

DELI BUSINESS

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COVER STORY



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DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

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IPC RECIPE CONTEST WINNERS



The Idaho Potato Commission (IPC), Eagle, ID, announces that Chef Daniel Swift from the Capstone Café at the University of Nevada Las Vegas took first place in IPC's *Get the Party Started* recipe contest. His recipe for Russet-Wrapped Shrimp Pops took first place honors, and won him \$1,500. Lobster Potato Skins won second place and \$550 for Chef David Knickrehm of Bella Aquila restaurant in Eagle, ID. For third place and \$400, Chef Marcos Rodriguez Caban, on the culinary arts faculty at Universidad de Este Culinary School in Carolina, PR, created Idaho Potato and Chicken Croquettes with Aioli and Spicy Paprika Oil.

IPC developed the recipe contest to celebrate its 75th anniversary and the national tour of the Famous Idaho Potato Truck. "Our foodservice team thought American Culinary Federation chefs would relish the opportunity to help *Get the Party Started*," said Don Odiorne, IPC vice president foodservice. "The chefs responded by raising the creative bar with outstanding menu applications that use flavor and technique in non-traditional and intriguing ways." The contest attracted entries from across the U.S.

COMING NEXT ISSUE IN DEC/JAN 2013

COVER STORY
Retail Trends

FEATURE STORIES
Combating Childhood Obesity
Dips and Spreads
Mediterranean Foods

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS
Olive Bars
Self-Service Options

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES
Fresh Breads

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DELI MEAT
Premium Cured Meats
The Many Faces of Ham

CHEESES
Affinage
California



COMING IN FEB./MAR. 2013

DELI BUSINESS will take an in-depth look at the pros and cons of GMO foods and how retailers can stake out the best position for their demographics.

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www.atlantafoods.com

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Denver, CO (720) 274-2888

Gourmet Foods International
Long Island City, NY (845) 701-5557

New Products



ENGLISH WEBSITE

The Consorzio Tutela Speck Alto Adige, South Tyrol, Italy, has launched a media campaign to educate American retailers, distributors, restaurateurs and consumers. The English-language website has videos, photos, recipes, and information on how Speck Alto Adige is produced and served. A lean meat originating from pigs raised on renowned, quality-controlled farms, the hams are cured and lightly smoked in the open air following centuries-old traditions. Speck Alto Adige owes its special character to the singular geographical location of Italy's northernmost province of Alto Adige, bordering Austria and Switzerland. Speck Alto Adige can't be produced anywhere else in the world.

www.speck.it/en/speck-alto-adige



CHEESE WRAPPING PAPER

Formaticum, Brooklyn, NY, has introduced its improved Cheese Paper Retail Pack with an eye-catching design. Each pack now contains 15 11x14" sheets and 30 adhesive labels (25 percent more for the same price). New Cheese Bags with the same design make cheese storage simple and easy. Consumers appreciate being able to preserve their cheese properly without having to become an expert at wrapping. 20 packs of 15 bags in each case. New bulk cheese paper features the cheese crest logo and is available in 8x9", 9x12", 11x14" & 12x19" sheets.

www.formaticum.com



NEW SOUP FLAVORS

Kettle Cuisine, Chelsea, MA, now offers four new on-trend varieties. Grilled Cheese & Bacon Soup has sautéed bacon, caramelized red onions, tomatoes, extra sharp Cheddar, smoked Gouda, Swiss cheese, basil and thyme. Moroccan Lamb with Couscous features diced lamb, sweet potatoes, red peppers, okra, chickpeas, couscous and aromatic spices in beef stock. Black-Eyed Pea & Smoked Ham Soup combines black-eyed peas, smoky uncured ham, collard greens, sautéed onions, garlic and southern spices in beef stock. Greek Chicken Orzo Soup has chicken, sautéed onions, carrots, herbs, orzo fresh mint and lemon in chicken stock.

www.kettlecuisine.com



DELI CHEESE PROGRAM

Litehouse Foods, Sandpoint, ID, has launched its handcrafted cheeses into the retail deli. The program includes artisan Blue cheese, Gorgonzola and Feta, which are available in wedges, wheels, crumbles and a unique center cut of the Blue cheese. Litehouse premium domestic cheese is made with locally sourced single-source milk and is rBST and gluten free. The Blue cheese and Gorgonzola are made in small batches from vintage recipes with strains dating back to pre-World War II. Each wheel is hand turned, hand salted and aged a minimum of 100 days.

www.lighthousefoods.com



RAW-MILK CHEDDAR

Red Barn Family Farms, Appleton, WI, recently unveiled Edun, its New Zealand-style raw-milk Cheddar cheese. Edun has a rich, buttery flavor and a firm texture. Made from clean unpasteurized milk and cream, it's always rBGH free with no additives or preservatives, only salt, cultures and vegetable rennet. Meticulously crafted in small batches at Willow Creek Creamery in Berlin, WI, Edun is aged 60 days or more. Packed and shipped in recycled fiber cartons; available in 40-pound blocks, 5- and 10-pound loaves, or in random or exact weight retail cuts.

www.redbarnfamilyfarms.com



MINI MEAT SNACKS

Tennessee Pride, Madison, TN, a division of ConAgra Foods, is expanding its snack-sized product line from the breakfast category into the snack and lunch sections with Premium Minis Hot Dogs and Buns. Premium Minis are half the size of regular hot dogs, made from premium cuts of pork and beef, and come in a soft bun. Each one is individually wrapped in microwaveable, easy-open packages for minimal handling and quick heating. Premium Minis Hot Dogs and Buns come in 4-count and 6-count packages and are being offered to all Tennessee Pride retail customers.

www.tnpride.com



SIX NEW DIPS

La Terra Fina, Union City, CA, is launching six new dips that blend fresh vegetables with Greek yogurt. With less fat and calories than most hummus, a dollop adds zip to sandwiches, wraps, crackers and veggie platters. The new flavors include: Greek Kalamata Olives & Spinach, Balsamic Beet & White Bean, Roasted Yellow Pepper & Lentil, Red Lentil Curry, Creamy Spinach & Bacon, and Caramelized Onion. All are gluten-free and contain no nuts or trans-fats; packaging is made from 100 percent recycled PET bottles and shaped in 10-ounce squares for more efficient stocking and shipping.

www.laterrafina.com



FLAVORED CHEESE LINE

Vermont Farmstead Cheese Co., S. Woodstock, VT, introduces flavored WindsorDales. A raw-milk cheese made using a late 1800s farmhouse Wensleydale recipe, WindsorDale and is a hard cheese with a hint of tart apple, honeyed aftertaste and firm, flaky texture. It's the perfect base for flavorful additions: Cranberry WindsorDale with whole cranberries that burst with tart flavor; Blueberry WindsorDale with whole blueberries that add a mellow sweetness; Chocolate Stout WindsorDale with a hearty brew that finishes with an earthy chocolate note; Cracked Pepper WindsorDale with a bold exuberant zing of fresh black peppers and Hot Pepper WindsorDale with extra kick from both jalapeño and chili peppers.

www.vermontfarmstead.com

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

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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

There's an App for That Deli Item

Publix has been in the news lately for launching — and then expanding to 50 stores — an experimental online system, designed with smartphone users in mind, that allows consumers to pre-order subs, wraps, sliced meats and cheeses. These are then ready and waiting for customer pickup.

It certainly is a good idea. Customers, often on a lunch hour getting a sub, don't want to wait.

Also sandwich orders can be complicated, and this way, customers can save to their “favorites” those sandwiches they might wish to order again.

It does seem somewhat antiquated that customers have to take a number and wait idly during some periods just to get sliced deli meats and cheeses. This columnist's family is a big buyer of sliced deli items, and just waiting for our own order — a pound of roast beef, a pound of turkey, etc. — takes far too long. So this ordering system is a good thing.

Still, it seems like a pretty limited technology for 2012. Although there may be some logistic difficulties, it isn't clear why customers can't add other products, say a cup of soup, some chips and a beverage, to their order.

And the system is just an ordering system; customers still have to wait in lines at the cashier to pay. It isn't clear why this is necessary.

In fact, it's pretty clear that waiting in line isn't necessary from a technological point of view. So one suspects Publix has a strategy to encourage customers to walk the store to get their chips and beverage and to force the customers to go through the cashier line so that they aren't tempted to walk out of the store with just their sandwich and go buy their Coke elsewhere. The strategy is to make it just convenient enough to get the order and then create a process that maximizes the likelihood of shopping for other things.

Conventional supermarkets have been battled on all sides in recent years. Customers can find less expensive offers from Wal-Mart, from deep discounters such as Aldi and Save-a-Lot and from price-focused offerings such as Winco and Market Basket. They also find more upscale offerings at Whole Foods and Fresh Market, unique vibes at Trader Joe's and more fun experiences at Costco. Increasingly, drug stores are offering more convenient grab-and-go sections filled with fresh foods, and this doesn't even touch on the alternative restaurants provide.

It's pretty clear that the conventional supermarket requires reinvention. It seems unlikely that successful reinvention will come about without slavish dedication to delighting consumers.

Online ordering systems and new apps to do similar things are all great ideas, but customers today don't necessarily experience such things as incremental progress

— “Great, now I can order online.”

They often experience it as an example of retail obstinacy — “What's wrong with these people? Why don't they let me charge this/scan this myself and pay on my credit card so I don't have to hassle with lines at the cashier?”

We can push consumption one direction or the other with BOGOs and whatnot but, bottom line, typical 22-year-olds find shopping in most grocery stores to be burdensome. They may enjoy shopping for clothes; they even may enjoy farmer's markets and trendy cheese shops. But they don't enjoy shopping for food in conventional grocery stores.

You might say that their parents and grandparents didn't find it such a thrill either. That would be true but it isn't necessarily relevant. Their parents and grandparents didn't grow up with a little device in their hands that allows instantaneous communication with friends and family, the ability to watch videos and listen to music, the ability to instantaneously summon all the information in the world. Their parents and grandparents were used to being bored, used to being frustrated. Not the young shoppers of today; they're used to never being bored. Life is more exciting — and few supermarkets have kept pace with the very real competition that an exciting life, filled with better things to do, offers to the conventional grocery store.

Where it's available — where new buildings in Manhattan are often designed with “Fresh Direct rooms” stocked with refrigerator and freezer space to which the online delivery service has access — young people are voting with their feet and dollars — and staying out of grocery stores.

So this columnist gives two cheers to Publix for its new online deli ordering system. It's clearly a step in the right direction. But the third cheer has to be reserved for the company that will figure out how to delight the young consumer of today and the mainstream consumer of tomorrow. **DB**



James F. Prevor

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Without Borders™

by Lee Smith, Publisher

A New Reality

I started to write a politically correct editorial about the state of the food supply in the United States, but I've decided to just tell it like it is. The bane of our food supply is cheap food; it's turning into a disaster with huge repercussions.

