



DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

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11th

Annual PEOPLE'S AWARDS

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PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

JAMES E. PREVOR
jprevor@phoenixmedianet.com

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

KENNETH L. WHITACRE
kwhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com

PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

LEE SMITH
lsmith@phoenixmedianet.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

ELLEN KOTEFF
ekoteff@phoenixmedianet.com

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

MARK GOLD
mgold@phoenixmedianet.com

SALES MANAGER

JANE JOHNSON
jjohnson@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

DIANA LEVINE
dlevine@phoenixmedianet.com

ART DIRECTOR

SUNSHINE GORMAN
sgorman@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

FREDDY PULIDO
JACKIE TUCKER

RESEARCH DIRECTOR

SHARON OLSON

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

CHRIS AUMAN CAROL BAREUTHER LINDA BROCKMAN
MARK HAMSTRA BOB JOHNSON TIA KEENAN KEITH LORIA
MAX MCCALMAN LISA WHITE

SEND INSERTION ORDERS, PAYMENTS, PRESS RELEASES,
PHOTOS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, ETC., TO:
DELI BUSINESS

P.O. BOX 810217, BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0217
PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610
EMAIL: DELIBUSINESS@PHOENIXMEDIANET.COM

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CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
JAMES E. PREVOR

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
KENNETH L. WHITACRE

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
LEE SMITH

VICE PRESIDENT EDITORIAL
ELLEN KOTEFF

GENERAL COUNSEL
DEBRA PREVOR

TRADE SHOW COORDINATOR
JACKIE LOMONTE

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SAFE FOOD MATTERS! IDDBA RELEASES CLEANING GUIDE FOR DELI SLICERS

As part of its food safety initiative called Safe Food Matters!, the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, based in Madison, WI, announced the release of its Deli Slicer Cleaning Job Guide. Available on the IDDBA website, this free training tool provides in-store deli employees with step-by-step instructions on how to safely and effectively disassemble, clean, sanitize, and reassemble deli slicers.

The association's focus in 2015 is to build awareness about *Listeria monocytogenes*, a bacteria that causes listeriosis, a potentially life-threatening condition responsible for approximately 1,600 infections and 260 deaths annually. By adopting specific food safety practices, retailers can help delis decrease the potential of any foodborne illness occurrences and cross-contamination, especially from *Listeria monocytogenes*.

"Some ready-to-eat foods like sliced deli meats can be ideal agents for the spread of *Listeria monocytogenes*, which makes proper training of service associates on the importance of food safety a vital necessity of store operations," said Mike Eardley, president and chief executive of the IDDBA, a non-profit membership organization serving the dairy, deli and bakery industry. "Along with other food safety processes such as temperature control, good personal hygiene, and correct food handling techniques, proper and regular cleaning of deli slicers is an important step in minimizing the risk of contamination and cross-contamination in the department."

To access this cleaning guide and a library of more than 100 job guides on food safety, customer service, and department-specific topics, visit iddba.org/jobguides.

COMING NEXT IN AUG/SEPT ISSUE

COVER STORY

Back To School

FEATURE STORIES

Tailgating
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MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Soups
Grab-N-Go

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PREPARED FOODS

Party Platters

CHEESES

American Sheep Cheeses
Parmigiano Reggiano

SUPPLEMENT

Company Profiles

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Announcements



BEAVERTON FOODS' MUSTARDS HONORED

Beaverton Foods, Beaverton, OR, has earned nine medals at the 20th annual World Wide Mustard Competition. The international event was held at the National Mustard Museum in Middleton, WI recently. Its Inglehoffer Sweet Hot Mustard, Beaver Brand Extra Hot Sriracha and Beaver Brand Wasabi Horseradish won gold medals. Beaver Brand Russian Mustard, and Garlic Mustards, Inglehoffer Original Horseradish, and Napa Valley Orange Ginger Mustard won silver medals. Beaver Brand Chinese Mustard and Coney Island Mustard took home the bronze.

www.beavertonfoods.com



BUTTERBALL CELEBRATES SAFETY

Butterball LLC, Mt. Olive, NC, recently achieved a major milestone in workplace safety by working three million hours without an Occupational Health and Safety Administration recordable lost-time injury. The turkey producer's workplace safety program's performance exceeds poultry industry standards as compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics adopting standards developed by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Voluntary Protection Program.

www.butterball.com
IDDBA Booth # 3133



RAISING THE BAR

EcoTensil Inc., Corte Madera, CA, has unveiled a new grab-and-go package design with a sanitary SpoonLidz in a paperboard lid. The PopOut SpoonLidz is made from smooth and sustainable paperboard similar to a coffee cup and in one fold becomes a sturdy spoon. This provides a utensil on or in a cup or package for healthy spoonable products to be easily eaten on the go. It is constructed from SFI renewable paperboard and can be easily added on to most existing packaging.

www.ecotensil.com
IDDBA Booth # 1438



NEWLY DESIGNED PACKAGING

Kangaroo Brands Inc., Milwaukee, WI, now has newly-designed artwork and packaging that contains a tray to protect its pita products. Each package contains eight pre-cut and ready to fill pockets that have clean ingredients, are low fat and have no cholesterol, trans fat or high fructose corn syrup. Each pita serving is 60 calories. The pitas ship frozen and have a 14-day sell by date. This allows for larger displays and reduced stocking.

www.reallytastyfood.com
IDDBA Booth # 1220



STELLA CHEESE WEBSITE HONORED

Saputo, Montreal, Canada, has announced Stella Cheese has been granted a 2015 American Web Design Award from Graphic Design USA magazine. The magazine's annual competition celebrates the work of graphic designers and recognizes the best-designed and most innovative packaging and web design in the food and beverage industry. Stella Cheese's new website was launched in January. It is now responsive and offers improved sorting functions. Other features include a cheese calculator and beverage-pairing guide, in addition to Cheese 101 and FAQ pages.

www.stellacheese.com
IDDBA Booth # 3905



HISSHO LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Hissho Sushi, Charlotte, NC, has launched a new website. The user experience is now clear-cut, fun and informative. An interactive locations map and information about joining the company also are included. Users can sign up to receive news, blog articles and more.

www.hisshosushi.com
IDDBA Booth # 4813



LIPARI FOODS ACQUIRES SODERHOLM WHOLESALE

Lipari Foods, Warren, MI, has signed an agreement to acquire 100 percent of Soderholm Wholesale Foods of Sun Prairie, WI. The acquisition will expand the breadth of products available to Soderholm customers, while strengthening Lipari's portfolio of natural, organic, vegetarian and gluten-free foods in particular. Soderholm's specialty product line across the frozen, dairy, meat, seafood, deli, bakery and produce departments complements Lipari's current offerings.

www.liparifoods.com



IRELAND EXPORTER REVEALS NEW IDENTITY

The Irish Dairy Board, in Dublin, Leinster, Ireland, revealed its new global corporate identity, Ornua, The Home of Irish Dairy. Ornua owns the Kerrygold brand, which includes butter, cheese and milk powders, while Ornua supplies dairy branded products and ingredients. Over the past five years, Ornua has been transforming its business in preparation for the removal of milk quotas, a new era for Irish dairying. The new global identity marks the next step in this mission.

www.ornua.com

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See us at the IDDBA booth #2413 and the Summer Fancy Food booth #266.



New Products



GRAFTON VILLAGE EARNS SQF CERTIFICATION

Grafton Village Cheese, makers of aged Vermont cheddar and specialty cheeses, recently received a Safe Quality Food Institute (SQF) Certificate of Registration Level 2 - Accredited HACCP Food Safety Plan for its cheese production facilities in Grafton and Brattleboro, VT. The SQF Institute is recognized worldwide by retailers and foodservice providers who require a rigorous, credible food safety management system. "We feel the certification provides an added layer of confidence and loyalty within our industry," says Bob Allen, president of Grafton Village Cheese, and its parent company, Windham Foundation. www.graftonvillagecheese.com



GLUTEN FREE SAUCES

Nestle USA, Glendale, CA, has announced its Stouffer's Alfredo sauces are now gluten free. The Alfredo and Alfredo Parmigiana sauces are crafted with real cream combined with aged Parmesan and lightly seasoned with ground black pepper. The line offers heat-and-serve use and a from-scratch taste. The sauces can be used as a topping for chicken, asparagus and sundried tomatoes or for a signature pizza or pasta entrée.

www.nestleusa.com
IDDBA Booth # 3105



A GOURMET MAC SALAD

Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, offers two new lines for deli foodservice programs. Reser's Gourmet Macaroni Salad is a little sweet and a bit tangy. It offers a colorful new twist on the classic macaroni salad, with cheddar cheese, crunchy celery, red bell pepper, green onion and shredded carrots. Stonemill Kitchens' Beet and Red Cabbage Slaw is a salad that adds color and texture to retailers' displays. The new bulk deli salad can be repacked for grab-and-go sections.

www.resers.com
IDDBA Booth # 2923



AN AUTHENTIC TASTE

Simply Fresh Foods, Cypress, CA, has introduced reformulated and new varieties in its Rojo's Salsa line. The products are crafted with more authentic taste using traditional recipes and preparation methods. Salsas use blends of jalapenos, serranos and chipotle chiles. The three new flavors include Black Bean & Corn with roasted corn and cumin, a molcajete-style Roasted Tomato & Green Chile with chunks of roasted tomatoes and green chiles and Mango Chipotle with sweet heat.

www.simplyff.com
IDDBA Booth # 1115



BEET SCALLION HOMMUS

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Ward Hill, MA, has launched Beet Scallion Hommus. A healthier alternative to dip products, all natural Beet Scallion Hommus is Non-GMO Project Verified and Gluten-Free Certified. This vegan dip has a large appeal to children with its vibrant hue and abundance of flavor. The line also provides great benefits due to the high nutritional value of beets, with significant amounts of calcium, vitamin C and anti-cancer properties.

www.cedarsfoods.com
IDDBA Booth # 4443



BEEF & CHICKEN

Dietz & Watson, Philadelphia, PA, has introduced two new products. Sriracha Chicken Breast is made with real red chilies and garlic for an authentic flavor and spice. The line is 97% fat free, gluten free and nitrate free. Deli Beef Franks use lean, hand-trimmed fresh beef and authentic spices for an Old World flavor. Updated packaging provides three individual packages of franks in a sleeve.

www.dietzandwatson.com
IDDBA Booth # 2433



GMO-FREE PASTA CHIPS

Keen Marketing and Manufacturing offers GMO-free Pasta Chips and Veggie Pasta Chips. Made from real pasta, the chips are lighter and healthier than traditional products. The line features all-natural ingredients, including premium ancient grains, semolina flour and faro, the line is oven baked to be thin and crispy. Six flavors are available: Marinara, Alfredo, Spicy Tomato Basil, Garlic Olive Oil, Mediterranean Sea Salt and Veggie Chip. Each package is 120 calories and has no cholesterol.

www.pastachips.com
IDDBA Booth # 4223



FIRE-ROASTED FOR FLAVOR

Eckrich, part of the John Morrell Food Group, a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, Inc., Lisle, IL, has introduced Fire-Roasted Pepper & Onion Smoked Sausage. Cooked over natural hardwood, with real bell peppers and sweet onions roasted over direct flames, this latest product delivers an authentic smokehouse taste. The fresh-picked peppers and onions in the sausage make for a flavorful and unique taste. This is the company's first fire-roasted offering in its line of 15 smoked sausage varieties.

www.eckrich.com
IDDBA Booth # 1301

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New Products



NO SALT ADDED ALBACORE TUNA

Wild Planet introduces its new no-salt-added product, ideal for delis catering to the growing demand for more healthful, lower sodium foods. Wild Planet's special once-cooked process seals in all the natural juices and nutritious omega oil content. No water or oil is added, resulting in a 100 percent yield, for more servings and more profits in every can.

www.wildplanetfoodservice.com



SPECIALTY MEAT LINE EXPANDS

Alexian, Neptune, NJ, has added smoked sausage to its specialty food lineup. Like its other lines, the Saucisson Smoked Sausage is all natural and minimally processed, with no added preservatives or artificial ingredients. The result is flavor without added sodium nitrite or sodium erythorbate. Saucisson is a type of charcuterie popular in France that is made of pork and beef. It is smoked in an easy-peel fibrous casing for several hours for maximum flavor development. Each 12-ounce sausage is individually vacuum-packaged and will remain fresh for more than 90 days.

www.alexianpate.com
IDDBA Booth # 1949



SAUCES ARE ALL NATURAL

Colavita, Edison, NJ, has created two lines of all-natural and organic tomato sauces. In the classic Italian style, the products use ripe tomatoes and extra virgin olive oil. The gluten-free sauces are cooked in small batches and contain no preservatives. Four flavors are available in 16- and 26-ounce jars: Marinara, Spicy Marinara, Italian Garden and Tomato Basil.

www.colavita.com
IDDBA Booth # 4368



FROZEN VEGETARIAN FARE

Demeter's Pantry, Silver Spring, MD, has introduced three of its best-selling Greek Table vegetarian entrees in frozen foodservice. The line, geared for hot bars, deli cases and catering applications, reheat in 5-pound portions. Varieties include Eggplant with Feta, Artichoke Stew and White Bean Stew. The dishes are made with extra virgin olive oil and 100 percent natural ingredients without fillers and additives. The entrees also are free of gluten and soy.

www.thegreektable.net



NEW SALADS AND SIDES

Garden-Fresh Foods Inc., Milwaukee, WI, has announced new salads and side dishes that feature a variety of sweet and savory profiles, in addition to a seasonal dessert line called Blissful Treats. New products include Apple Bourbon Cole Slaw, Cool Breeze Health Salad, Thai Noodle Salad, Chili Con Queso Mac & Cheese Salad, Grab-and-Go Snack Cups, and assorted cracker and dip party trays.

www.garden-freshfoods.com
IDDBA Booth # 2708



TURKEY LINE EXPANDS

Michigan Turkey Producers, Grand Rapids, MI, has expanded its Golden Legacy line of turkey products with a new Pastrami Seasoned Petite Turkey Breast. The line is gluten free, 99 percent fat free, contains no added starches or binders and is made with whole muscle breast meat that has been cured, smoked and seasoned. The turkey was raised on family farms and humanely harvested using a C.A.S. (Controlled Atmosphere Stunning) system.

www.miturkey.com
IDDBA Booth # 4270



A SWEET ALTERNATIVE

Peppadew USA, Morganville, NJ, has added two products to its line. Peppadew Goldew are grown in New Jersey. Although marketed fresh, the line also can be put in brine for deli bars. Goldew is packed in a 10-pound pail and comes with a 'Jersey Fresh' seal. It has a sweet and tangy flavor. The Peppadew used for Peppadew Stuffed with Cream Cheese is shipped from South Africa to Germany, then stuffed with cream cheese before being imported to the U.S. It combines the sweet heat of Peppadew with the tangy taste of European cream cheese.

www.peppadewusa.com



STOCK FOOD CONTAINERS LAUNCHED

Placon, Madison, WI, has launched a new line of stock food packaging containers. Fresh 'n Clear GoCubes offer modern and non-standard square shapes for versatility with an insert tray. Foods can be mixed and matched for a variety of pre-pack grab-and-go meal options. Five sizes are available, from 12 to 36 ounces. The film sealable containers also offer a one-size-fits-all clear recycled PET lid option with anti-fog technology.

www.placon.com
IDDBA Booth # 2603

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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Deli As It Once Was

As the industry gathers in Atlanta for the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association Annual Convention and Exposition, it can expect to see a truly extraordinary sight. After all, in those halls we will see an assortment of foods gathered from the far corners of the globe, we will see the miracle of how modern processing and packaging combines with contemporary transportation and storage techniques to create what is truly an exception in the annals of time — delicious, safe and plentiful food, most of which is affordable to the vast bulk of the nation's citizenry.

Yet as we as an industry justifiably take pride in these achievements, perhaps there is still a place for all to tip our collective hats to those who have gone before. There is no better way to do this than to catch a screening of *Deli Man — the Movie*, identified as "A freshly made documentary by Erik Greenberg Anjou." Here is how the producers describe the movie:

For some, delicatessen food is close to a religious experience. A tender, crumbling cut of corned beef steeped in its juices. A full-bodied garlic dill pickle. Spicy brown mustard with grain. A blintz that melts in your mouth like a creamsicle on a summer's day. Recipes and culinary garnishes from Hungary, Poland, Russia, Romania that flowed into late 19th and early 20th century America and soon became part of an American culinary and cultural vernacular — Deli.

Deli Man is a documentary film produced and directed by Erik Greenberg Anjou; the third work in his trilogy about Jewish culture. The celebrated preceding films are "A Cantor's Tale" and "The Klezmatics — On Holy Ground," which have to date screened at more than two hundred international film festivals and have been broadcast in the U.S., Israel, Canada and Poland. The principal guide of Deli Man is the effusive and charming Ziggy Gruber, a third-generation delicatessen man, owner and maven (as well as a Yiddish-speaking French trained chef) who currently operates one of the country's top delis, Kenny and Ziggy's in Houston. Kenny and Ziggy's has been touted in press reviews ranging from "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives" to the L.A. Daily News.

"Texas?" you ask. Shalom, y'all. Because the story of the American deli is the story of Jews — their immigration, migration, upward mobility, and western assimilation. New York may always be the most populous, celebrated and redolent Jewish node. But substantial and influential Jewish tides also flowed from Chicago to Detroit, San Francisco to L.A., and Galveston to Houston and Dallas.

How this burgeoning tribe moved and thrived from city to suburb and from suburb to strip mall, and in the process created a legacy and new generations of wealth, is the sunny topside of the Jewish-American journey. The shadowy under-story is how that very success engendered the deterioration of the old, traditional urban block and neighborhood — the epic synagogues, Mom and Pop storefronts, and nucleus of Jewish cultural life at which deli was the succulent heart.

One of the more poignant moments in the movie is when Ziggy Gruber and his father walk through the lower East side of Manhattan and observe the loss of Jewish culture. In 1931, there were 1,500 kosher delis in the five boroughs of New York, many more were Kosher-style or were in the suburbs. Today, in the whole country there are probably not even 200 kosher delis.

Ziggy, an exceptional human being who somehow channels the agony and ecstasy of a people, is driven to preserve the culture by preserving the food. Yet while Ziggy laments the loss, his father says there is nothing to be sad about. Everything has its moment.

Jewish deli is unlike other immigrant foods. The Italians and Chinese, the Mexicans and Indians... their cuisine is reinvigorated in each generation as new immigrants come, bringing recipes and a willingness to work hard. Yet the Jewish deli draws on a culture that perished in the crematoria of Auschwitz. It survives, if it is to survive at all, only by the willingness and ability of people already here to remember their roots and reinvigorate their own culture and cuisine.

The movie ends with Ziggy Gruber getting married at the great synagogue in Budapest where his grandfather had his Bar Mitzvah. It is a grand gesture to tie the future, his family, his children yet unborn, to the past he so loves, the Yiddish culture of his grandparents.

There is a movement to recreate Jewish delis, to make it sustainable, ethical, low fat and more. Perhaps they will succeed in recreating an old cuisine for the modern world.

Succeed or fail, the contemporary supermarket deli/foodservice outlet has its roots in the Kosher delicatessen that once was on every urban corner, long before Starbucks was dreamt of.

The methodical reach from Kosher, to kosher style, to just a deli, a step-by-step effort to make everyone a customer, culminates at the assortment we will all see in Atlanta. So as we walk, maybe we can give a silent toast for time gone by and hopes for the future. To life, to life, L'Chaim.

DB



James P. Prevora

Yummm



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The Nature of the Best



by Lee Smith, Publisher

The Transformation of Food

Our food supply has changed dramatically over the last 75 years. Consumer demands and good science, along with impressive technological advances, have led the way to safer and tastier consumer goods.

In the past, we wanted cheap, fast, safe and pretty. Multinational companies responded to demands for coast-to-coast availability by using chemical additives to extend shelf life and artificial colors to keep colors vibrant and fresh.

In order to meet the growing demand for less-expensive products, manufacturers used artificial flavors and low-cost sweeteners to give the appearance of quality, while enjoying the flexibility to use lower quality ingredients. Natural thickeners lowered cost but gave the appearance products were richer.

Animal welfare was ignored and, in all fairness, animals were thought of as just that — animals. Their primary purpose was to serve the needs of mankind. Often tortured and inhumanely killed, it was considered the price for meat everyone could afford every day.

In return, consumers developed unrealistic expectations of what food should look and taste like. All strawberries should be big, plump and bright red. Blueberries should be the size of grapes. Tomatoes should be available all year. Bread should stay soft and fresh for weeks, potato salad should have a 90-day shelf life and white foods, the color of fresh, should resemble white enamel paint.

Predictably, our tastes changed. The chemical taste of artificial is considered normal. Pale yellow eggs are the norm. Extra white Feta, Mozzarella, yogurt, and cottage cheese are preferred. Artificially colored and flavored, dark blue soy isolated protein bits taste like blueberries. Nutrition went out the window and parents demanded the right to send their kids to school with a bag of candy for lunch.

But, as always, times are changing as people are getting concerned about nutrition and what's in their foods. The new generation — riding the wave of technology, can research an ingredient label with the speed of a phone call and has access to studies that 10 years ago were only available to elite scientists — is demanding answers and complete transparency. The use of trans fats declined dramatically because of the voice of consumers and the same holds true for high fructose sweeteners.

