Chains across the country have hidden gems in their private-label lines."

Marketing and merchandising private-label deli meats are generally not much different than marketing and merchandising branded, although much depends on pricing arrangement with vendors. "Suppliers will provide a net price and then offer add-ons to fund promotions and point-of-sale materials," Tyson's Gerle notes. "Or retailers will tell vendors upfront when quoting on a program that they want it to include promos, point-of-sale material, signs, counter cards and any support a brand would have."

Retailers can fund marketing themselves, share costs with suppliers or include pricing in the program. "Private-label is mainly marketed in the store, so there are challenges," Smithfield's Gloyne says. "However, if delis utilize the same brands in the center of the store, they can capture umbrella marketing."

Suppliers believe most retailers can create a successful in-store marketing campaign around their name brand. "It's an extension of what they do as retailers. The promotional strategy should be the same as with a national brand," according to Hatfield's Ruth. "Stores can do brand comparisons as a way to get people to try private-label alternatives."

Other challenges exist. "For smaller retailers, it can be difficult getting manufacturers to pack enough product to make it worth their while," he continues. "To produce private-label products, suppliers need to change their production lines. If a store or chain doesn't have high enough counts or volume, this type of program isn't feasible."

By the same token, many branded manufacturers have a vested interest in their own brands, so many are not big proponents of private-label programs, which is not the case at Tyson Foods, Gerle says.

There also are obstacles to ensuring customer confidence in private-label products. "Retailers have done a great job in creating specs for these items," Gloyne says. "Now they're at a more acceptable quality level." DB

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# The World Is Flat

Flatbreads are more versatile than ever

BY BOB JOHNSON

Created before there were ovens, flatbreads require only an open heat source — a cooking utensil placed over fire or, in earliest times, just a bunch of really hot rocks. Asia gave us naan and papadams, the Americas tortillas and arepas, the Middle East pita and lavosh. Well-known items such as crepes, pancakes and matzoh are also flatbreads.

“Middle Eastern food is still very trendy because it’s healthful. You can use hummus with a flatbread cracker and it’s very healthful. But flatbreads are beyond a trend at this point. Most people are aware of them as a healthful bread alternative,” says Jenni Bon-signore, marketing manager for Valley Lahvosh Baking Company, Fresno, CA.

Flatbreads are also an economical alternative for austere times. “Flatbreads ‘eat big’

when made properly and are a value as a filling alternative to sliced bread. As specialty bread, they go well with higher-value deli meats, cheese and salads. Deli managers give shoppers a better value at the deli service counter and in grab-and-go centers making flatbread offerings a smart item, right for the economic times,” according to Bob Pallotta, president of Chicago, IL-based Tonic, a public relations firm that represents Flatout Flatbreads, Saline, MI.

The United States is a land of snackers, forever searching for something to satisfy their cravings. Many of today’s health-conscious consumers are ready to put aside salty potato chips with sour cream dips and try flatbread chips dipped in hummus or bruschetta. Technically, bruschetta is toasted bread but the

term has come to refer to the fresh tomato mixture that often tops bruschetta.

## Use Your Imagination

Flatbreads are now so popular it’s worth devoting more thought to their culinary and marketing possibilities. They can bring a new twist to a long list of familiar favorites including chips for dips, sandwiches and pizzas. “The category has grown in the last seven or eight years to the point that it means something to call it a category,” notes Demetrios Haralambatos, executive chef at Kontos Foods Inc., Patterson, NJ.

For example, in just a few years, panini have gone from being a novelty item to being a regular menu item in delis across the country. “Panini-grilled flatbread sandwiches are



Pita with hummus and falafel

increasingly showing up in deli service counters. New oval shaped flatbreads will make this application easier to prep, fold and serve," Tonic's Pallotta explains.

But the sandwich is just the beginning of uses for these versatile breads. They can be used as wraps or the base of a salad. While still fresh and soft, they can be filled, rolled and sliced. They can be cut into soft chips or toasted or fried for crisp chips, both of which can be used with any number of dips.

"You can use your imagination on how to use it," advises Nassem Ziyad, general manager of Cicero, IL-based Ziyad Brothers Importing, which offers a pita bread and hummus snack pack.

Kontos has come out with a combination product that includes pita and bruschetta. "Bruschetta is growing in upscale areas. Pop the pita in a toaster or oven, top it with the bruschetta, and you now have an appetizer," says Haralambatos.

Suppliers have many interesting usage ideas to share with retailers. "Manufacturers are helping with recipes that support a vast range of uses and give time-pressured chefs more options. One example is a 'peanut butter and jelly, granola and fruit' flatbread party platter recipe that shows flatbreads can deliver the big taste, comfort and appeal to

vegetarians and kids," Pallotta says.

Valley Lahvosh has tapped into the snack market with its cinnamon flavored lahvosh that offers a touch of sweetness. Two years ago the bakery started making sweetheart snacks, a heart-shaped flatbread cracker that comes in original and cinnamon flavors.

"We've even seen our flatbreads sold to a restaurant chain that takes them, cuts them into strips, seasons them with olive oil and spices, heats them and serves them along side some delicious spreads," says Karen Toufayan, senior vice president of sales for Toufayan Bakeries, Inc., Ridgefield, NJ.

Consumers who try prepared flatbread items in the deli department may have an interest in recreating them at home when time permits. "When deli managers are able to pull flatbreads off retail shelves and incorporate them into their deli menus, it's a double winner — driving deli sales and retail shopping basket sales. They showcase flatbreads' taste and help shoppers understand all the uses flatbreads have," Pallotta adds.

#### Pizza My Heart

Flatbread pizza is poised to be a big seller because it hits a lot of buttons. It's healthful, especially when made with vegetable toppings. It's convenient, even more than take-

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and-bake or frozen pizza. It can be eaten at the deli, taken home and quickly baked or sold as components to assemble at home.

Lahvosh is a thin, stiff flatbread that has become popular because of its versatility. It can be used in place of crackers or as a bread alternative. And it makes a delicious pizza crust. "It's a great alternative thin pizza crust. It absorbs moisture, and you can throw it in the oven for just four minutes because it's already baked," according to Bonsignore of Lahvosh Bakery.

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Flatbread pizza crusts are available in a variety of sizes and shapes. "Savvy manufacturers are offering new shapes from rectangular sizes to make 'four by four pizzas' to unique plank pizza flatbreads that are five by 15 inches. Topping pizza with fresh greens is a simple way to combine taste, health and seasonal options," relates Tonic's Pallotta.

Almost any kind of flatbread will serve as a pizza crust. "Naan can be used to make pizzas in store. The consumer can take it home, pop it in a toaster oven and have a 7- or 8-inch pizza," suggests Kontos' Haralambatos.

### It's A Small World

Few foods better exemplify what a small world it has become like a Mexican inspired pizza baked on a chipotle-flavored flatbread.

Flatbread products made in the local traditions of every area of the Middle East and Central Asia are now readily available. And exciting new flatbread products from even more regions are being made available. The key to sorting out this expanding assortment is in knowing who your customers are. "The line you should carry depends on the demographics of the store. If you try to put four or five Indian flatbreads in a store that doesn't have Indians, Pakistanis or Bangladeshis, they won't sell," advises Haralambatos.

