

# DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

JUNE/JULY 2013 \$14.95

## 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PEOPLE'S AWARDS



### ALSO INSIDE

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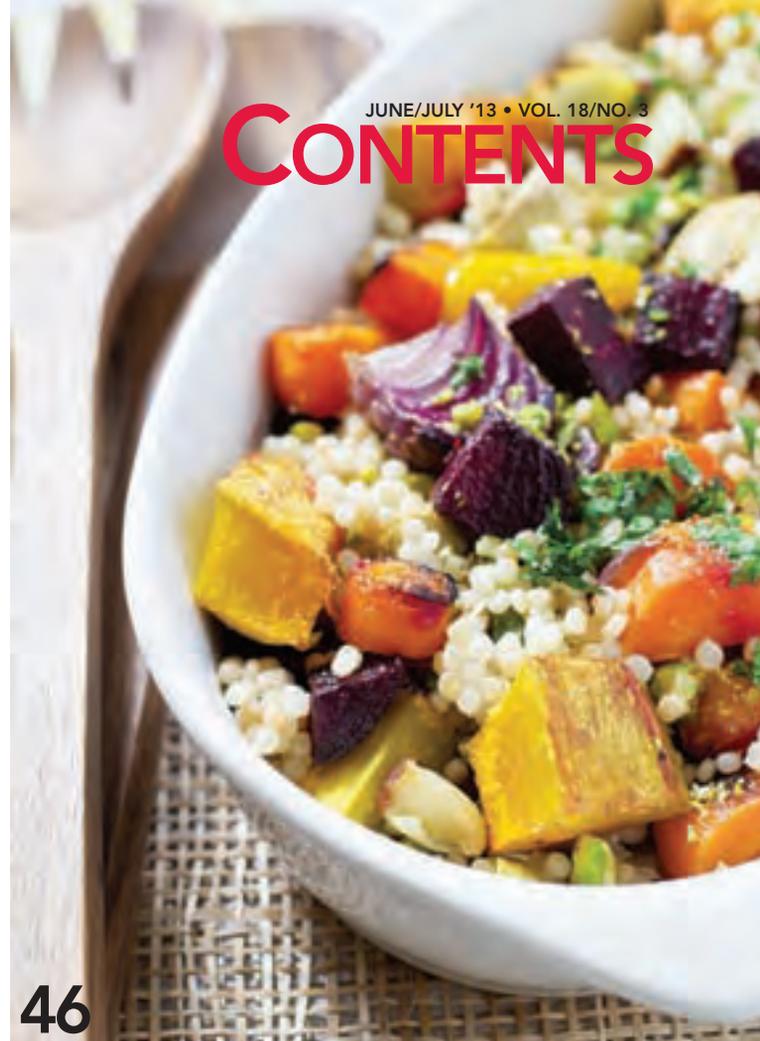
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## \$50,000 PRIZE WINNER



Carl Buddig & Co., Homewood, IL, the maker of popular Buddig lunchmeats and Old Wisconsin sausage and meat snack products, announces the winner of its \$50,000 Dream Big Giveaway, retired United States Postal Service (USPS) mail carrier, Johnny Lutz, of Madisonville, KY. Tom Buddig, executive vice president marketing, personally presented the check to Lutz and his wife Gayle at their home in Kentucky before enjoying lunch and spending the afternoon with them.

Lutz was one of nearly 80,000 participants in the Dream Big Giveaway sweepstakes. Entrants were asked to collect a combination of game tokens from product stickers on specially marked packaging, online via Facebook, by email or by mail for a chance to win the \$50,000 Grand Prize. In addition to the Grand Prize, Buddig awarded hundreds of first and second instant-win prizes, including gas grills and other prizes.

The Dream Big Giveaway is the latest in a series of successful promotions offered by Carl Buddig & Co. since mid-2011. Buddig will kick off a "Family Road Trip" promotion in July and the next Dream Big Giveaway returns in October.

## COMING NEXT ISSUE IN AUG./SEPT. 2013

**COVER STORY**  
Back To School

**FEATURE STORIES**  
Tailgating Profits  
Snack Foods  
Packaging

**MERCHANDISING REVIEWS**  
Grab-and-Go  
Soups  
Turkey Profits

**PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES**  
Holiday Buying

**PREPARED FOODS**  
Sandwiches

**DELI MEATS**  
Charcuterie  
Salami Trends

**CHEESES**  
English Cheddars  
California

### COMING IN OCT./NOV.

DELI BUSINESS will look at ways the deli can go green and adopt methods, strategies and marketing approaches that convey an image of sustainability, freshness and localism to consumers.

### SUBSCRIPTION & READER SERVICE INFO

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# *New* FROM CONROY FOODS INC. **SANDWICH SHAKERS™** *Roasted Garlic & Parmesan Cheese*

*Come Shake the Taste™*  
at the IDDBA  
Booth #2956  
June 2-4<sup>th</sup>



Beano's® Sandwich Shakers come in a convenient self shipping deli counter display—Holds 6 bottles per box.

Now you can enjoy your favorite sandwich bar spice blend at home with Beano's Sandwich Shakers Roasted Garlic & Parmesan Cheese™ spice blend—robust flavor without the added fat, cholesterol or carbohydrates. Beano's Sandwich Shakers™ is a perfect way to add flavor to your favorite sandwich creation, just *Shake the Taste™*.



In addition to adding flavor to your sandwiches, Beano's Sandwich Shakers™ has a variety of uses:

**Dipping Spice & Bread Spread:** Add 1 teaspoon of Beano's Sandwich Shakers™ into 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Stir with a fork, let stand for flavor blending and dip with your favorite bread. Add Beano's Sandwich Shakers™ to taste with softened butter to create a savory bread spread.

**Salad Dressing:** Sprinkle to taste directly on your favorite field of greens or fresh tomato and mozzarella salad. It also works well on oil and red wine vinegar cucumber salads. Or add a zesty new flavor to your favorite pasta salad recipe.

**Rub or Marinade:** Beano's Sandwich Shakers™ makes a perfect rub. Use Beano's Sandwich Shakers™ to coat whole chickens or pieces, turkey, chops, steaks or fish. No matter if you are roasting, grilling or smoking, Beano's Sandwich Shakers™ will increase the flavor. Mix generously with the vinegar of your choice and vegetable oil to marinate your favorite cut of meat or fish.

**Shake it on:** Pizza, pasta, steamed mussels and clams, garlic bread, soups, baked potatoes, French fries and wings!

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**CONROY  
FOODS**

Conroy Foods • 100 Chapel Harbor Dr., Suite 2 • Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
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## New Products



### GLUTEN-FREE WRAPS

Toufayan Bakeries, Ridgefield, NJ, introduces its Gluten-Free Wraps, a good-for-you food. Not only are these wraps 100 percent gluten-free, but they're also as great tasting as Toufayan's flour tortillas. Let customers discover the great taste and pliability they expect from a wrap, without the gluten. Stop by IDDBA booth #1502 and sample the new Gluten Free flavors, including Savory Tomato, Garden Vegetable, and Spinach. All 100 percent gluten-free. All 100 percent delicious.

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



### NEW SIZE ECOTASTER

EcoTensil Inc., Corte Madera, CA, introduces the 4-inch EcoTaster Mid. Silky-smooth, brandable paperboard utensils fold perfectly for one-handed sampling. They save costs by replacing the sample cup/utensil combo and allowing full-sized bites. FSC-certified, recyclable, renewable and compostable EcoTaster Mids save shipping and storage costs. Demo specialists and customers rave about the sturdy and ample EcoTaster Mid with a fold-in backstop to contain liquids. Visit us at IDDBA Booth #5635. Find a free product sample of the EcoTaster Mini on page 51.

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



### HPP PROCESSING ADDED

Frankly Fresh Wholesome Foods, Carson, CA, recently became one of only 17 companies in U.S. using high pressure processing (HPP) to keep its soups, fresh salads, Classics and Hip Dips, among many other products fresh on the shelf for up to 60 days unopened. HPP preserves product freshness, flavor, safety and increased shelf life without the use of artificial preservatives. Food is subjected to very high pressures to kill bacteria present in the food. HPP works like heat to improve food safety by destroying the bacteria that cause food borne illness and spoilage.

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



### TAMPER-EVIDENT RECYCLABLE CONTAINERS

Placon, Madison, WI, offers new 100 percent recyclable Crystal Seal tamper-evident plastic thermoformed food containers in seven grab-and-go sizes from 8 to 64 ounces. With no removable byproducts or tear-away pieces, minimizing potential choking hazards, the food containers' double hinged tamper-evident design eliminates the necessity for shrink bands or tamper-evident labels. The packaging's offset, recessed cavity instructional tabs ensure easy gripping and opening while the leak-resistant design ensures no messes or spills either in store aisles or while on the go.

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



### ROUND FOOD WELLS

Alto-Shaam, Inc., Menomonee Falls, WI, has added a selection of round wells for better food storage, display and quality. These hot soup wells use Alto-Shaam's Halo Heat technology and EcoSmart design. Available in 7- and 11-quart sizes, Halo Heat wraps around the food well, radiating from the recessed surface, providing greater ambient surface temperature control. The adjustable thermostat provides hot holding temperature flexibility, and the round well can be used with an existing counter, overhead lighting, and sneeze guard system, or dropped into a prep table for hot food plating convenience.

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



### RAW MILK GOAT CHEESE

Coach Farm, Pine Plains, NY, introduces Rawstruck, the cheesemaker's first raw milk goat cheese. Made just one day each month, Rawstruck is created from the milk of Coach Farm's own herd of dairy goats. The curd is hand ladled, hand shaped, and set to age. In compliance with current federal regulations of the sale and consumption of raw milk cheeses, Rawstruck is aged for 60 days before its release. Rawstruck is available immediately for distribution in 4-pound wheels with a suggested retail price of \$24.99 per pound.

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



### ALL-NATURAL CHICKEN SAUSAGES

Dietz & Watson, Philadelphia, PA, announces a new line of seven all-natural Chicken Sausages made from fresh, never frozen chicken. Using Old-World family recipes prepared in small batches, these fully cooked sausages contain no fillers, extenders or MSG and are certified gluten free by the Celiac Sprue Association. They are all 100 percent pork free. Flavors include Buffalo Style, Jamaican Jerk, Asiago & Spinach, classic Italian, Tomatillo Salsa Santa Fe Style, Andouille and Oktoberfest Black Forest Chicken Brats. Vibrant new packaging; 12-ounce packages of four sausages each.

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



### PETITE CHEESE LINE

Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ, launches three Chimay cheeses in convenient 11- and 8.8-ounce sizes. Chimay Classic is a washed rind cheese, with a distinct flavor, light yellow color and a smooth paste. Its sweet, mildly tanginess results from pure, antibiotic-free, local milk that must pass meticulous testing to ensure its high quality. Chimay with Beer is a washed rind beauty, bathed in the Abbey's own renowned beer, ensuring a finish with hints of malt and hops. Chimay Poteaupre has beautiful dark ochre color, bloomy and edible rind, and pleasantly spiced aromatic and unctuous flavor.

[www.atalanta.com](http://www.atalanta.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](mailto:DeliBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com)

WHEN PACKAGING MATTERS

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*ecoyummy*

*(ōkō-yūmō) adj.* the delicious combination of beautiful presentation and sustainability that caterers and customers crave. The Fresh 'n' Clear Catering collection of 100% recyclable platters, bowls and lids are fissile-free, stackable and stay secure in transit. Made from EcoStar® food-grade recycled PET, the trays and bowls are perfect for sandwiches, salads, fruits, veggies, desserts and more. Sleek. Reliable. Sustainable. Placon is redefining packaging for catering.

For samples, contact us at [info@placon.com](mailto:info@placon.com)

# DELI WATCH

## New Products



### STONE-FIRED PIZZA

Little Lady Foods, Elk Grove Village, IL, offers a new line of Thin & Crispy Take & Bake Pizza with a stone-fired thin crust and bold sauces. The crust is paired with popular toppings such as Four Cheese and Double Pepperoni and more unique offerings such as Buffalo Chicken and Philly Cheese-steak. Customizable as a square or round pizza, it arrives pre-packaged and ready to stack and sell. Made in high sanitation SQF certified level 3 facilities, Thin & Crispy Pizza is a complete solution. Sample its enticing flavors at IDDBA booth # 3133.

[www.littlelady.foods](http://www.littlelady.foods)



### SHALLOW CONTAINER

Anchor Packaging, Inc., St. Louis, MO, has added a 38-ounce container to its Mega-Meal line. This shallow container is perfect for hot or cold applications. It joins the deeper 80- and 100-ounce sizes as an alternative to aluminum half-steam table pan. All three polypropylene containers share a common clear, anti-fog, polypropylene lid, keeping SKUs and inventory costs to a minimum. Strong, durable, resistant to hot grease and oils, and able to withstand temperatures up to 230°F when used under heat lamps, in warming units, or in the microwave.

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



### PREMIUM CHICKEN BURGERS

Perdue Foods Retail Deli, Salisbury, MD, introduces easy to execute, restaurant-quality Perdue Chicken Burgers for deli. These fully cooked and grill-marked burgers can be prepared in an oven, fryer, microwave or combi-therm oven. Perdue Chicken Burgers have 40 percent less fat and 30 percent fewer calories than broiled ground beef patties (according to USDA data). Perdue Chicken Burgers are moist and juicy at a 90-minute hot hold time. Hot hold packaging is included in every case. Complete merchandising and self-serve racks are available.

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



### GREEK LIFESTYLE FLATBREAD

Kontos Foods, Inc., Paterson, N.J., announces the re-launch of its Smart-Carb flatbread as Kontos Greek Lifestyle Flatbread. The hand-stretched Greek Lifestyle Flatbread has been specially formulated to appeal to protein-seeking, carb-conscious consumers who want to enjoy satisfying sandwiches, elegant appetizers and Mediterranean-style meals as part of a healthy diet. It has 15 grams of protein, 21 grams of carbs, 2 grams of sugar and 190 calories per serving. Available for both retail and foodservice, in a 4-pack, 10-ounce package.

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

**Affinage** - (n.) the ancient art of maturing and aging cheese

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# Delivering Deli Insight and Innovation In-Store.

**From sliced to rotisserie, Perdue Foods Retail Deli provides premium meats for increased deli profits.**

At Perdue Foods, we're driven by shopper insight to create product innovations that move your category forward. With our easy to execute products, your deli can provide the quality meal solutions your shoppers are looking for – and the profitability your business needs.

Whether it's fresh, refrigerated or frozen, look to Perdue Foods Retail Deli for on-trend choices that meet your shoppers' lifestyle demands.

Visit us at [PerdueRetailTrade.com](http://PerdueRetailTrade.com) or call your sales representative.

**TALK TO US ABOUT OUR FULL DELI LINE**  
at *IDDBA's Dairy-Deli-Bake-2013*  
June 2-4, 2013 – Orlando, Florida  
Booth #4001

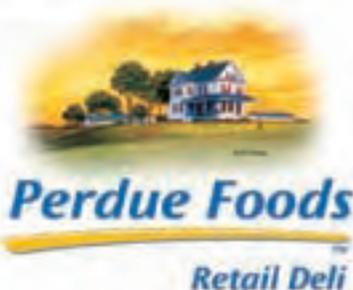
ALL VEGETARIAN FED



ANTIBIOTIC-FREE



ORGANIC



A HERITAGE OF INNOVATION.



New Products



**FRESH TORTILLA CHIPS**

Tyson Deli, Springdale, AR, introduces Mexican Original Tortilla Chips. Deli operators seeking a great tasting, high impulse, high margin snack with a 'made fresh in store' halo need look no farther than Tyson Deli's Mexican Original Tortilla Chips. Fried on-site using existing equipment, at three minutes of frying time per batch, even small fryers can prepare one or two 15-pound cases in 30 minutes. Each case yields approximately 14 bags of chips that, once packaged, stay fresh up to seven days. With a case or two in the cooler, refilling displays is a snap.

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



**FUSION PLUS LINE**

Master-Bilt, New Albany, MS, introduces its Fusion Plus line Energy Star qualified glass door merchandisers, coolers and freezers. The Fusion Plus line expands the Fusion foodservice cabinet offering with a line of glass door refrigerated and frozen merchandisers that includes swinging and glass doors. These models offer the ultimate full-feature, price-value experience with a wide range of industry standard sizes. Increased pack out space, LED lighting, a backlit graphic panel, noise reducing technology, maximum product display design, adjustable shelving, and three year parts and labor warranty are standard.

[www.master-bilt.com](http://www.master-bilt.com)



**BURGER BOOSTER KIT**

Mrs. Grissom's, Nashville, TN, has added a new twist to one of America's favorite summer time foods. The company's new Gourmet Burger Booster Kits contain packaged spices, cheeses and bacon bits that quickly and easily transform five pounds of ground meat into an enhanced, higher profit item. The kits come in a variety of flavor combinations and provide a way for store delis to expand their offerings. Flavors include: poblano fajita burger, Burgundy pepper mushroom burger, bacon Cheddar burger, Monterey bacon burger, and Blue cheese bacon teriyaki mushroom burger.

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



**KALAMATA OLIVE TAPENADE**

Nicola International, Inc., Sun Valley, CA, introduces Aiello Kalamata Olive Tapenade, a fresh and healthy way of turning appetizers into something new, inviting and delicious. It can be used as a spread on crackers or bread, or added to a salad to give it an exotic flavor. Consider it as a topping on a pizza or mixed with a Mediterranean appetizer, such as hummus or baba ghanoush. Available in foodservice and retail formats: 17-pound pails or in 12/8-ounce jars.

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

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**VISIT US AT IDDBA BOOTH #1903**

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# High-Touch Interface

As the industry gathers in Orlando for its annual meeting at the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA) Seminar and Expo, we are reminded that in this very high-tech world, where each of us walks around with a Dick Tracy-like device that lets us FaceTime or Skype anywhere at any time, human beings place enormous value on the high-touch interface of the personal meeting. How else to explain that thousands of people get on airplanes, stay in hotels and choose to confab in the shadow of the Mouse?

It's a metaphor of sorts against which to measure our actions in all areas of business. We love our technology. People can be so frustratingly human... they are unpredictable, they get sick, their preferences change quickly, they have divided loyalties, sometimes they turn against us, and sometimes they die. It is logical and proper to devote great attention to mechanization and to finding technological solutions to problems in every area of business, from procurement and payment systems to in-store kiosks and self-checkout. Yet, in the end, the more we automate, the more we employ technology, the more important people are to our operations.

The folks in Bentonville have long struggled with the question of whether Wal-Mart Supercenters should feature a service deli. In many ways the logical answer, in its price-driven, self-service format, is no. Yet, in the end, there are so few times when Wal-Mart personnel come into contact with consumers during their shopping experience that the chain's executives have always come down on the side of maintaining this touch point with customers in the store.

Of course, just having people isn't enough; people do leave an impression – for good or for ill. Many executives are finding that it is becoming more and more difficult to find entry level staff with the right customer-focused attitude. They blame the profusion of technologies that have young people texting, tweeting, putting status updates on Facebook, indeed doing everything except talking face to face. This is a not insignificant challenge; training programs are good ways of imparting product knowledge and technological fluency, but we all know that some people are “natural salespeople” or “people-persons” and our training programs are limited in their abilities to change personality types.