A significant issue today is GMO-labeling, a battle

being bitterly opposed by big business and demanded by a large swath of people. And, who is demanding transparency? The most prized golden geese — those consumers for whom the cost of food is a minor part of their budgets. They eat out frequently and when shopping, can afford the luxuries. They are educated and they read. They also are the customers everyone wants.

The trend is towards quality as defined by authenticity and clean labeling. They want animal welfare standards enforced; organic if possible. They believe the fewer number of ingredients the better. Most of all, they want to know what is in their food and GMOs are on their radar.

However, there is a caveat. For example, organic is widely sought after and in some markets anything labeled organic is a guaranteed winner. Is organic better? Maybe. Is it better if a buyer demands an organic cheese but a manufacturer cannot use high quality local milk and must source milk from 1,000 miles away? Is three-day-old organic milk better than local fresh milk that is turned into cheese in a matter of hours?

The marketplace needs to be educated and, for retailers, education should be a high priority. In all likelihood, the future will look entirely different than it does today. Personal predictions include overall strong growth in organics, locally sourced ingredients, in-store prepared foods and clean labels with a minimal number of ingredients. The winners will be those retailers and manufacturers that embrace transparency and demand such standards from their suppliers.

It may well be true that customers are placing unrealistic demands or are upset about the wrong issues. There is ample room for arguing that consumers do not know enough to make decisions about GMO's. However, in the long run it will not matter. Fight as we may, the consumer will win.

Will we still be able to feed the world? Yes, because new technologies will be developed to provide healthy and safe food. Just as chemicals changed the face of food in the last 100 years, a move to fresh foods without chemicals will change the face of tomorrow's marketplace. **DB**



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BY LISA WHITE

**KEN BLANCHETTE
MICHAEL EARDLEY
DIANE EARL
WILSON ESTUPIÑÁN**

**KIM HAGER
EMILIO MIGNUCCI
RICK STEIN
SUSAN STURMAN**

Deli Business honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to the industry, their company and their community. Nominations for 2016 may be submitted to: Executive Editor Ellen Koteff (ekoteff@phoenixmedianet.com).



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KEN BLANCHETTE

SENIOR CATEGORY MANAGER, IMPORT AND SPECIALTIES EXPERT, FRESHDIRECT, LONG ISLAND CITY, NY

NAME: Ken Blanchette

COMPANY: FreshDirect

TITLE: Senior Category Manager, Import And Specialties Expert

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

"Working with great people in the industry that appreciate authenticity and love of food here at FreshDirect and around the world," he says.

PERSONAL: He lives in Westchester County, NY and has been married to his wife Susan for 18 years. They have one daughter, Antonia, 14.

HOBBIES: Gardening and cooking with his wife.

BEST ADVICE: "You have to love what you do," says Blanchette. "If you want to be in the food business, you use whatever skill you have to get there; use that experience and take advantage of it to build your career."

Growing up in a traditional Italian family in Brooklyn, food was always a big part of Ken Blanchette's Sundays when he was a child.

"I grew up in a food-centric family, so it was all about Sunday dinners and weekends at my grandmother's preparing meals for a dozen or more people," he says. "I was there to help and learn along the way and, as a result, always wanted to do something in the food business."

Yet he admits the path he took was somewhat unconventional. Blanchette graduated from New York University's Polytechnic School of Science and Engineering with a degree in biochemistry.

"That's how I began this trek," he says. "When I first worked in the sciences and biochemistry research, I thought I'd be involved in food importing, redistribution or brokerage. There has always been a straight line in thought, but the business that would accommodate this was always up in the air."

After working at NYS Labs & Research as an assistant to a senior cancer researcher, he took a job at a Manhattan restaurant as sous chef.

A few short months later, Blanchette started his own charcuterie manufacturing and resale business, Michel's Magnifique, which specialized in traditional and vegetarian pâté.

Being 24 at the time was an advantage, since he wasn't aware of the challenges ahead. Instead, he capitalized on what he knew instead of what he didn't.

"After the 'ignorance is bliss' state of mind in getting into something over

my head, I established the company, maintained a good game plan and took the business to a higher level," says Blanchette.

"This included understanding how to work with associated businesses, promotions, advertising, distribution and getting goods into the market."

Twenty three years later, the time came when he felt the business had reached its peak, and he was not ready to invest any more capital into running it.

By that time, the charcuterie business was changing and dry-cured meats were the primary products.

He then was approached by the co-founder of FreshDirect at the Fancy Food Show in 1999 and, after selling his business in May 2001, joined the company as vice president purchasing and senior category manager, Imports and Specialties Expert.

"I enjoy discovery, travel, putting together programs that distinguish us from others and bringing new products into our family of goods," says Blanchette.

"I'm happy that I can use what I know to make a living."

He says those in the food industry not only get to experience great things, but always are on a path of discovery and learning.

"The more you know, the more you learn, and it's important to capitalize on educational experiences," he says.

"In any business, it's about finding the skill you think you can use best and developing it, but also loving what you do," he says.

"I was lucky to find a career that works to my strengths, which has benefitted my life as a whole."

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MICHAEL EARDLEY

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, INTERNATIONAL DAIRY-DELI-BAKERY ASSOCIATION, MADISON, WI

NAME: Michael Eardley

COMPANY: International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, Madison, WI

TITLE: President and chief executive

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

"Seeing that the professionalism of our business has improved, and it has been fun to be part of the process of upgrading our department in the eyes of customers," he says.

PERSONAL: Eardley makes his home in Madison, WI, with Deborah, his wife of 25 years. He has a son, Colin, and a daughter, Dana, both in college.

HOBBIES: Traveling, lifelong learning through reading and interaction, cooking, a love of all food and wine, and an occasional round of golf.

BEST ADVICE: "Have fun and be committed to people, product and lifelong learning," says Eardley. "There is a lot to learn about deli, and every day I learn something new. It's important to be open to constant change, understand the processes and utilize technology to make decisions."

Michael Eardley, president and chief executive of the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), was born into a Midwestern family of farmers and "supermarket-ers," so his career in food seems to be predestined.

He began his four-decade-long retail career while in grade school in Grand Rapids, MI, working in family grocery stores. Coming out of school, Eardley took a job with D&W Food Centers, with the intention it would only be a temporary position to pay for his schooling. It lasted almost 30 years, advancing to vice president of fresh foods.

When an opportunity with H-E-B presented itself, he moved his family to San Antonio, TX. "I left the Midwest to join H-E-B, spending 14 years at the company with every intention of retiring from retail there," says Eardley.

"The first time I won a People's Award as deli business development manager at H-E-B, the person on the page opposite of me was Carol Christison, former IDDBA executive director," he says. "Carol was the first person to take me to San Antonio and to see an H-E-B, so I feel like I've come full circle."

After the death of Christison in March 2014, Eardley was contacted by IDDBA to help with the transition.

"I didn't plan on leaving retail," says Eardley. "But I see this as the third leg in my career to make sure what Carol built over the last 31 years will continue and expand IDDBA's role in the industry."

Amidst an industry of consolidations and changing retail dynamics, his goal is to ensure that IDDBA is in a position to thrive, grow and remain relevant.

"We want to be a trusted resource that builds the retail community and relationships for our categories," says Eardley. "This also emphasizes the

importance of attending the IDDBA show — building relationships. In the past, our show was more about customer acquisition. Today it is about building a community, an important component to continued success."

Eardley specifically wants to fulfill IDDBA's mission and vision of expanding the leadership role in promoting the growth and development of dairy, deli, and bakery sales while being the essential resource for relevant information and services.

The process involves a re-launch of IDDBA's Long Range Planning Committee and identifying its Six Pillars of Influence, which are the external issues impacting the direction of the organization. These include food safety, community, people, consolidation, competition, and technology.

As an example, the first pillar, food safety, is being addressed through IDDBA's Safe Food Matters! campaign. It was launched in January to build awareness of safe food practices and serve as an industry resource for food retailers, manufacturers and their employees. This year, the initiative focuses on best practices for decreasing the potential for *Listeria monocytogenes* growth and cross contamination, particularly for deli ready-to-eat foods.

"Safe Food Matters! was developed in order for the association to take a leadership role in communicating awareness and education, thus, reducing contamination," says Eardley.

When Eardley first joined the deli industry, it mainly consisted of 6-foot deli cases chock full of resused product that couldn't be sold anywhere else in the store.

"Today, I am proud of the fact that the deli is a department of educated professionals and a culinary destination that focuses on customer service and customization," he says.

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DIANE EARL

**SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PREPARED FOODS,
UNITED SUPERMARKETS, LUBBOCK, TX**

NAME: Diane Earl

COMPANY: United Supermarkets, Lubbock, TX

TITLE: Senior director of prepared foods

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

In addition to successful careers in both foodservice and retail, Earl published a cookbook, "Always Enough Thyme ... for Great Friends, Fabulous Food & Spirited Fun."

PERSONAL: A life-long Texan, Earl graduated from Texas Tech University and has been married to her husband, Mike, for 30 years.

HOBBIES: Reading, traveling, cooking

BEST ADVICE: "In this business, it's important to learn something every single day," says Earl. "You must be good at developing people around you and be extremely flexible."

Diane Earl has a long history in the food business, but her first foray was in the restaurant industry.

When her former employer DF&R Restaurants, Inc. went public and was then purchased in 1995, she decided to take a different path.

In 2001, she published a cookbook with four of her longtime friends "and played for a while after that," says Earl.

After spending some time recentering and refocusing, she ran into a college friend who worked for United Supermarkets and was aware of her background. At the time, the chain was launching its Market Street foodservice program.

When he asked what she was doing, Earl responded, "Nothing," and he replied, "Not anymore." She was then brought on to direct United's new foodservice program and, 18 months later, became director of deli operations.

"The man upstairs was trying to get me off the couch," says Earl. "I knew I was going to go back to work, but didn't know when or in what capacity."

Thirteen years later, Earl remains with the chain as senior director of prepared foods, a position she has held for two years. Her duties now encompass deli, bakery and floral, with direct responsibilities for deli foodservice.

She enjoys the creative parts of the job as well as planning and moving departments forward. Yet, learning new things keeps her career fresh and exciting.

"I learn something new every single day, and that's a big driver," says Earl. "It's important, because if you don't continue to have drive, you'll look up one day and get run over, since everyone is getting better and the industry is becoming more competitive every day."

Earl says coming from a restaurant background gives her a different perspective on the business.

"People in the industry become stifled due to labor," she says. "In my opinion, you'll pay labor one way or another. Obviously, we can't make everything from scratch, but if you don't spend some money on labor then all you are is another 'me too.' Still, it's more difficult because you have to invest more in training your people."

There was a definite learning curve jumping from foodservice to the retail industry.

"One of the most difficult things coming from a restaurant background is learning the merchandising piece, which was a steeper learning curve than I expected," says Earl. "You just have to dig in and get others' perspectives. I have a great team around me that helps with that aspect."

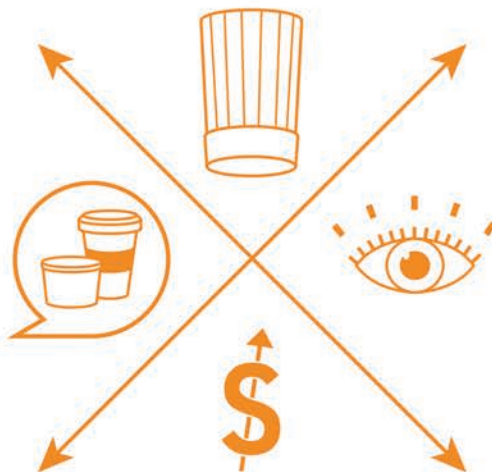
It also helps to have mentors. Prior to joining United, former DF&R executives David Frazier and Reagan Redus taught Earl the nuts and bolts of the retail business.

Among a host of those she credits for assisting her in the retail realm are Gerald Critz, former director of United's meat market, and Wes Jackson, currently the chain's vice president of merchandising.

If she wasn't in her current career, Earl says she would be in the retail industry in one form or another.

"I'm very fortunate to have had two great careers, and I've enjoyed both of them equally," says Earl.

"In order to grow in your career and be successful, you have to be true to yourself and have a balanced life. People need to learn to do this, but if they don't develop those skills, they won't be successful in the long term."



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WILSON ESTUPIÑÁN

**DIRECTOR OF FRESH FOODS, AMERICA'S
FOOD BASKET, LAKE SUCCESS, NY**

NAME: Wilson Estupiñán

COMPANY: America's Food Basket, Lake Success, NY

TITLE: Director of fresh foods

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

Moving from a consultant role to becoming director of fresh foods for a 44-plus-store supermarket chain

PERSONAL: Estupiñán has been married for 23 years to his wife Tania and has a 21-year-old son Bryan who is a U.S. Marine.

HOBBIES: Reading, going to movies, being with family, eating out, traveling

BEST ADVICE: "The supermarket industry is a challenging career, but very fulfilling," says Estupiñán. "It's important to be passionate about it to be successful."

When Wilson Estupiñán emigrated from Ecuador to the United States in 1993, his goal was not just to make a better life for himself and his family, but also to further his personal development.

His success in accomplishing this and more has led to becoming a recipient of the 2015 Deli Business People's Award.

Estupiñán joined the supermarket industry 21 years ago working in various capacities at Foodtown, before taking a position as business development manager at Farm Fresh Inc., a produce wholesaler. It was here that he met Mike Turco, the man who would become his mentor. He taught Estupiñán all about the wholesale business and introduced him to different retailers in the marketplace.

Estupiñán became a retail consultant in 2008. After coaching his clients to better manage the different food categories and to become better at business overall, one of them, America's Food Basket, hired him full-time in 2009 to better tap into Estupiñán's expertise.

America's Food Basket currently has 44 locations and is growing by five to seven stores a year.

Estupiñán worked in various departments after joining Foodtown, including serving as manager of perishables for about seven years, before getting into the deli side about 12 years ago.

In his current role as director of fresh foods, Estupiñán develops programs for the deli, bakery, meat, seafood, floral and produce departments. "I'm always working to get new programs up and running," he says.

Although he works in the corporate office, Estupiñán stays in close contact with America's Food Basket's stores, implementing innovative strategies; building meaningful business plans,

conducting market research and analysis; working with logistics; and helping to put new systems in place.

With the food industry in constant flux, Estupiñán realizes his job description has expanded significantly.

As a result, he has made an effort to keep on top of trends. He has become educated on various topics like GMOs, natural foods and gluten-free products by talking to customers, reading articles, surfing the web and attending industry trade shows and workshops.

"Everyone has become more aware of eating healthier, and people are changing their habits," he says. "This has impacted what I do, because in addition to selling food, it's become even more important to be educated and multi task in the different categories. We can grow our business, but need to be aware of our expanding demographics, while utilizing additional analytics."

When asked what he loves most about his job, Estupiñán says he enjoys developing employees to be the best they can be as well as putting new structures in place that help increase efficiencies and better the business.

"I'm an immigrant, so one of the biggest challenges I've dealt with was coming into a new country and learning the culture and language while trying to fit in," says Estupiñán. "This experience has helped me accomplish many things in my career and in my personal life."

Estupiñán says his strongest attributes are organization, time management, persistency and being committed to always making a difference.

The thought of another career path has never crossed his mind, since he enjoys coaching employees, learning about customers' eating habits, discovering new trends and working in an industry under constant change.



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KIM HAGER

DIRECTOR OF DELI, BAKERY AND STARBUCKS, FARM FRESH SUPERMARKETS, VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

NAME: Kim Hager

COMPANY: Farm Fresh, Virginia Beach, VA

TITLE: Director of deli, bakery and Starbucks

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: "I'm most proud of the fact that our service deli is No. 1 in profits and growth out of all Farm Fresh departments," says Hager. "It's a good driver on the fresh side and our fried chicken is the No. 1 SKU in the store."

PERSONAL: Hager lives in Virginia Beach and has been married to her husband, Bill, for 16 years. She has two children from a previous marriage — Kristine, 27, and Brooke, 25 — a stepson, Brandon, 21, and two grandchildren, 2-year-old Gracie and 6-month-old R.J., and one on the way.

HOBBIES: "When I'm not working, I'm with my grandchildren, but I also love sporting events and formerly played softball," says Hager.

BEST ADVICE: "Always keep an open mind," says Hager. "You have to be a sponge in this fast-paced business to get to the next level, but also be able to accept constructive criticism and have fun."

The retail bug bit Kim Hager, as she finished up her second year of college with plans to be a P.E. teacher and coach.

She had worked part-time at the local Giant Open Air Market when she was 16 and became the deli manager for the store only three years later.

Moving quickly up the ranks and her loyalty to the business has garnered Kim Hager a 2015 Deli Business People's Award.

"I had a really great boss who taught me so much in such a small amount of time," says Hager.

"I decided to take on the challenge."

About 11 years later, Farm Fresh purchased Giant Open Air Market, and Hager became the first department manager to transfer. Her new duties included running the deli, salad bar and cafeteria.

Hager was looking for new challenges and, because the chain wasn't promoting from within at that time, she took a position as store director for Carvel Corp.

It wasn't long before she was approached by Farm Fresh's vice president of deli/bakery during a company event and asked to come back as a merchandiser.

After five years, Hager had the opportunity to relocate and went to work as a deli/bakery merchandiser at an Orlando, FL Winn-Dixie for two years, before leaving for the same position at a Raleigh, NC store.

"I then decided to open up my own deli in Virginia Beach with a couple of partners called PMS (Professionally Made Sandwiches) Deli," says Hager. "We played it up with fun sandwich names, like the Hot Flash Wrap."

Unfortunately, Hager's partners had health and other personal issues. Because all three had agreed to call it quits if they were not all in, the partners decided to sell the business.

As Hager was visiting the lawyer to sign the sale papers, Farm Fresh contacted her regarding a sales manager position.

"I didn't have a next step in place, so I went on the interview and was hired as the service deli sales manager a week later," she says.

This was almost six years ago. Hager was promoted in March of this year to her current position as director of deli, bakery and Starbucks.

Being in the grocery business for more than 35 years and with Farm Fresh for 24 years, Hager enjoys the camaraderie between the staff most.

"Even though we're a chain of 41 stores, we're able to have more of a personal relationship with the store team," she says.

Hager's dad, a military veteran who died about 10 years ago, influenced her values in life and work.

"I'm one of three daughters and a good work ethic was always big in my family," she says. "My dad always said those who work hard will get recognition and rewards."

Other mentors throughout her career include Mike Buck, chief executive of Mega Foods, and Mark Merrill, Farm Fresh's vice president of sales, marketing and merchandising.

In the years ahead, Hager plans on getting to know more about the other departments she's now working with.

"I pride myself on knowing my numbers and all about the business," she says.

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EMILIO MIGNUCCI

CO-OWNER, DI BRUNO BROTHERS, PHILADELPHIA, PA

NAME: Emilio Mignucci

COMPANY: DiBruno Brothers

TITLE: Co-owner

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

"One of my favorite accomplishments is bringing the Italian Market Festival celebration back to prominence after not having it for more than 20 years," says Mignucci. "It took a lot of hard work begging door to door as well as plenty of my blood, sweat and tears."

PERSONAL: Born and raised in South Philly, married 25 years to wife Susan, two sons, Emilio, 23, who works in the business, and Dante, 18.

HOBBIES: Mignucci helps out at an area restaurant school and enjoys reading about the food industry.

BEST ADVICE: "To build a successful organization, you need to find out what your vision is, create a mission statement, and surround yourself with great people," says Mignucci.

As far back as Emilio Mignucci can remember he frequented his grandfather and uncle's Italian market, Di Bruno Brothers in Philadelphia, which opened in 1939.

In grade school, he'd stop there on the way to school for a bite, come in for lunch and help out on the weekends.

"I remember seeing the filming of the first Rocky movie with Sylvester Stallone, which was right in our neighborhood," says Mignucci.

This was the time, between the 1940s and 80s, where the area offered food stands on one side of the street and retail stores, including butchers, produce stores and restaurants, on the other. It was the main thoroughfare where families purchased their food.

At that time, Di Bruno Brothers was positioned as an Italian-style deli that focused on cheese like Provolone, Parmesan, Havarti and even French Brie, but the store also carried a wide variety of American and Italian meats, including prosciutto and salami.

There were 35 different cheeses in the store, along with sliced meats and olive oil, says Mignucci. "It was a specialty market, but wasn't considered one at that time."

As Mignucci, his brother William Mignucci and cousin William Mignucci, Jr. grew up, they started becoming more involved with the store and finally took over the business in 1990.

In the years that followed, the store evolved from an Italian deli and grocery to a specialty food store, adding four locations.

Today the store's deli offers between 400 and 700 cheeses — depending on the time of year — with more European items and price points from \$15 to \$150 a pound, says Mignucci.

For his dedication to elevating deli to a higher level, Mignucci has been recognized with Deli Business' 2015 People's Award.

Even at the expense of higher labor costs as a percentage of sales compared with supermarkets, Mignucci and his team are dedicated to educating customers on all products.

"At Di Bruno's, we're looking to romance and teach customers about the product we sell," says Mignucci.

"We celebrate really great food and not only follow the trends, but create them as well."

Along with hobnobbing with customers, Mignucci enjoys the relationships he's developed with producers, staff members and vendors.