Kontos is introducing a new line of flatbreads called Panplano, intended to serve Hispanic consumers and particularly Mexican-Americans. The line includes five different flavor profiles: Pico De Gallo, Chipotle, Sweet Onion, Jalapeño and Gordita. "We pride ourselves in being an innovator. We have expanded the South Central Asian flatbreads and expanded the Mediterranean collection," Haralambatos says.

### Tap Into Health

As new flatbread products come on line, their No. 1 selling point is that they offer healthful alternatives, so the new flavors that last will probably be the most healthful.

"Adding new flavors just as flavors is not enough," cautions Pallotta. "The new flatbreads are those with healthful ingredients such as whole grains and multigrain including flax. Omega-3 is an on-trend clue for health-conscious shoppers. Ancient grains, such as kamut, millet and spelt, are the next step forward that will enhance flatbread as a healthful alternative. A growing awareness of health and diet issues requires deli to offer more options and solutions that shoppers can pick up on quickly. Flatbreads fit well for example with diets such as the Mediterranean Diet, Weight Watchers or the Best Life Diet.

"Manufacturers help delis when they

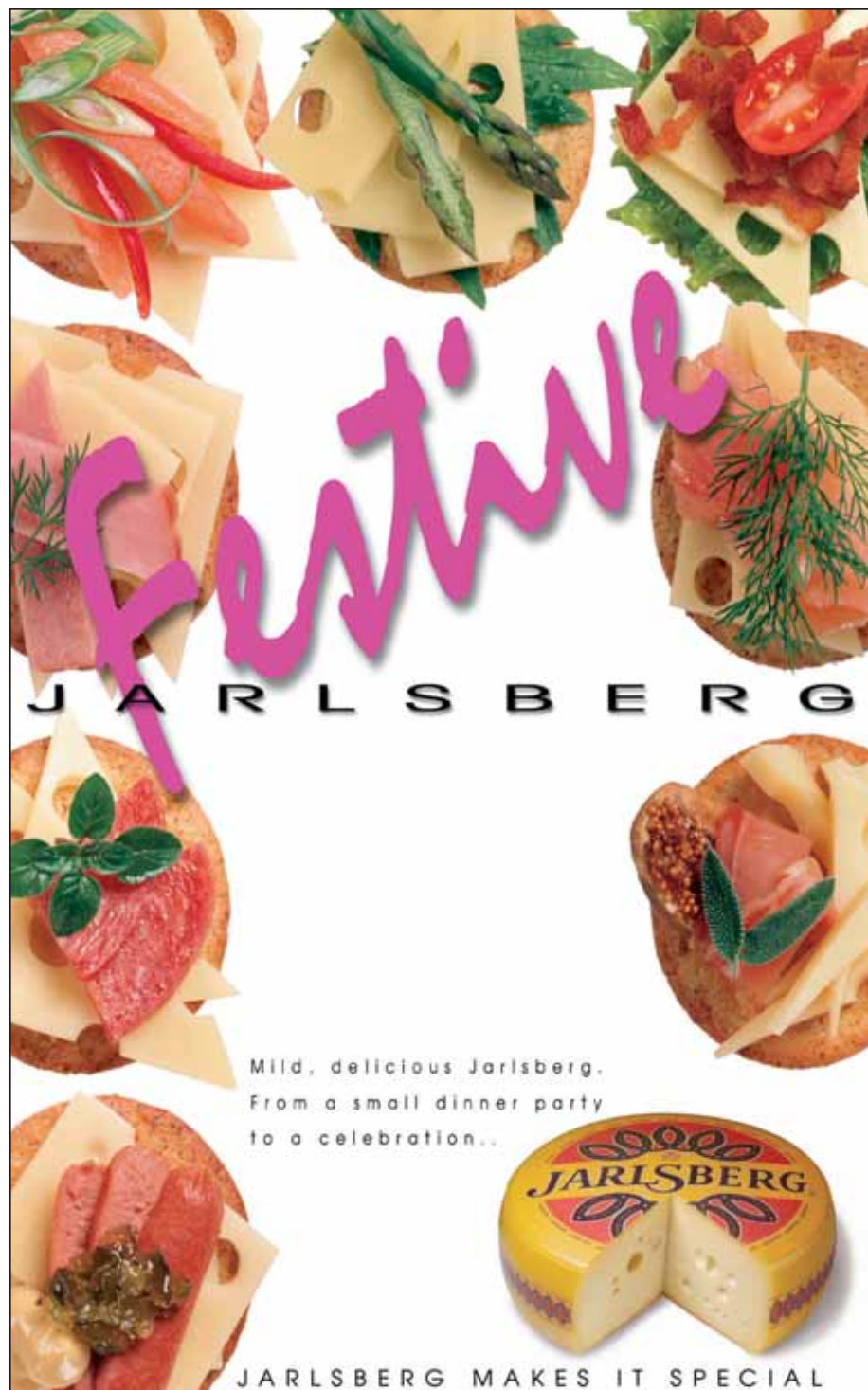
point out that their flatbreads fit these diets and give recipes that work with them, such as a healthful chicken kabob flatbread sandwich made with hummus as a base in place of mayo. This is a smart way to help. Dieters have a reason to return to delis for big taste and no guilt," he continues.

Many producers see multigrain or all-natural flatbread products as the wave of the future. "Multigrain is becoming increasingly popular. It's somewhat like the trend of the low-carb diet, but I feel it's here to stay," says

Toufayan. The wheat products, including wraps and pitas, are outselling the white flour products two to one. Based on this trend, Toufayan Bakeries now offers a multi-grain lavosh flatbread.

"A multigrain is probably your top mover. People are very health conscious these days," notes Ziyad of Ziyad Brothers. He believes flatbreads that include whole wheat, cracked wheat and other grains are likely to appeal to the growing number of health-conscious consumers.

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# Craving Comfort

During difficult times, consumers gravitate toward favorite salads and sides – often with a new twist

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

The worst economy since the Great Depression, ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the continuing threat of terrorism, and an outbreak of the dreaded swine flu. It's no wonder Americans are gravitating toward food that harkens back to happier times. In recent years, makers of so-called comfort foods have reported sales surges as consumers turn to foods that make them feel safe and bring back memories of childhood and family gatherings.

While comfort foods run the gamut from meat loaf and hamburgers to ice cream and apple pie, no category embodies comfort foods like salads and sides. Mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, potato salad, macaroni salad, coleslaw – all evoke the kind of warm fuzzies people need during trying times. Not surprisingly, salad and sides manufacturers are reporting strong interest in old favorites.

"While consumers are interested in trying new, exotic flavors, most of the volume and the greatest percentage of households are buying the basic items that have been around

for a long time – mashed potatoes, mac 'n cheese, deli salads," says David Lakey, vice president of marketing for Reser's Fine Foods, based in Beaverton, OR. "We think it's related to comfort foods, cocooning in an uncertain world, having familiar foods to serve their family."