The demise of the “Company Man” of the 1950's

and early 1960's has led to an almost schizophrenic attitude toward training at all levels of an organization. In some sense, everyone recognizes the priority of training; after all, what is the alternative? Hire people and don't train them? But without a conviction that people are likely to stick around, who can deny the hesitancy to invest in people, especially the kinds of investment in executive development that does not have any obvious immediate pay off, but is part and parcel of developing the skill-sets that enable people to take on greater responsibilities within an organization.

One reason British retailing is often a model is because the dedicated supply chain those stores utilize is willing to invest because they have the certainty of business that justifies the investment. American practices are different and thus investment patterns are different. The same applies to people. There was a day when great chains such as Kings in New Jersey had extensive training programs, not built to meet immediate needs but built to develop a deep bench, a cadre of well-trained and experienced executives who could help the company grow and prosper. Such programs were never common, but are even rarer today as the exigencies of finance demand immediate returns and the reality pervades that with workforce mobility, one is often training one's future competitors.

This edition of DELI BUSINESS is always instructive and inspirational, for it honors and recognizes people in the industry who have made a difference. Role models are crucial and in our cover story we provide them aplenty.

One of the tragedies of our time is that true mentoring has become rarer as concerns over harassment claims of various sorts have become more common. Our personal lives are the result of habits that define us. Those same habits will make success in one's career more or less likely. One can't be a truly great mentor unless one feels OK about helping one's mentee not just work better but live a constructive life. Today that intrusion is a recipe for getting in trouble, so most executives limit their commitment. That keeps them safe, but means the next generation isn't getting all the help it could use. **DB**



*Jim Prevor*

# Made Fresh Daily

Reduce shrink and increase profits with Sargento home meal solutions



Featured Meal Kit: Cheesy Chicken Enchiladas

**SARGENTO**  
Culinary Solutions

Booth#  
**4408**

See us at  
IDDBA

Sargento is an endless source of home meal solutions for your deli, and convenience is our secret ingredient. Our customizable Home Meal Solution Kits are easily assembled in-store, offering you variety and the fresh appearance consumers demand. The kits give you the flexibility to make Grab N' Go, Hot and/or Cold service items that will turn your deli into an in-store destination.

Learn more about our Meal Kits for Entrées, Side Dishes and Chicken Recovery at IDDBA booth #4408, or contact James Scher at 920.892.3673 or [james.scher@sargento.com](mailto:james.scher@sargento.com).



Chicken Caprese  
Meal Kit

by Lee Smith, Publisher

# Understanding Today's Deli

**D**eli department sales are up as are new products, food safety and packaging options. While the latest statistics are, for the most part, only available through 2011 and some from 2012, there's enough anecdotal information to make reasonable assumptions about sales increases. Statistical information used in this editorial is from multiple sources, including the *2013 What's In Store*, published by IDDBA, and proprietary research conducted by DELI BUSINESS.

This last year, we've seen housing prices begin to rise in most parts of the country and foreclosures decrease. New product introductions are up, new stores are being built and for some chains the growth is very aggressive.

However, as in every economic upturn or downturn, there are winners and losers. General trends rarely foretell the success of any single chain or independent store since individual circumstances clearly outweigh national statistics. Regardless, it's important to understand where the deli industry is going and find out where there's room for significant growth and what areas are producing only modest returns.

If you think your delis' growth in prepared foods is unusual, you'd be incorrect. Prepared food sales now reach over 50 percent of deli sales nationally. Chicken entrées, including rotisserie, fried, wings and tenders as well as salads, are the real powerhouses, but sandwiches are not far behind with over 6 percent of deli sales and still showing strong growth. There doesn't seem to be a ceiling on the sales of chicken wings, which just keep growing. Other categories are much smaller but also represent growth potential on a more regional and individual store basis.

Deli salads now represent close to 18 percent of the department sales, including full-service and self-serve options. Part of the prepared-food category growth may well be driven by more healthful, preservative-free offerings. But beware. More deli operators are saying the drive for preservative-free is no longer the hot button due to food-safety concerns at store level once product has been opened.

Deli meats come next with less than 25 percent of deli sales and about 88 percent of those sales are in bulk deli meats. For those who have been in the business awhile, this is almost a complete inversion. Deli meats used to be the dominant moneymaker with sales over 40 percent of the category. Clearly, there has been a shift to entrées and sandwiches.

The one bright light in the deli meat category is specialty meats, with an annual growth of slightly less than 10 percent. Specialty meats are not a category for every store, but for those stores with the correct demographics, it's an area to concentrate on. While sales of dry-cured imported deli meats continue to rise, American

artisanal producers are growing and showing impressive levels of quality.

Salami is an interesting category and while growth is forecast, the potential is still not certain. One benefit is most of the growth in salami falls into the grab-and-go category and, unlike bulk deli meats, there is less labor and shrink. Salami has also emerged as a growing snack and entertaining product. Closely aligned with the specialty cheese category, proximity in displays seems to encourage growth of both product categories.

However, there is a new development that may — or may not — dramatically change the mix and sales projections. The rules for importing Italian salami have changed, and Italian salami along with other cured meats that are aged less than 400 days are now allowed in the U.S. Expect to see imports arriving as early as mid-August. Depending on a chain's demographics, this could be a big winner, especially with the holidays approaching.

Deli cheese is also another winner, with sales approaching 20 percent of department sales. The more interesting sub-segment is specialty cheese, with sales approaching 13 percent.

Specialty cheese is one of the most problematic areas of the deli department. While some chains are doing a terrific job — to the extent cheese has become a sub-department with its own dedicated staff to it actually becoming its own department with separate management, buyers and supervisors — other chains are ignoring the category with a few pre-wrapped cheeses displayed in the grab-and-go areas.

An enigma for many deli executives, the quandary is how to introduce fine cheese without being overwhelmed with shrink and inventory carrying costs. There is no doubt cheese is expensive and often very perishable, especially the soft, fresh cheeses. There also is no doubt there are rewards, but the outcome is not certain in many executives' minds and the risk is viewed as being too great.

Specialty cheese may be an area to invest in hiring someone who is experienced in the cheese business and deciding to allocate some corporate R&D funds. With national department percentages of cheese now approaching 20 percent, it is a category foolish to ignore. One must keep in mind that as the newest category to show strong growth, the percentages still do not represent a majority of retailers and individual store results may be much better. **DB**



*Lee Smith*

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LEO BEGGEN



JOSE DIAZ



STEVE DRAGOO



BILL MARDON

DANIELLE MCINTYRE

GREG O'NEILL

VONI WOODS



Each year Deli Business honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to the industry, their company and their community. Nominations for 2014 may be submitted to: Publisher Lee Smith (lsmith@phoenixmedianet.com) .



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## LEO BEGGEN

DIRECTOR OF DELI AND BAKERY  
HARRIS TEETER  
CHARLOTTE, NC

**“Work hard and learn from the people with experience. Always be prepared to go the extra mile, as your extra effort will be recognized.”**



### How did you get started in the industry and who, or what, influenced you early on?

After leaving school, I pursued a career in store management at a supermarket chain in Ireland. A few months after I started my job, I was offered a development position in the deli and thoroughly enjoyed the variety of the work every day, so I stayed.

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

When an opportunity came up to move to America, I quickly jumped on it. Within a few short weeks I got a job doing what I do best and then rose through the ranks to my current position.

In my career, I have been an apprentice, clerk, department manager, merchandiser/specialist and I am currently the director.

The position I enjoy the most is my current role because all my combined experience in the different positions has given me the confidence to make solid business decisions.

### What is your leadership philosophy?

Being open and honest and always available to spend time with my direct reports and peers to answer their questions and support them in their roles. Never take failure personally and use facts to make good decisions.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Right now my goal is to bring my son to every NFL stadium. We've been to 10 so far, so I still have a lot to look forward to.

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

The biggest thrill I get is supporting small start-up companies as they venture to get a foothold in the industry. Their passion for their products and recipes is very inspiring.

### What charity is your personal favorite? Why?

There are many worthwhile organizations, but the ones that I favor are those that have affected my family — cancer research and Crohn's disease.

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

Work hard and learn from people with experience. Always be prepared to go the extra mile, as your extra effort will be recognized.

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

Meal solutions are still going to be a sales driver in the deli for several more years. As retailers begin to understand that piece of their business and the manufacturers and suppliers adapt their selection and production to support retailers, we will continue to carve out other business opportunities that cater to our customers' demands and needs.

### What's your favorite read?

“Good to Great” is probably the most impactful book I have read and what I've learned from reading it is still true today, no matter what business you are in.

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## JOSE DIAZ

DELI AND BAKERY DIRECTOR  
WESTERN BEEF  
RIDGWOOD, NY

**“It is very rewarding to be a factor in the evolution and growth of the company and to know that the policy of hiring from within, which pulled me up the ladder, is still available to all who work here.”**



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

I started with the company in 1986 at the age of 16 as a deli clerk at one of the first Western Beef stores in Flushing, NY. I was planning on becoming an architect, a dream from childhood, but I changed my mind the day I started. I saw that there was a future for me and my family at Western Beef.

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

My store manager, Fernando Montoya, was a great mentor and friend. He came to this country, just like I did, with the American dream of becoming successful. One day we were talking, and Fernando told me that he started at Western Beef the same way I did, as a deli clerk. I still remember it like it was yesterday. He said if you work hard and do the right thing you will have a tremendous future. How right he was.

With hard work and dedication, I was promoted to assistant deli manager six months after starting. Eight months later the deli supervisor asked me if I thought I could run the department. I told him I knew I could. A pretty bold statement for a 17-year-old! He gave me his phone number in case of “emergencies.” I didn’t call him the entire week. When he came by to check in on me, he walked the department with a smile on his face. I asked him if everything was OK.

He said, “The deli looks great.”

I said, “Thank you,”

He said, “No, thank you,” and appointed me the deli manager. I was the deli manager at that store for over two years.

My entry into the bakery department was as much the result of an opportunity as was my promotion in the deli department. There was an urgent need for a supervisor in our growing bakery department. I was asked to step in temporarily until someone could be found. I quickly learned the ins and outs of making our famous Italian bread, rolls, cakes and cookies. My temporary position became permanent, and eight years later I am fortunate to be the corporate director of both deli and bakery. One of the best parts of

my job is increasing the product line. I have carefully selected and added dozens of cakes, pastries, cookies, salads and ready-to-eat deli items that are available at Western Beef’s deli and bakery departments.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Outside of work, I love fishing. I love the water and I love boating.

I also collect classic cars and I love working on my cars. And I am a handy man fixing stuff around the house. I learn how to from watching the home improvement shows.

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

It is very rewarding to be a factor in the evolution and growth of the company and know that the policy of hiring from within, which pulled me up the ladder, is still available to all who work here. During the years I have been with Western Beef, we have grown from three locations to 29 operating in three states.

I love what I do and enjoy it every day. I also like to help my employees the way Fernando Montoya helped me. When I see a person who could have a future at Western Beef, I make sure I pass along what I have learned. I talk to them and tell them my story in this company. How good the company is, my beginnings, how I started and where I am today. There are so many stories like mine here; people who started at store level and have worked their way up. This is a company that offers its employees a future and that’s a great place to be.

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

My philosophy and advice is to work hard and don’t stop until you reach your goals.

I love my family. I love my job. And I love Western Beef.

### What’s your favorite read?

I like to read all the food industry magazines.

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## STEVE DRAGOO

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT  
SOLUTIONS CONSULTING, INC.  
FRANKLIN, TN

**“Embrace the challenges with optimism, a sense of wonder and curiosity. Be willing to work hard, listen and share your ideas.”**



**How did you get started in the industry and who, or what, influenced you early on?**

As an 8 year-old boy, I would walk to a small corner grocer with my grandfather. On occasion, I would linger near the meat case to see if the butcher needed help cleaning up. When he needed help, I gladly pitched in and was paid in bologna, salami and cheese. At this early age, I learned to love the sights, smells and tastes of fresh food. I also developed a fascination with the service interaction at the point of decision.

My first “paying” job in the industry was just out of high school, when I took a part-time deli position for a local large supermarket.

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

As a college student, I continued to work in the deli — moving from part- to full-time and I eventually become the department manager. While in grad school (now married and with a young family), I continued to work in deli as part of a grand-opening team. I moved from this role to a position as a deli/bakery buyer and director for a family-owned grocery chain. Next up, I moved over to the manufacturing side of the business to work for two different divisions of the Sara Lee Corporation, holding various positions in sales and training. After 10 years at Sara Lee, I moved over to ConAgra Foods to work briefly in a senior position in sales — then moving into a director of training role. In 2004, I founded Solutions Consulting, Inc. We design and stage immersive learning experiences for our clients. Our client base is mostly food manufacturers, retailers and restaurateurs. We do some work in health care, death care and broad-line retail, as well.

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

I was on the advisory board of Cornell University’s Distance Ed. Program. I have served as volunteer on a number of “behind the curtain” industry projects.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

- Listen. Learn. Instruct. Repeat
- Seek first to serve, then to be served
- Surround yourself with smart people and then get out of their way

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

Karaoke. (I am actually pretty awesome!) Reading. Regular cardio workouts. Visiting great local foodie spots and dives. Hanging out with family and friends.

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

I try to take time to count my blessings every day — from fresh clean water, a readily available source of clean wholesome food and having people around who care. Unto whom much is given — much shall be required.

**What charity is your personal favorite? Why?**

Heifer International is a great one ([heifer.org](http://heifer.org)). You can choose a meaningful gift to give a loved one and help children and families around the world receive training and animal gifts that help them become self-reliant. We’ve given a number of corporate and personal gifts through this fine organization.

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

Embrace the challenges with optimism, a sense of wonder and curiosity. Be willing to work hard, listen and share your ideas. The “fresh eyes” of new-to-the-industry colleagues are invaluable as we seek to serve our customers. I also encourage them to realize they are doing honorable work by providing safe and wholesome food for people around the world — and up their street.

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

Small foods. Slow foods. Local foods. Plant-based protein foods. More “artisan” and “artisan-style” meats and cheeses (supported by real backstories). I recently presented to a group that the hottest trends in restaurants can be summed up as “3 Zations” – Miniaturization, Premiumization, and Customization. Supermarket retail will likely follow suit.

**What’s your favorite read?**

- “Life on the Line” by Grant Achatz
- “The Gospel of Food” by Barry Glassner
- “The Experience Economy” by Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore

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## BILL MARDON

GENERAL MERCHANDISING MANAGER  
SEAFOOD & SERVICE DELI  
COSTCO  
ISSAQUAH, WA

**“As a leader, I think it’s important to create a team environment. With everything we do, it must be a group effort.”**



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

I started as a meat cutter in the first Costco meat department in the late 1980s. My father owned a butcher shop and also was a meat cutter, so I guess it ran in the family.

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

Until 1990, I worked in the meat department at Costco while attending college at night. From 1990 to 1995, I went to college full time with the idea of becoming a teacher. But, it was not meant to be and in 1995 I returned to Costco as an entry level meat buyer. By 2006, I had moved from being a meat buyer to a seafood buyer, and then in 2011, I added service deli to my buying responsibilities.

### What is your leadership philosophy?

As a leader, I think it’s important to create a team environment. With everything we do, it must be a group effort. I also think it’s important to teach people who work for me to carry on the Costco culture and empower them to make their own decisions and to help them gain confidence when making those decisions.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I loved playing sports but with work and family I don’t get as many opportunities to play anymore; however, I make time to coach Little League baseball and I still love fishing.

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

Costco’s philosophy of bringing great quality items into the marketplace at a good price and not cutting corners to be “cheap,” has set the company apart from its competition. Quality first, price second. For me, it’s really gratifying to be a part of this philosophy, which is based on a fair deal and also extends to the

way the company treats all the employees. Because we have a corporate culture of treating people fairly, it’s easy for me to make a difference every day.

### What charity is your personal favorite? Why?

I support United Way, which Costco also endorses with a generous match for employees. I like that under one umbrella United Way has responsibility for a number of different and worthy charities and I can channel my donations to one specific area one year and change to another area the next. It’s great that United Way has a variety of worthy choices and gives people the option of what groups to support.

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

Pick a good company. Be patient. Be driven. Everyone that I’ve seen who is successful has those three qualities. Success doesn’t come instantly or overnight. But if you go above and beyond the minimum asked of you, you will be rewarded in the end.

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

We always have a variety of items that are traditional favorites with members, but recently we’ve seen some great success with grain salads and we’ll be looking at adding more “prepared from organic” offerings. Organic is definitely on the radar.

### What’s your favorite read?

Intrafish.com is an on-line business publication that is a good, global resource for information about the seafood industry, especially the shrimp and salmon marketplace. I pay very close attention to this market because shrimp and salmon are key ingredients in many of the high volume items in our deli.

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## DANIELLE CIOFALO MCINTYRE

DELI BAKERY MERCHANDISING DIRECTOR  
D'AGOSTINO SUPERMARKETS, INC.  
LARCHMONT, NY

**“I’d like to put my imprint on something that will make the customers say, “Wow!” and get the people I work with to say, “Wow!” too.”**



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

I actually started out as a line-cook in New York City, while I was working my way through college. When I started to get a little burned out, I went to work for Whole Foods as a cook and that was my introduction to retail. In college, when I took classes on retail, I thought to myself, “I’m never going to use this!” But life has a funny way of giving you what you need. When I was at Whole Foods, I found that I loved learning how to appeal to customers and especially how to meet customers’ unique needs.

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

After cooking for Whole Foods, I returned to being a chef in a restaurant, but realized that I really missed retail. I was lucky to go to work for D’Agostino’s where I value the relationships I forge with the people I work with and our customers.

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

I haven’t held any board positions yet, but I always look forward to attending the NGA [National Grocers Association], IDDBA [International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association] and FIA [Food Industry Alliance]. These events provide fantastic networking opportunities. For me, each of these conferences give me the opportunity to find out about best practices, which gives me ideas about how to expand the way our business is conducted. Also, I get to see how traditional markets react to new ideas and to see what others are doing to get ahead.

### What is your leadership philosophy?

I always thought that leading by example was the most important principle for great leadership, but I now realize that it’s harder to practice than it is in theory. At D’Agostino’s there isn’t a lot of hierarchy, so I’m charged with motivating both the store managers and the vendors. My job as a leader is to get them to buy into the vision, to see where we are going and to accept responsibility for making it happen. I want to keep them motivated and excited

about making the vision a reality.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I’ve done Tough Mudder, triathlons and competitive racing. Right now I’m training for my next goal — to complete a half marathon at the end of the summer.

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

I’d like to put my imprint on something that will make the customers say, “Wow!” and to get the people I work with to say, “Wow!” too. That’s what gives me great satisfaction in my job.

### What charity is your personal favorite? Why?

My personal charity is Breast Cancer Awareness. That’s the one that’s closest to home for me and my family. Also Multiple Sclerosis gets a lot of support from everyone at D’Agostino’s. I find it really rewarding to be a part of something that raises awareness for these worthy causes.

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

Be willing to start at the bottom and work your way up. Working in the trenches will give you an appreciation for what really needs to be done in order to achieve a superior result.

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

We’re realizing that customers’ special diets, like gluten free and vegan, are not just specialty anymore. Right now I’m thinking more about how we can meet that need in an even better way, by being the first to offer customers a great product in those categories. It’s a challenge.

### What’s your favorite read?

As a former chef, I love Anthony Bourdain. His books are both intriguing and entertaining and I can commiserate when I’m reading, because I was there.