There's no doubt that the U.S. has a tremendous variety of foods available from around the globe at very reasonable prices and our food cost as a percentage of income is the lowest in the world. Low food prices have helped drive the economy and make us a nation of extravagant consumers. Prepared foods and low-cost restaurants have helped women enter the workplace and thus increase family earnings. All good for the economy.

But this drive for low prices is starting to show negative effects in surprising ways. And most of the problems are quietly hidden away from the public eye. Transparency is a goal to be lauded, but the results are often not easy to rationalize. Take the issue of "pink slime." A nasty name for a perfectly safe and nutritious beef product added in small quantities to chopped beef, it enabled producers to lower the cost of ground beef. Labeled by a scientist who thought it was a disgusting product and who disagreed with the vast majority of scientists and authorities, pink slime brought an industry to its knees. People are out of work, companies went bankrupt and a low-cost, nutritional product is no longer available. Should consumers have been aware of the product? Probably yes, but an overreaction has had bad consequences.

Other problems have much greater concern and far-reaching consequences. Rice from the southern states is now front and center. The new recommendations limits rice consumption to ½ cup per day for adults and ¼ cup for children. New warnings suggest rice is no longer viewed as a safe first food for babies. Why? Arsenic contamination. I should note that California rice is not affected and Maryland rice may not be affected as seriously or at all. The FDA is launching a formal investigation and the results may not be available until the end of the year.

How did this happen? First, arsenic is found in nature just about everywhere, so it's the kind of arsenic and the quantity that are raising concerns. The southern rice states were originally cotton farms and arsenic was one of the pesticides used on that non-food crop. Later on they converted to rice. Rice is grown on flooded ground, and water facilitates the plants' ability to absorb the arsenic left in the soil by the pesticides. (I doubt anyone foresaw arsenic being absorbed and

becoming part of a plant's chemical makeup.)

On a different track, arsenic-laced chicken feed is quite common and until recently was believed to be safe because the arsenic was excreted in chicken poop. What was used to fertilize rice? You guessed it. Why is chicken feed arsenic-laced? Makes them grow fatter faster.

And that's far from the end. Diacetyl was the ingredient that gave butter-flavored popcorn its buttery taste. It was removed when factory workers started having serious lung problems from breathing the fumes. Worse, studies suggest diacetyl may trigger Alzheimer's and there is great concern that consumers could be affected.

So who's to blame? That isn't an easy question. Probably no one. What do we do now? Remove all the products from the market? Bankrupt entire communities? Significantly raise food prices to account for market shortages? Cause mass panic when the results are mostly suppositions and the long-term effects are almost impossible to quantify?

Each retailer is going to have to develop its own policies. Offer quality at a higher price? Make unpleasant recommendations to consumers early on? Go for what most customers indicate they want by aggressively pursuing products from companies offering the lowest price?

Fortunately, the deli department can make changes fairly rapidly. There's no reason a deli product needs to be fried in trans-fats since alternatives are readily available. Most deli manufacturers are used to working with short shelf-life products and have the ability to develop new products quickly. Packaging options are varied and compostable packaging is now available at reasonable prices.

Go greener. Become more transparent. Communicate with consumers. Now's the time to be proactively green. Will organic and local continue to grow? Yup. Consumers are getting scared of big-food promises and losing trust in the government to protect them. Now's the time to start being 100 percent transparent. Educate consumers and offer alternatives. Most important — educate yourselves about the issues. **DB**





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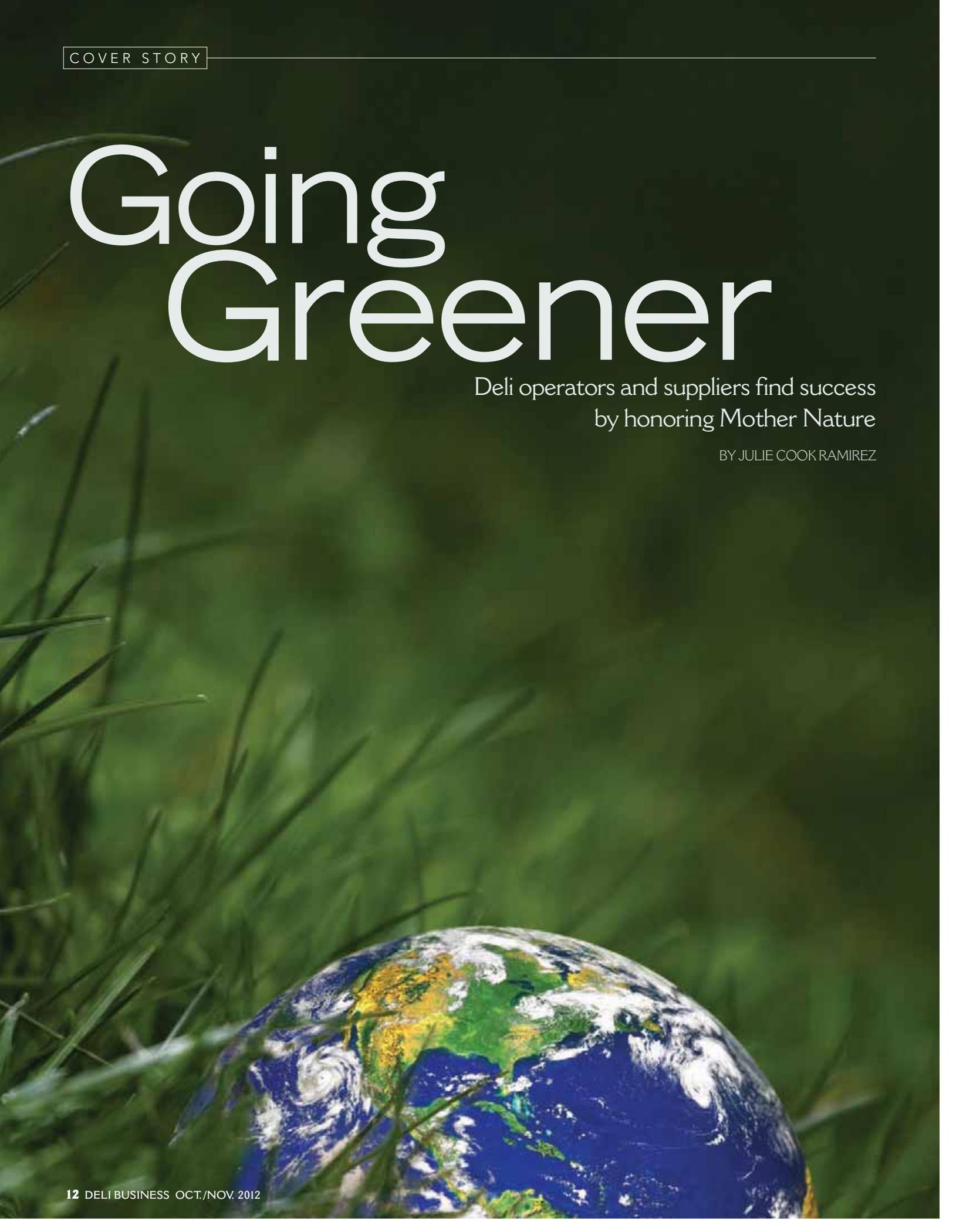
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If you type *going green* into Google, your search results number “about 2,000,000,000 (0.26 seconds).” Clearly, a lot of has been written about the general subject. Narrow your search to going green deli and you get “about 2,350,000 (0.40 seconds).” Far fewer to be sure, but still impressive at over 2 million.

Taking care of the environment is an objective that transcends generations, genders, national origins, and political affiliations. People are increasingly recognizing the need to tend to Mother Earth by more carefully considering how they use her resources and what they turn back into her. No longer satisfied to simply grab whatever product looks pleasing to the palate, consumers are paying attention to how the foods they eat were produced, where and how the ingredients were sourced, and how they are packed.

The Environment: Public Attitudes and Individual Behavior — A Twenty-Year Evolution is a comprehensive study conducted by the Roper Organization (now part of the GfK Group, headquartered in Nuremberg, Germany) for the SC Johnson Company and released in 2011. Among its findings is this:

“Americans Say Going Green Is (Still) Good Business — In spite of rising economic concerns, Americans still want companies to ‘go green,’ and there is evidence that they give credit to companies that do so. About three in four (74%) agree ‘a manufacturer that reduces the environmental impact of its production process and products is making a smart business decision.’”

Although these attitudes are apparent across the demographic spectrum, they’re extremely prevalent in millennial-generation consumers who do not have the collective memory of a world of limitless, endless resources that is common to their boomer parents and greatest generation grandparents. And since millennials represent the next great wave of consumers, retailers would do well to cater

to their perceptions.

An April 29, 2009, AdAge blog entry titled *The Greenest Generation* by Janis Gaudelli, senior vice president at Generate Insight, Santa Monica, CA, had this to say about the millennial generation:

“Generate Insight decided to dig deeper to discover the truth behind this generation’s eco-enthusiasm and involvement in the green movement, particularly as these attitudes relate to green marketing. To that end, we surveyed 400 millennials nationwide between the ages of 13 and 29...

“Millennials are one of the most highly educated demographics when it comes to understanding the importance of ecological and environmental conditions, and they glean most of their information from the web (79%). When it comes to the green movement, there are seemingly limitless opportunities for brands to engage with consumers on an interactive level in real time using digital media.”

A Greener Deli

“There’s an expectation in a lot of people in my generation and certainly even more among the younger kids who say they are concerned about what’s happening with the earth and they want companies to do things right,” says Bob Wills, president and owner, Cedar Grove Cheese, Plain, WI.

The deli certainly isn’t immune to the green movement. On the contrary, the deli can actually be a great place for the green movement to take root because the relationship between the deli worker and the customer is, by its very nature, a consultative one. People spend more time talking with deli staffers than anyone else in the grocery store. They’re more likely to ask for recommendations and to inquire about the attributes of the products being sold and the companies that produced them. Where better place to create a two-

PHOTO COURTESY OF FISCALINI



way dialogue about the desire to have more sustainable, eco-friendly, possibly organic products?

“Delis have some of the most direct access to consumers, so they hear what consumers are asking for and they have the opportunity to tell stories better than with your average on-the-shelf product,” says Cedar Grove’s Wills. “It’s an advantage to the delis because they can have that interaction and access and be able to provide feedback to companies like ours.”

Going greener means different things to different companies. In many ways, it depends on where they fall within the supply chain. For Fiscalini Cheese Co. in Modesto, CA, going green begins at the very beginning of the cheesemaking process with the cows themselves. Operating under the belief that “happy cows produce more and better quality milk,” Fiscalini goes to great lengths to ensure that the cows on its farm are contented.

“High-quality milk and high production go with what we call cow comfort,” says John Fiscalini, owner. “If cows have as little stress as possible in their life, they produce more milk. If a cow has stress or injuries, milk quality goes down dramatically.”