John Becker, senior director of sales for Medina, OH-based Sandridge Food Corporation, reports strong interest in products that fall into the category of "what you get at Grandma's house." That trend is particularly strong in the Midwest, he says, because so many blue-collar workers have been stung by layoffs. Feeling less adventurous these days, they're looking to spend whatever available income they have on products they know and love, rather than risking their discretionary income on a new product that they may not like and that is apt to cost them considerably more.

Mrs. Gerry's Kitchen, Albert Lea, MN, reports strong sales of commodity salads, including coleslaw, potato salad, and maca-

roni salad, according to Brenda Donahe, director of sales and marketing. She also cites strong sales of one of Mrs. Gerry's newest products, which is actually a comfort food favorite — fresh mashed potatoes. Donahe credits its introduction with helping "even out" an otherwise heavily seasonal category, particularly in the North and Midwest where the category tends to spike during the summer picnic months. A beloved comfort food, mashed potatoes have more year-round appeal.

It may be a matter of convincing retailers it's in their best interest to stop focusing the bulk of their efforts on promoting the latest and greatest. "Retailers are finding some of their ventures away from traditional products have not panned out," says Lakey. "They've strayed too far from things consumers understand and want to eat at home. In the future, they need to de-emphasize promoting exotic, unfamiliar flavors and re-emphasize traditional, high-volume products that have wide appeal."



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## Mixing Things Up

At the same time, Reser's Lakey concedes there may be room for both traditional products and new flavors to coexist peacefully in the category. A number of manufacturers have also seen this trend, with several reporting success with a "new spin on old favorites" approach to product development.

ASK Foods, Palmyra, PA, for example, has garnered positive consumer response with its Buffalo Blue Cheese Potato Salad and Yukon Gold Mashed Potatoes, according to CEO Wendy DiMatteo.

Sandridge has put a new spin on chicken salad, rolling out Dijon Chicken Salad, Grilled Chicken with Fennel Salad, and Country Club Chicken Salad, which is made with ranch dressing. The company has also added a new twist to its pasta salads, adding ingredients such as sundried tomatoes. Becker calls such innovations "natural progressions to a base line of business."

Hans Kissle, Haverhill, MA, has taken this approach to an extreme, rolling out a bevy of products that take an old favorite and turn it on its ear, says Craig Drinkwater, director of sales. Examples include Roasted Sweet Potato Salad, German Potato Salad with Bacon, Blue Cheese Potato Salad, Buffalo Chicken Salad, Chicken Salad with Cranberries and Nuts, Santa Fe Pepper Slaw, Asian Seafood Medley, Creole Rice & Beans, and Carrot & Raisin Salad.

"Bold flavors and colors are important to keep the category growing," explains Drinkwater. "The staples of potato, mac, and coleslaw will still be in the forefront, but it's definitely the different, unique, and bold flavors that people are going after."

So far, the country's economic difficulties have not tolled the death knell for upscale salads and sides, to DiMatteo's great relief. "We were concerned about some of our higher-end products falling by the wayside

with the issues in the economy, but that hasn't really been the case. Some of the very high end may have been hurt a little, but we still see strong support in terms of some of the more complex salads that are a little more expensive."

## Making It Easy

In an effort to help retailers give struggling consumers lower-priced options, Sandridge reduced some of its pack sizes, bringing the 3-pound family-size packs down to a 2-pound size and 1-pound packs down to eight ounces in certain instances. The results have far outpaced expectations.

"We did it originally as a defensive strategy to say, 'Let's see if we can get the ring down to make it a little more palatable,'" says Becker. "At first, we were happy if we sold just the same number of units, but we've actually overtaken the total pound. Not only have we replaced the units, but we've actually also sold more total pounds to the customers that made the transition."

A number of manufacturers are reporting growth at both ends of the spectrum — in larger packs and smaller packs — while those in the middle may be losing ground. In terms of side dishes, large sizes are growing in popularity, particularly in club stores, according to Lakey. Meanwhile, he says, retailers are increasingly asking for smaller sides.

Consumer purchasing decisions are often based on the size of their household. "Smaller households want the smaller sizes, even more so today because they don't want to waste food," Lakey continues. "On the other hand, with an increase in the number of meals being eaten at home, there's even better value to be found in large sizes among the larger households."

Seeking to help budget-conscious consumers while building on their own brand equity, a growing number of retailers are

expanding their private-label offerings. Increasingly, that involves custom formulations that serve to distinguish a particular chain from its competitors.

"A lot of our customers want to have proprietary recipes or at least regionally proprietary to their specific trading area," says DiMatteo. "They want these products to serve as a point of differentiation, where people walk into their store for a specific item they perceive to be available only at that store. It's a smart strategy." Fifty to 60 percent of ASK customers use their own recipes, filling the rest of their private-label line with existing ASK products under their store brand label.

Retailers seeking the lowest-cost options are willing to use existing formulas, notes Lakey. He sees a definite advantage to this approach in that these formulas have been tested in multiple plants and are already consumed by thousands, if not millions, of consumers. A custom formulation, on the other hand, has not yet proven itself and may fail to garner favor among consumers, resulting in a greater failure rate and increased costs.

Whether it's private label or branded, DiMatteo says consumers like the convenience of pre-packaged salads and sides because they can easily be taken to a picnic or party. "Table-ready containers" have become a focus of companies such as ASK that wish to make it easy for consumers to make their products part of their special occasion.

At the same time, Mrs. Gerry's Donahe cites a "definite increase" in bulk items, as retailers resume their focus on the full-service deli case. Admittedly, she concedes, some consumers will always remain committed to grab-and-go pre-packed products because of the extended shelf life.

Many consumers perceive items in the deli case to be fresher than pre-packaged products, according to DiMatteo. Her customers tend to strike a balance between pre-packed and deli case, often choosing to merchandise items in the case if they display better that way. Some retailers merchandise the same items in both locations to maximize their business.

The trend toward pre-pack or full-service is cyclical, relates Becker. In terms of his customer base, those trending toward full-service are placing their more upscale offerings in the case and keeping the value-priced commodity offerings in the grab-and-go section. The rationale is simple. "Retailers have to sell an awful lot of potato salad at \$1.99 a pound to make any money. What they're saying is, 'If I have a really nice coleslaw or upscale pasta I can sell for \$6, \$7 or \$8 a pound, I'll take those customers coming to my bulk case all day long.'"

**DB**



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# Merchandise Like You Mean It

When times get tough, cheese departments turn to creative merchandising solutions

BY JOANNE FRIEDRICK

Cheese consumption continues to edge upward — it hit 32.7 pounds per capita in 2007 — which means more activity in stores and at the deli counter.

Industry estimates reported by the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, DC, claim more than 300 varieties of cheese are now available to American consumers.

While access to imports continues to slide, falling by 16 percent to an estimated 165,000 tons in 2008, cheese production within the United States is on the rise, according to the *Dairy: World Markets and Trade* report issued in December 2008 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

For the deli department, this translates to continuing competition for space, especially as American-made products look to garner real estate previously held by imports. So even though consumers are shopping with a wary eye on their wallets, they are still looking to the deli to guide them through this burgeoning selection of cheeses.

## Promo, Then Promo Some More

Cost-conscious cheese merchandising can be a win for the brand, the consumer and the department.

