

# DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

OCT./NOV. 2009 \$14.95

## SAFE TO EAT?

### ALSO INSIDE

PIZZA  
PACKAGING  
MOZZARELLA  
HEALTHFUL DELI  
CALIFORNIA CHEESE  
CHICKEN PROGRAMS  
MEDITERRANEAN FOODS  
AMERICAN CHEESE SOCIETY



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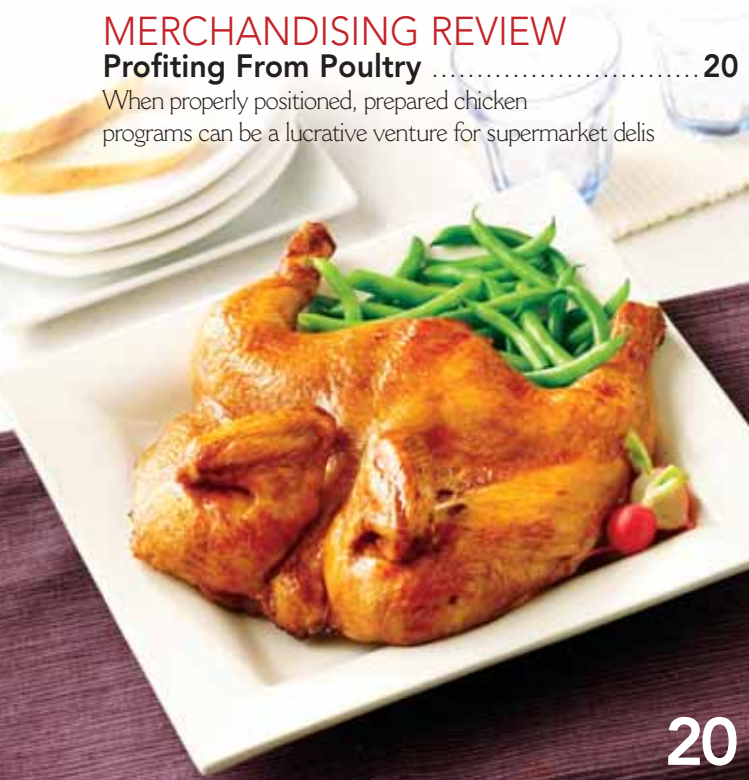
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## KETTLE CUISINE CERTIFIED GLUTEN-FREE

Kettle Cuisine, Chelsea, MA, is the first company to offer a full line of certified gluten-free soup options for foodservice operators. The Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO) has awarded Kettle Cuisine the first GIG certification in the soup category for its 10 gluten-free soups.

Both Kettle Cuisine and GFCO seek to improve the health of people on a gluten-free diet by providing safe, high-quality food options. With Americans consuming more than 10 billion bowls of soup each year, and one out of every 133

Americans suffering from celiac disease, Kettle Cuisine is bridging this gap by offering foodservice operators the ability to safely serve a line of soups with no gluten and no compromise in taste.

Soup enthusiasts can indulge in flavors such as Organic Roasted Eggplant & Tomato featuring eggplant, sautéed onions, garlic, red ripe tomatoes and olive oil and Organic Cream of Mushroom & Potato with savory mushrooms, garlic, thyme and fresh light cream.

## COMING NEXT ISSUE IN DEC/JAN 2010

### FEATURE STORIES

Snack Foods  
Marketing Terroir

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Appetizers

### DELI MEAT

Prosciutto

### MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Olives  
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Comfort Foods

### PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Sushi  
Ingredients

### CHEESES

Crackers  
Procuring Specialties

### SUPPLEMENT

Specialty Cheese Guide



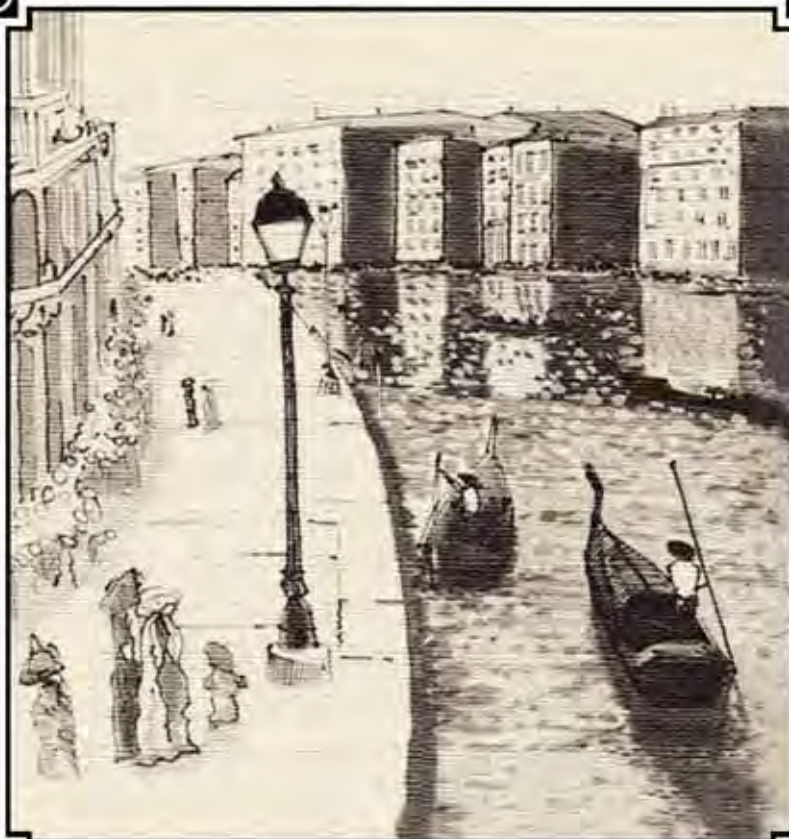
## COMING IN FEB/MAR 2010

The latest consumer research shows retailers what the buying public wants from the retail deli department.

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Lakeland, FL (863) 984-5656

Sheila Marie Imports  
Boston, MA (978) 664-1100

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

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# Merchandising And Marketing Anemia

One of the small pleasures of my position is the opportunity to visit retailers across the country and around the world. One could do worse than to argue that the modern supermarket — where transportation, storage, refrigeration and packaging technology have intersected with food production capability and a web of global trade relationships — is some kind of pinnacle of western civilization.

The deli/retail foodservice departments of modern food retailers are a big part of this offering and an important component of the atmosphere of a store. Upon first visit, many stores are simply extraordinary. Even modest or low-volume outlets that lean more toward pre-packaged foods than extensive foodservice offerings still offer a variety that is quite extraordinary.

Though there are exceptions, most companies treat these deli departments the way tinhorn dictators treat democracy: They believe they have to win an election once and can then not worry about it anymore.

So these beautiful stores we build suffer from an almost complete lack of merchandising and marketing. We build these temples to food, set up elaborate relationships to supply them and, for the most part, leave them like that until the next remodel.

Recently I visited chain stores around the country and, although some were exceptional and almost all reasonably nice, they were for the most part under-merchandised, under-marketed and, frankly, a bit boring.

If you went in to look, for example, at how the stores tied into the locavore trend, you'd mostly look in vain. For the most part, no organic deli foods are offered. Perhaps those stores with foodservice had tied into the cult of cooking personalities by highlighting their cooks? Not really. Surely there was evidence of the hottest recipes on the Food Network or in cooking magazines? No, barely a hint. Perhaps some explanation of why kosher product might be desirable? Or an offer of Fair Trade product for those interested in using their shopping to achieve ethical results? No, none of this at all.

We saw the occasional discounts — a particular sub on sale or a “meal deal” — but they seemed disconnected from any social trends that might make those products seem desirable for any reason other than price.

In DELI BUSINESS' sister publication, the online PERISHABLE PUNDIT, we've been running a series of articles built upon the battle between Boar's Head and Dietz & Watson over issues of retail exclusivity. Our visits around the country, though, make us suspect the business of retailers basically outsourcing procurement to a particular company tends to lead to less-than-optimal variability on the product offering and the merchandis-

ing that goes along with it.

Even traditional holiday merchandising seems to have fallen out of favor. Just prior to the Jewish holidays, many of the stores visited were in neighborhoods with significant Jewish populations, yet there was scarcely any indication these stores were ready to help consumers deal with the meals surrounding these holidays or any indication they wanted catering orders.

It's not that the retailers aren't hip to all the trends. The same stores that had nothing to say about their cheesemakers, the same stores that did not profile the family that had been making roast beef for generations, had large signs with multi-generational photographs of growers over in the produce department.

In some cases, these signs illustrated “local” growers but, just as often, they were just family farmers, growing things in major production areas such as Wenatchee and Yakima, WA, for apples or Salinas, CA, for greens. The posters were tying the product to a locale, not promoting nearby production.

The produce departments also generally had significant organic choices, and even though they did not have constant service staff, the fact that produce clerks actually work on the floor with the product, whereas deli clerks typically stay behind the counter servicing a line of customers, created a more intimate opportunity for conversation and trial.

Aside from an occasional dome filled with cheese cubes or rolled turkey slices — often with no signage indicating what the product is or why it was selected — many of the delis have an odd sampling program. The main sampling was a convention of offering consumers a slice of whatever they just ordered.

This may give consumers the opportunity to ask for thicker or thinner slicing, but since they just ordered the product that's sampled, it can't boost sales or expand the consumer palate. If someone orders roast beef, the win is to offer a slice of horseradish cheddar.

As we move deep in the holiday season and onto 2010, we need to make sure our departments are not a bore. It's not enough to build a beautiful store; we need to delight consumers with something new every visit. We need to tie into trends on the minds of consumers; we need to pay attention to what's going on in magazines and TV. We need to engage with the world and our customers.

DB



*James B. Prevor*



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\*No significant difference has been found in milk from cows treated with artificial hormones.

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by Lee Smith, Publisher

## Food Safety Realities

**W**e live in difficult times. With each new advance that allows us to track food illness outbreaks more easily, with each new development that allows us to identify previously unknown bacteria and viruses, there is the potential for tabloid journalism to incite the public into believing food safety is an “us or them” scenario. Almost inevitably, the villain is portrayed as greed, with companies and individuals responsible for outbreaks of foodborne illness that, but for more money and less profit, would have been avoided.

That's why it is so important to read this month's cover story, *Safe to Eat?*

Jan Fialkow, our managing editor, interviewed Marty Mitchell, general manager of Certified Laboratories and technical director for the Refrigerated Foods Association. I've known Marty for many years and I have great respect for him. He brings a wealth of common sense into a world where irrationality often rules.

As the technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association, he has helped to set standards that make refrigerated fresh salads, including commercially prepared tuna, egg and chicken salads as well as potato salad, macaroni salad and cole slaw, some of the safest prepared foods in the country.

I'd also like to say, in the interest of transparency, that Certified Laboratories is not an advertiser in DELI BUSINESS or any of our publications and Marty was not paid to participate in this interview.

The interview was completed before *The New York Times* article, *E. coli Path Shows Flaws in Beef Inspection*, published Oct. 4, 2009, about ground beef contaminated by *E. coli* 0157:H7 once again made the news. Centered on the case of Stephanie Smith, a 22-year-old dance instructor who ate a hamburger her mother prepared for Sunday dinner, it is a tragic story of the consequences of *E. coli* 0157:H7 poisoning. Within weeks of Smith becoming ill, Cargill voluntarily recalled approximately 845,000 pounds of ground beef patties found to be contaminated with 0157:H7 – the same hamburger her mother prepared.

The article is breathtakingly horrifying and while the article clearly states the incident occurred over two years ago, most people are talking about the “recent” problem. The purpose of the article is to incite an emotional response, which it does. After all, no one can react without sadness to the lifelong affects this woman will suffer. It is tragic. And Cargill had a responsibility for making sure its products were safe to eat. There is no question its ground beef patties were contaminated.

Yet, the tragedy could have been avoided if the hamburger had been cooked properly, a fact glossed over. The article briefly mentions that properly cooking ground beef virtually eliminates the problem, but says the issue is still not solved because of the dangers of cross contamination. It fails to mention the risks are the same if cross contamination occurs with raw poultry or pork. Of course, all risk can be eliminated by irradiation, but irradiation as a possible solution was not mentioned.

In addition, while the article castigates Cargill, it fails to mention more recent *E. coli* 0157:H7 outbreaks due to contaminated beef, the spinach recall of 2006, the tomato crisis that turned out to be green peppers from Mexico, and the most recent outbreak due to people eating refrigerated raw cookie dough. This is a relatively new, especially virulent *E. coli* strain. The bad news is that with better science, we will find more seriously bad bugs. The good news is that we are finding them and discovering how to deal with them.

The article implies that more regulation is needed and that better quality controls would solve the problem – only they won't. That is not to say there weren't problems in the past and there aren't still problems to be solved, but there will always be the chance that raw meat will be contaminated with pathogenic microorganisms. Most people would not think of eating a piece of raw chicken or pork, so I'm not sure why beef is expected to be exempt.

Can raw beef, chicken and pork be safer? Yes, but can it be guaranteed to be free of pathogens without the use of chemicals or irradiation? No. Will greater testing find all *E. coli* 0157:H7? No, because pathogens are not evenly distributed throughout the meat. Every time someone eats an undercooked hamburger there is a risk. How much of a risk? It's difficult to calculate because an estimated 85 percent of Americans eat a hamburger at least once a month and the vast majority never gets sick. You're more likely to know of someone who died in an automobile accident than someone who died from a foodborne illness.

What we really need is more education. One death is one death too many, but it will not end if consumers and food preparers ignore safe food-handling procedures. So, please read the cover story. It may be one of the most important articles you will read this year. **DB**

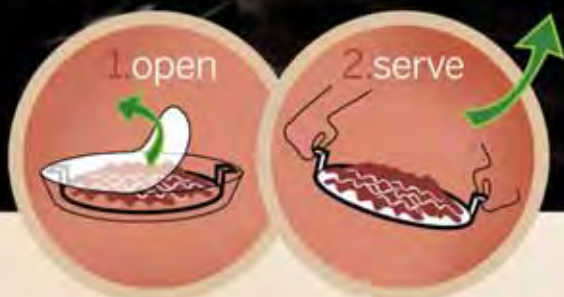


A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Smith'.





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## Announcements



### NEW NAME AND PACKAGING

Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, Websterville, VT, is celebrating 25 years of cheesemaking and introducing a new name — Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery — and new packaging. The new packaging will be in stores at the end of October. The same bright colors will have a touch of freshness and a modern look, while keeping the design clean and simple.

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



### NAME CHANGE

Finlandia Cheese Inc., Parsippany, NJ, has announced its new corporate name, Valio USA. The change better encompasses the company's identity and expanding product line. The Finlandia Cheese Division will continue its strong brand presence in supermarket deli departments and in the club store trade. Pictured are Christopher Franco, CEO of Valio USA, and John Sottile, president of the Finlandia Cheese Division.

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



### EXACT WEIGHT PACKAGING

Norseland, Inc., Stamford, CT, exclusive U.S. importer of Old Amsterdam, Holland's award-winning brand of Gouda cheese, has announced the introduction of a retail-friendly exact weight 5.2-ounce wedge package. National introduction will be supported with POS easel displays featuring the tagline, "Try the Best Bit of Amsterdam," in addition to recipe tear pads, mock wheels, demo kits and wooden shoes.

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



### DVD REFERENCE LIBRARY

Unilever Foodsolutions, Lisle, IL, in association with The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY, presents *Savoring the Best of World Flavors South America: Peru and Brazil*, the fourth in the *Savoring the Best of World Flavors* series. The DVD delivers a unique hands-on perspective. Learn how to incorporate the flavors of Peru and Brazil into your foodservice offerings. Available free from the Unilever website.

[www.unileverfoodsolutions.us/dvd\\_offer](http://www.unileverfoodsolutions.us/dvd_offer)

## New Products



### GOAT CHEESE WITH FLAVOR CENTER

Laura Chenel's Chèvre, Sonoma, CA, has launched its new Blossom goat cheese line nationally. The line features fresh goat cheese surrounding a heart of sweet and savory flavor. Blossom flavor blends include Sun-Dried Tomato, Fig & Olive and Basil & Olive Oil. Each 3.5-ounce cheese medallion with its colorful center is clearly visible in an elegant package for retail and deli display, priced at \$4.99-\$5.99.

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



### HOT FOOD DISPLAYS

Alto-Shaam, Menomonee Falls, WI, offers hot food wells with easy drop-in installation without costly water or drainage connections. Soft, gentle Halo Heat consistently keeps food warm, without overcooking or drying it out. The result is a more appealing food display, significantly extended food life and less waste. Available in 1-, 2-, 3-, 4- or 5-pan wells.

