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# GNP COMPANY PRESENTED 2016 HUNGER HERO AWARD BY SECOND HARVEST HEARTLAND

**S**t. Cloud, MN-based GNP Co., a chicken producer of the Gold'n Plump and Just BARE chicken brands, has been named a 2016 Hunger Hero Food Award recipient by Second Harvest Heartland in a ceremony held at Second Harvest Heartland's Golden Valley, MN headquarters.

The Hunger Hero Award, now in its seventh year, recognizes organizations that make a "compassionate and transformational impact on people in need in Minnesota and Wisconsin." GNP Company has supported Second Harvest Heartland for 12 years and was acknowledged as the food bank's largest food donor in 2015 for donating 1.7 million meals worth of chicken last year.

"As a food company, we appreciate all of the hard work of the Second Harvest Heartland team in building awareness about food insecurity in our local communities," says Paul Helgeson, sustainability manager for GNP Company. "Good organizations tend to find one another. We appreciate our partnership with Second Harvest Heartland, because they are helping us live our mission of 'dedicated to healthy food, families and farms.'"

According to Second Harvest Heartland, which is one of the largest food banks in the United States, one in 10 people in Minnesota and western Wisconsin experience the stress of hunger on any given day. The food bank delivered 77 million meals in the region last year.

According to Helgeson, what GNP Company equally appreciates about the partnership is the fact that Second Harvest Heartland serves all three of the communities in which the company operates. "My great-grandfather, E.M. Helgeson, who founded the company 90 years ago, would be very proud that we're continuing his legacy of supporting our people where they live and work. And, he would be humbled by the size of the donation and impact it made locally," says Helgeson.

A crowd of 75 people attended the event, where Helgeson, along with other GNP Co. representatives, were on-hand to officially accept the award.

## COMING NEXT IN AUG/SEPT ISSUE

### COVER STORY

Back To School

### FEATURE STORIES

Tailgating  
Packaging

### MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Grab And Go  
Soups

### PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Holiday Buying

### PREPARED FOODS

Party Platters  
Pasta

### DELI MEATS

Prosciutto

### CHEESES

Parmigiano Reggiano  
Asiago

### SUPPLEMENTS

Company Profiles

### COMING IN OCT/NOV

DELI BUSINESS will be taking a look at Going Green.

### SUBSCRIPTION & READER SERVICE INFO

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# National Deli Salad Month




[www.refrigeratedfoods.org](http://www.refrigeratedfoods.org)



**The Refrigerated Foods Association  
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## National Deli Salad Month in July!

-  New this year: Partner with food banks throughout US
-  Promote deli salads
-  Strengthen customer relationships
-  Encourage consumers to enjoy deli salads



### ***How to make National Deli Salad Month Work for You ~***



-  **FIGHT HUNGER** in your community with monetary and in-kind donations
-  **PLAN** how to use the National Deli Salad Month logo and materials.
-  **PARTNER** with your customers to create attention-grabbing promotions.
-  **PROMOTE** deli salads to consumers to encourage more purchases.

*For more details and to download the free Deli Salad Month Logo,  
visit [www.refrigeratedfoods.org](http://www.refrigeratedfoods.org)*



## Transitions



### ROGERS HIRES SALES DIRECTOR

Rogers Collection, Portland, ME, has announced Sergio Hernandez has joined the firm as director of business development and sales. He opened and managed the cheese and provisions shop Bklyn Larder in 2009. Prior to this, he served as general manager at Brooklyn wine bar/pizzeria Franny's. His past experience also includes working with food distributor Provisions International in Vermont.

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



### PLACON FOUNDER DIES AT 77

Placon, Madison, WI, has announced its founder and chairman, Tom Mohs, has died. He was 77. Mohs established the company in 1966 with a small thermo forming machine in his home making plastic jewelry boxes. The company was a custom thermoformer until 1980, when it began manufacturing retail packaging and patented the design for the first retail clamshell package created in the U.S. Today, Placon, which is now headed by Mohs' son Dan, has 500 employees and annual sales topping \$150 million.

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

## New Products



### NEW PACKAGING DEBUTS

Anchor Packaging Inc., St. Louis, has launched a new line of tamper-evident food containers, SAFE PINCH. The product is virtually leak-proof and eliminates the sharp edges associated with many existing tamper-evident containers. The PINCH feature is embossed on the container's hinge to send a clear message on opening the packaging. Visible, wide separation of the opened hinge makes it easy for store personnel or consumers to identify tampered product.

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



### A PEANUT-FREE ALTERNATIVE

J.S.B. Industries, Chelsea, MA, offers SunWise Peanut Free Crustless Sandwiches for retail stores. Made with SunButter sunflower seed spread and available with grape or strawberry jelly, the sandwiches formerly were only available for foodservice. The peanut and tree nut free, dairy free line has no high fructose corn syrup and features white, soft whole grain bread.

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



### NEW NAAN FLAVORS

Kangaroo Brands, Milwaukee, has unveiled Tandoori-style Naan in Original and Roasted Garlic flavors. The three-piece value pack is dairy free, kosher and comes in a tamper-evident zip locking bag. Naan complements a variety of meals and can be used for quick homemade pizza and dessert tarts.

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



### NEW LINE OF BASES, SAUCES

Nestle Brands, Glendale, CA, offers Minor's Ready to Flavor bases, concentrates and sauces. The line is edible without any additional preparation to achieve food safety. With no equipment restrictions, operators can enhance flavor across the menu without the added step of cooking. These products can be used to flavor spreads, dips and dressings for a variety of recipes.

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



### PACKS FOR GRAB AND GO

Rojo, Cypress, CA, has introduced a new chip and dip Snack Packs line. The single grab-and-go packs pair a 3-ounce cup of fresh-cut salsas or creamy hummus paired with a 1-ounce bag of tortilla chips. Varieties include Salsa & Tortilla Chips, Fiesta Black Bean Dip & Tortilla Chips, Hummus & Tortilla Chips and Sweet & Spicy Red Pepper Hummus and Tortilla Chips.

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



### AN ITALIAN INSPIRATION

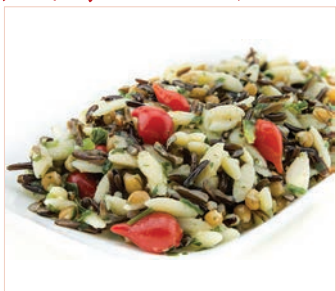
Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ, offers a new line of premium, authentic 100 percent Italian cheeses. The products are available in exact weight cuts, grated, shredded and shaved cups. Classic Italian varieties include Pecorino Romano, Piave 12 Month, Asiago 6 Month, Gorgonzola, Provolone Piccante, Parmigiano Reggiano, Grana Padano and Italian Salad Blend.

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

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



## New Products



### HEALTHY & CONVENIENT

Don's Food Products, Schwenksville, PA, offers a number of healthy salad options for delis that include grains and clean labels. These include Ancient Grain Pilaf; Curry Grain Salad; Edamame Corn Salad with Sun Dried Tomatoes; Farro with Peperonata; Island Grain with Beans Salad; Sriracha Pasta with Grilled Chicken and Spinach; and Wild Rice Medley.

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



### ARTISAN CHEESE LINE EXTENDED

Saputo Cheese USA Inc., Richfield, WI, has unveiled the newest extension to its Great Midwest artisan cheese line infused with a variety of flavors ranging from sweet to savory to spicy. Applewood Smoked Gouda is a bulk product available in two 6-pound logs. Creamy and mildly buttery, the Gouda is smoked with applewood to create a lightly sweet, delicate flavor. It can be paired with fresh fruit or used as a sandwich or burger topping.

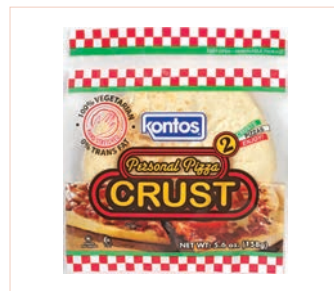
[www.saputo.com](http://www.saputo.com)



### FULL OF FLAVOR

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods Inc., Ward Hill, MA, has introduced three new organic hummus flavors. Harvest Vegetable is a vegan dip that combines red and green bell peppers, tomatoes, carrots and onions. Smoky Chipotle is infused with organic chipotle peppers and has a smoky flavor with a punch of heat. Lemon Cayenne blends sweet lemons with a pinch of cayenne peppers. All three are Non-GMO Project Verified and Gluten Free Certified.

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



### PERSONAL PIZZA PACK

Kontos Foods Inc., Paterson, NJ, has launched a new two-pack size of its Personal Pizza Crust line. The package contains two 7-inch hand-stretched pizza bases with olive oil baked into the crust for an extra crunch. The vegetarian crusts are designed to be an easy meal solution for busy families with varied tastes.

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



### PIZZA & PANINIS UNVEILED

Stefano Foods, Charlotte, NC, has introduced new lines in its Stefano Foods brands. Two 8-ounce strombolis and two 9-ounce paninis have been unveiled. The paninis include three meat and chicken Caesar flavors, while the stromboli includes pepperoni and Italian sausage. Also, three 22-ounce pizzas in bakeable packaging are available. These include The Five Cheese, The Veggie and The Four Meat. All have an all-natural crust and are topped with small-batch marinara sauce.

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



### NEW BRANDED EGG PRODUCTS

Prime Foods, LLC, Boonville, IN, has introduced new consumer products in the grocery and convenience markets. Eggs on the Run brand Pro-Go and Pro-Go PLUS protein packs include a hard-cooked peeled egg with two or four additional items for a healthy balance of protein, calcium and carbohydrates. Kramer Farms brand deviled egg kits are offered in four consumer-tested flavors. Six-packs of Kramer Farms hard-cooked, peeled cage free eggs and organic eggs are now available.

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



### HOT PRODUCTS LAUNCHED

Beaverton Foods, Hillsboro, OR, has introduced two new hot products, Ghost Pepper Mustard and Creamy Sriracha Horseradish. Both products are sold in 10.25- and 9.25-ounce shelf-stable squeeze bottles under the Inglehoffer brand. The new flavors also are available under the Beaver Brand in 12- and 13-ounce sizes. The products are Certified Gluten Free.

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

## Announcement



### TURKEY IS ANTIBIOTIC FREE

Perdue Foodservice, Salisbury, MD, has announced that its entire turkey line is antibiotic free. This includes a wide range of roasts, from premium pan roasts and raw roasts to oven-roasted turkey breasts as well as sliced meats, burgers, franks, sausages and breakfast meats. The company has completely removed any antibiotics from its turkey lines by 100 percent.

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



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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# Differentiating Food In An Online World

For decades now, the gatherings of the industry at the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's (IDDBA) annual convention have been affairs both productive and pleasant. How could it be otherwise? After all, it has been the perishable departments that the very top supermarket executives have looked to for differentiation and none more so than deli.

The storyline was written: As Wal-Mart rolled out across America, conventional supermarkets would not be able to compete on price, so they had to compete by being better than Wal-Mart where they could: the successful stores would have more service, more organics, more local and, most of all, more fresh foods.

And no department has been more transformed by this imperative than deli. Pizza programs, sandwich shops, wing bars, olive bars, wok stations, chicken both fried and rotisserie, soup stations, salad stations, coffee bars and more. With the integration of prepared foods and additional in-store seating, the literal transformation of what was once a relatively simple business selling sliced meats, cheeses, smoked fish and wet salads into full blown restaurants truly made the deli/prepared foods/retail foodservice department into the central hope of the supermarket.

And, to a large extent, it worked. Lots of supermarkets are still here, and it turned out that Wal-Mart couldn't match the cornucopia top retail delis delivered. It meant not only could these fresh departments be profitable, but they could draw in the consumer, and many of these consumers also would buy Tide and Coke and central-store items just because they were in the store, even knowing they could be bought elsewhere less expensively.

Yet this may well be yesterday's battle. Now there are new obstacles, and it is not so clear that deli, perishable foods or any product will be at the center.

We have been talking about the threat of online ordering for a long time, and most attention was paid to the comprehensive shopping services — to Webvan back in the beginning, and now on to the services such as Peapod, Fresh Direct and Amazon Fresh. But these direct assaults on supermarkets may not be the way the battle is fought.

It has been two years since CNN's Chris Isidore made this claim:

*Brick and mortar chain stores died this week, after a long illness. Born along Main Street, raised in shopping malls across post-World War II America, the traditional store enjoyed decades of good health, wealth and steady growth. But in recent years its fortunes have declined. Survived by Amazon.com and online outfits too numerous to list.*

If the obituary was premature, it may still have been prescient. Not so much in food, so far, but department store

sales keep going down, while online sales keep going up. And Wal-Mart is investing \$2 billion-plus to build a national two-day delivery network.

Investment in food keeps rising, but much of that is foodservice, where consumer interest in food quality can be indulged without much work.

At retail, it is tougher... already Amazon's Pantry is allowing its Prime consumers to stock up on an awful lot of dry groceries, health and beauty aids, etc., shipping a large master box that holds many items with only a \$5.99 shipping fee. No perishable items are included, but that may not be the point. If the convenience of buying things in a store because you are there to get fresh foods is diminished because consumers can have these pantry items delivered to their door, that reduces the value the supermarket realizes by drawing in consumers via its foodservice offerings.

But the very nature of choosing where to buy something may change from an everyday decision to a once-in-a-very-long-time decision. Amazon's Dash comes in two versions: One is a brand-specific Dash button that you can put next to where you store your Gatorade or Doritos and you just push the button when you want a reorder. Another, by invitation-only right now, is a Dash device that you talk into and can order anything on Amazon. WiFi connected, it eliminates the whole idea of buying things for price or convenience.

Amazon is not stopping at shopping. Amazon Echo is a kind of personal assistant that you can talk to, and it will play some Bach or the Beatles, turn off the lights, let you know your favorite team's scores, order Dominos to deliver a pizza, Uber to send a car or Amazon to send over whatever it sells, which is increasingly becoming everything.

What this means, of course, is that there is no business at all for parity products. The person who wants Tide will have his automated assistant order it from his dedicated vendor, which means the only opportunity in the food segment is for businesses to make the kinds of food that consumers value enough to specify — we need consumers to say, "no, Dominos pizza isn't good enough, I want Wegmans."

Retailers still grow — look at Aldi or Trader Joe's and think of Lidl, about to burst on the scene. But each retailer constantly innovates, and whether it is proprietary flavors or deep discounts, each offers a reason not to just press the reorder button. When the industry walks the floor at IDDBA, that is what buyers need to ask vendors: "What can you offer that my customers will want so badly they won't just press the reorder button?"

DB



*James B. Prevor*



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



by Lee Smith, Publisher

# Center Store Delis

It was the greatest pleasure to read this year's comments from the People's Award winners. Each spoke of their personal trips to success and what they envision for the future of the deli industry. Much of what they spoke about included the maturity of product trends we have seen evolve over many decades — prepared food, specialty cheeses, better quality meats and organics.

A department that was once shoved into the back of the store and staffed with cart-boy graduates is now a promise of innovation, future growth and career opportunities. The deli executive is a manager of complex skills — a combination of executive chef, cheese monger, international culinarian and a superb manager of people.

However, it was not about the new products and departments our winners developed that impressed me the most; it was the confidence and determination industry executives expressed for the importance of deli departments in the development of center-of-the-store focal points. In essence, deli departments are the future of supermarket relevance and success. This year's winners are today's thought leaders.

Personally, coming from a time when the next step up the ladder was a promotion from cart boy to deli clerk and the deli was a 12-foot case of slicing meats and cheeses along with some prepared salads, the deli of today is now a show place of culinary trends. As more people look for help in preparing meals or lack the time to cook for themselves and their families on a regular basis, the deli department is becoming a bastion of daily satisfaction. No longer limited to rotisserie chicken, cold sandwiches and take-and-bake pizza, the deli emerged as not one department but many departments under one umbrella that satisfy the needs of many different occasions and dayparts.