A major part of that is the in-store promotion, be it a sampling program, a display, or a price break.

"In times like this, it's important to continue promotions," says Michael Evan Blum, sales and marketing manager, Beemster Cheese USA, Jersey City, NJ. "Stores that stop promotions will be the ones hit."

Blum says retailers should take advantage of what is available to them for displays, such as the big wheels of Beemster's Dutch cheese. If the thought of building a display with a real wheel isn't feasible, the company provides prop wheels that can be merchandised with wrapped wedges.

According to Gabriel Robles, president





and CEO, Queso Campesino, based in Denver, CO, "In this economy, people are sensitive to price and portion size. You have to get more creative."

Sampling is one of the easiest ways to introduce consumers to a cheese, but if the promotion isn't handled correctly, it can be money wasted. "People should offer samples to those who are trying to decide which cheese to buy," says Robles. "You shouldn't just be feeding people who are hungry."

"The name of the game is getting the consumer to buy," notes Fred Chesman, vice president cheese department, Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ. He believes sampling works but there is a cost associated with it. An active sampling program requires the store or the supplier to provide people to handle the demos. Chesman says Atalanta will send producers to do in-store events, which have the benefit of both sampling and education. "People like to see the people who make the cheese."

That approach has worked for Heather Fiscali, who with her husband John operates Fiscali Farms in Modesto, CA. "We do a lot of in-store demos in California and elsewhere. Everyone wants to hear the story and hear from the cheesemaker." Fis-



calini prefers to do the demos herself rather than leave it to the store or hire someone to do them. "We feel we're the best marketers of our cheese," she explains.

"This is the time for brand awareness," relates Deanna Finegan, marketing manager at Norseland Inc., Stamford, CT. During a recession, she says, some consumers aban-

don brands and turn to private label, so it's important to stress what a brand stands for, such as quality, consistency and better taste.

Norseland, which handles brands such as Jarlsberg, Jarlsberg Lite, Boursin and others, has six themed promotions planned for this year. A grilling promotion, scheduled for the summer months, includes recipes, \$1 off



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coupons, shelf talkers and materials to help retailers build mass displays. Displays traditionally help create more turns in a product line, according to Finegan.

Merchandising a product as an award winner builds recognition for the brand and cachet for retailer selling it, advises Fiscalini, whose Cheddar is an award winner. She uses the World Cheese and American Cheese Society (ACS) award-winning status on signage and encourages retailers to create special sections for blue-ribbon cheeses.

Getting products into the minds of consumers via specialty ads or news items placed in the newspaper food section are also effective marketing tools, says Chesman, because they drive people into the stores. Once there, retailers have the opportunity to build additional sales through price reductions and other events.

#### Establish A Point Of Differentiation

Deli departments should have the advantage of offering more variety than dairy departments, says Matt Curl, sales manager for Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA. He encourages retailers, especially in tough times, to present a clean, full case with depth of product.

If a retailer needs to watch the bottom

line, he advises having shrink procedures in place before the product gets to expiration and continuing to review the variety in the cheese case. "Delis need to maintain their point of differentiation, which is variety."

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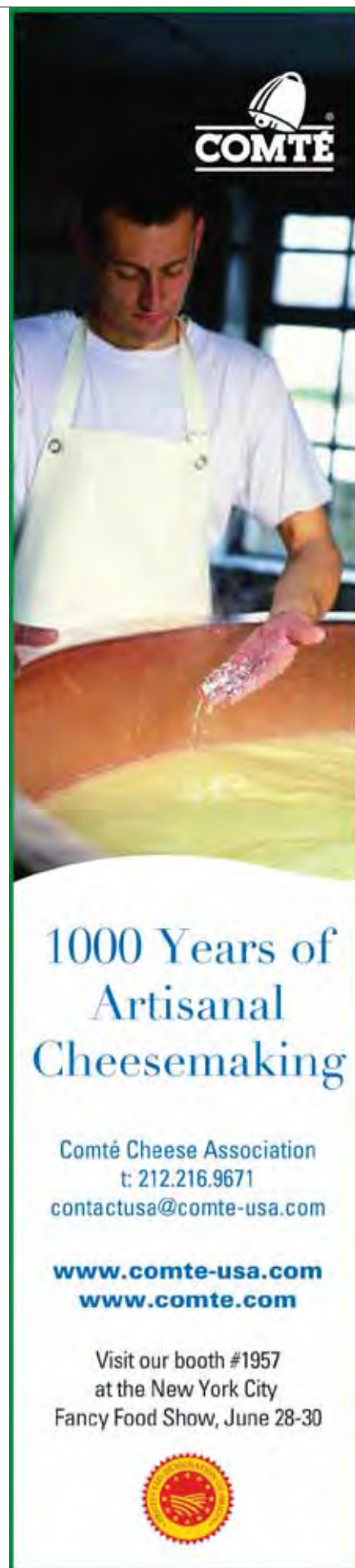
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the description of the cheese, its country of origin, milk type and wine pairing. Traditionally, he adds, items that are showcased sell the best “and feature items make the department unique.”

Not every product needs, or should have, a sign, cautions Atlanta’s Curl. Rather, select feature products within designated categories such as farmstead cheeses, ACS winners, imports and local treasures.

#### Make It Easy To Use

Queso Campesino’s Robles believes both retailers and manufacturers should look for ways to move products through the channel. One way to do that is to educate consumers on what the product is, how to use it and even what it is similar to.

Hispanic cheeses, while naturally lending themselves to Latin and Mexican dishes, can also be substitutes for other commonly used ingredients, says Robles. Crema Mexicana, for example, is a good substitute for sour cream and Requeson is the Mexican equivalent of Ricotta. Queso Campesino is putting comparisons on the labels and recipes on its Website and in stores to encourage the use of the Hispanic products.

Booklets, recipes and anything that helps explain how to use the cheese is getting attention from retailers these days. Finegan says Norseland has developed a wine and cheese-pairing guide for six brands. The guide offers upscale pairings using items that can be found in the deli, such as bread, nuts and specialty meats. “It’s a way to incorporate different specialty brands together.”

Several industry leaders point to the practice of merchandising smaller, pre-cut

wedges to hit a price point attractive to consumers. “The biggest thing I’ve seen is manufacturers offering smaller cut sizes,” says Curl. In an attempt to hit a less-than-\$10 price point, manufacturers are offering smaller, pre-cut pieces.

For stores that cut cheese themselves, Curl suggests selling sample sizes and merchandising them in a basket. Consumers can pick a few they want to try and come back at another time to purchase a larger piece of

a cheese they enjoyed.

#### Don’t Be Afraid To Ask

Need a little help meeting that sales quota this week? Chesman of Atlanta says don’t hesitate to ask importers or suppliers what they’ve got too much of and if you can have it at a price where it can work for both of you.

“What a retailer has to do is bombard suppliers with questions,” he advises, adding,

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## All They're Cracked Up To Be BY JOANNE FRIEDRICK

Just as the cheese category has evolved with myriad flavors, styles and consistencies, so too has that ubiquitous accompaniment — the cracker.