[www.alto-shaam.com](http://www.alto-shaam.com)



### AHA-CERTIFIED DELI MEAT

Butterball, LLC, Garner, NC, has introduced Carolina Turkey Deluxe American Heart Association (AHA) certified deli products, an array of quality deli meats at affordable prices targeted to consumers trying to eat more healthfully on a tight budget. AHA certification means products contain 3g or less of fat, 1g of fat of saturated fat, .5g of fat of trans fat, 460 mgs of fat of sodium, and 20 mgs of fat of cholesterol. In six flavors: Cajun, Peppered, Oven Roasted, Oil Browned, Smoked and Honey.

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



### ORGANIC BULK CHEESES

Applegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ, announces the debut of its new bulk organic cheeses, Applegate Farms Bulk Provolone, Swiss, American, and Medium Cheddar. The new bulk cheeses offer added convenience under the Applegate Farms umbrella of taste and quality and will be available at select retailers nationwide. Meeting Applegate Farms strict quality standards, all of the new cheeses are produced from cows not treated with rBGH.

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

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## New Products



### INSECTICIDE PAINT ADDITIVE

Walla Walla Environmental, Inc., Walla Walla, WA, introduces Bug Juice Insecticide Paint Additive, the first and only product of its kind to receive EPA registration for both interior and exterior applications. It kills cockroaches, ants, mosquitoes, silverfish and more; minimizes airborne pollutants related to pesticide sprays; is odorless (only smell is fresh paint); is residual — works 24/7 and lasts a minimum 2 years; and reduces costly pesticide control applications.

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



### WHOLE-GRAIN WHEATSTICKS

John Wm. Macy's CheeseSticks, Elmwood Park, NJ, introduces WheatSticks, an all-natural whole-grain version of its popular CheeseSticks line. Available in Jalapeño Pepper and Garlic Romano flavors, WheatSticks are made from thin layers of whole-wheat sourdough, aged cheeses and select seasonings. Retail prices for the 4-ounce boxes will range between \$2.99 and \$3.99.

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



### MINI EPOISSES 2-PACK

Fromagerie Berthaut, Epoisses, France, has introduced a new package for its Trou de Cru, an Epoisses mini cheese. Created by Robert Berthaut in the early 1980's Trou du Cru employs the same making and ripening technology as larger PDO Epoisses cheeses. In spite of its small size, each cheese is hand washed with Marc de Bourgogne to complete its maturing. Each package contains two 2-ounce cheeses.

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



### FLAVOR EXTENSIONS

Woolwich Dairy Inc., Orangeville, ON, Canada, has added two new flavors to its Elite gourmet topped fresh chèvre line — Lemon Poppyseed and Blueberry Pomegranate. Tangy lemon accented with poppyseeds and luscious blueberry paired with tart-sweet pomegranate provide plenty of menu versatility, offering consumers trendy, tasty options that work equally well for breakfast, snacking, dessert and cheese plates. Available in 6-ounce packages.

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



### TOWELS WITH LOTION

Georgia-Pacific Professional, Atlanta, GA, has added enMotion with Lotion towels, the only moisture-activated lotion towel in the away-from-home market. enMotion with Lotion towels help protect hands from the signs of dryness, cracking and scaling — a common issue among employees required to engage in frequent hand washing. Release of the lotion applied to the towels is enhanced when in contact with water, typically after hand washing.

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



### ENERGY-EFFICIENT OPEN-FRONT DISPLAY CASES

Structural Concepts, Muskegon, MI, new EnergyWise refrigeration system reduces energy consumption by more than 50 percent, saving 28.7 kilowatt hours per day and up to \$1,000 a year in electricity costs. Cases with EnergyWise encourage impulse sales without needing doors to conserve energy.

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



### FRESH BAKED SANDWICH BREAD

Rich Products Corp., Buffalo, NY, offers freezer-to-oven Fresh 'n Ready Classic Sandwich Breads to foodservice operations. The 4x4" sandwich carrier roll is available in five varieties: multi-grain, Italian herb, Italian peppercorn, wheat, and white. They can be taken directly from the freezer and baked in the oven.

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



### PUFF PASTRY HORS D'OEUVRES

DeBoer Food, Sanford, FL, is introducing a new line of premium European hors d'oeuvres in time for the holiday season. Seafood Mix includes fish-shaped Salmon & Dill Bites, Tuna Bites, Prawn Rolls and Scallop Crowns. French Mix includes Tomato Vegetable & Chili Bite, Emmental Cheese & Onion Bite, Goat Cheese and Tomato Crown and Spinach & Ricotta Crown.

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

# SAFE TO EAT?

Is our food supply less safe than in the past — or are we getting better at finding the common denominators?

BY JAN FIALKOW



A large number of consumers have the perception that safety has taken a back seat to lax government oversight, corporate greed and/or malfeasance, and a variety of other factors. Many of them feel that nobody cares about the people and that food safety is “going to hell in a handbasket.”

According to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 76 million cases of foodborne illness occur in the United States every year, which means one in four Americans becomes ill after eat-

ing foods contaminated with such pathogens as E. coli O157:H7, Salmonella, Hepatitis A, Campylobacter, Shigella, Norovirus, and Listeria. On an annual basis, approximately 325,000 people are hospitalized with a diagnosis of food poisoning, and 5,000 die.

DELI BUSINESS asked Martin Mitchell, managing director of Plainview, NY-based Certified Laboratories Inc. and technical director of Atlanta, GA-based Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA), to talk to us about the issue of food safety.

**DB: How do you think the average consumer feels about food safety?**

**MM:** I think the average consumer is much more concerned about food safety than he or she used to be, but I think that has to do with the increase and the size of the number of recalls rather than an increase in the number of foodborne illnesses. With 24-hour cable news cycles, we’re bombarded — almost daily — with yet another major recall. I’m concerned that it is this coverage that would make consumers question the safety of their food.



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So let's talk about that. The news coverage would lead me — and the average consumer — to think, "Oh, my god, look at what's happening. My food used to be safe. When I was growing up, I never heard about a food recall and now it seems like I can't eat peanut butter, I can't eat ground beef, even my vegetables are poison. What am I going to do?"

The peanut recall is a very good example of a recall that wouldn't have happened five years ago because the regulatory health agencies wouldn't have been able to put together disparate reports of illness with a single food that could be traced back to a manufacturer. It allowed us to remove from the marketplace the peanut products that would have created more illness. We now have powerful searchlight/magnifying glass tools that allow us to do this.

We have better reporting facilities, such as PulseNet, the repository of DNA fingerprints [standardized molecular subtyping] of organisms diagnosed in food poisoning cases. [PulseNet is a national network of public health and food regulatory agency laboratories coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The network consists of state and local health departments and federal agencies (CDC, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), FDA.] It's for connecting the dots, the dots being the fingerprints on PulseNet that allow researchers, in conjunction with the interview process, to begin to identify the food. A growing number of hospitals and many health agencies have access to PulseNet.

When we were kids — or even 10 years ago — foodborne illness was identified when a group of people went to a common event — a wedding, church picnic, bar mitzvah, dinner at Aunt Sally's house — and this group began to talk to each other the next day and found a lot of them were struck with some intestinal illness. They pointed to whatever food they thought they ate and said it must have been Aunt Sally's ham — well, certainly not at the bar mitzvah! And they called in the health department, which, through less sophisticated interviewing techniques, maybe some analysis, would then begin to recognize this as a case of food poisoning, maybe identify the organism and maybe identify the particular food.

But 10 years ago foodborne illness recognized as having a common source — and which could result in a recall or something like that — was pretty rare. Now, when you go to the hospital with foodborne illness symptoms, they look to diagnose the organism. They fingerprint the particular strain of the organism that got you sick and report it



to a common place. Then people and computer algorithms look at these hits and begin to see patterns. When they see a pattern, they follow it up with interviews that begin to point to a common direction that can identify what food is responsible for the illness and then have a recall.

That's what's changed — not food safety, not the care the average food manufacturer puts into the safety of his food but our ability for the first time in history to do this type of connect-the-dots identification that helps us find these very diverse illnesses and put them together.

That really is the issue — we know more. Ultimately, it will make our food safer, but it also makes the headlines and it can make mistakes. We all remember the Florida tomato fiasco — well-intentioned people attempting to remove from the marketplace a product that could create a potential illness. Interviews pointed to the tomatoes; only after further continuing developments did it turn out to be peppers from Mexico.

People reported they had tomato products, probably salsa, but at the time it was reported as tomato products. Things kept pointing back to the tomatoes when it should have pointed to the peppers. It's not a perfect system — but it's the best we have and it's good. It's a wonderful step forward but it puts this powerful spotlight on an area that makes the world a little scarier. But we're safer, not less safe.

#### **DB: Are companies becoming lax?**

**MM:** Absolutely not. Companies do more tests and spend more time and money ensuring the safety of our food than in any time in our history.

Concurrent with this is the increased demand for food without preservatives. Consumers say, "I don't want chemicals in my food, but I still want safe food." Would

you like to me to ensure the safety of your food? I have this magic ingredient — irradiation — that will help me ensure the safety — and they say, "No, I don't want that in my food." It's ludicrous!

Being against irradiated food is like being against pasteurized milk. I know that lately many people are all for selling raw milk because of some real or imagined benefits. I would offer that the risk of giving children raw milk is not in any way outweighed by this not-based-in-science benefit.

The risk in consuming raw milk is well documented, well understood and I would invite anybody who would like raw milk to get a mental image of where the udder of a cow is — and its proximity to where it defecates — and tell me they want to drink something from that close. This is an animal — it's not a factory. This is an animal that moves her bowels whenever and wherever she pleases. And the graphic of the consistency of cow manure and its proximity to the udder which delivers the milk and the diseases that occur in animals and the bacteria that reside in animals — and you want to put this in milk and have people drink it right away? Look at the childhood mortality change when we went from raw milk to pasteurized milk in the 20th century — it's ludicrous to think we should go backwards.

We have a similar situation with ground beef. *E. coli* 0157 is a naturally occurring organism in meat and we've taken great strides in reducing it, but once again, it's shed by beef cattle in their feces. The feces contaminate the hide of the animal and while loads of steps are being taken — the meat industry has done a great job — we can't make it foolproof.

We have two choices. We can pass along the responsibility to consumers to cook hamburger — using a thermometer — until it reaches a temperature high enough to kill *E.*



coli 0157 — 160° F. We have an even better tool — irradiating the ground beef to ensure the absence of E. coli 0157. But people out there say, “I don’t want to eat irradiated meat.” That’s like saying I don’t want pasteurized milk. It’s ludicrous on its face — and it’s risky behavior. The danger associated with eating irradiated meat is the same risk as getting sunburn from eating a raisin because it got dried out in the sun!

**DB: What exactly is irradiation? How is it done?**

**MM:** They pass the meat through a chamber where it’s bombarded with atoms known to disrupt the life cycle of bacteria. You can find a detailed explanation on the Internet. But it’s a safe, well-proven technology that should be used. The industry would be using it except for consumer resistance to eating irradiated food.

**DB: What do you think is behind this consumer aversion?**

**MM:** Ignorance — and some very vocal people. You’d think we were re-fighting the battle of raw milk. Life was not better in the 1800s and why we want to return to the 1800s is beyond me. Food wasn’t safer and it didn’t taste any better. Life wasn’t easier. We died from all sorts of things, but yet we have this imaginary idea that says let’s go back to the day of the local farm — and yet we want to go to Sam’s Club and buy cheap food. You can’t have your cake and eat it.

I would offer that food from the local farm is no safer than food from China. People forget we pull these crops out of the ground. We take food from animals. Processed food is safer because techniques remove the bacteria. When you pull a carrot out of the ground, the bacteria in the ground adheres to it. And the ground in upstate New York is no cleaner, no safer from a bacterial point of view, than the ground in Guangdong province in China.

**DB: So we’re just letting this bucolic image override reality?**

**MM:** I think it’s great to the extent that I can support my local farmer and go to the farmers market — I love to do it, I think it’s wonderful. It doesn’t make my food any safer. Do we feel good about it? Is the food perhaps a little fresher because the farmer picked it the day before? Sure. But is a possibility for E. coli 0157 on the spinach I bought at my local farmers market about equal to the risk of getting E. coli 0157 from the spinach I bought in bag at the supermarket? I’d offer the risk is higher — but the distribution is lower — it never hits Pulsenet.

If I bring home that spinach and get sick

and you bring home that spinach and get sick and maybe five other people do, there aren’t enough data points on Pulsenet to point to that farmer. So it goes into one of the etymology-unknown illnesses. That’s the only difference. When you bring that spinach into a big mega-factory and produce two million bags and 10,000 people have the symptoms, they begin to test it and find the E. coli. Now we point to the factory. But if 10 bushels of the spinach that was sold from the same

farmer went to the farmers market, what makes us think that’s any safer?

It appears safer and no big recalls make headlines. You just miss work for a couple of days because your stomach hurts — it’s unlikely you’d even blame the spinach from the farmers market. Food poisoning takes a number of hours, but you normally throw up what you last ate — so that’s what you blame! Even though it probably had nothing to do with what got you sick!

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**DB: Do you see any new food-safety threats looming on the horizon?**

**MM:** Besides our government? In the '80s and '90s, a lot of work was done on what we then called emerging pathogens — microorganisms we heretofore had not recognized as being foodborne risks. *Listeria*, *Campylobacter* and more recently *E. coli* O157. When I went to school, we didn't study those organisms — we weren't aware of them. I'm sure, as time goes on, we'll discover more.

Viruses are a problem because of the difficulty in recovering them from foods. I personally believe this is an area where there is risk. We don't have the tools to even begin to reduce that risk — so that's the new threat. I think five years from now when you interview me, we'll be taking a lot more about viruses.

**DB: Do viruses spread the same way as these other organisms? Do they spread more quickly?**

**MM:** It's about the same, but we don't know as much about viruses on food as we need to because the methods of discovering them, seeing if they exist, tracing them through the food plant, haven't happened

yet. We're just beginning to develop those methodologies.

**DB: When you referred to our government, were you referring to too much interference or too little oversight?**

**MM:** I don't think the FDA has been particularly effective in making the food any safer in the last 10 years and I don't think throwing money at the problem will make it that much more effective.

**DB: Would making it more effective entail hiring more people to do more audits?**

**MM:** No, I think maybe it would be more effective to provide the leadership in food safety that could be passed on to help people run their businesses better.

For example, when HACCP [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point analysis] was embraced as a great food-safety tool, we proceeded in making it mandatory for all USDA meat and poultry products and then made it mandatory on the FDA side for juices and seafood, not necessarily in that order, but, for whatever reason, we didn't take the next step — as I believe we should

have — and mandate HACCP for all foods, period, the end.

Why not? It doesn't take a lot of money — the cost of execution is borne by the food manufacturers, as it should be. We're giving them direction as to how to make their food safer. Look back at milk regulations and how the government's role in milk was to set forth standards that gave the milk producer answers about how he was to do things in terms of cleaning, pasteurization, times and temperatures. The government said if you want to make safe milk, you must do this — and we will show up, check you and help you stay on the straight and narrow. We didn't spend millions of dollars. Milk was a big commodity — even in the '50s and '60s — with thousands of people producing and bottling milk. Yet look at the safety record of milk — it's phenomenal.

FDA didn't want to adopt that with food — it was easier to be the cop and write tickets than be the leader and help us go the right way. The states, which controlled milk, provided leadership in technical and trade organizations, in publications to help the industry get better. They were the leaders. The FDA and USDA were leaders — they helped industry get better. Recently, they've

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become a little cop-like — and provide no leadership. We need a paradigm shift for them to become useful in making the food supply safer. All the government is going to do is give manufacturers more rules to enforce so they can write more tickets, but I question whether it will make food safer.

I do support some of the proposed regulations that talk about mandatory HACCP or food-safety plans by all producers. Why that wasn't done 10 years ago is beyond me. If these proposals were, in fact, to become law, then manufacturers would have another tool to help them make food safer. Manufacturers make the food safe, not regulatory agencies. All they can do is provide leadership and get rid of some of the bad apples. As with anything, there are bad apples — people who do not belong in the food producing industry — they're thieves and they're crooks — and we should rid the food industry of them. We should also rid Congress of those same types of people. People in the food industry are certainly no worse than the people who sit in Congress.