Even his off-hours are dedicated to the industry he loves. Mignucci is on the board of the American Cheese Society and on The Specialty Food Association's Retailer Network Committee.

He also is a founding member of the Good Food Retailers Collaborative, which consists of innovative independent retailers from around the country.

"It helps to have my family as partners, since we all do something different," says Mignucci.

"I couldn't do what I do without them. There is a lot of collaboration within our business."

His grandfather and great uncle who founded the business served as role models and taught him that good business was about giving customers a great experience and treating everyone with honesty and respect.

"The food business is a calling and those who leave almost always want to come back," says Mignucci. "I never see myself retiring, since I enjoy every day doing what I do."



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RICK STEIN

VICE PRESIDENT OF FRESH FOODS AT FOOD MARKETING INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

NAME: Rick Stein

COMPANY: Food Marketing Institute

TITLE: Vice president of fresh foods

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

"Since I've joined FMI, creating the Fresh Executive Council (FEC) is what I'm most proud of, since it brings value to the association and all who are involved," says Stein.

PERSONAL: Stein lives in Rockville, MD and has been married to his wife Rosemary for 32 years. He has three sons and a daughter, Matthew (30) Mark (27) Kevin (22) and Kerry Rose (20). His oldest son worked for Safeway in California and is still in the business working for Dr. Pepper.

HOBBIES: In addition to golf, volunteering at his church and serving on several charitable boards, including Easter Seals of DC/VA/MD, Stein's free time is spent with his family, which includes 52 nieces and nephews.

BEST ADVICE: "I'm a big proponent of getting involved in the industry, especially since there are voids and we're losing talent," says Stein. "There is a lot of opportunity for those interested in a supermarket industry career, and people can move up quickly if they put forth the effort."

Rick Stein's retail experience dates back to the 1970s, when, as a high school student in Silver Spring, MD, he was a bagger for Safeway.

Little did he know that his first job would result in a successful and lengthy retail industry career and a 2015 Deli Business People's Award.

"In those days, getting a job at the supermarket was the best you could get, since it paid three times minimum wage," says Stein. "Many people were 'addicted' to the income and even left college to make it a career."

Stein wasn't one of them, but after graduating from the University of Maryland with a degree in criminal justice and a minor in business, he joined Safeway's Eastern division office, working in category management and buying. He moved from buying to become general merchandise/health and beauty care (HBC) director, the highest level in his department.

He was selected with five others across the country to launch a beta project in 1994 that was the big chain's first foray into a sophisticated category management.

In 2000, Stein joined the corporate office on the West Coast, working in a variety of roles. These included group director of general merchandise and HBC, international sourcing and then vice president of sales and marketing for Safeway's Eastern and Northern California divisions.

"Every eight to nine months, I had a new role at the corporate office," says Stein.

Still, with family roots on the East Coast, Stein jumped at the chance to become vice president of sales and merchandising for Safeway's Eastern division in the mid-2000s, where he had the opportunity to interface with fresh

departments at the chain's 180 stores.

When Safeway was sold to Albertsons in March of 2014, Stein was one of several executives who elected to retire early. At that point, he had been at the company for 40 years.

After just six months of retirement, Stein was approached by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), which was looking to build its fresh program with help from supermarket industry professionals.

Having Stein at the helm of fresh programs at FMI has resulted in a number of positive changes at the association in just 10 months.

Not only was he recruited as the association's first vice president of fresh foods, but he's also helped create FMI's Fresh Executive Council, which is comprised of 17 retailers and wholesalers.

"We are using these folks as intellectual capital to stay on top of key issues, such as the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), Safe Quality Food Codes (SQF) and menu labeling," says Stein. "The other thing we're trying to do is expand the annual FMI Connect Show with a fresh pavilion and more produce supplier exhibitors."

Stein says the biggest adjustment moving from the retail side to a trade association representing more than 1,200 retailer and wholesaler companies is that issues are no longer so black and white.

But despite these new challenges, the successes are just as sweet.

"As much as I thought I knew, I now realize I only knew a small percent in terms of the various types of retailers and wholesalers, how they go to market and their strategies," says Stein. "I now see sides of the business I haven't seen before and I get to work with a great team of bright people, which makes my job very rewarding."



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SUSAN STURMAN

ACADEMIE OPUS CASEUS,
SAINT-HAON-LE-CHÂTEL, FRANCE

NAME: Susan Sturman

COMPANY:

Academie Opus Caseus,
Saint-Haon-le-Châtel, France

TITLE: Partner

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

Helping to create the first Certified Cheese Professional program; assistant director, Ecole Ritz-Escoffier, Paris; partner, Academie Opus Caseus

PERSONAL: Sturman grew up in Long Island, NY and currently lives in Brookline, MA. She's been married to her husband, David, for 33 years. Her daughter, Sarah, 17, is going to American University of Paris, and she has a 14-year-old son, Nicholas.

HOBBIES: Cooking, reading, entertaining, gardening.

BEST ADVICE: "People should be open to opportunity," says Sturman. "Know yourself, including your strengths and weaknesses, and be able to jump and contribute. Also, keep yourself square-jawed driven by service."

Susan Sturman describes her career as a winding route that, while unpredictable, made sense in hindsight.

In testament to her dedication in developing the careers of cheese professionals around the world, Sturman is being honored with a 2015 Deli Business People's Award.

The biggest influence on her love of food was Sturman's mother, who she describes as a wonderful cook.

"She loved to entertain and had a great reputation as a cook, but she was very territorial about her kitchen, so she didn't teach me cooking, but rather the joy and satisfaction of preparing and sharing meals with friends," she says.

Sturman's food industry career didn't start right away. After graduating from Boston University with a major in public relations and minor in organizational communications, she worked in corporate public relations, advertising, employee activities, sales and catering.

"I worked with customers, developed menus, and ran on-site events, then moved to the kitchen," says Sturman. "Usually, people move from the back-of-the-house to management, not the other way around."

When Sturman's husband completed graduate school in Boston, the couple decided to move to France.

She studied cooking at the Ecole Ritz Escoffier at the Ritz Paris, then worked as a sous chef in a Paris restaurant. Her six years in Paris also included jobs as a gastronomic tour guide and menu translator, before she was asked to serve as assistant director of the Ritz Escoffier school. This is where Sturman's education and love of cheese was born.

"One of my responsibilities was learning about cheese, and I discovered the more you teach, the more you learn," she says.

She opened a catering company, before moving back to the states and starting a family. After a four-year hiatus, Sturman launched a small business teaching custom-designed cooking classes to small groups for the next seven years. At the same time she started teaching about cheese to private and corporate groups, eventually teaching regularly at New York City's Murray's Cheese in Greenwich Village.

Inquiring about American cheeses at a local Slow Food event, she was introduced to the American Cheese Society. After attending an ACS conference, her cheese career took off.

"During one of my first ACS conferences, I went to a session debating the need for cheese professional certification, and it created an ad hoc breakout session that was the beginning of the society's Certified Cheese Professional Program," says Sturman.

She was tapped to chair the committee, and the project eventually involved more than 100 ACS cheese professionals.

Although it took seven years to come to fruition, the first Certified Cheese Professional Exam was created in 2012. More than 150 people signed up to get certified, proof that the certification was warranted. This year, more than 300 candidates will take the exam.

"We were working with consultants who said that in the 25-plus years of giving credential exams, they have never seen such a successful program," says Sturman.

She is proud to be a part of an idea that has experienced great success and helped the ACS achieve a new level of prominence in the industry.

"We spent time paving the way, making sure this was something worth doing, and it was well worth the effort," says Sturman.

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THE HARD TRUTH CONCERNING CHEESE FORGERY

Industry leaders speak out

BY KEITH LORIA

It's hard to think about making an Italian meal without utilizing some fresh Parmesan or Romano cheese, and deli operators have seen a rise in requests for these grated or shredded cheeses on food served at the deli counter.

What many people don't know, however, is that sometimes what they are getting is not really Parmesan or Romano, and in fact, fake cheese. It's not uncommon to go to a supermarket and find a canister of grated cheese with as much as 20-30 percent non-Parmesan material as some disreputable companies find ingredients that cost less than what is required,

such as cellulose, starches, vegetable based and cheese analogues, according to Neal Schuman, chief executive of Italian cheese industry leader Arthur Schuman Inc. (ASI), headquartered in Fairfield, NJ.

Of the estimated 463 million pounds of Italian hard cheeses sold in the United States annually, 20 percent of the overall pound volume is forged cheese, meaning that the product is not up to standards, and uses ingredients that aren't acceptable under FDA guidelines.

The USDA Dairy Products Import Schedule established by the U.S. International Trade Commission shows the Italian hard cheese category in the U.S., including domestically produced as well as imported products, has a dollar volume of approximately \$3 billion.

With numbers like these, it's no wonder forgery is a major concern in the

grated/shredded domestic Parmesan and Romano cheese market today. Although it's a problem that has been going on for decades, only recently have strong efforts been made to combat the forgers.

Schuman says ASI routinely encounters violations of the Standard of Identity for Parmesan and Romano in retail, foodservice and food ingredient businesses. Thus the problem is pervasive in all channels. Cheese that is made improperly (not to Standard specs) is misrepresented or mislabeled as real Parmesan or Romano. The deception is in the name. There's nothing illegal about cheap, non-compliant cheese if it's properly labeled and presented.

The FDA maintains the cheese industry Standard of Identity for each cheese type that stipulates the ingredients; specifications for fat, moisture, protein and salt content; and methods of cheesemaking (aging) for each variety that must be followed before a cheese can be legally labeled by its Italian name. Calling a cheese "Parmesan" without following its Standard of Identity for ingredients and cheesemaking rules is fraud. Calling it "Italian Style cheese" isn't — and is permitted by FDA standards.

DELI BUSINESS recently reached out to Schuman and Bob Wheatley, chief executive of Emergent Healthy Living, and a consumer insight research and communications advisor to ASI, to get their expert opinion on the growing problem.



Neal Schuman



Bob Wheatley

DELI BUSINESS: Let's talk history. How long has this been a problem? Is it something that's always been out there and has just received more attention lately? Can you take me through a timeline?

Neal Schuman: I would say there has been various forms of adulteration going on for many years. Adulteration has many faces. It can include excessive use of fillers, starches, cellulose, cheese analogs (vegetable oil based cheeses), even different, lower cost cheeses entirely that displace real Parmesan cheese in the fin-

dry grated canister business. The second mess — the presence of adulteration in packaged, grated Parmesan and Romano products sold to restaurants in larger pack sizes — would probably occur in 25- and 5-pound bags in the foodservice sector.

DELI BUSINESS: Deli is the providence of higher quality cheese experiences in the grocery store. How much are they getting involved in combating the problem?

Neal Schuman: I would imagine delis care deeply about the quality of

Neal Schuman: You can test for cellulose, you can test for starches, you can test for milk proteins, or if somebody's using a vegetable product then your milk protein numbers are low, or if they're using cellulose, your milk protein levels are lower. You can test for calcium-phosphorous ratios, which would determine whether people are using processed cheeses. You can test for calcium-magnesium ratios, which would detect if people were blending cheeses. Sugars would tell you whether or not the product is young or old or whether people added whey, which is another additive.

TWENTY PERCENT OF THE OVERALL POUND VOLUME OF CHEESE IS NOT UP TO STANDARDS.

ished product. Absence of proper aging is another one. I would say it probably fell on deaf ears and blind eyes because we didn't have the type of consumer movement for transparency, and for quality, that we currently have today.

Bob Wheatley: For a long time the industry wasn't paying close attention to this condition. And is doing so now in part due to the shifts in consumer behavior and preference, as well as the "glass house" aspects of the Internet and the ability to expose practices publicly. People now actively demand real, authentic, honestly made and labeled products. Our research confirmed that. The adulteration problem is accelerating at a time when the market wants real.

DELI BUSINESS: I'm guessing that number has risen in the last couple of years.

Neal Schuman: I would say the best way to look at it is that the market continues to grow because the population and the percentage have probably grown a little bit. I think that's the easiest way to respond to it. Yes, it's grown but it's also grown on a bigger base. If we prioritize them, the greatest percentage is sitting in grated cheeses — Parmesan, and Romano in grated form — and then maybe a little bit in shredded, and not at all in wedges and wheels. And then, as that relates to markets, the highest percentage of adulteration occurs in the

product they're putting out there and it matters to them that what's labeled and represented is right. I think that's increasingly important because we're at a place now where consumers want higher-quality food experiences across the board and are determined to make sure what they're buying is real.

DELI BUSINESS: How is this all being discovered? Is it all FDA? Are there other groups and organizations out there helping to combat the problem?

Neal Schuman: I think concerned cheese companies are discovering it. Since there are tests and protocols, what we've been able to do is just go to market and pull samples of products and have them tested, and tell the customer what they're buying. Our company routinely performs tests of cheeses and determine how they are made and if they are done to spec. ASI shares that information with customer organizations. The consumer has a tougher time knowing what is real from fake unless you know how to read a label and look for some of the markers, such as the presence of other cheeses, lower protein levels or higher carbohydrates. Education is needed and that's what we're doing.

DELI BUSINESS: Can you talk about some of those protocols? What exactly is involved with the protocols you mentioned?

Bob Wheatley: Price is an indicator if all is not right. Considering some of the cost associated with making the real thing, price can be a red flag. Frequently the people that are buying this adulterated product are also buying wheels or blocks of Parmesan or Romano and there is an additional cost to make grated cheese. You have this wheel of cheese, or this block of cheese, and you're going to subject it to a grating process and you're going to add labor and plant overhead, and you're going to put it in a bag, in a carton, and you're going to ship it. And in certain cases, if you're drying the cheese you're going to lose, probably, 18 percent of the moisture of the product, and yet the same cheese that is being sold at \$3.59 a pound in wheel form is frequently sold at \$3.09 or \$2.89, so the math just doesn't work out.

DELI BUSINESS: Who are the major culprits?

Neal Schuman: We never, nor do we desire to, call out the people that are doing this, but I will say that people that are vertically integrated, that companies that make, that grate and dehydrate, or make, bake and package are responsible suppliers.

DELI BUSINESS: Let's talk about the how. Can you explain how this is done?

Neal Schuman: Sure. It's an economically based model. The way people go about lowering their cost is to find ingredients that cost less than the cost of their cheese, and those ingredients are cellulose, starches, vegetable based and cheese analogues. We have solid testing protocols and procedures approved by the industry that can detect those things.

It's not uncommon to go to a supermarket and find a canister of grated cheese with 21 to 25, or 30 percent non-Parmesan material, or more sometimes.

DELI BUSINESS: What's included in the FDA's standard of identity with domestic cheese?

Neal Schuman: There's a CFR, which is a Code of Federal Regulation. It has basic statements as to the authenticity and how to make the product, how long it has to be cured, what its maximum moisture has to be and what its minimum fat has to be.

DELI BUSINESS: What sort of shortcuts do these forgers, or fakers, use when it comes to ingredients and aging practices?

Neal Schuman: They are taking 100 pounds of a sale and using 85 percent, or 80 percent, of the real worth and then adding additional things to lower the cost. In order to call the product legal Parmesan, it should be aged 10 months unless you've applied to the Food and Drug Administration for a waiver or temporary markdown, but we'll call it a TMP, a temporary marketing permit, which enables you to reduce your aging to six months for Parmesan and three months for Romano instead of five months.

DELI BUSINESS: What is the penalty? If someone is found to be doing this what happens?

Neal Schuman: If found out, the risk is that they lose the business if the customer cares. If the customer finds out the cheese is out of spec and mislabeled, the processor could lose the account/business — assuming the customer they sold it to cares that the cheese is misrepresented. Underneath this comment is the reality that there's no real policing of the standard so it's up to the industry to care and to act.

DELI BUSINESS: So, there are no fines by the FDA or warnings, or anything like that?

Bob Wheatley: We don't have any evidence the FDA has exerted their power. I know in today's world there could be class actions, there could be lawsuits, it's just the industry hasn't seen any of those yet.

DELI BUSINESS: What is consumer research saying about how people are viewing this problem? Do they care?

Bob Wheatley: At the very beginning of this we did a national quantitative consumer study to determine what people knew about this situation and their opinions of it and what to do about it. This sample was purposefully designed to cover virtually all age and demographic classifications that mattered to cheese purchase. Virtually no one was aware that economically motivated fraud is occurring in Parmesan and Romano products. That's not surprising because there's

really not been, up until now, much education and awareness efforts going on with respect to the issue. Then, most importantly, once the survey was completed and the respondents were made aware of this and what it is, the numbers were significant in response to their attitude and opinion of the problem, overwhelmingly. They think the existence of fraud should be eliminated and eradicated. They are not interested in purchasing products that are mislabeled or misrepresented as to what they truly are.

DELI BUSINESS: I guess the real question is what's to be done? How do we fix this problem, how do we end this?

Neal Schuman: I think it has to be education. A lot of people are buying this product without knowing what they're buying so I would say the first call to action for the industry is to let everybody know there are standards for Parmesan and grated Parmesan, and Romano and what those standards are. And then begin on the organoleptic side of the equation, which in cases like this, sweet and nutty is part of the component of the product. It shouldn't be overly salty, it shouldn't be too gritty, it shouldn't taste too milky, or it shouldn't taste too sugary. If it tastes too sugary, it probably has added whey.

So I think education across the board is probably the big key, letting people understand what the rules are and what a good piece of cheese, or what any type of legally produced product should be.

DB





A Sea of Flavors

The healthy aspect of the Mediterranean diet is only part of the story

BY MARK HAMSTRA

Mediterranean foods fit in perfectly with consumer trends focused on health and wellness, convenience and robust flavor profiles, making them an ideal tool to attract a broad range of customers to the deli.

"The Mediterranean diet is really a plant-based diet, and many of the foods in the deli are at the base of the food pyramid and are the basis of the Mediterranean diet," says Sara Baer-Sinott, president of Oldways, a Boston-based nonprofit food and nutrition educational organization that is parent of the Mediterranean Foods Alliance. "It has things like beans, olive oil, vegetables, herbs and spices. It's no one food that makes the Mediterranean diet so healthy — it's all these foods together."

Mina Penna, corporate nutritionist for Sabra Dipping Co., the White Plains, NY-based supplier of hummus and other

Mediterranean-style products, agrees, noting Mediterranean populations live longer and have lower rates of cancer, heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

"While there is no one component of a Mediterranean style of eating that holds the key, it is likely it's the combination of simple, wholesome, nutrient-rich foods, served fresh and flavored with herbs and spices," she says.

Penna points out the Mediterranean diet encompasses not only a wide variety of plant foods — such as vegetables, beans, fruits, whole grains and nuts — it also can incorporate fish and poultry occasionally, as well as small amounts of lean red meat, yogurt and cheese. Hummus, one of the fastest-growing Mediterranean-style foods in the deli, is made from a combination of chickpeas, sesame seeds and healthy fats, and also can be a healthy part of the Mediterranean diet, she says.



Maria Kardamaki Robertson, founder and chief executive of importer and fresh-prepared foods supplier Demeter's Pantry in Silver Spring, MD, notes the Mediterranean diet is very low in saturated fats, cholesterol, trans fats and sodium, but high in flavor.

Healthy salads and prepared foods have been appearing in the deli the last several years from the cuisines of Greece, Spain, Italy and others from the Middle East, she points out, "as well as fusions of ingredients from these cuisines."

"These salads include fresh vegetables and grains such as wheat berries, quinoa, couscous as well as lentils and other beans," says Kardamaki Robertson, citing as examples two salads from Demeter's The Greek Table line: the palikaria salad with wheat berry, five different beans, fresh herbs and fresh lemon dressing; and a raw beet, carrot and apple salad with feta cheese and walnuts.

Brandon Gross, director of marketing at Mediterranean food importer Food-Match, New York, notes the Mediterranean Diet "has proven time and again to be one of the most effective lifestyle plans to follow due to its promotion of eating smart foods."

"It's a natural way to eat that doesn't rely on fads, trends or gimmicks," he says.

John Leonardo, senior brand manager at Grecian Delight Foods in Elk Grove Village, IL, adds that many of the Mediterranean products sold in the deli area,

including hummus and Greek yogurt dips, are both low in calories and a good source of protein. Grecian Delight's sister company, Pure Mediterranean Foods, recently introduced a new line called Hummus Plus, which combines hummus and chicken. It has up to 28 grams of protein and 12 grams of fiber.

"Additionally, many of the products have clean labels without any artificial ingredients or preservatives, catering to consumers seeking more natural food

choices," says Leonardo.

The bread products that are part of Mediterranean cuisine — flatbreads and pitas, for example — also can be part of a healthy eating regimen, says Warren Stoll, marketing director at Kontos Foods, a Paterson, NJ-based supplier of Mediterranean foods, including more than 50 varieties of flatbreads.

One of its offerings is a Greek Lifestyle Flatbread, which contains 15 grams of protein per piece — about twice as much protein as typical flatbread — and about half the carbohydrates, with 20 carbs versus 40. The company also offers French-style crêpes for making wraps that have about a third of the calories of traditional wraps.

Promoting Mediterranean Foods

Baer-Sinnott of Oldways says deli managers can promote Mediterranean foods by creating new small dishes, or mezze, incorporating Mediterranean ingredients. These can include flatbreads with vegetables, or pasta or bean salads.