Although saltines and round, buttery crackers are still adequate carriers for many foods, most deli department managers are aiming to differentiate their sections from the standard grocery aisle fare with crackers in various shapes, sizes, textures and colors, as well as with subtle flavors that complement, rather than compete with, the cheese.

"Crackers are a natural fit" in the deli, says Deanna Finegan, marketing manager for Norseland Inc., Stamford, CT. She suggests basic water crackers as a "safe choice" to serve with the variety of Norwegian, Spanish and other cheeses Norseland handles.

Simply put, crackers make it easier for consumers to enjoy the cheeses they purchase, notes Michael Thompson, president of Venus Wafers, Hingham, MA. "Eighty percent of people will probably eat their cheese with a cracker," he states.

The differing textures of stoned wheat, water crackers and flatbreads can play off the boldness or mildness of a cheese, as well as its consistency, he notes. "With a softer cheese, for example, you want a cracker with a creamier mouth feel."

Denver, CO-based 34 Degrees has developed Australian-inspired crispbreads, as opposed to crackers, that are cre-

ated to serve multiple functions beyond pairing with cheese, according to founder Craig Lieberman. "The way we pitch it, the crackers are light and thin, allowing more room for the cheese" being consumed.

"The packaging, the box and the copy are all related to the deli and the cheese case setting," he explains. The boxes can be merchandised horizontally or vertically, depending on whether the deli department uses baskets or the case top and shelves for displays. Shippers, such as the one 34 Degrees is launching for the holidays, can also assist delis cross-merchandise crackers with cheese without giving up valuable counter space.

Serving suggestion cards for each of the four flavors help customers and deli personnel pair the crackers with various cheeses and accompaniments, adds Lieberman. A bold Blue may be the showcase with the natural flavor, while herbed goat cheese gets a lift from a pairing with a rosemary-flavored variety.

Lieberman says cheesemakers have suggested their own best selections among the crispbreads. "We try to partner with American artisanal cheesemakers. It's an informal partnership: We like their product and they like ours."

Venus Wafers partners with cheese companies for in-store promotions that highlight deli cheeses and specialty crackers, notes Thompson. He believes having crackers unique to the deli is important to build traffic in the department and, he notes, the growth of the Mediterranean Diet and the low-fat lifestyle have helped flatbreads flourish in the deli over the past eight years.

"I always felt it was easy to get crackers in the deli. But sometimes the crackers get co-opted by the grocery department," says Thompson.

Within the deli, "You're talking about an experience, not just filling the pantry." By providing a host of products that work together, "You're trying to capture people with an entertainment occasion in mind."

All types of accompaniments are critical to the successful merchandising of cheese, says Matt Curl, sales manager for Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA. By offering customers the opportunity to buy crackers, as well as allied items such as fig spread and Marcona almonds with their Brie, the deli department is going from a single cash-register ring to multiple sales, he points out. **DB**

"Suppliers will take the initiative to help you sell their products."

Blum says many of Beemster's promotions are designed to entice the consumer and help out the retailer, such as the buy two wheels, get a case of shredded cheese for free. The promo helps promote the new cheese in cups, he says, and gives retailers the opportunity to try a new product with little risk.

"Now is the time to try new items if they fit with your profile," adds Blum. "Come to the supplier with an idea and work together. We all have to survive the economy." **DB**

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# Fresh For Summer

## Goat cheese goes casual for warm weather dining

BY LISA FUTTERMAN

Putting fresh goat cheeses on your customer's summertime dinner table can be as straightforward as slathering butter on fresh corn on the cob. In warm weather, most shoppers crave easy ideas for no-cook meals and appetizing recipes for outdoor dining. Fresh goat cheeses can brighten both hot and cold meals as well as add simple elegance to summer grilling and entertaining.

In the past several years, American retailers have seen huge increases in fresh goat cheese sales, thanks in part to their availability in a growing range of restaurant menu items. "Chefs led the way in their interest in this multipurpose cheese that allows creativity," says Dominique Penicaud, general manager of Couturier North America, based in Warwick, RI.

Lindsay Gregory, marketing manager for Woolwich Dairy, based in Orangeville, ON, Canada, believes consumers are becoming educated through travel and realize they can recreate the dishes they encounter on their trips when they get home.

Showing customers how to bring these dishes to their own table can spike interest and change buying habits. Retailers should start to see sales bumps if they provide recipe cards for trendy items, such as goat cheese pizza or panini, and if they demo easy-to-make appetizers.

Arnaud Solandt, general manager for Montchevré, based in Rolling Hills Estates, CA, recommends opening packages and custom seasoning the cheeses for in-store tastings. "Cover goat logs with prepared tapenade and you create a simple summer appetizer and a perfect cross-promotion."

Consumer acceptance of fresh goat cheeses has brought dozens of varieties to market. Montchevré offers a wide range of products, including fresh logs, Chabis and Crottin, Feta and crumbles, to appeal to a wide range of consumers. "Consumers are always looking for direction," notes Solandt, "so we make a variety of cheeses with goat's milk. The crumbled goat is great for salads,



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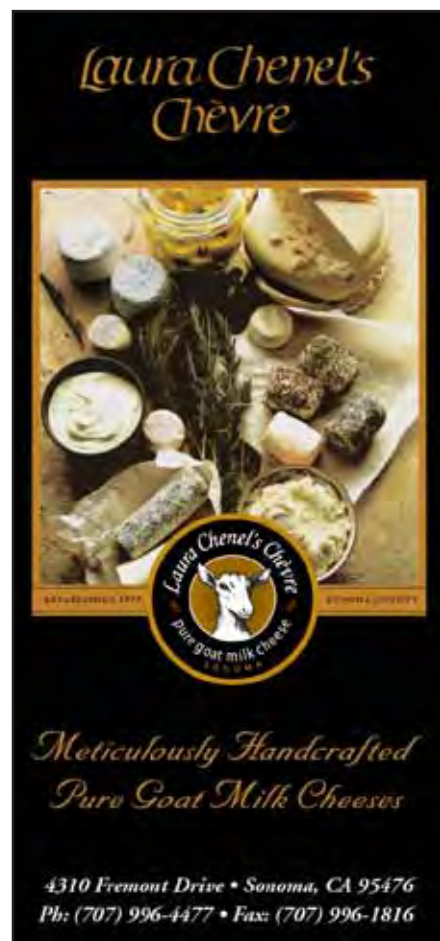
but goat Feta applies for salads as well."

Coach Farm, based in Pine Plains, NY, introduced goat milk Ricotta this past year. "Its sweet, grassy flavor adds freshness and interest to lasagnas and other baked pastas," relates Nancy Austin, director of marketing. "Our award-winning buttons are also refreshing for summer; their lemony taste goes great with the herb coating, especially the dill flavor."

Allowing customers to taste these items, either in simple preparations or on their own, will remove much of the mystery around them, making them less intimidating to an increasing number of shoppers.

Meyenberg Goat Milk Products, based in Turlock, CA, has introduced goat butter and goat cream cheese, two newer goat milk products that are quite trendy and chic but that require some customer education to generate sales. "The chefs are going crazy but consumers need to be taught how to use these products in everyday recipes," explains Tracy Darrimon, director of marketing.