Fiscalini keeps its cows happy with a

multi-faceted approach that makes use of free-stall barns that allow cows to lie down comfortably and move easily throughout the building. This allows them to “socialize with their neighbors.”

At \$30,000 an acre, land in Central California is simply too expensive for any dairy farm to provide large pastures in which cows can graze. Instead, Fiscalini provides its cows with 24-hour access to large open lots. When it gets too hot, the cows take it upon themselves to go indoors where water shoots up over their backs and fans cool them down. In the evening, they typically go back outside to sleep.

That’s when the weather is favorable. In the winter, the farm locks the cows inside so they don’t get wet and dirty, possibly leading to infections that would then necessitate the use of antibiotics, something Fiscalini avoids at all costs.

“Antibiotics are extremely expensive and there’s no advantage to giving a cow an antibiotic for any reason whatsoever unless she’s sick,” says Fiscalini. “By keeping the cows comfortable and stress-free, they tend to have fewer injuries, fewer diseases, and, therefore, less need for antibiotics.”

Fiscalini also refuses to use hormones on his cows. The company carefully monitors

the health of the animals, employing transponder pedometers on each cow, which allows staff to gather vital information every time she’s milked. The transponder enables Fiscalini to measure the health of a cow’s udder and tell if she has an infection that would require antibiotics.

Doing What Makes Sense

Nonna Lena’s, a small, family-run maker of pesto, sauces, dips, and dressings based in Arcata, CA, takes great pride in being “ecologically aware.” From its all vegetarian — and increasingly, vegan — 18-product line to its recyclable packaging, the company is all about meeting consumer demand for sustainable products.

Nonna Lena’s uses whole ingredients, never processed. That makes it remarkably easy to recycle because the ingredients typically arrive in cardboard boxes. The company uses bulk olive oil, which comes in a “great big barrel” that is simply returned to the manufacturer once it’s empty, according to Cynthia Timek, CEO. Most of Nonna Lena’s garbage is actually compostable, but the facility the company shares with several other food manufacturers doesn’t have a compost location. Timek is currently working with her

Continued on page 18.



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DELI BUSINESS





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Continued from page 15.

local wastewater management company to set up an on-site composting system.

Since its inception in 1969, Charlie's Pride Meats in Vernon, CA, has strived for being green. From the very beginning, all cardboard and plastic were recycled. According to CEO James Dickman, the rationale for being environmentally friendly was two-fold. The company would be caring for the planet and it would be making a sound business decision.

"It was just good common business sense to do that," says Dickman. "It costs us less because then we don't have to dispose of it and have a company pick up trash."

While Charlie's Pride could easily be looked at as an innovator in the green movement, Dickman stresses that every green decision his company makes is based on sound economic factors. Take the company's current initiative, which involves recycling water through the use of a rack washing system. Charlie's Pride was interested in such a system not only because it reduces the amount of water "going into the local sewer facility" due to hand spraying, but also because it made economic sense.

"If there's enough benefit that it does make sense to go green in whatever one is doing and a company can afford the initial capital investment, then it makes perfect sense," says Dickman. "It would be a terrific thing to do, but a company first and foremost has to analyze whether it's going to be cost-effective to do those types of things."

Sometimes, green decisions are made hastily and don't produce the expected return on investment. That was the case for Fiscalini Cheese's Fiscalini who regrets his 2009 decision to install a methane digester that transforms cow manure, cheese whey, and other traditional waste products into renewable electrical energy. Although the electricity produced by the system powers Fiscalini's entire farm and cheese factory, he wishes he had never opted to make the multi-million dollar investment.

"Our methane digester has not turned out to be a profitable venture," he explains. "Nonetheless, it's still here, it's operating and it's good for the environment, but the dairy has lost potential profit by having to keep it afloat. Quite honestly, I wish I had never built the thing."

Back in Wisconsin at Cedar Grove, Wills expresses no regrets over the installation of a Living Machine for its wastewater treatment. Designed to be a working ecosystem, the Living Machine uses natural microbes and a collection of hydroponic plants. Wash water from cleaning milk



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GENPAK, LLC



trucks, tanks, and cheesemaking equipment is biologically processed back into clean water and then discharged into nearby Honey Creek. According to Wills, the system has not only saved him money but also focused his employees' attention on what happens with water after it goes down the drain and specifically on the fish and plants it impacts.

"Before, people didn't care about spills and leaks, but once they started caring about what the impact is, they stopped wasting water and putting things down the drain," he explains. "We've saved a lot of money because it's cut our water disposal costs from 3¢ a gallon to less than a 1/2¢."

Closing the Loop

Going greener doesn't stop at the farm or the facility, of course. Each product has to make its way to the customer somehow and delis are increasingly opting for sustainable or green packaging in which to sell their goods. The push for recycled, recyclable, and compostable packaging is coming from the end user, according to Michelle Quirk, product manager for cups, Genpak LLC, Glens Falls, NY. In particular, she says, delis are looking for recyclable packaging in which to place wet deli salads. Genpak's PET packaging is now 40 percent post-consumer recycled content, Quirk says, which results in a slightly higher cost. This need not be a disadvantage, however, since delis can drive business by using table tents to tout the recycled content of their packaging. Those consumers who value green attributes won't mind paying a little extra.

"The majority of people who are really concerned where their food comes from are buying the upper price range," says Fiscalini. "Those people really do vote with their dollars."

While pricing for green packaging can be a bit higher than for conventional packaging, that's about the only real difference for deli operators, says Justin Faerman, direc-

tor of media and marketing, Be Green Packaging, Santa Barbara, CA. According to Faerman, the same basic designs are available. They're simply produced to be more sustainable. His company produces "Cradle to Cradle" certified compostable packaging using a proprietary blend of tree-free plant fibers. The aesthetics are the same as traditional packaging and the durability is equivalent, with Be Green's sustainable packaging holding up just as well to liquids and heat.

"There's nothing but benefits to switching over," says Faerman. "There are marketing benefits by being able to tell customers the company is putting its money where its mouth is and actually taking steps toward being greener."

Those delis and deli suppliers that don't take the initiative to lead the way toward a greener tomorrow are likely to find themselves left behind as others take up the gauntlet and reap the rewards of being more environmentally-conscious, says Nonna Lena's Timek. She goes so far as to predict business failure for those who fail to pay heed to the growing demand for more sustainable products and packaging in the deli.

"In another 25 years, if you aren't making a product that's sustainable, what's going to happen to it?" asks Timek. "It's just going to become an antique or go by the wayside." **DB**

Upscale Comfort Food

Fresh pasta offers a myriad of options for creating an easy, delicious meal at home

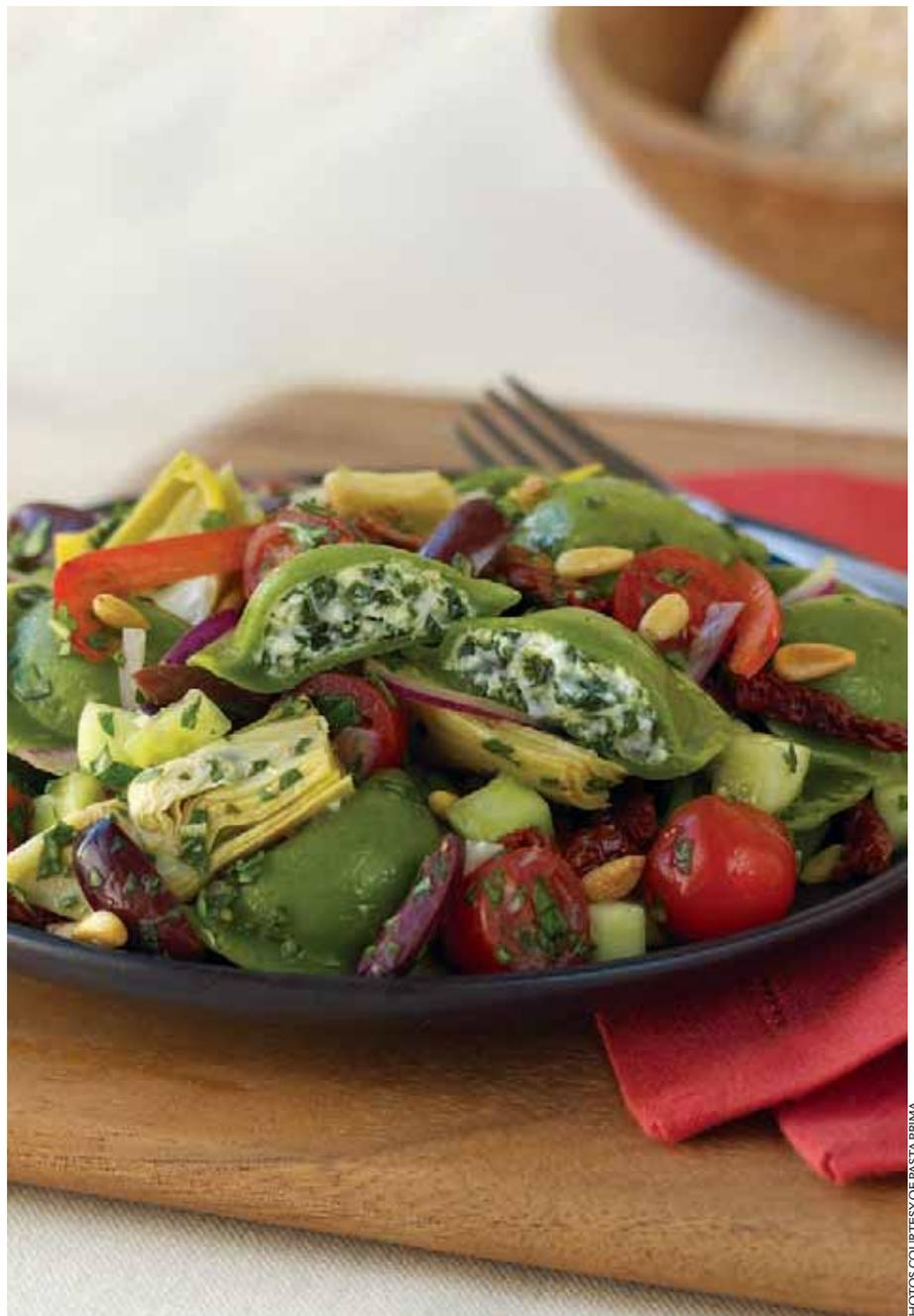
BY LAUREN KATIMS

Many consumers consider pasta the ultimate comfort food, but when made with high-quality meats, gourmet cheeses, chunky vegetables and fresh herbs, fresh pasta can also be an upscale dinner option.

The desire for homemade gourmet food took off when the Great Recession hit and people couldn't afford to eat out as often as they could during the high-flying economy. Now, as people are feeling more confident about their finances and venturing back out to their favorite restaurants, the desire for a gourmet meal at home hasn't subsided. In fact, it's growing — in part because of food competition shows, food blogs and shared recipes on social media that have spurred interest in cooking exceptional weekday meals at home.