Deli operators also can work to help educate their customers about the benefits of a plant-based diet and how Mediterranean cuisine can fit into that lifestyle. Such efforts can include having the store's dietitian promote Mediterranean foods in the deli area, he says.

"Families are looking to eat one or two vegetarian meals a week, and the deli is particularly well suited to embracing this trend," says Baer-Sinnott.

Penna of Sabra suggests that deli managers can seek to offer nutrient-dense






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A close-up photograph of a Mediterranean antipasto salad. It features halved red bell peppers, white mozzarella cheese balls, dark olives, green olives, and a sprig of rosemary. A small white bowl in the foreground contains green olives. A silver fork is visible on the left side of the frame. The background is a rustic wooden surface.

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meal combinations using Mediterranean foods.

"For example, offer a lean protein sandwich using hummus as a spread instead of the traditional condiments to boost the protein and fiber from the beans and reduce overall fat significantly," she says.

She also suggests deli operators offer tools to help consumers understand how easy it is to eat a Mediterranean-style diet, such as the one-page resource Sabra created showing consumers the nutritional benefits of eating two spoonfuls of hummus a day.

Kardamaki Robertson of Demeter's Pantry says deli operators should ask their vendors to recommend ways of pairing different items.

"For example, instead of grouping all salads together you can have a Mediterranean diet set, like the ethnic sets that we see in the hot bar in stores like Whole Foods Market," she says. "Often customers come to the deli looking for meal solutions — a quick way to put dinner on the table. Pairing items makes it easy."

Likewise, Gross of FoodMatch suggests deli managers offer customers a wide selection of Mediterranean foods "that allow for simple customization of quick meals and snacks."

In addition to olive and antipasti bars, deli operators should consider offering grab-and-go prepackaged items "to capture the attention of more people and give the deli a chance to co-merchandise with cheese, hummus, salsa, charcuterie, etc.," says Gross.

Deli managers also must ensure they are offering the "foundation" foods such as greens and grains, he adds. Instead of heavy dressings, offer extra virgin olive oil, lemon juice and fresh herbs.

Leonardo of Grecian Delight Foods



says promotion of Mediterranean Foods "comes down to availability of food choices and consumer education."

"Provide consumers with a variety of options spanning the Mediterranean region and information on the benefits of the Mediterranean diet," he says. "This can include information on the retailer's website, pamphlets at the deli counter and in-store signage."

Trends In Mediterranean Foods

The popularity of Greek yogurt has led to some innovations in the deli, including new dips and dressings using the yogurt as a base. Sabra offers such Greek yogurt-based dips, says Penna.

"Another trend that continues to persevere is the inclusion of healthy fats in the diet," says Penna. "People are doing this in a variety of ways with different oils, nuts, seeds and fruits, such as avocados that are a good source of fat, and other foods."

Vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free items also have gained in popularity, adds Kardamaki Robertson of Demeter's Pantry.

"Greek cuisine has numerous dishes that are vegan and gluten free," she says, noting such items have been popular in the company's The Greek Table line.

"This category continues to have legs — and it's running, not walking," says Gross of FoodMatch.

"Consumers are prioritizing transparency with ingredients, regional authenticity and responsible sourcing."

He also cites the growth of value-added items that free up time for the home chef, such as roasted tomatoes, roasted garlic and sliced or chopped olives.

Leonardo of Grecian Delight Foods says consumers' desire for convenience is driving innovation in the category.

"Consumers are seeking authentic, healthy meal solutions for on-the-go consumption or for something that can be easily prepared at work or home," he says, citing the emergence of refrigerated, take-and-heat gyro sandwiches in the deli.

Another trend Leonardo says he has seen is an increase in store-made pita chips. "For example, Grecian Delight has been working with several upscale retailers that bring in our authentic pita chips and can prepare them in under five minutes, offering their customers a fresh alternative," he says.

Stoll of Kontos Foods cites pre-made Panini sandwiches as another big trend in the deli, and notes Kontos offers Panini bread that comes pre-scored with grill marks for those deli and restaurant operators who prefer to use a flat press.

He says deli operators could more fully tap into the current popularity of Mediterranean foods by merchandising healthy and flavorful Greek products like stuffed grape leaves and spanakopita.

"Consumers more and more are looking for exotic foods, and foods that have an ethnic background," says Stoll. "If you can tie that into a healthy diet, it's a win-win."

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▶▶ BEYOND THE OLIVE BAR

Prepackaging, cross-merchandising and other techniques to boost sales

BY MARK HAMSTRA

The olive bar is in serious need of an overhaul, according to Jeff Siegel, chief executive of Farm Ridge Foods, Islandia, NY, a supplier of olives and other Mediterranean foods.

"The olive business has been hurt by lack of innovation in terms of merchandising in the delis," he says. "When the olive bars first came out, they were new and exciting, but not much has been done to create that air of specialness in the last 10 years."

While some new products have helped liven up the category, more could be done to promote olives in the deli, says Siegel.

"I think the challenge is to come out with not only new and exciting products to reinvigorate the consumer, but also to reinvigorate the retailer," he says. "At Farm Ridge Foods we have big plans coming up in the future, and we look to change that paradigm."

Last year the olive business also was impacted by high costs, which were a byproduct of both the economic turmoil in Greece and the adverse weather conditions in the region.

"We have seen some more economic stability recently, and most importantly the weather has been much better, and the olives are much better in terms of sizing and quality," says Siegel. "At Farm Ridge we have been able to capitalize on that with all sorts of new promotions coming out in the near term."

He says the promotional efforts will involve new signage, new promotions that pair like types of olives — such as olives from Spain or olives from Greece — and olives that are stuffed with interesting ingredients.

"We are going to deliver something interesting at a cost that is attractive to the consumer," says Siegel.

The best way to call attention to

olives is with colorful, eye-catching point-of-sale (POS) signage and materials that not only promote the products, but also inspire with recipe and usage ideas," says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at George DeLallo Co. in Mount Pleasant, PA.

"But it's not always about what is in the deli itself," she says. "The Internet is buzzing with recipes and entertaining ideas, so consumers are already primed for a purchase featuring these popular Mediterranean flavors."

To take advantage of this web exposure, DeLallo has been partnering with retailers on social media platforms to amp up their presence, says Pozzuto. DeLallo supplies its partners with social media content that includes sharp visuals, pairing ideas and entertaining solutions, for example.

"For successful merchandising, we need to promote the olive and antipasti bar as a complete Mediterranean destination — as snacks, entertaining gems and inspiring gourmet ingredients," she says.

Olives also present opportunities for merchandising adjacent to complementary deli items such as meats, cheeses and gourmet noshes for entertaining, says Pozzuto.

"The key is to merchandise beyond the olive bar," she says. "Prepackaged olives and antipasti, like our top-selling Ready Pack items, are super-convenient, able to be merchandised in the deli and cross-merchandised throughout the store."

Dean Spilka, president, Norpaco Gourmet Foods, a Middletown, CT-based maker of specialty food products, suggests delis can incorporate olives to "create an antipasti experience for the customer matching with cheese, meats and crackers."

In addition to a variety of stuffed



olives, Norpaco offers olive salads in bulk, including a Tuscan Style Olive Salad, Green Olives with Lemon and Garlic, and a Muffaletta Olive Salad.

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wife of M&CP Farms, olive growers based in Orland, CA, says the probiotic aspect of olive processing could play into consumer interest in health and wellness.

"We keep hearing a lot of talk about fermented foods, and olives fall in that broad category," he says. "Olives are part of the Mediterranean diet, which is heart healthy and has other benefits, but then there's also the fermentation, which reflects the slow food movement."

Fermentation removes the bitterness from raw olives and can be done over a longer period of time to improve the flavor, according to Penna.

"The taste just gets better and better," he says. "A 2-year-old olive tastes much different than a 1-year-old olive. It's just amazing."

Patty Amato, director of sales at Farm Ridge Foods, notes that olives have multiple health benefits.

"They are rich in vitamin E, they contain special phytochemicals that have anti-inflammatory properties and have been linked to cancer prevention," she says. In addition, "the

monounsaturated fat in olives helps reduce 'bad' LDL cholesterol levels and the risk of heart disease. And to top it off olives are also a good source of fiber and iron."

Numerous Uses

Olives are not only ideal for snacking and entertaining, but also can be used to liven up a wide range of recipes, says Pozzuto of George DeLallo Co.

"The bold, vibrant flavors of these Mediterranean bites offer a unique palette, inspiring consumers to get creative," she says. "Olives and antipasti add a new dimension to pizzas, flatbreads, salads, sandwiches, pasta dishes, meat and poultry recipes, as well as dip. Consumers are finding more and more ways to incorporate them into their favorite recipes."

Amato of Farm Ridge Foods notes the rich variety of olive flavor profiles makes them ideal for myriad uses in the kitchen.

"Some have a strong earthy taste, and others have a fruity flavor with a hint of bitterness," she says. "Each

type has its own distinct characteristics, giving you plenty of variety to try olives in different dishes."

Pozzuto notes the variety of uses for olives underscores the need to merchandise them in different ways, such as both prepackaged and on an olive bar.

"What is so appealing about olives and antipasti is their big flavor combined with their simplicity," she says. "The typical customer is looking for quick and easy, grab-and-go options for entertaining — someone who is going for more than just chips and dip. For some, creating their own collection at the bar is ideal, having the opportunity to mix and match their favorites and try new items. For others, the prepackaged collections are the perfect way to pick up just what they need."

Penna of M&CP Farms suggests even smaller containers of prepackaged olives could help drive sales.

"We have some new ideas for olives," he says. "One of the things we need to do is have the packaging down to a size that people can pack in their lunch." **DB**

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IS ASIAN FOOD THE NEW DARLING OF THE AMERICAN CONSUMER?

**With more flavors and dishes,
the category has untapped potential**

BY BOB JOHNSON

As consumers see and sample cuisines from more areas of the Far East, Asian food is soaring in popularity. Because it is healthful and has the cachet of being ethnic and interesting, with a little retail attention Asian food can offer a convenient dining option.

Gourmet Boutique of Jamaica, NY, supplies prepared deli sides and entrees to Safeway, Kroger, Shaw's and other major supermarkets, and company owner Jere Dudley believes ethnic food attracts consumers to the deli. Asian food, in particular, ranks high among deli favorites.

"It still remains in the top two ethnic cuisines, along with Italian," says Dudley. "Based on my travels within the marketplace and talking with industry leaders, I see the Asian food category remaining strong."

The popularity of healthier fare piques

consumer curiosity about a wide range of Asian foods.

"Asian appetizers are growing because Asian foods are perceived as being healthful," says Katy Biggers, director of retail sales at Amy Food, Houston, TX. "Over the last couple years, the category has grown, and our business has grown. We produce healthier products that are lower in fat, have no MSG and no preservatives, and we use fresh ingredients. We're able to promote ourselves as healthier."

Amy Food was founded more than a quarter century ago with a line of egg rolls served in schools throughout the Houston area. The company's product line has expanded to include pot stickers, empanadas and party platters, including an organic line, for retailers nationwide.

Delis are in a position to promote this rising star by making ingredients and dishes visible and easy to purchase for impulse

buyers and by offering a combination of traditional favorites and new flavors for the curious.

Make It Easy

The United States is becoming more adventurous with bold new flavors, while continually seeking convenient and healthy, grab-and-go options for Americans' fast-paced lifestyle.

"Fuji Food Products has developed flavorful and high quality fresh prepared deli salads to reflect the consumers ever-evolving pallet and discriminating taste, some to include Mango Salsa Seafood, Bahn Mi Tuna and numerous other chicken, grain and pasta varieties," says Thomas Bulowski, vice president of sales. "In addition to traditional deli container options, grab-and-go microwaveable bowls are becoming increasingly more popular."

Delis can achieve the ultimate in consumer convenience by placing Asian foods

in the grab-and-go section.

"Hot-food bars and self-service grab-and-go departments are excellent ways of optimizing sales in this category," says Dudley. "The Bahn Mi sandwich, Korean in nature, is also extremely popular."

Asian cuisines outside the conventional are now becoming part of "the everyday fabric of available food," says Suzanne Kennedy of DNI Group in Novato, CA. "In the past when American consumers thought about Asian food, it had been primarily Japanese sushi or Americanized Chinese food. In 2015, look for Korean and Vietnamese food, along with upscale ramen, to take over mainstream menus."

Jun Yako, Asian deli specialist at DNI Group, reports deli managers are actively looking for Asian appetizers in the prepared foods section to satisfy consumers looking for healthy, smaller meals and protein



alternatives.

Displaying in the grab-and-go section lets the consumer choose Asian food, even when the service deli counter is unstaffed.

"I think it is best to have the appetizers with the prepackaged products because consumers can pick them up when the deli is closed," says Biggers. "The other reason to have them with the prepackaged products is because typically appetizers are sold in multiple packs rather than single serving."

Starport Foods, which produces a line of Asian sauces and marinades for retailers, Sysco, US Foods and other foodservice and supermarket outlets, gets good results with a lightning-fast stir fry variant on the salad bar theme.

"A lot of delis have a salad bar for all the veggies, so you can pick your own vegetables, then you pick the protein and then you pick the flavor sauce you want," says Cheryl Tsang, owner of Starport Foods, Fullerton, CA.

The self-serve approach works best if

everything is in place for a fast and easy turnaround, according to Tsang.

"We're looking for three minutes from the time the customer comes to the counter with their ingredients until you hand them the bowl of stir fry," she says. "Two minutes is cook time, and you have a minute to fill their bowl and give it to them."

To meet the two-minute standard, the meat must be marinated or velvetized, or both, in advance, and the vegetables consumers select need to be softened.

"Some of the vegetables — like carrots — are water blanched before they are put in the salad bar," says Tsang. "It's all that preparation that makes it possible."

The key to the program's success? Keep it simple for staff.

"It has to be easy so unskilled cooks at the deli can do it," says Tsang. "We train them with the ingredients they already have and add a few to give it an ethnic flavor, like ginger and snow peas."

Appetizers and other convenient foods particularly suit the needs of busy consumers.

"Spring rolls and pot stickers are growing," says Biggers. "Chicken is always number one in Asian appetizers, number

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two would be pork."

Make It Visible

Visual appeal attracts impulse buyers who come to the deli without a meal plan in mind. Hissho Sushi of Charlotte, NC, has enjoyed such meteoric growth over the last 25 years that today the firm operates more than 400 sushi bars. Company founder Philip Maung earned the *2009 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award* for the Southeast division.

"The kaleidoscope of colors in sushi is mesmerizing to children, and they bring their parents over," says Andrea Lee, corporate communications manager at Hissho Sushi. "The trend is increasing. We see a much more educated public. They have a more sophisticated palate when it comes to sushi."

DNI Group's Kennedy cited recent statistics from the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA) publication "2015 What's in Store?" which found that "78 percent of younger shoppers, Gen Ys and Millennials brought home prepared food from the deli last year. And with this population's interest in food combined with purchasing power, they are driving the industry to keep on top of food trends, flavors, packaging and variety."

Visual appeal is enhanced by allowing the public to watch as the deli staff prepares the more popular Asian dishes.

"At Bristol Farms markets in Southern California, they are using demonstration woks in the deli so customers can see them cook," says Tsang. "The store put in the demonstration area because the customers want to see the flames."

Visibility can be as simple as placing the food in convenient, high-traffic locations.

"The important thing is to have it merchandised with the top sellers," says Amy Food's Biggers. "I've seen appetizers in the grab-and-go section with the prepackaged products. I've also seen the bulk product cooked at the store,

and the third place I've seen them is in the hot case."

Some Asian salads also feature bright colors that catch the eye and stimulate the appetite.

"If I'm looking at salads in the deli, I look at the entire selection, and the color of superfoods in many Asian salads jump out at you," says Wayne Nielsen, vice president of sales and marketing at JSL Foods, Los Angeles, CA. "Whole Foods has taken this to an art form."

JSL is a third-generation family firm producing noodles, wrappers and cookies sold to retailers and foodservice companies under the Fortune, Spring Home and Twin Dragon labels.

Variety Spices Up Sales

There are more exciting Asian food flavors than there is space to put them, but along with the familiar it helps to squeeze in some new items for consumers who are curious about other flavors. Although some of the most popular dishes are sweet-and-sour chicken or pork, beef and broccoli, fried rice, egg rolls and spring rolls — items consumers typically order from their favorite Chinese restaurant — diners are more than willing to try new flavors, says Gourmet Boutiques' Dudley.

"Thai and Korean cuisines are on the rise, especially dishes that are spicy, as spicy foods are on the rise," he says.

As sushi grows more popular, suppliers are offering innovative ingredients.

"A lot of fresh fruit has been incorporated into sushi the last few years," says Hissho Sushi's Lee. "We have a mango tango. The flavors are very compatible. We've used strawberries before, and we've used dried figs and dried papaya."

Hawaiian sweet-and-sour and brown stir-fry sauce are two milder flavors attracting fans, according to Tsang. Spicy Szechwan is popular, too.

"Fusion is a trend, like a garlic sesame sauce with kung pao," she says. "The first

thing you taste is the garlic, then the peppers, then the full flavor."

Asian salads, in particular, are a perfect match for a variety of fusion recipes.

"The Asian noodle lends itself to lots of fusion because it is a great flavor carrier," says JSL Foods' Nielsen. "When grocery delis first tried to do Asian cold salads, often they used pasta. We see that trend changing because consumers are more sophisticated, and they know Asian noodles have a different texture with more curl."

A few tricks of the trade allow delis to offer more variety while reducing the time to prepare meals.

"You dice your vegetables or cut them into strips or into big chunks so you can have some variety without having to offer a lot of different vegetables," says Tsang.

Because no deli can offer all the interesting flavors, departments must plan for a combination of the familiar and the new in the Asian section.

Many suppliers search aggressively for new dishes to incorporate into the Asian food menu. Hissho Sushi looks for trends all around the world and adapts them for the U.S. market, shipping ingredients to more than 500 locations in 34 states, says Lee.

Although a few unique items increase appeal, core products in the deli section should replicate familiar choices at Asian restaurants.

"I think you would need at least four entrees and some salads or sides to provide a complete program in the service deli case," says Dudley. "You need to have some of the dishes to offer a complete meal as though the customer was at a Chinese or Asian restaurant. During the spring and summer months, sesame noodle salads are great."

Whatever the size and mix of dishes in the Asian food section, this is a category capable of continued growth.

Evidence that Asian food has untapped potential is as close as the restaurant down the street or the freezer section in the supermarket.

"Asian has been and continues to be a growth area in foodservice and in the grocery store," says Nielsen of JSL Foods. "It only makes sense consumers who are buying more food at restaurants and grocery stores would buy more at the deli." **DB**







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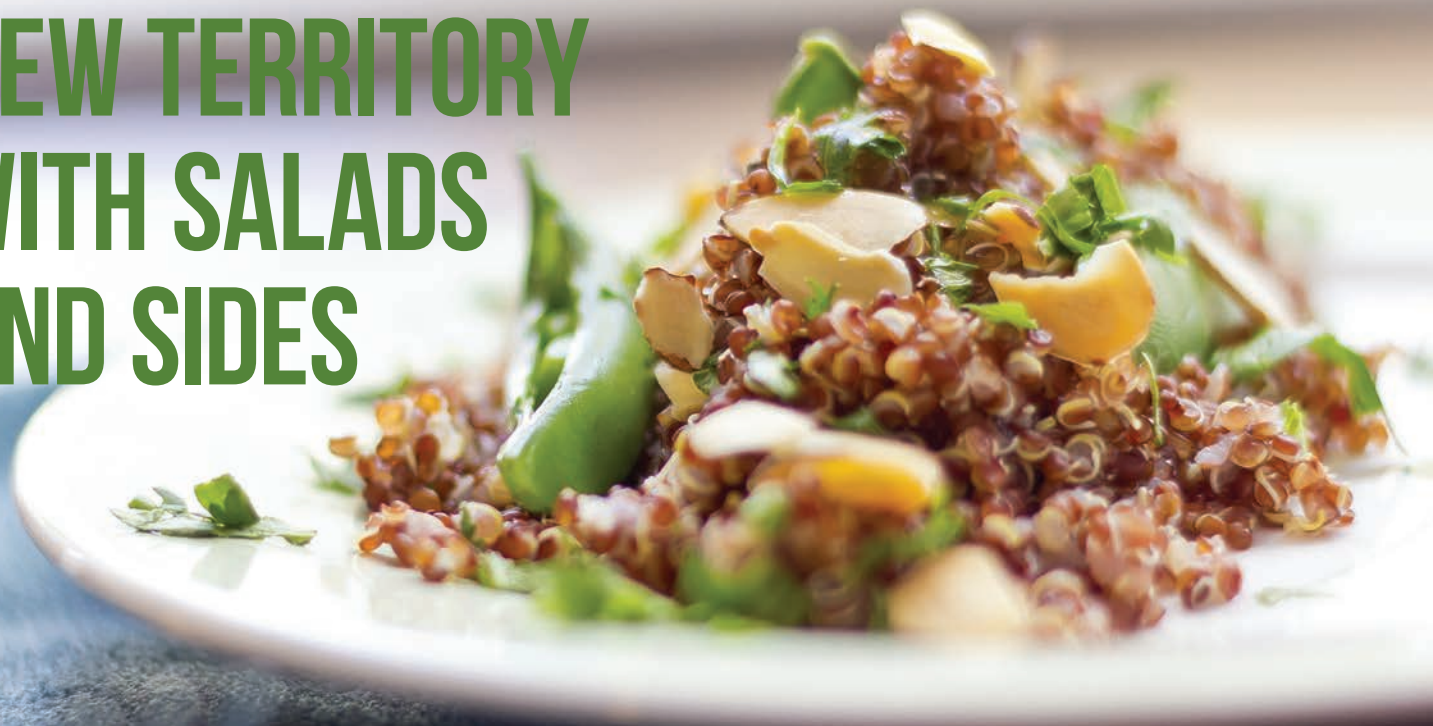
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EXPLORING NEW TERRITORY WITH SALADS AND SIDES



A new generation of health conscious foodies leads the way

BY BOB JOHNSON

The days of sides plunged into the deep-fat fryer and salads heavily laced with mayonnaise are, if not gone, on the way out as a new generation of consumers is seeking better-for-you options.