For example, the tangy goat butter can be made into a compound butter — just add herbs and seasonings, freeze and then slice for a no-cook sauce to accompany grilled items for quick summer eating. "Because it



has a lower melting point than traditional cow's milk butter, it melts easier, plus it has a higher perceived value than regular butter," says Darrimon.

Goat cream cheese works well in breakfast applications and easy summer appetizers and can be directly substituted for traditional cream cheese. It presents an especially effective opportunity for passive in-store sampling; customers will be surprised by the fresh yet familiar tangy taste and are quite likely to pick up a container.

### Creative Merchandising Techniques

Merchandising creatively to promote a wide variety of uses can increase sales. Woolwich's Gregory suggests giving consumers quick little ideas — such as picking up some flatbreads to dip in or spread with fresh goat cheese.

Cross-merchandising out of the department can be quite effective. "We suggest merchandising the cheeses next to the salad vegetables in the produce department," says Solandt. Other simple cross-promotions highlighting artisan breads, crackers or fresh summer berries or figs can also boost sales. "The retailer can ask the distributors for promotional pricing and they should chip right in," he adds.

Jacquelyn Buchanan, director of culinary development for Laura Chenel's Chèvre,

Inc., based in Santa Rosa, CA, is another proponent of cross-merchandising. "Summer is the time of year when tomatoes are in their prime. A display of balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, [fresh goat] logs, fresh basil, tomatoes, and loaves of artisan bread would create a simple suggestion."

Couturier's Penicaud suggests placing fresh goat cheese in the meat department to promote cooking with goat cheese in grilling season. "Goat cheese brings more flavor to bland chicken than most regular cheeses. Offer a recipe card suggesting a chicken breast stuffed with goat cheese and garlic cooked outside on the grill." In the produce department, place goat cheeses next to popular grilling vegetables — zucchini, peppers, eggplant — to encourage a Mediterranean-themed meal.

Don't forget to emphasize the visual appeal of goat cheese. Its vibrant white color and round shape can be a great foil for the summer vegetable color spectrum. "Its distinct individual slices stay round because it doesn't melt like standard cheeses," notes Penicaud. Provide recipe cards with colorful photographs of pizzas and salads and bring them to life by sampling rounds of warmed goat cheese.

For the ultimate riot of color, Cécile Delannes, ambassadrice of The French Cheese Club, based in College Park, MD,



suggests packaging fresh goat cheese rounds decorated “the French way” with edible flowers. Even though fresh flowers are quite perishable, their whimsical summery feel creates an original and impactful appeal.

Affordable luxury is an exotic angle for merchandising fresh goat cheese during tough economic times. Delannes suggests inviting customers on a “food adventure” in these days when consumers are limiting travel and watching their pennies. “It is easy,” she says, “to create a Provençal environment with a Provençal tablecloth and a bottle of

states Penicaud. “People who regularly eat specialty cheeses don’t worry much about the fat content, but the fact that it is easier to digest allows new customers to enjoy it.”

Many domestic goat cheeses come from small producers who pay attention to how the goats are raised. Austin calls the Coach Farm goats “a happy herd” whose milk has no additives, hormones, or antibiotics.

Retailers should highlight quality farmstead cheeses and educate consumers about

their fine points. Shelf talkers and cut sheets can help point up the health benefits of fresh goat cheeses in comparison to other summer best sellers.

Meyenberg’s Darrimon teaches consumers about the health benefits of goat milk products primarily through printed brochures and packaging, but she also uses the Internet to raise awareness. “I post to blogs on health-oriented Websites to answer questions about the benefits of fresh goat’s milk

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rosé wine.” Just add fresh goat cheese buttons and a baguette and customers feel as if they’re on a picnic in the South of France. Suggesting fresh goat cheese is an affordable treat and cross-merchandising it with wines, nuts, jams, and honeys gives consumers the permission they need to indulge.

Goat cheese also represents a counterpoint to luxury — the healthful indulgence. Much of goat cheese’s increasing popularity can be attributed to its healthful nature. Not only is goat’s milk lower in fat and higher in calcium and many vitamins than cow’s milk, but it is also easier to digest due to its smaller fat particles. “This is a great health advantage for those who are lactose intolerant,”



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and the cheeses made from them," she notes. Retailers might want to consider blogging about all types of promotions and issues of interest to their current and potential customers on their own company Websites, and they can cross-promote the Website in store with signage and sign-up cards.

Beverage pairings are another popular trend that retailers can promote. Solandt of Montchevré recommends pairing amber beers with fresh goat cheese for summer,

while mentioning that wine and cheese is the classic way to go. "Goat cheese goes with every wine depending on the season," he says. Feature light, bright summer wines and clean summer beers on goat cheese displays to emphasize summer snacking.

Helping customers keep track of their pairing preferences can keep them coming back. "Get the customer more involved," advises Darrimon. "Give them an index card, have them record their taste preferences and



PHOTO COURTESY OF REDWOOD HILL FARM AND CREAMERY

keep them in a file behind the counter." Or create a computerized customer profile if you have the capability. Customers appreciate that you can see at a glance they loved the Frog's Leap Sauvignon Blanc with Coupole from Vermont Butter & Cheese.

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In any customer interaction, the retailer's enthusiasm and passion for a product will ultimately increase sales of that product. Encourage your staff and your customers to share their ideas for easy and elegant summer appetizer ideas, refreshing salads, delicious grilling recipes, and favorite beverage pairings — and watch the demand for fresh goat cheese soar.

**DB**



# World Class Cheeses From The Heartland

Wisconsin cheeses are taking on all comers and beating them handily

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

In recent years, consumers have shown increasing interest in domestic regional foods. Armed with buzzwords such as slow food and eating local, they want to learn about the land where the product is created and the artisans who created it.

"American cheeses have improved in selection and quantity," says Sid Cook, master cheesemaker and fourth-generation owner of LaValle, WI-based Carr Valley Cheese Co., which produces a multitude of cheeses from cow's milk and sheep's milk.

Wisconsin is home to dozens of family-run dairy farms, many of which are artisanal farmstead cheesemaking operations. During 2007, 2.5 billion pounds of cheese were produced in the state, according to the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI. There has been remarkably steady growth in volume since 1977, the first year WMMB kept annual statistics. That year, Wisconsin produced 1.3 billion pounds of cheese.

"There's so much emphasis today on being local — on buying from local farms or farmers," relates Marilyn Wilkinson, WMMB director of national product communications. "Once people become aware of how sophisticated Wisconsin cheeses are, they're surprised when they find out the scope and the ethnicity."

Many of the state's cheesemakers learned their craft from relatives who passed down European techniques that are generations old. BelGioioso Cheese Co. of Denmark, WI, a maker of classic Italian cheeses, is one of the state's first artisanal cheesemaking operations. "We came from Italy to make specialty cheese," says Errico Auricchio, who started BelGioioso 29 years ago. "There's much more of an emphasis on specialty cheeses in Wisconsin now."