"What we're seeing now is restaurants increasing in traffic on weekends, yet our business is up dramatically using these products during the week," says Tom Quinn, vice president of operations for Nuovo Pasta Productions, Ltd., Stratford, CT. "People still haven't given up on that take-home experience."

Fresh pasta — easy to cook with an



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PASTA PRIMA

impressive presentation — appeals to virtually all demographic groups, especially because producers are focusing on making top-notch, family-friendly products with bright colors and often with fun shapes.

Filled pastas such as ravioli, tortellini and agnolotti serve as an ideal base for endless varieties of flavors and ingredients that can transform pasta into a customized, unique meal without much preparation.

“What we’re seeing is a lot of use of different cheeses, experimenting with gourmet cheeses such as Gorgonzola, Asiago and Fontina,” says Quinn. Nuovo recently introduced spinach, mushroom and Gruyère cheese ravioli; portabella and Fontina ravioli with mushrooms, finely chopped shallots, brandy and a creamy Ricotta; and Gorgonzola and sundried tomato in a spinach and herb-flecked round ravioli. “The trend is a lot of simple but elegant flavor profiles, not overworking them,” he adds.

Adding meat to the filling makes each bite even heartier and gives producers an opportunity to be creative in developing unique flavor combinations. “Although there are a lot of different varieties of pasta products, there’s not an overabundance of protein,” says Quinn.

Over the past year, Nuovo has been try-

ing to alter that trend by incorporating more meats into their products, for example, Italian sausage and Mozzarella ravioli and chicken Florentine ravioli made with sliced roasted chicken, spinach, Gruyère cheese, Mozzarella cheese and white wine garlic sauce.

With so many flavors packed into one bite, the quality of the ingredients is important. Pasta Prima, Benicia, CA, recently introduced “superfood” ravioli made with kale and spinach. “It’s an excellent source of calcium, vitamins A and C and antioxidants; it’s a functionally good-for-you product,” says Wayne Tu, vice president.

This past summer, Pasta Prima also introduced heirloom tomato ravioli to complement a trend Tu has been seeing in every aspect of the food business. “We see them everywhere — restaurants, farmers markets and grocers,” he says. The pasta is filled with the classic combination of heirloom tomatoes, Mozzarella and fresh basil. “Each bite tastes like pasta with freshly made marinara.”

Getting Creative

The taste keeps customers coming back for more, but it’s the appearance that immediately attracts them to the product.

The French Farm, headquartered in

Houston, TX, offers multi-colored pasta with red, yellow, green and black lining the noodles. The colors don’t alter the flavor, nor are they lost when cooked. “When you think about pasta, you think about white, yellowish pasta,” says Jennifer Morton, assistant to the owner. “The multi-color is striking. It’s beautiful on a shelf.”

The French Farm uses a small manufacturer in Italy and keeps its products all natural. The red in the pasta is from beet root, the green from spinach and the black from squid ink. “It’s becoming very popular,” says Morton. “All-natural really turns people on to the product.”

Producers are increasingly incorporating organic and gluten-free products to lure health-conscious consumers or those who have special dietary needs. Nuovo, which is USDA-certified organic, offers a variety of gluten-free products, including five-cheese ravioli. Pasta Prima’s line of gluten-free ravioli is made with rice and corn flour, eliminating all wheat.

“It’s important to keep up with all the key things people are looking for,” says Quinn.

Family-friendly options continue to be important to consumers. A great way to attract kids is to make the pasta in fun shapes instead of traditional square-shaped



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ravioli. The French Farm's pasta comes in Eiffel Tower and Italian monument shapes. Nuovo makes a Mac-N-Cheezy ravioli in the shape of a fish.

Completing The Meal

Light, clear sauces or herbs make a great addition to artisanal pasta by complementing rather than overwhelming the appearance and flavor. "Since the pasta is so pretty, consumers don't want to cover them with a tra-

ditional tomato sauce. They want an oil-based sauce, where you can still see the colors," says Morton. At The French Farm, the most popular options are highly concentrated artichoke garlic sauce, basil pine nut pesto from Italy, pesto pomodoro and sundried tomato pesto.

Pasta Prima's superfood line includes pesto made with kale, aged imported Parmesan cheese, garlic and extra virgin olive oil. "It tastes exactly like the classic

basic pesto," says Tu, but it has additional health benefits. The year, Pasta Prima also developed heirloom tomato sauce. "The flavor is naturally sweet and acidic with hints of garlic, onions and basil," says Tu.

Nuovo Pasta incorporates gourmet cheeses into its sauces with flavors such as Gorgonzola and sweet basil sauce and sundried tomato, roasted garlic and Mozzarella.

Cross-merchandising can promote more than just sauce and is a great way for retailers to make the consumer's shopping experience easy. "When you think pasta, you think sauce, bread, wine — Italian things," says Morton. She suggests placing pesto and olive wood cooking utensils next to the pasta. "Place them in a way that's going to attract customers and entice them. People like things that are special." She believes creating a separate section for a pasta dinner enhances the appeal.

Laying out an entire dinner option, complete with cheese, bread, herbs and olive oils, makes for one-stop dinner shopping; including complementary wines and salad ingredients near the pasta creates a complete destination within the deli. When people walk into the store at 6 PM, "Make it easy and answer the question, 'What's for dinner?'" says Nuovo's Quinn. "Make it a positive experience — it works." **DB**

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Cheese Merchandising Redux

How to present the cheese case to its best advantage

BY PATTI ORTON

Merchandising a cheese case for maximum sales doesn't have to be difficult, but adhering to a short list of key principles is essential for sales success.

Brian Scott, sales manager for Atlanta Foods, based in Atlanta, GA, believes full, fresh and faced are the cornerstones for successfully merchandising specialty cheese. When these concepts are prioritized and well managed, cheese merchandising is effective and captures maximum sales.

Experienced retailers know fullness can indicate physical abundance or it can be illusionary. When stock is heavy, show off "the plentiful variety of types and brands, with plenty of signage to explain cheeses," advises Molly O'Loughlin, brand communications manager, Irish Dairy Board, Evanston, IL. But, she adds, it must also have "an organized and clean look."

When stock is low or the cheese is fragile and cannot be piled, creating the perception of fullness is the way to go. "Use boxes or cheese dummies in the case to produce the desired appearance," advises Scott. These props fill up black holes, give lift to cuts, and if done well, help send the same message of abundance.

Creating a full look with diminutive cheeses can be more challenging than massing up chunks of Cheddar. While some small cheeses are sturdy enough to withstand some piling, trying to fill up even a small case not only is an investment but also risks higher shrink. In this instance, use of props is an option, but Scott sees a way to pursue "physical abundance" while holding shrink at bay. "Small units of cheese are actually an option to avoid shrink," he says. "Some guests find less risk in cheeses that are small and retail for under \$5 each. In some cases, this allows the guest to try several different cheeses at lower costs and build a cheese flight for a smaller audience. Merchandising small cuts should aim toward clearly communicating the threshold of investment for the cheeses merchandised in



PHOTO COURTESY OF PASTA SHOP



“MERCHANDISING SPECIALTY CHEESE IS ABOUT CREATING CLEAR AND EASY DIRECTION FOR THE CONSUMER. IT TENDS TO BE AN INTIMIDATING PURCHASE FOR MANY CONSUMERS, SO THE EASIER IT IS FOR THEM TO FIND PRODUCTS THEY KNOW OR WILL LIKE, THE BETTER SERVED RETAILERS AND MANUFACTURERS ARE TO GAIN REPEAT SALES.”

— ADAM CRISCIONE
ARLA FOODS, BASKING RIDGE, NJ

that area — e.g. ‘Trial cheeses all under five \$5’. Larger pieces of cheese should be cut down and merchandised in the ‘under \$5 case’ to help move product prior to spoiling.”

Another important merchandising aspect deals with how the cheese visually flows in the display. “The waterfall effect makes for the best theater and presentation. Product should trickle down moving forward,” according to Atlanta’s Scott. A waterfall flow is built high in the back, has a defined middle step, and ends at a low point closest to the customer. The key is trickle. Some retailers make the mistake of building a Class V white-water rapid in which a high cliff in the back falls severely to the foreground. That mid-ground elevation is critical to the visual appeal of a case display. Since “getting the product into the consumer’s hand is the hardest part,” adds Scott, visual appeal is everything.

It’s far better to work with refrigeration than compete with it. Although not a fun aspect of merchandising cheese, it’s necessary to know how to arrange product without adversely affecting the refrigeration. A display can be beautiful, but if the airflow is blocked, the cheese won’t stay chilled, risking both quality and food safety. “Some props may not work with all display cases,” cautions Arnaud Solandt, president of Montchèvre, Rolling Hills Estates, CA. “Make sure what you are

using does not alter ventilation and prevent proper refrigeration. Check temperature regularly if you are changing to new props.”

Practicing FIFO (First In First Out) is a must but cheese merchants have a unique opportunity to extend freshness of some cheeses. Staying on top of mold trimming and cutting larger wedges down helps assure customers go home with fresh, quality cheese. Keeping a calendar of expiration dates is also an effective strategy to ensure fresh displays. Scott advocates going one step further. “For products inside 10 days, assign a contingency plan to move prior to the expiration: Push, demo, shred/grate, or use as an ingredient.”

Facing or conditioning displays several times throughout the day not only maximizes appeal but also sends a message of product care and enhances navigability. “All products should be pulled forward for easiest accessibility to the guest. All repack labels, if used, should face forward with the scale label down,” Scott advises. And facing doesn’t stop with the cheese. “Signs, too, should be clean, straight and forward facing.”

Display with Style

Display elements such as wheels of cheese, wooden cutting boards, slate boards, cheese stands, and cake plate pedestals may enhance visual interest. “They all work

great, but pick a style and stay with it,” says Solandt. “Try to innovate — wood barrels and branches of ivy are a bit over used. Why not, for example, present small cheeses in glass jars with a bottom layer of small rocks or stones? Try to make a cheese tray in the middle of your case. Use five or six cheeses; amongst them should be two new products. It will inspire the consumer.”

“I’d like to see props that a consumer would really have in their home — items that would be brought out for a party or used every day,” shares O’Loughlin from the Irish Dairy Board.

Part of setting up a cheese case is what’s around the case itself. “Nesting tables are a great way to call out specific cheeses and conveniently merchandise the appropriate accompaniments — crackers, honey, fig cakes, and preserves,” Scott adds. “A retailer should always place accompaniments within close proximity of the appropriate cheeses they pair with. Anything that isn’t for sale shouldn’t be in the case or in the ambient back drop. The accompaniment items, cheese tools, cheese books — all for sale — can really produce an awesome display.”

Showcasing cheeses pursuant to a theme poses infinite, creative possibilities. Scott is partial to seasonal and local themes. He believes these groupings “are important to today’s cheese enthusiast. Making them part

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of your offering will enhance your credibility to those important guests.”