"In deli salads the trends are healthy, grains, Asian and Hispanic," says Carl Cappelli, vice president of sales and business development at Don's Food Products, Schwenksville, PA. "We are concentrating on clean grain salads with no artificial colors or preservatives."

Millennials enjoy eating and serving gourmet foods, but don't have time to make them and are willing to pay a little more.

"With respect to rotisserie chicken and the hot bar, the quality of the sides is improving," says Bob Sewall, execu-

tive vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA. "They're made with better ingredients. We're bringing in a new clientele with clean labels or organic ingredients. Organic and clean label products are really taking off."

It's Cool To Be A Foodie

The trendsetting generation craves adventure in its foods, and frequently ethnic profiles satisfy that desire.

"More and more Millennials want edgy flavors," says Cappelli. "Millennials now outnumber Baby Boomers. They are eating lighter, small portions, and on the go. They will be setting the trend for years to come. The flavor trends are Asian and Hispanic. We've all heard about jalapeño, but now we're hearing about sriracha."

Bold, spicy flavors are marching to the forefront in efforts to quench this thirst for culinary adventure.

"We have seen people wanting bolder flavors like sriracha, ginger or flavored wines," says Mike Stinson, chief executive of Walker's Food Products in North Kansas City, MO, who noticed these changes a few years ago. "We see demand for ethnic flavors and healthier options like oil and vinegar dressing, or yogurt based dressing, rather than mayonnaise. We see more grain and bean salads that are not mayonnaise-based, things like quinoa and couscous."

One producer finds favorable response for a traditional working class Hispanic seafood dish.

"We've made a ceviche for a long time, seafood cured in lime or lemon



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juice,” says Mark Miller, vice president for marketing at Fresh Food Concepts in Cypress, CA. “We offer a tomato and shrimp salad that is pretty expensive. We have another with very little shrimp that has more ‘krab.’ It’s less expensive and more popular. It’s primarily Hispanic-based, and often eaten on a tortilla.”

Even foods that are not economical are finding markets as long as they demonstrate high-quality artisan flair.

“The change I have seen is not unlike the craft beer market,” says Stinson. “People used to drink Budweiser or Coors. Now it’s like everyone wants to

show off their artisan brand flavor.”

One strategy some consumers employ is to economize a little in the center of the plate in order to afford more interesting and nutritious options on the side.

“Customers are thinking less expensive proteins and higher quality sides,” says Sewall. “People want things like butternut squash with organic cream, or spinach and kale with mac and cheese, where the first ingredient is real cheese.”

Some younger consumers crave bold adventures they can act out in their own kitchens.

“People are getting more experimental

with different types of cooking, including salads and sides, revolving around more ethnic flavors,” says Margi Gunter, brand manager for deli and foodservice at Litehouse, Sandpoint, ID. “Millennials almost view themselves as sous chefs, so are trying to duplicate what they see at restaurants, in their home meals.”

These wannabes don’t have the time to be chefs, and they know it, which is where the deli can lend a helping hand.

“More consumers are eating at home. According to market research company NPD Group, the number of meals bought at restaurants has recently dipped to the lowest levels since 1993,” says Gunter. “It’s not because people are making their own food at home, they’re using simple ingredients and meal-starters to get a jump on dinner. Consumers want fresh ingredients and wholesome foods.”

Cable television shows and celebrity chefs have made healthy, gourmet food the new hip.

“It is cool to be a foodie,” says Kristyn Lawson, vice president of retail sales at Good Foods Group, Pleasant Prairie, WI. “With the explosion of high profile chefs and success of TV Food Show’s consumers expect more from packaged and convenient foods in their local supermarkets. As part of the ‘Food Revolution,’ Good Foods uses a variety of ‘superfoods’ to bring innovation and excitement to the deli category. We also have a world class culinary team that perfectly balances flavors with products like kale, beet, grains, nuts, avocado and more.”

It may be cool to be a foodie, but in today’s world it also has to be convenient.

“People are starved for time,” says Stinson of Walker’s. “They are willing to spend a little more for the wow factor they can have with an excellent side next to the piece of meat they just grilled. We see convenience is a big factor.”

Better For You Options With Clean Labels

Convenience is big, but healthy and nutritious are also in, but this is not homework because consumers, led by the Millennials, want their food to be interesting and delectable, and are willing to pay a little more for the pleasure.

The trend toward healthy options with clean labels has reached the sides and salads categories in the deli, and looks to be here to stay.

“About a year ago I noticed the shift,” says Sewall. “People were having to go to other departments to buy the sides, but the clean label is here to stay in the deli.

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This change toward cleaner, healthier foods should be a lasting megatrend because it reflects a new generation.

"Consumers of all ages are paying more attention to what products they are eating with Millennials being instrumental in food trends and choices," says Lawson. "The direction of the food industry is rapidly changing and food choices are shifting with a focus on 'preservative free,' 'no additives,' 'natural,' 'healthy,' 'high protein,' 'reduced calories/fat,' being important for a healthy lifestyle and to live longer."

The all natural label is not enough anymore because consumers want specifics such as labels they understand, locally grown, organic, non-GMO, gluten free, and, most of all, ingredients they know to be healthy.

"We provide retailers with a sheet with a definition of clean label that's accepted by Giant Eagle, Publix and Wegman's," says Cappelli of Don's.

Some grains are stepping out as major ingredients in healthy but tasty salad options.

"Consumers are still shying away from gluten-containing foods and are now on the watch for non-GMO products as well," says Gunter. "Ancient grains are an easy way to meet both needs, and highlighting it in the name of the salad is especially important. Ethnic and regional continue to gain momentum because consumers feel that meets both exotic and indulgent desires as well as eating 'local.' People are just becoming more aware of their food and wanting to know where it comes from."

Salad makers are looking more toward herbs and oils for flavor, and far less toward mayonnaise.

"I have seen more herb- and spice-led salad varieties in the deli case, especially from celebrity and professional chefs," says Nathan Roe, category manager at Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR. "I also see a trend in deli salads where the preparation methods are going to extremes — on one end, bigger pieces of leafy greens and fewer cuts of vegetables and meats, and on the other end, smaller-bite salads with very small chops and dices."

Reser's recently introduced a beet and red cabbage slaw, and a maca-

roni salad with fancier pasta shapes and chunks of real cheddar cheese.

"Herbs and spices allow food manufacturers and home cooks to make a very small ingredient change with potentially large flavor and color impact," says Roe. "And, the size of salad ingredients helps delis innovate without dramatically modifying what they're already procuring."

In some circles rich is in, and that means high quality dairy can be a key ingredient in both salads and sides.

"A growing trend in side dishes is the consumer's desire for richer flavored dishes and new varieties," says John McCarthy, category manager at Reser's Fine Foods, in Beaverton, OR. "People want contemporary twists on old favor-

ites like macaroni and cheese. We are also seeing regional and ethnic flavors infused with traditional recipes to create new delicious dishes."

In the sides category Reser's introduced a buffalo macaroni and cheese, and rich buttermilk mashed potatoes with chives and seasonings.

"Farm Ridge Foods creates new salads and sides seasonally — spring and summer, fall and winter. From Bacon Mac & Cheese Balls and Sweet Thai Chili Krab Cakes to Edamamae Salad, Jeweled Couscous, and Tropical Quinoa, there is something for everyone," says Patty Amato, director of sales at Farm Ridge Foods, in Islandia, NY.

Many producers report increased

►► PACKAGING FOR THE NEW GENERATION

BY BOB JOHNSON

New and creative packaging can draw attention to sides and salads, as it holds and protects them.

"In thermoformed and injection molded packaging we're continuing to see a number of different and unique shapes to plastic containers," says Jeff Lucash, director of sales for stock products at Placon in Madison, WI. "It might not be completely dramatic, but it's enough of a change that it may make you stop and look, which is the point."

A simple change in the sight lines of the packaging may contribute significantly to merchandising.

"We get used to seeing certain foods in certain types and styles of containers. It becomes comfortable to us," says Lucash. "When we see the packaging in the store, we can immediately

identify it because of that familiarity. Whatever the reason, whether it's to reinvigorate a brand or encourage new business, new shapes and sizes will continue to appear and be accepted as long as it's as functional as it's unique."

Placon plans to unveil new GoCubes and Selectables lines at this year's National Restaurant Association (NRA) and International Dairy, Deli and Bakery Association (IDDBA) shows. These new packages will display salad ingredients in separate compartments the customer can easily see, and will use post-consumer recycled PET material.

"The packaging is extremely versatile and allows you to get creative with your presentation through the use of insert trays," says Lucash. "Customers will be able to easily discern a Southwest Chicken salad from a Caesar whereas with many mixed ingredient salads, heavier foods, like meats and cheeses, will settle to the bottom of the container making it more difficult for customers to identify the type of salad."

In the minds of some consumers the appeal of ecological benefits goes hand in hand with the desire for healthier foods.

"We're still seeing the emphasis in using post-consumer recycled material for our thermoformed food containers," says Lucash. "We have a lot of natural and organic food customers whose own customers are pushing them to use recycled material that also is recyclable."

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interest in grain based salads with relatively light dressings.

"I'm seeing more grain salads with different vegetables mixed together," says Miller of Fresh Food Concepts. "They all seem to have something good for you. Most of them have a light vinegar or maybe a yogurt dressing, but not mayonnaise."

The popularity of grain and vegetable combinations reflects itself in the increasing popularity of Mediterranean salads.

"We started carrying a Mediterranean salad two years ago," says Miller. "They're not runaway successes, but before we couldn't get any traction with something like that. They include garbanzos, quinoa, and kale, along with

peppers and olives."

The ability to serve grain-based dishes either hot or cold, as a salad or a side, inspired one producer to introduce a new line featuring this versatility.

"We're going to debut Melanie's Medleys in a big way at the International Dairy Deli and Bakery Association (IDDBA) show in June," says Cappelli. "We're the only salad company thinking about breakfast grains, snack grains, anytime grains, desert grains and midnight grains. We're creating ready-to-eat, clean-label, hot or cold grain medleys."

Another producer entices with a healthy salad that packs a protein punch, and only has familiar ingredients.

Creative signs can headline bold salads and sides, and draw attention to their healthy ingredients.

"Nifty names help, and you put a couple of the ingredients on the signage, like Southwest salad with pinto beans, corn, quinoa and red peppers," says Miller. "Just a little bit of a description."

If interesting and nutritious food is in, nothing could be cooler than to merchandise these dishes using social media.

"A younger demographic of consumers are driving the desire to try and quickly accept new and different flavors," says McCarthy of Reser's. "They want to discover new foods, flavors and food combinations and share their discoveries with friends using social media. Posting pictures of new dishes on Instagram is very popular. The impact of social media, the popularity of cooking and food TV shows, and continued relocating of people have all contributed to ethnic and regional flavors becoming more mainstream."

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CROSS-MERCHANDISING GIVES CONSUMERS SOLUTIONS

Millennials crave healthy but interesting snack combinations

By Bob Johnson

Crackers and cheese, bread and wine, and more recently, hummus and pita go together in consumers' eyes, in the deli display.

Many new and interesting mixes can be effectively merchandised together in the deli if they combine to answer a question.

"The most effective cross-merchandising is a presentation that provides a complete pairing solution to the customer," says Cara Figgins, vice president at Partners, a Kent, WA-based cracker company. "With effective cross-merchandising the retailer could increase from selling just one of the items in the pairing to selling all three items. When it is made easier for the consumer, they are much more likely to buy the whole combination."

Because exciting answers to consumer questions sell, the operative word here is solution.

"The main thing to keep in mind when merchandising deli crackers and cheeses is that the consumer is always looking for a presentation solution, and if the retailer creates that solution, the consumer is very likely to buy it," says Figgins.

Combine Tasty and Healthy

While high-end ingredients that combine into a gourmet meal excite the connoisseur in us, and can be the holy grail of deli cross-merchandising, items that make for a quick but nutritious snack satisfy the Millennial in us.

"The Millennials are snacking because they don't have time, and if they're going to snack, they want healthier snacks," says Paul Cipolla, president of Plocky's Fine Snacks in Hinsdale, IL. "The trend the last four or five years has been toward the healthier snacks."

High nutritional value and clean labels matter in the eyes of the generation setting the standard in the deli.

Plocky's chips are gluten free, kosher, non-GMO, and have no trans fats. "They have good-for-you ingredients and the Millennials like that. They merchandise best over a refrigerated case where hummus is displayed."

Protein and produce items can be part of the cross-merchandising program because they help fill out a nutritionally balanced snack.

"There are many things in the deli that lend themselves to being cross-merchan-

dised — meats and cheeses, vegetables and fruits with cheese spreads," says Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager at Valley Lahvosh Baking in Fresno, CA.

Some producers make a point of helping retailers effectively display their foods in combination with related items.

"Our field team consistently looks for opportunities to improve our customers' ring size and overall profitability by cross-merchandising with pre-packed deli meats and cheeses, sliced and dried meats, hummus, spreadable cheese and various dips," says Eric Van De Wal, vice president of marketing at The Snack Factory in Princeton, NJ.

Industry experts recommend displaying a variety of interesting items that can be quickly and easily assembled into an exciting meal.

"The latest trend is putting a meal solution together," says Sharon Olson of Olson Communications, Chicago. "The consumer can have the satisfaction of putting a meal together and they can get it all in one place instead of going all over the store."

She suggests the deli take a cue from the trend in which companies deliver



ingredients for healthy, seasonal dinners to a patron's door weekly, to be assembled in their kitchen. Similarly, "the supermarket can showcase all the items for an amazing meal together," says Olson.

Because some consumers crave gourmet meals at home, but are starved for time, this sort of solution has the potential to significantly increase deli revenues.

"When you combine a couple of products together you can increase your sales," says Eric Gerard, vice president of sales and marketing at Van Holten's pickles in Waterloo, WI. "Depending on the item retailers can easily boost the average ring 10 percent, and sometimes a whole lot more when they are pushing a full meal solution."

The largest number of consumers coming to the deli, however, will continue to be looking for healthy and interesting snacks they can eat on the go.

A number of companies are unveiling new products specifically targeted toward this hurried but health conscious demographic.

Dr. Kracker launched Robustica Flats on February 1, says Bob Obenberger, a partner in the Plano, TX company. "These products are great for pairing with dips and hummus, or as a carrier for cheese or other proteins. So far about half of the stores have placed them in the deli, and half in grocery. Dr. Kracker's Robustica Flats are a distinctive offering that doesn't use flavoring agents, but the actual ingredients like real cheese. Flatbreads are a growing part of the category and have especially enjoyed a real success in the deli."

New varieties of higher protein chips will make a first public appearance late this spring.

"We have some different flavors we're going to introduce at the Fancy Food Show at the end of June," says Diane Cipolla, vice president for sales at Plocky's Fine Snacks, Hinsdale, IL. "In the deli we had the three-ounce hummus chips in 900 Publix stores and did very well. We also have an 8-ounce package of hummus chips. They do very well with hummus."

There will also be new snacks targeting a growing number of consumers trying to avoid gluten.

"We have recently launched Gluten-Free Pretzel Crisps Minis in many

of our retailers nationwide," says Van De Wal of the Snack Factory. "It comes in two flavors, Original and Salted Caramel. We're excited to be able to provide consumers sensitive to this allergen more choices and variety."

Promotional Prices Optional

Many producers believe that discounted prices add to sales, but are not essential for an effective cross-merchandising program.

"Promotional prices are not needed, but it sure does help," says Gerard. "Customers want deals and even a small discount will encourage adding that additional item and increasing the ring."

Providing information about how to use two or more items together can help increase sales at least as much as offering a price break.

"Promotional prices are always helpful but I think it's more important to let the consumer know what to do with the items being cross-merchandised," says Bonsignore. "It's always helpful to provide serving suggestions or recipes that use the items being featured."

Creative pairing can seal the deal without a discount, in particular, when cross-merchandising for holidays or special events.

"I think the need for promotional pricing depends on whether it is during a time that people would be most likely to be entertaining or if you are presenting it to an everyday shopper," says Figgins of Partners. "I think an everyday shopper would be more likely to purchase the pairing if at least one of the items was on promotion."



If it is a busy holiday entertaining season, I think just providing the solution to the customer could be sufficient."

Retailers and producers find some items can be effectively cross-merchandised through displays outside the deli, in other areas of the store.

"I think stores can use themed displays in other areas of the store with recipes and coupons for deli items that will direct their consumers to the deli," says Bonsignore. "For example, in one store chain for Valentine's Day, our Heart Lahvosh was displayed in the back aisle of the store with wine and serving suggestions for cheeses and spreads."

Some baked goods do well to stake out familiar space near, but not in, the deli department.

"We are primarily right next to deli in the bakery," says Michael Girkout, president of Alvarado Street Bakery in Petaluma, CA. "We are usually merchandised with organic cream cheese, almond butter or that sort of thing because we make organic bread."

Alvarado Street also makes what Girkout calls "kids' bread," which is merchandised with peanut butter and jelly to make an inviting display for easy, healthy school lunch items.

The produce department, too, can serve as a display destination for deli foods that pair well with fruits.

"Cheese, crackers, cheese accompaniments like jams, jellies, etc. can all be in a great wine department presentation through demos, and cheeses and crackers can also be effectively merchandised in the produce department to create a fruit and cheese platter," says Figgins.

Cooperation among departments may create new possibilities for selling products in combination.

"We have been successful in cross-merchandising with our partners in the grocery department as well," says Van De Wal from The Snack Factory. "Try cross-merchandising with premium and craft beer as well as brands such as Nutella. A typical point of distribution can add a minimum of one case or 12 bags of incremental volume per store. Couple that with Nutella and the average ring goes from \$3.49 to \$7.00."

Some items that can be displayed in deli are better displayed in other sections of the store where consumers are used to finding the category.

"We made the decision to move our Crispbreads to grocery a few years ago, where consumers are used to finding Crispbreads," says Dr. Kracker's

Obenberger. "The competition is merchandising in the grocery department so we found our sales increased by moving there, with Dr. Kracker being the only organic offering. When we were in the deli some people shopping the category didn't even know about our Crispbreads."

At least a few producers and retailers are taking a second look at what items are best merchandised in deli, and what do better elsewhere in the store.

"Some retailers are moving more

deli snacks and crackers into the grocery department, because of a desire to manage the entire category under one department," says Obenberger. "You're seeing limited dry goods selections in some delis while others are doing a good job of presenting a large variety of items to complement their cheeses, proteins and dips. We're always looking more in depth at the question of bringing items to the market that merchandise and grow sales in the deli."

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Business Is Anything But Flat



A desire for a healthier lifestyle has helped flatbread sales go through the roof

BY KEITH LORIA

A recent study released by Nielsen Perishables Group shows that over the last few years, there has been a steady shift in consumer preference from regular sandwich bread to flatbreads, with statistics showing almost 30 percent of bread shoppers are now using flatbread for their sandwiches.

Warren Stoll, marketing director for Kontos Foods, Inc., doing business in Paterson, NJ, says the entire industry is selling flatbreads like gangbusters.

"I've been here two-and-a-half years now, and we are growing in retail and our growth is higher than it's been in the past and it continues to grow," he says. "We are increasing our offerings and it seems to be paying off nicely."

Milt Weinstock, chief marketing officer of Toufayan Bakeries, located in Ridgefield, NJ, says the consumers' desire for portability, as well as the variety of healthy and tasty offerings contribute to the rising numbers.

The company's gluten free wraps,

which come in four varieties, grew 162 percent in sales in the past year, he says. "Our low carb wrap, which has more protein than four egg whites, while being low in sodium and high in fiber, is performing extremely well."

Bob Pallotta, senior vice president for Flatout, Inc., headquartered in Chicago, says the company continues to see strong growth in the category and forecasts are that it will continue increasing in 2015, as the industry as a whole is expected to do.

"The specialty flatbread segment has

good manufacturers producing quality products," he says. "As we all continue to innovate with better, tastier, easier offerings, consumers will spread the word."

Cara Caulkins, a spokesperson for Stonefire Authentic Flatbreads, based in Toronto, Ontario, says the flatbread segment is growing because the products are unique and different from the usual bakery offerings.

"Consumers are also seeing flatbreads on menus when they go to restaurants and want to recreate those when they're cooking at home," she says. "Food magazines and recipe websites are flooded with flatbread recipes so there is an interest for people to try this and get creative in their home kitchen."

On The Shelf

Kontos, who uses the tagline, "We Are Flatbread," offers more than 50 varieties of flatbread in delis, and has flavors of everything from spinach to tomatoes to jalapeños to sweet onions.