Prepared foods expanded to in-store restaurants, sushi bars, coffee bars, sandwich shops, pizzerias and more. It is no longer unusual to find the “best of” awards going to a local supermarket. Recent research shows customers are looking for fast-casual options that serve high-quality food at reasonable prices. They want options, they want to customize their meals, and many supermarkets are delivering top-tier alternatives to home cooking or restaurant dining.

It's not just new departments that are bringing in the bucks; it is also the offerings themselves. There remain markets where the least expensive options are necessary, but more Americans are being introduced to higher quality products that were traditionally found only in specialty shops. Quality, pre-sliced options introduced millions of people to Prosciutto di Parma and Prosciutto di San Daniele. Italian salumi companies are now building plants in the U.S. to make high-quality salumi that was once solely found in Italy. American companies took salami to new heights with original recipes and organic versions. Trained chefs are seeing a future in retail, and national competitions or certification programs are attracting specialty cheese clerks who view themselves as mongers with a lifelong career ahead of them.

Contemporary delis have become stores unto themselves. What was once not considered feasible is now routine. Deli departments are not just poised to take over the center of the store — in many cases, they are already have.

DB





# 2016



## BEST OF CLASS

### Wyngaard Kaas Chèvre Affiné Goat Gouda



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# 12TH ANNUAL PEOPLE'S AWARDS

PAUL CASSARA  
GREG DRESCHER  
LEE E. FRENCH  
GATHY GAFFNEY

ROB KAUFELT  
CHRIS LITZ  
SAM MOGANNAM  
DAVE RYAN

Deli Business honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to the industry, their company and their community. Nominations for 2017 may be submitted to: Executive Editor Ellen Koteff ([ekoteff@phoenixmedianet.com](mailto:ekoteff@phoenixmedianet.com)).



# PAUL CASSARA

DIRECTOR OF PREPARED FOODS, EARTH FARE

**AGE:** 40

**HOMETOWN:** Asheville, NC

**FAMILY:** Married 15 years, daughter 9 years old

**HOBBIES:** Hiking, biking and camping

**CAREER ADVICE:** "This is an awesome field to work in. I don't think every field makes you feel as if you're serving the greater good, but we think we're changing people's lives with the healthy food we provide."

**A:** I'm passionate about food so I'd be running an organic farm or organic or natural restaurant, touching the same things in a different way.

**Q: Where do you see yourself in 5 years? In 10 years?**

**A:** We're a growing company, so my hope is that we continue to reach more communities and in 5 to 10 years there will be 500 Earth Fares.

**Q: How would you describe yourself in one word?**

**A:** Determined

**Q: How do you keep on top of consumer trends?**

**A:** I read magazines, surf the internet and attend trade shows, but we also visit other retailers to see what they're doing. I feel like retail is about spotting good ideas and tweaking or transforming them to meet our customer needs and to adapt the business.

**Q: What makes a great leader?**

**A:** Everyone should have short- and long-term goals in their head and push through obstacles.

**Q: Where do you think supermarket delis are headed?**

**A:** I think grocery, deli and retailers are catching on that fresh, healthy food is the wave of the future. Delis are moving toward being fresh meal destinations and away from the traditional deli model of deli meat and potato salad. Organic and natural ingredients are better for everyone. We've been in the space for awhile, but as other retailers catch on and the price of these products comes down, everyone can get healthier.

Paul Cassara began his career at Earth Fare when he was in college at the University of North Carolina, Asheville. His first job was washing dishes. Since then, he has held positions within the 36-store chain as a line cook, kitchen manager, food-service manager, regional trainer and deli category manager. He has been in his current role as director of prepared foods for more than three years.

"I remember going to the first Earth Fare as a child, which was called Dinner for the Earth back then, running through the bulk aisles that had nuts and raisins on the floor," he says. "At that point, health food stores were smaller than they are today with a general store feel."

Cassara credits his mom as his biggest influence, as she was into healthy eating before it was popular due to a number of food allergies and sensitivities.

"She taught me there is a huge need to provide healthy food to people," he says.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?**

**A:** Making great food is the big picture answer. Our food quality standards

are above the industry standards. In our delis, we use antibiotic-free meat that is humanely raised, and our offerings include cage-free eggs and sustainably-raised seafood. We are not allowing artificial colors and flavors in our stores. We have chefs on our team who make great recipes with awesome ingredients.

**Q: Detail a challenge you've successfully overcome in your career.**

**A:** Growth is the biggest challenge. As we try and bring our brand, message and food to multiple states and communities, and continue growing, there are always challenges. Looking back, most challenges were good and needed and necessary for us to grow and reach out to new communities, which is never an easy process.

**Q: What are you most proud of?**

**A:** In my career, it really has to do with a realization that you can provide organic foods to customers and make it work from a business perspective. These are visible to customers and sets us apart.

**Q: If you weren't in your current career, what would you be doing?**





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# GREG DRESCHER

VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP, THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

**AGE:** 61

**HOMETOWN:** Sacramento, works out of a home office and the CIA's Napa Valley campus, and travels between four campuses (New York, California, Texas and Singapore)

**FAMILY:** Married for 13 years to Mai Pham, an Asian chef and cookbook author who owns the restaurants, *Lemon Grass* and *Star Ginger*

**HOBBIES:** Travel and enjoying the natural world in California

**CAREER ADVICE:** "Cast a wide net in terms of curiosity, but at the same time focus narrowly on at least a few things so that you hone your expertise in those areas. Figure out who are the experts in areas that you care about and get to know them and understand how they look at the world."

As vice president of strategic initiatives and industry leadership at The Culinary Institute of America, Greg Drescher oversees the college's leadership initiatives, including conferences, invitational leadership retreats, digital media, academic and other strategic partnerships, as well as other initiatives. Many of these initiatives are geared toward retail and foodservice executives and chefs.

He is the creator of the college's influential Worlds of Flavor International Conference & Festival; the annual Worlds of Healthy Flavors; Healthy Menus R & D Collaborative; Healthy Kids Collaborative; Appetites + Innovation: Shaping our Future; as well as numerous other CIA "think tank" and change initiatives.

For the past decade, Drescher has co-directed a CIA-Harvard Chan School initiative, Healthy Kitchens, Healthy Lives, to advance a new paradigm around food and culinary literacy, health, and lifestyle change within and through the healthcare sector. As an outgrowth of this long running program, CIA and the Harvard Chan School have recently launched the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative to

"advance personal and public health through culinary literacy and integrative lifestyle transformation."

**Q: Detail a challenge you've successfully overcome in your career.**

**A:** For 30 years, I have been tracking trends, researching issues, recruiting talent in multiple fields and disciplines from around the world for international conferences. Early in my career, I had a small fraction of the contacts I have today, and yet I was successful at what I did even then. I overcame that challenge by an intensity of focus, a lot of listening, and a readily expressed desire to connect with experts and innovators that wanted to accomplish things that mattered beyond themselves, and not simply be financially successful or achieve celebrity status.

**Q: What are you most proud of?**

**A:** Over the years, working with many talented colleagues at the CIA, we have been able to build a new division of the college focused entirely on strategic initiatives and thought leadership, focusing on excellence and innovation, world cuisines and cultures, health and wellness, and sustainability

and food ethics. Through our close collaboration with leaders in our industry and as a result of academic partnerships, it's been gratifying to see the impact we have been able to make in helping our industry get out ahead of key trends and issues, and not simply be reactive.

**Q: Who was most influential in your life?**

**A:** Actually if you look at the professional focus of my parents and grandparents, you can see a foreshadowing of my career. My dad was a physician, one of my grandfathers was a superintendent of schools in Wisconsin, and the other was a very accomplished baker and bakery owner in Minnesota.

**Q: Where do you think supermarket delis are headed?**

**A:** If supermarkets and supermarket deli executives seize the opportunities, they will design a future where delis are competitive with the best casual restaurants, headed up by teams of chefs that are accomplished and innovative. I see a future where supermarket delis are places where customers learn that healthy, sustainable food choices can be absolutely delicious, with no sacrifice in flavor — and where the flavors of the world are faithfully recreated to great accolades. And to support that vision, I am so pleased that we were able to launch this past January our first CIA leadership platform for the world of supermarkets and other food at retail operations, "Appetites + Innovation." Our inaugural invitational leadership collaborative brought together about 50 influential leaders in this space, with extensive representation from the supermarket deli sector.



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# LEE E. FRENCH

VICE PRESIDENT DELI/FOODSERVICE MERCHANDISING,  
PRICE CHOPPER SUPERMARKETS

**AGE:** 58

**HOMETOWN:** Rotterdam, NY,  
a suburb of Schenectady

**FAMILY:** Married to Eileen for  
33 years; four sons: Brendan, 29;  
Cory, 28; Brett, 25; Collin, 21

**HOBBIES:** Referee for womens' high  
school and college basketball. "My  
wife and I spend our spare time and  
as many weekends as possible at our

house on Saratoga Lake, where we  
enjoy our pontoon boat and jet ski."

**CAREER ADVICE:** "When it comes  
to retail, you either love it or hate it –  
there is no middle ground if you want to  
be highly successful. I think that a per-  
son's greatest strengths can be their  
greatest weaknesses, as well. A per-  
fect example is loyalty and dedica-  
tion. If you don't know when to cut loose  
from work, it can become a problem."

Lee E. French started with Price Chopper in 1975 and continued working at the stores through high school and college. He now has logged more than 41 years with Price Chopper. Prior to working in the chain's corporate headquarters, French held positions as a produce and grocery clerk and assistant produce manager in its stores.

Upon graduating from college French was promoted to the position of operations research specialist, where he managed a complete labor-scheduling program for all store level merchandising departments. "The goal of the position was to increase store level productivity through labor savings techniques, methods or equipment," says French. "During my time in that position, I developed a business plan to build a corporate resource recovery facility that would reduce costs and enhance profitability of handling all recyclables generated in our stores." Capital investment of \$1.4 million was paid off in four years.

After five years of running the facility, French was promoted to project manager, reporting directly to Price Chopper's vice president of fresh

merchandising, where he worked on projects that developed computer assisted ordering, computer generated ordering, customer relationship marketing programs and developed manageable commodity and category groupings for the Fresh Merchandising teams.

"I then spent the next 17 years as a seafood buyer, senior buyer, senior category manager, director and vice president seafood merchandising," he says.

In August 2015, he was promoted to vice president of deli/foodservice, which also includes specialty cheese.

**Q: If you weren't in your current career, what would you be doing?**

**A:** My wife would tell you I'd be a weather man, as I enjoy that area so much. But I also think that I would have loved being an elementary school teacher, making an impact on young lives.

**Q: How has retailing evolved over the course of your career?**

**A:** Retailing has moved from the days of S&H Green Stamps to the world of digital. I am very fortunate to work for a company and with trade

partners that are leaders in retail innovation. While we still have many guests that are from the WWII era, we also have the latest Millennial guest in our store, as well. We need to be able to market to this vast cross section of shoppers each and every day.

**Q: What makes a great leader?**

**A:** I believe a leader must demonstrate great stamina and integrity. They must have great planning, organizing, supervisory, analytical and communications skills. A leader must be loyal and dedicated to the organization and the team, while being strategic to ensure the success and growth of the business. A leader must have the strengths to build and motivate teams to reach heights never thought obtainable.

**Q: Where do you think supermarket delis are headed?**

**A:** We must move to improve the wait time of our guests. People are time-starved, and we are enhancing and adding to our foodservice offers. Another is to offer grab-and-go sliced meats and cheeses available and ready for the guest at all times. We must stay on track with the new Millennials and meet their growing needs and appetites.

**Q: Does the industry do a good job of attracting top talent?**

**A:** I believe we each have great talent pools right within our own organizations. We must find those diamonds in the rough and begin to coach, teach and train them. This is one part of my career that I have loved as well as has helped me to be successful in generating the next group of leaders for my company.



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# CATHY GAFFNEY

VICE PRESIDENT OF SPECIALTY CHEESE,  
DELI AND KOSHER, WEGMANS

**AGE:** 48

**HOMETOWN:** West Henrietta, NY,  
15 minutes from where she grew up

**FAMILY:** "I met John, my very best friend, 31 years ago, and we have been married for 26 years. He has been an incredible support, always encourages me, and has never held me back from doing almost anything. We have one daughter, Mary, already 15. She is an amazing young person with so much drive, talent and compassion."

Mary has been one of my favorite teachers, and I have already learned so much from her. Incredible how much you can learn from the next generation."

**HOBBIES:** Spending as much time with my family as possible, usually on the softball field. Also loves snowmobiling and gardening.

**CAREER ADVICE:** "Be ready to roll up your sleeves, regardless of your position, and do whatever is needed to get the job done."

to teach and watch grow personally and professionally.

**Q: Who was most influential in your life?**

**A:** My mom. She passed away a few years ago, but I still hear her pushing me to try the next thing, always saying you can do it, no matter the challenge.

**Q: If you weren't in your current career, what would you be doing?**

**A:** Initially, I went to Cornell to be a large animal veterinarian. Some days I would rather be with the cows.

**Q: Where do you see yourself in 5 years? In 10 years?**

**A:** Hopefully, still at Wegmans and still married to my husband. Seriously, I love what I do. In the years ahead, having a position and opportunity to affect the future growth and innovation of our company will be my goal.

**Q: How would you describe yourself in one word?**

**A:** Innovative.

Growing up on a dairy farm in upstate New York, showing and marketing registered Holsteins, and being an avid 4-H member, all led Cathy Gaffney to Cornell University. Her major was Applied Economics and Business Management, and she began her career as a buyer for May Department Stores.

"I wanted to get closer to my roots, and food retailing seemed like a much better fit for me, combining my agricultural background, love for food and my passion for being a buyer/merchant," she says in describing her career shift.

Wegmans had a management intern program, and in 1993, she joined the company, initially working in its stores. In 1995, Gaffney joined the corporate office, heading up the specialty coffee program and coffee bars, doubling the number of coffee shops at Wegmans by 1997.

She then became the prepared foods category merchant, working with Wegmans corporate executive chef and senior vice president of prepared foods to develop the Prepared Foods concept and brigade system.

In 2000, Gaffney headed to the flagship store in Pittsford, NY to further develop the perishable store manager role, a new position for the company. She also had an opportunity to work in Wegmans Tastings restaurant on special assignment.

In 2003, Gaffney went back to corporate as the cheese category merchant.

"Over the last 13 years, the business has grown and my role has continued to evolve into my current position," says Gaffney. "It has been an incredible journey."

**Q: What are you most proud of?**

**A:** I love teaching people. At Wegmans, we are truly empowered to run our part of the business. This has afforded me the opportunity to do some really out-of-the-box projects, like our Cheese Caves, and travel extensively with others from our company to learn, create and innovate. At home, it has been so much fun teaching my daughter at each stage of her life. I am very proud of all the people in my life I have been able

“ I WANTED TO GET CLOSER TO MY ROOTS, AND FOOD RETAILING SEEMED LIKE A MUCH BETTER FIT FOR ME, COMBINING MY AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND, LOVE FOR FOOD AND MY PASSION FOR BEING A BUYER/MERCHANT, ”



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# ROB KAUFELT

PRESIDENT/PROPRIETOR, MURRAY'S CHEESE SHOP

**AGE:** 68

**HOMETOWN:** New York City

**FAMILY:** Married in 2010 to Nina Planck, who was a reporter for Time magazine and grew up on one of the first organic vegetarian farms in America. Nina, who was born in Virginia, ran the London Farmers Market. They have three children.