Increased competition — as well as innate pride in a job well-done — has spurred the cheesemakers to take whatever steps necessary to turn out internationally recognized cheeses. Part of making specialty



PHOTO COURTESY OF WIDMER'S CHEESE CELLARS



PHOTO COURTESY OF BELGIOIOSO CHEESE CO.

cheese is providing extra care and attention during the production cycle. That might mean rubbing the cheese by hand, extensively evaluating for a flavor profile and aging "to make the flavors meld just right," explains Brad Nicholson, vice president of organiza-

tional development at Plymouth, WI-based Sartori Foods, which has been making cheese in Wisconsin since 1939. "A lot of the time, people are looking for something that will deliver distinctive flavor characteristics."


At this year's U.S. Championship Cheese

Contest in Madison, WI, Sartori Reserve SarVecchio Parmesan snagged the gold medal, allowing it to claim the title of best cheese in the United States. "A lot of Americans have not considered Parmesan as a stand-alone dish, with a glass of wine and on a cheese plate, as Europeans do," notes Nicholson. "People are starting to realize that the terroir in Wisconsin, especially for cheese producers, allows for the ability to produce products that are unparalleled in the world. Even in these difficult economic times, they want a product that's going to deliver." Sartori also won a best-in-class award for its Dolcina Gorgonzola.


### The Case For Wisconsin Cheese

The rising cost of European cheese imports has helped spur the demand for U.S. cheese. Consumers want an affordable product that delivers both taste and quality. Comparable cheese varieties produced in Wisconsin cost less per pound than their European counterparts, says WMMB's Wilkinson.

Wisconsin cheesemakers have been collecting awards at not only the U.S. Championship Cheese Contest but also the American Cheese Society (ACS) competition,



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World Dairy Expo and World Cheese Awards. The credibility that comes from winning so many awards is a positive when introducing unfamiliar cheeses to consumers.

"What a lot of people overlook, when

comparing European cheeses to American cheeses, and especially with artisan and specialty cheeses, is we're mostly family-owned and pretty small here," says Carr Valley's Cook. His company has won around 200

awards, including 18 at the 2008 ACS. Plants in Europe, especially in Germany, are larger, he says, and that gives Wisconsin cheesemakers a "green" angle in terms of having a smaller footprint on the land. It has

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a lot to do “with the terroir we have here – the fresh water and lack of people, when compared to Germany,” says Cook. “When it comes down to it, it’s about quality and what people like.”

Current economic conditions have not dimmed America’s ongoing love affair with specialty cheese, and some think it has actually helped growth as many consumers concentrate on quality rather than quantity. “With everything going on with the econo-

my, there’s definitely been a renaissance in cheese, an interest in cheese, in this country over the past few years that helps all of us. When the specialty cheese category is growing, it’s to all of our benefit – domestic and international,” according to Kirsten Jaeckle, marketing manager for Roth Käse USA in Monroe, WI. The company has won more than 100 awards for its cheeses, which include Moody Blue, Petite Swiss and Roth’s Private Reserve.

Joe Widmer, master cheesemaker and third-generation owner of Widmer’s Cheese Cellars in Theresa, WI, believes Wisconsin cheeses are positioned to fill the desires of consumers who are no longer willing to pay the prices imported cheeses demand. “I’ve been hearing from a lot of retailers that with the higher prices [of European cheeses], they’re seeing more sales of domestic cheeses, because Wisconsin’s coming out with more and more domestic [versions of] imports,” says Widmer.

Cheddar may be the type of Wisconsin cheese that springs most readily to the minds of consumers, but it’s not the most widely produced type of Wisconsin cheese. In 2007, according to WMMB, Cheddar represented 26 percent of the state’s cheese production, while Mozzarella represented 35 percent. The largest third group, “other Italian,” represented 13 percent.

BelGioioso’s reach goes beyond Mozzarella. Burrata is an Italian-style cheese, silky on the outside and creamy on the inside, very delicate and not at all widespread. BelGioioso

## LAST YEAR WMMB

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is one of only a few American companies producing it. BelGioioso Burrata won a bronze award at the 2008 World Cheese Awards. “People can’t believe some of the best Mozzarellas and Gorgonzolas come from Wisconsin,” says Auricchio. “We’re definitely headed in the right direction. More and more, you will see an appreciation for cheeses made in the United States. There’s a renewed appreciation for cheese made in Wisconsin.”



WMMB is doing its part to promote the state’s cheeses. Last year it launched a successful marketing “toolbox” for retailer, which includes recipe brochures and signage for promoting Wisconsin cheeses. Retailers just attach their logo to personalize WMMB’s materials. WMMB can also arrange for cheesemakers to visit stores and can organize tastings to entice customer purchases. **DB**


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## Third party audits — Passing the buck or coming full circle?

19.apr.09

Roy Costa

In the absence of food-safety regulations in many commodities or the lack of oversight in general, companies have turned to the private regulation of the food supply. On an individual and voluntary basis, dozens of auditing firms and hundreds of private parties are looking closely at the safety of thousands of suppliers. The supplier food-safety scheme is pushing all the way back from the retailer to primary producer or farmer. As each link in the supply chain tightens standards, there will be a corresponding improvement in the safety of final products.

The third-party food-safety business model is that buyers "accredit" or approve the third-party food-safety firms they will accept audits from, and suppliers are free to hire whatever firm they wish to satisfy the buyer. The supplier pays the auditing firm directly and the auditing firm sends the audit findings to the buyer. The buyer does not pay for the audit and the findings do not bind his purchasing decision.

Third-party audits have the capacity to improve food safety and provide another means of protection in the wake of government inaction or even failure. Third parties use private food-safety standards developed either in partnership with prospective buyers or in formal expert groups at the national and international levels. They provide the basis for determining "conformance" whereas regulations provide the basis or scope of the regulatory inspection, which is "compliance." Third-party audits cannot take the place of regulatory inspection in protecting the consumer for the simple fact that only government has the legal power to enforce compliance. Third-party audits, since they are voluntary, often take on a collaborative air. A buyer maintaining good working relationships with his auditing companies makes sense and adversarial relationships are not productive. Bias can easily slip in when the audit customer and the auditing firm grow too close. Bias can enter from the supplier side as well. When choosing an auditing firm, a supplier may decide to select a firm based on

price, personal knowledge of the company and its personnel, as well as the strength of the auditing system and its recognition.

The premise for any company to hire an auditing firm is the needs of the buyer who is more than likely requesting the audit. The consumer benefits from the third-party scheme in more consistently safe products, but protection is weak when the most hazardous facilities continue to operate. Disqualification of a supplier is the responsibility of the buyer, but the audit findings in no way bind the buyer. Third parties can rate a firm but they cannot dictate to the buyer who to use. In such an unregulated system, unsafe operations continue to operate and distribute unsafe food to consumers who continue to become ill and die. Unsafe operations continue even when audits reveal clear significant problems and, more troubling, sometimes auditors do not clearly report unsafe conditions.

Bias can work in another way. Since the auditing firm really wants the supplier's business, relationships between suppliers, auditors and firms may develop. If those personal relationships cloud the findings and discretion of the auditor, the system becomes very weak.

Shifting the weight for protecting the consumer to third parties alone is not a good system and is simply "passing the buck." A comprehensive and competent authority with enforcement powers and consistent presence must be at the basis for the model. We cannot rely upon independent third parties for this.