**DB: What about the responsibility of the consumer?**

**MM:** I'd like to find an American who wants to take responsibility for anything! Of course, we should be responsible.

Here's a classic story that goes back years ago. A woman reported a case of food poisoning. In the interview, she said, "My son came in from playing and he wanted this dessert item. I smelled it and it didn't smell too good, but he was in a hurry so I gave it to him." And he got sick! Now does that relieve the manufacturer who sold a product with bacteria that got the kid sick? No, but what about the responsibility of the woman who said it smelled bad? She acknowledged it looked bad and smelled funny, but she gave it to him anyway — and then turned around and sued my client! It was terrible that kid got sick, and the manufacturer was culpable. It was his job to sell food that was not capable of having bacteria, I agree with that. But you asked about responsibility. Where's the mother's responsibility. Why didn't she say, "Tommy, don't eat that. I'll give you something else."

We're allowed to put hot coffee between our legs and then sue McDonald's. We're allowed to do stupid things and then look to blame other people, but that issue is beyond the scope of DELI BUSINESS and Martin Mitchell.

There really are some responsibilities. Should manufacturers sell ground meat that has E. coli 0157? No. Should they do everything in their power to make sure it doesn't exist? Yes. But the fact is, short of irradiation,

you can't ensure to an endpoint of never. Therefore, don't I, as a father or a grandfather, have a responsibility to feed my children hamburgers that have been cooked to the right temperature to kill it? Growing up, I loved medium rare hamburgers, but now we know medium rare hamburgers can make you sick.

**DB: Not necessarily make you sick, but there is a possibility?**

**MM:** Yes — and therefore, if you don't want your kid to get sick, take the responsibility either to buy irradiated meat, which is my choice because I like my hamburgers medium rare, or cook it so your children or grandchildren don't get sick. And I don't care if you go to the local farm to buy the ground beef — the risk is the same. Albeit very small, but there is a risk.

**DB: What can we do make people feel safe? Is there anything from a public relations standpoint retailers can give their customers?**

**MM:** I think retailers can talk about the types of things they and their suppliers do to ensure safety, to paint a picture that their suppliers are responsible, local business people — they're local to someplace — who have their lives and their careers tied up in the success of their business, and the success of their business is directly linked to the quality, safety and wholesomeness of their product. And therefore, with all their heart, the vast majority of them do everything they can — everyday — to ensure that. It's the same story with the distributor and the retailer.

But they should also say, "Mrs. Consumer, you can't come in and buy a product and keep it in your trunk all afternoon in the summer while you're taking Tommy to soccer practice — and not be concerned about the temperature of the product when you finally get home."

**DB: So you're saying the retailers need to A) reassure consumers about the origins of the product and B) pass along common sense information that people are neglecting.**

**MM:** I think retailers should feature the quality that's built into the products they sell. I can assure you every manufacturer in the United States has quality designed and built into the refrigerated products they sell —



and they should feature that so I, as the consumer, know that when I walk in and look at the deli roast beef, I don't think it was made in some garage someplace by some sweaty chef with hairy arms. I should know it was made in a sophisticated factory with time/temperature controls, with all kinds of audited environmental sampling going on to assure that this roast beef or this potato salad presented at the display case is safe. And that when retailers receive the product, they are taking its temperature to ensure its safety and checking the temperature of their storage boxes and display cases and that the retailers are making sure the shelf life is within code and they're not selling out-of-code product.

Then, when the consumers get home, they need to maintain that cold chain — which is the one thing we can all do to maintain food safety — and not cross-contaminate it by putting that roast beef on the same cutting board they just used to cut up raw chicken.

**DB: Are there any other aspects you'd like to get across to retailers?**

**MM:** Yes. Safety costs money. Quality costs money. Look for the value in your products when making purchasing decisions, not just the lowest price.

**DB: Thank you, Martin. We really appreciate your taking the time to speak to us.**

**DB**

# Profiting From Poultry

When properly positioned, prepared chicken programs can be a lucrative venture for supermarket delis

BY LISA WHITE

Delis with prepared food programs are in an enviable position. According to a recent survey by Technomic, Inc., a research and consulting firm headquartered in Chicago, IL, the economic downturn is responsible for 85 percent of consumers eating dinner at home more often than in the past.

With chicken items being a major part of most deli departments' business, the economy has been a positive for prepared chicken sales. Chicken items, including roasted, rotisserie and barbecue items, are the top-selling prepared food in supermarket delis, according to the *Counter Intelligence Consumer Study 2008* from Jennie-O Turkey Store,

Inc., Austin, MN.

Demographics drive chicken programs. "Supermarkets need to take advantage of the uptick in their business and gear their chicken offerings to their customers," explains Laurie Friedrich-Bargebuhr, president of Brown Summit, NC-based Friedrich Metal Products, whose roasters and smokers



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feature self-cleaning technology and easy operation. She believes most delis are doing a good job with the chicken programs they're currently running.

When implemented properly, deli chicken programs can provide added revenue with minimal fuss. "Like other businesses, delis have felt the recent pinch," says Tracy Miller, director of product development, Gold'n Plump Poultry, St. Cloud, MN. "But they're well poised at a time when we're seeing continued trends in health, convenience, and eating more at home. Delis are really in a strong position to take advantage."

Suppliers are helping stores capitalize on this trend by expanding their product offerings, while equipment and ingredient manufacturers are facilitating the process with new technology and innovative flavorings.

In order to capture consumers looking for meal options, Gold'n Plump recently expanded its deli offerings to include cuts of fresh

chicken. The new program, which includes marinated butterfly whole chicken, split whole chicken and quartered chicken, is designed to help delis expand their baked and rotisserie chicken offerings. "The program not only offers new merchandising opportunities for the deli, but it also saves from 30 to 60 minutes of cooking time when compared to whole rotisserie chicken," explains Miller.

In-store promotional materials and a universal label that can be used on a variety of prepared, boxed options are available. Retailers can also purchase a wire basket customized to hold the new cuts for baking or



preparing in rotisseries. Gold'n Plump is offering a \$50 rebate on the basket to qualified customers.

Dale Faunce, marketing manager at Baldwin, GA-based Fieldale Farms Corp., sees rotisserie chicken continuing to outperforming fried chicken. The company offers private





PHOTO COURTESY OF ALTO-SHAAM

**Combi ovens proved fast cooking with minimal shrinkage.**

label, foodservice and branded chicken products. "Wing demand also remains strong. Several customers have added boneless wings to their bars and combine bone-in and boneless wings for party trays and ads." Fiel-dale offers delis its new Vings line — BBQ and Buffalo flavored boneless wings lightly breaded and oil set — in addition to its rotisserie and 8-piece chicken.

Competition demands retailers look for new flavors and unique items to incorporate into deli chicken programs. Bone Suckin' Sauce from Raleigh, NC-based Ford's Foods works well with baked, rotisserie and fried chicken, as well as wings and drumettes. According Sandi Ford, president, some delis identify the brand and some do not. "Upselling, by positioning ready-to-eat sauces and mustard by the chicken area, also is effective," she adds.

Along with taste and quality, the keys to a successful deli chicken program are attractive merchandising and making sure product is stocked hot and ready-to-go. The aroma draws customers into the deli.

Chef Paul Prudhomme's Magic Seasoning Blends, based in Harahan, LA, offers rotisserie seasoning programs for supermarket delis. Its 10 flavors, including honey barbecue and garlic, can be rotated on different days. "We're seeing some growth in rotisserie chicken programs, more so with small chains

and independents," relates John L. McBride, vice president of sales, who adds the company's sales increased 10 percent overall in the last year.

Stores using the seasonings typically purchase raw whole chickens and marinate them overnight to better infiltrate the skin. Magic Seasoning provides retailers with a brochure on how to best use the seasonings, in addition to stickers for finished product

and a double-sided informational tent to promote the brand.

Old World Spices and Seasonings, Kansas City, Mo, launched its Rotisserie Sea Salt program at the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Exposition this past June. The five flavors in the line are Sea Salt & Cracked Pepper, Sea Salt Chile & Lime, Bayou BBQ Sea Salt, Chesapeake Bay Sea Salt, and Asian Sea Salt. According to David Maples,

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## Meal Accompaniments

Retailers that effectively incorporate side dishes into prepared chicken programs will benefit from add-on sales in this segment. "Deli customers are looking for restaurant-quality food, and our more successful retailers seem to be providing better quality sides," says Dale Faunce, marketing manager at Dahlonega, GA-based Fieldale Farms.

Traditional comfort foods, such as mashed potatoes and macaroni and cheese, are strong sellers. "Offering core side items will help improve sales," claims Dan Yost, senior vice president of Bridgford Foods Corp., Anaheim, CA. "The high demand items will result in a higher sales volume." The company's breads, rolls and biscuits are natural tie-ins to chicken programs. "What we're seeing on the foodservice side, and what everyone is trying to capture in the retail segment, is a significant increase in sides and more options in the retail deli."

Increased visibility is key to moving these items. "Delis are putting hot sides in circular, open merchandisers with chicken alongside them to help draw customers in. This also creates impulse purchases for meals," says Laurie Friedrich-Bargebuhr, president of Friedrich Metal Products, Summit, NC.

About nine years ago, King's Hawaiian Bakery, Torrance, CA, began offering delis a meal deal and meal-solution program so as to more prominently display its bread lines. "We decided to assist retailers in marketing their meal programs via meal bundling," says Shelby Weeda, president. The bread supplier reduced its 12-pack of rolls to four and offers them at cost so retailers can easily incorporate the line into the cost of a meal program. "We found 67 percent of our customers look for us in the deli, so we sought to capture new customers and raise register rings via meal programs."

King's Hawaiian created merchandising fixtures that allow retailers to move hot cases and rolls to prime spots in the deli. A stick-man display features a 5-foot high post and header card advertising the meal program. The merchandiser has been successfully implemented in a variety of chains, including Kroger's, Dominick's, Publix and Winn-Dixie. **DB**



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regional vice president of sales, "Sea salt is very popular and a good way to get consumers interested in flavors."

Rotisserie Sea Salts have application beyond whole chickens; they're also compatible with fish, wings, and pork tenderloins that are either baked in convection ovens or cooked in baskets in the rotisserie oven.

In addition, Old World's Baked Chicken Tender Seasoning Program provides an alternative to fried chicken tenders. "This is not a breading," explains Maples. "It's a seasoning. Typical rotisserie seasonings don't work well on tenders because they contain too much salt." The seasoning is sprinkled on tenders, which then marinate for 15 minutes before being baked in a convection oven.

In an effort to help delis save money on frying, Bunge North America, St. Louis, MO, has introduced a new soybean oil that's more affordable than canola oil. According to Ed Williams, territory manager for bakery/deli, Bunge's Pour N Fry NT soybean oil is grown in the United States; canola oil is produced in Canada. This product is low in saturated fat. "Frying is something people don't like to do at home, so we've seen the fried chicken segment staying stable in delis," he notes.

### Equipment Advances

Equipment innovations also have given

**ALONG WITH TASTE AND QUALITY, THE KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DELI CHICKEN PROGRAM ARE ATTRACTIVE MERCHANDISING AND MAKING SURE PRODUCT IS STOCKED HOT AND READY-TO-GO. THE AROMA DRAWS CUSTOMERS INTO THE DELI.**

prepared chicken programs a boost. This year, Henny Penny Corp., an equipment manufacturer located in Eaton, OH, introduced a new open fryer designed to use 40 percent less frying oil than standard models. "With the rising cost of oil, this offers an immediate benefit to users," says Jason Moles, field marketing manager.



Still a growing market in delis, fried chicken has had an increased presence in smaller supermarkets with less extensive hot-foods programs, Moles notes. "This is because fried chicken is a very profitable menu item and, with a relatively small investment, retailers can achieve an immediate impact on their business." Henry Penny offers a combi-oven with a 22-inch footprint that can be used for roasted, grilled, baked and steamed chicken. A new energy-efficient merchandiser that can hold prepackaged chicken and features LED lighting is available.

Safeway has incorporated combi ovens from Alto-Shaam, based in Menomonee Falls, WI, in all of its locations. "These units

produce moist chicken that can be prepared in 30 minutes as opposed to an hour and a half on a rotisserie," says Jack Scott, vice president of sales and marketing. Alto-Shaam combis feature boilerless technology for increased reliability. A smoker for barbecuing is also available.

Combi ovens allow supermarkets to purchase a 3½-pound bird and sell it as a large because there's less shrinkage. Also, because of the fast cooking time, delis don't have to prepare 48 birds at a time, which results in less wasted product. The company also manufactures fryers that are 71 percent efficient and can fry at lower temperatures than other fryers.

Packaging is vital for marketing and merchandising chicken properly in the deli. Merit Paper Corp., Melville, NY, offers microwavable and reclosable chicken bags that feature a handle for easy transport and a slide zip seal. The company recently introduced a snack pack to accommodate smaller items like wings, which co-owner Ed Sussman says have become more popular in recent years.

Merit Paper is currently focusing on how its bag line supports sustainability. "One truckload of our bags is equal to many more truckloads of plastic domes and lids. More trucks result in increased labor, emissions, handling and costs," Sussman says. **DB**



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# Good Things Come In Small Packages

Recognizing the demand for smaller offerings, deli operators embrace single-serve packaging



BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

**C**lub stores and mass merchandisers would have you believe all people care about these days is value-size savings. You've got to buy big to save big seems to be their motto. That may very well be the case, but talk to any number of deli operators and you'll find smaller servings are fast outpacing family-size offerings in their arena.

That's not to suggest consumers no longer rely on the deli when feeding their family or planning a party. But when it comes to everyday sales, single-serve packages are increasingly accounting for the lion's share of deli business.

"There are still stores out there selling 12-piece hot fried chicken, but if you ask them how many they sell per day, that number is much smaller than the 4-piece fried chicken," says Michael Thaler, vice president of marketing, Anchor Packaging, St. Louis, Mo. "In response to consumer demand, delis are looking for small-size packages much more than they did in the past." Thaler reports strong sales of his company's 8-ounce to 16-ounce packages, as well as increasing interest in packages as small as 5-ounce.

At Madison, WI-based Placon Corp., national sales manager Bob Saric notes 8-ounce packages now account for 30 to 35 percent of sales, up from 25 percent. When introducing its new Fresh 'n Clear Bowl line, Saric says, Placon made sure to include 8-, 12-, and 16-ounce sizes.

Similarly, Megan Havrda, senior vice president, Be Green Packaging LLC, Santa Barbara, CA, reports decreased demand for her company's

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PLACON CORP.



36-ounce packages, while interest in its 24- and 16-ounce offerings is on the rise.

The focus on staying healthy by eating fewer calories has driven consumers to single-serve deli options. Unable to rein themselves in when faced with a seemingly bottomless bowl, people are turning to smaller packages for the purpose of portion control. Anchor's Thaler points to Ben & Jerry's Homemade Inc. and the enormous success it's enjoyed with its line of 3.6-ounce single-serve ice cream. "People want something they can consume in one sitting without feeling they've just destroyed their diet or their pocketbook. Small portion sizes have filled a niche with consumers by giving them something that tastes great without the guilt of consuming a whole lot of calories."

Demographic trends also have paved the way for more single-serve options. An increasing number of empty nesters, singles, and young couples has created greater demand for portions designed to feed just one or two people. With such a small number to feed, today's cost-conscious consumers want to make sure they don't buy any more than they're actually going to use. Single-serve portions fit that consumer need to a tee.



"If you move to a smaller portion size, the price tag is naturally a bit smaller," says Thaler. "That fits well in these times when people still want to treat themselves to something that's already prepared and ready-

to-eat, but a high ring would put them off."

#### Waste Not, Want Not

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Packaging offering multiple servings has been designed to divide into small portions.

money they have in their wallets. Struggling to get by with less discretionary income, people are more aware of how much food they want. Seeking to buy only as much as they're going to use, they're likely to opt for a

smaller serving. Not only does it cost less up front, but they're also less likely to find themselves throwing some of it away later.

To assist consumers in their quest to reduce wasted food, some companies have

begun developing packaging that gives them the option of saving some of the product for later. Last year, Duncan, SC-headquartered Sealed Air Corporation rolled out Cryovac Multibag, a vacuum-sealed barrier bag that can be divided into multiple sections. A perforated seal divides the sections, allowing consumers to separate and use one portion at a time. The rest then can be refrigerated or frozen in the original packaging for later use. Mike Rosinski, marketing director for smoked and processed meats, says it's the ideal solution for popular deli offerings such as summer sausage.

"When you buy stick summer sausage, normally that would be a 1-pound chub, but with Multibag, you can do two 8-ounce chub packages," he explains. "Instead of having to open that 1-pound package of meat, you can open one 8-ounce at a time and then leave the rest in the refrigerator for a much longer shelf-life."