**HOBBIES:** Playing Bob Dylan songs on the guitar; songwriting, writing and reading

**CAREER ADVICE:** "I set my own path and followed my passions without much regard for planning and convention. I urge others to follow their passions wherever they may lead and, with luck and hard work, things may work out."

**R**ob Kaufelt is a third generation food retailer. His grandfather had a mom-and-pop grocery store in Perth Amboy, NJ, where his father worked, and eventually opened a small chain in the state called Mayfair Supermarkets, which was a part of the Food Town coop in the area.

After graduating from Cornell University, Kaufelt joined the chain, working his way up. He held positions as deli manager, assistant manager, store manager, dairy supervisor, district manager, director of operations and, eventually, president.

He later opened a full-service gourmet store, Kaufelt's Fancy Groceries, which was the original name of his grandfather's store, in Summit and Princeton, NJ.

After the market crashed in 1987, he sold the operation and later bought Murray's Cheese Shop, becoming a cheesemonger.

"I was the business' third owner, and brought more unique varieties into the shop and acquired licenses to import cheese directly," says Kaufelt.

About a decade ago, Kroger approached Kaufelt about locating shops within the chain's high-volume stores. It started off slowly, than really

picked up.

Today, there are 265 Murray's Cheese Shops within Kroger stores, and 100 more shops are opening each year.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?**

**A:** I have the best job in the world because I'm here in the middle of New York and the food world, so my personal and work lives have become fully integrated. I recently took my children to the Union Square farmers market and spoke to producers, then went to a benefit for a food in schools program that we sponsor and participate in. I hardly know where work ends and the rest begins.

**Q: What are you most proud of?**

**A:** Aside from my family, I am most proud that we are creating a legitimate new profession for people who are passionate about cheese. Murray's has trained more than 3,000 people as red jackets (cheesemasters). I do intros and histories myself to explain our philosophies and goals and how this came to be. We created a new legitimate profession for people who are passionate about cheese.



**I RECENTLY TOOK MY CHILDREN TO THE UNION SQUARE FARMERS MARKET AND SPOKE TO PRODUCERS, THEN WENT TO A BENEFIT FOR A FOOD IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM THAT WE SPONSOR AND PARTICIPATE IN. I HARDLY KNOW WHERE WORK ENDS AND THE REST BEGINS.**

**Q: Who was most influential in your professional life?**

**A:** There were two people who came later in my life who were most influential. This includes the former chairman of Kroger, Dave Dillon, who brought the company to its position as a leading chain, and his successor who invested in my company, the current chairman Rodney McMullen.

I often felt like I was too far outside the box approaching things as a merchandiser, and they both showed a great deal of faith in me, so I felt validated in my path.

**Q: How would you describe yourself in one word?**

**A:** Passionate

**Q: How has retailing evolved over the course of your career?**

**A:** The whole food movement is based around farmers, farm to table and natural, rather than processed, foods. My self-proclaimed mission is to bring traditional cheeses to a larger market.

I had a mission statement to do this and no real hope of it ever becoming a reality until Kroger showed up.





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# CHRIS LITZ

VICE PRESIDENT OF FRESH PRODUCTS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIX

**AGE:** 52

**HOMETOWN:** Lakeland, FL

**FAMILY:** Married for 32 years, two daughters, a surgeon and attorney, are 29 and 30 years old

**HOBBIES:** Fishing, scuba diving

**CAREER ADVICE:** "The grocery business is extremely hard work, but also very rewarding and secure. As long as you have a long-term outlook and are willing to work hard and evolve with the business, you'll be successful."

a passion for the industry and the people at Publix. He is a shining example of what we stand for.

**Q: If you weren't in your current career, what would you be doing?**

**A:** I'm a licensed charter boat captain and like to fish and scuba dive, so I'd probably be in the water. Still, I never saw myself doing anything different than what I'm doing today. This is a segment of the business I want to be in.

**Q: How would you describe yourself in one word?**

**A:** Visionary

**Q: How do you keep on top of consumer trends?**

**A:** When I started in the industry, people would write out grocery lists and know what they were making for dinner each night of the week. Today, people think about dinner at 2 p.m. the same day. Shopping patterns have changed in large part because the segment and manner people go to the grocery store have changed.

**Q: What makes a great leader?**

**A:** Someone who is approachable, listens and contributes.

**Q: Where do you think supermarket delis are headed?**

**A:** I think delis are moving away from the corner of the store as a sub department to the eventual center of the store. I can see this department gravitating away from the traditional deli to a place to sit down and have dinner with wine, a source for grab-and-go salads for lunch and yet remain a resource for imported olives, cheeses and traditional deli items.

Chris Litz has been in the grocery business his entire life and with Publix for 30 years. "I went straight into management right out of high school and worked my way up at the company," he says. Litz started his career as a Publix store manager, then seven years later became district manager, before serving as director of warehousing for five years.

This is a great business to be in.

**Q: What are you most proud of?**

**A:** It's always been more about the people than the product. It's been eye-opening running into managers and district managers today that I hired when they were teens. They've told me they've made career decisions based on our conversations that made

“ I CAN SEE THIS DEPARTMENT GRAVITATING AWAY FROM THE TRADITIONAL DELI TO A PLACE TO SIT DOWN AND HAVE DINNER WITH WINE, A SOURCE FOR GRAB-AND-GO SALADS FOR LUNCH AND YET REMAIN A RESOURCE FOR IMPORTED OLIVES, CHEESE AND TRADITIONAL DELI ITEMS. ”

He oversaw about 80 stores in Tennessee and Alabama as a regional director for five years, before taking on his current role as vice president of fresh products business development for the Florida-based chain.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?**

**A:** I enjoy fresh obviously, because from our company's perspective, it's where the growth is in grocery stores. Customers gravitate toward meal solutions, and it's fun from a product standpoint. I also like dealing with people.

them stick with the company, and it made me realize that what I thought was all in a day's work for me was impactful to them.

**Q: Who was most influential in your life?**

**A:** Ed Crenshaw, Publix chief executive had the most influence on me. He epitomizes what our company stands for. As heir to the Publix chain, Ed didn't have to work, yet not only did he work full time, but he is one of the hardest workers. He is now retiring after 42 years, but Ed continues to demonstrate





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Assistant Sales Manager Service Deli  
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# SAM MOGANNAM

FOUNDER OF BI-RITE FAMILY OF BUSINESSES

**AGE:** 48

**HOMETOWN:** San Francisco

**FAMILY:** Married for 15 years with two daughters, ages 13 and 9

**HOBBIES:** "I love to visit farmers markets and cook. I also love to work on our farm, take bike rides with our daughters

and referee their soccer games. I love to travel and the discovery that comes with being in an unfamiliar place. "

**CAREER ADVICE:** "Don't be afraid of failure. Clearly think about the risks and consequences of those risks, but know that achieving anything great will be messy, and that your job as the leader is to keep it from getting too messy."

**B**orn and raised in San Francisco, Sam Mogannam grew up in the family grocery business, working at the original Bi-Rite Market on 18th Street from the age of 6 to 17.

"At that point, I told my father I didn't want to be a part of the family business," he says. "My dad and uncle had owned the original market since the 1960s, so my childhood was spent stocking shelves and working the cash register."

Instead, Mogannam found his calling in the restaurant world, and studied hotel restaurant operations at City College of San Francisco before cooking for a year in Basel, Switzerland.

He returned to San Francisco and continued to cook, spending two years working at The Pasta Shop in Oakland's Rockridge neighborhood before opening his first restaurant, Rendezvous du Monde, at the age of 23.

"When my father gave me the opportunity to take over the family grocery business in 1997, I immediately started visualizing the store's potential as a restaurant and new ways to use the space," he says. "Finally, after much debate, I caved and agreed to take over the market with the caveat that I could run it my own way."

He then built a kitchen at the heart

of the market, and revamped the offerings so the shelves were filled with items like farm-direct produce and sustainably-raised meat.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?**

**A:** The people. I am always so inspired by the love, passion, and integrity of our team. I feel we have the best guests, who share our values. And we get to work with amazing producers, who grow, raise and create the tastiest food in the world.

**Q: Detail a challenge you've successfully overcome in your career.**

**A:** I was a chef who learned to manage a business and grow it from a staff of six to more than 300. In the mid-1990s I opened an organic juice café long before it was trendy and it didn't do well — people weren't ready for it.

**Q: Who was most influential in your life?**

**A:** My mother, who taught me to love unconditionally, and my father, who taught me to work hard, be determined and to never compromise on my integrity.

**Q: Where do you see yourself in**

**five years? In 10 years?**

**A:** Continuing the work we are currently doing, but hopefully spending a bit more of my time with my hands in the soil on our farm, and in the food we produce. In 2013, we decided to define the scope and nature of our work at Bi-Rite over a much longer period of time. We know who we are and our mission of Creating Community Through Food hasn't changed, but we wanted to envision where we're going. This inspired us to write our 10-year vision to give us guidance. What was exciting about it was that everyone had an opportunity to contribute to the vision, helping us direct where we see ourselves in 2024.

**Q: Where do you think supermarket delis are headed?**

**A:** Supermarket delis should be headed in the direction of continuing to create flavorful, transparent, culturally-significant, thoughtfully-produced food that will make people happy and connect them to each other and their producers. I'd love to see supermarket delis build trust and excitement with customers, educating them about where their food comes from, who grows it and how it was produced.

**Q: Does the industry do a good job of attracting top talent?**

**A:** My suspicion in general is no. I suspect really great talent wants to be part of an organization that has a greater purpose beyond selling products at a high margin. I believe top talent and great people want to be part of something that's bigger than themselves, bigger than what the organization stands for. Businesses can do this by having a mission and truly living it.





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# DAVE RYAN

SERVICE DELI SALES MANAGER, JEWEL-OSCO

**AGE:** 55

**HOMETOWN:** Hoffman Estates, IL

**FAMILY:** Married to Sue for 26 years with two sons, Dan, 22, who graduated from University of North Carolina, Charlotte this spring, and Casey, 20, a junior at Loyola University in Chicago

**HOBBIES:** Golf, watching NASCAR and other sports and spending time with family and friends

**CAREER ADVICE:** "Be a team player, and you will be recognized when the team succeeds. Don't be satisfied with the status quo, always look for ways to make things better."

**W**hen Dave Ryan financed his education at Massachusetts' Bentley College working as a cook in various restaurants, he knew his career was destined to be in the food industry.

After graduating with a business degree in 1983, Ryan went into Star Market's management training program. Two years later, he went to work for an upscale gourmet store for six years, serving first as store manager, then as director of home delivery and director of new ventures.

He left to begin a 20-year career at Stop & Shop. His many roles included store manager, deli specialist, bake shop specialist, prepared food merchandiser and prepared food category manager for Ahold USA.

"From there, I went back on the road as a deli/bake shop regional sales manager, where I covered 75 stores," says Ryan. "Then I became director of deli and bakery for 214 stores."

In October 2014, Ryan left Stop & Shop and the Northeast to become deli sales manager for the Chicago area's Jewel-Osco's 185 stores.

**Q: Detail a challenge you've successfully overcome in your career.**

**A:** Most recently, I'm proud of having made the change from Stop & Shop

in the Northeast where I was for 30 years and moving to Chicago to learn about a whole new market and company. Jewel was very successful when I arrived, but I saw an opportunity to grow deli sales and profits. To do this, I had to learn what our stores did well and how we could build upon it. Then look for the greatest opportunities with the goal to continue to grow sales in what we do well, while creating programs to grow incremental dollars.

**Q: Who was most influential in your life?**

**A:** My father, a factory worker who never made much or had much but worked every day at 5:30 a.m., six days a week. My parents both worked hard to provide for our family.

**Q: How would you describe yourself in one word?**

**A:** Lucky. One of my favorite sayings is 'luck is when preparation meets opportunity.' I've been lucky to work with great people and learn something from all of them and also have the opportunity to work in so many positions, which prepared me for my role today.

**Q: How do you keep on top of consumer trends?**



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**A:** Being a foodie helps, but I read a lot of trade publications, like Deli Business. The vendor community is another set of eyes and ears into emerging trends in the food industry. Also, watching food networks keeps me up to date on consumer trends. Some shows even create demand for supermarket products. I also keep an eye on competitors in retail and foodservice.

**Q: How has retailing evolved over the course of your career?**

**A:** I think back to when I started and delis were basic with a display case of meat and cheese. Now delis and prepared food departments are increasingly the focal point of stores and a point of differentiation. There is an emphasis toward fresh and clean labels, with everyone young and old trying to live a healthier lifestyle.

**Q: Where do you think supermarket delis are headed?**

**A:** There will be more foodservice hybrids. Delis are bridging the gap between traditional supermarkets and restaurants. There will always be a service deli, but it's changing from offering deli salads to providing fresh, healthy meal solutions.





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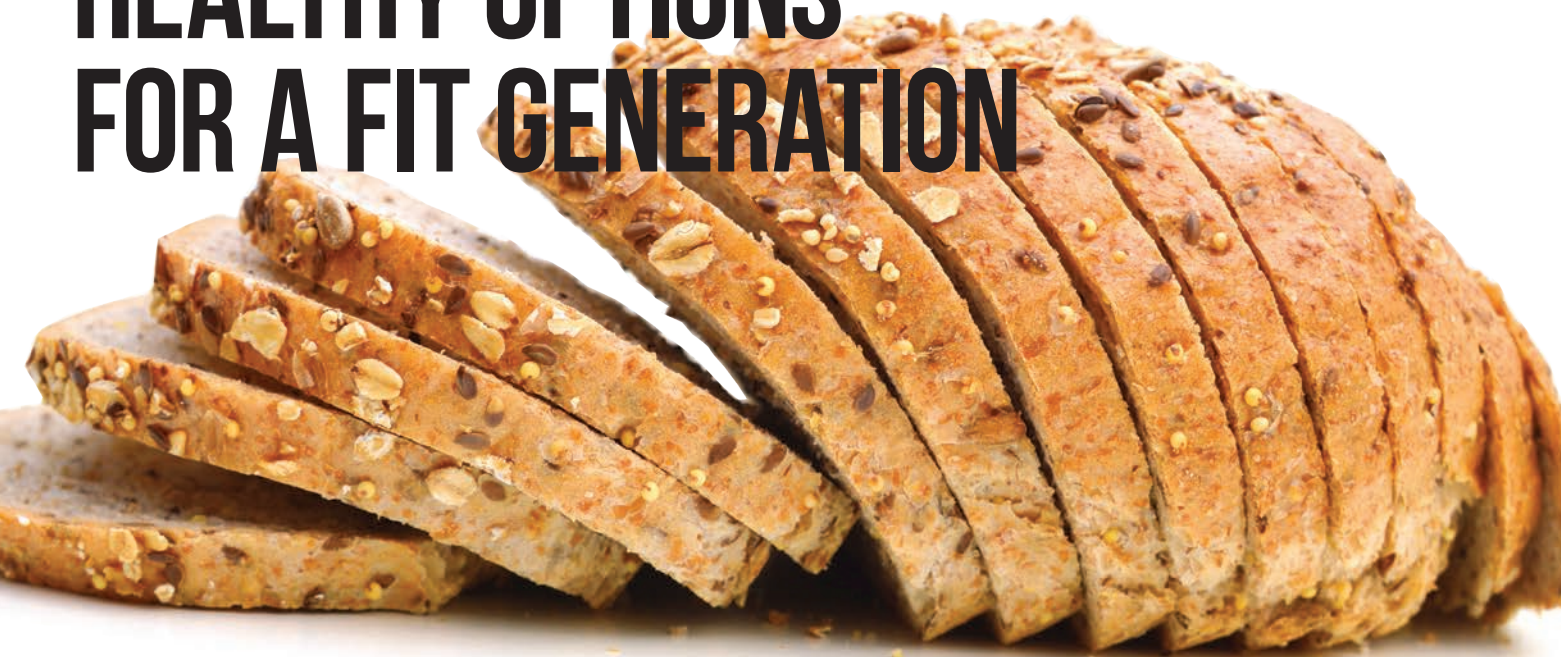
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# DELI BREADS: HEALTHY OPTIONS FOR A FIT GENERATION



## Millennials want interesting, authentic and nutritious

BY BOB JOHNSON

**T**he bakery a few feet away from the deli sells more than \$6 billion in breads annually and, according to What's in Store 2016 from the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association, the trendsetting Millennial generation is looking for a greater variety of ethnic products with clean labels.