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## GREG O'NEILL

CO-FOUNDER/CO-OWNER & COO OF PASTORAL ARTISAN CHEESE, BREAD & WINE CHICAGO, IL

**“Leadership should be a collaborative effort. By sharing the responsibilities, you won't burn out and you get the benefit of constructive input from others.”**



Greg O'Neill and partner Ken Miller

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

My partner Ken Miller and I lived all over the world where we did our food shopping at local market stalls. We got to know the people who made the food we loved and how it was made. We loved learning about food in a small environment. When I left the corporate world, we met people like retail legends Ari [Weinzweig] and Paul [Saginaw] at Zingerman's and small cheesemakers like the Putnams at Thistle Hill Farm and the Kehlers at Jasper Hill Farm in Vermont and in northern California with legends like Ig Vella, the folks at Cowgirl Creamery and others to learn about what they were making and why they were doing it. It was important to build our retail business around the knowledge they shared with us so we could pass it along to our employees and consumers.

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

I went from a management career in advertising and global marketing to working for big corporate companies where I developed other people's brands. My partner is a trained chef and software developer, so when we had our own brand to develop we had a good mix of artistry and business. In 2004 we opened a neighborhood store in Lakeview, Chicago. In 2009, we opened a third shop at the new Chicago French Market. During the years, we evolved a wholesale business serving more than 85 fine dining restaurants and an on-line e-commerce business where we can ship specialty food and wine nationwide.

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

I'm very involved with the American Cheese Society. I served as a conference co-chair and now I'm serving a two-year term as president promoting cheese in North America and ensuring the membership is well served. Last year I was honored to be inducted into the International Guild of Fromagers, a group that includes legends in the world of cheese, so it was quite humbling. I am also an elected member of the National Retailer Council of the Specialty Food Association (formerly known as the NASFT). I like to get involved in a lot of task forces and committees that get the work done in the specialty food and wine industry. It's a karma thing; what you have received from so many others, you must give back.

### What is your leadership philosophy?

Don't rule by decree. Don't be a control freak; you have to leave

room for error and to learn from mistakes. Leadership should be a collaborative effort. By sharing the responsibilities, you won't burn out and you get the benefit of constructive input from others.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

So that I can eat without weighing 300 pounds, I do a lot of fitness training, bicycling and I do love to travel, especially when it involves amazing food and wine. I guess my favorite activity is my job; they say the second career is the one you do for love.

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

Life's too short to eat bad food. You don't have to be rich to eat well. Don't have an attitude around food. Share and delight neophyte tasters and gourmands alike and they will pass on the knowledge to future generations.

### What charity is your personal favorite? Why?

One charity I passionately support is The American Cheese Society Education Fund which, along with the Daphne Zepos Teaching Award, is creating an educational legacy for the cheese community in perpetuity.

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

Do. Your. Homework. Starting a retail operation isn't a hobby; it's a business, albeit an enjoyable one. You're going to need to put in extra time and by doing so, you'll convince yourself that what you're doing is the right thing and maybe even convince others who can help you with funding.

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

Artisanal cheese exploded on the scene 10 to 15 years ago and now we're seeing the rise of all the related hand-crafted foods like salumi and charcuterie, honey, micro-brews and confection. There's a much more amazing depth of offerings becoming available that are much more creative and robust and this trend continues to grow. They will go more mainstream over time.

### What's your favorite read?

As a general rule, I like to read current, non-fiction books, but right now I'm reading Tina Fey's *Bossy Pants*. Sometimes you need a good chuckle at the end of a busy day.

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## VONI WOODS

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DELI  
GIANT EAGLE INC.  
PITTSBURGH, PA

**“I learned that transformational growth into exceptional leadership comes through stewardship and coaching — and more listening than talking.”**



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

I started working in the deli when I was in college, where I was studying to be a court reporter. College was never a waste of time even though I did not put that training to use! Initially, working in the deli was a means to an end, that of paying my way through college. But it was a cool job, in a cool category, and I found I had a passion for the business. I did stints in other departments, but I kept gravitating back to deli and I've been in deli for 35 years.

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

I have a pretty passionate, competitive spirit so I'm always learning new things. I started behind the counter, and then became a trainer, moved on to the buying department finding great items, and then rose to a leadership role and have moved through different levels of leadership in the organization. I'm still learning though. I'm never going to be touting myself as the big 'deli know-it-all' on the hill!

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

I served on the board of directors of the IDDBA for nine years in a number of executive positions. I was delighted to serve as the IDDBA's 49th president, a role that has recently transitioned into chairman of the board for the 2012/2013 term. I also serve as president of the Women's Business Resource Group at Giant Eagle where we 'Advocate for the life-career of women across our company, change the way women shape our success....And do so in ways that are good for business'. My passions lie in these areas, outside my day-to-day responsibilities at Giant Eagle!

### What is your leadership philosophy?

You have to understand your own personal style to know how you will lead others. Early on, I thought if I did well I'd lead by example and others would follow. It wasn't until I took an executive leadership program, I learned that transformational growth into exceptional leadership comes through stewardship and coaching — and more listening than talking. Great leadership is much more than being the subject expert.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I'm a type A personality, so I'm involved in lots of things! Ten years ago I volunteered at my church to be a wedding coordinator and two weeks later I was in charge of the program and the volun-

teers. To keep fit, I'm a runner. I need to stay fit both physically and mentally to keep going in my amazing job. I'm pretty competitive so I run three or four times a week, 45 minutes at lunchtime with other team members at Giant Eagle and I find it energizing.

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

I have two daughters, a son-in-law and a new grandson. My grandson's arrival in my world filled a hole I didn't even know was there. Because of my family, I am more focused on how I can give back, how I can inspire people to make better choices, to eat better, cleaner, healthier food — that is not so expensive. I believe everybody can and should eat well. Even my keynote at the next IDDBA annual show is titled "If you are what you eat, be delicious!"

### What charity is your personal favorite? Why?

My church! I serve on Parish Council and as a Eucharistic minister. At Giant Eagle, we do a lot of different things in the community — I try to support all of them. I like to give to everyone who asks!

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

My advice to anyone starting out would be to find a mentor who can teach you about the work they are doing, who can show you the ropes. It is important for you to be an individual contributor and to do something better every day. In doing so, that's where you find the true joy and rewards of work. Having a passion for the end result, for families and meals on their tables, is pretty helpful, too.

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

Right now we're seeing a trend of shoppers moving away from three square meals toward five snacks or small meals in the day. Lots of really creative things can be done with small bites or plates. This is definitely a trend. Healthy food in the deli isn't a trend, but it is an area where education is needed. Deli is not the enemy of eating well and staying healthy and fit; we just need to create opportunities to educate people to shop according to their diets.

### What's your favorite read?

Lean In by Cheryl Sandberg. The author raised some controversial issues about individual responsibility that I love! I also enjoyed Take The Lead by Betsy Myers and Strength Finders by Tom Rath.



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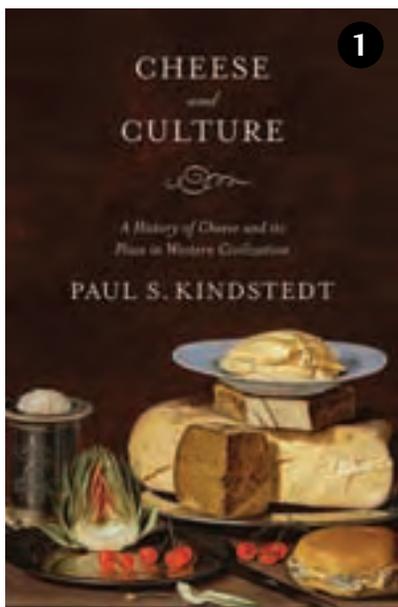
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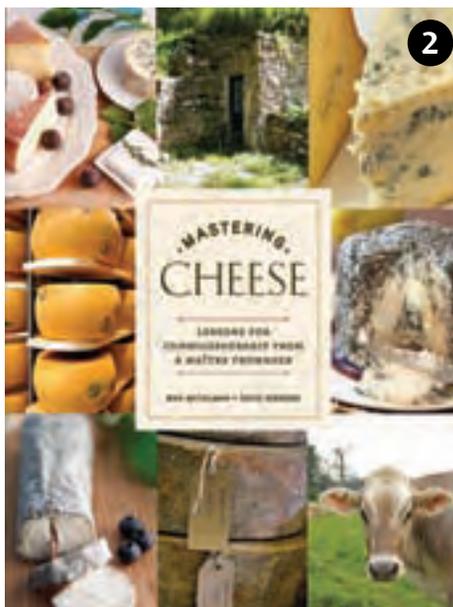
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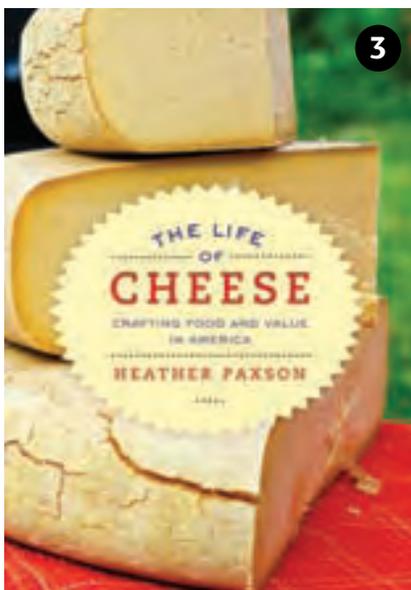


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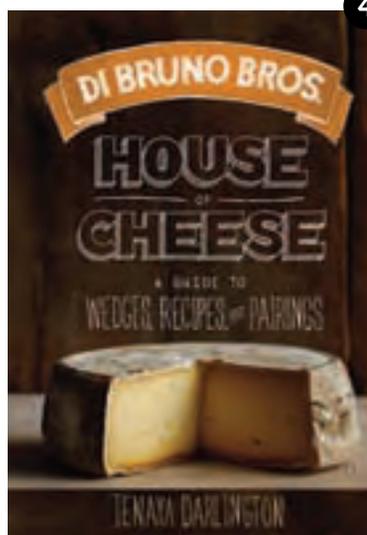
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**2. *Mastering Cheese:*** Lessons for Connoisseurship from a Maître Fromager. Max McCalman and David Gibbons. A frequent contributor to Cheese Connoisseur, McCalman shares his expertise. With helpful charts and an index of more than 300 cheeses, this is the definitive course you can use in your own home to pursue your passion for cheese. Clarkson Potter. [www.clarksonpotter.com](http://www.clarksonpotter.com)



3



4

**3. *The Life of Cheese:*** Crafting Food and Value in America. Heather Paxson. Cheese is alive, and alive with meaning. Dairy farmers and artisans inhabit a world in which their colleagues and collaborators are a wild cast of characters, including plants, animals, microorganisms, family members, employees and customers. University of California Press. [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu)

**4. *DiBruno Bros. House of Cheese:*** A Guide to Wedges, Recipes, and Pairings. Tenaya Darlington. The cheese blogger Madame Fromage peeks behind Philadelphia's largest and oldest cheese counter. Includes menu ideas, beer and wine pairings, buying, serving, storage tips plus 30 cheese-focused recipes. Running Press. [www.runningpress.com](http://www.runningpress.com)



5

**5. *Cheese & Beer.*** Janet Fletcher. Capitalizes on the growing audience for craft beer and the enthusiasm beer fans have for good cheese. Enhanced by Fletcher's reputation as a journalist and cheese authority, the book fills a wide-open niche for consumer guidance in pairing craft beer and cheese. Andrews McMeel Publishing. [www.andrewsmcmeel.com](http://www.andrewsmcmeel.com)

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# Hummus Is a Versatile and Varied Star

Line extensions keep the category in the spotlight

BY BOB JOHNSON



**A**fter years of double-digit growth, hummus has emerged as a star in the Mediterranean food section with sales eclipsing \$300 million in 2010 and showing no signs of slowing down.

As hummus has become established in the mainstream, its uses have expanded — it serves as a healthy and versatile dip, a spread, a topping and even a condiment. Packages are available that grab the attention of on-the-go consumers looking for a single-serving combination that also includes pita chips, carrots or other dipping companions. And with the market continuing to grow, producers are working their imaginations overtime to come up with new ingredients that build on the flavor of the ancient Middle Eastern combination of chickpeas, sesame tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and salt.

The latest twist to hit the market is to make the healthy dip even healthier by combining hummus with another rising star of the Mediterranean food trend — Greek yogurt. “At IDDBA 2012 we launched a hummus that includes Greek yogurt,” says Bob Ferraro, vice president for sales at Tryst Gourmet LLC, Port Washington, NY. “It gives you that smooth, creamy mouthfeel of regular hummus, but it

has only half the fat and one third the calories. The response has been tremendous.”

Greek yogurt and hummus are two of the most successful new foods, and this leaner hummus gives the deli a product with a unique one-two nutritional and merchandising punch. “It gives the deli a chance to capitalize on Greek yogurt, which is doing so well in other parts of the store,” Ferraro says.

New ingredients and flavors are key to bringing expanded hummus offerings. “We continue to focus on authentic ingredients and bringing consumers the incredible taste of this good-for-you food in flavors that help them experience the fresh flavor of authentic hummus and experience the flavors of regions around the world,” says Ronen Zohar, CEO of Sabra Dipping Co., LLC, Queens, NY. “For some, a new flavor means more variety, even more ways to include hummus in a daily menu. For others, a flavor like spinach and artichoke or sundried tomato may provide the inspiration to try hummus for the first time. Sabra’s new garden variety hummus continues to fly off the shelves. Flavors such as Tuscan herb and Southwest have really excited consumers.”

New textures are also important. “In our research with consumers,” says Adam Carr, CEO of Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Taunton, MA, “we realized that, just as with peanut butter, some consumers like super smooth hummus and some like a more rustic style. And some like both, depending on the occasion. To meet this need, Tribe will be launching a new kind of hummus called Extra Smooth Classic Hummus — an even smoother version of our top-selling Classic hummus. With an extra touch of tahini, it features a delicious, nutty flavor and a texture that’s perfect for spreading on sandwiches. Tribe Extra Smooth Classic Hummus will be debuting in stores this month.

“In addition, Tribe is continuing to roll out new flavors for our Limited Batch Series — the category’s first-ever rotating line of hummus. Our first offering is Everything, an inventive and delicious flavor creation inspired by the New York bagel. It’s a modern and unexpected take on a classic ‘American’ flavor, which features perfectly roasted sesame seeds, poppy seeds, garlic and onion. We just started selling this, and we’ve already had an overwhelmingly positive response on our Facebook page.”

Other producers are coming to market with lines of hummus offering new flavor profiles. Select Store Brands, Ontario, CA, has put forward a range of new hummus flavors including cilantro and poblano hummus, spicy chili hummus, white bean and basil hummus, Cuban black bean hummus, fire roasted garlic hummus, sundried tomato

hummus, red bell pepper hummus, and black eyed pea hummus.

“As far as flavors of hummus, there seems to be no end. Most retailers start with Mediterranean-style hummus — this is traditional hummus with the main ingredient being chickpeas. Our R&D group has spent hundreds of hours developing new/special/unique and some may say out of this world flavors,” says Bobby D. Ray, vice president for retail and store brands.

Hummus first became popular in the U.S. among consumers looking for healthier, non-animal sources of protein, and many of the latest trends in hummus ingredients relate to the demand for healthier food.

According to Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales at Cedar’s Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Ward Hill, MA, “Ingredients are heading towards all natural, gluten free, no MSG, and non-GMO certified. As consumers are becoming more and more edu-



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cated in food types and production, they're becoming more wary of what's in their foods. Therefore, manufacturers such as Cedar's have been satisfying these consumers with gluten-free certification, transitioning to all-natural product lines and becoming non-GMO certified. The key point of differentiation here is certified. It's important to note that there are many claims being made for gluten free, but without a certified logo, there's no real assurance that a manufactured product is what it claims to be."

The new hommus (Cedar's spells its product this way) options aren't just about health; they're also about making this healthy food more exciting. "Hommus flavors have certainly evolved in the last five years. Recently, we've seen a surge of funky flavors, like Cedar's new wasabi hommus. Funky flavors have become extremely trendy in the industry and consumers like to see these funky flavors as a fresh take on hommus. Manufacturers have also gotten creative with the toppings on hommus, adding an extra value to the product. Fruit and sweet flavors are also making a comeback, especially with the fall and holiday seasons coming up. Cedar's introduced two new flavors last September to satisfy the sweet tooth —

pumpkin spice and cinnamon raisin," Frocione adds. Cedar's also launched a new restaurant themed line of hummus under the TGI Fridays label last year.

"On the flavor side, you are seeing a multitude of flavors: various spicy flavors, using different legumes as well as ethnic flavor profiles," notes Jeff Derr, senior manager for retail marketing & sales at Grecian Delight Food, Elk Grove Village, IL. "On the ingredient side, you're starting to see clean label and all-natural ingredients in hummus. People want to know they're eating something that provides some form of nutritional value without being highly processed."

Yucatan Foods, Los Angeles, CA, is offering hummus with Hass avocados as a major ingredient, resulting in a vitamin-rich and high-protein guacamole hummus. "A premium texture, quality ingredients and delicious flavor are the three most important components of a great hummus," says Kristyn Lawson, vice president of sales. "In our special formulation, Yucatan Foods has created a delicious, smooth and creamy textured hummus that is complemented with 50 percent Hass avocado and a special blend of chickpeas and tahini. This hummus blend is truly a 'superfood' that provides optimum

levels of protein, potassium and high fiber."

As producers are becoming more creative in their hummus flavor profiles, they're also suggesting new uses. As hummus merges with guacamole, flatbreads sit side-by-side with tortilla chips. "Hummus is wonderful served with flatbreads such as naan, as a healthy sandwich spread. My personal favorite for snacking and entertaining is hummus served with tortilla chips! It makes a great trilogy of dips when entertaining to include guacamole, guacamole hummus, and fresh salsa for a festive flair," Lawson says.

#### New Uses for an Ancient Favorite

"Hummus is a trendy dip that can be paired with vegetables, chips and crackers," says Greg Wilson, vice president for sales and marketing at Reichel Foods, Rochester, MN. "Roasted red pepper and original are the best selling flavors."

But the growing interest in more exotic food possibilities — which benefits hummus greatly — has led to discussions on cable television food shows and in magazines of a myriad of interesting uses for hummus.

"New usages have been highly publicized by authors, nutritionists, magazines, and more," Cedar's Frocione says. "Consumers

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are reading about these new usages and are implementing them into their daily meal routines. What once was a favorite dip in the 'fridge has truly transformed into an ingredient, a spread, a condiment, a sauce, a pizza topping — you name it. This is where new and funky flavors play a role. Consumers catch on to the new flavors and are eager to implement them into as many snacks and meals as they can, multiplying usage and creating new usage."

Versatility is one of hummus's strongest selling points. "We actually believe hummus is the most versatile food in the world. It's never wrong to dip, and really you can dip anything into hummus — from carrots to grilled chicken to pretzels. But as the category grows and more consumers discover hummus, there's a lot of passion around using it as a spread or in recipes — even in desserts," Sabra's Zohar says.

Some producers are offering recipes with hummus, many of them recipes in which hummus serves as a flavorful substitute for higher fat and higher cholesterol ingredients.

According to Grecian Delight's Derr, "Hummus isn't just for pita chips anymore. We have an extensive recipe catalog that

shows the versatility of hummus. Imagine a Mediterranean salad with olive hummus instead of a standard salad dressing. Or you can use your favorite flavored hummus [instead of butter or mayonnaise] as a sandwich spread. And you get the added benefit of making the sandwich better for you."