**"CONSUMERS WANT PORTABILITY, SO A SMALLER PACK THAT ALLOWS FOR BETTER PORTABILITY AND MORE IN-YOUR-REFRIGERATOR SHELF-LIFE OF THE UNUSED PORTION IS GOING TO BE OF GREAT INTEREST."**

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Sealed Air also offers Cryovac Multi-Seal, a recloseable, flexible package for sliced deli meats and cheeses. Designed to replace press-to-close or slide zippers, the Multi-Seal package can be opened and resealed at least 10 times. Since its introduction in November 2008, customers have ordered Multi-Seal packages ranging from 6-ounce to 16-ounce. Like Multibag, it gives consumers the option of using some of the product and then refrigerating or freezing the rest for another time, thus eliminating waste. "In this day and age, consumers want portability, so a smaller pack that allows for better portability and more in-your-refrigerator shelf-life of the



unused portion is going to be of great interest," says Rosinski.

The ability to save some for later, coupled with the ongoing trend toward so-called dashboard dining, has led to a wealth of packaging innovations. Increasingly, delis are in need of packaging that provides the ability to refrigerate, microwave, consume and perhaps even freeze — all in the same container. As a result, polypropylene has become one of the materials of choice, says Hanna Sjolund, marketing manager for foodservice plastic, InnoWare Inc., Atlanta, GA.

**INCREASINGLY, DELIS ARE IN NEED OF PACKAGING THAT PROVIDES THE ABILITY TO REFRIGERATE, MICROWAVE, CONSUME AND PERHAPS EVEN FREEZE — ALL IN THE SAME CONTAINER.**

Responding to the demand for small packaging that could hold up to high heat, Anchor introduced the Incredi-Bowl 4800 line in 5-, 8-, and 10-ounce sizes. Designed specifically for single-serve deli offerings such as hot sides and soups, Incredi-Bowl is leak-resistant and features a clear, anti-fog lid. Unlike polystyrene bowls, these polypropylene bowls withstand heat up to 230° F without causing off-odors or off-flavors. That makes them ideal for staging foods under heat lamps, in warming units, or for reheating in the microwave, says Thaler.

Considering current economic conditions, Anchor realized its customers would not be interested in the new line if it substantially increased their costs. Thus, the company "worked backwards," developing the Incredi-Bowls line in consultation with deli operators in order to meet their target price point. The resulting price per unit is "shockingly low," says Thaler, "almost comparable to Styrofoam."

#### Environmentally Conscious

The trend toward dashboard dining has also led to the inclusion of utensils inside deli packages, creating the perfect grab-and-go

meal. "Everything is about ease of consumption, ease of use, whether it's easy to microwave or easy to eat out of," says Roman Forowycz, group president and chief marketing officer, Clear Lam Packaging Inc., Elk Grove Village, Ill. "To compete with the foodservice segment, delis need to give consumers the ability to run in at lunch time, grab something out of the 3-tier merchandising display case, throw it in the microwave, jump in the car, and consume it."

While conveniences such as in-pack utensils add value to a package, Sealed Air's Rosinski cautions delis to balance ease of consumption with wasted space. Producing a package large enough to accommodate utensils not only costs more up front in terms of materials but also makes the packaging more expensive to store and ship. Once in the deli, it takes up more retail space.

The same factors are also driving a shift from round single-serve containers to square

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ones, says Clear Lam's Forowycz. The space savings alone is significant, he says, as 130 square containers can fit in the same area that once held 100 round ones.

According to InnoWare's Sjolund, square containers are perceived to be more upscale and trendy. What's more, she says, they give the appearance of containing more food.

These kinds of issues, along with environmental concerns, have led delis to rethink the tub packaging once extremely popular for

pre-packaged single-serve deli meat, notes Sealed Air's Rosinski. "People are taking a critical eye toward the eco-friendliness of such a package in terms of the total amount of plastic involved. There's a lot of void space there. If we can reduce the amount of plastic and incur shipping efficiency with a better-designed package, that's going to resonate considerably with deli operators right now."

Responding to customer demand for cost savings and environmentally friendly offer-

ings, packaging manufacturers have expanded their lines. Vernon, CA-based PWP Industries recently launched hinged tamper-resistant packaging. According to marketing manager Natalie Kirschner, the new line was created in direct response to the growing demand for "more food-safe, convenient and single-serve packaging." The new package is safe for the freezer and refrigerator and contains a minimum of 25 percent post-consumer recycled PET material. Available in sizes ranging from 8- to 64-ounce, it also can be made with a built-in spork.

Placon uses EcoStar food-grade recycled PET with a minimum 35 percent post-consumer content, which reduces the cost of the material without sacrificing quality, according to Saric.

While an increasing number of delis are leaning on their packaging manufacturers to help keep the cost of single-serve options down, Forowycz encourages them to look internally for savings, particularly in labor costs. "Direct packaging costs will inevitably be a higher percentage of your P&L because you're going to much more packaging for smaller serving sizes," he says. "But you may be able to bundle the production in moving to the smaller serving sizes."

To date, cold-food applications have accounted for the majority of single-serve deli offerings, according to Sjolund. Howev-



PHOTO COURTESY OF WHOLEFOODS



er, she feels the greatest opportunity moving forward lies in hot food, particularly snack-type offerings designed to steal the thunder from McDonald's and other quick-service restaurants.

While it doesn't specifically offer single-serve options, Glendale, CA-based Nestle

**A GROWING NUMBER OF DELI OPERATORS ARE EMBRACING STRATEGIES THAT ENABLE THEM TO CREATE THE ILLUSION THAT SINGLE-SERVE OFFERINGS WERE PRODUCED AT THE STORE LEVEL WHILE THE STORE REAPS THE BENEFITS OF A CENTRALLY PROCESSED PROGRAM.**



Professional North America gives its deli customers the flexibility to serve a variety of hot products in a variety of package sizes. Under its Stouffer's brand, for example, Nestle produces Menu Starters, a line of seasoning mixes, such as Cacciadore and Prima Vera, to which deli operators need just add rotisserie chicken. "It gives them a ready-to-serve, restaurant-quality entrée they can then repackage into smaller sizes," says Kathy Lenkov, manager of communications and public relations.

Likewise, Nestle has launched Up for

Grabs, a line of sauces in bags. Deli operators add one pound of chicken strips, wings, or other protein to create a ready-to-serve meal in Buffalo, Honey BBQ, or Teriyaki flavors. They can then repackage it into any size they wish.

A growing number of deli operators are embracing such strategies that enable them to create the illusion that single-serve offerings were produced at the store level while the store reaps the benefits of a centrally processed program, according to Clear Lam's Forowycz. **DB**

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# The Mediterranean Diet And The Deli — A PERFECT FIT

Simple, delicious foods in the deli could help solve America's obesity crisis

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

**T**he Mediterranean Diet — based on the dietary traditions of several Mediterranean countries where people were found to live longer and more healthfully than most people in the rest of the world — makes use of a number of delicious foods that delis can offer. That's great news for retailers wishing to attract the growing number of health-conscious consumers.

"Every week there seems to be another study validating the healthfulness of the Mediterranean Diet," says Sara Baer-Sinnot, executive vice president of Oldways, the Boston, MA-based non-profit parent organization of the Mediterranean Foods Alliance.

"The Mediterranean Diet has some magnificent research behind it," asserts Jeanne Sauve, of Portland, ME-based Swardlick Marketing Group, a representative of The Cheeses of France Marketing Council.

The momentum of the Mediterranean trend itself is growing, according to Dennis Droushiotis, managing director, CheesEU, the Cyprus Association for the Promotion



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHEESEU



of Milk Products, New York, NY. "The consumer is getting a bit more savvy. There's been information getting out about eating healthfully," says Droushiotis. "This is something retailers can take advantage of."

"Many people come to delis for a quick meal or for easy snacking ideas — these people are ideal targets for learning about the Mediterranean way of eating," notes Heather Innocenti, director of marketing, G.L. Mezzetta, Inc., American Canyon, CA, specialty food producers.

"I think there's been a big change in the deli in the past five, six years," notes Oldways' Baer-Sinnot. In addition to traditional fat-laden salads in the deli case, she says, "There will be eggplant, Caprese salads, bean salads, interesting vegetables that were not there before. In prepared foods there are so many new, interesting things — grilled vegetables, tabbouleh, hummus." Antipasto bars offering olives, pickled vegetables and dips such as baba ganoush have sprung up in stores around the country, as well.

The Mediterranean Diet is more of a lifestyle plan than what Americans traditionally think of as a diet. Portion sizes are smaller, with emphasis on nutrient-dense foods — especially plant-based foods such as vegeta-



PHOTO COURTESY OF KONITOS FOODS

bles, fruits (including olives) and grains (including breads, rice and grain salads). Lean proteins such as poultry and fish are impor-

tant, as is yogurt, with highly flavored cheeses and meats used as accents and antioxidant-rich olive oil as a main source of

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fat, so that the food is satisfying and exciting while at the same time healthful. A moderate amount of wine is suggested, and social eating and exercise are also thought to play important roles.

"It's not a diet, per se but a way of living and a way of eating," explains Anthony DiPietro, vice president, George E. Delallo Co., Inc, Pittsburgh, PA, a processor and distributor of Italian and Mediterranean foods.

All these things taken together, plus the Mediterranean philosophy of slowing down to enjoy food, makes the Mediterranean Diet appealing to consumers. "It's not just what they eat — it's the way in which they consume it," says Sauve, who notes that The Cheeses of France's slogan is "Savor the experience," something that fits in very well with this lifestyle.

Breads, including lavash, pita, baguettes and other European favorites — thought by many to be carbohydrate-heavy and fattening — are a staple of the diet. "The typical breads used in the Eastern Mediterranean are actually used as utensils. In some cuisines, they don't even use forks," notes Demetrios Haralambatos, corporate executive chef, Kontos Foods, Davidsonville, MD.

The foods of the Mediterranean Diet and the way they're eaten might be considered a guilty pleasure, sans the guilt. "It's a rare thing in life when doing the right thing is pleasurable," says Phil Meldrum, president, New York, NY-based FoodMatch, Inc., which

manufactures and imports Mediterranean and Mediterranean-inspired foods. "In this case, doing the right thing does not require pain and sacrifice."

The simplicity of the foods — with their short, natural ingredient lists — also appeals to a number of consumers. "It's natural. The foods are pretty much picked, grown, cooked and conserved," says Jeffrey Shaw,

**"IT'S A RARE THING IN LIFE WHEN DOING THE RIGHT THING IS PLEASURABLE. IN THIS CASE, DOING THE RIGHT THING DOES NOT REQUIRE PAIN AND SACRIFICE."**

— *PHIL MELDRUM*  
*FOODMATCH, INC.*

marketing director, Trade Commission of Spain, New York, NY.

"It's a diet that goes back to the way we were eating thousands of years ago," explains Meldrum. "It's healthful comfort

food. Really wonderful, healthful, tasty basic foods that speak to people." At the same time, they allow Americans to have the same taste experiences they may have discovered in restaurants or on trips to places such as Greece, Italy, Spain and France.

### Making It Easy

Delis can make it easy for consumers by offering a number of healthful, tasty Mediterranean-inspired items. Hot prepared foods — including meats, fish, chicken, roasted potatoes, rice pilafs and pasta dishes — as well as grilled vegetables and cold salads are perfect meal solutions.

"Cheese is such an integral part of this diet," adds CheesEU's Droushiotis. Keeping a variety of Mediterranean cheeses, which include French, Italian, Spanish and Greek, in the specialty cheese section helps consumers enjoy the many flavors and textures available within the Mediterranean diet. Prepared foods may include grilled tomatoes topped with Halloumi or a salad tossed with Feta.

Sandwiches can fit into the Mediterranean diet, as well. "In the Mediterranean, they toast the bread, add a little olive oil, rub it with a bit of garlic and put ham or cheese on it," says Shaw. In Spain the ham of choice is serrano, a thinly sliced, highly flavorful cured ham. What makes this Mediterranean food healthful is its emphasis on flavor, not volume. "It's not your typical fat sandwich with a lot of ham on it — it's skinny," he says.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOODMATCH, INC.





As a result, consumers need to be made aware of the value they're getting, which is why sampling is helpful.

Mediterranean and antipasto bars also offer quick solutions for meals, snacks and even parties. "You don't have to do anything — just go to the Mediterranean bar," says Meldrum of FoodMatch. "Instead of worrying about preparation, all you have to worry about is presentation. Go home and put it on platters and you're done in 10 minutes."

According to Meldrum, the beauty of a Mediterranean bar is that customers can enjoy familiar flavors as well new. "It's critical to have at least a minimal selection of a variety of high-quality olives." A bar can offer other familiar foods, such as "peppers and

mushrooms, beans, tomatoes and hummus-es," he adds. From there, consumers may branch out to less familiar items. "Stuffed grape leaves are a wonderful item. Cippolini onions marinated in balsamic vinegar. Artichokes with long stems."

Other quick-and-easy items are constantly being introduced to the market. "Hummus continues to grow at a steady pace, but we have started to bring more items from other regions of the Mediterranean to market. Greek yogurt dips, also known as tzatziki, are gaining momentum as well as some new fresh salads such as chickpea, edamame, and a new orzo Feta salad," says Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, based in

Bradford, MA.

"Greek yogurt has exploded in dairy departments everywhere and has taken a big chunk of business from domestic yogurt manufacturers," Frocione notes. Plain Greek yogurt can be utilized in a yogurt bar or paired with fresh fruit in the prepared foods section. "Our funky twist on the Greek yogurt phenomenon is a yogurt dip called Tzatziki Greek Strained Yogurt Dip, available in five flavors — cucumber garlic, sun-dried tomato, roasted red pepper, artichoke spinach and celery chive. This dip is high in protein, low in fat and low in calories. Consumers across the country are going crazy for this yogurt dip. It's quickly becoming a ready-to-eat snack paired with veggies or

## The Appeal Of Hummus

If one Mediterranean food stands out as a favorite, it's hummus. "Hummus is becoming a widely recognized snack food and is replacing some of the unhealthy high-fat products that are causing obesity," states Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales, Cedar's Mediterranean, Bradford, MA.

In addition to healthfulness, the chickpea dip is known for its taste. "Kids love it, parents love it. It has a wonderful texture," notes Sara Baer-Sinnot, executive vice president, Oldways, Boston, MA.

According to Howie Klagsbrun, vice president sales, Brooklyn, NY-based Sonny & Joe's, makers of hummus and other Mediterranean dips and spreads, "I have not met with a single buyer in the last seven years who has not confessed to me that the hummus category is on fire and showing no signs of slowing down. Both Nielson and IRI report double-digit growth year after year." Americans have only begun to understand the possibilities. "It has been called the ketchup of the Mediterranean," he adds. In some countries, hummus is the condiment of choice, often used instead of mayonnaise on sandwiches.

"Most buyers I speak with tell me hummus is the fastest growing item in the deli case," Klagsbrun continues. "How much space should a store devote to hummus? How much do you want your business to grow?" **DB**



pita chips and a highly sought-after substitute to fatty condiments, such as mayonnaise, cream cheese and salad dressing.”

### A Mediterranean Destination

To attract followers of the Mediterranean Diet, as well as those who simply love these foods, “Build a Mediterranean section!” advises Frocione. “If you hype the whole Mediterranean family of products and devote space to make it a destination, then

**“BUILD A MEDITERRANEAN SECTION! IF YOU HYPE THE WHOLE MEDITERRANEAN FAMILY OF PRODUCTS AND DEVOTE SPACE TO MAKE IT A DESTINATION, THEN YOU’LL BE SUCCESSFUL. MISCELLANEOUS SKUs SCATTERED AROUND A DEPARTMENT DO NOT BUILD A CATEGORY.”**

—DOMINICK FROCIONE,  
CEDAR’S MEDITERRANEAN FOODS

you’ll be successful. Miscellaneous SKUs scattered around a department do not build a category.”

Consumer education plays an important role. “Some of the programs we do with our retail partners emphasize pairings and help steer people to things they will like,” says FoodMatch’s Meldrum. This can be accomplished in many ways. “I think signage is important. We provide a lot of different kinds of materials that can get the information to people passively,” he explains.

“Successful Mezzetta promotions at deli counters have included sandwich stickers with product suggestions, recipes cards added on shelves and anything that reminds people that these products are great low-fat ways to add variety to sandwiches,” relates Innocenti.

An educated staff is also crucial. “The retailers need to make a commitment to making sure the personnel in their stores are

trained in how to handle and merchandise these products and answer questions,” recommends Meldrum.