The sandwich program is the well-traveled bridge between the deli and the rising flatbread, ciabatta, and focaccia.

"Sandwiches are still king, and that's why bread in general is still growing," says Warren Stoll, marketing director at Kontos Foods in Paterson, NJ. "Sandwiches are a growing trend and it goes with another growing trend, hand-held food. A lot of people eat in their cars."

A more adventurous and health-conscious group of consumers is creating markets for an evolving variety of interesting breads.

"Artisan breads are very popular right now due to their natural and homestyle feel." Says Michel Saillant, president at Boulart in Lachine, Quebec.

"Focaccias are also starting to be

more and more present in restaurants and prepared food menus as they are very flavorful, versatile and make a great canvas for recipes. Ciabatta breads are also very on trend and several big foodservice chains are serving their burgers, paninis, etc. on artisan ciabatta buns."

The deli has opportunities to use premium breads to make the sandwich program stand out, and to cross merchandise with companion products.

### Flatbreads Lead The Way

Because it is a different, interesting and healthier option, and usually associated with an intriguing and popular region, flatbreads from around the world are taking the lead.

"Flatbread is the Anglo term but the Greek term is pita bread," says Stoll. "Pita bread has a lot of cache. If you put the word Greek in front of just about anything, it sells. 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding' was the highest grossing romantic comedy ever, and 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2' just came out."

There are other names for unique

flatbreads that come from other locales around the world.

"In the Indian culture it is called naan, and in the Hispanic culture it is pan plano," says Stoll. "Different cultures have their own flatbreads. We make more than 50 varieties of flatbread."

These different ethnic breads are all lower carb options that fit easily with the growing interest in healthier eating.

"A healthier Mediterranean diet and trend is supporting the pita and flatbread growth," says Leigh Thornberry, director of marketing and communications for Kangaroo Brands in Omaha, NE. "Consumers are eating more fresh vegetables and fruits. These fresh plant-based foods go well stuffed in a Kangaroo Salad Pocket pita or sprinkled on a flatbread. Lower carbs and easier platform for the Mediterranean diet."

Sandwiches are still king, but flatbreads also lend themselves to a variety of other popular uses.

"Flatbread pizzas are even promoted with Weight Watchers point values," says Thornberry, discussing naan pizza





PHOTO COURTESY OF KONTOS

crust. “Naan offers a rich, hearty flavor and makes flatbread pizzas and even dessert tarts...fun and easy to make. Just add healthy ingredients and toast up in the oven...in just minutes... for a tasty meal.”

One reason for the popularity of flatbread is it is amenable for use in many convenient and healthy dishes.

“Consumers use flatbreads for quick-and-easy recipes as well as healthier choices,” says Thornberry. “Flatbreads make great personal sized pizzas. You can dip with hummus, spinach dip and spreads, or use them as an alternative to rolls for dinner.”

This versatile option can easily serve as a carrier for many other foods found in the deli.

“Flatbreads have seen an increase in popularity in the past couple of years,” says Saillant. “The creativity that comes with these types of breads is unlimited. They can accommodate a large variety of dips and sauces and can be used for sandwiches, placed on platters for sharable entrees. The possibilities are endless.”

Social media is keeping the buzz alive for the variety of flatbreads from around the world.

“With social media consumers are baraged with quick, easy and healthy recipe ideas,” says Thornberry. “We see a trend in healthier eating and lower carb diets.”

The trend figures to continue growing as more people become aware of these

bread, and of their many uses.

“Not everybody is aware of flatbread yet,” says Stoll. “As more people become aware and try it, they like it. If everything goes as I expect, flatbread is not even close to its peak.”

### Interesting, Authentic, Healthy

Other breads are also doing well these days, if they offer interesting, authentic and healthy options.

“We’re seeing the healthier versions are doing well,” says Karen Toufayan,

vice president for marketing at Toufayan Bakeries in Ridgefield, NJ. “Smart bagels have less than 100 calories. Smart pockets are square so they are easier to fill and easier to eat. Sprouted grains are doing well. The quality of health is driving a lot of consumers.”

There are even markets for bread products that are gluten-free, which appeals to a growing number of people.

“Gluten-free is appealing to people who want to eat healthy, not just people with celiac disease,” says Toufayan. “We have the only gluten-free pita chip in the U.S. We have gluten free wraps in four flavors, and they perform like a regular wrap. We are making all of the health statements on our packaging — organic, sprouted grain, gluten-free.”

Breads made from sprouted grains are also striking the authentic and healthy chord.

“Sprouted bread and gluten-free are gaining momentum,” says Thornberry. “So are hearty breads with seeds and whole grains, and smaller portions ... like our Slider Pockets, smaller-sized pita pockets to grab and fill with healthy ingredients.”

This bread is popular because it suits the desire for good nutrition that has gotten hold of both the old and the young.

“Baby Boomers and Millennials are more and more cautious about what they eat, and try to pick healthier options,” says Saillant. “We have always believed in making our breads as clean as possible using simple ingredients that you know and can



pronounce without adding any preservatives, additives or sugar. We know these are the types of products people need and want to eat."

The newly popular bread products are both nutritious and versatile in the menu items they help create.

"Another reason for the flatbread trend catching on is the perception of healthier eating that it provides to consumers," says Saillant. "We have just launched a flatbread type sandwich bun that holds up whatever toppings are added onto it. This new product is very versatile and we believe it will be our next big success."

The older generation is frequently looking for their bread products in relatively small quantities.

"Baby Boomers are becoming empty nesters, so they are looking for a smaller count size," says Thornberry. "At Kangaroo we developed our 3-count, value pack flatbread pockets. Kangaroo tandoori-style naan also comes in a 3-pack value pack."

These trends figure to be with us for a while because they are driven largely by a younger generation.

"Millennials are great influencers in terms of food trends," says Saillant. "They

are a very foodie generation and want to indulge, but still keep things healthy. They understand prevention of diseases is more important than reacting to them. We see a lot more food chains such as Panera Bread and Chipotle using fresh ingredients free from additives catering to these consumer's needs."

Many consumers are looking for adventure in their foods, and that includes breads.

"Nowadays, people like to discover new cuisines and flavors and the market is seeing a lot more variety of breads such as flatbreads and ethnic inspired breads," says Saillant. "Consumers like the versatility, interesting flavors and combinations that these products provide."

For the right product you can charge a

little more, because this generation will pay for the experience of eating.

"Millennials look for food and food making to be an experience," says Thornberry. "So, you see 'fancier' bread choices like pretzel rolls versus plain rolls ... or more ethnic choices to complement the whole meal experience like pitas."

### Merchandising Decisions

There are merchandising decisions to be made about these healthy and interesting breads, and it begins with where to sell them in the store.

"If flatbread is placed in the deli, it's not going to get placed elsewhere," says Stoll. "Wherever the flatbread is merchandised it must be visible, and the consumer must understand use occasions. It helps to educate the consumer on how versatile these breads are."

There are important advantages to locating the bread in the deli, or at least within an arm's reach, including the wealth of cross-merchandising opportunities.

"A great cross-merchandising idea is to combine the sliced meat, cheese and panini bread," says Stoll. "You can have recipes on making a panini sandwich. The panini bread is made with grill marks on it. You can heat it at home and you have the same grill marks as if it were pressed."

Locating the bread next to the deli makes it possible to develop a range of cross-sampling and cross-merchandising programs.

"We have been seeing a lot of retailers that do in-store sampling of certain products like spreads, butters and special jams using bread that can be found in the bakery section," says Saillant. "Another best practice is to place bread baskets or have a few bakery items placed in other departments such as the deli section or near the cashier for easy grab and go. Seasonal or themed layouts at the entrance of the store are also effective. For instance, at Thanksgiving, you can have a layout of all ingredients necessary — such as great bread — to make stuffing."

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**“ WHEREVER THE FLATBREAD IS MERCHANDISED IT MUST BE VISIBLE, AND THE CONSUMER MUST UNDERSTAND USE OCCASIONS. IT HELPS TO EDUCATE THE CONSUMER ON HOW VERSATILE THESE BREADS ARE. ” — WARREN STOLL, KONTOS FOODS**

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# Exploring The Mediterranean Diet



## An abundance of health benefits and flavor possibilities

BY CHRIS AUMAN

**T**he Mediterranean Diet Pyramid recommends basing every meal on portions of fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains and seeds. Seafood is suggested over red meat; spices are preferred over salt; and olive oil is given the nod over butter. Studies have shown that this diet keeps the heart healthy, the waistline trim, the risk of cancer low and can even help postmenopausal women maintain healthy bones. Deli managers can take advantage of the positive attributes by communicating these health aspects to customers. Point-of-sale tools, like recipe cards and signage, and cross merchandising techniques help consumers learn ways to incorporate Mediterranean foods into their diets.

### The Health Benefits

"The FDA has offered guidance to really embrace the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid to help consumers balance their overall nutritional profile," says David Gacom, vice president, sales and marketing for Hummus Plus, headquartered in Elk Grove Village, IL. "The way we look at it is very similar. In every meal there's going to be some form of grain and we're seeing delis starting to embrace whole wheat in the form of pita chips and flat breads and lavash."

Of course, nothing pairs with these breads quite like hummus and displaying the two together is a natural fit as most deli managers know. Hummus is about more than pita bread, however. "As you move

up the pyramid," says Gacom, "you find hummus really falls in that second rung, which is all about nuts, vegetables and fruits and that's supposed to be the daily part of every meal. Whether it's vegetables or hummus or falafel, basically getting that into your diet is really important."

"The Mediterranean Diet is based on natural grains, vegetables, fruits, seeds and nuts, lean meats, olive oil — basically, all the good stuff in life." That's the opinion of David Mafoud, third generation baker and co-owner of Damascus Bakeries headquartered in Brooklyn, NY. He's not alone in this thinking. Not only does the Mediterranean Diet include all of the good things he mentions, it emphasizes sensible portions. Mafoud explains: "There is a sense





and sensibility of eating with portion control — Portion-Sense as we have coined it at Damascus Bakeries — which simply means ‘coupling’ different food groups together (and) ‘controlling’ amounts from each group.”

Mafoed recommends deli managers merchandise and promote food groups that complement each other both nutritionally and for great taste combinations. Pairing hummus with breads and veggies; pizza crusts with olive oil; cheeses with fresh tomatoes, these combinations cement the healthy association in the minds of consumers.

Karen Toufayan, vice president of marketing and sales at Toufayan Bakeries, headquartered in Ridgefield, NJ, sees the deli section as a great fit with healthy Mediterranean foods. “They are usually natural, low in fat, and full of fresh or minimally processed, high quality ingredients,” she says. “Since the deli is a key source of these types of foods, they are a natural for deli department promotions.”

### Cross Merchandising

Deli managers can use a number of tools to help educate consumers on the health benefits of the Mediterranean Diet. One effective way is through cross merchandising. “We’re seeing a lot of big companies starting to explore recipe development using hummus as a key ingredient,” says Gacom at Hummus Plus. “Hummus has typically been just a dip or a snack item used with pretzels and vegetables. I think

if you can replace that with pita chips and flatbreads that would help, but also using hummus as an ingredient to a meal is really important.” Gacom recommends hummus as a spread in place of mayonnaise on sandwiches or in place of marinara on flatbread

pizzas. Placing these items together in the deli department inspire possibilities.

“Pita breads are perfect for stuffing in all kinds of deli salads, meats and cheeses,” says Leigh Thornberry, director of marketing for Kangaroo Brands, Inc. based in Milwaukee. “Deli-prepared salads don’t have to be a side dish,” she says. When stuffed in a pita, a salad becomes a meal.

“Flatbreads can be used as wraps,” she suggests, and are “perfect for making hot and cold pizzas. Both flatbreads and pitas are great toasted up to tear and dip in spinach dips, hummus or couscous.”

Eric Greifenberger, director of marketing for Sabra, based in White Plains, NY, sees the use of carriers as a great way to cross merchandise. “Deli managers can run cross promotions with items such as Stacy’s Pita Chips.” Greifenberger also suggests using fresh vegetables such as baby carrots as sensible cross merchandising options.

For Brion Cimino, vice president of sales for Eat Well, Embrace Life, headquartered in Austin, TX, possibilities for hummus go well past pita. “I like to pair our hummus spreads with rotisserie chicken and pita bread. There is nothing better than a rotis-

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# RISE OF THE OLIVES

**A resurgence in sales at the deli counter has changed marketing tactics**

BY KEITH LORIA

**E**mbracing the centuries-old Mediterranean diet, many consumers are shifting their lifestyles to smaller meals, healthier ingredients and simpler preparations, which has led to olives enjoying more and more space in the delis over the years.

Brandon Gross, vice president of marketing for FoodMatch, Inc., based in New York City, feels the rise in olive sales can be attributed to a generational change in the way people approach food and one that will be at the forefront of our culture for a long while.

"To satisfy that, we will continue to see growth in our core products like Kalamata olives, roasted tomatoes, artichokes, mushrooms, tapenades, etc.," he says. "In addition, we will grow our line with more variety: new flavors, spices, combinations of ingredients, etc. that allow consumers to make simple, nutritious Mediterranean meals at home. The real trend, if there is one, is that people want more variety and it's up to us to identify and source it."

Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director for George DeLallo Co., based in Jeannette, PA, predicts that next year's trends will include more antipasto and salads that include popular flavors from Mediterranean cuisine, as well as olives particular to specific regions within olive producing countries.

"Best sellers always start with the Greek Kalamata, but consumers are more willing to try different antipasti composed of vegetables and flavors unique to countries and their cuisine," says Pozzuto. "Olives are incredible ingredients whose bold flavors shine in a number of cuisines."

Dan Kelly, vice president of sales for the Musco Family Olive Company, headquartered in Tracy, CA, says trends in olives are all about offering solutions for the busy, on-the-go consumer seeking a healthful, ready to eat, no-mess snack.

"Musco Family Olive Company's Pearls brand currently makes the only brine-less, portable, ready-to-enjoy, single-serve, portioned olive cup in four different options: black ripe, black ripe sliced, pimiento stuffed green, and Kalamata olives," he says. "When we think of olives in the grocery store, we think of cans and jars on the grocery shelf. When we think of olives in the deli, we think of the olive bar. What we offer captures consumers who love olives, but may not want to buy from the olive bar out of concern for safety or cleanliness, or of not wanting to purchase so many olives, or they don't want the brine and oil mess."

## What's Popular?

Industry insiders note that as far as the olive bar is concerned, imported olives are vital to a bar's selection, accounting for the majority of olives sold at the deli.

"In general, U.S. consumers tend to prefer pitted olives to whole olives. It's simpler to serve or throw into a salad or pasta dish," says Gross. "In terms of popular varieties, we find that con-

sumers are willing to try a lot as long as it's authentically and responsibly sourced. Additionally, the raw materials should come from single-source farms where the product can be traced back to the tree it was harvested from."