O’Loughlin gravitates toward themes based on usage occasion. A display for “consumers who are using specialty cheese as a treat while they’re preparing dinner might consist of cheese, crackers, meat and a bottle of wine. A party-planning theme might feature a few different cheese varieties, nuts, fruit, wine and chutney. And a meal-solution theme should provide cheese plus some ingredients for an easy dinner — butter, pasta and some vegetables,” she recommends.

Play up the romance of specialty cheese, advises Montchèvre’s Solandt. “As a manufacturer, I always like when a retailer makes a special effort to present a specific brand or a cheesemaker, with signs pointing out some original, cool facts about that company and why it was selected as a feature cheese or supplier. It’s an easy way to educate your staff about that cheese; it will also open the eye of the consumer. It makes the company more ‘personal’ and the consumer will feel as if he or she is taking not just a piece of cheese home but a piece of a farm, a tradition, something special.”

Simple, defined signage is a friend to consumers. “Merchandising specialty cheese is about creating clear and easy direction for



PHOTO COURTESY OF LUND'S/BYERLY'S

the consumer,” states Adam Criscione, brand manager, Arla Foods, Basking Ridge, NJ. “It tends to be an intimidating purchase for many consumers, so the easier it is for them to find products they know or will like, the better served retailers and manufacturers are to gain repeat sales.”

According to the Irish Dairy Board’s

O’Loughlin, “There’s often not enough room on a cheese label for a manufacturer to describe the cheese properly,” so signage giving succinct information goes a long way toward growing the customer base. “Recipe ideas are also helpful — every consumer is looking for recipe ideas!”

Of course, there is a limit; retailers need to find that sweet spot between helpful signage and overkill. “Too much signage will definitely clutter the cheese case” and detract from the appeal, notes Solandt. “There’s no need to encumber the case with signs for your staple cheeses. Instead, make only a few signs for new products or products that are seasonal.”

Know Your Customer

At times, even first-rate merchandising doesn’t move a stalled cheese. In this situation, “Interact with your customers to find out why the product doesn’t have a high velocity in your case,” suggests Solandt. It might be time for a SKU rationalization if “Consumers feel you’re offering a very similar product which is better known to them or has a better value.”

Eliminating a lagging cheese has advantages. It opens up more space to make a bigger visual statement with a better mover; it saves some labor, and it heads off shrink. “In some cases, wonderful cheeses are not addressing the particular needs of your store demographic. Perhaps a theme promotion at the store level can help, but these results might be temporary,” he adds.

Perfecting cheese case merchandising complements your credibility. Or, as Scott puts it, nailing these cornerstone principles “tells the shopper that you’re a destination for cheese.”

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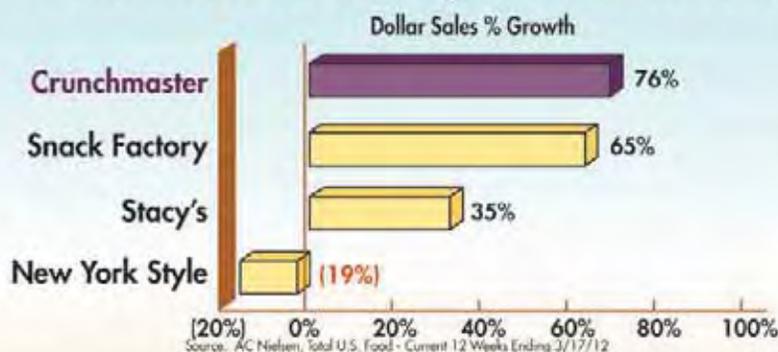
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PHOTO BY ANDY RYAN

ENCOUNTERING CRAFTSMANSHIP

The ACS Certified Cheese Professional is a boon to retailers

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

The American Cheese Society (ACS), Denver, CO, announcement of its first class of Certified Cheese Professionals (CCPs) — 121 individuals who passed the certification exam — has the potential of boosting the entire industry. It's already commanded *Wall Street Journal* attention in the article *Curd Your Enthusiasm: Cheese Pros Hope to Get Certified* on page one, August 1, 2012.

"Over time, there will be growth not just in numbers but also in the level of professionalism and awareness," says Christine Bonney Hyatt, founder of Scottsdale, AZ-based Cheese Chick Productions LLC, a cheese education and marketing company, and immediate ACS past president.

For the newly certified, it's a validation and a commitment to ongoing education for recertification in three years. Many had support from their employers, signaling retailers' awareness of the value of a well-defined industry-shared body of knowledge and an independent assessment of competency.

On the road to certification, John Stueland, deli category manager for Lund Food Holdings Inc., Edina, MN, developed a pre-test with colleague Jennifer Hodges (both are now CCPs) and staff to determine the current level of knowledge and build on the company's existing training. "Well before the CCP exam, we started preparing. We've had an ongoing curriculum for the past year. That was a big change for us at retail, but our consumers look to us to be leaders.

They have varying dietary needs. They ask about lactose content, raw milk, milk type — they expect that we can provide them the correct answers. We're also learning the science behind why the cheeses need to be cared for in certain ways, behind what makes them exceptional. That impacts how we do business every day."

Currently, more than 40 Lund's and Byerly's employees are enrolled in the company's internal cheese education program, and Stueland is encouraging distributor partners to pursue certification for their teams. "It's good for all of us who work with cheese after the producer to have a shared level and body of knowledge — we all affect the final product in the end consumer's home," he says.

Eligibility for the exam requires both work experience and accomplishment. "Certification translates into knowledge and service. It doesn't reflect just book smarts," says Greg O'Neill, co-owner/co-founder of Pastoral Artisan Cheese Bread & Wine, Chicago, IL, and president of ACS. "It means this person has attained a level of working knowledge that will make her, or him, an asset. In retail in general, turnover is huge, and the cost of acquiring new employees is high —

from interviewing and loss of time to empty positions that can get you off your game. When you're trying to bring in knowledgeable folks to educate on cheese — this is one of several litmus tests that will help bring in the best talent that's out there."

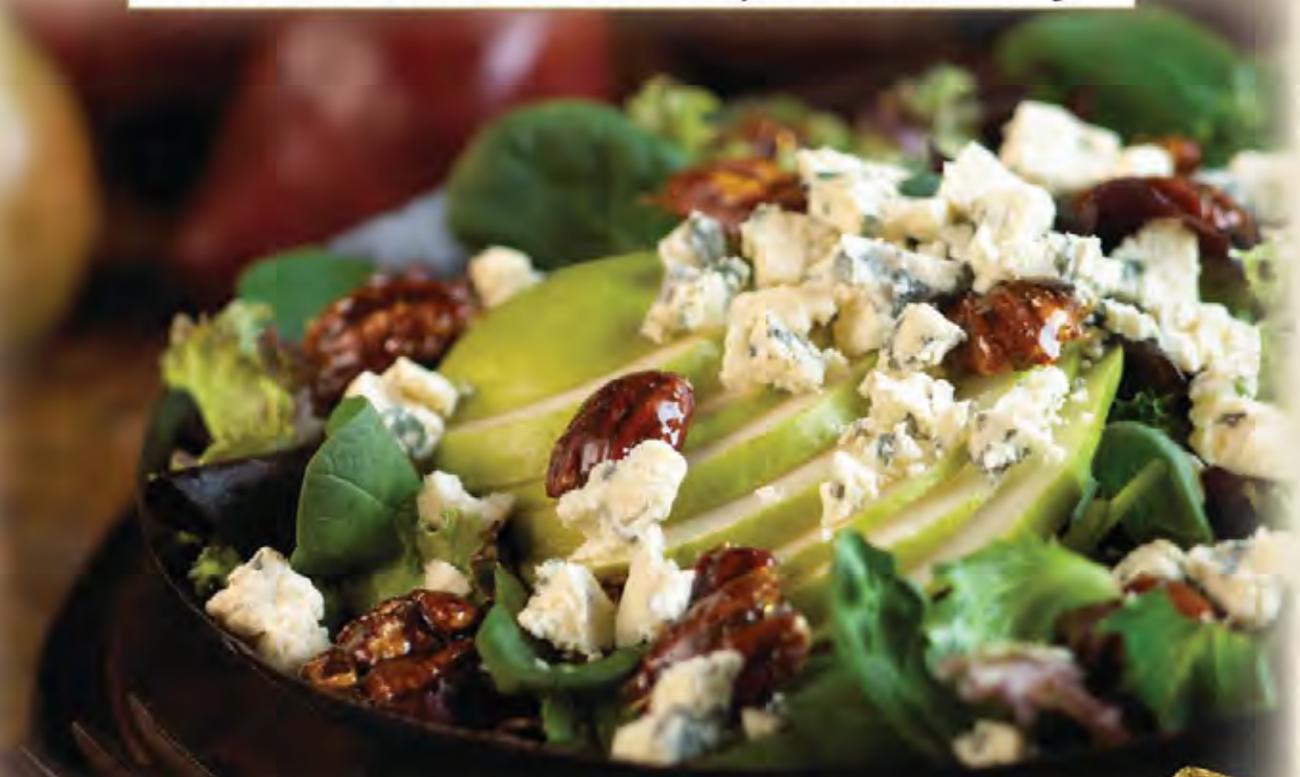
"If you're known as a retailer who has shown willingness to pro-



Photo of certification team by Sue Sturman

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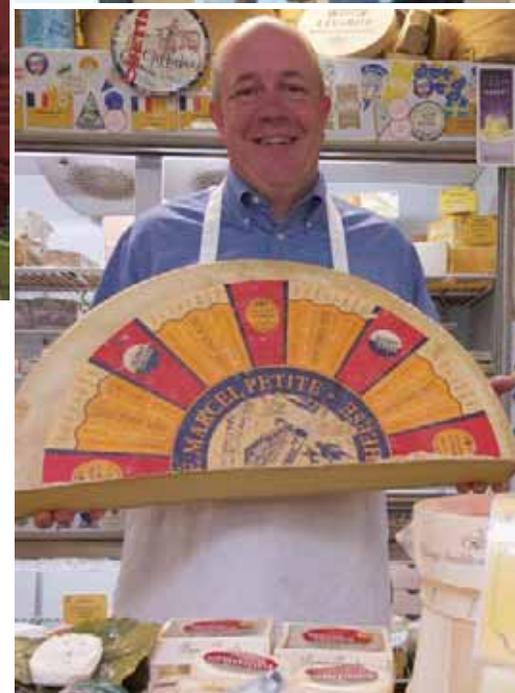
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TOP ROW, L TO R: Luan Schooler of Foster & Dobbs, Portland, OR, photo by Peter Benke; Steve Ehlers, Larry's Market, Brown Deer, WI, photo courtesy of Larry's Market; Anne Saxelby of Saxelby Cheese, New York, NY, photo by Susie Wyshak
 CENTER: Brad, Carol and Brian Wasik of Wasik's The Cheese Shop in Wellesley, MA, photo by Jan Fialkow
 BOTTOM ROW, L TO R: Cheesemongers at Metropolitan Market in Kirkland, WA, photo courtesy of Metropolitan Markets; Peter Lovis, The Cheese Shop, Concord, MA, photo by Andy Ryan

The cheesemongers on this page did not necessarily take the exam. They're pictured here to show the diversity, enthusiasm and passion of today's cheese professionals.

vide training, education and investment in your people, it can only yield positive results when you're trying to bring in people who are passionate. We believed it was a good investment," says Kurt Dammeier, owner of Seattle, WA-based Beecher's Handmade Cheese. "People who are trained for certification and completed it successfully should be worth more in the marketplace because they should be able to deliver to customers a better experience and a better cheese. It centers on learning how to get cheese to consumers in the proper condition so they can

experience it as it is supposed to be. People who know how to do that command greater money and therefore stay in those jobs." Dammeier is sending two people from Beecher's Seattle to the 2013 certification exam and one ACS CCP is on staff at Beecher's New York.