"Within the flatbreads, we offer many different sizes, shapes and colors; big to small, oval to round, we even put grill marks on there so people can make an authentic panini on their stove," says

Stoll. "We're constantly coming up with new flavors and we can't keep things like spinach on the shelves, they are selling so fast."

Stonefire offers naan, whole grain and garlic, plus pizza crust in the deli section of retailers in the U.S., and its naan is the No. 1 ranked flatbread SKU in total U.S. food IRI data.

The company also recently made updates to its Stonefire pizza crust line, which will be unveiled at the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association show in Atlanta this June.

"Flatbreads offer consumers versatility in their meal planning. Naan is an excellent accompaniment to traditional stews and curries, but is also a fantastic base for flatbread pizzas, wraps and paninis," says Caulkins. "Our pizza crusts offer a nutritious base for an easy dinner or lunch. The options are endless for creative meal ideas."

Pallotta notes Flatout is the brand innovator in flatbreads with a variety of unique oval wraps, artisan sandwich flatbreads and thin crust flatbread pizza.

"Flatbreads are hot and continue to outpace the fresh bread category," he says. "Flatout's research shows

convenience, 'healthy halo' and taste are why shoppers are adding Flatout to their shopping carts."

A Healthier Choice

Consumers are more educated and more conscious of the nutritional value of their bread products. That is why Caulkins says Stonefire uses authentic ingredients and traditional baking methods to make the flatbreads, none of which contain artificial preservatives, additives, artificial colors, trans fat or hydrogenated oils.

Flatout, Inc. recently introduced a new protein line called ProteinUP CarbDown, and each wrap has 12 grams of protein. Flatout ProteinUP uses a range of beans — chickpeas, navy beans and black beans — as the protein source. Flavors include the original Core 12, Red Pepper Hummus, and Sea Salt and Crushed Black Pepper.

"Consumers eat Flatout for several reasons and health is one of them. Be it for weight loss, sourcing healthy grains and avoiding other ingredients," says Pallotta. "One Flatout, for example, has half the calories and carbs of two slices of 100-percent whole-wheat bread. What is

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unique is we are using oats as part of the ingredients.”

Flatout is also introducing a gluten free product in response to the demand for it.

Ethnic Cuisines

People are seeking ethnic cuisines offering strong taste profiles (sweet, heat, sour, tangy and smoked), which reflect Asian, Middle Eastern and North African ethnicities in their sandwiches, and flatbread manufacturers have paid notice.

One of the traits of flatbreads is that it can be used in recipes for all different sorts of ethnic varieties. Be it pizza, quesadillas, paninis or sandwich varieties such as caramelized chicken bahn mi wraps or muffaletta wraps.

And of course, homemade pizzas have been steadily on the rise over the last five years as consumers have gravitated towards the myriad of flatbread flavors to use as their dough.

Stoll says Greek and Mediterranean ethnic products have really driven the interest in flatbreads.

“Flatbreads are inexplicably linked into that culture and cuisine,” he says. “I think consumers are looking for ethnic and

exotic products, and the flatbread, the pita and the naans in the Asian culture, are all a staple of the trend.”

The Role Of Retailers

Weinstock says retailers need to revisit their deli counters to better communicate

the breadth of health and taste varieties that are now available to consumers in their deli counters — and flatbreads play a big role in that.

“They need to play up the adventure of the new tastes and textures that are now available in their local supermarket that are both convenient and a good value,” he says. “Deli managers also need to recognize consumer taste and health issues are changing and they need to deal with vendors that can adequately satisfy their needs.”

There are a number of great cross-merchandising opportunities for deli counters to employ to help increase flatbread sales.

“Flatout partners with a great number of proteins, cheese manufacturers and spreads and we do demos, recipes and promotions together,” says Pallotta. “Shoppers are busy, and showing them that there are endless ways to use, serve and please with Flatout and quality premier ingredients helps to drive sales.”

From what Stoll has experienced from the job, and seen as a consumer himself, he says retailers have a good handle on what they can and should be doing with flatbreads and are eager to see the segment grow within the store.

“At the counter, pre-made sandwiches exist at lunchtime; in front of the counter, there are plenty of flatbread offering at eye level; and they use these offerings to make ready-made products,” says Stoll. “Delis benefit when they show these sandwiches are healthier to eat because that’s what will get a consumer’s attention.”

DB





ROTISSERIE CHICKEN CONTINUES TO SPREAD ITS WINGS

The deli's most popular entrée item still growing in popularity

BY BOB JOHNSON

Rotisserie chicken is featured in delis everywhere and known to virtually all consumers. But while it would seem this best-selling mainstream item couldn't become any more popular than it is today, industry experts maintain it still has room to grow.

"I don't think anyone has found the end of this," says Eric LeBlanc, vice president of marketing at Tyson Foods in Springdale, AR. "We just keep sell-

ing more. We have huge accounts with mature programs that are still getting double-digit increases."

Nielsen Perishables Group's FreshFacts reported that rotisserie chicken accounted for more than \$1.5 billion in U.S. sales in 2014 — that's almost double the amount of fried chicken sold, an increase of 9.5 percent in sales compared to 2013. The National Chicken Council estimates more than 800 million rotisserie

chickens were sold in 2010, including 600 million in supermarkets and wholesale clubs, and an additional 200 million through foodservice outlets, according to Tom Super, vice president for communications at the council.

The Chicken Council, which has represented the producers, processors and distributors of 95 percent of the chickens sold in the United States for the last 60 years, has seen during which time



per-capita chicken consumption has quadrupled and red meat demand has dropped by nearly 30 percent, according to Tom Super, vice president for communications at the council.

The formula for selling this remarkably popular product is simple: have a supply of high-quality rotisserie chickens reliably available in a highly visible spot in the deli.

"Be in stock with quality chicken," advises Tyson's LeBlanc. "Costco sells a boatload of rotisserie chicken with one flavor, and Sam's Club does the same thing. Your core flavors are savory, barbecue and lemon pepper. That's where more of your volume is going to be."

From the early days of the Great Depression when John Tyson worked to support his family by selling chick-

ens from his small Arkansas farming operation, his company has grown into an international giant, producing 34 million chickens a week, as well as pork and beef.

Merchandising Strategies

LeBlanc also cites other new strategies that can help cross-merchandise the chickens with other items to form a more revenue-enhancing grab-and-go dinner.

"There is a big push to cross-merchandise rotisserie chicken with a beverage and a side dish," says LeBlanc. "Publix does a beautiful job. They've got a chicken, two Hawaiian rolls and a side that you put in a bag with a UPC code on the bottom to scan."

Producers supply the chickens already seasoned and ready for cooking at the deli. But because variety in seasoning profiles has surprisingly little impact in sales, only a few retailers experiment with offering a selection of flavored rotisserie chickens.

"Ahold does limited edition rotisserie chicken flavors to increase variety for the shopper," says Scott Moses, senior brand manager at Tyson Foods. Ahold USA of Carlisle, PA, is a Dutch-based firm that owns Giant-Carlisle, Stop & Shop, Giant Landover and Pea Pod supermarkets.

"Once a quarter they will rotate in [another] flavor. The Ahold rotisserie flavors include traditional, or savory, and honey — offered every day, and bourbon, barbecue and applewood smoke as limited-time offerings," says Moses.

While unique flavors may add interest to the product, the tried and true familiar recipe still commands the market. "Savory, or roasted, makes up 80 percent of the rotisserie chicken," says Moses. "Lemon pepper, barbecue and garlic come next. But when people buy rotisserie chicken, what they really want is a roasted chicken."

Not only is a single flavor adequate to building a program, but rotisserie chicken also is largely immune to seasonal slumps — even though there is a peak season.

"You see rotisserie chicken the most in the summer time, from Memorial Day to Labor Day," says Moses. "There's also a blip the week before Thanksgiving."

Perdue Farms of Salisbury, MD,

offers rotisserie chicken meal suggestions on its website.

The most common companion for rotisserie chicken, the potato, also does not have a significant off-season. “Potato items are sold throughout the year,” says Susan Hannah, vice president for marketing and product development at Pacific Valley Foods, Bellevue, WA.

“The great thing about potatoes is they can be stored during the year, and then processed into a variety of items per the consumer demands. As a side dish, potatoes are great for summertime meals and picnics, or great as comfort food in the winter months.”

Health Hook

Another trend is rotisserie chicken products claiming to have an even more healthful profile than traditional varieties. This is an attempt to reach a key demographic group for rotisserie chickens — consumers who are a little older, more affluent and concerned about health and wellness issues.

“The biggest new thing is that there is a lot more ‘no-antibiotic chicken,’” says Tyson Food’s LeBlanc. “You’ve had people talk about ‘all natural’ for a while, but it wasn’t clear what that meant. People would say no growth hormones, but no reputable poultry firm has used growth hormones since the 1960s.

“We had a major push on ‘no antibiotics’ in 2007, but then we kind of backed off,” he says. “You have to get a premium [price] for it — it’s close to double.”

Producers offering antibiotic-free chickens separate sick birds that must be treated with medications from the rest of the flock, says LeBlanc. The lion’s share of the increased cost is tied to the higher mortality rate among chickens not treated with antibiotics. The process is tricky enough on the producer’s side so the demand usually originates with the deli operators.

“In many cases it’s the retailer’s initiative,” says LeBlanc, who notes a major Midwestern-based produce retailer has moved in this direction. “Some more mainstream large players are moving toward no antibiotics.”

Perdue Farms has found the issue urgent enough to issue a statement on its use of antibiotics: “Chickens raised for Perdue Foods never receive antibiotics for growth promotion, nor do we add human antibiotics to the feed,” according to company policy. “Chickens not raised for the organic and no-antibiotics-ever program are generally treated



to prevent common intestinal illnesses using ionophores. Ionophores are a type of animal-only antibiotic not used in human medicine, and are not associated with antibacterial resistance in human medicine. Chickens marketed as no-antibiotics-ever and organic never receive any antibiotics.”

Gold’n Plump of St. Cloud, MN, also has clarified its use of antibiotics.

“We take a holistic approach to our animal care program, including the judicious use of sub-therapeutic antibiotics [to prevent disease] in flocks sold under the Gold’n Plump brand,” the company says in a statement. “This holistic approach significantly minimizes the use of antibiotics when compared to the amount needed to treat illness.”

The Minnesota firm also claims to offer a greater consistency in the weight of its chickens.

Rotisserie Chicken Soars

With well more than half a billion rotisserie chickens sold each year at supermarket delis and club stores, it is easy to mistakenly assume this premier grab-and-go deli entrée has been around for a long time. But it has been less than three decades since Boston Chicken — later renamed Boston Market — first popularized taking home whole spit-roasted chickens to serve as the centerpiece of an easy but tasty dinner.

Oven manufacturers in the 1950s had

attempted to promote rotisserie cooking at home by building rotisseries into their domestic ovens. However, the attempt finally failed, presumably because the cooking and cleaning took too much time.

In the restaurant industry, though, Boston Market was quickly followed by numerous regional chains that dominated the market before the overnight explosion of rotisserie chickens in supermarkets and club stores.

With the trend toward eating chicken as a healthful and economical meat option showing no signs of diminishing, this sensational growth of rotisserie chicken is expected to continue. According to USDA statistics, per-capita chicken consumption has more than quadrupled since 1960, from less than 23 pounds to 95 pounds. Meanwhile, beef consumption declined 10 percent over the last decade.

Nearly a quarter of consumers queried in the Chicken Council’s most recent survey said they had taken home rotisserie chicken in the last month, while many respondents said they had taken home this popular entrée more than once.

Well over 90 percent of those buying rotisserie chickens bought them in a supermarket or grocery store, the study found.

The Council’s survey also found that convenience is the No. 1 reason for buying rotisserie chicken or, as they called it — “dinner on a spit” — followed closely by good taste.

DB

VIVE LA FRANCE!



Pairing Goat Cheeses With Unique Condiments Boost Sales

STORY BY TIA KEENAN

PHOTOS BY GEERT TEUWEN

Great pairings begin with great cheese. Great cheese sings, in both hushed and booming notes, enchanting us with its aesthetic, texture and flavor. A condiment plays a supporting role — it can help reveal what is already there, enhancing or adorning an existing characteristic.

Occasionally a pairing makes something new and different, a third taste — a flavor that isn't the cheese and isn't the condiment but what emerges from the union of the two.

Very few categories of cheese are more iconic than French goat cheeses. With hundreds of years of tradition, 3,000 goat cheese producers, 60 goat cheese dairies and a network of affineurs who age cheese to its optimum ripeness, it's no surprise French goat cheese continues to set the bar for goat cheesemaking globally.

The people of the Mediterranean have been making goat cheese since 10,000 BC. By the time the Roman Empire hit its stride, goat cheese was a reliable source

of protein and entrenched in Mediterranean culture and cuisine. By the Middle Ages, goat cheese served as a bartering currency and stocks of matured cheeses were mentioned in deeds. Cheese was recognized as an essential and valuable part of life and society. As industrialization and urbanization took hold, cheeses traditionally enjoyed locally in the countryside began to make their way to urban markets, where they were sold for cash or bartered for other goods. Affineurs would buy stocks of cheese, transport them to caves for aging and then sell them in Paris.

So what makes a great pairing? Much like the flavor experience itself, there's subjectivity to what makes a pairing

appealing. Before you begin recommending cheese pairings to your customers, here are some important points to keep in mind:

Respect the cheese. Cheese is the result of the hard work of at least two species, if not more. It's a finished product; any ornamentation should first be respectful of that. If the condiment is all you can taste in the pairing, you've trounced the cheese.

Consider context: the who, what and where of the experience. This helps gauge the approach and how daring one should be. If your customers are serving pairings to guests who have limited experience with cheese, they shouldn't approach the work like performance art, experimental and confrontational. They should work like an impressionist, in soft flavors and good light. When pairing, always consider the guests.

Texture is so often neglected when examining how we experience flavor, which is surprising considering how much influence it has. We cannot separate texture from flavor. One should consider texture when deciding how to pair a cheese and condiment.



The deep influence of aesthetics on how we perceive taste is widely recognized. We eat with our eyes is a cliché because it's so true. Make beautiful pairings that don't obscure the cheese. Let the natural beauty of the cheese shine. Consider color, contrast, variation, and proportion when plating and pairing.

Three Principles For Great Pairings

There are three basic principles when

creating cheese and condiment pairings. The most basic is the concept of mimicry. That is, experiencing a flavor or texture note in a chosen cheese and then offering a pairing that mimics one note, or both.

A slightly more complex approach is to make a contrasting pairing. This type of pairing is ambitious in that it requires a second leap of thought, a journey from point A (cheese experience) to point B (I'd like to add this experience).



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The third principle is the most nebulous but perhaps the most satisfying when it succeeds: the condiment that coaxes. This is an approach that draws something out of the cheese, resulting in a "third taste." It requires a thorough understanding of the cheese, a delicate hand, and a leap of faith. When these types of pairings are slightly miscast, they still teach us something useful about flavor, and help us get to know the cheese on a deeper level. When they're spot on, they're truly transformative.

Above all else, creating and discovering pairings should be exciting, keeping us engaged in the familiar by creating something new and clearing the way for an unexpected experience. Pairings can amuse, surprise, provoke, intrigue and seduce. They make us dive that much deeper into the world of cheese, and for that reason alone they are a journey worth making.

DB

Tia Keenan is a cheese specialist, chef, and writer based in New York City. Keenan is the 2015 Goat Cheeses of France Ambassador. She is currently working on a book about cheese plates and pairings, to be published by Rizzoli in fall 2016.

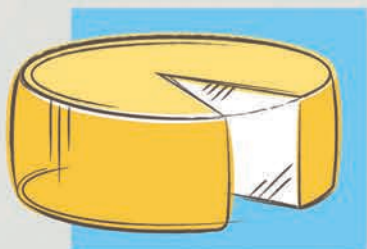




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An Italian staple becomes an American favorite

BY MAX MCCALMAN

The No. 1 cheese in Italy is gaining ground in the United States. Grana Padano is the mostly widely consumed Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) cheese in the world and about 1.6 million wheels are exported annually. Also commonly known as Grana, the shortened name may seem to be a generic name for grating cheeses, but Grana is protected in Italy and many countries of the world to mean exclusively Grana Padano.

Like all PDO cheeses, the geographical area from where it is produced, its milk and the method of production define it. Grana Padano is a raw, cow's milk cheese that is made from partially skimmed milk. It can be made from one or two milkings after it has been left to stand and cream naturally. The milk cannot undergo any physical, mechanical or thermal treatment.

Grana is a hard cheese, often used for grating or cooking, but also widely appreciated as a table cheese or the centerpiece of a cheese board. While Grana is a name often associated with grating cheese, the name Grana actually refers to its grainy texture. Originally called grana or formaggio di grana, it was a general style of aged "old" cheese made in the area with many regional differences.

The name Grana Padano, refers to its geographical roots – the Padana plain on the river Po. It is produced in the provinces of Alessandria, Asti, Biella, Cuneo, Novara, Turin, Verbano-Cusio-Ossola, Vercelli, Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Lecco, Lodi, Mantua (to the left of the Po), Milan, Monza, Pavia, Sondrio, Varese, Trento, Padua, Rovigo, Treviso, Venice, Verona, Vincenzo, Bologna, Ferrara, Forli, Cesena, Piacenza, Ravenna and Rimini.

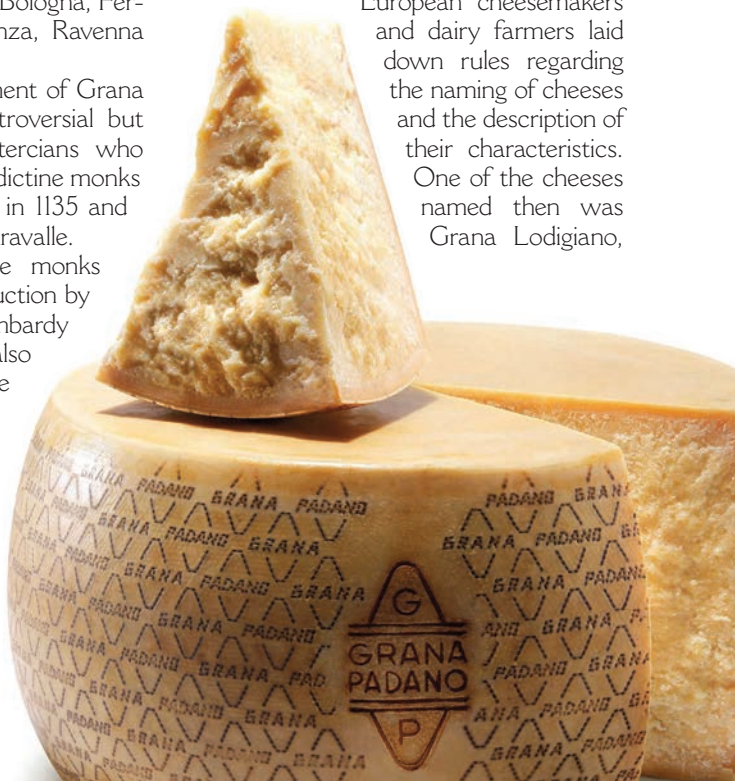
Credit for the development of Grana Padano is somewhat controversial but usually given to the Cistercians who were a branch of the Benedictine monks that travelled from France in 1135 and founded the Abbey of Chiaravalle.

Enterprising Benedictine monks advanced agricultural production by draining the swamps in Lombardy around 1000 A.D. They also brought their cows. Cattle had been bred to be larger milk producers by this time. Nothing was wasted in those monasteries; there was too much hunger in the surrounding areas. The farmers were so poor that there was little differentiation between the homes of the farm-

ers and the cowsheds. Nothing went to waste, the monks fed the leftover whey back to their cows and pigs.

Rules And Regulations

Grana Padano has been a name-protected cheese for decades. A breakthrough in its production occurred at the June 1, 1951, Stresa convention where European cheesemakers and dairy farmers laid down rules regarding the naming of cheeses and the description of their characteristics. One of the cheeses named then was Grana Lodigiano,





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which later became Grana Padano.

Italy introduced regulations regarding the protection of the designation of origin in 1954, and the Consorzio per la Tutela del Formaggio Grana Padano — or Grana Padano Cheese Protection Consortium — was established that same year. The European Commission awarded Grana Padano its PDO status — Protected Designation of Origin — on June 12, 1996. Thereafter the Italian Ministry of Farming, Food and Forestry Policy appointed the Consortium to oversee the production, promotion and price control of Grana Padano, and guiding consumer information and the wider interest of the product.

The Consortium helps supervise, protect and safeguard the PDO. This has led to great improvements to the cheese over recent years — a superior cheese to the Granas that came into the United States in the 1980s. Those were good Granas but not always top-quality. The best went to the Italian market so the lesser wheels became the face of Grana Padano outside of Italy. It has taken all this time to elevate its appreciation above a mere grating or cooking cheese.

Determining Quality

Today, every wheel of Grana Padano must undergo much scrutiny before it can be fire branded with the Grana Padano trademark. All grated Grana Padano must be produced, grated and packaged in Grana's territory — authorized by the Consortium's famous diamond-shaped mark as a guarantee of its authenticity. While many stores grate it at store level for their customers, it is important that buyers protect themselves from the many imitations that cross their paths.