Jamie Lincoln, business development at Norpaco Gourmet Foods, headquartered in Middletown, CT, notes consumers are smart enough to know the difference between an item that has artificial flavoring vs. real ingredients — so adding high quality herbs and fresh produce gives a wow factor to standard olive mixes.

"Olive mixes with fresh herbs such as thyme, rosemary and oregano, as well as olive mixtures with fresh citrus are the latest trend we see," says Lincoln. "High-quality Greek Kalamata olives and Blue Cheese-stuffed olives are olive favorites."

Imported no longer necessarily means something is fancier than a domestic counterpart. But with olives in particular, it does mean you're getting closer to the true source and origin of where these products are best and originally crafted.

"Kalamata olives should always come from Greece, Castelvetrano from Sicily, Lucques from France, and so forth," says Gross. "It's important to understand the history behind the dif-







ferent varieties so customers can make informed choices at the point of purchase and recognize true quality.”

### Merchandising Matters

Olives should be merchandised in a variety of ways including a fresh bar, behind the deli case and repacked next to cheeses or charcuterie. Gross notes that placing products in two or three locations within the store, increases the likelihood that you’ll connect to the shopper one or more times during their trip.

“Most everything can be purchased online these days so if someone is taking the time to experience the store, we have to make it worth the trip,” says Gross. “Retailers should offer recipe ideas, pairing ideas and cross merchandise olives with antipasti, charcuterie, cheese, nuts, spreads, wine and beer. Offering this added value of education and inspiration will drive sales.”

While specialty cheeses and cured meats are the best merchandising partners, DeLallo loves to inspire consumers with fun and easy ways to incorporate their favorite olives in their kitchens creations.

“Eye appeal is the number one contributor of olive bar success, so refrigerated cases and bars must be kept clean and full,” says Pozzuto. “Signage must be clear and concise. Seasonal events and eye-catching signage with recipe and pairing ideas inspire the consumer and lead to increased sales — especially to those who are looking for that night’s dinner or quick entertaining options.”

In Lincoln’s opinion, the best ways to get customers interested in olives is to point out ways they can be used in recipes, whether it is a cold pasta or potato salad, or as an ingredient in a roast.

“For example, pitted Kalamata olives stand out in a simple pasta salad for a summer picnic and roasted garlic-stuffed olives add tons of flavor when added to a chicken or pork roast,” she says.

The most impactful way to display

olives for optimum sales, Lincoln says, is to keep olives covered in brine or oil to optimize the color of the olives and to rotate product and never top it off in the olive bar.

“Sampling the olives is a wonderful way to increase sales,” she says. “Delis can prepare small cups for customers to try while waiting for their sliced deli meats.”

### Reaching The Target Consumer

Olives appeal to a broad spectrum of consumers, so isolating one group would not be ideal. The best way to reach consumers is to make a statement by positioning the bar as a destination in the deli.

“We recommend using social media and targeted marketing to reach frequent consumers or those who purchase wine, cheese, salami and specialty foods on a regular basis,” says Pozzuto. “We provide a steady flow of new and unique recipe and pairing ideas available on our website as a resource to targeted marketing for our retail partners.”

In an effort to reach people of all generations, Norpaco works with many other olive distributors to educate the customers on the product variety available.

“Educating consumers on the variety of olives and olive uses is key to gaining sales in the olive business,” says Lincoln. “Everyone tends to love olives and the increase in the business of late supports that theory.”

The target consumer for olives and antipasti is literally every shopper. The beauty of a robust olive and antipasti program is that there’s something for every taste.

Whether people are shopping for weekly meals, a big party or a small snack, this category checks the boxes of what shoppers seek.

According to Kelly, a snapshot of the olive category reveals some opportunities to increase sales.

“Research shows that both the deli olive bars, and canned black ripe and canned green olives sales are flat. However, the specialty olive category is growing and the No. 1 specialty olive is the Kalamata,” he says. “The target consumers are many — the impulse buyer, the super-snacker, the olive lover, the devotee of the Mediterranean diet, and the very important and elusive Millennial shopper.”

DB

serie chicken sandwich with our Carrot Sriracha Hummus.”

### POS Possibilities

Toufayan suggests displays and signage to highlight the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid and increase deli rings. Also, a registered dietitian can help with education and information sessions that are provided by manufacturers. “At Toufayan, we work with food influencers and registered dietitians and would love to hear from retailers about how we can help support their consumers with information. We’d love to partner in social media outreach or even on-site events.”

“MILLENNIALS ARE SO BUSY AND THEY LEAD SUCH ACTIVE LIFESTYLES THEY WANT PRODUCTS THAT MAKE THEM FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEIR FOOD CHOICE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME ARE AFFORDABLE AND CONVENIENT.”

— DAVID GACOM, HUMMUS PLUS

Cimino at Eat Well also views social media and websites as a good way to convey information to customers. “Consumers are going to retailer websites looking for deals and meal suggestions already,” he says, “so leveraging that captive audience is a great way to educate.”

### Millennials And Mediterranean

Millennials are a highly coveted demographic across all industries and the retail deli is no exception. As Gacom explains, “The Mediterranean-inspired products that are out there are huge draws to Millennials. In terms of the demographic itself, the Millennial population has now exceeded the Baby Boomers in the U.S. and their purchasing power continues to rise.” Gacom sees these young people as being very aware of labels and what they put into their bodies and how it affects them. “Millennials are so busy and they lead such active lifestyles they want products that make them feel good about their food choice, but at the same time are affordable and convenient.”

Referring to this demographic, Cimino says: “They are definitely shopping the

perimeter of the store looking for fresher options, and considering their tendencies and buying power they are key drivers of product innovation.” Developing new flavors to appeal to their adventurous yet healthful tastes is key. “Manufacturers have to continue to innovate if they want to capture their attention, which is why we launched our Beet Hummus last year. Staying ahead of the trends is key and something Eat Well Embrace Life will continue to do.”

Sabra targets Millennials in two ways according to Greifenberger. The first is with bold flavors, such as their hummus products featuring smoked paprika, pico de gallo, rosemary and sea salt. “The flavors that we are launching are perfectly suited for the Millennial tastes,” he says. The second effort is with convenience. “Millennials tend to live a more on-the-go lifestyle, so Sabra has filled this need with options including hummus singles and grab-and-go hummus with pretzels, offering a healthier, fresh snack that can be taken with you when on the go.”

“Millennials are the true demographic leaders when it comes to eating healthier,” says Toufayan. “Whether it is the non-

and sandwiches are taking center stage as trends shift from eating less to eating better to fuel your day.”

Thornberry at Kangaroo Brands sees consumers getting creative with flatbreads and developing new recipe ideas of their own. “We’re seeing the whole family get involved more in the food making expe-

warma or chicken, and they top their hummus with protein. It’s becoming a base, like rice. And there are a lot of fast casual restaurants all over the county that are starting to promote it as such.”

“Interestingly, while the U.S. market has started to embrace hummus, it is still not mainstream,” says Cimino at Eat Well, “and it certainly hasn’t caught up to the usage habits of the Middle East, where it is used more as a condiment and placed on almost everything. I believe that as hummus in the U.S. becomes even more of a household item, we will see a wider range of usage, but it is our job to also educate and help foster that alternative usage.”

Greifenberger has noticed a similar trend with Sabra. “Our more involved consumers are also spreading hummus on toast and on sandwiches, instead of using mayo. We’re also seeing our products used as a flavor enhancer in a main dish. We already have innovation in the pipeline to address the behaviors we see emerging.”

“While consumers want to eat healthy, they also seek convenience and foods that are portable for meals on the run,” says Toufayan. “Pita and flatbreads offer both convenience and portability and are wonderful complements to the Mediterranean foods consumers are seeking. Deli managers should communicate how easy and convenient it is to enjoy the taste and healthfulness of a Mediterranean Diet with the foods and breads offered in the deli section.”

**DB**



## // PITA AND FLATBREADS OFFER BOTH CONVENIENCE AND PORTABILITY AND ARE WONDERFUL COMPLEMENTS TO THE MEDITERRANEAN FOODS CONSUMERS ARE SEEKING. //

— KAREN TOUFAYAN, TOUFAYAN BAKERY

GMO revolution, the appeal of ancient and sprouted grains, the broad scale acceptance of organic foods or the appeal of gluten-free foods, they have been a catalyst making these types of food attributes a trend.” Toufayan has stayed current by developing products such as gluten-free pita chips that are non-GMO certified and vegan; organic sprouted whole wheat pita; and an all-natural sprouted grain Smart Pocket.

### Unique Eating Trends

As eating habits increasingly focus on health and convenience, consumers are devising new ways to incorporate Mediterranean food into their diets. “We’re seeing consumers enjoying our products all day, not for just lunch,” says Toufayan. “Healthy breakfast wraps

and rice bowls are taking center stage as trends shift from eating less to eating better to fuel your day.”

Hummus Plus has done extensive research in an attempt to discover how people interact with food, says Gacom. “We travel the world and we’ve seen how traditional Mediterranean cultures eat and we imported that over to the retail space with Hummus Plus.”

What Gacom has noticed is how ubiquitous hummus has become. It has gone beyond a simple dip. “We’re getting inspiration from the foodservice industry, specifically the fast casual restaurants that are using hummus as a base for meals. So if you go to the Mediterranean, whether it’s Turkey or Lebanon or Israel, in that geography, what they’re doing is serving a ton of different protein on a platter, whether it be pork or sha-





# THE LATEST IN APPETIZERS

## How retailers can move more starters at the deli

BY KEITH LORIA

One of the staples of deli sales over the years has been tried and true appetizers, and over the last few years, there have been a hoard of new offerings that are targeting consumers of all ages in the category. Today's appetizer options include more healthy choices, an increase in distinct flavors and foods to satisfy any and all nationalities.

Appetizers can be anything you put out to snack on before dinner — from hummus to stuffed grape leaves to crudité to salsa, to deviled eggs, smoked fish, small franks, and even salsa and chips.

Alexandra Groezinger Tierney, director of marketing for Alexian Pâté & Specialty Meats, headquartered in Neptune, NJ, believes consumers are curious and also price conscious, and most would prefer to try before they buy — especially in the specialty foods category, which encompasses many different types of appetizers and hors d'oeuvres, as price points trend higher than regular grocery items.

"Sampling product gives the consumer the opportunity to try the product first, gather recipe ideas or serving suggestions,

and sometimes a coupon for the item," she says. "Running a promotion in tandem with a sampling program opens the opportunity for trial and often leads to the sale."

Eric Greifenberger, director of marketing for Sabra Dipping Company, headquartered in White Plains, NY, says the fresh dips category is one of the fastest growing within deli, which includes all categories — hummus, guacamole, salsa and Greek yogurt dips.

"Dips and spreads are providing on-trend solutions for consumers who are looking for a better way to snack," he says, adding, "and consumers are starting to figure out fresh dips like hummus are versatile enough to work for social gatherings with friends, or everyday pre-dinner snacks with the family. They are looking for a self defined better-for-you option that also tastes great. So the products and brands that can deliver both perform best."

While product categories tend to perform relatively the same across regions, some flavor preferences are definitely regional.

"Consumers tend to gravitate to different flavors in the Southwest versus the Northeast," says Greifenberger, citing the

popularity of the company's Supremely Spicy flavor in one region and the performance of Luscious Lemon elsewhere in the country. "Favorites like Roasted Pine Nut or Roasted Red Pepper perform well universally."

Tierney says while healthier items are trending, indulgent products will never go out of style.

"Humans have an innate need to indulge once in a while, especially during the holidays when enjoying the celebratory season and downtime with family and friends," she says.

### Convenience Is Key

With life moving so quickly nowadays, the consumer craves convenience. Big supermarkets are changing the way they do business and revamping offerings.

Tierney notes many retailers are creating destinations, with offerings that include on-the-go items such as hot and cold food bars, prepackaged sandwiches and sushi, brick oven pizza stations, juice bars, and sometimes craft beer or wine bars. And to add to the convenience factor, some stores are even building in exercise facilities.

Jessica Brown, director of marketing at Yucatan Foods, based in Los Angeles, agrees convenience is key to successful appetizer sales.

"Consumers preparing a meal want an appetizer to be convenient yet, delicious and unique," she says. "Hosts also want to give their guests something that appears homemade but does not take a lot of time to create. Yucatan created simple recipes that give consumers the ability to quickly prepare a unique appetizer by adding three simple ingredients to a tub of our guacamole."

### Merchandising Tactics

Just listing appetizer specials above the deli is not enough to attract customers — especially Millennials, who are often too distracted by their phones to look up.

"Delis can communicate convenient appetizers in stores through signage and recipe cards, as well as through coupon programs that link like items that make up convenient appetizers," says Brown. "Get the word out and make it known throughout the store."

When it comes to cross merchandising, while super creative pairings can be

## “DELIS CAN COMMUNICATE CONVENIENT APPETIZERS IN STORES THROUGH SIGNAGE AND RECIPE CARDS, AS WELL AS THROUGH COUPON PROGRAMS THAT LINK LIKE ITEMS THAT MAKE UP CONVENIENT APPETIZERS.” — JESSICA BROWN, YUCATAN FOODS

fun, be sure the pairing makes sense to the consumer.

"It is best to cross merchandise products that are complementary and understood by the consumer," says Tierney. "In either case, a sampling program is always a great approach, as it allows for an opportunity to convey specific messaging about the brands, products, and their relationship, as well as the opportunity for free trial."

Sabra's Greifenberger says deli managers can move more product by leveraging cross promotions with carriers such as pita chips and fresh veggies from the produce area.

"Another great option is thinking about cross promotions outside of deli for appetizer moments, such as a wine or beer partnership that helps solve shopper needs based on the trip mission they're on, like preparing for a casual get-together or

holiday," he says. "Sabra is working to help educate consumers and show how hummus can provide a fresher way of snacking."

For example, the pre-dinner occasion where people tend to bridge the gap with unhealthy options, Sabra's helping consumers connect the dots by putting fresh vegetables and Sabra out on the table, which helps enhance any pre-meal snacking occasion with a fresh way of eating.

Other items such as fresh veggies from the produce department — including baby carrots, small peppers or pre sliced options — are also excellent cross-merchandising options for shoppers seeking fresh veggies as carriers for their dipping occasions.

"Secondary displays will also encourage impulse purchases that often bring new consumers into the category," says Greifenberger. "Showcasing fresh dips like hummus shows consumers they are a wonderful option for healthy snacking."

### Impact Of Foodservice Trends

Appetizers are gaining ground in restaurants as Americans change the way they eat out, and that is crossing over to retail as well, with an increase in mini meal kits and snack kits.

"Kits with fresh dips and carriers are growing in popularity as a reflection of what's happening at the restaurant level," says Greifenberger. "Many households are also not eating the typical three meals a day, and sometimes eating smaller portions and tapas style meals more frequently throughout the day."

Sabra's new campaign targets these consumers, naming the Unofficial Meal as the time between school or work and dinner, when you're looking to eat a little something before dinner.

Numerous deli experts say running promotions in tandem with a sampling program seems to be the most successful. When a consumer has the opportunity to try a product and get a few cents off if they decide to buy it, it creates incentive. The first step to building a loyal customer is trial, and sampling creates this opportunity.

DB





# CHEESE'S FAVORITE PARTNER



## Get sales of crackers 'cracking' in the deli

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER

**C**rackers — traditionally thin, crisp, savory, bite-sized flatbreads — have enjoyed staple status in the American diet for more than two centuries. The manufacturing of crackers, in fact, was one of the nation's first food businesses.

It all started in 1801 when Massachusetts baker Josiah Bent discovered that when he put his new bread invention into a hot oven it made a crackling sound. Hence, the "cracker" was born, according to the 2012-published Oxford Encyclopedia of Food & Drink in America.