Consumers as well as retailers can visit [www.oldwayspt.org](http://www.oldwayspt.org) to sign up for Oldways’ *Fresh Fridays* e-newsletter, which offers valuable information and recipes for eating according to the Mediterranean Diet. Merchandising kits are also available from the organization as are beautifully illustrated Mediterranean Diet Pyramid posters that explain the Mediterranean ways of eating and living.

“We have a great deal of information on our website that we would love for delis to use,” says DiPietro of George E. DeLallo. In addition to obtaining information for staff members, retailers can repost information on their own websites for customers to read. “Offer them more information online so they can have confidence when going to the store and buying those items,” he suggests.

Displays can encourage sales. Innocenti recommends combining colorful groupings of

shelf-stable items as a collection and promoting them as an essential part of a Mediterranean diet. She also suggests using “Mediterranean-themed décor such as olive branches, urns and topiaries.”

“Beautiful bowls aren’t a big investment. I would think retailers would sell more if the products are in beautiful dishes,” adds Baer-Sinnott of Oldways.

Cross-merchandising items so consumers can put together an entire Mediterranean meal in one spot helps generate multiple sales. “The deli tends to be very close to the produce section,” notes Sauve of Cheeses of France, and both departments can take advantage of that.

Whenever possible, let people try new and interesting combinations before they buy. “That’s where the consumer gets to taste the product and make a decision about buying it,” says CheesEU’s Droushiotis. For example, “Demo cheeses with dried fruit. We’ve even demoed Halloumi with fresh watermelon.”

DB





# A Bigger Piece Of The Pie

More and more consumers are turning to the deli for their pizza fix

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Americans love pizza. Seventy-seven percent of consumers eat it more than once a month and 35 percent more than once a week, according to the *2008 Pizza Consumer Trend Report*, published by Technomic Inc., Chicago, IL. This report also indicates consumer buying habits are changing, with 51 percent of shoppers saying they purchased pizza at retail in 2008, up from 40 percent in 2006.

The deli appears to be getting a slice of this seemingly recession-proof pie. According to Perishables Group FreshFacts powered by Nielsen, deli pizza dollar sales were \$186.2 million during the 52 weeks ending June 27, 2009, up 15.3 percent from the previous year. During this same time period, pizza was the eighth largest prepared-foods category in the deli, contributing 1.5 percent to total deli department dollar sales.

"Even before the recent economic slowdown, national supermarket chains were dedicating an increasing amount of space to pizza," notes Alan Hamer, vice president of sales and marketing for Stefano Foods, Charlotte, NC. "Today, an expanding range of retailers are devoting merchandising space and promotional activity to building deli pizza sales. Deli pizza clearly has the potential to be the deli's next rotisserie chicken."

## Take-And-Bake Or Hot-To-Go?

Take-and-bake programs are gaining popularity. "Mom or dad can pick up a take-and-bake pizza from their local deli with the confidence that quality ingredients were used in the preparation," according to Johanna Hulme, marketing manager for Pocino Foods Co., City of Industry, CA. "Within a few minutes the whole family can be enjoying a hot dinner at home."

Take-and-bake moved into retail in a big way in 2005 when Donatos Pizzeria, Columbus, OH, opened kiosks in supermarkets owned by The Kroger Co, based in Cincinnati, OH. The kiosks offer 13-inch pizzas with up to 16 different toppings pack-





## Pizza Stars At Culinaría

**M**ade-to-order pizza is a star attraction in the prepared foods department at Culinaría, a new concept supermarket opened in August by Schnuck Markets, Inc., a 106-store chain based in St. Louis, MO.

Built on the main level of the Ninth Street Garage in downtown St. Louis, the 21,000-square-foot full-service grocery includes a 6,000 square-foot mezzanine featuring a wine bar and customer seating area. Customers who call ahead and order “can pull up in the loading zone outside and we’ll bring their hot pizza right to them,” explains Lori Willis, director of communications.

Although only about one-third the size of a typical Schnuck’s store, Culinaría stocks more than 22,000 products including its ultra-premium Culinaría line. Most of the prepared foods, including pizza, are made in-store daily. “Customers will find a kiosk with a touch-screen automatic ordering system at the entrance to the prepared foods department,” notes Willis. “They can custom-order salads, sandwiches and pizza and come back and pick their order up about 10 minutes later.”

Customers can watch in-house chefs make pizza dough from scratch and top it with a signature sauce and fresh ingredients sourced from throughout the store. Toppings include meats such as bacon, pepperoni, ground beef and ham; cheeses such as whole-milk Mozzarella, Cheddar and Provel, a white processed cheese popular in St. Louis; and fruits and vegetables such as pineapple, tomatoes, green peppers, mushrooms and spinach. Specialty pizzas include Breakfast Pizza with sausage, ham, bacon, eggs, Cheddar and Mozzarella and Shrimp and Artichoke Pizza with pesto sauce, shrimp and sliced artichokes.

The 12- and 16-inch thin crust pizzas are sold whole or by the slice. A plain 12-inch cheese pizza retails for \$5.49, while a 16-ounce is \$9.49 and slices are \$2.99. “Customers can buy a slice ready to eat at our counter or we’ll box it and they can take it with them,” Willis notes.

Take-and-bake versions of Culinaría’s most popular pizzas are displayed in a refrigerated case.

**DB**

aged in a disposable foil-baking pan with cardboard square cutting board and boxed with baking instructions. Today, there are more than 100 Donatos take-and-bake kiosks in Kroger’s Marketplace format stores.

“Delis have found they can get 15 to 20 percent in additional sales by adding a take-and-bake pizza program,” notes Lauri Gritten, vice president of sales and marketing for Pizza Blends, Inc., Bellevue, WA. The key, she says, “is not to have an overly manufactured look. Push the fresh concept to the consumer. You want the product to look like it just came from mama’s pizzeria.”

**“DELIS HAVE FOUND THEY CAN GET 15 TO 20 PERCENT IN ADDITIONAL SALES BY ADDING A TAKE-AND-BAKE PIZZA PROGRAM.”**

—LAURI GRITTEN  
PIZZA BLENDS, INC.

To do this, says Jim Storer, national sales manager for Connie’s Pizza, Chicago, IL, “You can bring in frozen pre-topped pizza, [thaw] it out and sell it in the refrigerated case as fresh or bring a frozen crust, [thaw] it out and have store employees custom top, over-wrap and display it refrigerated. Some operators order a cheese blank — a plain cheese pizza that an operator can thaw and custom top. The advantage lies in controlling food costs and reducing inventory. You can do any of these options with par-bake or fresh crusts.”

Many delis, says Peter Smith, national marketing manager for Champion Foods, New Boston, MI, “sell both take-and-bake pizza and have a hot-to-go program. The hot program is especially good if the deli has a big lunch or dinner business.” Hot by-the-slice sales are most common at lunchtime. “Slices can sometimes be more profitable than a whole pizza, depending on volume.”

For example, Ukrop’s Super Markets, a 28-store chain based in Richmond, VA, sells its plain cheese pizza by the slice for \$2.29





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and its 8-slice 16-inch whole classic cheese pizza for \$11.99. This represents an additional \$6.33 in sales for a pizza sold by the slice rather than whole.

Whole pizza represented a 63.1 percent dollar share of deli pizza (\$117.5 million) and slices 12.0 percent (\$22.4 million) for 52 weeks ending June 27, 2009, according to Perishables Group FreshFacts.

At dinnertime, says Champion's Smith, "Many delis offer customers the option to order their pizza and have the deli bake it while the customer is shopping. This takes around 15 minutes and requires no special equipment other than an electric or gas convection oven."

A hot pizza program can help reduce shrink in a take-and-bake program. "The sauce starts to bleed through the crust in a take-and-bake in four to five days and will affect its appearance," relates Connie's Stoner. "Pull the product before this, bake it off and sell it hot. That helps keep product rotated and fresh."

**"MANY DELIS OFFER CUSTOMERS THE OPTION TO ORDER THEIR PIZZA AND HAVE THE DELI BAKE IT WHILE THE CUSTOMER IS SHOPPING. THIS TAKES AROUND 15 MINUTES AND REQUIRES NO SPECIAL EQUIPMENT OTHER THAN AN ELECTRIC OR GAS CONVECTION OVEN."**

— PETER SMITH  
CHAMPION FOODS

### Healthful Sells

Good-for-you pizzas — as long as they are also good-tasting — will entice health conscious consumers to the deli. According to Technomic's *2008 Pizza Trend Report*, 41 percent of women and 29 percent of men limit their intake of pizza for health reasons.

The Pizza Station at the Whole Foods Market in La Jolla, CA, offers hot-to-go pizzas free of artificial preservatives, sweeteners, coloring and additives. Crusts are made of white, wheat or rice flours. Meat-topped pizzas



use all natural hormone-free beef and cage-free poultry. Vegetarian and vegan pizzas are also available. For example, the vegan hummus pizza retails for \$14.99 and is topped with hummus, grilled onions, Kalamata olives and fresh basil.

"Multigrain pizza crusts are a big push now and so is whole wheat," says Stoner. "A 100 percent whole-wheat product can be too dry. That's why we make ours with 51 percent whole wheat."

Bob Horth, vice president of business development, Delorio's Frozen Dough Products, Utica, NY, sees an emerging demand for gluten-free crusts. The company offers a gluten-free, par-baked, frozen pizza shell to commercial operators. "We're getting inquiries now for pre-topped gluten-free pizzas."

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye

and barley. Persons with celiac disease cannot eat gluten and suffer severe intestinal problems if they do. Alternative flours such as rice and tapioca are used to make gluten-free products.

A pre-made gluten-free crust or pizza is the way to go, says Pizza Blend's Gritten. "You need to have a whole separate facility so there is no cross contamination from other flours. This isn't something you can do in the back of the deli."

### One Size Does Not Fill All

The key to a successful deli pizza program, according to Stefano's Hamer, is to "merchandise mainstream varieties at retail price points that are an undeniable value for consumers."

Costco, Issaquah, WA, is king of this cat-



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egory. It sells some 20 million 18-inch cheese, pepperoni or combo pizzas annually for \$9.99.

"Some delis sell an 18-inch pizza as a point of differentiation," notes Delorio's Horth. "The secret is that there isn't that much more topping required for an 18-inch compared to a 16-inch and there's the 'wow' effect with customers because of the size."

Not all consumers are looking for quantity, however. Connie's Storner observes single-serve pizzas gaining in popularity because of the increase in 1- and 2-person households. "The smaller size also allows for a lower price point."

A pizza that's identified with a deli operation can draw in consumers. Pocino's Hulme advises retailers to "explore new toppings that appeal to your consumer demographics. Ethnic and exotic toppings are becoming more popular. All pizza toppings can be used equally well in refrigerated take-and-bake and hot-to-go programs."

Delis all want to carry something different, adds Storner. "In response, we've just introduced a gourmet 9-inch by 11-inch 'rustica' in three flavors: chicken carbonara, meat lovers and Margherita."

Ukrop's draws in customers with its distinctive pizzas. For example, the 7-item specialty pizza menu offers Apple Cheddar Pizza, Sombrero Taco Pizza and Breakfast Pizza made with the customer's choice of three favorite breakfast toppings. The specialty pizzas are made-to-order and sell for \$14.99 each.

### Promotions

In-and-out specials are a good way to introduce new pizza flavors. "A pizza topped with Alfredo sauce is a niche rather than an everyday item," according to Storner. "So are other flavors such as chicken pesto, barbecue chicken and garlic, olive oil and vegetable. These are great to bring in as specials to add excitement."

A new variety needs promotional help to capture impulse sales. "This means advertising in the store's weekly circular for a \$1 off incentive, using point-of-sale to let customers know what it is and perhaps sampling it out," says Champion's Smith, who believes bundled promotions are also effective. "Advertise a pizza and 2-liter soda or pizza, soda and a salad for one price. It's a real value-driven deal."

Pizza promotions need not last an entire week to be effective. Storner recommends running specials on Friday or Saturday nights. "For example, Pizza Fridays with a cheese and one topping for \$6.99."

Finally, Storner recommends tying pizza promotions to seasonal themes. "Run a football special on a meat lover's or barbecue chicken pizza. You can do this for baseball and basketball season, too. Hang balloons, streamers and signage in the deli to really play up the promotion and give a boost to your pizza category."

**DB**

# A Matter Of Judging

By acknowledging the best North American cheeses, the American Cheese Society provides retailers with a first-rate marketing tool

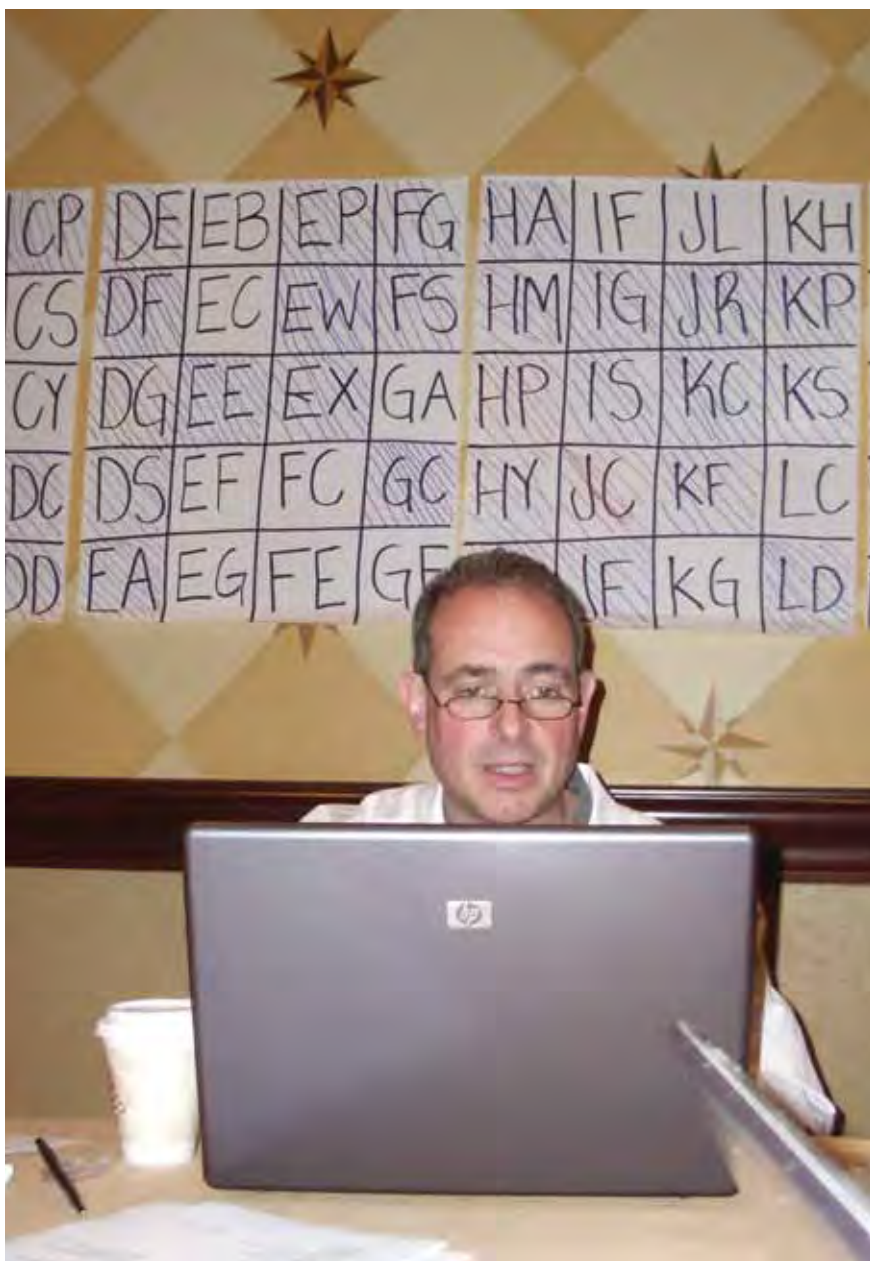
BY DAVID GROTENSTEIN

**Editor's note:** Just as winning a prestigious wine contest can increase a wine's desirability, so can winning a prestigious cheese contest increase a cheese's desirability. For the past 26 years, the American Cheese Society (ACS), Louisville, KY, has held an annual competition that recognizes the best cheeses coming out of the United States, Canada and Mexico. This year, 1,327 cheeses — from cheesemakers small, large and in between — were entered to be judged by objective standards designed to insure fairness. The cheeses awarded ACS recognition constitute the best examples in a variety of categories.