Government authority backing up the system greatly improves the third-party model and gives it credibility especially when efforts are coordinated with industry. Government acting in tandem with industry third parties and thus the industry itself brings us full circle in the evolution of food-protection efforts. Such an effort would pave the way for a significant improvement in the safety of foods and the protection of consumers.

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**M**artin 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](http://www.refrigeratedfoods.org).

## "Pork is safe to eat, handle," says pork industry

02.may.09

from a press release

<http://sev.pnewswire.com/agriculture/20090502/CG1003802052009-1.html>

WASHINGTON — "Pork is safe to eat and handle," the U.S. pork industry continues to reassure people in the wake of a report from Canada that pigs in an Alberta pork operation contracted an H1N1 virus. A worker who recently visited Mexico — and became ill with the flu — is suspected of transmitting the virus to a pig.

"People cannot get the flu from eating or handling pork," said Dr. Jennifer Greiner, director of science and technology for the National Pork Producers Council. "The flu is a respiratory illness, it's not a food-borne illness."

According to the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Health and Human Services and Homeland Security, the H1N1 flu strain that has been contracted by 763 people worldwide cannot be transmitted by eating pork; it is not a food-safety issue.

Today, the World Trade Organization, OIE and U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization issued a joint statement saying pork is safe.

"Influenza is not uncommon in pigs," Greiner said, "but they recover, and it does not affect the safety or quality of pork."

"It is well known that influenzas are transmissible, and it is not a surprise that a flu virus might have passed from people to pigs. The bottom line is pork is safe to eat and handle."

# Beyond Bells And Whistles: Basics Matter To Shoppers



By  
**Sharon Olson**  
President  
Olson  
Communications  
Chicago, IL

In our continuous search for “wow-factor” merchandising in the deli, Olson Communications recently surveyed over 300 consumers to get their insight on promotions and merchandising that captivated them and made the difference to entice an impulse buy, try a new product or stimulate a brand switch. We had expected to learn about some new technology-enabled connection but found, instead, the simplest tried-and-true techniques were the ones that worked.

## Enticing the Senses:

Over 90 percent of respondents said product sampling and product displays helped them make their decisions. Well-done displays and signs have stopping power and a delicious sample usually closes the deal.

**The Power of the Deal:** Eighty percent of respondents said coupons made a difference in their decision. Almost three-fourths said store flyers and advertising were helpful or very helpful. Although we didn't survey regular on-line customer-requested communication from a retailer, we have heard some feedback in individual interviews with consumers. They noted the primary benefits of on-line newsletters are recipes, coupons and special offers.

**On My Time:** The newspaper food section continues to entice 59 percent of respondents preparing for a weekly shopping trip. Sixty-one percent of consumers reacted negatively to unsolicited e-mail promotions. Unrequested or irrelevant information is considered an intrusion and can create brand aversion among retail consumers. Time is currency for today's consumers and messages that interrupt a task or waste time can have an adverse affect.

The most negative response from consumers related to loudspeaker promotions in stores — 76 percent objected. These promotions were characterized as interruptions with a message that often did not even relate to the area of the store in which they were currently shopping. Consumers noted an important distinction between enticement and interruption that could be important to retailers when selecting appropriate tactics for customers in particular stores. Customers enjoyed the offer of a sample that gave them the option to try a product and make their own decision.

**Sampling That Sells:** Since consumers favored sampling and most retailers have committed to sampling organizations for in-store promotions, we conducted some individual consumer interviews to find out more about sampling techniques that stand head and shoulders above the others.

We were surprised to learn those consumers' expectations of store employees and demonstrators have actually

decreased in the past five years. In a 2005 study, customers told us about deli employees who knew and understood the products they were offering and encouraged them to try new things including new products that might not be on sale at the moment. Higher-income consumers in urban markets

said their visits to local green markets were increasing and there they have the opportunity to taste and experience the passion of the local farmer, farmstead cheesemaker or artisan baker.

This year, retail shoppers told us they were more interested in seeing a clean sampling area. They were happy if samples appeared to be

fresh and were served appropriately hot or cold. There were many comments about the sampling tray with the cover that looks nice and fresh during prime time but a little scary during after-work hours with only one or two pieces of a product left to try. Off-peak hours are a challenge for displays of perishables when shoppers will use empty displays to drop unwanted product from other departments. These displays can become trash bins if not monitored consistently.

Consumers also enjoyed meeting the farmer, artisan or chef whose product was being sampled in store. A celebrity chef is always a draw, but many also noted local artisan candy makers sampling their products with passion and enthusiasm almost assured a sale. The only complaint related to the ability to purchase the product again after the special promotion, when it was stocked in an unfamiliar location or not at all.

**Displays Packed With Purchase Power:** Handcrafted was a very positive characteristic when it came to displays. Consumers tended to shy away from big end-aisle deli displays with colorful graphics in favor of simply packaged products with appetite appeal that appeared fresh. They expressed different motivations for shopping in the grocery aisles and noted brand, convenience and price far more often than they did for deli purchases where freshness and appetite appeal were key drivers.

Signs promoting seasonal items to call attention to a special limited time offer were well received.

**The Experience Factor:** Despite everything we learned about successful merchandising tactics, consumers consistently told us that their experience with the brand, the store's reputation and the ingredients were the most important factors driving their purchase decisions. There is no amount of clever, wow-factor merchandising that can compensate for less-than-brilliant performance at the basics.

Consumers are hungry for experience when it comes to food. A delicious sample, enthusiastically presented is irresistible.

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Wilkinson Manufacturing .....	46	Packaging.....	800-456-4519	402-468-5124

## Blast From The Past

# Lincet

# L

incet of Saligny, France, makes regional specialty cheeses from Burgundy and Champagne, including PDO Chaource, PDO

Epoisses, Brillat-Savarin and Délice de Bourgogne. The company took its present form in 1957 with the acquisition of a small dairy in Saligny that specialized in the production of Saint Florentin.

The Lincet family, originally from Marne, France, has been making cheese for five generations. Didier Lincet, patriarch of the family, is pictured to the right. The original cheesemaking facility is shown in the picture below left, taken in 1907.

The molding line, pictured below right, was installed in 1960, and it proved to be a great improvement for productivity and ergonomics.



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

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Serrano español

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Available bone-in, boneless, ready to slice deli loaf, and pre-sliced packages.



## Nutrition Facts

Serving size: 2 oz (56g)

Amount per serving

Calories 150

% Daily Value\*

Total Fat 9g

Sat Fat 3.5g

Trans Fat 0g

Cholest. 35mg

Sodium 1,250mg

Total Carb. 0g

Dietary Fiber 0g

Sugars 0g

Protein 19g

Vitamin A 0%

Vitamin C 0%

Calcium 0%

Iron 2%

\*Percent Daily Values (DV)

are based on a 2000

calorie diet.

INGREDIENTS: Ham, Mediterranean Sea Salt, Sodium Nitrite, Potassium Nitrate

Imported by: Redondo USA  
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Keep Refrigerated

NET WEIGHT: 4 oz



## REDONDO IGLESIAS

Maestros del Jamón

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