Fast forward, crackers today come in a variety of styles, sizes and seasonings. What's more, crackers make up the larg-

est, at three-fourths (74.8 percent), of deli snack sales according to the Madison, WI-headquartered International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's What's in Store 2016.

Why sell crackers in the deli when the grocery aisle is full of name-brand favorites? Two reasons.

First, shoppers are drawn into the deli because they are looking for something special, according to Elizabeth Schwartz, director of sales for John Wm. Macy's CheeseSticks, Inc., the Elmwood Park, NJ-based manufacturer of twice-baked namesake-branded CheeseCrisps and CheeseSticks. "This includes shoppers who want something to pair with their

favorite gourmet cheese on an ongoing basis or those who want something unique to serve at or bring to a party."

Secondly, crackers can boost the deli ring.

"It has only made sense to provide an accompaniment as more gourmet cheeses, dips and spreads emerged in the deli," says Kim Holman, marketing director at TH Foods, Inc., the Loves Park, IL-headquartered manufacturer and marketer of Crunchmaster and Harvest Stone specialty cracker brands. "Crackers in the deli drive incremental sales and a greater dollar ring. When you provide 'carrier crackers' that can partner with cheese, dips and spreads, you invite the consumer to

purchase a bundle of products instead of just one.

### Taste Trends

Demand for natural, healthy ingredients and less-processed food has sky-rocketed, according to the U.S. Food Industry Update, released in April 2016, by Tully & Holland, Inc., a Wellesley, MA-based investment bank that works with food companies.

"Consumers are looking for better-for-you crackers and want to know specifically why it is better. Key on-pack claims that are trending are: non-GMO project verified, organic, gluten-free, non-allergen and grain, protein and fiber claims, as well. Consumers also want new and interesting healthful ingredients like hemp, teff, matcha and chia just to name a few. That's what makes our Multi-Seed Original and Multi-Grain Sea Salt, which are both gluten-free, best-sellers in the deli," says Holman.

Ancient grains ranked as the 15th hottest food trend of 2016 according to the National Restaurant Association's "What's Hot" survey of nearly 1,600 professional chefs nationwide. These grains,

**CONSUMERS ARE LOOKING FOR BETTER-FOR-YOU CRACKERS AND WANT TO KNOW SPECIFICALLY WHY IT IS BETTER. KEY ON-PACK CLAIMS THAT ARE TRENDING ARE: NON-GMO PROJECT VERIFIED, ORGANIC, GLUTEN-FREE, NON-ALLERGEN AND GRAIN, PROTEIN AND FIBER CLAIMS, AS WELL.** -- KIM HOLMAN OF TH FOODS, INC.

including amaranth, quinoa, millet, sorghum and teff, are used in the manufacture of recently introduced Free for All Kitchen crackers, produced by Partners, A Taste-ful Choice Company, in Kent, WA.

"Free for All Kitchen crackers are made from a blend of five ancient grains and cassava flour," says Cara Figgins, vice president. "They are lightly salted and are made without rice, corn or soy, which are common ingredients in other gluten-free crackers. Free for All Kitchen crackers are upscale gourmet, taste great, pair exceptionally well with cheeses, dips and spreads and can be served to all guests or family members without concern for having to

buy multiple types of cracker products."

Food preparations that feature bold, spicy and ethnic flavors are something we can expect to see more of, according to Salty Snacks in the U.S., 4th Edition, released by Rockville, MD-headquartered market research firm, Packaged Facts, on February 26, 2016.

"As long as we can deliver these types of flavors as part of our product offering, while maintaining our goal of trying to provide a 'healthier' snack alternative, we believe consumers will love our new snack Bites," says Paul Pigott, owner of La Panzanella Artisanal Foods Co., in Tukwila, WA. "We used our best-selling Croccan-

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tini cracker as the base and seasoned them with the flavors that hit on those trends; Italian Herb, Sundried Tomato with Basil, and Spicy Olive.”

#### Four Deli Selling Ideas

1. Front, Center and Demo. “If you only have one or two packages of crackers out, they are going to get lost on the shelf and shoppers won’t see them. A nice display is key,” says James Anderko, national sales manager for Venus Wafers, the Hingham, MA-based manufacturer of Mariner-brand Stoned Wheat crackers. “Place cracker displays adjacent to cheese to instantly create that association in shoppers’ minds. Or use them actively or passively to demo cheese and other deli products. Many customers won’t buy a cracker that retails for \$3.99 to \$4.99 unless they know they like it.”

2. One-Stop Shop. “Crackers positioned with cheeses and meats have an advantage over those in the grocery aisle, because they are set-up to be the deli’s one-stop snacking/entertaining solution. As long as they are positioned so that consumers can make an easy decision, they will buy the crackers in the deli rather than heading over to another part of the store,” says Partners’ Figgins.

One-stop locations help shoppers to see everything they need to create upscale mini-meal solutions, appetizers and/or a party platter at home.

“This opportunity to visualize leads shoppers to identify things that may not have been on their list or top of mind to



PHOTO COURTESY OF MACY’S

begin with,” explains Steve Lorenz, director of marketing for La Panzanella. “Also, knowledgeable deli staff can educate the customer about what cheeses work best with particular crackers and therefore encourage a broader mix of products and flavors.”

3. Great Gatherings. “Cracker sales peak around holidays that coincide with gatherings with friends and family. Examples include Easter, Mother’s Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s. Beyond these, shoppers seek out crackers anytime they want to enjoy cheeses and charcuterie such as at summer concerts and fall tailgating,” says Lorenz.

Delis can position crackers for sale for these occasions by enabling customers to order online or on their phone and pick up a completed deli platter that includes the cracker component. “Beyond this, offering ways for customers to order-shop-pick up their platter in-store is another great opportunity to promote the various cheeses, meats and crackers the deli carries,” says Lorenz.

4. In- and Out-of-the-Box Promotions. “Tie-ins are a great way to promote crackers. For example, advertise \$1 off on a box of crackers when customers buy a particular hummus, spread or perhaps a sliced Brie. Or, put crackers on sale at a 20 to 40 percent discount off the regular price.”

To promote its crackers in a more novel fashion, Venus Wafers has packaged the newly introduced bite-sized version of its Nejaime’s Lavash Crisp Flatbreads in 1.5-ounce giveaway bags to be used as samples.

“Some of our retail accounts host community events like 5K runs. Our crackers are great to hand out at these events because they are 100 percent whole-grain, certified organic and non-GMO,” says Anderko. “In addition, we gave one deli manager 300 bags for a store grand opening. He put the crackers and other deli product samples into gift bags. Then, he advertised that the first 300 customers that visited the deli the day of the store’s grand opening would get one of these bags. It was a great way for him to ultimately sell more crackers and other deli products too.”

**DB**



# FOOD SAFETY UPDATE: Survival Tips For Retailers

BY CHARLIE KALISH, CO-FOUNDER AND MANAGING MEMBER OF FOOD SAFETY GUIDES

**A**n increasing number of local and state agencies are training inspectors to enforce the requirement that retailers packaging food in reduced oxygen packaging (ROP) have a special food safety plan, called a HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) plan.

What are the food safety risks associated with ROP?

ROP foods are at risk of food safety hazards conventionally packaged foods are not. For example, when oxygen is removed from the bag, aerobic spoilage organisms cannot grow, which means we no longer benefit from those tell-tale signs of stink, slime and discoloration that indicate to us that the food is not safe to eat. In fact, a vacuum packaged food can look fine and still be toxigenic.

By removing spoilage organisms, we also eliminate competition for nutrients, which gives an advantage to pathogens that can survive in low- or zero-oxygen conditions. Cooking has the same effect. It may succeed in eliminating all of the vegetative pathogens in the stock, but may be insufficient to destroy spores, which are capable of surviving cooking temperatures. Once the bagged food cools, the spores can develop into cells and reproduce without any competition (or for that matter, signs of spoilage).

## What Pathogens Are Regulators Concerned About?

Many pathogens are capable of growing in a reduced oxygen environment, and are likely to grow if the food is temperature

abused. However, only two pathogens are capable of growing in ROP conditions at temperatures below 41 degrees F: *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) and *Clostridium botulinum* (C. bot).

At refrigerated temperatures, Lm and C. bot grow slowly. But vacuum packaging is typically used to extend shelf-life, which means plenty of time is available for these pathogens to proliferate. Sous vide and cook-chill processing has the potential to accelerate growth by incubating Lm and C. bot as well as clearing the field of competing microorganisms. Consequently, these two pathogens are the FDA Food Code's main pathogens of concern for all ROP processes.

## Quick Profile: *Listeria Monocytogenes*

*Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) are salt-tolerant, non-spore-forming bacteria that lead to Listeriosis, a serious infection that is one of the leading causes of death due to foodborne illness in the United States. Infection with Lm results in one of two illnesses: (1) non-invasive gastrointestinal illness, which generally resolves in otherwise healthy people; and (2) the much more serious, invasive form of the illness, which may cause septicemia and meningitis. The elderly and persons with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable to severe health consequences, including death, as a result of infection with *Listeria*. Pregnant women also need to be wary of *Listeria* as one-third of confirmed cases of maternal-fetal L. monocytogenes infections lead to abortion or stillbirth.

Lm is ubiquitous in the environment, so anytime food contacts a surface in the retail environment prior to vacuum packaging, a risk exists that Lm could be introduced into the food. Foods that are at elevated risk of Lm contamination include deli meats (including bits left on improperly cleaned meat slicers), smoked fish and fresh and soft unpasteurized cheeses.

Lm is capable of growing at freezing temperatures (as low as 32 degrees F) and has been linked to major outbreaks involving ice cream.

## *Clostridium Botulinum*

*Clostridium botulinum* (C. bot) is the causative agent of botulism, a severe food poisoning characterized by double vision,

## WHAT IS REDUCED OXYGEN PACKAGING?

The term reduced oxygen packaging (ROP), as defined by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), refers to any packaging procedure that causes a reduced oxygen level in a sealed package.

This includes:

- Sucking the oxygen directly out of the bag prior to sealing (e.g. vacuum packaging, sous vide)
- Cooking the oxygen out of the product prior to packaging (e.g. cook-chill)
- Replacing the oxygen with another type of gas (a process known as modified atmosphere packaging or MAP)

By definition, packaging is considered ROP if the oxygen level inside the package falls below the surrounding atmospheric oxygen, or 21 percent.



## USING THE FDA FOOD CODE

While the FDA Food Code only provides a “model” food code and thus serves only as a recommendation to local and state public health agencies, most states choose to adopt it in some form. According to the 2009 FDA Food Code, “49 of 50 states and 3 of 6 territories of the United States report having retail codes patterned after prior editions of the Food Code.”

Not all agencies have adopted the 2013 version of the Food Code (which has different ROP requirements than previous versions), so you will need to check with your local or state agency as to which Food Code recommendations they will accept. For the purpose of this article, all ROP-related regulations are cited from the 2013 FDA Food Code unless otherwise noted.

paralysis, and occasionally, death. A spore-forming bacteria that produces a deadly neurotoxin, it grows only under anaerobic (oxygen-free) conditions and is commonly associated with fish products and improperly canned low acid foods, though it can contaminate other foods.

*C. bot* spores are capable of surviving cooking temperatures, making it a major concern for cook-chill and sous vide foods. Certain strains of *C. bot* (type E and nonproteolytic types B and F) are capable of growing at temperatures as low as 38 degrees F.

### When A HACCP Plan Isn't Required For ROP Foods

According to the 2013 FDA Food Code Section 3-502.12, a HACCP Plan is not required for the following ROP processes at retail:

- ROP that involves only non-TCS (time/temperature control for safety) foods. For example, vacuum packaging dry goods, such as dry salt or wheat flour, does not currently require a HACCP plan.
- When ROP is limited to only vacuum-packaged TCS foods that are:
  - ♦ Labeled with the production time and date
  - ♦ Held at 5 degrees C (41 degrees F) or less during refrigerated storage
  - ♦ Removed from its package in the food establishment within 48 hours after packaging

Some departments do not require a HACCP plan for food that is cooked sous vide “as a cooking step only,” i.e. the food is bagged, cooked, and then removed immediately from the packaging prior to storage or further processing. While this exemption would appear the same as the 48-hour rule noted above, not all departments agree.

Important: If planning on engaging in any of the above ROP activities, do not assume that you are exempt from the HACCP requirement as health departments often adopt and enforce rules differently. My recommendation is that before engaging in any ROP operation, check with your regulatory authority to confirm which operations require a HACCP plan and which do not. You may get different answers from different inspectors in the same department, so make sure you ask the proper authority.

### So I Need A HACCP Plan, What Are Next Steps?

#### 1. Contact the department responsible for reviewing the plan.

In some states and localities, the health department has developed a checklist dictating what you need to address in your

plan. They may even help you draft the plan by providing written feedback or talking to you on the phone. We recommend starting out by opening lines of communication with your health department (if possible) and doing whatever you can to find out what you need to do in order for your facility to comply before investing in training and the plan development process.

#### 2. Pick your team wisely and get involved in the process

Turnover is a serious problem for retail HACCP, which is one big reason why you should never assign only one person to write the HACCP plan. You could spend thou-

sands of dollars in training and overtime, only to send your best employee to your competitors, and be left with a HACCP plan that nobody understands. To prevent major setbacks, we recommend that ownership, or at least reliable employees who will likely stick around long-term, get involved in plan development, even if HACCP seems outside his or her wheelhouse.

#### 3. Get HACCP trained (be selective)

Most HACCP trainings are geared toward processors, not retailers. While the principles of HACCP are the same, the training will cost you two days and hundreds of dollars and much of the information will not be applicable. If possible, find an ROP HACCP training program or vetted consultant that focuses on retail ROP HACCP. The consultant should have a bulletproof pass rate with a demanding health department (e.g. California, Nevada, New York).

#### 4. Set a development timeline and stick to it

Rome wasn't built in a day, and your HACCP plan won't be either. Depending on the complexity of your plan, development can last eight weeks to a year. If you have trouble sizing up how long it will take to write your plan, contact a consultant and get projections. Teams often make many mistakes in their first go around, so you could actually save money by hiring someone who has been through the process before.

#### 5. Use real-time productivity tools

The best way to streamline HACCP development is to use real-time productivity tools that allow teams to collaborate in documents in real-time and insert diagrams without creating formatting superstorms. For this reason, platforms like Google Apps for Work and Office 365 are ideal for HACCP development. These tools are cheap and business-grade. Once you start using them, you'll wonder how you ever managed without them.

#### 6. Be committed to your plan

Once you have developed your plan and it is approved by the proper authority, it's your job to implement the plan and keep it up to date. In many ways, implementation is harder than writing the plan. Creating a culture that embraces the plan, and is committed to continuous improvement, is the only way to ensure it is carried out effectively.

DB

<sup>1</sup>CDC *Estimates of Foodborne Illness in the United States*. Feb. 2011. <http://www.cdc.gov/foodborneburden/2011-foodborne-estimates.html>

<sup>2</sup>*Bad Bug Book*. Food and Drug Administration. 2nd Edition. p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup>2013 FDA Food Code. Annex 6. p. 625.

# SALADS AND SIDES GO SPICIER, MORE ETHNIC



## Millennials definitely want more ‘flavorable,’ healthier foods

BY BARRY SPARKS

Salads and sides are getting spicier and more ethnic as consumers continue to expand their palates with global flavors from Latin America and Asia.

“Bold flavors are here to stay, and it’s beyond chipotle and curry,” says John Becker of Sandridge Food Corporation, Medina, OH. “Even legacy products

are taking on new twists, such as Mexican-style coleslaw and chipotle-flavored mac and cheese.”