Retailers who feature and promote ACS winners in their deli cheese selections offer novice cheese consumers a road map to discovering new (to them, at least) cheeses of impeccable quality and taste. Cheese connoisseurs respond to the winning cheeses on a variety of levels, including discovering cheesemakers and cheese variations, serving exceptional quality to family and friends, and being the first in the crowd to try the winners. It should not be a surprise if the ACS winning cheeses in your store sell out completely.

The cheese chosen Best in Show at the 2009 ACS Judging and Competition in Austin, TX, was Rogue River Blue from Rogue Creamery, Central Point, OR. Second Place Best in Show went to Red Hawk from Cowgirl Creamery, Point Reyes Station, CA. Third Place Best in Show was a tie between Cave Aged Mollage from Carr Valley Cheese Co., LaValle, WI, and Rupert from Consider Bardwell Farm, West Pawlet, VT. A complete list of the 300-plus winners is available at [www.cheesesociety.org](http://www.cheesesociety.org).

David Grotenstein, pictured at left overseeing the Judging & Competition in Austin this past June, has co-chaired the ACS Judging and Competition Committee since 2005. He has provided Deli Business with an insider's view of the competition and its judging criteria. We thank David for his uniquely personal insight into the premier cheese competition in the United States.





For the past four years it has been my good fortune and privilege to serve as co-chairman of Judging and Competition for the ACS. For retailers, few developments have been as exciting as the explosion in American cheeses over our new millennium's first decade. For me, it remains the choicest category in specialty foods, the one place where we can offer our customers really new foods from people we know. And they're arriving as fast as we can find parking places for them in the showcase.

This year, somewhere between the sinking economy and skyrocketing temperature of Austin, TX, in August, the ACS Annual Conference managed to be fully attended, and we had a record number of entries into Judging and Competition — 1,327 cheese

major additional requirement is that the entrant be, or become, a member of ACS.

Every year, soon after the Conference, we start planning next year's judging, always looking to make improvements. How can we further streamline the process, gather more data or possibly handle more cheeses?

We make our changes or choices working from one basic core value: that the Judging and Competition always be the fairest possible evaluation of the accomplishments of our cheesemaker members. We strive to do that by handling their cheeses and dairy products with the utmost care and efficiency and by operating a seamless, tranquil judging environment for the hard-working people who serve as judges.

ACS judging is unique. Unlike most judg-

maker. The awards we give out are really a by-product of that process.

All entries are judged anonymously. No labels or markings of distinction are permitted into the judging room. Each entry receives a predetermined, preprinted code number that reflects only its category.

Both technical and aesthetic judges work from focused score sheets that have been tailored to reflect the particular flavor, textural and visual characteristics of specific categories or subcategories. Aesthetic judges award points for outstanding characteristics they find; technical judges deduct points for flaws they detect. Their combined scores are the total score of the entry. Judges also make additional written comments and suggestions to the cheesemakers.



and dairy products from the United States, Canada and Mexico were entered. Over 300 ribbons were awarded.

We certainly have our share of frequently asked questions. Who qualifies to enter? How does it work exactly? How have we kept up with the rapid growth (more than 50 percent over the last five years)? Why are there so many categories? What is the value of an ACS a ribbon to the cheesemaker?

The first question — who qualifies? — is pretty easy. Any cheesemaker with proper state or county-issued permitting whose products are made only from North or South American milk sources and have been on the market for at least six months prior to judging can enter. "On the market" means generally available to the public, whether it be at a retail food shop, weekly farmer's market, online store or mail order. The only

ings, which are solely technical evaluations, we work with teams of judges, one technical and one aesthetic. Technical judges come from the dairy and food science community, most of them are returning judges for us. Our aesthetic judges could be described as professional cheese lovers: merchants, food writers, distributors — people close to the consumer side.

Unlike other contests in the cheese and specialty food world, we're actually not a contest at all. It's not the goal of our judges to pick a winner from each of the categories they're appraising. Entries are not pitted against one another in order to determine which is best.

We are a judging first, a competition second. The purpose and goal of ACS judging is to grade each cheese on its own merits and provide meaningful feedback to its cheese-

When they have completed grading a category, the scores are compared and winners emerge — usually. I say usually because cheeses must meet minimum grades to qualify for a ribbon and sometimes wins do not occur at every level within a category. There might be a 1st Place, but no 2nd or 3rd. There might be winners for 2nd or 3rd, but no 1st. Sometimes, no ribbons at all are awarded in a category.

Entries must receive a minimum of 91 points in order to qualify for a 1st Place ribbon. Only cheeses and dairy products that score 81 to 90 can qualify for 2nd Place, 75 to 80 for 3rd Place. That said, achieving those scores does not guarantee a ribbon. If multiple entries meet minimum scores, the three highest scores will be declared the winners. (Note: Ties are permitted for 2nd and 3rd place, but not for 1st place. Cheeses that

tie for a blue ribbon are sent back to their judges to break the tie.)

After this major part of the judging is completed, the 1st Place winners from all categories are assembled and the judges now pick Best of Show. At this point, the judging teams disband, each judge gets a new score sheet created specifically for Best of Show and individually rates every blue ribbon winner. No technicals or aesthetics anymore. Everyone makes their picks for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, scoring them on a sliding scale. The point totals from all the judges are collected and totaled, and the Grand Prize Winners are named.

In 2009, there were 27 ACS-recognized categories of cheese and dairy, spread out over 102 subcategories. Over the years, we have added subcategories on an as-needed basis. There are two criteria for adding categories. First is that a type or style of cheese produces enough entries to warrant the addition of the category. Washed rinds, Emmen-thal-style and triple crèmes would be examples of categories created for this reason.

The second, perhaps less obvious circumstance, is when one particular category grows so long that we need to break it up in order not to overburden the palates of our



**Best in Show at the 2009 ACS Judging and Competition went to Rogue River Blue from Rogue Creamery. Pictured (left to right) are David Gremmels and Cary Bryant, owners of Rogue Creamery, and David Grotenstein, co-chairman of the ACS Judging and Competition committee.**

judges. In ACS judging, one team judges an entire subcategory. We like to keep a team's tastings to less than 50 per day, so when one

year a subcategory suddenly runs 40 to 50 cheeses all by itself, we need to lighten the load. It would be unfair to the judges and a disservice to the cheesemakers not to. So, fresh goat cheeses get subdivided by shapes and styles, cheese flavorings get more speci-

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cally defined, washed rinds are further classified by age.

Not only is keeping the categories as short as possible fairer to the cheesemakers but it also gives our judges the opportunity to sample a wider range of cheeses. A benefit for them, both technically and aesthetically.



Again, as a retailer, I can tell you that the opportunity to use an ACS Ribbon (or two or three...) as a marketing tool is huge. Shops with savvy cheese counters will include ACS wins in their own signage and build their merchandising around them. Distributors and brokers can tout the good news to their customers with items in their lineups. Cheesemakers can herald their own successes on their websites, in their handouts and with other support materials, including prize-ribbon stickers — available through ACS — they can pop right on their cheeses or send out as part of their prepack labeling.

As with wine, olive oil and other complex specialty food categories, consumers appreciate whatever guidance we can give them. Good signs and point-of-sale information will often act alone as your sales force. Even better, they might spark conversation between a nervous but trusting customer and a knowledgeable, sympathetic cheesemonger.

As I stated earlier, the interest in farm-produced American cheeses has never been greater. The recognition ACS cheesemakers get from their peers and colleagues through Judging and Competition ultimately helps everyone. From the farm to the table. **DB**



Currently the director of operations and purchasing for Garden of Eden Marketplace in New York, David Grotenstein has been a consultant to the specialty food industry under the banner Food and Image. He has been in the food business for 28 years, having been a manager at Pasta & Cheese, DDL Foodshow and Mangia, and general manager and buyer for

Fairway Market, Gourmet Garage and Union Market, all in New York City. In 2002, he co-founded Molto Sugo LLC, which produced specialty food products under the Mario Batali label. He served on the American Cheese Society Board of Directors from 1998-2001 and rejoined the Board in 2004 to co-chair the Judging and Competition Committee.

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# Cheese From California

California's diverse cheese industry offers retailers a well-known "brand" as well as artisanal specialties

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

California is the second largest cheese-producing state (after Wisconsin). According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Sacramento, CA, 2.11 billion pounds were produced in 2008, nearly a quarter of the U.S. production. More than half was Mozzarella and 17.8 percent was Cheddar. California produced more Hispanic-style cheese than any other state — 109 million pounds in more than 25 styles.

More than 50 cheesemakers produce 250 different cheese varieties and styles, ranging from commodity to small-scale, handmade production. Among the best-known types of created-in-California cheeses are Monterey Jack and Teleme.

According to David Freedheim, sales consultant for the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), South San Francisco, CA, "The specialty cheese business is pretty strong — it's been growing throughout the country. A lot of cheese for the service deli is delivered already cut and wrapped — and most is pre-sliced."

The CMAB advertising campaign is in large part responsible for consumer recognition of the California cheese industry. In 2010, CMAB support will emphasize business on the East Coast, especially in New York and Washington/Baltimore.

"CMAB is using three tactics — its national advertising campaign, demo sampling and millions of instant redeemable coupons — to accomplish its mission: increase demand for California dairy products made with California milk," says Freedheim. "The most effective way to promote California cheese is for people to try it. They like it. And by putting a coupon on the packaging, we're providing an extra incentive."

"CMAB goes into stores to talk directly to buyers to encourage them to buy — telling them about the happy cows [a long-time focus of CMAB TV commercials], the



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA CHENEL'S CHEVRE



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Drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and sprinkled with crushed hot red pepper and mint flakes, Labne can be served as a dip for pita chips or crackers. Mix in diced bell peppers, carrots and cucumbers and it will make a superb vegetable dip. Spread it on your favorite bagel or crusty bread for a delicious snack. Labne can be used to marinate meats and adds creaminess with a tart kick to soups.

Made with all natural rBST (growth hormone) free Real California Milk, Karoun's Labne is a healthy alternative to cream cheese and sour cream.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF KAROUN DAIRIES

quality of California dairy products, the variety of cheeses, the aggressive position of the cheesemakers, and sampling,” he continues. “CMAB also works with perishables distributors across the country. Then, cheesemakers talk to distributors about pricing, delivery and service, and arrange for the perishables distributor to distribute their cheeses.”

Retailers that want to avail themselves of CMAB’s expertise can download the *Professional’s Guide*, a resource for sourcing, storing, handling, serving and selling California

cheeses, from the CMAB website. The sections on *Merchandising Cheese for Retail* and *Sourcing, Storing and Handling Cheese* can be invaluable to store-level associates.

Although CMAB may be the most widely recognized organization behind California

cheese, it is not the only group supporting the industry.

### California Artisan Cheese Guild

The California Artisan Cheese Guild is a non-profit membership organization to support and encourage cheesemakers and their milk producers promote cheese and foster collaboration — whether they use milk of cows, goats, sheep or water buffalo. Founded in 2006, it’s funded by annual dues, donations and fund-raising events held at the Cheese School of San Francisco.

The membership currently consists of 28 cheesemakers and milk producers — whose contact information is easy to access on the website — and other members of the trade and enthusiasts. A day of training for cheesemongers, chefs and professionals is planned for Monday, March 29, 2010, following the 4th annual

**“CMAB ALSO WORKS WITH PERISHABLES DISTRIBUTORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THEN, CHEESEMAKERS TALK TO DISTRIBUTORS ABOUT PRICING, DELIVERY AND SERVICE, AND ARRANGE FOR THE PERISHABLES DISTRIBUTOR TO DISTRIBUTE THEIR CHEESES.”**

— DAVID FREEDHEIM  
CALIFORNIA MILK ADVISORY BOARD



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUMIANO CHEESE CO.



California Artisan Cheese Festival to be held March 26-29, 2010, at the Sheraton Sonoma County in Petaluma, CA.

### G.O.A.T.

G.O.A.T. — an acronym for Greatest Of All Time — is an initiative to educate retailers and consumers about why goat's milk

very little is known about goats," explains Keehn. "The amount of goat cheese eaten per capita in the United States is very small compared to France. We're one of the larger producers. We have a cow producer up the road who makes more in a day than we do in a year."

Goats are not treated with hormones and goat dairies have less impact on the environment than cow dairies. "Goats don't have the

same issues with manure," says Bice.

Keehn has been bringing in a consultant to work with nearby struggling cow dairies to see if it's viable for them to raise goats. No one wants to lose farms that have been in the same family for generations, but it takes a different mind-set to raise goats. Goats aren't "just small cows — they have different needs. We don't want farmers to make a change and not be successful."


**TO DISCOVER THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NON-COMMODITY CHEESES COMING FROM DIFFERENT CALIFORNIA REGIONS, YOU HAVE TO EXPLORE THE CLIMATE'S EFFECT ON WHAT THE ANIMALS EAT AND ANIMAL COMFORT PRACTICES, THEN FACTOR IN BREED AND HOW THE CHEESEMAKER CHOOSES TO HANDLE SEASONAL VARIATIONS IN MILK.**


products are "good for you and good for the planet." It's a grassroots campaign with plans to reach out through healthful-living tasting events. The founders are cheesemakers Mary Keehn, owner of Cypress Grove Chevre, Arcata, CA; Jennifer Bice, owner of Redwood Hill Farm and Creamery, Sebastopol, CA; and Laura Howard owner of LaLoo's Goat's Milk Ice Cream Company, Petaluma, CA.

G.O.A.T.'s website, [supergoat.org](http://supergoat.org), is a good resource for information on goat milk and goat milk products. The group, which wants people to understand why they would choose goat products, has chosen a fun approach to tell their story, using tag lines such as "Moo-ve over cows" and "Try the other white milk."

"We feel very strongly that goats are environmentally more sustainable and also that goat milk is healthy for most people, yet

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Fresh cheeses are made in most dairies; soft-ripened and washed rind cow's milk cheeses come mostly from north of the Bay Area in Marin County and Sonoma County. Semi-firm and firm cow's milk cheese come from Riverside County in Southern California to the North Coast, and from the Central Valley near Lindsay to the area north of Sacramento. Goat cheese is made from Turlock to Humboldt County on the North Coast. Only a few producers make sheep milk cheese, and they're located from the coastal hills of San Luis Obispo County to Western Sonoma County.

There are still dairies all along the coast from Marin County north, but south of Marin, production moved inland as coastal cities grew. Most California milk is produced in the Central Valley, where most of California's large dairies are found, but not all Central Valley milk goes into commodity cheese.

To discover the differences between non-commodity cheeses coming from different California regions, you have to explore the climate's effect on what the animals eat and animal comfort practices, then factor in breed and how the cheesemaker chooses to handle seasonal variations in milk. The ideal



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milk source is a healthy farm that has somebody who cares about the animals and is being attentive to health of the soil and the animal feed. Examples exist throughout the Golden State, regardless of location.

In Northern California, there are more

pasturing and months of good foraging per year than in other parts of the state. In the Central Valley, more dairies feed scientifically.