Select Store Brands is also seeing interest in hummus as a nutritious sandwich spread. "Most of us think of hummus as a dip item, but let me tell you, folks are tossing out their mayonnaise and mustard as hummus is now becoming the new sandwich spread. If one wants to spice up a sandwich, this is the way to do it. If it works as a sandwich spread, it will spice up almost any item," Ray says.

Hummus is even finding a spot for itself on olive bars. "We're now seeing retailers reduce the amount of space for olives and make an olive, hummus, salsa and antipasto bar," explains Ray. "One retailer told me their total sales from the new concept went up over 90 percent to 120 percent after converting the old olive bars and yet they were using the same space. They're giving their customers what they want. This hummus bar also gives retailers the option to see what flavors the consumers want without going

through the expense of packaging development. Once it takes off, then put it in a cup with their own store brand and see the sales hit another high as it really takes off."

Part of the underlying appeal of hummus is the powerful protein punch that comes in a package with zero animal fat. "Hummus is useful in vegetarian and vegan diets; by combining it with grains, it serves as a complete protein. Other serving trends with hummus include serving hummus as you would find in the Middle East and Israel, by scooping out the center of a dish of hummus and adding fresh toppings such as pesto, olive oils, pine nuts, tomatoes and sprinkling with fresh herbs and dry seasonings that add beautiful color and extra layers of delicious flavor," Yucatan's Lawson adds.

### Grab-and-Go Packaging

One of the most important hummus merchandising developments is packaging that includes a single serving of hummus and a carrier. "Dippin' Stix offer hummus with carrots and pita chips, a perfect combination in a ready-to-eat package," explains Reichel's Wilson.

Most major producers are hitting the





market with single-service grab-and-go hummus products. “Sabra’s single-serve products, both with pretzels and the 2-ounce size, are very popular. Hummus is a great snack for on-the-go and increasingly we see families and children taking hummus to work and school with chips, fresh veggies and beyond,” Zohar says.

Multi-packs of single-serve hummus are also available. “Grab-and-go items and single-serve hummus products are vital in this industry,” says Aimee Tsakirellis, director of marketing at Cedar’s. “More now than ever, consumers are on the go and looking for convenience, meal replacements and healthy items. Hommus is a natural fit for these demands. Some manufacturers — like Cedar’s — have taken advantage of this and introduced 2- to 3-ounce single-serve hummus cups, which are great for bagged school and office lunches or for portion control. Some manufacturers have also introduced snack-pack items of hommus packaged with a dipper. Cedar’s recently introduced a full line of all natural snack packs of hommus offered in three flavors, packaged with either gluten-free hommus Chips or all-natural pretzels. These are packaged in a tray with an easily removable tear-away film — convenient for on-the-go and for children.”

A variety of hummus packages can be effective. “There are tons of grab-and-go and single-serve hummus products. Not just pita chips or chips and hummus but also veggies and hummus. And you are now seeing grab-and-go deli boxes with hummus as the spread,” Grecian Delight’s Derr says.

Single-serve packages must allow the consumer a good look at the product. “Packaging is always changing. The one constant is

that consumers want to see what they’re buying before they buy it, so having clear, see-thru containers is important. Portion packs are also very popular right now,” Derr continues.

Another new constant is green packag-

ing. According to Cedar’s Frocione, “Hommus packaging is ‘going green.’ Consumers and manufacturers alike are looking for eco-friendly packaging, and most manufacturers have transitioned to this type of packaging in the last five to seven years. One other note on packaging is in regards to private label. There’s a strong trend by retailers to move into their own store brand of topped hommus for their premium products.”

Hummus consumers appreciate attention to detail in offering environmentally friendly packaging. “Yucatan Foods is known for premium packaging that is environmentally friendly and our crystal clear tubs are beautiful for merchandising with a high level of shelf appeal. Additionally, surveys show that consumers prefer round tubs and we have added a resealability feature with an easy open peel top lid to protect the freshness,” Lawson says.

Green packaging with a clear view of the product is the trend in hummus. “We continue to focus on all elements of packaging, from the red rims to the ‘green’ elements. We love to give consumers the ability to see the rich blends and vegetable toppings, which can inspire new flavor tries,” Sabra’s Zohar says. **DB**

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# Flatbread on the Rise

With the proliferation of Mediterranean foods and healthier bread options, flatbread popularity is growing in today's delis

BY LISA WHITE

The flatbread category's popularity can be compared to the perfect storm. The increased focus on healthful eating and sales growth of all foods ethnic have put this bread alternative in the spotlight.

In the 2012 *What's In Store* report from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, Madison, WI, Jonna Parker, director of account services for Nielsen Perishables Group, Chicago, IL, states consumers are now more interested in ethnic breads than ever, and these products are starting to fall into the mainstream.

The Mediterranean food segment, particularly Greek foods, is where the Mexican segment was 30 years ago. But awareness is building.

"The Middle East and Lebanon were the genesis for a lot of products in this category," says Karen Toufayan, vice president of sales and marketing for Ridgefield, NJ-based Toufayan Bakeries. "These foods started to become very popular in the '60s and hummus in the last decade. Yet there is only between 15 and 20 percent market penetration currently."

An ethnic and cultural link between hummus and flatbread goes back centuries. "There has always been an ethnic and cultural link between flatbreads and other Greek and Mediterranean foods, especially with hummus and yogurt. Not only is flatbread a great alternative to typical sandwich breads, but it is also wonderful as a scooping chip for yogurt and hummus as well as other Mediterranean-style dips. One look at the dairy department and it is easy to see the growth in Greek-style yogurt," says Warren Stoll, marketing director, Kontos Foods, Paterson, NJ.

"Before common utensils were used, food was eaten hand to mouth," says Salem Kashou, marketing manager for Kangaroo Brands Inc., Milwaukee, WI. "In certain cultures, like the Middle East where flatbreads





PHOTO COURTESY OF KONTOS

and pita originated, the bread is used to scoop food into the mouth. Flatbread and pita work well with hummus for two reasons. First, the bread is firm yet pliable and non-porous, which helps create ideal shapes for scooping without spilling. Plus, the

hearth-baked flavor complements the dip much more than everyday sliced bread.”

It’s the versatility of flatbread that has helped increase its popularity. It comes in a variety of shapes, varieties and flavors and can be used for making sandwiches, dipping

as an appetizer or as a pizza crust.

Supermarket delis can house these breads in retail packaging within the deli counter or utilize it as part of a foodservice program. “It also is very portable for grab-and-go sections,” says Jeff Derr, senior manager of retail marketing and sales at Grecian Delight, located in Elk Grove Village, IL. “Flatbread can be used for all day-parts.”

**Mediterranean Influence**

The Mediterranean diet, which includes flatbread, hummus and other foods, has been touted as a healthy way of eating. Even with this generally healthy image, the flatbread category has seen a proliferation of smaller sizes and more healthful ingredients.

For example, Flatout Flatbreads, based in Saline, MI, has recently introduced a thin crust flatbread that is 5 x12 inches in size. “There are six flatbreads in each bag that can be prepared in six minutes,” says Robert Pallotta, senior vice president.

Toufayan recently introduced gluten-free and low-sodium wraps, capitalizing on the trend towards healthier and allergen-free diets. The company also has offered no-salt pita bread for the last three decades. “Because flatbread and wraps are healthier

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alternatives to traditional sandwich bread, we're taking it to another level," Toufayan says. "We've introduced a number of options that include omegas, flax flour and products with less fat and carbohydrates." For example, the company's Smart Pocket line includes fewer calories than traditional pita bread.

Grecian Delight is working on a maple flatbread in conjunction with a supermarket that's interested in offering a breakfast sandwich. "Flatbread's versatility and portability give it an edge over traditional bread products," Derr notes.

At press time, Kontos was experimenting with Ede's Pita Styx, a new product line featuring pita that undergoes additional cooking. "It is then sliced into a bagel chip size to go with appetizers," says Stoll. "We see it being sold on deli counters for a variety of usages."

Another new product launch from Kontos focuses on increasing the nutritious properties of flatbread. Greek Lifestyle Flatbread, which has twice the protein and half of the carbohydrates as traditional flatbread, capitalizes on flatbread's growing popularity as a more nutritious alternative to other bread options.

Greek-style sandwiches are also gaining in popularity. Greek restaurants are becoming more numerous and some say Greek food is where Mexican food was 20 years ago. With the opening of more Greek restaurants, consumers are being exposed to traditional Greek sandwiches served on flatbreads, such as gyros made with thinly sliced lamb and yogurt, or flatbreads stuffed with traditional falafel. This is an area where supermarkets can enhance their offers and bring some excitement to the hero and sub sandwiches that are often a staple of the deli department. "

### Successful Selling

Flatbread and hummus provide a bevy of cross-merchandising opportunities in supermarket delis. "These items are generally around in the same area of the store, with many delis featuring hummus and flatbread," Flatout's Pallotta says.

Flatout has worked with hummus manufacturers, including Sabra Dipping Co., LLC, Queens, NY; Athenos, Northfield, IL; and Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Taunton, MA, to demo its flatbread at the store level. "With these products, it's important to utilize in-store point of sale promotions," says Nicole Simonds, director of marketing.

The company works with bloggers to drive traffic into stores and take photos of food creations to get the buzz going. "Retailers need to do a better job of educating consumers, whether offering a meatless Monday program by substituting hummus and flat-



PHOTO COURTESY OF KANGAROO BRANDS INC.

bread or emphasizing the Mediterranean diet's benefits," Simonds adds.

A number of manufacturers recommend supermarket delis promote flatbread and hummus together, which can stimulate trial and help increase sales of both items. "One of our suggestions for cross-merchandising is to offer one product at the regular price and the other on special," says Toufayan of Toufayan Bakeries. "For example, 'Buy hummus and get a package of flatbread for \$1 off.'"

These items have synergies that encourage cross-merchandising since both can be used for meals, appetizers or a quick snack. "Sampling is great for delis, and cross-merchandising is convenient for deli managers to choreograph," Toufayan says.

Placement at the point of purchase also is key. According to Grecian Delight's Derr, "In addition to pairing these items and offering a deal, it's important to have the flatbread dis-

play within view of the hummus. Proper placement and merchandising is beneficial.

Despite its popularity and growth, flatbread still has an untapped audience. "We're seeing more consumers become aware of it," Pallotta says. "We've been able to capture non-ethnic flatbread positioning because we're able to recipe all things ethnic. Just as tortillas are best used in Mexican applications, flatbread works across all ethnic directions."

To elevate the flatbread experience from a health and eating standpoint, manufacturers continue to increase market penetration, distribution and trial by educating consumers and building awareness. "There are still people out there who've never tried flatbread," Toufayan says. "As people continue looking for something new and different, they'll discover that these products not only taste good, but are healthy. It's all about awareness and acceptance." **DB**



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# Salads and Sides Make the Meal

Flavor, variety and convenience are key to increased sales

BY BOB JOHNSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF RESER'S FINE FOODS

Most of the salads that catch the eye and pique consumers' interests traditionally reside in the service cold case, a mere glance away from the hot side dishes also behind the glass. This arrangement makes for an interesting and appetizing stroll through the deli salad and side dish menu.

But a growing number of consumers don't have time to wait in line for their turn to have service staff dish up, weigh and price their order. These consumers are best reached with prominent displays of healthy and interesting salads and sides in packages already marked and ready to go.

"The packaged salads are doing extremely well. The product behind the glass is also doing well, but that's a different customer. If you're going behind the glass, you're probably going to pay a little more and you're going to have to wait. The packaged salads get the impulse sales," says Dominick Frocione, vice president for sales at Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Ward Hill, MA. "Packaged Mediterranean salads have been big in the Northeast for a long time, but we've seen them spread nationwide the last three or four years."

The mega trend toward healthy salads and sides shows no sign of slowing down. And while offering healthful and appetizing alternatives are important, another trend shows that salads and sides must be pack-



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aged and presented in a way to make them easy for the consumer.

### Make It Easy

The single most popular center-of-the-plate item at the deli is rotisserie chicken. It's convenient, tasty, relatively healthy and inexpensive. But while rotisserie chicken may be the star, it's only part of the answer to the "What's for dinner?" question.

"A chicken isn't a meal," says Tim Oliphant, director of sales at BD&K Foods, Columbus, GA. "There were over 800 million rotisserie chickens bought last year. It's our belief if they're buying the protein hot, they'll be looking for the side dishes hot, too."

BD&K is rolling out a line of hot Southern side dishes, named Fixins, intended to turn a rotisserie chicken into a complete dinner. Key to success is packaging and displaying these hot side dishes so they can be picked up right

along with the rotisserie chicken.

"Traditionally they were sold in the hot cases and the customer had to wait in line. We're moving them out toward the rotisserie chickens. The No. 1 factor in purchasing hot sides is convenience," Oliphant continues. "We're launching May 1, and the deli operator response has been outstanding. They see the need. Now delis can bundle the entire meal without having to use just sides."

When time is short, consumers look for sides to help devise memorable meals, a need that peaks during the holiday season. "The trend is toward fresh prepared, pre-packaged sides that will save time in the kitchen. People are looking for more complicated sides, especially around the holidays. We've seen a tremendous increase in demand for our holiday sides in November and December," says Neil Merrit, vice president for sales and marketing at Huxtable's

Kitchen, Vernon, CA.

Everyday opportunities abound during the lunch day-part. Retailers can offer tasty side items to accompany the popular grab-and-go lunch sandwich. "Made-to-order or pre-wrapped sandwiches help customers combine shopping with a lunch occasion and help retailers compete with fast feeders and sandwich shops. Items such as Pickle-In-A-Pouch help retailers offer full-meal solutions, such as a sandwich and a pickle, sandwich and chips, etc.," says Eric Girard, vice president of sales & marketing at Van Holten's, Waterloo, WI.

Consumers' need to save time positions the deli to cater "special events" food, including the salads and sides. "With 'downtime' being a luxury in most households, we're seeing an increase in deli and super-markets catering requests," says Jeff Lucash, director of sales for stock products



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## Putting The Pressure On Pathogens

High-pressure processing, or Pascalization, is a way to rid food products of pathogens by putting them in chambers under high pressure.

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"The No. 1 reason we use it is food safety," says Mark Sandridge, CEO of Sandridge Food Corporation, Medina, OH. "It kills all the bacteria we've been worried about — *listeria*, *E. coli*, and *salmonella*. You need a processing facility that gives you a clean product, but this is a final step. It's an insurance policy to give you a bacteria free product."

This process is expensive, and Sandridge preferred not to divulge exactly how expensive. But the payoff comes from being able to protect and promote your brand as one that believes in — and uses — the gold standard when it comes to food safety.

"The goal is brand protection — my brand and the brand of the retailer I sell products to. I put it in because I get a clean-label product. There are no chemical preservatives. It's expensive but I haven't run into many customers who aren't willing to pay more for brand protection. One customer didn't want it for economic reasons, but that was a bad strategy on their part," Sandridge says.

This technology can be used to kill pathogens in almost, but not quite all, food products. "I haven't found many limitations on what it will do. You can use it with chicken salad or pasta salad. It doesn't work well with the leafy green vegetables or cabbage," Sandridge said.

Sandridge has become a believer in this high-tech approach to food safety. "I owned the largest piece of high-pressure processing equipment in North America until a few months ago, and I just bought a second one," he says. "That should tell you how I feel about it."

DB

at Placon, Madison, WI. "Consumers are finding it easier and more worthwhile to spend the extra money on having food catered in for certain events rather than spending the time to make it themselves."

Lucash finds increased demand for convenience packaging brings increased demand for packaging that promotes the store's brand. "We're also seeing a desire by our customers to differentiate themselves from the competition and promote their brand through custom embossing options or engraving of their logo on our plastic food containers' lids and bases. When manufacturing 'stock' plastic packaging products, being able to differentiate our customers' product from a competitors' is important," he continues. "Whether that's through offering containers with tamper-resistant features that they can market, eco-friendly messaging or custom branding solutions, we have packaging with unique, differentiating features that help our customers' products stand out, while letting the food take center stage."

Merchandising salads and sides in the cold case, the hot case and the grab-and-go displays allow retailers to have three locations to reach a growing number of consumers. "Some of our items can be offered hot or cold. If you ask if we should be behind the counter, at the salad bar, or in the hot or cold case, the answer is all of the above," says Carl Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development at Don's Food Products, Schwensville, PA.

### Make It Healthy

Consumers are increasingly shopping for sides and salads to fit a lifestyle that includes healthy eating. "We're seeing an increase in interest around grain-based salads, ethnic salads and healthier options says Teresa Carter, category manager salads & dips at Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR. "These salads can incorporate on-trend ingredients including quinoa, bulgur, curry, fresh herbs, agave, nuts, ginger, tabouli and so forth."

While potato salad, cole slaw and macaroni salad still lead the category, retailers are also looking for additional salads that are both healthy and interesting. "We're starting to see retailers ask for more specialty salads to offer in conjunction with their core deli salad line-up. Some examples of specialty salads include grain salads (quinoa, bulgur, wild rice), ethnic salads (curries, Asian flavors, Latin flavors), and legume salads (edamame, garbanzo beans, white beans)," Carter adds.

Health consciousness is also bringing some nutritious new entries to the popular

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side dish menu. "Sweet potatoes, whole grains, and kale and other vegetables are more popular than ever and finding their way into a variety of sides dues to their nutritional benefits," says John McCarthy, category manager at Reser's. "Quality of ingredients and nutritional benefits are playing a bigger role in selecting foods in the deli, including sides. Shoppers are becoming more aware of the importance of being healthy and eating wisely with the rise of reports touting the health benefits of select ingredients and the rate of product recalls increasing."

Two years ago Don's Food Products had no items that could classify as all natural. Last year the firm counted seven, and this year the all-natural list grew to include 11 items. "We're trying to do more all-natural products with cleaner labels. Consumer trends and some of the retailers have taken us in that direction. We would show retailers a bruschetta or a pico de gallo, and they would ask if we could make it all-natural," Cappelli says. "I think there's a greater awareness of obesity and high blood pressure. Folks want to be healthier."

The desire for healthier foods is taking Mediterranean salads, in particular, to an



PHOTO COURTESY OF PLACON

entirely new level. "We look at the salads as a growth category as hummus was 15 years ago. They're healthy, but it's more than that — they taste good," explains Cedar's Fro-

cione. "Salad is a hot commodity in the deli right now. A lot of it is Mediterranean with tabouli, chickpea, edamame or couscous. Retailers recognized their customers are interested in healthy foods and they put them on the shelves. Once they were on the shelves, consumers tried them, and they liked them."

The connection between the desire for healthy food and the desire for safe food shows up in the popularity of new packaging options. According to Placon's Lucash, "An ongoing trend will also be the call for safe plastic food packaging products with designed-in tamper-evident and tamper-resistant features that eliminate the need for shrink banding or labeling."

### Make It Interesting

While the market for healthier salads and sides continues to grow, consumers still demand inviting dishes and delicious tastes. "You keep it interesting by maintaining the flavor and texture. People want to eat healthy, but they want to enjoy their food," Cappelli of Don's Food says.

Changing demographics and changing restaurants menus are influencing deli customer expectations. "Younger adults are beginning to spend more time in the deli and are looking for something special, whether it's a grain salad or something on the lighter side. To accommodate all ages and palates, deli operators need to strike a perfect balance between specialty and core deli salads. Another factor contributing to these trends is restaurant offerings. Quick-service and fast-casual restaurants are starting to offer





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more trendy items on their menus, and people are starting to look for those flavors and ingredients from their grocery store as well," Reser's Carter notes.