A CCP at retail helps manufacturers. "The monger is another voice in the field that can educate the consumer. A monger is informed about less familiar cheeses and can relay information to the consumer — and sell more cheese," says Francis J. Wall, vice pres-

ident of marketing for BelGioioso Cheese, Inc., Green Bay, WI. Knowing the health benefits can have a big impact. "Ricotta is as high in protein as Greek yogurt. It's rich in calcium and lower in carbs. Those are talking points I wish the cheesemonger knew."

Retail Advantage

A trained front line is a retail advantage when selling cheese. Austin, TX-based Whole Foods Market, saw certification as a way to support its employees and help the company. The 70 Whole Foods Market

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employees who passed the exam represent 68 stores.

According to Dave Leonhardi, director of education and events for the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Madison, WI, "A professional who asks the cheesemakers better questions can resolve any issues they might have with communication to and fro that is much more to the point. Somebody who has a passion for the category, wants to be helpful to the consumer, has a good mind for all aspects of what the product is, and knows the nuances when it's at its peak makes sure the quality of the product gets carried through to the consumer. Less loss, better handling, and more profit margin are long-term benefits."

"The hope is the CCP will lift the cheese industry in the way sommelier certification lifted the wine industry. It will take some years to see how this resonates," says Francis Plowman, marketing and merchandising director, Rogue Creamery, Central Point, OR. "We believe in having the best possible cheesemongers and people behind the counter to serve the guests in our retail store. When you have some great products, there's value in having someone there to focus on consumer enjoyment and help put it together. It would also be valuable in a high end restaurant or an urban environment." Rogue's Tom



PHOTO BY JAN FIALKOW

Van Voorhees is a CCP.

To raise the profile of not only the cheese professional and the certification but also of the cheese program, Cheese Chick's Hyatt suggests reaching out to media, conducting interviews to let people know the certified individual is on staff and promoting in newsletters, social media, and websites, if team members are profiled there. When offering a

class or displaying the person's name, add the letters ACS CCP following the name and inform people this person is a resource. The lapel pin should be part of the daily attire.

"To have an employee who has certification does raise the prestige of the retailer," says Max McCalman, dean of curriculum, maître fromager and director of affinage at the Artisanal Premium Cheese Center in New York, NY. The new chair of ACS Certification, McCalman is author of *Mastering Cheese: Lessons for Connoisseurship from a Maître Fromager*; *Cheese: A Connoisseur's Guide to the World's Best*; and *The Cheese Plate*. "It would be nice to see an employee has the CCP — maybe the certificate can be hung on the wall or the front of the store. It should be displayed and celebrated because it should help the store. Customers would see that this person is qualified, knows a thing or two, and sales follow.

"This is the first of its kind in the United States. The ACS is the logical body due to its depth, credibility and because it's non-profit and exists for the cheesemaker," continues McCalman. "Not only would it help the individual who is certified but it would give the cheesemaker assurance the cheeses would be handled correctly. Although there are questions about cheesemaking [on the test], it's not a certification for cheesemakers; it's what everyone along the supply chain should know to be able to answer questions that come up."

"It's getting so much attention that France itself is considering a program similar to ours. Affineurs recognize this as something that is important, and as more people become acquainted with it, I think it will become more popular," he adds. **DB**

Expertise In Action

Max McCalman, dean of curriculum, maître fromager and director of affinage for the Artisanal Premium Cheese Center, New York, NY, author, and the new chair of ACS Certification, offers a snapshot of an American Cheese Society Certified Cheese Professional (CCP) in action:

The CCP knows how to take care of cheese better [than the average cheesemonger], so it looks better. Better care of the cheese and better storage would lead to less waste and better ordering. The CCP should be able to recommend additional sales or, if a cheese type is not available, able to recommend something related.

CCPs should know how to segregate cheeses into styles to avoid cross-contamination of the microflora in and on cheeses. Knowing how to store them will extend the shelf life. CCPs will have a greater appreciation [than the average cheesemonger] that a cheese has a certain peak, and therefore know what to recommend because it's good right now and what is unlikely to be good by the

following Saturday. They'll be able to recommend to the customer how to best store the cheese at home and know how to cut the cheese so the consumer has a better experience and they will come back for more. They'll know a little about pairing with beverage and other complementary items.

CCPs will have a good understanding of distribution, making, and federal regulations — perhaps not local regulations because they differ so widely, but most recommendations for cheese handling do dovetail into federal regulations.

CCPs are aware of HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control points), not just for safety but also to ensure quality of the product. Cheese enjoys a stellar record for food safety but if there is a question, the CCP should be able to recognize a flawed cheese. If something doesn't look right, a CCP would have an idea of what might be a serious pathogen compared to something that just looks like a flaw; he or she should then take a photograph and send the cheese back to the distributor. **DB**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALEXIAN



Seasonal Treats

Capitalizing on fourth quarter sales of pâté and charcuterie

BY JAN FIALKOW

The seasonal holidays of the fourth quarter — Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's — lend themselves to splurging on high-end foodstuffs of all kinds. For the deli department, that means an uptick in sales of pâté and top-of-the-line charcuterie. Even the Great Recession hasn't eliminated reasonable end-of-the-year indulgences for most consumers.

"The holidays are one time of year when people are willing to extend their budgets and their waistslines for promising taste experiences," notes Laurie Cummins, president, Alexian Pâtés and Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ.

According to figures from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, as provided by Hoffman Estates, IL-based FreshLook Marketing Group, LLC, 2011 (the last year for which figures were available) showed substantial fourth quarter dollar sales after a year of ups and downs. Pâté sales in the first and third quarter of 2011 were down from 2010 while the second and fourth quarters showed increases. As a comparison, total dollar sales for Q1 2010 were \$767,213 while Q1 2011 were \$590,121; Q3 2010 were \$636,309 and Q3 2011 were \$509,743. On



the positive side, Q2 2010 sales were \$634,587 and Q2 2011 were \$728,308. In the all important fourth quarter, sales improved from \$711,045 in 2010 to \$768,491 in 2011.

Comparisons for charcuterie were unavailable as high-end product was not broken out into a distinct category. However, sales of all salami increased from \$82,992,085 in Q4 of 2010 to \$83,209,358 in Q4 2011. Sales of all sausage minus frankfurters showed a slight decrease with sales of \$6,675,922 in Q4 2010 versus sales of \$6,636,650 in Q4 2011.

Offering New and On-Trend

Because sales of pâté and charcuterie spike at the end of the year, many manufacturers choose to release new products to coincide with holiday buying.

Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY, "just launched three new pork-free sausages — chicken with spinach and Gruyère cheese sausage, merguez sausage and chicken andouille sausage," notes Camille Collins, marketing director.

"Obviously the charcuterie board trend is still going strong, which means consumers will want to re-create what they've had in a restaurant at home," adds Collins. "Retailers who provide some type of 'charcuterie how-to' info sheet or a charcuterie board 'kit' with a selection of products they carry to the consumer will benefit."

Launching new products requires anticipating consumer wants and demands. According to Chris Bowler, president, Creminelli Fine Meats, LLC, Salt Lake City, UT, "We're introducing a whiskey salami for the fourth quarter of this year. It's a departure for us from traditional Italian recipes, but at the same time we're connecting with a traditional American product and a locally crafted Utah product. We're also introducing a traditional handcrafted porchetta, an ancient Italian pork roast wrapped in a pork belly, which is ideal for sandwiches as well as a uniquely delicious entrée."

Positioning products as having multiple applications will help retailers increase sales. "Every day we're seeing more gourmet sandwiches and pizzas," Bowler adds. "Charcuterie is a straightforward way of taking a simple everyday meal like a sandwich or pizza and turning it into something to get excited about. We also continue to see the variety of salumi available expand."

These items must also cater to consumer desire for convenience and shopping ease. "We're preparing to introduce a pre-packaged 5-ounce slice of chicken ballotine," says

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Alexian's Cummins. "The ballotine is a very texture-rich and colorful loaf prepared with a breast of chicken that's been stuffed with minced white chicken meat, pistachio nuts and a medley of dried tropical fruits then baked until golden brown. We're also planning to introduce a smoked sausage to the Alexian family.

"We're asked more frequently for non-pork products and also gluten-free products," Cummins continues. "Alexian offers four non-pork pâtés and all of our pâtés are gluten free. To aid the customer and the retailer, we indicate this information on our packaging."

Merchandising Tips

According to Les Trois Petits Cochons' Collins, sampling is still the name of the game, particularly with high-end, unfamiliar products. Many consumers are reluctant to purchase any type of food that's unusual or outside their realm of experience. "In-store product sampling is always the best way for retailers to increase pâté sales," she explains. "It allows customers to sample something they may have been afraid to buy before without trying first. Since pâté is still an unknown food for a lot of consumers — especially Americans — having the opportunity to sample first before buying is always ideal."



It's important for retailers to offer high-end products advantageous real estate. "Retailers should be sure that their pâté is prominently placed near other products that might be considered for holiday entertaining such as olives, cheeses, and caviar," recommends Cummins.

In addition, she advises offering a breadth of product. Retailers "should review their assortment of pâtés and consider having something to offer in different varieties such as spreadable mousses, coarse-cut country-

style, pork-free, vegetarian and vegan. It's also an excellent time to consider adding one the more exotic meats such as pheasant or duck with Grand Marnier.

Retailers should also make it easy for the consumer to discover these products. "In store sampling and promotion with store signage is a proven traffic stopper and the way to introduce new customers to the world of pâté," Cummins continues. "So many people have heard the word but have not yet had the opportunity to try it. The sampling station should also have information — either in print or from sampling personnel — about the many ways pâté can be served. We're always delighted to witness first-time tasters discovering how easy it is to serve something so flavorful."