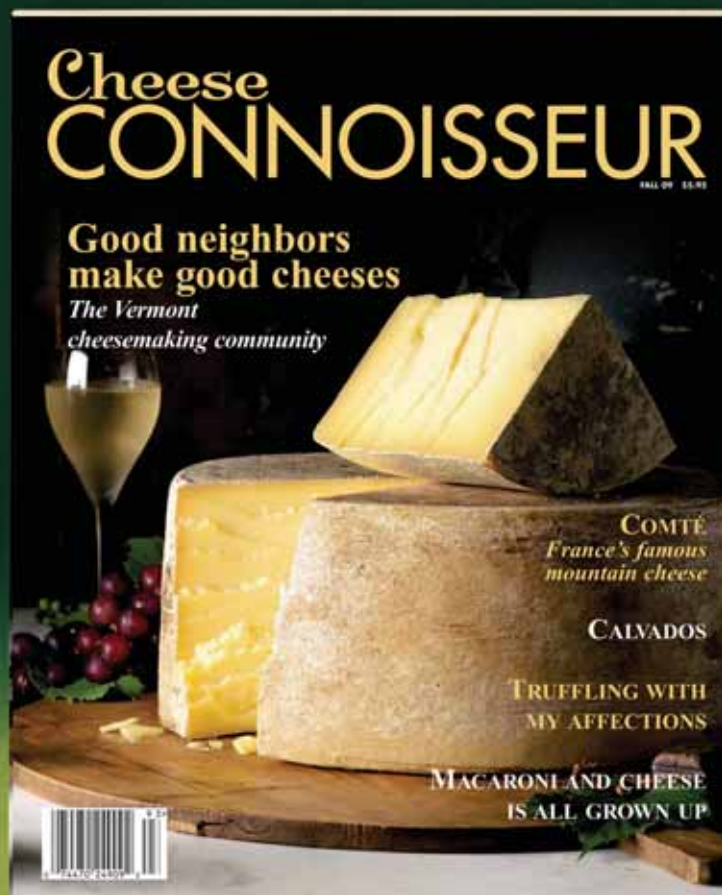
Some small farms in the Valley, mostly north of Sacramento, practice seasonal grazing. Temperatures above 75° F or below 40°



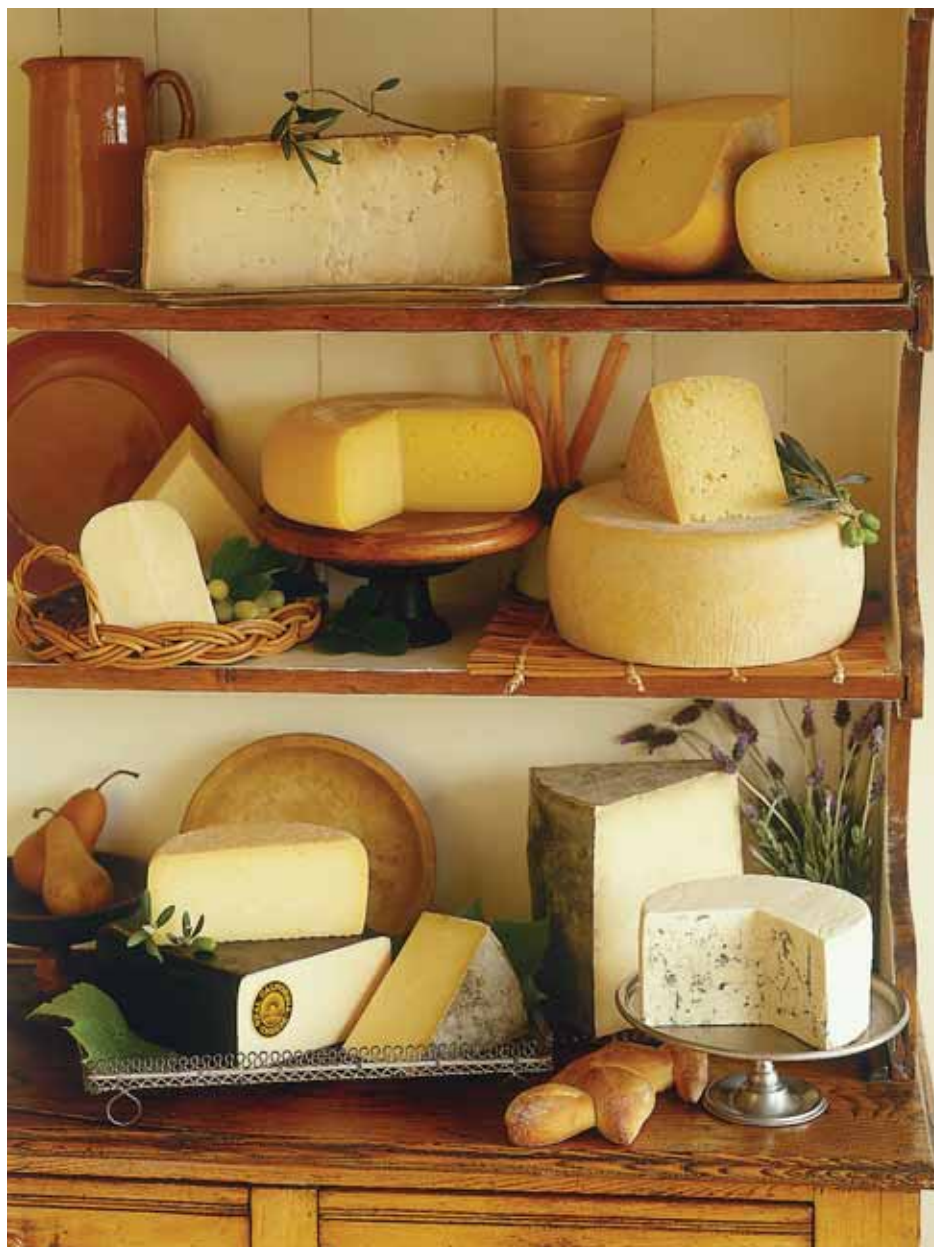
# WELCOME TO CHEESE CONNOISSEUR

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TO DISCOVER THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NON-COMMODITY CHEESES COMING FROM DIFFERENT CALIFORNIA REGIONS, YOU HAVE TO EXPLORE THE CLIMATE'S EFFECT ON WHAT THE ANIMALS EAT AND ANIMAL COMFORT PRACTICES, THEN FACTOR IN BREED AND HOW THE CHEESEMAKER CHOOSES TO HANDLE SEASONAL VARIATIONS IN MILK.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA MILK ADVISORY BOARD

cause stress, so cows are kept comfortable with well-maintained bedding, stall design, misting machines and fans. Since cows don't like going down stairs or being made to back out of a stall, carousel-milking systems are used to reduce stress.

Milk composition varies seasonally and by breed. Sue Conley, owner, Cowgirl Creamery, Pt. Reyes Station, CA, is working with different milks from different farms for specific cheeses. She experimented with local Jersey cow milk because it is higher in butterfat and solids. "Those components are really good for our soft seasonal cheese and our Fromage Blanc. They make a really creamy, nice young cheese."

For California's goat cheeses, climate and breed affect milk composition and practices, but differences are more attributable to cheesemaker than region. Cypress Grove's Keehn uses the wine model to show the relationship of food to place. "When you get into grapes — and you are not fertilizing or irrigating, where the roots are going down into a particular soil and pulling up those nutrients only — then it's 100 percent based on the place." When it comes to her goat cheese, "Everything we do matters. It's not 100 percent based on the region. It's what you do through intention to produce the best quality cheese you can. You're trying to develop your flavor profile for your particular product."

"Lactating animals require some grain and hay, which may have to be brought in from a different region," Keehn continues. "In dry, wet or cold climates, you're supplementing, so where is that hay, where are those concentrates coming from? We can't grow alfalfa in our damp climate. We get our hay as close as we can but it might be 150 miles away. It's mild enough for the goats to be on pasture most of the year and that will affect the milk. In a cold climate, time on pasture will come into play less. So it's more difficult to say that it is 'the place' that accounts for the difference between the cheeses from one area to another. It's really 'everything matters.' Everything you do matters."

DB



# Get Fresh With Me

## Fresh Mozzarella is becoming a consumer favorite

BY BOB JOHNSON

Television, bloggers and high-end restaurants have expanded food choices for the average American consumer and, in so doing, fresh Mozzarella has stepped into the spotlight. Millions of consumers have moved beyond the Mozzarella on pizzas to taste the fresh stuff. And they like what they've tasted.

"People have tried the drier Mozzarella on cheese pizza and then found the higher moisture Mozzarella, and the flavor is even better," says Doug Jay, president of Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA. Mozzarella offers an accessible flavor profile, both fresh and mild, which makes it pleasing to most Americans. "People started exploring and a lot of people have tried it and like it."

As more consumers have become aware of this fresh flavor, demand for fresh Mozzarella has grown steadily. "The popularity of fresh Mozzarella has allowed double-digit growth the last several years," notes Francis Wall, vice president for marketing at BelGioioso Cheese Inc., Denmark, WI. "Many retailers carry a whole section of fresh Mozzarella available in different sizes such as pearls, ciliegine [cherry-sized], bocconcini [bite-sized], ovolini [roughly 4-ounce size], large balls, unwrap-and-roll sheets, and log shapes that can also be offered pre-sliced. The fresh Mozzarella category also includes flavored logs such as fresh Mozzarella wrapped in prosciutto and basil. Another fresh Mozzarella specialty is Burrata, hand-formed balls of fresh Mozzarella filled with shreds of Mozzarella soaked in cream."

### The Cheese That Cries

Mozzarella brings a bit of freshness to the deli cheese department.

Those who know and love fresh Mozzarella can rise to poetic levels when they describe it. "When you peel fresh Mozzarella, it looks like a chicken breast. If a product doesn't string, it's not the real thing," according to Vic Agchikian, owner of King Cheese Corp. Monrovia, CA. The strings are



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAVE BROTHERS

formed when the milk paste is pulled during the cheesemaking. The pulling used to be done by hand, but labor saving machines now replicate hand pulling.

Even more important than the strings is the fresh, moist taste of authentic Mozzarella. "When you cut into it, it should cry. It should have some moisture in it; it should shed a tear. It's all in the freshness of the milk and the art of the cheesemaker. It should have the flavor of fresh milk," relates Margaret Cicogna, an Italian cheese specialist who travels to Italy finding cheeses for U.S. suppliers including Atalanta Corp. of Elizabeth, NJ.

Italians traditionally eat this fresh cheese every day, much as Americans drink a glass of milk. Fresh Mozzarella can last a few weeks, but the fresher the better. "If you ask someone in Italy, fresh Mozzarella should be made every day. The fresher the Mozzarella, the better it tastes. It's a fresh cheese," she adds.

Moisture, the key to the cheese's freshness, must be vigilantly maintained at the deli. "It must not dry out or become hard. The fresher you eat it the better, and it must have its moisture. That's why it's in brine," Cicogna explains.

The usual way to keep fresh Mozzarella moist is to present it in the deli case in a brine. Another alternative is to seal the cheese in Cryovac.

The reward for taking the time to find the good stuff — and the care to keep it fresh — is an irresistible cheese. "Fresh Mozzarella should be porcelain white, with a soft

texture and a mild milky flavor. Fresh Mozzarella is addictive," BelGioioso's Wall says.

### The Versatile Cheese

Genuine fresh Mozzarella can be used to create many products, according to King Cheese's Agchikian. It can be marinated, filled with a wide range of ingredients and turned into a many shapes. "There's more to

**"FRESH MOZZARELLA SHOULD BE PORCELAIN WHITE, WITH A SOFT TEXTURE AND A MILD MILKY FLAVOR. FRESH MOZZARELLA IS ADDICTIVE."**

— FRANCIS WALL  
BELGIOIOSO CHEESE INC.

fresh Mozzarella than fresh Mozzarella balls," he explains.

Fresh Mozzarella sheets rolled around deli meats are a specialty at King Cheese. The versatile sheets are a quarter inch thick, six inches wide and a foot long. They can be filled with any meat that strikes the imagination of the

deli or the consumer. They can even be shaped with a cookie cutter. Many more shapes are still be developed. "I'd love to see what high-end chefs would do with the curd. The creator is the individual who is going to be using the product," Agchikian adds.

This proliferation of flavor profiles represents the evolution of fresh Mozzarella. "In Europe, Mozzarella has always been plain Mozzarella. It's a daily staple. Then we started to make a smoked Mozzarella. Then we started to add a little flavor, such as a leaf of basil or a little prosciutto," says Fiorella Cutrufello, national sales representative at Calabro Cheese Corp., East Haven, CT. From there, it was an easy step to rolled Mozzarella with sun-dried tomatoes, truffles or black pepper.

"What I see most of is the ciliegine and ovolini in water, but I think the Cryovac log product is coming on strong. Marinated ciliegine salad is very popular, as is any flavored fresh cheese. Our biggest seller is rotolini. It's a small ball with prosciutto, bite-sized, smaller than a meatball. We arrange them like a pinwheel on a plate," she explains.

Some consumers have experienced fresh Mozzarella with added ingredients at restaurants and hope to find the same combinations at the supermarket. But adding ingredients to fresh Mozzarella can spur the growth of mold. "You have to be careful about mold developing around the ingredients. We've only made rolls with prosciutto because it has salt, which acts as a preservative," Cutrufello adds.





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Restaurants have made Caprese salad — a combination of tomato, Mozzarella, olive oil and basil — ubiquitous. “The most popular way to serve fresh Mozzarella is in a Caprese salad, which is presented in a variety of ways from the simple fresh tomato, basil, olive oil and cracked pepper to combining with avocado or dressing with a balsamic vinaigrette and crumbled blue cheese to combining with bruschetta or an olive tapenade. Restaurants and food writers as well as adventurous cooks keep finding new ways to use this cheese,” says Sherrie Zebrasky, retail advisor at Principe Foods, Los Angeles, CA.

Producers are finding that consumers expect an expanding variety of shapes, sizes and flavor profiles. “We thought making ciliegine, bocconcini, ovoline and the 8-ounce log was the full line. But now consumers are looking for the 1-pound log, pearls, sliced medallions and marinated! We supply all these sizes to retail and are glad to see so much interest in fresh Mozzarella,” says

Debbie Crave, vice president at Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, Waterloo, WI.

The demand for variety is reaching every corner of the country. “Up North they might have a bigger Mozzarella selection than they do in the South. They would still have bocconcini, ovalini and some of the pearls here. They would have Mozzarella sliced, whole and Cryovac. It’s becoming more popular everywhere,” notes Atlanta Foods’ Jay.

#### Take The Time To Show It Off

Offering a variety of choices is a good first step in a fresh Mozzarella merchandising program. “The broader the offerings, the better chance your customers will look to you for all their Fresh Mozzarella needs,” explains BelGioioso’s Wall. He advises retailers “to create an entire section to offer a variety offerings and sizes of fresh Mozzarella. Consumers love the freshness and versatility of this cheese, so sampling at store level will increase awareness and sales.”

The next step in marketing is a sampling program that includes showing the extent of the foods fresh Mozzarella can complement. “It’s great if the deli can show some applications with cheese — unique and interesting appetizers, panini, salads for example. And also sampling is so important,” Crave says.

Merchandising fresh Mozzarella can also include cross-promotions with complementary ingredients. “Effectively merchandising this cheese would include sampling as well as showing the customer how to use the cheese

### SOME CONSUMERS HAVE EXPERIENCED FRESH MOZZARELLA WITH ADDED INGREDIENTS AT RESTAURANTS AND HOPE TO FIND THE SAME COMBINATIONS AT THE SUPERMARKET.

in creative ways, such as combining with thinly sliced prosciutto,” relates Zebrasky. “Provide recipes and cross-merchandise in various departments such as produce, meat and bakery. Promotions can include cents-off on the cheese and the prosciutto for example, or a free package of sliced prosciutto with the purchase of Burrata — both new items in the product mix and would serve dual purposes of exposing the customer to both products and showing them how these items can be eaten together.”

The options become even greater when fresh salad ingredients are available in the spring and summer. According to Wall, “The fresh Mozzarella category is popular year-round, especially around the garden season when there are a variety of fresh tomatoes and herbs. Cross-merchandising with produce, pastas, breads and meats at other times of the year are successful. Keeping your cooler well-stocked and clean, offering recipe ideas and signage explaining the different types will give your customers the tools they need for making the appropriate choice.”

Cheese specialist Cicogna suggests demonstrations of fresh Mozzarella served with fresh tomatoes and basil, drizzled with a little olive oil.

The salad demonstration options are endless, but you have to decide if there is enough bang for the buck. “You might display the salad of the Day but you have to decide it’s worth putting the time into demonstrations,” notes Calabro’s Cutrufello.

DB







PHOTO COURTESY OF ORGANIC VALLEY

# Selling Health In The Deli

The deli should take advantage of consumers' desire for healthful foods

BY CHRISTINA DAVIS ROBERTS

**A**LREADY A DESTINATION FOR FRESHLY PREPARED FOOD, THE DELI CAN POSITION ITSELF AS THE SOURCE FOR HEALTHFUL EATING. EVEN THOUGH MANY HEALTHFUL PRODUCTS MAY COST A BIT MORE THAN THEIR CONVENTIONAL COUNTERPARTS, CONSUMERS JUSTIFY THE EXPENSE AS NECESSARY FOR THEIR WELLBEING.

With so many products jumping on the healthful-marketing bandwagon, consumers are now scrutinizing packaging and seeking out information to be sure products are consistent with their needs, and they have high expectations for foods touted as organic and natural. “Natural foods have migrated into mainstream grocery categories such as pizza and potpie, broths, soups and beverages. The trend is growing,” says Patrick Gabrish, vice president of Tualatin, OR-based Pacific Natural Foods, a natural and organic foods company that provides bulk foodservice components and multi-pack products for house-brand resale.

Retailers should focus on healthful additions to service-counter deli staples. Eric Newman, vice president of sales, Organic Valley, LaFarge, WI, advises deli operators not to segregate organic or other healthful products from their mainstream counterparts. “Put the cheese alongside conventional cheese of similar flavor profile to offer consumers are choice,” he advises.