One way to keep it interesting is to offer more complex salads with a variety of ingredients. "We've seen an uptick in demand for high-quality prepared salads with a protein in it — and a fork and a dressing. Consumers are looking for salads with a longer list of ingredients — grains, nuts, cheese, a dressing," says Merrit of Huxtable's Kitchen. "They want six or seven or eight components. They want more diverse and complicated salads."

In the past, delis prepared many of their own salads. But today, most have transitioned to the laborsaving option of prepared salads. "It's evolved over time. Three or four years ago, retailers were making their own salads with protein, doing the cutting at the deli. But now they're looking to save labor and we've seen an increase in demand in the last year," Merrit continues.

The newest wave of side dishes also features a healthy marriage of the spirit of adventure and the need for convenience. "You're seeing upscale versions of contemporary favorites, like Yukon gold or red skin



PHOTO COURTESY OF DON'S FOOD PRODUCTS

mashed potatoes instead of standard russet mashed potatoes, or 4-cheese macaroni instead of simple macaroni and cheese," Reser's McCarthy says. "The selection of the side dishes continues to expand in the deli as consumers look for more choices and

new varieties. Consumers aren't content with the same old side dishes and are looking for something to spice up their meals. People are more time poor than ever before so they want delicious sides without the hassle and fuss. They want convenience." **DB**

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# Asian Food Trends

Sushi sales are strengthening and Korean is making a strong debut

BY LAURA WHITEMAN



It's said that everything you need to know, you learn from your kids. When looking for upcoming trends in the deli, what's going to be "hot" is what the kids want to eat. And one trend worth watching in Asian food is who's buying sushi.

Sushi isn't new to the deli, but it is poised to continue to make extensive gains in the market in the coming years, and one of the drivers of this trend is children. Sushi — the name actually refers to the rolled rice integral to the dish — has expanded as a category to include a marriage of fish, fruit or vegetables with sushi rice. Today, grade-school and middle-school children are requesting sushi because it's fresh, healthy and delicious.

Asian food in general is all about the marriage and blending of flavors: sweet, salty, spicy, sour, and umami. It can be more sophisticated than much of what America eats, but it has found great favor with Americans' picky palates. Children who grow up exposed to these flavors are quite comfortable with sushi offerings that often include mango, ginger, crunchy onions, sliced pork and even eel.

Hissho Sushi, Charlotte, NC, has partnered with upscale supermarkets and foodservice operations to provide freshly prepared sushi on site for 15 years. Its turnkey solution makes it easy to integrate sushi into grab-and-go offerings, meet the demand for fresh and healthy choices and drive profits;

Hissho hires and trains qualified chefs and uses high quality, fresh ingredients.

Andrea Lee, corporate communications spokesperson, says Hissho keeps ahead of the customer curve by regularly introducing rolls with new taste surprises, such as Southern Charm Roll, which combines spicy real crab, tuna, salmon, yellowtail or cooked shrimp with cucumber and avocado topped with sesame seeds, spicy mayo, Japanese BBQ sauce and crispy fried onions.

To continue building market inroads, Lee adds, Hissho's priority is to build relationships in-store through sampling. Later this year, Hissho will roll out a new, more interactive website that lets customers order online for pickup at their closest store. The company believes the best quality, natural ingredients is a differentiator consumers recognize; a growing market means greater knowledge, which in turn increases consumer expectations.

### Korean Cuisine Makes Inroads

Asian cuisines have more than sushi to offer consumers for healthy, pickup meals and this year will see Korean dishes become much more than a rare curiosity in the deli.

Hanryu — a Korean culture craze — is sweeping America, from Gangnam Style dancing to K-pop music. Playing their part in this cultural wave are the Korean food trucks. These street-corner entrepreneurs have been helping to promote Korean dishes and flavors in many major U.S. cities, but especially in California, says Cheryl Tsang, co-founder of Starport Foods, LLC. Fullerton, CA.

Through her Asian food brokerage, Oriental Select Foods, Tsang says she has seen a phenomenal boost in year-on-year sales for a range of Korean products designed for both retail and foodservice. Sweet potato noodles and fermented red pepper paste, both staples for many Korean recipes, are selling briskly. Wegmans Food Markets, Rochester, NY, clearly spotted an early trend in Korean foods and placed an early order for 40 different products.

Tsang has seen surprisingly strong sales this year for Orion's ChocoLune Pies, a ubiquitous Korean version of a "moon pie" chocolate treat, which had a 77 percent increase in sales. Korean BBQ sauce is up 29 percent, Sea's Gift seaweed snacks are up 88 percent (and at the time of this article were the No. 2 grocery/gourmet item on Amazon.com) and orders for Savia's aloe juice with pomegranate increased 47 percent over last year.

Tsang has a wealth of experience in Asian foods, as a taste creator, broker, supplier and consultant. She sold two companies — House of Tsang and Oriental Deli, which she

co-founded with her husband David — to Hormel in 1992. She offers lucid insight into what works with consumers. "The biggest mistake anyone can make when building out Asian cuisine in foodservice is to hire an Asian chef and think that's all they need to do. Asians, no matter where they are in the

U.S., will go to great lengths to track down their native dishes just to try them, and Koreans are no exception to the rule."

Asian Americans don't expect to find comfort food like Mom used to make, but they are impressed with consistency. Every Asian chef has his or her own recipe that is





the only “right way” to create the dish. Once a chef leaves, or even when he or she takes a day off, the creation is replaced by another from another chef with a different “right way.”

Non-Asians “want to be wowed by the authenticity in your dish,” says Tsang. “But without a recipe’s consistency from experience to experience, the consumer can’t decide what is the authentic taste.” When that happens, “Both the Asian and non-Asian consumers will turn away and buy elsewhere.”

The best way to create an Asian menu, according to Tsang, is to start by thinking easy — “Make it simple!” She recommends finding a sauce, a one-pour base, and then tweaking it for a store’s demographics. Try combining sauces or adding ingredients and when it’s right, stick with the recipe so any chef can create the same dish every time.

This make-it-simple strategy is beneficial when expanding a store’s Asian offerings,

according to Tsang. The bane of many Asian recipes is difficulty sourcing authentic products and ingredients. If sweet potato or udon noodles are key ingredients to a recipe but aren’t readily available, success will be elusive. Sourcing is critical.

For example, Jayone Foods, a Korean food producer exclusively represented in the U.S. by Tsang, sells bibimbap, which Tsang describes as a Korean table’s “national treasure” in frozen 5- and 10-pound bags. This veggie and rice dish with egg should be included in any Korean offering.

Green Chopsticks, a Korean-owned company based in Alhambra, CA, produces dumplings and pot stickers with an authentic Korean taste. Primarily pre-cooked and frozen, the products are very versatile. The dumplings can be boiled in soups or steamed and then fried. The company also offers traditional Korean meats, such as kalbi and bul-

gogi, which are cut and marinated meats that are easy to include in recipes.

Tsang believes one of the drivers for the Korean food trend is “that everything is very healthy. Grated fruit and veggies are included in many dishes and natural sweetening is appreciated by consumers who look at the whole health benefits.”

She predicts Asian food will continue to increase its footprint in the deli and elsewhere to meet consumer demand. In fact, Disneyland in Anaheim, CA, recently approached Tsang about creating a food cart dedicated to Asian snacks for the park. The cart, which was operational in February in time to celebrate the Asian New Year, will sell Asian drinks, seaweed snacks, Starport sauces and Vietnamese iced coffees.

If Asian foods are so ubiquitous as to show up in Disneyland, shouldn’t they be easy to find in the deli?

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# What about Food Trucks?



PHOTO BY JOE SEER / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## Are trendy mobile food trucks right for supermarkets?

BY BARBARA ROBISON

**T**he mobile food truck business has become a hot trend over the past few years. It's come a long way from the old days of the "roach coach." As the business has developed, food trucks have taken on lives of their own, moving from offering primarily hamburgers, hot dogs, grilled cheese sandwiches and pizza to a whole array of specialty ethnic and fusion dishes. Some in the food industry have asked if mobile food trucks are a viable business venture for the supermarket industry. Would they work as an adjunct of the deli departments of major supermarkets? Are they a good fit for a smaller chain? What are the pros and cons of supermarket involvement?

In its 2012 industry report *Street Vendors in the US*, Santa Monica, CA-based IBIS World, Inc., a research, strategy, analysis and market-

ing company, estimated the food truck industry revenue to grow at an average annual rate of 8.4 percent to \$1.5 billion. After growing 6.1 percent in 2008 and 9.5 percent in 2009, rising to \$1.2 billion, the growth continued, reaching its peak in 2010 at 12.7 percent. Since then, growth was forecast to slow slightly in 2012, rising to 4.2 percent for the year. The report projects the revenue will grow at an average annual rate of 3.3 percent to reach \$1.7 billion in the five years to 2017.

The report also estimated that street locations make up about 55 percent of the industry revenue, while shopping malls and work sites generate approximately 12 percent. Sporting, entertainment and other events, where large numbers of people enter or leave, account for 18 percent of the industry revenue.

## Information of Supermarket Involvement Lacking

Most of the major organizations representing segments of the food industry have little or no information regarding supermarkets operating mobile food trucks in their marketing areas. The International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, conducted a study, *2011 Innovation, Trends, Attitudes, Opportunities*, which included a rating for the top 50 interests of frequent deli and bakery shoppers. The interests listed were such things as “paper coupons mailed to you” and “meet your local farmers events.” A “mini traveling grocery store truck” was mentioned by 33.4 percent of those queried. Of the in-store deli frequenters at least once a week 41.9 percent ranked it and 47.2 percent of hot prepared food shoppers ranked it, with 43.6 percent of cold prepared foods shoppers mentioning it. The study did not, of course, refer specifically to meals being served from mobile trucks, but only to a “traveling mini grocery store truck.”

In a *2012 Restaurant Trends Survey* from the Washington, DC-based National Restaurant Association, 73 percent of adults said they would likely visit a food truck if it

were offered by one of their favorite restaurants. The feeling was much more prominent among young adults. The interest was uniform across the country. However, the survey also found the vast majority of restaurant operators do not anticipate getting into the food truck industry.

## Supermarkets Show Little Interest in Food Trucks

In speaking to a number of executives from various size supermarkets, most have either not considered running food trucks or had looked into the idea and chosen not to proceed. “We identified it as a trend two or three years ago and thought we would look into it,” states Byron Hanson, director of deli, bakery and food service, Lunds and Byerly’s, the 22-store 2-banner chain owned by Lund Food Holdings, Inc., Edina, MN. “After doing so, we decided against it for a number of reasons. It’s a big capital investment and the logistic considerations for meeting many local and state requirements are major. We felt we had so many opportunities within our stores themselves. We’re doing well, with new stores planned. We also plan to do more on the Internet and a

new mobile app.”

Publix Supermarkets, Inc., Lakeland, FL, a 1,069-store chain, is not pursuing food trucks at this time. “We’re always interested in new trends. However, our core business is within our stores,” says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations.

In Madison, WI, the Fresh Madison Market, a single store located near the University of Wisconsin campus, has launched a non-profit grocery-on-the-go called Freshmobile. It’s a special project to bring more fruits and vegetables to communities that have been deemed food deserts. About 10 percent of the 65,000 census tracts in the United States have limited access to a healthy diet.

“We aren’t considering running regular mobile food carts but wanted to simply make more nutritious foods available to low-income families who have little or no access to them. Our biggest request is for fresh produce and we have a few other grocery items in the trucks. We don’t offer any items from our deli,” says Jeff Mauer, the market’s owner.

## Important Factors to Consider

IBIS World’s report identifies some of the



PHOTO BY FRANCES L. FRUIT / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

most important factors to be successful in the mobile food truck business. Proximity to key markets and significant potential customers are necessary to maximize potential sales. Operators must be licensed and meet all local and state requirements, such as for food storage and handling and cart cleanliness. Maintaining effective quality control and using efficient ordering and storage systems are essential. Maximizing revenue and reducing purchase costs by avoiding waste and spoilage are also critical.

Investments in the food truck business can run high. The food truck itself can cost as much as \$100,000, according to the IBIS report *Street Vendors in the US*. There are also the costs of food equipment used within the truck itself and in the certified kitchen where the food is prepared. The sale of home-prepared foods is generally not allowed. The rental of a certified kitchen plus the hiring of a chef or other well-trained personnel to run the truck operation are other costs incurred. The cost of insurance should also be included.

One of the major considerations in the food truck business is all the local and state laws and regulations that must be met. These can vary widely, often within a few blocks of each other. Some city Departments of Health, Sanitation, Transportation and Consumer Affairs all have regulations covering food trucks and many can be conflicting. Licenses are required and usually permits for each individual truck are required. In New York City, every mobile-food employee must have a Health Certificate. There are examples of great inconsistencies in issuing tickets for violations and some cities give out tickets



PHOTO BY JOE SEER / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

with abandon to food truck vendors. Costs for the licenses, permits and certificates required have also increased.

The IBIS 2012 street vendor report suggests foods should be appropriately packaged and labeled to meet license and permit

requirements. There need to be appropriate hot and cold temperatures for food storage, preparation and display as well. Internal and external cleanliness of vehicles, with no insect or animal infestations, is also important. An annual inspection of each food truck is usually conducted, including the vehicle's state of repair.

### Food Truck Business Unpredictable

In *Should You Join the Food Truck Revolution?* by Deborah Moss, appearing in *Specialty Food Magazine*, Matt Geller, CEO of the Southern California Mobile Vendors Association, states, "The only absolute about the food truck business is that it's absolutely unpredictable. This business changes constantly and requires you be an expert at things that are always changing (such as licensing and permit requirements). The more you personally know, the better you can navigate it." He recommends research, research, research.

There is a question about mobile food truck market saturation, with supporters on both sides of the question. Saturation may vary with particular markets, but it's definitely something to consider when determining the viability of food truck vending for a supermarket.

DB

PHOTO BY JEFF WHYTE / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



# California Cheese

## Trends from California influence the country and the world

BY PATTI ORTON

California shaped the country's wine industry (and by extension the world's), and now it's poised to work its magic with specialty cheese. New cheeses and new cheesemakers bespeckle the countryside and complement a previously established nucleus of masters. They're dishing up more of what consumers are seeking and influencing trends that will impact the rest of the industry.

"Responding to growing consumer preference and an overall societal inclination, cheesemakers are paying more attention to the overall carbon footprint of their operation," says Janne Rasmussen, sales manager

at Cypress Grove Chevre, Arcata, CA. This over-arching societal concern impacts how cheese is made in the Golden State. It impacts how animals are cared for, what they eat, as well as energy and water conservation.

Many examples of sustainability within the state's industry play an increasing role in consumer purchasing decisions. According to Rasmussen, "Efforts include whey and animal waste digesters that reduce pollution while creating electricity, ozone generators for creamery cleaning efforts, increased use of solar panel and wind generators, installing energy efficient heat exchangers to maintain aging room temperatures, secondary use of

alternative feedstuffs for dairy animals — beet pulp from sugar production, spent brewer's grain from breweries, reusing their own creamery's whey to feed their animals — minimizing waste runoff into streams through rainwater retention, and wastewater diversion and treatment."

Environmental concerns are a factor in cheese production, and as such, they offer retailers a marketing topic to promote. For example, Central Coast Creamery, Paso Robles, CA, offers Organic Big Rock Blue made from organic cow milk. Sierra Nevada Cheese Company, Willows, CA, is launching Graziers, a cheese line derived from the



PHOTO COURTESY OF CYPRESS GROVE CHEVRE

milk of local certified producers who use sustainable rotational grazing practices. Redwood Hill Farm and Creamery/Green Valley Organics, Sebastopol, CA, promotes its organic farming methods, solar energy and humane husbandry. Fiscalini Cheese Company, Modesto, CA, generates enough electricity to power the entire farm; it uses methane, a fuel derived from waste products including whey.

Personal health combines with the planet's health in the realm of cheese from genuinely grass-fed animals. Always on the quest for good tasting food with health benefits, consumers are paying attention to the extra advantages of curds from grass-fed animals. "Recent studies have shown grass-fed dairy products to be up to four times higher in conjugated linoleic acids (CLA) and omega-3 fatty acids," Meghan Curry, sales and marketing, Sierra Nevada Cheese, reports. "CLAs are a good type of fat that may protect the body from cancer formation and protection. Omega-3 fatty acids are an essential fatty acid needed by our bodies and have been shown to increase heart health and reduce triglycerides."

### Goat and Sheep Milk

Although cow's milk cheeses represent the majority of cheeses, many cheesemakers have turned to other types of milk. "We can confirm specialty cheese continues to increase with more goat and sheep cheeses coming on the market faster than ever before," says Sharon Bice, marketing communications manager at Redwood Hill.

Carol Jackson, vice president of marketing, Meyenberg Goat Milk Products, Turlock, CA, credits the popularity of goat's milk cheeses to chefs nationwide incorporating goat milk cheeses in every part of the menu — hors d'oeuvres, salads, entrées and desserts. She adds this category, considered "unusual" 10 years ago, now encompasses many styles: Feta, Cheddar, Jack, spreadable, and, of course, fresh.

Lactose-intolerant cheese lovers sparked at least part of the initial demand. Previously, "Those folks were left out in the cold," Jackson adds. "Goat's milk still contains lactose, but people seem to be less sensitive to it than from that of cow's milk. It has smaller, more digestible curds."

Some cheesemakers are building on already successful platforms. "At Laura Chenel we're making our award-winning classic Crottin with delicate geotrichum cultures," explains Lynne Devereux, marketing and PR for Marin French Cheese in Petaluma, CA, and Laura Chenel's Chèvre and Sonoma Cheese Factory in Sonoma, CA.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FISCALINI CHEESE COMPANY



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURACHENEL'S CHÈVRE



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Sheep's milk cheeses have lagged behind goat's milk in production because of a lack of availability in California, reports Devereux. She indicates the short supply may impede development of these cheeses, leading to a higher demand than what can be satisfied by creameries. [EDITOR'S NOTE: As a point of reference, a good dairy sheep gives four pounds of milk a day. A dairy goat gives eight to 10 pounds, a Jersey cow 40 pounds and a Holstein 80 pounds.]

Unlike sheep's milk, as demand for goat milk cheese rises, Meyenberg's Jackson expects the supply to expand appreciably.

### Fresh and Flavored

Fresh cheeses, with or without flavor, are getting extra attention in California. "Burrata is a growing item in the specialty cheese case in California," states David Freedheim, sales consultant, California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), South San Francisco, CA.

Di Stefano Cheese Company recently set up shop in Pomona and is stimulating Burrata's growth. "This is exciting as Burrata continues to be a popular cheese on foodservice menus, which has contributed to its growing demand at retail," says Jim Dimataris, CMAB director of processor relations.