Although pâté and charcuterie sales increase in the fourth quarter, retailers should make sure their presentations let consumers know these items are available — and desirable — year-round. "If retailers offer charcuterie as part of a holiday antipasto tray or sandwich tray, they'll be able to both distinguish their holiday hosting options and introduce their customers to a new experience which translates into incremental revenue year-round," relates Cremenelli's Bowler. **DB**

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Profits in Packaging

Style and function are of equal importance for deli packaging

BY LISA WHITE

It hasn't always been possible to combine the important attributes of appearance, functionality and freshness in supermarket deli packaging. Fortunately, new innovations and technologies have helped up the ante, providing longer shelf lives, eye-catching graphics and space-saving designs that can help increase impulse sales in the department.

Today's new packaging options can lead to profit growth for a number of food items. "[This is because] 35 percent of shoppers don't know what they're going to buy when they shop and 65 percent don't know what they're having for dinner that day," says Larinda Becker, vice president of marketing foodservice, Solo Cup Co., Lake Forest, IL.

According to the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, 82 percent of consumers visit delis to find trendy items and 39 percent of consumers don't decide on deli purchases until they are inside the store.

This drives home the importance of pack-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SOLO CUP CO.



aging. "The goal is to deliver a better quality product to consumers," says Bob Bova, vice president of business development for Paper Pak Industries, La Verne, CA. "It's all about minimizing packaging, while delivering items in the best formats possible that emphasize freshness. When the best quality product in packaging is provided, it ensures better quality food for consumers."

Segment Trends

Today's packaging is likely to be designed as a communication tool, with labels and graphics playing a significant role. "An example is the Kraft Cream Cheese lines that are designed to serve as an ingredient as opposed to a spread," says John King, product market manager/oxygen barrier packaging at IPL, Quebec City, Canada. "Consumers have lit-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF INLINE PLASTICS CORP.

sumers are aware of this attribute.

The convenience trend, with an emphasis on grab-and-go packaging, is still going strong. "Customers want to have grab-and-go options in the deli for a quick lunch, dinner or a fast snack," says Jack Tilley, who handles market research for Inline Plastics Corp., Shelton, CT. "This has prompted suppliers to provide packaging for sandwiches, salads and other deli items to meet these needs. We see growth in rigid plastic

packaging, such as clamshell containers, that offers better protection of food contents than flexible packaging."

Label requirements can be challenging when the goal is to showcase food. "Wider panels have become a big trend and can help restrict tampering," Becker adds.

Packaging colors that exude freshness have become prevalent, including earthy colors in browns and tan. "These reassure consumers that the product is natural, not artifi-



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tle time to buy products, so the packaging has to communicate the message immediately." IPL's new packaging line includes a scaled-down cube design geared to save space and in-mold labels on sidewalls.

Environmentally friendly packaging that either is produced with green materials or helps reduce carbon footprints is in the spotlight. "Sustainability is being positioned not only in terms of reducing materials but also in terms of how packaging is designed to reduce freight or get more packages on retail shelves," IPL's King says. "It's moved out of being green and is more about economics."

As a result, functional packaging that is also economical has become important and sought after. "Some chains are focused on green packaging, so we work with them to get to the price points that are needed," Solo Cup's Becker says. "But if retailers are paying more to be environmentally friendly, they want credit for it" and will make sure con-

cial," Becker says. In addition, she notes. "Shingling [meats and cheese] and multiple packs help encourage impulse sales. Retailers are looking for packaging that calls out to consumers, since they buy with their eyes."

An increasing number of new items are incorporating recloseable packaging with convenient, consumer-friendly peel/reseal systems. These new designs work well for sliced meats or cheeses along with multi-serve refrigerated prepared foods, such as

pastas, egg rolls and salads. "The peel/reseal systems are part of the lidding film used with a tray," says Jim Foster, marketing manager at Clear Lam Packaging, headquartered in Elk Grove Village, IL. "Consumers can easily peel open the package, pull out what they need and then reclose. The new technology eliminates rigid plastic lids



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBBIE MANUFACTURING

and shrink bands. It saves a lot of weight and reduces the overall carbon footprint."

What's New

Consumer sustainability concerns have resulted in packaging manufacturers offering containers in more environmentally friendly materials.

Inline offers all its containers in recyclable DPET material produced using an energy-efficient process. "This has been shown to have a carbon footprint as low as other materials made from 50 percent post-consumer recycled plastic," Tilley says.

Manufacturers also are developing additional packaging for on-the-go deli applications. Inline now offers targeted sandwich packaging with its tamper-resistant Sandwich Wedge and tamper-resistant hoagie containers. The company recently introduced tamper-resistant car cup containers, which fit into most automotive cup holders, for fresh-cut fruit and vegetables, yogurts, parfaits and snacks.

Lenexa, KS-based Robbie Manufacturing's new Hot N Handy line extension offers heat-and-eat pouches designed for cold-case proteins such as rotisserie and fried chicken, wings and chicken tenders. The packaging is made from a non-laminated coex structure, which reduces cost since the pouches don't need the extra barrier required for hot-case extended holding time use. "This is an important factor, as cold proteins are food-stamp eligible, whereas hot proteins are not," says Patrick Starrett, product marketing manager.

Robbie has the capability of placing on-pack coupons on any hot- or cold-case deli protein pouch. "This is a great tool for IRCs [instant redeemable coupon], bounce-back coupons, recipe delivery and cross-promotion," Starrett explains.

Seaman Paper Co., Gardner, MA, recently introduced a new wax tissue size that can be used for wrapping sandwiches on the scale. The 10½-pound sheet is lightweight, interfolded and packaged in a 6x8½-inch size. "This is more economical, since it

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uses 15 percent less paper and costs 15 percent less than a traditional 10 3/4-pound size," says Jamie Jones, Jr., vice president, foodservice sales. "There's no wax on the sheet, so this product is not impacted by swinging petroleum prices."

Solo Cup has expanded its line of 5- and 6-ounce food containers that provide insulation for use in high-volume service environments. "We've offered a lot of traditional items in creative carryout packaging, but now we're starting to see more activity with smaller portions, whether food or salad containers," Becker says. "It's more of a share shift that fits in with the healthy/wellness and lower price point trends."

Several new packaging materials are entering the market for deli foods. These include plastics produced from bio-based raw materials similar to the Coke PlantBottle, a recyclable PET plastic beverage bottle made partially from plants.

New rigid trays and lids include anti-fogging technologies that eliminate a lot of the condensation common inside deli packaging. "We're seeing more multi-serve, snap-apart

packaging for deli salads and meat or cheese snacks," notes Clear Lam's Foster. "These typically hold four to six ounces in a serving."

Black is still very common in deli containers but the market is seeing the use of more custom colors such as green, blue or red. The colors allow consumers to easily differentiate between skus and also distinguish seasonal items that are on display.

Many retailers prefer clear packaging that exposes as much of the food as possible. Inline has developed two new product lines, Visibly Fresh and Crystal Fresh, clear containers that highlight the quality of foods and help promote impulse sales.

Innovations

Technological packaging advances in recent years have helped to extend the shelf life of food as well as to help preserve its quality and freshness.

Modified atmosphere packaging, also known as MAP, has been used in the North American marketplace for the last 35 years, but its popularity has increased in the last decade. This technology helps extend shelf

life by replacing the air inside a package with other gases commonly found in the earth's atmosphere, such as nitrogen or carbon dioxide. In addition to keeping food fresh, MAP helps to slow bacterial and mold growth and enzymatic activity.

According to Robbie's Starrett, "MAP is widely prevalent in the produce industry through the use of micro- or macro-perforation to extend the shelf life of fresh whole or cut produce. The variety and cut size have an effect on the respiration rate of the produce inside the package. Micro- and macro-perforations modify the atmosphere inside the package specific to the variety and cut size, extending the shelf life of the contents. This is not needed or used in the ready-to-eat deli market."

Oxygen absorbers, also called scavengers, are used in a variety of food packaging. The absorbing materials consume oxygen in the headspace of a hermetically enclosed package in an attempt to minimize mold growth, bacterial growth or rancidity. The oxygen-absorbing materials can be included in a packet that is dropped into a package or can be embedded into the plastic packaging films or trays. "You typically see oxygen absorbers used in beef jerky packaging as well as with other foods," Foster says.

The key to implementing new technologies is for packaging companies to accomplish this goal without involving a lot of pricey equipment. "Oxygen scavenger products are used mostly in shipping product, not in retail packaging," explains Paper Pak's Bova. "There's a lot of technology that needs to be worked out before it's viable for retail settings in terms of ensuring a packaging's integrity."

Although size, sustainability and labeling are important factors, functionality, appearance and freshness take precedence in supermarket deli packaging. **DB**



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEAR LAM PACKAGING

Pizza Sales Track Upward

Innovative product launches have attracted a growing consumer base

BY LISA WHITE

The history of pizza has always been in dispute. The food is indisputably Italian, but how far back in time it began is shrouded in mystery. One school of thought says Roman soldiers stationed in ancient Israel topped matzoh with vegetables to make it palatable. When they returned home, the dish morphed into a leavened crust topped with vegetables. Evidence of pizza — complete with tools and bakeshops used for producing and marketing pies — was found in 1st century BCE Pompeian excavations around Mount Vesuvius, as well as in Greece and Egypt. Tomato sauce didn't appear until after the discovery of the New World and the introduction — and acceptance — of tomatoes to Europe in the 16th century.

Naples is considered the home of contemporary pizza. Neapolitans gravitated toward this inexpensive, easy-to-produce, innovative meal, utilizing a variety of toppings for use at breakfast, lunch and dinner. When Italian immigrants migrated to the U.S. at the turn of the 20th century, pizza fast became a fixture in the American landscape.

Although not a major player in retail delis, pizza is becoming more commonplace. Deli prepared foods encompassed 52.9 percent of U.S. deli department category distribution in the 52 weeks ending March 31, 2012, according to Nielsen Perishable Group's FreshFacts information, included in the *What's In Store* report from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI. Pizza's category contribution is just 1.6 percent, 13th on the list behind pre-sliced meat and tied with deli platters.

Pizza is most popular in the eastern U.S., making up 2.5 percent of the category contribution, according to the report, and least popular in the South at just 1 percent of category contributions during this time period. It's 1.4 percent in the central and western US.

The category is growing, as evidenced by the increase in sales and volume over the last three years in the 52 weeks ending in March. According to the report, in 2010, pizza sales



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEFANO FOODS

at traditional grocery stores with sales of \$2 million or greater, excluding supercenters and club stores, totaled close to \$116 million. This number increased to more than \$119 million in 2011 and is estimated at over \$123 million in 2012.

Alan Hoover, general manager of Columbus, OH-based Jane's Dough Foods, which makes take-and-bake pizzas, sees definite trends emerging. "Some of the more encouraging retail trends are that 41 percent of consumers report that they eat pizza at least once per week — up from 26 percent in 2009 — and 49 percent of consumers

report that they purchase pizza from a grocery store at least once per month. Purchase trends focus on perceived authenticity — Sicilian, Neapolitan, etc. — and the increased popularity of chicken, especially BBQ and Buffalo."