Wendie DiMatteo, CEO, Hershey PA-based ASK Foods, which offers preservative-free deli salads, also recommends merchandising healthful and traditional choices together. “Years ago there was a sea of white and yellow potato and macaroni salad. Now, we see more colorful foods in the case, such as veggie and whole-wheat pasta salads or lighter tuna salads with garden vegetables and olive oil, or vinaigrette-based potato salads. Sometimes when you distinguish a

**“YEARS AGO THERE WAS A SEA OF WHITE AND YELLOW POTATO AND MACARONI SALAD. NOW, WE SEE MORE COLORFUL FOODS IN THE CASE, SUCH AS VEGGIE AND WHOLE-WHEAT PASTA SALADS OR LIGHTER TUNA SALADS WITH GARDEN VEGETABLES...”**

— *WENDIE DiMATTEO*  
*ASK FOODS*

product as healthful, some consumers may actually avoid it for a preconceived notion of how it will taste. By blending them into the overall case, with proper signage of how many grams of fat or calling out noted ingredients on labels, such as olive oil, consumers are able to make informed decisions.”

Philadelphia, PA-based Deitz & Watson's Healthy Lifestyle Program includes 50 deli items that meet the American Heart Association's recommendations for healthful

nutritional criteria. Each product has an identification tag with nutritional information, such as sodium and fat content, for display in the service deli case. “The nutritional information of our products tells an excellent story at point of purchase,” says Louis Eni, president and CEO. The company's minimally processed lower-sodium and lower-fat deli meats compare favorably to other meats bulked up with water and sodium injections. “We found a long time ago that it is much better to process whole-muscle premium deli meats such as old fashioned ham, premium turkey, chicken breast and roast beef with just enough salt for flavor.”

“The beauty is in what's not on the label,” says Ken Hoffman, a consultant to Dietz & Watson.

“Loyal purchasers of all-natural meat and cheese cross every demographic,” says Gina Asoudegan, manager of communications and outreach for Bridgewater, NJ-based Applegate Farms, a producer of natural and organic meats and cheeses, including a new line of bulk deli American, Provolone, Swiss, and Medium Cheddar cheese. “Some are driven to a healthful lifestyle because of a medical diagnosis, while others purchase natural products because of their beliefs about the issues surrounding food. For example, they may feel strongly about the effects of pesticides, antibiotics and hormones. Or they might have a strong belief about the humane treatment of animals. In fact, we're seeing increasingly more demand as consumers

PHOTO COURTESY OF APPLAGATE FARMS





demand higher-quality natural and organic versions of food such as deli meats, hot dogs, and bacon that traditionally contain a host of unnatural ingredients.

"The new trend in sandwiches is to use less meat and cheese," she continues. "These sandwiches are made on good bread, with seasonal produce, and a couple of slices of high-quality meat and cheese. Sandwiches made this way are healthful without compromising flavor. Similarly, the best way to market our all-natural deli meats and new cheeses is to highlight their taste. The flavor is directly related to how it's raised and produced. Meat tastes better when it's raised humanely without antibiotics and hormones and doesn't contain any additives, fillers, or preservatives — so hand out those free samples!" she recommends.

Applegate's deli meats, sausages, and bacons are also gluten-free. A gluten-free diet prohibits foods containing all forms of wheat, rye, barley and related grain hybrids. "In fact, we recently launched gluten-free chicken nuggets. We developed a gluten-free breading using a mixture of corn and rice flours without comprising the level of taste and quality that our loyal customers depend on," Asoudegan explains.

Because certified kosher food production is so stringent, a wide range of non-Jewish shoppers — such as vegans, Muslims, Seventh Day Adventists, and others concerned with animal and environmental welfare — seek out the kosher label as a form of vetting for similar values. "They want to know food is sustainable," says Brigitte Mizrahi, CEO of Mineola, NY-based Anderson International Foods, Inc., which is introducing a new line of USDA-certified organic as well as kosher cheeses. To maintain their religious kosher identity, bulk loaf kosher items must be handled in a kosher-certified service deli with rabbinical supervision from beginning to end, but mainstream supermarkets can still sell the products as a natural product. "If a regular deli wants to offer a certified kosher product, we offer deli pre-packs with the certified kosher label, which can be sold in the refrigerated section," she adds.

### Product Promotion

Delis can reach out to health-conscious consumers by advertising complementary products on a rotating basis in circulars and highlighting specific healthful aspects. "The most successful stores run an ad with a picture and 1- or 2-sentence description. People want to know where [a product is] from, why it's produced and why they should care," says Chad Pawlak, president of Thorp, WI-based Organic Farm Marketing, a producer of milk, cheese and butter products.

Demos and sampling are proven ways to get an untried product into a consumer's mouth. Organic Valley's Newman believes

## DELIS CAN REACH OUT TO HEALTH-CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS BY ADVERTISING COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS ON A ROTATING BASIS IN CIRCULARS AND HIGHLIGHTING SPECIFIC HEALTHFUL ASPECTS.

sampling from behind the counter and demoing are the best ways to introduce new products. "We can even arrange to have a farmer in the store doing an active demo. People absolutely love to meet the farmers."

"One of the most effective ways of getting the word out about our products has been through product demos and social media outlets, such as blogs. Demos let us show people, first hand, that they're not trading flavor for health, and bloggers offer consumers a credible third party opinion about the taste and quality of our products," Applegate's Asoudegan says.

### Natural and Organic

FreeBird, a line of natural chicken, offers delis rotisserie-ready trussed non-marinated chickens ready for the deli's own signature seasoning as well as birds pre-seasoned with rubs and ingredients with no chemical additives. "Just as we are what we eat, these animals are what they eat. Our chickens are raised on family farms in a humane manner with high regard for animal welfare standards, and vegetarian-fed corn and soybean feed with no antibiotics and no animal protein by-product of any kind in the feed. What we do creates an opportunity for the retailer to present product to the customer which can trace the lineage of their food back to the farm," says Joe DePippo, vice president of FreeBird Organics, Fredericksburg, PA, a division of The Hain Celestial Group, based in Boulder, CO.

"These are value-added rotisserie chickens in their purest possible form, starting with organic, free-range chickens and a clean panel of seasoning ingredients that are never irradiated," DePippo explains. "We use sea

salt, not water and phosphates. We all strive for the best possible tasting chicken. It gets back to the authenticity of how chicken used to taste." FreeBird also offers operator-ready foodservice products such as chicken nuggets, party wings and chicken tenders.

According to Organic Valley's Newman, "Organic food has provided a lot of the growth in the grocery segment in recent years. Consumers who are interested in food safety are seeking out organic certified foods because we can provide transparency in their production. Products can be tracked back through every stage of production and go through as many as 38 different tests before they hit the shelf." In addition to its current line of pre-packed sliced organic cheeses, the company is introducing a line of random-weight block cheeses, cut, wrapped and labeled organic for sale in the deli cold case.

Consumers seeking organic meats and cheeses will likely also seek an organic cracker to serve with them. Dallas, TX-based Dr. Kracker manufactures whole-wheat, artisan seed- and grain-topped crunchy flatbreads. They differ from crackers typically found in the grocery aisle because they are yeast-raised and baked. Sturdy enough for cheeses and dips such as hummus, tapenade and pesto, they are available in flavors such as seeded spelt and pumpkin or sunflower seed topped cheddar. "We pack them in plastic acetate tubs for sale in the deli department so shoppers can view the heavily textured whole grain crackers," says vice president George Eckrich, who is also baker trained in Germany.

### A Sustainable Trend

Some consumers feel maintaining the health of the planet is as important as maintaining their own health, so positioning product to fit this niche can be profitable.

"People are making quality lifestyle choices," says Pacific Natural's Gabrish, who cites the use of the pesticides, petroleum products, and groundwater pollution as issues increasingly on the radar. "Generation Y is the single most influential demographic right now — used to looking at those nutrition labels and reading them. There is a growing awareness that cheap pork isn't cheap; someone else is paying those costs."

According to Applegate's Asoudegan, "Healthy food is becoming less about fat grams and nutrition panels and more about clean ingredients and where the food comes from."

"Consumers are buying and eating with intent, looking not only for a good price, but how that product is made — how the cows are treated and what they are fed," notes Organic Farm's Pawlak.

DB

## Edible Apple Film Wraps May Protect Meat And Poultry Products Against Foodborne Pathogens

23.sep.09

Institute of Food Technologists

<http://www.ift.org/cms/?pid=1002134>

CHICAGO — Foodborne pathogens such as *Salmonella enterica*, *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 and *Listeria monocytogenes* are serious safety issues for food processors and consumers alike. However, meat and poultry products may be rendered safer with the use of edible apple film wraps, according to a new study in the *Journal of Food Science*, published by the Institute of Food Technologists.

Researchers from the University of Arizona investigated the use of carvacrol and cinnamaldehyde in apple-based films.

Carvacrol is the main ingredient of oregano oil, and cinnamaldehyde is the main ingredient of cinnamon oil. The researchers looked at how the antimicrobials in these films would protect against *S. enterica* and *E. coli* O157:H7 on chicken breast and *L. monocytogenes* on ham at two different temperatures. Their findings are as follows:

- Carvacrol was a stronger antimicrobial agent against both *Salmonella* and *E. coli* O157:H7 than cinnamaldehyde on the chicken breast at 4° C.

- At 23° C, *S. enterica* population reductions were similar for both carvacrol and cinnamaldehyde but higher for carvacrol against *E. coli* O157:H7.

- Carvacrol was also a stronger antimicrobial agent against *L. monocytogenes* than cinnamaldehyde on ham at 4° C and 23° C.

- The antimicrobials containing apple films were also effective against the natural microflora present on raw chicken breast.

"Our findings provide a scientific rationale for large-scale application of apple-based antimicrobial films to improve microbial food safety," says lead researcher Sadhana Ravishankar. "The use of edible antimicrobial films offers several consumer advantages, including prevention of moisture loss, control of dripping juices — which reduces cross-contamination — reduction of rancidity and

discoloration, and prevention of foreign odor pick-up."

NOTE: This study was conducted in collaboration with Mendel Friedman and colleagues of USDA-ARS-WRRC in Albany, CA, where the apple-based edible antimicrobial films were prepared. This research was partially supported by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Arizona and by the USDA-CSREES-NRI grant #2006-01321.

## Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Technology May Help In Keeping Foods Safe

23.sep.09

Institute of Food Technologists

<http://www.ift.org/cms/?pid=1002139>

CHICAGO — The October 2009 issue of the *Journal of Food Science* reviews the key concepts of RFID technology and its food-safety applications to the food industry.

RFID technology has led to better safety handling of raw materials and finished products in the food industry and is used to speed up the processing of manufactured goods and materials. RFID technology enables identification of an object from a distance without requiring a line of sight. RFID tags can also incorporate additional information such as details of the product and manufacturer and can transmit measured environmental factors such as temperature and relative humidity.

Scientists from North Carolina State University detail the numerous applications of RFID technology in the food industry:

- Within supply chain management, RFID tags can be used to track food products during distribution and storage.

- Multiple tags can be read simultaneously and RFID technology can facilitate automated product shipments from a warehouse to a retail location.

- Freshtime RFID tags monitor the shelf life of foods to which they are attached. The tags sense temperature and integrate it over time to determine the shelf life of products.

- ThermAssureRF is a new RFID-based system that combines tracking and temperature measurement to ensure foods

**M**artin Mitchell, technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) and president 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).

such as meat, fruit and dairy products remain at a safe temperature during transportation and storage. It is currently being used by companies that ship wine, produce, seafood, meat, poultry, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

"The challenges that face RFID technology are read-range and accuracy in retail environments, non-uniform standards, cost, recycling issues and privacy and security concerns," says lead researcher K.P. Sandeep. "Another challenge is the differences in frequencies allocated for RFID applications because each country is setting its own standards for the new technology."

## CANADIAN NEWS: Health Canada Proposes Mustard Seeds Be Listed As Allergens

The action follows review of public comments and a subsequent literature review to determine the scientific validity of requiring enhanced labeling as an allergen. Health Canada scientists concluded that mustard meets the Canadian criteria of a priority food allergen and are proposing it require enhanced labeling in Canada. A similar review of garlic and onion found insufficient evidence to require adding them to the list of allergens requiring enhanced labeling.



# Memorable Experiences, Meaningful Relationships



By  
**Jeffrey Spear**  
President  
Studio Spear LLC  
Baltimore, MD

If you've been following industry reports, sales at the deli counter are down. According to the IDDBA, more than half of consumers surveyed say they're buying less in the deli and prepared food areas. If you're going to win back customers and boost sales, dramatic changes are needed.

When I've visited supermarkets around the country, I see very little distinguishing one deli department from the next. While some may be cleaner, have better merchandising systems, or offer new technologies to expedite shopping, the experiences are pretty similar. Unless shoppers have an item on their shopping list that require a visit, supermarkets provide little incentive to explore the deli department.

Retailers such as Wegmans, Whole Foods and Trader Joe's are recognized for innovation. According to a recent report in *Business Week*, Whole Foods was named the top-performing retailer of 2009. And when it comes to customer service, Trader Joe's gets high honors. Whether these reputations are being built on product variety and quality, in-store experiences or overall brand satisfaction, all three companies are finding ways to maintain buyer loyalties and outperform many of their competitors.

These achievements may not be attributed specifically to activity in the deli department, but these retailers offer an interesting product mix in their deli case and prepared foods sections and they provide unique and memorable experiences. Ultimately, these operators are going to great lengths to avoid "me too" comparisons with other supermarkets and have found ways to stimulate and engage the customer.

If you're going to stay ahead of the pack, compel shoppers to visit your deli department and register an increase in sales volume, you're going to have to do more than maintain the status quo. And since the above-mentioned retailers have raised the bar, you'll want to do what you can to innovate one step further.

Just about every brand owner I know reports spikes in sales when they provide in-store sampling and product demonstrations. While Whole Foods and Trader Joe's have regular and ongoing product tasting programs — samples left out for self-service by customers — why not up the ante with greater depth of product information, tried-and-true recipes and serving suggestions? In this economy, showing customers how to stretch their budgets and get more from the deli products they purchase would be certainly appreciated. How about cooking demonstrations?

While a limited number of retailers designate floor space for just this purpose, it's easy to set up temporary displays. Letting customers learn about your products in an entertaining manner that resonates with their lifestyle is more engaging than simply placing a tray of inexpensive cheese out for self-service sampling.

If your store has a meaningful web presence, perhaps you could have customers register at the deli, deliver deli-based content online and begin one-to-one relationships from that department. E-mailed invitations to special events and demonstrations would let your customers know you value their patronage, are considerably more personal than weekly advertising inserts in the local paper and give shoppers a

reason to make the deli a shopping destination.

Going one step further, do any people on your staff know deli customers by name? Do they know who their regulars are and anticipate their needs? Do they talk about products and make suggestions for additional purchases?

At McDonalds, they routinely ask if you'd like fries with your order. The U.S. Post Office asks if you need stamps before completing the sale. In the deli department, closed-ended questions such as "Can I get you anything else" or "Is that all for today?" are not good enough. Open-ended questions that indicate an interest in the customer's needs are more productive. Something as simple as "What are you cooking today?" could open the door to suggestions for side salads, breads, condiments, meat and cheese recommendations, etc. and make the visit to the deli a more engaging experience.

Of course, you'll need to train your staff to become more conversational. If, however, there is one person at the store level who can perform in this manner, his or her colleagues will learn from example. And unlike new merchandising systems and re-alignment of floor plans that may fall out of your control, making conversation and building personal relationships with customers is absolutely free. All it takes is a little effort.

It doesn't look as if our economy is rebounding in a hurry. Additionally, and as more and more deli departments scale back product variety, become single brand destinations, embrace faceless electronic ordering systems and limit opportunities for customer interaction, they are also minimizing opportunities to build and maintain customer loyalty. In an economic environment where price is king and competition is fierce, forming meaningful relationships with your customers represents an excellent, low-cost opportunity to pursue sales growth.

DB

# Blast From The Past

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## Dietz & Watson

his year, Dietz & Watson, Philadelphia, PA, is celebrating its 70th anniversary as a producer of quality deli meats, cheeses and complements.

This picture, which probably dates to the 1940s, shows company founder Gottlieb Dietz, a talented sausage maker who emigrated from Germany to the United States — he's the mustachioed gent in the overalls — with Dr. Hope, the health inspector at the time the picture was taken. The man on the right is Heinrich Waldoerfer, Gottlieb's father-in-law. Unfortunately, the name of the woman in the picture have been lost to history.



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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