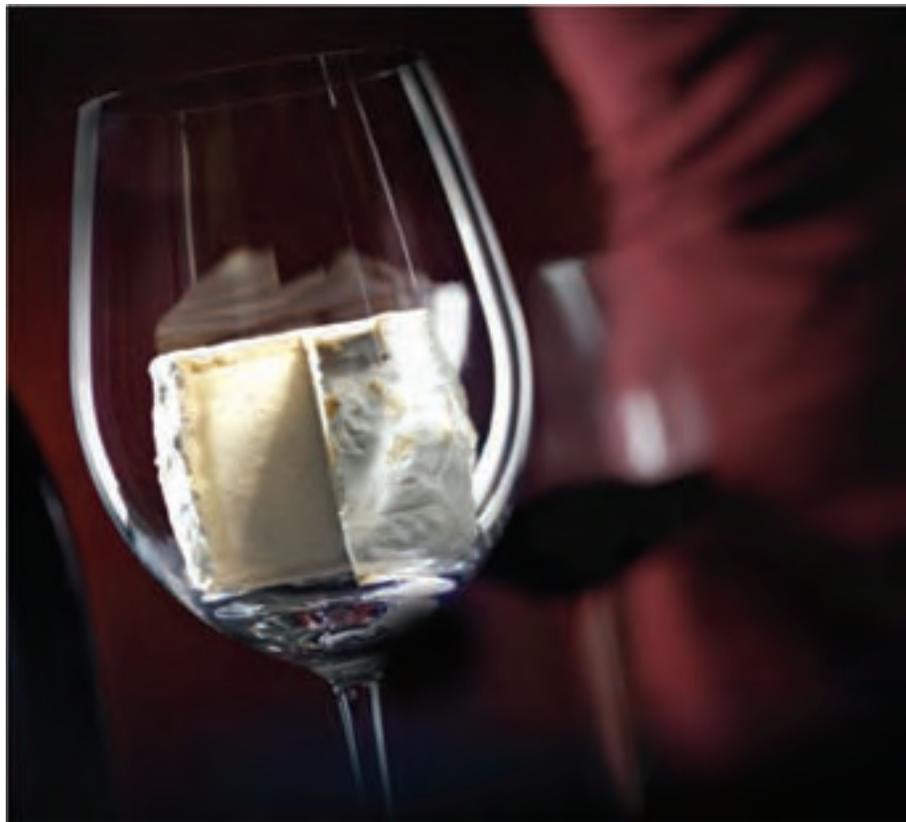


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Flavored fresh cheeses are coming on board, too. According to Dimataris, "Nicasio Valley [Cheese Company, Nicasio, CA] has introduced a basil and garlic version of its award-winning Foggy Morning. Dairy Goddess Farmstead Cheese [Lemoore, CA] has two sweet varieties of Fromage Blanc — one with peaches, almonds and honey, and the other with white chocolate, pistachio and cranberry."

California's cheesemakers are helping to reinvent the reputation of flavored cheese — a category that has had to overcome its less-than-stellar origins. "Flavored cheeses are more accepted than they were five years ago. In the beginning, they were hard to sell," says Heather Fiscalini, director of sales and marketing, Fiscalini Cheese. She explains flavored cheeses of yore consisted of an industrialized, bland paste with a flavor added just for that reason — to add flavor. "Chefs frowned on flavored cheese," she says.

But specialty cheese with added flavor is an entirely different product. Flavored artisan cheeses start with a high-quality paste and then add high-quality enhancements. "We take a cheese that's full flavor and add a new twist," says Fiscalini. The company offers a line of flavored Cheddars that includes taragon, chipotle, garlic and habanero. "Spreads are also popular, like jalapeño and horseradish. It's a nice platform to deliver

hotter, spicier flavors.”

“The flavored cheese category is still seeing growth,” notes CMAB’s Freedheim. “Fruit and nuts are strong additions to both soft ripened and Monterey-style products.”

Flavored cheese is popular enough that Cypress Grove is working on a sixth cheese for its Flashback line. “We’re still in the beginning stages, but the new product along with the five other Flashback flavors — Purple Haze, Herbs de Humboldt, Sgt. Pepper, PsycheDillic and Ms. Natural — will reinforce our commitment to develop specialty cheeses that are ‘special’ and celebrate the unique characteristics of goat milk,” Rasmussen says.

What’s behind this trend for flavored cheese? The best explanation so far comes from Jennifer Giambroni, CMAB director of communications. “Taking familiar textures and adding a burst of flavor really taps into consumer taste buds and their drive to pair their favorite flavor profiles. Pairings are really popular — whether cheese and wine, beer or even chocolate and whiskey — and these

flavored cheeses capture that ‘perfect pair’ in one bite.”

### Hispanic and Mediterranean

“There’s a distinct effort by the large Hispanic-style dairy processors to educate mainstream consumer on how to use Hispanic cheeses traditionally thought of and sold as ethnic products. This is being done through the use of professional chefs and demonstrating recipes outside of traditional Latin dishes on televised food channels,” CMAB’s Dimataris states. “Once the mainstream consumer understands the many uses for these cheeses, their potential as specialty items at retail is endless.”

Giambroni sees continued growth of Hispanic cheeses, which tend to be affordable specialty options. “The continued growth of Latin flavors both in the home and at foodservice is inspiring consumers to add authenticity with Hispanic-style cheeses such as Asadero, Cotija and Queso Fresco,” she says.

“The growth in Mediterranean flavors means that consumers are looking at cheeses

like Yanni — a white Halloumi-style grilling cheese from Karoun [Dairies, SunValley, CA] with a Mozzarella texture that can be heated and grilled without melting,” explains Dimataris.

The popularity of Greek yogurt is helping the Mediterranean cheeses. “It’s really opened the door to other Mediterranean flavors such as Labne and Yanni,” says Giambroni.

### Bold and Blue

Consumers continue to seek out ever-bolder, ever-sharper cheeses. According to Giambroni, the popularity of charcuterie boards is fueling this trend. “Consumers will be looking for bold options to pair with their cured meats at home,” she says.

This trend bodes well for Blue cheeses and aged Cheddars. Dimataris cites the following examples: “Sonoma Cheese has Blue Jack, which combines the flavors of Monterey Jack and Blue. Marin’s Rouge et Noir Marin French Blue combines Triple Crème Brie with blue veins. And Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese [Point Reyes Station, CA] is putting out a new Blue that’s aged longer than its award winning Original Blue.”

### What’s In the Pipeline?

Up and coming on the cheese scene are goat milk alpine cheeses, aged sheep milk creations and fresh water buffalo Mozzarella, according to Reggie Jones, cheesemaker at Central Coast Creamery. He calls out Ramini Mozzarella — a startup 40-head water buffalo herd and creamery in Tomales.

Looking at trends in foodservice, Giambroni cites “the rise in smoked foods. We have a limited number of smoked specialty cheeses in California but if that flavor profile continues to grow, I can see our processors experimenting more in that area.”

In support of that view, Redwood’s Bice notes grassroots raves for Goat Milk Cheddar when it was sampled at festivals.

“A host of new cheese shops, enthusiastic, knowledgeable cheesemongers and chefs are educating consumers. There has never been greater support for California’s specialty and artisan cheeses,” says Devereux.

“People are travelling to the region for this cheese and to get close to the cheesemakers,” notes Jill Giacomini Basch of Point Reyes Farmstead. “It’s an exciting time for all of us. We’re known for our wine and now we’re known for our cheese.”

The upsurge of cheese-centered tourism, and newcomers in the industry are evidence of California positioning itself as an authority in specialty cheese. “California specialty cheese is still in its infancy with a ton of room for growth,” claims Jones. **DB**



# Regulatory Change Proposals

By Greg O'Neill  
President,  
American Cheese Society  
Denver, CO

Co-Owner/Founder  
Pastoral Artisan Cheese,  
Bread & Wine  
Chicago, IL

IN RECENT MONTHS, THE AMERICAN CHEESE SOCIETY (ACS) has been working steadfastly to support American cheesemakers in preparation for potential regulatory change. In February 2013, the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and Health Canada jointly published a *Draft Quantitative Assessment of the Risk of Listeriosis from Soft-Ripened Cheese Consumption in the U.S. and Canada*. As the leader in supporting and promoting American cheese, ACS took on the task of carefully reviewing the risk assessment and developing a detailed response with leading experts. Our comment was posted to the Federal Register in April, and nearly 100 industry members joined us by posting comments of their own and/or expressing their support of our comment. If you haven't already done so, we hope you'll take the time to review our comment at [www.tinyurl.com/acs-comment](http://www.tinyurl.com/acs-comment).

ACS focused on two primary areas of concern in our official comment:

First, we observed that the conclusions and takeaway messages from the risk assessment may be based on an incomplete data set and thus may not be entirely accurate. The data set used to determine *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination rates and levels was obtained from surveys of bulk tanks of milk from producers harvesting commodity fluid milk for pasteurization and not necessarily milk intended for the manufacture of cheese. In addition, the description of the risk of listeriosis cites outbreaks that occurred in other countries with different standards and regulatory regimes, as well as outbreaks related to cheese made in unlicensed facilities or in violation of current regulations. Per FDA's own data, there have been few, if any, outbreaks involving legally made soft cheese in the United States and Canada.

Of particular concern to ACS, the risk assessment suggests that soft-ripened cheeses carry a high risk of contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes* when the evidence and history suggest the risks are low from such cheeses made in compliance with current regulations. It also suggests soft-ripened cheeses made from unpasteurized milk are significantly more risky than those made from pasteurized milk. In fact, the analysis indicates at least one preventive strategy considered in the report can reduce risk in raw-milk products below that of pasteurized products. Unfortunately, the analysis fails to consider a wide range of preventative controls and strategies that are available — and are already used successfully — to ensure the safe production of cheese. In its comments, ACS asked that the final risk assessment consider such strategies.

Second, we expressed concern that misrepresentations in the risk assessment may lead to reduced sales of safe cheese products and

increased regulatory efforts beyond those justified by empirical evidence. The analysis in the risk assessment is based on data concerning Camembert cheese, but the conclusions — and the report's title — appear to extend its conclusions to a broader class of “soft-ripened” cheese without clearly defining this class. We are concerned such an approach may set precedent for future risk assessments with broader reach than is justified.

ACS has asked FDA to clarify and offer more detail on the inconsistencies and concerns outlined in our comment and incorporate additional, relevant research into its final findings. Just as importantly, we asked FDA inform stakeholders of how the risk assessment may ultimately impact policy and regulation. We recognize that regulatory changes often have the greatest impact on smaller producers — jeopardizing small businesses, family dairies and the very types of producers who are growing the economy through job creation and by fueling consumer desire for safe, delicious and unique cheeses. Our organization is committed to working with FDA to ensure the unique needs of these smaller producers are kept in mind.

Although the official public comment period on the risk assessment has come to a close, we encourage you to read the full report at [www.federalregister.gov](http://www.federalregister.gov) (docket # FDA-2012-N-1182) and reach out to FDA in support of ACS's comment. FDA is working on the publication of other draft risk assessments that could impact the specialty cheese industry, as well. One such assessment will attempt to analyze the risk of cheeses made from unpasteurized milk. Another, of particular interest to DELI BUSINESS readers, may be the “Interagency Risk Assessment—L. monocytogenes in Retail Delicatessens,” jointly prepared by the Food Safety & Inspection Service (FSIS) and FDA. Stakeholders were invited to share comments on the assessment at a public meeting

on May 22 in Washington, D.C. ACS was present to share the point-of-view of our members. Per FSIS/FDA, the draft “provides a scientific assessment of the risk of foodborne illness associated with consumption of [ready-to-eat] foods (i.e., deli meats, cheese, and deli salads) commonly prepared and sold in the deli of a retail food store and examines how that risk may be impacted by changes to common or recommended practices.”

ACS will continue to keep our members informed about these publications, and we will do our best to ensure that the concerns of small, artisan and farmstead producers are addressed. Your voice can make a difference in shaping the future of this industry. Please join us in championing the diversity and quality of unique American-made cheeses. **DB**



# The Biggest Cheese Festival On Earth

Every other year, the Italian town of Bra plays host to world's finest cheeses

BY LEE SMITH

About 50 kilometers from Turino, Italy, in the region of Piemonte in the province of Cuneo sits the small city of Bra, which, every other year, transforms itself into the largest cheese festival on earth.

The international organization Slow Food, the city of Bra, and the tourism bureau of Alba, Bra, Lange and Roero organize the festival that is often described as having the largest collection of fine cheese to be found any place in the world. The gathering, simply called simply *Cheese*, is known to turophiles as *Bra*.

Most of the time, Bra has a population of about 29,000. With all the beautiful places to visit in Italy, few tourists visit this small enclave in the northwestern corner of the country. But during the third week in September of odd-numbered years, Bra becomes the most heralded place on earth for the cheese crowd. During Cheese 2011, 160,000 people from all over the planet made their pilgrimage to what is usually little more than a village. This year, *Cheese* will occur Sept. 20-Sept. 23.

The downtown streets are closed to all traffic and tents ranging from the size of football fields to just enough to cover a table are crammed into every conceivable nook and cranny. Cheesemakers from around the globe set up stands to sell their cheese, meet buyers and consumers, and join together to celebrate the land. Music plays into the wee hours of the night and street performers make balloon animals to entertain children and adults. Cafes and restaurants serve up the local cuisine, and outdoor cafes are scattered among the stands that are selling cheese and offering samples.

But *Bra* is more than festivities and convivial atmosphere. It is in this little city that tourists, cheese retailers, buyers, distributors, journalists and turophiles from all over the world immerse themselves not just in the cheese itself but in the issues affecting its production, saving farmlands, healthy eating, and protecting a way of life that is thousands



ALL PHOTOS BY JESSE DART

of years old. For all the hustle and bustle, this event is about slowing down and appreciating the beauty that surrounds us.

Why Bra? Bra is the birthplace of Carlo Petrini, the founder of the International Slow Food Movement and the University of Gastronomic Sciences. The name Slow Food was chosen as a way of saying no to fast food. Slow Food is, quite literally, about slowing down to appreciate and protect a way of life that is quickly disappearing. It is about preserving the land and its heritage.

The website, [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com), says, "Slow Food stands at the crossroads of ecology and gastronomy, ethics and pleasure. It

opposes the standardization of taste and culture, and the unrestrained power of the food industry multinationals and industrial agriculture. We believe that everyone has a fundamental right to the pleasure of good food and consequently the responsibility to protect the heritage of food tradition and culture that made this pleasure possible."

Petrini has a vision of a world in which all people can access good, clean and fair food. Good is described as "a fresh and flavorsome seasonal diet that satisfies the senses and is part of our local culture"; clean as "food production and consumption that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or our

health"; and fair as "accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for small-scale producers."

Slow Food embodies the belief that food is tied to many important aspects of life. The food we eat is important to our health and our happiness, but it is also tied to strong families, local agriculture, the ecology of our planet, politics and agriculture. It is about bringing people and their communities together with the goal of slowing down and appreciating the world around us. It is about preserving cultures and heritage.

"It's important to talk about the real protagonists of this event — the farmer, the





herders and the cheesemakers — and their future,” said Mauro Pizzato of Slow Food Italy at a milk workshop at Cheese 2011. “The future is our youth — the people who will decide whether or not to follow in their parents footsteps.” *Bra* is a surprisingly youthful event — one quarter of the members of Slow Food are under the age of 30.

Among the festival’s most popular attractions is the street of the shepherds. This long street is lined with tents that highlight the small producers who milk their own herds out in rural areas and up in the mountains. *Bra* provides them with an opportunity to meet the people who buy their cheeses. Recently, there has been renewed interest in the “transhumance,” the seasonal moving of animals from the low valley pastures of win-

ter to the high mountain pastures of summer. The cheeses from herds that make these treks tend to be seasonal and unique since each shepherd and his household craft their cheeses based on their own recipes and family traditions.

During Cheese 2011, representatives from food communities recounted the stories of the men and women who make their livelihoods from their herding animals. As they told their stories and shared their experiences, they contributed to a global exchange of ideas and traditional values.

In 2011, the United States occupied a large area thanks to the hard work and generosity of Atlanta Foods, a distributor headquartered in Atlanta, GA. Watching Europeans taste American cheeses, often for the

first time, was a gratifying experience for the American cheesemakers who attended. By the last day there wasn’t a sliver of U.S. cheese left to sell. Once again, at Cheese 2013, Atlanta Foods will be sponsoring American cheesemakers.

Maybe *Bra* is just a street fair full of cheese; maybe the Slow Food mantra will be the song of this century; but whatever the future holds, it still is an amazing confluence of people, cultures and cheese. Hopefully, it foretells a future of understanding and respect for all people and the environment.

For those who want to attend Slow Food’s Cheese 2013, make your reservations for both hotel and events as soon as possible. With over 150,000 people invading sleepy Bra, everything sells out early. **DB**

# The Lord of La Mancha

Celebrated Manchego cheese deserves the kudos

BY JAN FIALKOW

The Spanish plains of La Mancha have given the world two enduring treasures — Don Quixote, Miguel de Cervantes' eccentric hero, and Manchego cheese, sheep milk's alchemical transformation. Cervantes actually mentions Manchego in his classic tale. Perhaps it was the time he spent in prison while writing the novel that brought him memories of the piquant cheese.

La Mancha is a vast high plateau, some 13,500 square miles located 500 meters above sea level in the Castilla-La Mancha Autonomous Region southeast of Madrid. This agricultural area, which has some fertile land and lots of rocky outcrops, supports mostly hardy plants that can survive the extreme climate. The Moors who lived in Spain from 711 until their final expulsion in 1492 called the area Al Mansha — the





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If you travel to La Mancha in early fall, you'll be greeted by a sea of purple flowers — *Crocus sativus* — whose stamens are handpicked to produce saffron, the world's most expensive spice. At any time of year, you'll see a countryside still dotted with windmills, though it's unlikely you'll see a gaunt knight tilting at them.

And you'll see flocks of Manchega sheep, the ancient breed that has survived

— and thrived — on the plateau for millennia and whose milk is required to make Manchego cheese. Archeologists have found evidence of the cheese and the Manchegas' ancestors dating back to the Bronze Age.

Queso Manchego was granted PDO — Protected Designation of Origin — status in 1984. To earn the PDO, the cheese must be made in La Mancha solely of whole milk from Manchega sheep and

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then aged in La Mancha's natural caves for a minimum of two months. Today you can find Manchego made from raw milk and from pasteurized milk. Since the raw-milk cheese ages for more than 60 days, it can be brought into this country. Raw-milk Manchego will have more complexity, more nuance, and more character than its pasteurized commodity cousin. The raw milk retains the idiosyncratic notes of the wild grasses and herbs eaten by the sheep.

Wheels of Manchego weigh approximately three kilos — a bit over 6½ pounds — and have an inedible rind with a distinctive herringbone or zigzag pattern. The shape and rind pattern reflect the traditional molds made of esparto grass that date back to the Bronze Age. During the aging process, the cheeses are pressed top and bottom with boards that impart wheat-ear patterns and lines that divide the cheese into four equal parts.



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Two months in the cave earns PDO status, but it takes time and skill to create one of the world's great sheep milk cheeses. If aged for three to six months, you get Manchego Curado, which is semi-cured. That means it's about halfway to being completely solid. It breaks easily and has just a hint of yellow in the paste. It's mild, tastes nutty and has a smooth, creamy mouthfeel. Manchego Curado melts beautifully and is a wonderful cooking cheese.