There are three levels of aging that determine the characteristics of a wheel of Grana.

Grana Padano (PDO), identified by the yellow diamond, is aged between nine and 16 months. It is mellow on the palate and has a mild and delicate flavor often described as being similar to cream and butter. At this age, the cheese is very pleasing on a cheeseboard. Due to its young age, it is also most affordable and an excellent buy for the average consumer.

Grana Padano "Oltre 16 Mesi" (aged over 16 months) lends itself beautifully to grating, while also making an excellent table cheese. It has a more pronounced grainy texture and fractures into flakes.

Because of the reduction in moisture, the cheese has a distinct savory flavor

that is not too strong with an aroma of nuts and hay. It will also begin to have those crunchy bites that are due to the crystals of calcium lactate, which form the white specks visible in the grainy structure. This is not a fault and often cherished by cheese lovers.

Grana Padano (PDO) Riserva – Oltre 20 Mesi (aged over 20 months) has the highest standards. Its flavor will be distinctive and pronounced. Excellent with traditional balsamic vinegar, it is ideal with charcuterie and salami platters.

What The Experts Are Saying

Emilio Mignucci, vice president and co-owner of Di Bruno Brothers in Philadelphia, says, “I am old-school Italian, born and raised by my grandparents eating sharp Provolone. And when I started going to Italy it was just Grana Padano everywhere. In America ... all the restaurants want to use Grana Padano.”

Matt Bonano, who opened and operates Brooklyn South, a cheese shop in

Tampa, FL, in 2014, buys and sells Grana Padano on its own, but he also uses it almost exclusively for cooking, stating firmly that no other cheese is more versatile. He also uses Grana Padano in his store’s popular sandwiches. When customers come into his shop asking for a favorite, he happily offers them a taste of Grana Padano. According to Bonano they love it, and all the more when they hear the affordable price.

Grana Padano, especially at a younger age, is well balanced, relatively moist and a little mild — qualities which many cheese lovers prefer. Those milder flavors offer advantages in pairings with wines; the cheese would be less challenging to a potential wine partner, allowing the wine or other beverage partner to “make its case” on the palate. This is an especially valuable quality in northern Italy where red wines are preferred. Red wines rarely fold into stronger flavored cheeses as gracefully as do the white wines.

Nonetheless, it appears the cheeses

with bolder and more persistent flavors are becoming more favored around the globe, and Reserva, which is aged over 20 months, meets this criterion. This preference for bigger flavors could be a reaction to the standardization of foods, yet there is something to be said for subtlety; cheese in its most elemental form is simply preserved milk. An argument could be made that bigger flavors in foods are an indication of greater nutritive values, but this is not necessarily so.

Make no mistake, Grana Padano is no wallflower. It is a cheese that has stood the test of time. You can go back a thousand years in its production history. Consistency has been long lasting.

The cheese offers long and delicious finishes. One of the original owners of New York’s Italian food emporium Eat-aly called Grana Padano the world’s greatest cheese. A tremendous value, Grana Padano is a cheese that has helped sustain millions of its consumers for many centuries.

DB



Becoming a Platter Destination



By incorporating various cheese types with complementary items, deli departments can build profits

BY LISA WHITE

Cheese has always been a primary component of entertaining, and supermarket delis are a main resource for this food item. Consequently, cheese platters of varying types, sizes and price points have become a staple in these departments.

Just like a work of art, cheese platters today must be artfully crafted for both the eye and palate.

"Consumers purchasing a cheese platter expect a no fuss, ready to go solution," says Debbie Seife, general manager, marketing, at Norseland Inc., located in Darien, CT. "No longer is it just cubed cheese; cheese platters have evolved to fit the modern lifestyle."

Deli departments can be creative by incorporating different cheeses with complementary items, while also being innovative with merchandising and marketing can become a destination for these moneymakers.

The Changing Marketplace

Michael Trullinger, Northeast area account manager at cracker manufacturer La Panzanella, based in Tukwila, WA, has spent half a career behind the cheese counter.

"When it comes to cheese platters, every store is different," he says. "But conventional supermarkets are getting better [at providing these items]."

As supermarket cheese cases have become more diverse, so have cheese platter components. This has been necessary to meet the needs of more discerning customers.

Variety is the key for retailers to achieve success with cheese platters.

This includes incorporating, not just various types of cheese, but also different shapes, sizes, rinds and textures.

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"We are seeing a variety of cuts from the traditional cube to triangles to rough cuts from cheese, such as aged Gouda," says Seife.

With more Generation Xers and Millennials seeking out cheese platters for a variety of occasions, there is more opportunity for retailers to target these demographics and capitalize on this segment.

Still, there are challenges. There is increased competition for shoppers' dollars, as club stores like Costco and Sam's Club have entered the category.

With cheese platters becoming more mainstream and available, retailers need to set their offerings apart while also catering to their customers and market.

Entering this category can also bring added attention to deli departments' overall cheese offering. For this reason, creating a sampler platter can help increase incremental sales of specialty and artisan cheese.

"Some retailers will include reasonable portions, so customers can try different cheeses without breaking the bank, and this has helped expand the cheese platter and specialty cheese demographic," says Diane Sauvage, branch manager at Hoboken, NJ-based Interval Export USA. "A complete cheese platter would include one fresh cheese, like goat, then Camembert or Brie and a hard cheese



and bread, broadens the appeal.

“This consumer mindset is driving retailers to be creative and attentive to details, including the cheese accompaniments like fig jam or artisan crackers,” says Cara Figgins, vice president of Partners, a cracker supplier in Kent, WA. “I think the biggest consumers of cheese platters are consumers who are looking for convenience.”

The focus on healthy eating also has impacted cheese platter components, but consumers of these products are more concerned with preservatives and clean labels than calories.

Upping The Ante

Today's platters are more diverse and creative

than in the past. Cheese cuts may be enhanced with kale or other decorative greens, along with fruit like grapes or pears; high-end vehicles, such as specialty crackers or artisan breads; and gourmet jams.

"More people are looking for easy entertaining options, and platters are a spur of the moment solution," says Trullinger. "Our crackers are a supporting player in this production, and they hold up very well in this format."

In addition to complementary add-ons, retailers can take cheese platters to the next level by creating a theme. The most popular and easiest way to accom-

like Gruyère, plus any type of blue."

To further the upsell, these can be paired with different cracker varieties, such as water or stone wheat

Crackers play an important role in any cheese platter, says Seife. Retailers should use two to three types, depending upon the size of the platter, including whole grain flat breads and crusty bread.

The objective is to add texture without taking away from the cheese. Crackers are a complement to the cheese.

Because cheese platters are typically shared with a group that most likely has a wide range of taste preferences, including varied accompaniments for different palates, such as jam, fruit, crackers

►► CONSTRUCTING AN APPEALING PLATTER

BY LISA WHITE

There are a number of ways to organize a cheese platter or tray, according to Susan Sturman, cheese expert and director of the Anglophone Program at Academie Opus Caseus in Boston.

Here, she provides construction tips as well as ideas retailers can tap into in order to create a successful cheese platter business.

"One thing I don't love is precut cheese, but this is sometimes necessary to include," says Sturman. Retailers should avoid hacking chunks of cheese and, instead, try to be creative with the presentation. It's important to remember that, with precut cheese, every surface is exposed to air and the variety won't be as identifiable as wedges and rinds. "It's key to get a sense of a cheese's identity to set it apart from other varieties on the tray," says Sturman.

Just like in cheese cases, platters can feature different themes. "It's classic to have cheeses from each family, but there is really no universal standard for identifying what these are," says Sturman. "In the U.S., cheeses can be chosen by texture and/or milk type, in France, the selection process is by how cheese is made or the rind's character, which is easier to break down."

Cheeses on platters also can be arranged by country, depending on the size, demographic and price point. "In some cases, it may not be worth including pricier cheeses," says Sturman. "There's no need to upsell customers on \$50 a pound varieties if there is no product awareness."

There are a number of ways retailers can get creative with cheese platters. "For example, delis can include three to four different Blues made from various milk types or they



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plish this is by consolidating cheeses from different regions or countries, such as Wisconsin, Vermont, Italy and France. In some markets, an artisan cheese platter may also be well received.



"The options are much broader than years ago, with the wide variety of cheese types now available," says Trullinger. "This has made it easier to diversify."

For example, complementary cheeses such as Manchego, aged Gouda, soft spreadable cheese and smoked cheese offer a combination of age, flavor and texture.

"The more creative retailers are the go-to destination for consumers," says Seife. "Platters no longer just have cheese, but also must offer other complementary products such as charcuterie, fresh and dried fruits, nuts, crackers and crusty bread."

When it comes to cheese accompa-

niments, another consideration is food blending. Retailers need to consider that olive oil can run and ruin crackers and cheese, and soft blue crumbles can inadvertently contaminate nearby cheeses, for example.

"It's important to separate different items into compartments to prevent this," says James R. Anderko, national sales manager at Venus Wafers, headquartered in Hingham, MA.

In addition, for more upscale platters, retailers can consider wine pairings for different cheeses, like Goat, Cheddar and Brie, along with including higher-end add-ons like olives, prosciutto and nuts.

"There's a big upsell for consumers, who are willing to pay more for specialty cheese and

high-end crackers to eat with wine," says Anderko.

Increasing Visibility

Marketing and merchandising are key to bringing added visibility to cheese platters at the store level.

To accomplish this, retailers should take into account colors, textures and flavors. Both visual and textural appeal should be highlighted.

There are a number of cheese platter trends deli departments can capitalize on.

"Fresh figs seem to be the go-to fruit and more honey is being used with soft-ripened and blue cheeses," says Marcella Wright, American Cheese Society

Certified Cheese Professional. "More charcuterie items are gracing cheese platters than in the last few years."

Experts agree that basic choices seem to still be the rule, including soft-ripened and/or fresh; at least two different milks; and a Blue.

"I see more and more small, grab-and-go platters with one or two cheeses and one pairing, usually a jam or preserve with price points between \$8 and \$15," says Wright.

To generate more interest and buzz, retailers can feature cheese platters on websites or brochures.

During the holidays, these offerings can be spotlighted, enhanced and promoted more aggressively.

"Publix offers bigger cheese at the end of the year, such as Camembert and Gouda packed in a platter," says Sauvage. "New ideas are unveiled during the holidays, too, like bamboo platters or healthier platters with nuts, cheese and fresh fruit."

Platters are more visible in center islands by the specialty cheese, but can be segregated into stand-alone displays for added visibility, especially during top-selling periods.

"Sales tend to spike between September and December for these products," says Anderko.

It is also important to call attention to specific details of quality through signage.

"For example, a retailer could focus on the cheese platter as containing locally made products," says Figgins.

Entertaining is seasonal and focused on holidays, family gatherings and big sporting events such as the Super Bowl, patterns that will impact the volume of cheese platter sales in supermarket delis.

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►► CONSTRUCTING AN APPEALING PLATTER

Cont'd from page 78

can put together an array of domestic cheese from different states," says Sturman. "A platter can be comprised solely of goat cheeses, cheddars or washed rind varieties."

Seasonality also needs to be taken into account with cheese platter components. "For instance, in the spring we can celebrate fresh goat and sheep milk cheeses, since seasonal animals just had babies and those cheeses are coming back on the market," says Sturman. "In the dog days of summer, people aren't interested in heavy Blues, which are more of a winter cheese, and from mid- to late-October and November, it's great to have a platter that includes spoonable cheese."


"While delicate cheese won't need anything to compete with it, robust cheese will shine with a contrast that brings highlights and helps show it off," says Sturman.

It's effective to alternate colors and shapes on cheese platters. "By incorporating squares, logs, rounds and pyramids in different colors and types of rinds, it makes it easier for consumers to distinguish between the cheeses and plays one variety off of another," says Sturman.

By the same token, it's important to have underlying logic to the cheese platter layout so it looks good for an extended period of time. "There shouldn't be crumbles of Blue by the runny Brie," says Sturman. "In many cases, it helps to have accompaniments that can divide the cheeses."

Retailers also should pay attention to what the cheese is put on. "A platter doesn't have to be a dish, but it needs to be food safe," says Sturman. "[For more upscale displays] delis can use mirrors, stone or wood."

DB

A top-down photograph of a rustic wooden cutting board on a dark, textured wooden table. The board is laden with various deli items: several slices of salami with a red and white marbled pattern, a large piece of prosciutto with a pinkish-red hue and white fat, several chunks of pale yellow cheese, and several round, golden-brown crackers with a perforated pattern. In the upper right corner, a small white ceramic dish contains a yellow liquid, possibly olive oil, with some dark specks. Next to it is a small, round, reddish-brown object, possibly a lid or a small bowl. The text "DELI MEAT GUIDE" is overlaid in the center in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

DELI MEAT GUIDE



GETTING TO THE MEAT OF SALES

An examination on the state of the deli meat industry

BY KEITH LORIA

Despite changing consumer tastes and concerns, deli operators who keep pace with the shifts in the deli meat marketplace are expected to continue to reap healthy sales benefits.

Statista, Inc. recently released data showing U.S. deli departments generated sales of \$11.64 billion in 2014, with nearly 80 percent of that total the result of deli meats sold.

Meanwhile, the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association, or IDDBA, observed in its What's In Store 2015 report, "compared to a year ago, 39.3 percent of grocery retailers said they were more optimistic about the retailing climate for supermarkets."

"We share in this optimism and are excited about the future and evolution of the service deli, specifically which continues to grow and expand," says Mark Beierle, deli brand manager for Hormel Foods Corp., in Columbia, MD. "Consumers are looking for simpler ingredient statements. Manufacturers willing to embrace this evolution will position themselves for success, and any retailer willing to support these efforts will benefit in kind."

Beierle says an increasing number of consumers are looking for new and unique items and flavors throughout every section of the deli, including deli meat. As a result, it's important for operators to have a wide range of product offerings to meet the evolving needs of the consumer base.

Ellen Deutsch, senior vice president of marketing for Hain Pure Protein Corp. in New Oxford, PA, says the latest buzz involves organic deli, reflecting increased consumer concerns about the transparency of ingredients found in the product.

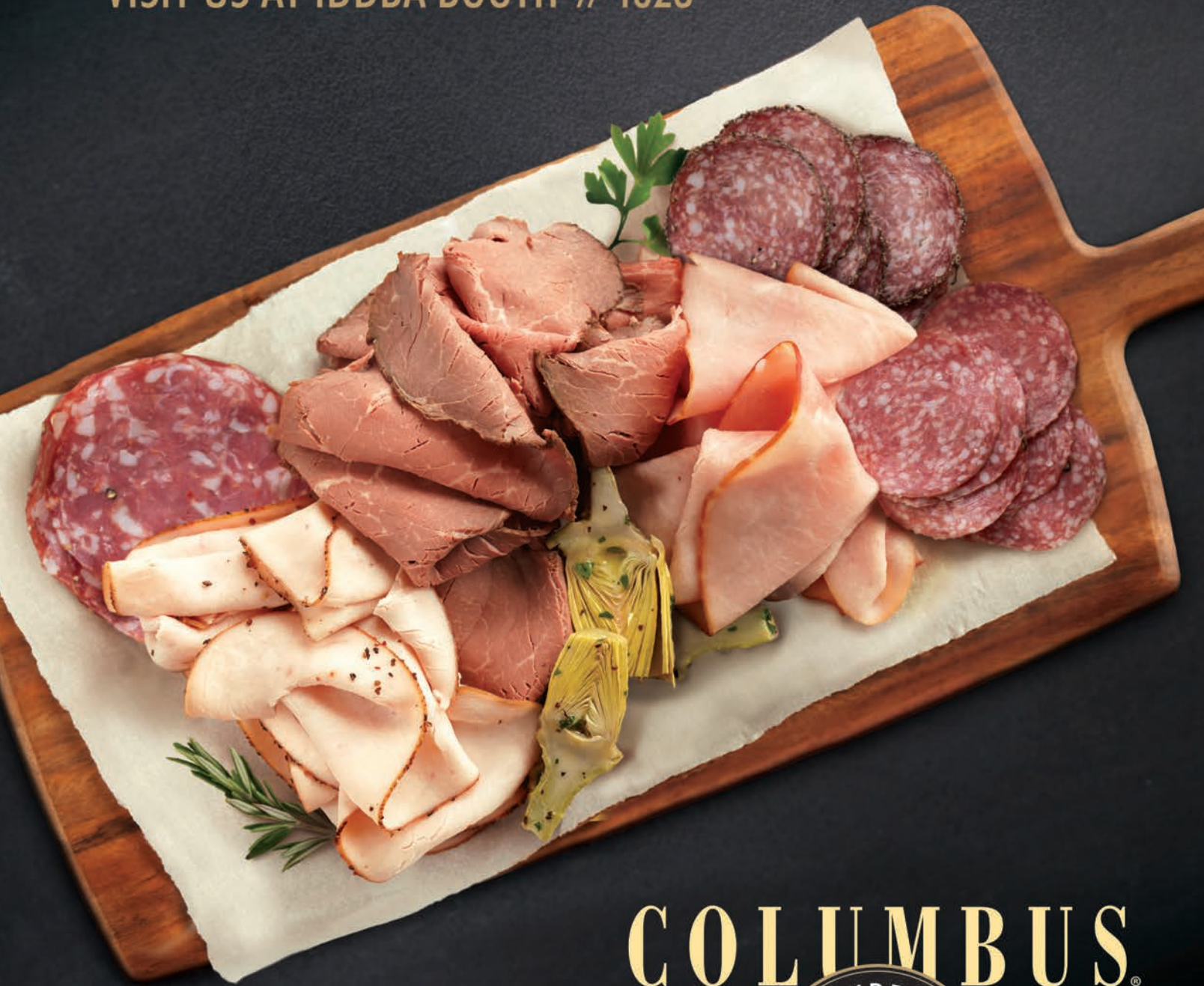
"This is reflective of growing concerns regarding antibiotics, hormones and pesticides, leading consumers to new natural and organic alternatives," she says.

Dan Estridge, chief flavor officer for NYPD Deli-Patrol in Westford, MA, also says consumers today are more interested in how their meat is made, where it comes from and what's in it.

"They're looking for labels they can understand," he says. "For many brands, this has meant selling products based on what's not in them. You're seeing sim-

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pler formulations — even products with just meat, water and maybe salt. And, of course, for anyone claiming to make ‘natural’ products, they have to claim their product is ‘minimally processed’ because it’s a claim required by regulation even though it’s not defined.”

Estridge notes the NYPD Deli-Patrol products are best described as “Cooked, Not Processed,” and the natural features are in the company’s recipes and attention to detail.

“This means we only roast single cuts of meat just like real people at home. We never macerate and combine cuts to create larger slicing logs. Our turkeys are single lobe. Our hams are single pork top-rounds. And when we say roast, we really mean roast,” he says. “We cook everything open, on racks or hung on hooks. We don’t cook in a bag. We’re cooking food, not processing products.”

To help increase sales, Estridge says deli operators must recognize that not all decisions a buyer makes are about how to most profitably meet the demand they are currently serving.

“Including items that will appeal to more demanding customers — many of whom are in their stores today but not patronizing the deli — can raise their top line,” says Estridge. “Buying that kind of quality will cost more than they’re used

to, but if they price them right, these higher-quality, higher-priced offerings will generate good turns and fantastic dollar profits.”

Points On Prosciutto

The U.S. market has seen much of the recent growth in pre-sliced packaging and longer aged prosciutto, particularly with larger chain retailers.

Jason Stemm, vice president of PadillaCRT in New York, says the gourmet and specialty shops continue to do great work in marketing prosciutto and other Italian salumi, or cured meats.

“Prosciutto di Parma continues to be by far the most popular cured ham imported from Europe,” says Stemm. Total exports of Prosciutto di Parma were up 13 percent in 2014, and pre-sliced packages were up 21 percent, he notes.

Healthy Trends

“Better for you” means different things to different consumer segments, and the trend continues to evolve. Industry insiders suggest that what consumers were looking for even just a few years ago is different today.

Research firm Mintel published a study recently examining consumer concerns about health and nutrition. In the study that polled 1,868 Internet users 18 years old and over, findings showed

when it came to lunch meat attributes, 45 percent of respondents cared about all-natural ingredients, while 37 percent wanted low-sodium product, 33 percent opted for low-fat and 30 percent wanted low- or no-meat filler content.

Michigan Turkey Producers in Grand Rapids, MI, recently expanded its Golden Legacy line of turkey products with a new Pastrami Seasoned Petite Turkey Breast that is gluten free, 99-percent fat free, contains no added starches or binders, and is made with whole muscle breast meat that has been cured, smoked and seasoned.

“The deli is already perceived by consumers as having fresh and nutritious products, and deli operators have an opportunity to play up these queues,” says Hormel’s Beierle.

Being gluten free and free of nitrates are important points when marketing Prosciutto di Parma, says Stemm.

“As a PDO [protected designation of origin] product it must meet strict standards for production that are set and monitored by the Consorzio,” he says. “Overall, I think people are opting for more lean meats and are thinking more about their protein sources.”

Stemm notes only sea salt is added to the fresh pork to cure Prosciutto di Parma, and Parma traditionally uses less salt than other cured meats.



Deutsch says a demand for poultry that does not use antibiotics has risen this year.