Positioning Pizza

Designating a specific place in the deli for pizza displays and ingredients to make and/or enhance it at home can boost profits.

When Rustic Crust, a Pittsfield, NH-based crust supplier, conducted focus groups on its products, the No. 1 complaint was



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retailers didn't have a designated area for pizza crusts. "Stores don't have it set as a category," says Bradford Sterl, CEO. "Some stores are starting to talk about building an inline pizza set in the pasta aisle to bring brands together. Consumers are looking for a display where they can choose the crust and toppings, so it's important to bring as many items as possible into one area, rather than moving different pizza ingredients around the store."

Because the segment is growing, it's important to build the category as a set. "Sales of frozen pizzas are going down, while take-and-bake and fresh pizza sales are on the rise," Sterl says.

Many of the issues have to do with product displays. With the majority of crusts displayed on floor racks, the tendency is to move the racks to different locations throughout the department and store. "If the rack disappears or is moved around, that's a problem because people can't find it," Sterl adds. "There are multiple places where it can go."

Another issue is quality. Cash-strapped consumers are looking to retail delis as an alternative to restaurants and takeout pizza. Consumers are seeking affordably priced pies with quality similar to that of a foodservice

establishment. "If the quality isn't there, people will back off from the product," Sterl says. "Consumers need to feel they're getting a comparable pizza from a supermarket that they would from a restaurant."

Supermarkets that make the commitment can create a destination for pizza and help increase the store's profit potential. "The pizza trends at retail lean toward freshly prepared, large, New York-style pies that use fresh dough balls for the crust," says Alan Hamer, vice president of sales and marketing, Stefano Foods, Charlotte, NC. "These pizzas are sold either hot by the slice or whole."

In recent years, crust styles and thicknesses of deli pizza lines have expanded, helping differentiate store offerings and giving retailers more options to produce signature products. "Thin and crunchy crusts show off toppings, while thick, chewy crusts have an artisan bread quality," Hamer says.

Retailers looking to expand or add pizza have a number of options. Single-serve pizzas can be successfully incorporated with in-store sandwich programs to increase the visibility and viability of prepared food programs. "Retailers can utilize existing elements, such as sandwich toppings — like pepperoni, pep-

pers, onion and chicken strips — as well as quick-baking oven technology," Hamer says. "Stores also can customize par-baked cheese pizzas and provide a hot product in less than two minutes."

Jane's Hoover makes a case for tried-and-true merchandising techniques with this advice. "Make the display as compelling as possible to consumers. Keep it clean, well lit, and well organized. Utilize point-of-sale merchandising materials as often as possible to attract attention. Stock a core line-up and add 'signature' rotational items to add excitement to the set. Consider a twin pack at a value price as an even more compelling offer!"

New Launches

Line extensions and new product introductions have kept the retail pizza segment strong and increased register rings. "Our products are on the premium side, and we've been receiving feedback from consumers who are looking for fresh ingredients, including real tomatoes, basil and other better-for-you toppings," Rustic Crust's Sterl says.

In response to the increasing number of consumers looking for upscale, premium and gourmet products, Rustic Crust recently

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launched a ciabatta pizza crust geared for deli departments. This rustic, wood-fired, old-world crust is topped with basil and sea salt. It can be used as a base for pizza or as an appetizer, sandwich bread or snack for ripping and dipping. The crust has a chewy, soft texture and can be heated and eaten on its own.

"Because we offer a number of wood-fired products, we're receiving more requests for these types of items," Sterl says. "Thin crust has always been popular, and we continue to get inquiries for other crust flavors in thin versions."

Sizes don't vary as much on the retail side as in the restaurant industry, due to limited shelf space. "We don't get many requests for different sizes, although sometimes we will get a random request for a 16-inch crust," Sterl says. "We offer a 7-inch size, but nothing for retailers right now that is a single-serving." The company did fulfill a customer request for a rectangular crust, which was unusual.

Rustic Crust currently provides sourdough, Tuscan 6-grain and Italian herb crust varieties. Its multi-grain crusts have increased in popularity recently. "Some manufacturers put flavors on top of crusts, rather than incorporating them into the dough," Sterl says.

"We are continuing to experience large and extra large sizes as the mainstay of the industry," adds Hoover. "We haven't gotten any interest in personal sized pizzas."

Like the dough, pizza toppings can help distinguish a retailer's pizza offerings and create a signature program. Consumers are becoming more adventurous thanks, in part, to television cooking shows that have broadened the average consumer's palate.

Hauppauge, NY-based Castella Imports, Inc., an importer and manufacturer of gourmet olives and antipasto, offers a number of unique signature topping options, including Marinated Artichoke & Hearts of Palm Salad and Zesty Pepps. "Many of Castella's products are enjoyed as pizza toppings," says Cheryl Growvogel, marketing director. "For example, oil-cured olives with crushed red pepper are perfect for baking into pizza or authentic Italian bread. Our stuffed olives have become quite popular as a slightly more eclectic topping for pizza, along with many of our specialty antipasti, such as roasted garlic or our variety of sweet and hot peppers."

For stores looking to offer a take-and-bake program, New Boston, MI-based Champion Foods' Family Finest Take-and-

Bake pizzas are shipped frozen and entirely assembled, which helps minimize labor at the store level. Designed for displaying in a refrigerated case, the pizzas come with cardboard takeout boxes for easy transport.

Varieties include pepperoni; sausage and pepperoni; supreme with Italian sausage, pepperoni, sliced red, green and yellow peppers and red onion; four cheese, which combines Mozzarella, Asiago, Romano and Parmesan cheeses; and vegetable, which includes mushrooms, sliced red and green peppers and red onions.

Champion also creates private label take-and-bake pizza programs, including developing signature recipes for all sizes of pies. The company will also work with stores to create exclusive packaging designs for pizza boxes.

Retailers have many options when creating or expanding a pizza program. Whether implementing a take-and-bake or fresh program, offering components for making pizza at home or providing a cross section of these options, delis should try to stay ahead of the curve in terms of new products and innovative offerings. As this category continues to grow, retailers on the forefront of the pizza segment will reap the greatest rewards in terms of sales and profits. **DB**

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Marketing Food With A Conscience



By
Sharon Olson
Executive Director
CULINARY VISIONS
PANEL
CHICAGO, IL

Marketing food with a conscience in a relevant way can be challenging. Although today's consumers may be focused on price, tomorrow's consumers are growing up in a world where *going green* is simply expected.

Young consumers have a strong, growing global consciousness with a focus on food ethics. Millennials, who are between 18 and 35 years old today, represent one quarter of the U. S. population. They're the most likely to expect environmen-

tally friendly products when they shop and more likely to buy fair trade products.

When marketing environmentally responsible products and practices, it's more important to think about education than promotion. Young consumers simply expect these options, and those who care most about these initiatives want sincerity and transparency rather than promotion that can cross the line to self-congratulation.

Studying young consumers and their relationships with food can seem like nailing gelatin to the wall; attitudes and awareness change quickly. Yet it's important to capture their attention and their trust. They might not represent the consumer group with the largest buying power today, but they're definitely the consumers of tomorrow.

Millennials are not one homogeneous group; for this discussion, millennial consumers are described as 18 to 26 years old with some college education. As a group, they're concerned about the world and judgmental if they suspect a *green wash* rather than a truly green initiative.

Food Ethics: Food ethics is about the principles of food production and delivery, and it's becoming increasingly important to Millennials. At colleges and universities, they've been encouraged to take an active part in campus policy and programs related to food ethics and social justice. Some universities have worked with their students to craft a Fair Value Statement that highlights what the campus is doing to focus on sustainability based on requests from student groups.

Some supermarket chains have very similar statements, but they're often buried in a scroll-down menu after the store locator and all the deals listed on the home page. That's probably because most customers come to a website to find a store and see what's on sale.

Interest in food with a conscience is growing worldwide as consumers look for certifications by trusted sources, sustainability, animal welfare and local sourcing. Last year, 7 percent of total global food and drink product launches were positioned on an ethical platform, up 6.5 percent from the previous year.

[Millennials] might not represent the consumer group with the largest buying power today, but they're definitely the consumers of tomorrow.

Sustainability Sells: Young consumers are more likely to pay an additional price for food with a conscience even though their incomes are among the lowest of all the generations. They're among the hardest hit by the current economy; no established careers and no safety net other than family, so value for dollars spent is carefully scrutinized. Organic is nice, but if it's too expensive, they'll go with the local or sustainable option or the producer known for giving back to the community.

Young consumers expect a lot of retailers and restaurants when it comes to sustainable choices. Look at the emergence of the fast-casual restaurant segment where Chipotle is the classic example of sustainability that sells.

Simply Food: Millennials want food that's food; they grew up with nutrition education and school meals that were nutritious but didn't seem like real food to them. Even though their stressed-out, over-booked, multi-tasked lives demand convenience, they want it on their terms. They look for ingredient statements that show food ingredients, not long complicated words they don't understand.

Local has been growing in popularity and there's talk about hyper-local foods such as those grown in on-site gardens and in-house butchering. They don't look at the grocery store as the point of origin for the food they buy. They want to know the provenance of every meal and snack they eat. They covet real and virtual relationships with chefs, farmers and all kinds of authorities on food and food culture.

Food Activism: Young consumers are part of an Internet empowered global community so it's not uncommon to find similar concerns popping up simultaneously in different parts of the world. Food activism is a growing part of American food culture and young, educated consumers are among the first to take up the charge.

One example is a new subculture fueled by the growing awareness of the amount of edible food discarded daily. This new eco trend is called *containering* — or *dumpster diving*; consumers forage for food in supermarket dumpsters. It's growing in America, Europe, Australia and Japan.

Most food retailers regularly engage in many environmentally responsible practices that can be important but don't make the nightly news. Targeted social media outreach with permission can connect customers to values they respect and understand.

Young consumers are thrilled with transparency; they seek it out and hunt it down when it's not readily available. The more they know about your positive practices, the more positive their impression will be of everything they buy in your store.

DB

Sharon Olson is the president and founder of Olson Communications, a marketing communications firm that specializes in providing insight driven strategy exclusively to companies in the food business. This article was based on research from Y-Pulse (ypulse.org), an Olson Communications subsidiary that focuses on understanding tomorrow's consumers today.

Blast From The Past

T

The Wensleydale Creamery

The Wensleydale Creamery is located in Hawes, North Yorkshire, England. The “old” dairy (right) was built in 1897 by Edward Chapman, a corn and provisions merchant who

bought cheese from local farmers. Due to the irregularity and inconsistency of the cheeses — shape, size, quality, etc. — from the different farms, he decided to buy the milk to make the cheese himself on a larger scale to ensure quality and consistency.

Now employing over 200 people, The Wensleydale Creamery (left) enjoys global acclaim for its award-winning cheeses. Today it supplies a broad range of customers including major multiple retailers, wholesalers, export, and the foodservice sector.



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