But if the cheese is allowed a year in the caves, it transforms into the extraordinary Manchego Viejo. It has completely cured and the texture is harder with a crumbly texture. The paste is now a rich yellow and the taste has grown complex and salty with a sharp edge and intense spiciness. It can be grated and used to finish a variety of dishes, but this is a cheese to eat on its own. It's the cheese that most often appears on tapas plates, accompanied by rustic bread and Spanish favorites that share its terroir — Serrano ham, Ibérico de Bellota (if you're feeling flush), marcona almonds or dulce de membrillo (quince paste). Pair it with a glass of Rioja;

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# American Cheese Caves

Aging cheese is as significant as making cheese

BY CHARLIE KALISH

With the surge in American artisan cheesemaking, many cheesemakers are looking to launch their own cheese caves so they can exercise control over the process from beginning to end. Other businesses have launched cheese caves because they're specialists in the art and science of aging cheeses, more commonly called *affinage*.

*Affinage* is the methodical aging or ripening of cheese; the word *affinage* comes from the French word *affiner*, which means to refine. From the moment fresh molded curd is salted and put into a special aging chamber to age until the moment it leaves to be pack-

aged and sold, that cheese is said to be undergoing *affinage*. *Affinage* may involve turning, washing, brushing, sprinkling with herbs — really any treatment the *affineur* (the cheese ager) performs on the cheese. *Affinage* is an essential step in a cheese's development — all cheeses require a minimum amount of aging and care to acquire their defining features, in other words, their flavor profile, texture, and aroma.

Operating cheese caves is more complicated — and more expensive — than digging a hole in the ground or blasting a hole in some rock. Aging cheese effectively requires expertise, capital investment and planning,

not to mention a whole lot of hard work. In the United States, four companies are leading the way in *affinage*: Bleu Mont Dairy, Caves of Faribault, Cellars of Jasper Hill, and Murray's Cheese.

## Bleu Mont Dairy

Bleu Mont Dairy, located in Blue Mounds, WI, is owned and operated by Willi Lehner, a second generation Swiss-American cheesemaker. His father, a Swiss immigrant, moved to Wisconsin in the early 1950s to manage a cheese factory. The young Lehner trained alongside his father as a cheesemaker before traveling to Switzer-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MURRAY'S CHEESE

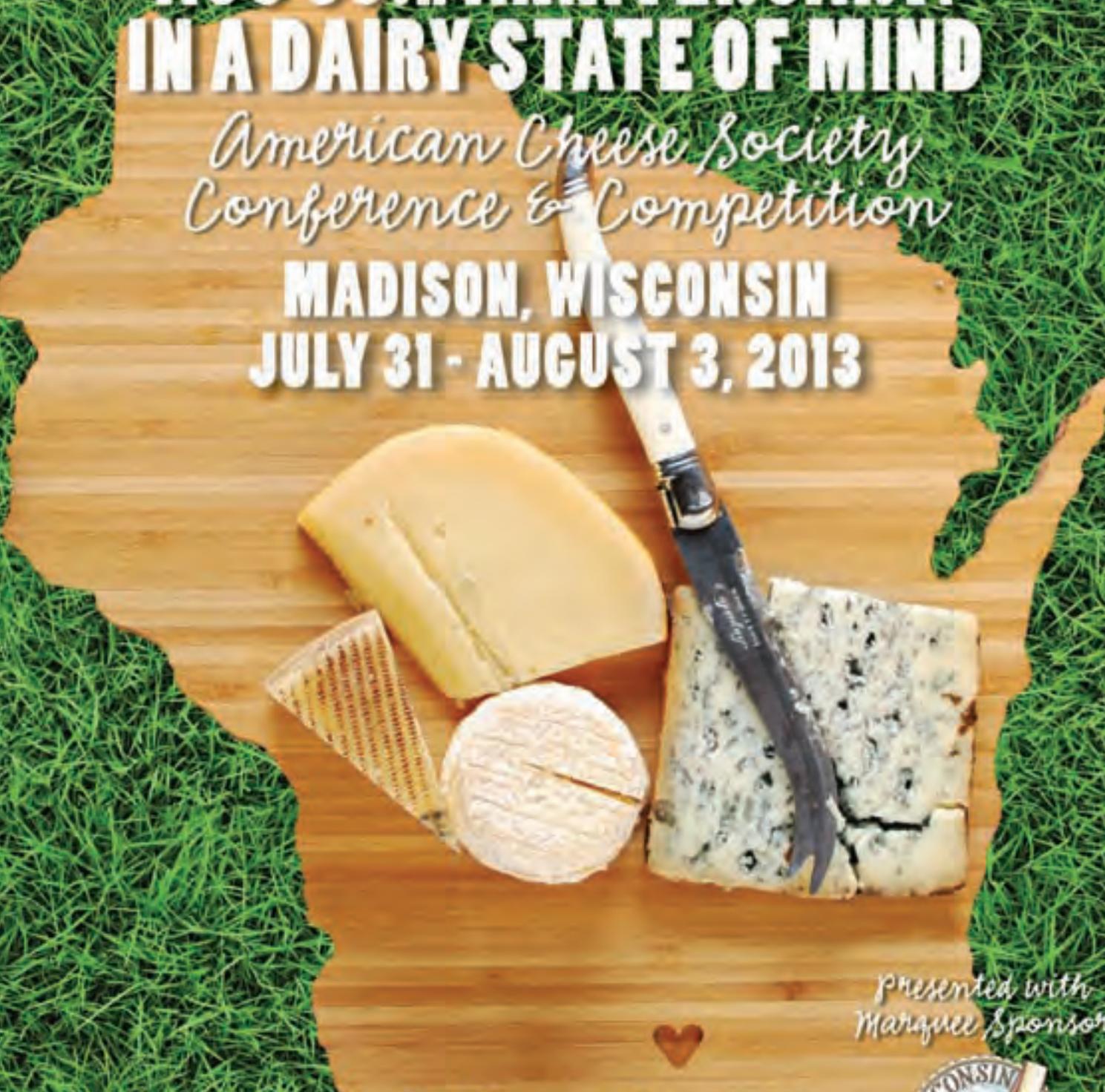


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land where he learned to make traditional Swiss cheeses in a copper vat over a wood fire. While in Switzerland, he made the connection between the cheese and what the cows eat. Today, he works with five different dairies to produce a line of artisan cheeses that he ages in his own cave.

In the cheese industry, the term “cave” is often used loosely. Just as it can indicate a natural underground cavern — like the caves of Roquefort in France — it can also refer to a walk-in refrigerator. Lehner’s cave, which was dug out of a hillside in 2006, is man-made and indeed, situated underground. The insulation provided by the earth piled over the cave walls is so good that he manages to maintain a near-constant temperature and humidity within the cave year-round, despite Wisconsin’s immense seasonal temperature swings.

“The cheeses love the environment they have in the cave,” says Lehner. “It can be two degrees below zero outside but in the cave it’s around 52.”

The facility, 1,600 square feet in all, is oval in shape and divided into two sections by a constructed wood barrier. On one side is Cave 1, the washed rind cave; on the other side Cave 2, where Lehner stores his natural-rind cheeses, allows molds native to the cave and bioregion to flourish.

Cheeses of different varieties are generally aged in separate chambers because optimal conditions for microbial environments on and within each type of cheese tend to differ one to the next. Such is the case at Bleu Mont Dairy. Lehner says his washed-rind cheeses thrive under high humidity, around 96 to 98 percent, while his natural-rind cheeses tend to do better with slightly lower humidity, 85 to 90 percent. The differences, he says, are apparent right away.

“A lot of the transformation happens because of the molds that grow on the surface of the cheese,” explains Lehner. “The first three to four months, there’s this ongoing procession of various molds. You can see the changes over time. There is literally a war on the surface of the cheese as the food source and the surface of the cheese change.

“Because we’re aging the cheese at an average temperature of 55°, that’s a wonderful temperature for the enzymes to be changing the flavors and texture of the cheese. If I give the cheese the proper environment, provided that the cheese is made with good quality milk, it’s hard to screw it up.

“The raw-milk cheeses that I make from cow and sheep milk are my favorite,” states Lehner. “However, my claim to fame is my Banded Cheddar.”

Of all the affinage companies in the country, Bleu Mont Dairy is probably one of the



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLEU MONT DAIRY

smallest yet for being a one-man show, it’s also one of the most impressive.

### The Caves of Faribault

The Saint Peter sandstone caves of Faribault, MN, have been used to age blue cheese since the 1930s, when a man by the name of Felix Frederikson made them the site of the country’s first domestic cave-aged blues. Blue cheeses were aged in the Faribault caves until the 1990s, when another cheese company bought them and then shut them down after moving operations out of state. In 2001, the caves were reopened by the Faribault Dairy Company, Inc. (now known as Caves of Faribault) and have since been producing some of the country’s finest, aged domestic blue cheese.

The Caves of Faribault specializes in aging, but the company also produces its own cheese. Among the cheeses made and aged by the Caves of Faribault are Amablue Blue Cheese (aged 75 days), AmaGorg Gorgonzola (90 days) and Saint-Pete’s Select (100 days). The latest addition, the result of a collaboration with Jeff Wideman, master cheesemaker at Maple Leaf Cheese in Wisconsin, is Jeff’s Select, a sharp, creamy-in-the-mouth Gouda aged nine months. The cheese is named after Jeff Wideman and after Jeff Jirik, who oversees their aging at the Caves of Faribault.

What has made the Caves of Faribault such a desirable location for aging blue cheese, Jirik says, is its Saint Peter sandstone deposits, a unique geological feature that

provides optimal conditions for cave-aging.

“What’s cool about it is it’s very pure,” says Jirik. “It’s 99 percent silicon dioxide.” Fewer impurities, he says, mean stronger cave walls, and because pure sand is biologically inert, it’s also more hygienic.

“Number two,” he adds “[Saint Peter sandstone] is slightly acidic, because after the water percolates through it after rainfall, it produces carbonic acid.” This acidity assists the cheeses by pulling ammonia — a byproduct of fermentation — out of the air in a natural process that returns nitrogen harmlessly into the atmosphere.

“The third thing is, because of how clean it is and its density, it’s self-supporting in a gothic arch. None of our caves have support — they’re hewn out of the solid rock. The fourth thing is that the caves maintain a constant temperature and humidity.”

The natural temperature in the caves is 52° F, ideal for aging (read: natural refrigerator). The relative humidity: a whopping 99.9 percent.

“We didn’t believe that number until it took me about three or four recording hygrometers [breaking down] before I realized they couldn’t take that level of humidity,” laughs Jirik.

The success of the Caves of Faribault is a combination of the right place, the right people, and the right product. All these factors have to come together to make a successful affinage company because in affinage, consistency is everything. The Caves of Faribault work hard, and employ a great deal of knowl-



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### Cellars of Jasper Hill

Located in Greensboro in the heart of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom is Cellars of Jasper Hill, a company making waves across the country and around the world with its line of outstanding aged, artisan cheeses. Jasper Hill Farm (precursor to the Cellars) was founded in May 2003 by brothers Andy and Mateo Kehler. In 2006, the brothers had their first major breakthrough: a Best in Show ribbon at the annual American Cheese Society (ACS) competition. The cheese: Cabot Clothbound Cheddar, a toothsome, 40-pound, muslin cloth-wrapped round produced by nearby Cabot Creamery and then aged for 10 to 15 months at Jasper Hill.

Since 2006, Jasper Hill has expanded, in the process bringing on additional staff, developing new cheeses, and constructing a 22,000-square-foot underground, state-of-the-art aging facility, which includes seven separate aging chambers or vaults. Nine different cheeses are aged in the Cellars, five of which are made onsite; the other four are sourced from nearby producers: Cabot Creamery, Landaff Creamery, Scholten Family Farm and von Trapp Farmstead.

Working with small-scale, local producers is central to the Cellars' mission. The company sees itself as a "bridge between small-scale production and large-scale markets." The cheeses are all artisan and vary in type, from small-format bloomy rinds wrapped in spruce bark (Harbison) to Appenzeller-style alpine cheeses (Alpha Tolman). Each is relegated to vaults of varying temperature and humidity, optimized for each respective cheese's maturation.

Touring the aging facility at Cellars of Jasper Hill, one cannot escape a feeling of awe. Vaulted ceilings tower dozens of feet overhead, and thousands of pounds of delicious, artisan cheese slowly mature to perfection. In the bloomy-rind vault are two rows of mobile racks loaded with fresh and white-bloomy cheeses. A veil of mist hovers in the washed-rind vault. In Vault 7, a worker pierces a table's worth of Bayley Hazen Blue with a stainless steel spike, a process that facilitates the development of blue veins. In every vault, employees are busy at work, turning, brushing, washing, and piercing cheeses.

Over the course of aging, the cheeses are routinely tested by the Cellars' staff for qual-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CELLARS OF JASPER HILL

ity control. The tasters look at each sample's flavor profile, texture and aroma, then come up with a course of action. For example, the cheese may be perfect but need to sit in the cave for another week; or maybe it needs to be shipped out right away. If a flavor needs tweaking, they can look at the records from the cheese's make and work with the cheesemakers and affineurs to come up with a solution, which might involve increasing the humidity of the cave or cutting the curd into smaller pieces.

### Murray's Cheese

Bleu Mont Diary, Caves of Faribault and the Cellars of Jasper Hill are all companies that produce and age their own cheese. Murray's Cheese, located on Bleeker Street in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, operates on a very different model: Rather than making and aging cheese, it specializes in aging and selling cheese. Murray's is an urban retail shop that several years ago decided to start up its own in-house affinage.

The original goal when the caves were built in 2004, says Brian Ralph, Murray's cave manager, was "to store the cheese in best condition [and] distribute humidity and airflow properly." Over the years, the caves have become increasingly specialized, with each cave tailored to the products Murray's selectively ages in the caves: 152 different cheeses, about 15 of which are bought fresh and aged to full maturity.

Murray's has five caves, each equipped with a cooling unit to maintain the low temperature needed for aging. A single humidifier generates vapor, which is distributed room to room through a series of tubes inside the ceiling. Cave 1, "the fridge," is kept at cold temperatures. Used for storage of fresh cheeses, it also doubles as a drying room. Caves 2, 3 and 4 house washed-rind, bloomy-rind and natural-rind cheeses, respectively; Cave 5 is for the big boys: large-format cheeses such as bandaged-wrapped Cheddars and Parmigiano Reggiano.

All the caves have vaulted ceilings, which help air flow, and walls made from porous concrete, which has the beneficial effect of buffering the caves' humidity by "breathing." These features are vital to the proper functioning of the caves, but most important to Murray's affinage isn't what is built into the facility, but what is living inside it.

"Microflora is behind the foundation of the caves and cave aging," explains Ralph. "We have a series of different environments that are suited to different types of microflora on each of the cheeses we mature. For some, we have to culture our caves with distinct molds and yeast; for others, we depend on the natural microfloras that have cultured our caves for years to provide our product distinct and unique flavors."

"For example, we depend on the microflora in Cave 2 to give C Local — one of Murray's signature cheeses — its distinct orange hue, buttered truffle flavor from the rind and to break down a thin cream line into the paste."

Like Neal's Yard Dairy in London, the United Kingdom's No. 1 cheese aging company, Murray's does not make its own cheese. If there's an issue with a cheese, the folks at Murray's cannot simply walk into the make-room, like the folks at Jasper Hill, and start making changes. Instead, their influence in driving a consistent product comes through close relationships and trust.

Our relationships, says Ralph, are "overall, very tight, especially with domestic producers. We're finding that as our program progresses and becomes stronger, producers are more willing to let us age their cheese exclusively or in full confidence that we'll promote the end product in its best light to our customers. This makes customers want to come back for that product again and again, which is good for us and good for the producers." **DB**

# Deli Meat Roundup

Finding prime opportunities in a tough economy

BY BOB JOHNSON



**T**he market for deli meat, like its product, is not a single whole. Instead, it's sliced into several different markets to satisfy different consumer desires.

Many customers are responding to economic uncertainty by looking for the most economical deli meat alternatives. But there are also consumers demanding the highest quality meats in order to get their money's worth. High quality can translate into the cut, the processing or even the grass the animal walked on. This all adds up to a complex and sometimes confusing set of decisions as to which markets deserve priority.

"When it comes to market positioning, it does seem to be all of the above. Some chains are focusing on high end, some on the value end, and some have a mix," says Alan Hiebert, senior coordinator for education at the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI. "Obviously, each chain — and each store within that chain — needs to be aware of its shopper base and what the neighborhood around the location looks like." Of utmost importance is knowing which consumers are coming to the deli, and which meat products suit their needs and desires.

According to James Dickman, CEO of Charlie's Pride Meats, Vernon, CA, "Retailers are targeting their customers better. Some look to sell the economy end of products with no frills and just lowest cost positioning; others look to attract the customer looking for gourmet items or a specialty niche. Then there are some retailers that are looking for the more healthful, younger customer who does read label ingredients with vigor. And finally there are the 'hybrids' where they may feature one or more of the various categories I mention and do not fall into any one category."

There is little forgiveness for poor market choices because, while important growing opportunities in deli meat still do exist, sales overall have plateaued, or worse. "Pound and dollar sales are pretty flat, and same store sales are down 2 percent. It's flat; it's a matter of the economy," says Steve Riley, marketing manager at Dietz & Watson, headquartered in Philadelphia, PA.

### What Price Value?

A good starting point in developing a strategy is learning what consumers mean by value. For some, value means finding an affordable price in difficult economic times; for others, value means finding



superior quality to justify the price.

"Quality and innovation are the current trends in deli meats. There seem to be two factions that are growing right now — the folks who want the inexpensive, no-frills products and the folks who are willing to indulge in the more gourmet or 'natural' types of deli products," Dickman explains.

Industry-wide research confirms both a general cost consciousness and different consumers looking for value in different places. According to Hiebert, "IDDBA research has shown price is the most important factor when shoppers choose their delis and when they choose to make a purchase. That doesn't necessarily mean shoppers aren't interested in high-quality meats, but it does mean they're looking closely at prices throughout the deli."

The economy has created opportunities for deli poultry products that are both affordable and interesting. Dietz & Watson has, for example, enjoyed good response to new chicken products including chicken Parmesan, Buffalo chicken and chicken sausage. "Bulk chicken has continued to show growth, both in pounds and dollars. All of our new chicken products are doing very well. Chicken is very popular," Riley says.

At the other end of the price spectrum, some producers have experienced demand for their select deli meats. "We're seeing a move to high-quality products," says Guy Giordano, president of Vincent Giordano Corporation, Philadelphia, PA. "We're seeing that people

want to get something for their money. The price difference isn't that much, so you might as well pay a little extra for the highest quality."

One quality characteristic that continues to gain momentum is a verifiable claim that the meat is natural all the way from the pasture to the plate. "We find consumers are willing to pay a premium for pure, wholesome, natural deli meats from a trusted brand with a sustainable farm-to-table story," says Barb Quijano, vice president of marketing and key accounts at Hain Pure Protein Corp., Fredericksburg, PA.

### Clean And Safe

All natural has become an important — albeit vague — category so it's essential descriptions of what is meant by all natural be as easy as possible for the customer to understand.

"'Clean' labeling is another term that means different things to different people," says Hiebert. "For the most part, it means people are looking for products that are minimally processed. The most common metric is the number of items on the ingredient list. In the deli meat segment, particularly in the service case, many products are sold without nutrition or ingredient labels. Today's information-hungry shoppers should be able to find nutrition information for every product they're considering. That means stores should have information available in writing, on their websites, and available for mobile devices."