Foodies between the ages of 16 to 36 are the tastemakers when it comes to what we eat, according to Millennial Marketing, the content hub of FutureCast, a consultancy specializing in Millennials. They consider food an adventure and 40

percent seek out different ethnic and artisan foods. Food trends tend to start with younger groups and move up the generational ladder.

“Millennials definitely want more ‘flavorable’ foods,” says Jeff Siegel, owner and chief executive of Farm Ridge Foods, using a Millennial term. “They like layered flavors, and they crave spicy, hot items.”





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Although this group may be driving the trend to spicier, more ethnic salads and sides, it doesn't mean older consumers can't be coaxed along for the ride.

"Many Baby Boomers are reluctant to try some new foods because they are unsure of its heat level," points out Becker. "We recently worked with a retail partner on an Indian-inspired limited time offer product. We created special store signage to designate the heat level of each of the

**ACCORDING TO RECENT DATA FROM  
THE U.S. CENSUS DEPARTMENT, THERE ARE  
CURRENTLY 83.1 MILLION YOUNG AMERICANS  
WHO WERE BORN BETWEEN 1980 AND 2000,  
WHO SPEND \$600 BILLION EACH YEAR.**

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recipes, so the consumer's hesitation to try a new recipe was reduced."

According to industry leaders, some of the more popular and growing specialty salads and sides include: lentil dal, saag paneer, farro salad, tropical quinoa, sweet and spicy quinoa, Persian rice, vegetarian falafel, Mediterranean orzo salad, orecchiette with vegetables, seafood salad, Italian chickpeas, Moroccan couscous, tabbouleh salad, ancient grain pilaf, kimchee and other fermented and pickled recipes.

"Salads featuring whole grains and ancient grains have caught the imagination of consumers," says Mark Miller of Simply Fresh Foods, a company based in Buena Park, CA.

#### **Millennials Represent Growth**

While traditional salads and sides, such as potato salad, mac and cheese and coleslaw, still make up the bulk of deli sales, it's not an area of growth, according to Jim Gawronski of Garden Fresh Foods in Milwaukee. "We need to grow new consumers for the deli," he says.

Millennials represent that growth area. According to recent data from the U.S. Census Department, there are currently 83.1 million young Americans who were born between 1980 and 2000, who spend \$600 billion each year. That amount is expected to increase to \$1.4 trillion over the next four years, representing 30 percent of all retail sales in the country.

"We are working very hard to understand the purchasing behavior of Millennials and their flavor profile," says Gawronski. "The big question is how do we lure them into the store?"

That's a challenge because Millennials tend to make the majority of their food purchases in retail outlets other than traditional grocery stores, according to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's in Store 2016 report. Giving this group what they want, however, is a strong magnet.





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"Consumers seek three things from salads and sides — convenience; flavor and taste; and health and wellness," says Carl Cappelli of the Schwenksville, PA-based Don's Food Products. "Millennials definitely want all three, and they are driving the trends."

In addition to spicier, more ethnic salads and sides, Millennials favor organic and clean labels. Health-halo callouts such as "local," "natural," "authentic" and "premium" also influence their food-buying decisions, according to Technomic's Generation Consumer Trend Report.

"You can no longer offer mystery sides, where customers don't know the ingredients," says Bob Sewall of Blount Fine Foods, located in Falls River, MA. "Now, it's organic and clean label."

Cappelli says innovative new items need to be consistently introduced to meet



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consumer needs in flavor and freshness. Don's Food Products introduced five new grain items in 2014 and has 38 clean label products.

"We need to show customers we care about them by offering better quality, healthier foods," says Sewall. He says cus-

tomers are willing to spend more for high quality, healthier foods, and it's an opportunity to attract new customers.

#### Trend Is To Elevate Quality

The trend is to elevate the quality of salads and sides.

"If consumers are buying ABF (antibiotic-free) Angus beef, why wouldn't they purchase organic sides?" asks Sewall. "The sides are a fraction of the cost of the ABF Angus beef. Higher cost protein needs organic sides."

ads and sides with their eyes, Cappelli suggests putting more sides, particularly colorful, eye-popping grain salads, behind the deli glass. He also suggests giving customers ideas of how to use salads and sides as components of a complete meal by presenting plating combinations, much like in foodservice. He recommends putting a row of organic sides next to rotisserie chicken or ABF Angus beef.

Packaging meal deals is a popular, effective marketing tool. "Restaurants are offering more meal deals, and delis need

**RESTAURANTS ARE OFFERING MORE MEAL DEALS, AND DELIS NEED TO REMEMBER THEY ARE COMPETING WITH RESTAURANTS, NOT OTHER GROCERY STORES.**

— BOB SEAWALL, BLOUNT FINE FOODS

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Becker of Sandridge Food Corporation says consumers are looking for balance in their food products, so simpler, less processed items are in higher demand. "Whether gluten-free products, no high-fructose corn syrup, or items high in protein, people are paying attention to what's in the food they eat," he says.

With the demand for higher quality and healthier food, salads and sides are fairly easy add-on purchases. They also create an opportunity to upsell to consumers.

Since consumers often purchase sal-

ads to remember they are competing with restaurants, not other grocery stores," says Sewall.

He suggests offering a rotisserie chicken, three sides and a 2-liter bottle of Coke as a meal deal.

"People are willing to pay for a complete meal," says Miller of Simply Fresh Foods. "We are seeing more pairing of sides and salads with entrees. It makes it easy for the Mom who wants to feed her family healthy, high quality foods, but doesn't have the time to prepare the meal."





Becker says many retailers are following restaurant leads by offering limited time offer concepts to grab incremental sales. "It requires planning and execution, but it keeps departments fresh and relevant, as well as providing a method to test new items," he says. "In store-demonstrations are the best to gain shopper trial in new products and allow them to taste a product before committing to buy it."

### Use Social Media

Writing for Millennial Marketing, John Fecteau advocates using social media to market to Millennials while they are shopping. A recent study shows 40 percent of Millennials are still checking their social media accounts while in the store.

"Stores can take advantage of this constant connection through beacon-triggered technology, which uses a Bluetooth device to identify shoppers who are within a specified proximity to a certain location," writes Fecteau. "Once a retailer knows that information, it can trigger special deals or product bursts to be sent — ensuring Millennials receive an extra order or discount at a time when they are most likely to buy."

Other marketing techniques include holiday promotions, ethnic themes, salad of the month and introduction of new products.

One often overlooked marketing effort tends to be the training of deli personnel to sell new products, according to Siegel of Farm Ridge Foods, located in Islandia, NY.

"Staff members should be trained to make suggestions," he says. "It's extremely important they have product knowledge of the ingredients, how the product tastes and its attributes. You need commitment at the store level, and execution is key."

The continued rise of network and cable food programming has made consumers more comfortable with trying new types of cuisines and flavors.

"Customers may not want to experiment with making a diverse recipe at home,

but uncommon ingredients and worldwide flavors that have been demonstrated by well-known chefs remove the stigma of trying new dishes," stresses Becker.

Miller foresees the day when grocery stores may have a chef, and perhaps a nutritionist, on the premise to advise and educate customers.

"Delis need to step up their game by offering quality, convenience and healthy products," says Sewall. "If not, they will get left behind."

**DB**

## FRESHNESS IS PRIORITY

**F**reshness is more important than ever. Eighty-four percent of Millennials say freshness is likely to influence their food and beverage purchases, with 41 percent saying they will pay more for freshness, according to Millennial Marketing.

Hip, eco-friendly packaging also enhances the appeal of food products for Millennials.

"Freshness is a priority to consumers," says Jeff Lucash of Placon, a Madison, WI-based company. "Consumers want good tasting, fresh food that is quickly available."

Lucash says there has been a dramatic increase in the sales of pre-packaged sal-

ads and sides as grab-and-go items.

PET (polyethylene terephthalate) containers keep products fresher longer. PET is a natural barrier that controls oxygen transmission. PET containers also can be recycled to reuse the material they are made of and to reduce the amount of waste going into landfills.

"Retailers have moved strongly toward PET materials," says Lucash. "It extends a product's shelf life, and it leaves a much smaller environmental footprint."

He says more retailers are asking for lid options, and, as a result, lid film packaging has become more popular.

— Barry Sparks



# The International Intrigue Of Feta



## On trend but with a 6,000 year history

BY BEN NARASIN

A specific cheese can instantly bring to mind an association: often of a place, region, country or dish. Raclette can evoke thoughts of the snow-dipped mountains and hearth warmed chalets of Switzerland. Stilton can bring to mind the holiday season in England, with a glass of port to greet guests. And Manchego is as definitive of Spanish cheese as any, both in the States and in the tapas spots throughout Spain. Some cheeses even take on, rightly or wrongly, the name of a place of supposed origin: Swiss cheese, not actually Swiss and American cheese, not actually cheese, come immediately to mind.

And so it is with Feta. For many Feta is definitively Greek: white and sharp with the tang of sheep's milk and touched with residual traces of salt brine. The association is likely strengthened by the fact Feta is so often incorporated into a salad of similarly place named specificity — a Greek salad.

Feta clearly rings Greek to many, but that simple association is being challenged: legally, culturally and economically, in ways that bring Feta's pedigree into a questioning spotlight like never before.

For all the countless varieties of cheese in the world, cheese itself is made up of easily countable ingredients: milk, cultures, rennet and salt. What makes each cheese distinct is the recipe for creating it: the way it is made and aged, the type or types of milk used and the culture that activates the process of transmutation from liquid to solid. Each cheese, with only four ingredients, is after all at its root and variance, a recipe.

The influence of local geography can significantly impact the ingredients and the recipes' end product. Most cheese-makers generally believe cheese has terroir, the unique sense of place, just as wine does. The specific foliage the animals graze on, the weather, the microbiological elements and everything else that influences a place, also influences the products produced there.

### A Product Of Place

Greek Feta is a product of its place. Cheese has always been



a historic store of excess milk and the milk used historically was the milk available in the region. It is a simple white cheese made, in its original form, predominantly of sheep's milk but with a portion of goat's milk as well. The milk choice traces to the reality of the islands and land, which provide more rock than pasture and conditions generally favorable to sheep but not particularly hospitable to cows. Goats were brought in to help tend the olive trees by eating the bottom branches, which prevents total destruction of the tree during brush fires by eliminating the self-starting kindling-like lower branches.

Today Feta is proudly marked as either sheep, or goat or even cow. While occasionally sold dry, pre crumbled or with herbs added, traditional Feta is stored in a salt-water brine as a natural preservative. While oft forgotten, the brine is meant to be rinsed off before serving, and Feta, which does not melt, is primarily used as a condiment-like additive versus a slicing or melting cheese. Beyond Greek salads, simple salads of diced cucumbers and tomatoes, or freshly roasted beets, amended with Feta and olive oil, make delicious simple and healthy meals or sides.

But while the recipe we know as Feta brings Greece to mind, does Greece in fact own its origins, and should Greece be able to protect, in essence own, the name most associated with the recipe? The rec-



ties to place of origin, season, and method is no less debatable than the same concept in wine, but when one claims the exclusive title, through claimed origin, the argument becomes a more contentious one.

In the case of Feta there is not a claim that there is a region specific to the product within the country, as a place of origin in the traditional sense historically offered to food products unique to a subregion of a country like the Champagne or Sauternes

established, requires only product made in the region certified to be able to carry the product name. According to the European Commission it introduced the concept and process in 1992 "in an attempt to harmonize the protection of food products at EU level and to bring clarity to the market and protect the interests of producers and consumers." With a centralized EU comprised of previously disharmonious, or even warring, nation-states, the attempt to standardize whom can lay claim to what, food-wise or anything-wise, seems a daunting task.

And it has been just that in the case of Feta. The EU granted PDO status defining Feta as Greek in 2002 only after 16 years of court battles with Germany and Denmark, which wanted to use the name on cheeses produced in the same form in their countries, not due to claims of origin, but for claims of economic harm and historical use of the name.

### A 6,000-Year History

The more interesting, and more deep-seated and relevant claims, are those that Feta was not born in Greece at all. While Turkey has opinions on this issue, as it seems to have on all things Greek due to their long and acrimonious history, the strongest heritage based claim comes from Bulgaria, which claims to have been the original source of Feta, but Bulgaria did not join the Union until 2007, five years after the then member state Greece received the award.

## IN 2013 THE EU ENTERED INTO A TRADE AGREEMENT WITH CANADA THAT INCLUDED THE PROTECTION OF THE NAME FETA FOR ONLY CHEESE FROM GREECE...

ipe known as Cheddar has historic ties to Britain, but since there was never an effort to protect the product's origin the recipe can be freely made anywhere and the end product can be labeled Cheddar. Other cheeses, of similar recipes, have geographically protected names allowed only to those cheeses produced in their regions, regardless of how similar they are, in order to be protected and tied to their point of origin. Think of Blue cheese of similar appearance and appeal but different cultural origins: Gorgonzola, Stilton, and Roquefort.

Points of geographic origin are logical both from cultural rationale and from the unique terroir the region brings. A cheese's

regions of France or Parmigiano-Reggiano in Italy, but to an entire country because of its strong association with that country. That country being Greece.

### PDO Certification

While these cultural and country claims have existed for some time, they have become more pressing of late following Greece's admission to the EU, in 1981, their adoption of the Euro in 2001 and the EU's issuance of PDO certification for Feta as a distinctly Greek product in 2002, in a non-contestable ruling.

PDO certification, or "protected designation of origin," is a politically sanctioned certification of historical origin that, once



Greece claims a 6,000-year history with Feta. When referring to Greece's Feta legacy many, including the World Cheese Book, cite a "record of cheese-making in Homer's *Odyssey*," specifically of Homer "seeing Cyclops the giant making ewe's milk cheese," a cheese widely believed to be what we now call Feta.

The modern name "Feta means 'slice' in Greek," according to Laura Werlin's *Cheese Essentials*. Bulgarians, who are praised for their yogurt and cheese credited to a rare bacteria found only in Bulgaria have a "salty white cheese" known as *Sirene* locally. The title of Feta is commonly applied to the Bulgarian cheese we occasionally find in the states. Bulgarian Feta is significantly harder to find in the U.S. than Greek, but is generally considered the pinnacle of the product.

Historically this entire region saw many shiftings of borders, with one country invading another and a region populated by some, conquered and named after another; By 1000 BC Thracians had occupied parts of what are now Bulgaria, Romania and Northern Greece, then came the Romans and onward until the Bulgars created the Bulgarian nation in 681. Some find the debate nonsensical as the groups crossed

over so much historically, but the EU's declaration gives sole title to Greece alone.

While the EU considers the matter settled for its own nation states, the view externally varies by country, and is often tied to economic interest. In 2013 the EU entered into a trade agreement with Canada that included the protection of the name Feta for only cheese from Greece, though a carve out for producers already making a Feta in Canada as of or before

the treaty date was established.

The topic is arising again because the U.S. had not previously recognized the ruling as binding on any U.S. companies, but origin rules are being examined anew as we negotiate the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). The U.S. looks at the naming instance as damaging to our own cheese producers who fear loss of brand identity or difficulty in marketing, all of which can result in economic impact.

When the U.S. finally agreed that Champagne, in order to protect Napa and other U.S.-centric wine naming conventions for our wine-makers, could only be labeled as such if it was made in the Champagne region of France existing marketers of U.S. sparkling wines labeled Champagne were allowed to keep the label. In practice, only low price U.S. producers have maintained the mark, while premium producers have chose to compete on merit alone and eliminated the Champagne designation.

Based on the plentitude of quality U.S. sparkling wines with healthy markets it would appear the word alone is not required to succeed. What one would call a Feta that is not from Greece is unclear, though "Feta-like," a poor alternative, has been bandied about.