"Consumers are concerned with their health, weight and longevity, and they believe natural and organic products, free of genetically modified organisms offer the benefits they seek for themselves and their families," she says. "We expect that as consumers continue to seek to purchase poultry as a preferred protein in their diets, they will seek out more innovation and meal-solutions that meet their time and health demands."

Merchandising Matters

Conveying "fresh" is extremely important to consumers and an avenue that deli counters need to highlight in the stores. As Beierle points out, consumers are increasingly shopping the deli for diverse and convenient meal solutions.

"That can be achieved through how the meat is displayed, point-of-sale materials describing the meat or offering a story about the product through sampling demonstrations," he says. "Sampling and displaying the end uses of deli meats are effective ways to inspire meal solutions and encourage cross-category purchases."



Also, he adds, "Think accoutrements and charcuterie recommendations such as wine and cheese pairings, as well as

creative and healthy snacking ideas."

Hain's Deutsch notes bulk deli is best merchandised with clear POS supporting



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products that meet growing consumer concerns.

"For example, our bulk deli packaging clearly indicates that we never, ever use antibiotics. Flavor distinction is also very important as Millennials seek new flavor experiences in deli and other categories," she says. "Pre-sliced deli is often perceived as more convenient but of lesser quality, so merchandising natural and organic deli with POS indicating the benefits consumers are seeking will increase

market basket and consumption."

For cross promotions, seasonal fruits like figs and melons are always winners when matched with prosciutto. Advising customers on building charcuterie and cheese platters is another great way to build incremental sales.

"Deli would benefit from cross promotion with bakery and condiment products sharing the health benefits," says Deutsch. "Gluten-free deli is a natural combination with gluten-free bread,

for example, and deli can deliver meal solutions to all demographics. Similarly, deli could cross promote with produce to add more fruits and vegetables to all meal occasions."

Stemm says there's no better marketing "trick" than to offer a taste to customers.

"When you see someone scanning the counter, take the opportunity to engage them and drive sales to your premium items," he says. "The deli counter is one of the few places in the store where customers stand and wait. Empowering staff to converse with customers will build sales and loyalty."

Rise Of The Millennials

As the largest increasing population segment group, Millennials are critical to the growth of deli. According to Mintel, nearly half (47 percent) of lunch meat consumers say they'd eat more deli meat if it was less processed looking and tasting.

The study shows all natural and quality ingredients are important to most lunch meat consumers, regardless of age. However, younger consumers aged 25-34 are significantly more concerned about the presence of hormones, ethical treatment of animals and whether products are organic and free from artificial ingredients and pesticides.

"The best way to market to this segment is therefore with transparent communication, particularly in social media, and by meeting their needs for information regarding quality, utility and ease of use, with new flavor experiences to deliver those benefits," says Deutsch.

Millennials are likely to be the most frequent shopper of the deli and are the future of food retailing. Because Millennials are exposed to an evolving food culture with customized eating experiences, the deli has a great opportunity to appeal to these interests and shopping behaviors.

"Retailers can appeal to this consumer segment by offering bold and unique flavors, high quality, freshness and a variety of products, and by sharing the nutritious aspects and origins of the foods," says Beierle. "Millennials engage in food experiences — and want to be part of something bigger. Deli operators have an opportunity to tap into this dynamic by telling stories about their food offerings."

Stemm says there is a growing interest in the story behind the food and the journey to our plates, so providing little information cards or signs about products will draw a Millennial's curiosity and may even get them to look up from their phones.

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Prosciutto:

Old World flavor, New World Fans

Impressive sales reflect nod of approval from foodies

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

America's growing legion of food aficionados is helping to drive demand for specialty deli meats like the tender and buttery dry-cured Italian ham, prosciutto.

Since 2010, the Italian imported lunch meat market in the United States — which includes prosciutto — grew impressively from \$60 million in 2009 to nearly \$100 million in 2013, according to Cured Meats Market in the U.S. to 2016, a market profile published by Canadean, a London, UK-headquartered research company.

"The focus on premium specialty products is growing annually and with it consumption pulled by foodies' desire to discover new products," says Alberto Morandi, associate brand manager with MRA, Inc., in Norwalk, CT, which represents Levoni America Corp., the U.S.

subsidiary of Levoni SpA, an Italian manufacturer of cured meats including prosciutto.

"The epitomized specialty Italian consumer is the foodie, of which there are an estimated 40 million in America located mostly in large metropolitan areas," says Morandi.

Foodies, he continues, represent a new generation of consumers who are increasingly aware of the authenticity of foods and who want to learn about the romance behind a product. They are an easily approachable target with promotional activities because they have established habits — for example, watching food shows on television and reading specialized magazines — and they are open to experiment with new food and flavors.

Food TV and celebrity chefs are stoking

ing foodies' interest in specialty deli meats like prosciutto. In fact, prosciutto hasn't simply been featured as an ingredient — it was the star of the Iron Chef America Series episode: Battle Prosciutto, which aired in 2010.

Know Your Prosciutto

Quality is what customers today are looking for when they shop the deli for prosciutto, according to suppliers.

"Consumers nowadays are more educated about how a prosciutto should be," explains Anna Gallo, director of marketing for Savello USA, Inc., based in Wilkes-Barre, PA. "I am frequently asked about how long we age our prosciutto. When we talk about San Daniele, the ham is aged up to 36 months and the majority sold is aged from 24 and 18 months. When we talk

PHOTO COURTESY OF PRINCIPE FOODS

about Parma prosciutto, we only carry a 16- and 18-month aged product with a limited quantity of 24-month [aged prosciutto]. Most consumers like a sweeter and softer prosciutto."

San Daniele and Parma are the two major types of imported Italian prosciutto crudo, or ham that isn't cooked but instead has been salt cured and aged. Each has Protected Designation of Origin, or PDO, status from the European Union, which means it is produced in the

specific region that historically created its sought-after qualities. San Daniele prosciutto comes from San Daniele del Friuli, located in the northwestern region of Friuli, while Prosciutto di Parma is produced in the northcentral region of Emilia-Romagna, famous also for Parmigiano Reggiano.

"San Daniele prosciutto is sweeter in flavor and more velvety in texture than Parma, which has a more earthy, grounded appeal," says Alberto Minardi,

general manager of Principe Foods USA, Inc., in Long Beach, CA. "These flavor profiles, owing to how the product is manufactured, make prosciutto a high-dollar destination item that sells for anywhere from \$25 to \$30 per pound." The consumer usually doesn't notice this, he adds, as the typical purchase is an eighth or quarter of a pound.

One important method for selling prosciutto is for deli staff to educate shoppers about how this premium Italian meat is crafted.

"There is a lot more to the story of Italian prosciutto beyond the geography of where it's produced," says Jason Stemm, the New York-based U.S. marketing coordinator for the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma in Parma, Italy. "For example, the only ingredients are sea salt and pork, and the salt is worked into the meat by hand... the pigs are specially bred from a particular Italian stock and must be a specific weight prior to harvest."

The Rogers Collection, a Portland, ME-based importer of artisanal foods, undertook an innovative month-long QR Code campaign that drew on centuries of tradition plus modern-day technology to tell the story of its Pio Tosini Prosciutto di Parma. The company provided deli operators with an 8.5-inch by 11-inch upright counter sign for the top of their service cases that announced an opportunity to win a 15-pound leg of prosciutto. To enter, customers were asked to scan the QR code on the sign and enter their name and email, which took them to a landing page with recipes and, more importantly, a beautiful 38-second video of how the product is crafted and cured in Italy.

"We gave delis free product for sampling at the same time so customers could taste and tell the difference in our prosciutto," says Carrie Davenport, managing director of The Rogers Collection. "We also worked it out with the delis so the winner could come back in to have their leg of prosciutto sliced. This in itself generated even more interest by fellow customers."

The Perfect Mix

Delis that offer a mix of behind-the-glass and pre-sliced prosciutto can satisfy a broader range of customer's needs.

"When having to choose between buying over-the-counter or ready-made cold cuts, foodies generally prefer to buy freshly sliced prosciutto," says Levoni America's Morandi. "This is mainly because they are suspicious about the fact the pre-sliced one may

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A novel product has reintroduced San Daniele prosciutto in a new way. DOK Dall'Ava, imported by Savello USA, is the only authorized producer able to pre-cut the ham in four pieces, vacuum pack each piece with its own label and variable weight, and put the four pieces back together and vacuum pack it as a whole.

“Consumers love it because they can take a quarter of a piece home and slice it as needed,” says Gallo. “It fits almost any slicing machine. Small retailers love this item because they don’t have to open a whole 18-pound piece of prosciutto at once.”

At the same time, shoppers are buying more pre-sliced prosciutto. In 2014, 1.5 million pounds of pre-sliced Parma were imported to the United States, a 21-percent increase over the year prior, according to data supplied by Savello USA.

“One of our key products is diced prosciutto, which is very convenient for making delicious and easy recipes,” says Greg Morgan, vice president of sales and marketing for Campofrio Food Group America based in South Chesterfield, VA.

Serving Suggestions

Prosciutto and melon is one of the most famous Italian food pairings. Many deli operators will cross-merchandise prosciutto with Mozzarella cheese and pencil-sized Italian breadsticks called grissini as a simple serving suggestion.

“The No. 1 usage for prosciutto is on pizza, followed by pasta,” says Campofrio’s Morgan. “We also see a broad spectrum of uses from the familiar to the creative: sandwiches made special by using prosciutto instead of ham, for example, or as an ingredient for a familiar dinner.”

Prosciutto’s versatility is indeed boundless. Consider that chef Michael Symon won the Iron Chef America Series’ Battle Prosciutto with a menu of Prosciutto and Figs, Spaghetti with Prosciutto & Clams, Prosciutto Wrapped Lobster, Green Eggs and Ham,



PHOTO COURTESY OF SAVELLO

and a Corn and Prosciutto Fritter with Brown Sugar Ice Cream for dessert.

“We are moving well past the standard prosciutto and melon,” says Morgan. **DB**



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Americans Embrace Hispanic Deli Meats

BY CHRIS AUMAN

The growing Hispanic population in the United States has sent ripples — waves, really — through every corner of the U.S. economy, and supermarkets aisles are no exception. This population shift presents many opportunities for retailers to cater to Latino shoppers, especially in the deli section. While beef comprises a large portion of the meat sold to Hispanics in the U.S., cold cuts and other deli meats also account for a significant portion of total sales.

Factors Of Geography And Nationality

One of the challenges in marketing Hispanic deli meats to consumers lies in the diversity of the Latino population. There are many varied tastes, nationalities and traditions under the umbrella label of Hispanic. Promoting products as simply “Hispanic” can be problematic. From South and Central America to the Islands of the Caribbean, not to mention a Latino population that has called the United States home for countless generations, it can be difficult to make blanket statements about this giant market segment.

“A supermarket on the West Coast cannot market the same way as a supermarket on the East Coast,” says Edgar Soto, sales manager at Cibao Meat Products in The Bronx, New York. Cibao’s biggest selling products are salamis made from a variety of meats including chicken, turkey and pork.

As beef costs rise, it affects the sale of prepackaged deli meats. “The consumer, due to economic constraints, is

finding more value to it especially now as the price of beef has gone up,” says Soto. Budgetary reasons are a factor and can be used as a counter to any slowdown in beef sales as shoppers turn to similar, but differently packaged, less expensive products to save money.

While the diversity of the Hispanic demographic can be complicated, one thing that is obvious across the board is that Hispanic shoppers purchase large amounts of meat. According to a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report from 2011, Latinos spent nearly \$1,000 per year on meat per household compared to just more than \$800 for the general market. The size of Hispanic families accounts for some of this difference, but so do cultural eating habits. According to a 2014 study compiled by Marketresearch.com, spending by Hispanics has also seen tremendous growth in the past 10 years with the amount of money spent at food stores increasing by more than 80 percent.

Davide and Stefano Dukceovich are the third generation owners of Daniele, Inc., which produces and distributes meat products at their state-of-the-art facility in Pascoag, RI. Davide, who is also the company’s sales manager, says they discovered Iberian charcuterie in Spain where Stefano was courting the Spanish woman

he would eventually marry. While Stefano was in Spain he began sampling the rich variety of sausages and dried meats available there. Upon returning home, Stefano “started using those recipes with American pork and offering it to the market here,” says Davide Dukceovich, who credits this type of international tourism and cultural exchange for boosting the sale of Spanish deli meat in the U.S.

Davide Dukceovich also sees a Hispanic market that is as diverse as it is large. “There’s a danger in treating the Hispanic market as a monolith,” he says.



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"You find so often in the media this idea that Latino means Mexican because they're a giant part of the population, but that's not true."

From the East Coast to the West Coast, from Miami to Milwaukee, Hispanic culture is as varied as it is rich with regional food traditions. Cubans in Florida, Mexicans in Texas, Puerto Ricans in New York, they all have different tastes. "In Rhode Island, for example," says Dukceovich, "the Dominican population is really big, as is the Guatemalan

and Central American population. It's a much more layered and complicated market than many people think."

For a company like Daniele, Inc., it's not so much about targeting a particular group, as it is trying to create the best possible product and just because chorizo is a Spanish name doesn't mean it will be a product limited to Hispanic shoppers either. As Dukceovich says, "Rather than making those kinds of superficial conclusions ... what's much more important is quality."

He has good reason for thinking this. For Daniele, Inc., they have seen Hispanic consumers exhibit a willingness to buy other types of deli meats as well, maybe more so than non-Hispanics. While the biggest markets for Daniele Inc. are those with large Latino populations like Miami, Southern California and Texas, they sell just as much prosciutto there as they do their Spanish and Iberian products.

For Spanish charcuterie producer Redondo Iglesias, the decision to expand into the Hispanic market is a recent one. Kate Whittum, who works in sales and marketing for Redondo Iglesias USA in Bayonne, NJ, explains, "There hasn't been room at the upper end of the price range for our product in the market that recognizes and is most familiar with it." Awareness of traditional Spanish deli meats in the U.S. has prompted the company to expand its offerings to include whole format sausages and chorizo, salchichón, and lomo in pre-sliced retail packs. "As the demographic makeup of the USA grows more heavily Hispanic, those consumers more and more will become specialty consumers," says Whittum.

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Opportunities Beyond The Hispanic Demographic

While bilingual signage and advertising are effective ways to reach Hispanic consumers, for Soto and Cibao Meats, they're not looking to limit the reach of their products to strictly Hispanic shoppers. As Hispanic culture assimilates into more mainstream American culture, non-Hispanic consumers present opportunities for sales as well. Just as Mexican food is represented on menus in restaurants right next to more traditional American fare, so too are Hispanic food products being purchased by non-Hispanic consumers in supermarkets.

Soto sees this crossover happening across the country. "You see it all over," he says, "a lot of the chain stores sell jalapeños and spicy sauces." Soto sees value in using in-store demos to reach non-Hispanics who may have preconceived notions that Hispanic deli meats will be too spicy for their tastes. He hesitates to even use the word "spicy" as it can make some shoppers wary. "Our products aren't spicy per se," he says. "Except for our chorizo, they are seasoned, they're flavorful." Once people try them, they tend to agree. "We've been very successful in increasing our sales to non-Hispanics."

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Pâté And Spread Sales Poised To Grow



Charcuterie trend makes strong inroads with American consumers

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

The popularity of charcuterie platters, cheeseboards and bar snacks is giving pâtés and spreads a renewed place at the table.

"It's a trend we see in foodservice now, especially at gastropubs that specialize in craft beer and upscale high-quality fare," explains John Stueland, deli category manager at Lund Food Holdings, Inc., an Edina, MN-based retailer that offers a selection of pâté products at its Lunds and Byerlys supermarkets.

Restaurant trends invariably migrate

to retail where renewed interest in pâté is poised to grow.

"People want to be able to assemble a chic charcuterie platter at home to entertain their friends. Ready-made pâtés that only need to be cut or sliced fit in well with this," says Sébastien Espinasse, vice president of sales and marketing at Fabrique Délices, a traditional French charcuterie company based in Hayward, CA.

Fat-phobia once caused some customers concern about eating pâté, especially the traditional liver-based products that are also rich in cholesterol. However,

manufacturers say today's healthconscious shoppers are more interested in products that are hormone-, antibiotic- and gluten-free as well as organic.

"A clean label is important," says Camille Collins, marketing director for Les Trois Petits Cochons, a Brooklyn, NY-based producer of pâtés and other charcuterie items, referring to the transparency or wholesomeness of a product's ingredients. "In items displayed behind the glass, where a label isn't readily available, it's important for deli staff to be educated so they can tell customers about these

foods, how they are made and what they contain.” Les Trois Petits Cochons offers hands-on training sessions to retail deli operators in the New York area.

Favorite Flavors Still Rule

What this change in health focus means is that traditional types of pâtés remain the foundation of category sales.

“Three varieties of pâté always top the charts: Duck Mousse with Cognac, Truffle Mousse, and Pâté de Campagne. These are the classic pâtés containing liver and liquor,” explains Laurie Cummins, president and owner of Neptune, NJ-headquartered Alexian Pâtés & Terrines.

Manufacturers are innovating trendy twists on these classics. For example, in honor of its 40th anniversary and its first product, Les Trois Petits Cochons will debut its organic Pâté de Campagne in June. This product comes in a 3-pound tub for the service deli. Likewise, Fabrique Délices has incorporated a favorite American ingredient, crunchy bacon, into its time-honored French-style chicken liver mousse. This new product, first debuted in the specialty foods department at Whole Foods in Los Angeles, in May,

comes packaged in a 7-ounce tub and will begin national distribution in June.

Les Trois Petits Cochons offers venison and wild boar pâté, as well as new pheasant pâté, made with pheasant, pork and chicken liver pâté with dried blueberries and almonds, and sold in an 8-ounce retail tub. “Game pâtés are popular for the winter holidays,” says Collins. “At Easter, we see more demand for our salmon and three-layer vegetable terrines. This winter too we introduced a 5.5-ounce terrine of wild-caught salmon and fresh kale.”

Some manufacturers find vegetable and vegan terrines are a growing category.

“There is definitely a growing segment of shoppers who are interested in lean and green and in novel presentations of them,” says Alexian’s Cummins. “Our three-layer vegetable terrine made with carrots, cauliflower and broccoli answers this need. We also offer eggplant with goat cheese, and mushroom with artichoke.”



However, the optimum deli assortment should be heavy on the liver pâtés.

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because their sales are slower and they are more perishable than liver pâtés, delis often find it more profitable to offer a smaller offering of these items,” says Fabrique Délices’ Espinasse.

Double & Triple the Ring

Creative merchandising encourages shoppers to buy pâtés and fill their baskets with go-with products. Start where pâté is displayed.

“It’s helpful when pâté is merchandised with like products such as cheese, spreads and even caviar. I don’t think sliced sandwich meats or the fresh meat section inspire indulgence or luxuriant dining,” says Alexian’s Cummins.

Imaginatively cross-merchandise pâté with a variety of products.

“Pâté displayed with petite toasts, cornichons, Dijon-style mustard and other meat products such as duck rillettes and

saucisson adjacent to the pâté display so customers can easily pick up all the ingredients they need to make a charcuterie platter,” recommends Les Trois Petits Cochons’ Collins.

Delis often sell pâté, cut-to-order behind the glass, as well as in small tubs in the grab-and-go case. The advantage of the small self-serve tubs, manufacturers say, is shelf life. Once cut, bulk pâté remains fresh for 7 to 10 days whereas unopened individual tubs remain good for 6 to 8 weeks. However, the service deli is the optimal locale for demos since staff is available to encourage trial and answer customers’ questions.

“We demo pâté during the winter holidays to remind customers to purchase,” says Lund Food Holdings’ Stueland.

A generous over-the-counter sampling policy is especially advantageous around holiday time, says Alexian’s Cummins. “We feel so strongly about this that our company will supply free product for sampling when requested. This can be supplemented by demos from the vendor. There are a great many people who have heard about pâté but have never tasted it and are curious to try it. Don’t discount the children. Children are the best sales reps; they love the smooth and creamy mousses.”

Demos are an excellent way to suggest how pâté can be enjoyed in out-of-the-box ways.

“Pâtés are always great with wine and the heartier country style pâtés are wonderful with beer. Pâté is a delicious treat anytime. It’s terrific on a warm bagel at breakfast, in a baguette for lunch, or served as an appetizer or hors d’oeuvre cubed with toothpicks or spread on crackers. On our website and in our brochure, we offer 30 different creative ways to use pâté,” says Cummins. **DB**





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They opened San Francisco Sausage Co. with Columbus as its brand name, to represent their strong Italian-American heritage in the city. In the 1930s, production was moved to the heart of North Beach, Little Italy.

Columbus Salame's popularity grew and the company moved to South San Francisco in 1967 to accommodate its need for more space. This facility allowed Columbus to cure more than a million pounds of salami at a time and let the owners expand their skills to produce a full line of deli meats, which launched in 1974.

Domenici, a skilled butcher and salami maker, and Parducci were able to successfully incorporate the newest scientific and technological advances with their own old world flavors and beliefs to create a model for making salami and deli meats that took Columbus into the 21st century. In the 2000s, chief executive Tim Fallon and his team continued improving production efficiencies for the company's 100-plus items. Those improvements led to opening an additional manufacturing plant in 2007 followed by a slicing facility in 2011 in Hayward, CA.

In 2015, Columbus will finish building another pillar to support its legacy and move into the future with the addition of robotics and state-of-the-art curing rooms.



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