Among a growing number of con-



sumers, all natural begins with the living conditions for the animals on the farm. “Demand for products that consumers feel good about serving their families, sourced from credible suppliers who raise animals humanely, is the growing trend,” Quijano says. “Plainville Farms focuses on providing retailers with all-natural ingredient deli meats produced from turkey raised on our family-owned farms. The turkeys are raised without the use of antibiotics, are fed a 100 percent vegetarian diet, and humanely raised in a low-stress environment. Retailers not carrying all-natural ingredient, antibiotic-free deli meats are providing a disservice to their customers.”

High-pressure pasteurization is an important way to preserve shelf life — and reduce shrink — without using chemical preservatives. The process, called Pascalization, submits food products to extremely high pressure that kills pathogens without using heat or chemicals. “It’s definitely a safety advantage and also a shelf-life advantage” Giordano explains. “It can extend shelf life three or four times without additives. You get a clean product and, if you refrigerate it right, you get almost no shrink. I think retailers will demand it in the future. We were one of the first to be doing high-pressure pasteurization and one of the first letting our customers know we are doing it.”

The importance of transparency is growing. “The big thing we’re seeing is interest in food safety and the Global Food Safety Initiative. A lot of retailers

are requiring Safe Quality Food and Global Food Safety Initiative certifications now,” Giordano continues. “It takes a commitment to changing the culture in your facility from the top to the bottom, from management to the guy sweeping the floor. It also takes a lot of documentation — if it’s worth doing, it’s worth writing down.”

### Other Trends

Because consumers are a busy bunch, demand continues for meat products that streamline sandwich or meal making. And the convenience of pre-sliced meats has garnered them accolades. “Pre-sliced meat sales have increased. It’s the new customer looking for ease of shopping. Generation X and Y are doing more shopping, and people are looking for something quick and easy,” says Dietz & Watson’s Riley.

Pre-sliced packages of all-natural meats that do not have chemical preservatives can also help manage potential shrink problems. “If shrinking bulk product is the deterrent, offer pre-sliced packages as an option,” Quijano advises.

A number of producers are offering promotions targeting consumers who prize convenience. “Retailers are looking for innovative ways to get folks into their hot and cold delis,” says Dickman. “Promotions such as Charlie’s Pride meats and Italian gravy entice customers to come in and buy our roast beef at the local service deli. The promotion is buy the roast beef and get a package of free gravy for your family. People love it, and

it’s fast and easy to prepare as well.”

One facet of the deli meat category enjoying unprecedented popularity is Hispanic meat products. “All Hispanic items seem to be on the upward trend of things. Old fashioned deli items are at best holding their own or declining in sales volume,” Dickman adds.

This is part of a general trend toward deli products, including meats, that match the ethnic diversity of the country. “Overall, people are eating more ethnic and ethnic-inspired foods. *What’s in Store 2013*, the latest edition of IDDBA’s annual trends report, indicated a surge in ethnic-inspired flavors hitting the deli, including Asian, Mediterranean and Mexican flavor characteristics,” says Hiebert. “Studies also show that a majority of households in the United States make some kind of ethnic meal regularly. Now we’re seeing young adults who grew up eating ethnic or ethnic-inspired meals looking for familiar ethnic flavors. And there are plenty of young adults who can’t or don’t want to cook. They’re looking for ready-to-eat options that fit their palates.”

Another growing trend is locally produced meats. And, as with all natural, it can be well worth the time to clearly communicate what local means.

“We’re seeing interest from shoppers in locally produced products and in clean labels,” Hiebert continues. “It’s not feasible for most stores to carry exclusively locally produced deli meats, not to mention the fact that different people have different definitions of local. For one person, it means buying lunch meat from a farmers market, while it may mean buying from a locally owned business to another. Overall, however, there is an interest in eating products that were produced as close to home as possible. There’s a move in some cities back to neighborhood butcher shops and bakeries where shoppers can feel like they’re developing a relationship and buying from friends. These days, such neighborhood products are often available in local supermarkets.”

But even with tough economics and shifting consumer tastes, deli meat comes back largely to doing a good job of presenting the long-time favorites.

“There are always new flavors when it comes to deli meats, but the perennial best-selling varieties are turkey, ham, and roast beef. Historically, turkey has been a good canvas for flavors, which may explain some of its popularity,” Hiebert adds. **DB**

# Easy Peasy Wings & Ribs

Popular barbecued ribs and wings offer deli sales opportunities

BY BARBARA ROBISON



PHOTO COURTESY OF BURGERS SMOKEHOUSE

Consumer interest in barbecued ribs and wings sold in the deli has increased with the popularity of prepared foods for take-out meals and casual entertaining. More and more supermarket delis are featuring barbecued ribs or wings in special promotions, often combining them with other deli items for complete prepared meals, but these proteins still offer substantial opportunities for increased sales.

According to a 2012 study by Mintel Group Limited, a leading market research company, cited in the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's (IDDBA) *What's In Store 2013*, only 15 percent of shoppers surveyed purchased ribs or wings at delis every time or most every time. Five percent purchased ribs or wings every time, 10 percent purchased them most of the time, 32 percent purchased them some of the time — and 53 percent never purchased them. Creative marketing should help reach a good number of those non-purchasers.

### Barbecued Ribs a Deli Favorite

“When purchasing ribs, consumers want flavor and consistent quality, which we can provide with our decades of experience,” states Philip Burger, vice president and wholesale manager, Burgers’ Smokehouse, California, MO, marketer of specialty meats and food items. “We allow extra time for our ribs to ‘rest’ prior to cooking and smoking. There are growth opportunities for our ribs in delis because we can eliminate store labor costs, and supply consistency in the products.”

The signature St. Louis sauced and dry-rub ribs are its specialties. Deli operators are provided with reheat instructions and product specifications sheets so they know proper storage temperatures, handling and re-heat procedures. “The sauced ribs are the most popular, probably due to price,” adds Burger.

St. Louis, MO, claims to have the biggest per capita consumption of barbecue sauce, hence the popularity of St. Louis-style barbecued ribs.

For deli operations that prefer to sauce the ribs themselves, Ford’s Food, Inc., Raleigh, NC, markets Bone Suckin’ Sauce, which is available in degrees of heat for marinating ribs and wings. “It’s an excellent all-natural sauce, made with honey, molasses and a tomato base. There are no preservatives and it’s available in gallon and half-gallon containers,” explains vice president Pat Ford.

Ford’s also offers a teriyaki sauce and a mustard sauce. The company provides shelf talkers, print signs and sampling demo suggestions.

### Rib Promotions

Supermarket delis promote their BBQ rib specialties in many ways. Kirwen’s Super Market, an independent store in Gibsonburg, OH, promotes BBQ ribs on its website, calling out its rotisserie and stating that it roasts whole chickens, chicken parts and ribs in the rotisserie daily. “Hot and ready daily for a quick dinner,” it adds.

Dierbergs, a supermarket chain headquartered in Chesterfield, MO, promotes Bob’s Signature Smokehouse Barbecue on its website. A platter of baby back ribs is pictured, along with a description of the smoking process used in cooking them. The ribs are smoked slowly over sweet apple and cherry wood.

Surf Supermarket, Gualala, CA, barbe-

cues ribs in its parking lot on many weekends. The grill is started at 7:00 AM and the ribs are ready at 11:00. Customers come from all over and are enthusiastic, with comments such as “BBQ outside is so good it is difficult to justify cooking” and “Absolutely worth it.”

### Chicken Wings Are Hot

Chicken wings are one of the hottest food trends. They’re ideal for grab-and-go dinners or casual gatherings anytime. IDDBA’s *What’s In Store 2013* reported that according to the Nielsen Perishable Group, in the 52 weeks ending Feb, 25, 2012, fresh chicken wing dollar sales increased 7.9 percent while volume sales rose 17.1 percent in traditional supermarkets. Attributed to that growth is a 7.8 percent dip in the average price. They told the *Los Angeles Times* that about 36 billion wing segments in the United States sold last year amounting to 115 wing parts per person.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WING-TIME, INC.

The National Chicken Council's (NCC) 2012 *Wing Report* predicted more than 1.25 billion wing portions would be consumed during Super Bowl weekend in 2012, totaling more than 100 million pounds of wings. About half would be ordered from restaurants and half purchased from grocery stores.

While the Super Bowl period is a great time to enjoy chicken wings, many other occasions throughout the year lend themselves to serving chicken wings. Memorial Day, graduation festivities, wedding showers, Father's Day, Fourth of July gatherings, and Labor Day picnics are all occasions for delis to promote barbecued chicken wings (as well as flavorful ribs).

"Our wings are precooked and sauced, then frozen and packaged in bulk boxes," says Scott Worthington, director of foodservice sales, Foster Farms, Livingston, CA. "All the deli operator needs to do at store level is heat and serve. Sometimes raw wings are frozen and the operation uses its own sauce for barbecuing. The advantages we see to



having the wings already pre-cooked and sauced is that less labor is required and the product is more consistent. We have several flavors for the wings, such as hot or mild, honey BBQ and, of course, Buffalo wings are very popular. We also do proprietary sauce blends for a customer. Sometimes we get requests for smaller

packs so the operator does not need to thaw as many wings at one time. Our relationship with our customers involves providing greater efficiencies in the use of the product and labor."

Wing-Time, Inc., Steamboat Springs, CO, a marketer of chicken wing sauces, often starts on the retail grocery side. "If



*(BTW this is Bonnie.)*

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they like the sauces, they ask if we have a foodservice size product. Then we're introduced into the deli area, where we are now doing a lot of business. We have a variety of sauce flavors, from the mild to hot and super hot, a Buffalo sauce, a Jamaican jerk sauce, as well as one with garlic and Parmesan cheese. Our sauces are designed for chicken, tangy but not sweet, whereas the rib sauces are usually

sweeter," says Terry Brown, founder, owner and sauce creator.

The company doesn't have a formal training program for deli operators but works closely with its customers on how to apply its premium sauce to the wings. "Chicken wing bars, offering a variety of flavors, have become popular with some markets and we help them with the use of our sauces," Brown adds.

## Wing Promotions

IDDBA's *What's In Store 2013* cites information from Technomics MenuMonitor online menu tracking resource that a good way to spur wing sales has been limited time offers promoting new wing flavors, with 28 percent of sales coming from such promotions.

One Southern California market chain's deli recently offered 1½ pounds of boneless chicken wings for \$5 on their \$5 special Friday. Two chicken wings were also included in an 8-piece chicken special, with two side dishes or a 1-pound deli salad for \$9.99. A drink, rolls, bread or tortillas could be added for 99¢.

Publix Supermarket, based in Lakeland, FL, has offered Signature Publix Deli Wings, which are double hand-breaded and "fried to perfection." They're served fresh chilled, with barbecue, blue cheese, ranch, honey mustard, or Buffalo sauce.

Ingles Markets, based in Asheville, NC, has promoted a Boneless Wing Tray in a small, medium or large size. It's advertised as "a platter piled high with fresh, tender boneless wings, dipped in zesty sauce of your choice, accompanied by fresh carrots and celery from our own Elmer's Produce Department. Great for any get together!" The company also has promoted a Chicken Wing Combo with spicy chicken wings, chicken drumettes, fresh carrots and celery and a deli dip. A "Touchdown Pack" promotion included 50 chicken wings, 30 chicken tenders, fresh carrots and celery, a dipping sauce and a bag of tortilla chips with salsa.

## Cross-Merchandising Can Build Sales

Barbecued ribs and chicken wings offer cross-merchandising opportunities to sell other deli items in combo-meal promotions. Ribs and wings combine well with beans, potato dishes, quinoa and other grain specialties in the service deli, as well as slaw, potato salad and chilled desserts from the self-serve deli area. Offering complete green salad kits from the produce department might add an interesting departure for a promotion.

"When an identification tag is used on our BBQ ribs in the delis, consumers who like the products will often purchase our BBQ ribs in the meat department for preparation at home," comments Burger of Burgers' Smokehouse. Or it can work in reverse, especially for a busy consumer who initially likes the product purchased in the meat department and then buys the same product ready-to-serve from the deli. **DB**

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# The Exquisite Ibérico de Bellota

The world's most exceptional, most expensive dry-cured ham

BY LEE SMITH



It was close to eight years ago during a trip to the Italian trade show Cibus that I had my first taste of Ibérico de Bellota — the precious dry-cured ham of Spain. Someone had told me a booth was giving away samples and I almost didn't stop because there was such a large crowd of people seemingly begging for a small sliver.

But given the enthusiastic praise I had heard, I waited my turn — and was transported to culinary heaven. So smitten was I with Ibérico de Bellota that I waited until the afternoon of the last day of the show, when few crowds remained, to speak with a company representative.

Fortunately, I was able to spend some time with the experts to learn about this rarest, most expensive dry-cured ham in the world. The whole ham was dark red, long and lean with a black hoof attached to the end of the leg. The taste was rich, almost creamy thanks to the marbled layers of fat, but what really stood out was a nutty sweetness hidden under complex layers of flavor.

The nutty sweetness comes from a diet high in bellota — the acorns of the Dehesa, the native oak forests of Spain and Portugal.

I was told Ibérico de Bellota was very expensive with a very limited supply and would never be exported the United States. So for years I waited, looking for Ibérico de Bellota at every European trade show, in every fine food shop, on every restaurant menu.

Then I received a long-hoped-for email from Michelle Buster of Forever Cheese, an importer of Spanish specialties. "Ibérico de Bellota is now available both fresh and dry-cured," the message read.

The journey to appreciate this culinary treasure must begin with the pig. Then the trip moves to the ancient oak forests of Spain and on to the acorns. This is a story as complex as the ham itself.

### The Ibérico Pig

The Ibérico is Spain's original native pig with a recorded history that goes as far back as the country's Neolithic cave paintings. The Ibérico hog is a large, black, muscular, almost hairless animal with long legs and a pointed snout. It is an unusually calm pig; ranchers and visitors can easily walk around a drove without fear of being attacked, most unusual in the world of hogs.

By the way, a group of pigs, or swine as they're also known, can be called a drove, a passel or a sounder. All are correct and using the proper term is sure to

impress any vendor or salesperson.

The hoof of the Ibérico is black, which is where the term pata negra comes from. Pata negra refers to the hoof that will remain on the leg during the entire curing process and the term is often used to describe Spanish ham. But be careful, because the term can be ambiguous; there's no guarantee that ham labeled pata negra is authentic Ibérico de Bellota. It just means black hoof. Not all Ibérico pigs are black and not all black pigs are Ibérico.

The Ibérico is more than just an unusual looking pig — structurally it is also quite different from other breeds. Genetically, the Ibérico's fat is intramuscular. While most pigs put on fat that's deposited on top of muscle and under the skin, the Ibérico's fat is distributed throughout the meat. What's more, in order for the pig to put on fat, it must walk, generally around 10 miles a day. So these animals are athletic foragers. They need to increase muscle in order to add the fat that adds the sweetness.

The Ibérico's fat makes its meat the healthiest in the world. Its fat is 65 percent oleic acid due to the pig's consump-

tion of acorns. In Spain, the Ibérico is known as the four-legged olive tree.

Oleic acid is a monounsaturated fatty acid found naturally in many plant sources but it's very unusual to find it in animal fats. Oleic acid can lower total cholesterol counts and increase the levels of HDL while lowering the levels of LDL — the bad cholesterol.

In addition to the dry-cured, Ibérico is also now available in its raw form, known as Ibérico Fresco. High-end restaurants are beginning to feature it on their menus. Like the dry-cured, the raw meat is a deep red. Beautifully marbled, it's sweet and fork tender. Most people seeing a dish made with Ibérico Fresco may misidentify it as beef or venison. Top Spanish chefs strongly recommend never using Ibérico in a well-done preparation. It must be served rare to appreciate its extraordinarily fine qualities and preserve the fat. The fat has a very low melting point so it must be cooked quickly over high heat. After all, it's the fat that makes this meat so healthy and delicious.

### The Dehesa

The Dehesa — the oak forest of Spain

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— is a land that lives in ecological harmony. The original oak woodland, known as the encina, was a primeval forest that stretched over much of Europe and covered wide swaths of Spain. Human encroachment — wars, farming, the need for more pastureland — resulted in the demise of the continent’s great forests.

A remnant of the encina covers about five million acres in modern Spain, bordering on Portugal. Today, due to careful management, the Dehesa is a tree-covered area of meadows, grasslands and ancient oak trees. The area is home to many animals other than the Ibérico pig. It’s an important bird sanctuary for Europe and provides natural areas for birds that migrate south for the winter.

Because of the increased interest in Ibérico pork and the commitment of pork producers, this unique ecosystem is protected for its economic value, providing important jobs for young people.

Here — and only here — can the true Ibérico pig survive. The oak trees that produce acorns in abundance are native to the area. These acorns are quite a bit larger than the acorns produced by American oak trees. They’re also very high in fatty acids, especially the much desired oleic acid. These are the acorns responsible for the sweet nuttiness of Ibérico ham, and the pigs need the acorns to thrive.

The Ibérico pigs have developed some unique feeding mechanisms. Just like the shell of any nut, the acorn hull is not easily digestible. The Ibéricos have developed the ability to separate the nutmeat from the shell, crushing the nuts and spitting out the shells from the sides of their mouths — and preventing belly-aches in the process.

The Ibéricos are free-ranging pigs, eating grasses, wild legumes and the occasional grub. Each day during acorn sea-

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son, the pigs will walk about 10 miles, eat 22 pounds of acorns and put on about 2.2 pounds of intramuscular fat for their efforts.

### **Selling Ibérico**

This is where it gets a little tricky. While the nomenclature is very clear, it can be somewhat confusing to an uneducated buyer. The top of the line is “Pure Ibérico.” Representing only 8 percent of production, this is highly sought after and very expensive.

The next level is “Ibérico.” Ibérico pigs are often crossbred with other

breeds, usually the White Duroc and the resulting meat has less fat. There are good reasons for crossbreeding — it adds a degree of flexibility. White Duroc crosses, for example, have larger litters and more meat, making them commercially more viable. The pure Ibérico needs 14 to 18 months to grow up, while the Ibérico crosses need only nine to 10 months.

Laws regarding the percentage of Ibérico are very strict; the pig must be at least 25 percent Ibérico to be called Ibérico.

Serrano ham from Spain is more com-

mon, less expensive and readily available. It’s delicious and well worth the time to find a good source of supply, but it’s not Ibérico. There is no such thing as Ibérico Serrano.

The other term often used is pata negra or black hoof. Of course, a Spanish pata negra may be delicious, but the term is often tossed around with a wink and smile, leading the unwary to believe they’re purchasing Ibérico or even the best of the Ibérico. Just not true.

Whether you sell Pure Ibérico or Ibérico ham, the eating experience is amazing. **DB**

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## Blast From The Past

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oufayan Bakeries, Inc., headquartered in Ridgefield NJ, began in North Bergen, NJ, as a small 3,500-square-foot facility that primarily baked pita bread. Today its three state-of-the-art facilities total more than 500,000 square feet and bake a range of specialty items that include pitas, wraps, bagels, tortillas, lavash, cookies and bread sticks.

Toufayan is one of the largest family-owned baking facilities in the U.S. And just as has been true since the company started, there's a Toufayan running the place. Today it's dad Harry, ably helped by son Gregory and daughters Karen and Kristine. Harry's father started the business in the Middle East in 1926, and worked until he was 94 years old. The family emigrated to the U.S in 1963 and opened their first baking plant in this country in 1968 and since then "families have been relyin' on the fresh taste of Toufayan!"

The company's present-day facilities include, from left to right: Ridgefield, NJ (110,000 square feet), Orlando, FL (250,000 square feet) and Plant City, FL (155,000 square feet).



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