There have been debates throughout time over the cultural origins of practices and foods claimed by one nation and disputed by others. In a "winners write the history books style," it is the vanquished that must challenge the conqueror for the, perceived, rightful title, even if that title is who gets to take credit for the simple white cheese we crumble on our salads.

**DB**







# A THOUSAND YEARS OF GOAT CHEESE

## French Chèvre gaining fans In American delis

BY HANNAH HOWARD

**B**aguettes, berets, and...chevre. There's nothing more French than a snow-white cylinder of goat's milk cheese. "Chevre" means goat in French, and we've adopted the term to refer to cheese made from the animal's milk. After all, if one has goat's milk, the most obvious and delicious next step is to make a wheel of fresh, bright goodness.

Goats, and goat cheese, were introduced to France either by the Saracens or Moors, people from the Arabian peninsula and North Africa respectively, in the 8th Century. The armies of the Umayyad Caliphate came to conquer, and they needed to bring along their goats to feed

themselves along the way. The Umayyad expansion did not go as planned, and they were forced to retreat. In haste, they left their goats behind. Domesticated goats — and the technique of turning their milk into fresh cheese — became an important part of culinary France.

As cheeses go, fresh goat cheese is relatively simple and quick to produce. Makers heat goat's milk, add cultures and rennet, let the curds and whey separate, salt, drain, and voilà — fresh chevre.

French farmers in the Loire River Valley continued nurturing goats and making cheese from their milk over a millennium. The first "crottins," those adorable little buttons, were crafted in the 16th Century.

There are more than 100 varieties of goat cheese produced in France, about 70 percent of which are made along the banks of the Loire Valley. France produces more goat cheese than any other country.

All French goat cheese is not created equal. The styles are many and diverse. "For thirty years, my counters were defined by French chevres," says Steven Jenkins, author of *Cheese Primer*. "I could list more than three dozen, each with a different captivating shape, color, texture and maker. Many were gloriously fermier (farm-made) and moule à la louche (hand-ladled curd). Each day they took center stage lined up like little soldiers on rye straw mats."



### Comes To America

In the late 70's, Lara Chenel was just a girl with some goats, hoping to supplement her waitressing tips with a little cheese business on the side. And so she took off to visit dairy scientist Jean-Claude Le Jaouen in France, who taught her enough that she could return to Sonoma and start crafting lovely, fluffy little pillows of fresh chevre.

Which is precisely what she did. And she was good at it. Soon Alice Waters-era Californians — and Alice Waters herself — were buying her cheese in an excited flurry. The waitressing gig was forfeited, and Laura Chenel Chevre grew into a booming business. Chenel hired employees, purchased goats, land, and equipment. Hundreds of pounds of cheese turned into thousands, and then a million.

Chenel played a big part in igniting goat cheese mania in the U.S. "French goat cheese is on the decline, in part because many American producers are creating high quality products," says Rachel Perez, ambassador for the French Cheese Club.

Laura Chenel, which was bought by French artisan cheese company The Rians Group in 2006, continues to produce excellent goat cheese, as does Vermont Creamery, Rivers Edge Chevre, and Cypress Grove.

### Vive La France

"I don't care how many decent North American goat's milk cheeses have arisen, none are master nor match to the



great fromages de chevre from Berry, Orlonais, Touraine, Poitou, Perigord, Cevennes, Ardeche, Savoie, Dauphine and Provence," says Jenkins.

Generations upon generations of know-how indeed make many French chevres truly special. "French goat logs are generally made with fresh curd, not frozen, and have a higher moisture content, which creates a more spreadable product with a lingering mouthfeel," explains Perez. They do tend to be more expensive than their Spanish or American competitors, but for the customers looking for quality, directing them towards French goat often is the best option.

Getting great goat cheese across the Atlantic can be a challenge. Last year, the FDA raised alerts for ash on goat cheese — ash-ripened chevre is a tradition that has been respected, and safe, for centuries. For lactic set goat cheeses, an extremely fragile and heat sensitive product can make importation difficult. "A rupture in the cold chain can destroy the integrity of the product quickly," says Perez. And a shortage of goat's milk in France means supply is limited.

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have plenty of tart, fresh flavors and a lovely lactic richness. They're elegant on a cheese plate, perhaps with some jam and crusty baguette, or served beside chutney and simple crackers.

They're fantastic for cooking — sprinkled on pizza, stuffed in quesadillas, melted in a panini. A crumble of goat cheese lends a bright pop to mac and cheese or lasagna. Sprinkling chevre in an omelet or atop a platter of roast veggies is always a great idea. Goat cheese lends a creamy, salty, flavorful dimension to salads with arugula, kale and spinach.

Retailers looking to sell French goat cheese may benefit from emphasizing the strong links to high quality and consistency, as well as the romantic legacy of cheesemaking in France and the Loire Valley. The cheeses are usually produced near where milk is collected — so although they travel from abroad, they embody a local ethos and represent a heritage of local cheesemaking and community pride.

Unlike cows, whose beta-carotene rich milk is deeply yellow, goats convert beta-carotene into vitamin A, which has no color — hence goat cheese is almost always bone white. Goat cheese con-

tains less lactose than cow's milk and cheese, and its smaller fat globules make the cheese easier to digest than its bovine counterparts. Health-conscious shoppers will appreciate this, along with the fact goat cheese is lower in calories, cholesterol and fat than cow and sheep's milk cheeses, and rich in calcium, protein, vitamin A, and vitamin K.

Goat cheese is generally more successfully merchandized with specialty cheeses than with commodity products. Since goats yield less milk than cows, the price point of these items is generally higher. Larger cities with customers with more

disposable income like New York City, Boston, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and Chicago tend to be hot markets for chevre.

Millennials, especially those who frequent Whole Foods or other specialty shops, have grown up with goat cheese. They are often receptive and appreciative of the distinctive flavor profile. Baby Boomers and the uninitiated sometimes complain about the gamey flavor of these cheeses. However, a gorgeous taste of chevre may turn them around. One thousand years of happy cheesemakers, cooks and eaters can't be wrong.

DB

## THE CHEESES ARE USUALLY PRODUCED NEAR WHERE MILK IS COLLECTED — SO ALTHOUGH THEY TRAVEL FROM ABROAD, THEY EMBODY A LOCAL ETHOS AND REPRESENT A HERITAGE OF LOCAL CHEESEMAKING AND COMMUNITY PRIDE.

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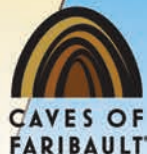
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# REPORT FROM ALIMENTARIA 2016

## Discovering the Mediterranean allure of Spanish cuisine

BY SHARON OLSON

**M**editerranean cuisine is captivating with flavors that comfort and intrigue with a halo of healthfulness that adds to its allure. The gastronomy of Spain has inspired our tastes for decades bringing tapas that were once a novelty on specialty restaurant menus to a mainstream trend. Small plates have become a permanent part of the American culinary landscape. As much as the cutting-edge chefs from Spain have influenced world cuisine, Spain is somewhat of a late-comer to the export business.

As popular as many Spanish foods and wines are in the U.S., the six large exhibit halls at Alimentaria 2016 in Barcelona proved that Spain might indeed be the least discovered of the Mediterranean cuisines. And this journey of culinary discovery is one that is perfect for the deli to share with American consumers.

With more than 30,000 food companies in Spain, the country has more

food manufacturers than any other country in the European Union. Yet most of the food businesses in Spain are small and medium-sized producers rather than the mega-companies in other countries. Of these companies, about 13,000 of them have export programs feeding the appetite of deli consumers for specialty foods from smaller, more exclusive producers.

Alimentaria included all segments of the food industry including supermarket, gourmet retail, foodservice, hotels, catering and distribution. Hot spots with chef demonstrations inspired those attending with recipes, menu concepts, culinary techniques and contemporary mixology. World-renowned chefs and up-and-coming stars on the culinary scene conducted cooking demos and master workshops.

Even food trucks, which have become an expected part of the street food scene around the world, demonstrated innovation. Vintage gourmet was the rage featuring vehicles with decades-

old design and modern-kitchen equipment serving up everything from Peruvian ceviche to smoked fish and meat with an Alaskan theme. The vintage-inspired vans demonstrated how the concept of fast food and quality could go hand in hand.

### Driving Consumer Interest

For the mainstream consumer, the escapades of famous chefs from Spain have been more of a culinary thrill ride than an approachable cuisine. Yet walking the exhibit floor at Alimentaria, one was constantly reminded that authentic, delicious food, sustainably produced and well prepared would always be on trend.

This was a long show that ran for four consecutive full days. Many shows struggle to capture the attention of an audience for more than a few hours, yet here many exhibitors built small cafes within their exhibits to give customers





a chance to truly explore their foods and wines and talk with experts from the vendors about the products.

Travel, not just to Spain, but other European countries where most of Spain's exports go has increased interest and demand for the foods and flavors this country has to offer. The regions of Spain offer unique cultural and culinary treasures, and a taste tour of the regions of the country was an important part of the Alimentaria experience.

### Products Beyond The Expected

Food and wines from Spain have long been available as private label brands, yet high quality branded products are building consumer demand throughout the world. Cheese, wine and olive oil from Spain are well known, yet the depth of variety of products and packaging available was breathtaking.

The olive oil tasting bar extended for several aisles and offered an exceptional tasting opportunity of more than 100 different olive oils. The oils included well-known varieties like Picual, Cornicabra and Arbequina to less familiar ones such as Changlot Real, Royal and Arróniz. More than half of the national olive oil production of Spain is exported, so there are many opportunities to find unique and appealing varieties in the U.S.

One of a kind packaging helped to differentiate the various offerings as much as the different taste profiles and characteristics. Packaging for premium olive oils was reminiscent of what one might

expect for high-end spirits. Others were packaged in what appeared to be hand-crafted decanters, each with its own allure for everyday use at home, special occasions or even gift giving.

There were more than 500 meat exhibitors spread over two halls creating a carnivore's paradise. Spain's top meat producing regions are Asturias, Extremadura, Castile-Leon, Galicia and La Rioja. The slicing and serving demonstrated how to turn a simple service into an unforgettable experience for the customer. The diversity of offerings included everything from exquisite Jamon Ibérico to bite-sized nuggets of sausage in an easy to transport to-go container.

Cheeses were generously available to sample from individual exhibitors, and an exclusive area offered tastings of 100

cheeses from Spain. For a nominal fee, guests were able to enjoy a self-guided tasting and sit with colleagues or new acquaintances at communal tables to share tasting notes. In addition to widely known varieties of cheeses from Spain, a wide range of artisan cheeses were available from Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Castile – Leon, the Basque Country and Navarre.

Twenty percent of Spanish cheeses are produced by micro-enterprises, which are largely family farms. The majority of Spanish traditional cheeses, including all of the Protected Denominations of Origin (DOP's) and many new cheeses are produced by these small cheese dairies, which offer a great opportunity for delis in the U.S. to source exceptional and not widely available specialty cheeses for their





customers. “These micro-enterprises may be the ones producing the oldest and most traditional cheeses, but they are also the ones introducing the most innovations in their production methods,” says Eric Canut, the coordinator of the Land of 100 Cheeses exhibition.

Wine tasting was done in large and small venues to provide a full range of the Spanish wine offerings. One space was dedicated to “vignerons,” small-scale grape growers and winemakers who opt for limited production in harmony with nature. These small vintners who are devoted to designing unique signature wines of exceptional quality were given a wine barrel over which they sampled and discussed their offerings with potential customers.

An exclusive section for fine foods featured the jewels of Spanish food and wine in a private area that looked more couture than culinary. Jamon Ibérico was sampled and displayed in red lacquered cases reminiscent of concert instruments. Mannequins flanked the latest fashions in cheese, and sleek white leather seating allowed customers to relax and enjoy the entire scene.

### Kitchen News

Demonstration kitchens that bring consumers into the kitchen for an interactive learning experience were sleek and modern yet also inviting and approachable. An in-store teaching kitchen can engage consumers with store experts and build brand loyalty. Creating convenient opportunities for in-store learning can entice consumers who want to hone their skills. Even if an in-store cooking demonstration is simply a

diversion that creates interest in purchasing fully prepared items from the deli, it is a win-win.

### Innovation And Trends

Innovation was showcased across all categories at this show in a major exposition area that featured display and seminars. The sessions were educational, thought provoking, sometimes controversial and designed to encourage discussion

venient packaging and right-size portions.

The emerging trend of ultra-personalization of diets is expected to foster the growth of healthy, organic, natural and functional products. The search for pleasure, entertainment and fun characterizes the whole foodie experience that continues to gain momentum. Many consider the Flexitarian Diet to be an American invention, yet it has a global following. Vegetables take center stage attention in meals but consumers are not necessarily relinquishing their enjoyment of meat and seafood; they are simply raising their quality expectations.

Many of the new product innovations had a practical nature designed to feed consumer desires for quick and easy preparation; easy to eat anytime anywhere; and available in a right-sized portion, individual or family size. Some examples included: fully prepared dishes and salads that do not require refrigeration; international specialties served in a pot ready to refresh and heat in minutes; chef-designed recipes in microwavable packaging; sausage snacks and toppings and cheese in wedges or slices without the rind.

Experiencing some of these premium products in convenient packaging leads to the idea that snacking is being elevated

## THE EMERGING TREND OF ULTRA-PERSONALIZATION OF DIETS IS EXPECTED TO FOSTER THE GROWTH OF HEALTHY, ORGANIC, NATURAL AND FUNCTIONAL PRODUCTS.

and debate. The Mediterranean Diet, climate change and the food industry, and new diets including Paleo, Nordic and raw foodism were among the topics.

Three mega trends evident in the 300 new products on display included: pleasure, health and practicality. Among the many aspects of pleasure included indulgence, sophistication and luxury packaging. Many products characterized among those with healthful attributes seemed surprising until one realized that natural or organic ingredients with integrity were considered part of this trend. Practicality focused on con-

with a gastronomic twist that is very likely to delight consumers. The food culture, romance and terroir of the small producers from the different regions of Spain can easily become the next irresistible pleasure for deli consumers.

Alimentaria celebrated 40 years this year and has been international since 1998. With more than 140,000 visitors from 157 countries and world-class educational opportunities, this show clearly takes its place on the world stage for presenting culinary influence and innovation along with ANUGA and SIAL.

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# DELI MEAT GUIDE



# Beefing Up Meat Sales



## A valuable guide to this profitable and ever-changing deli segment

BY LISA WHITE

**I**t may seem like the deli meat category is a conundrum.

Among the traditional varieties, such as turkey, roast beef, salami and ham, are gourmet versions, innovative flavors and minimally processed lines.

"The traditional deli meat shopper seeking value and familiarity is still driving the category, but innovative flavors, clean ingredients and humane production won't go unnoticed among many shoppers today," says Jonathan Whalley, education coordinator at the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), based in Madison, WI. "In general, I think healthier ingredients, cleaner labels and more upscale varieties are the future of deli meat."

According to the Nielsen Perishables Group FreshFacts study from New York, NY-based marketing firm Nielsen, bulk deli meat comprised 17.3 percent of deli category share of dollars in the year ending March 28, 2015 — close to 21 percent of share of dollars.

Deli meat sales totaled almost \$6 billion in the year ending March 29, 2015, according to IRI, a Chicago, IL-based marketing firm, or more than 785 million pounds. Turkey remains the top seller, followed by ham and roast beef.

The deli segment is a growing area for Nueske's Applewood Smoked Meats in Wittenberg, WI, with customers looking to the deli case for both meats and other foods that are pre-cooked and ready to eat and also as a source of fresh items that can be easily made into meals.

"Also, delis fit seamlessly into being able to purchase product by weight, which is perfect for those looking to watch their portions," says Don Bergman, Nueske's director of sales and marketing.

Flavor popularity varies, depending on the type of meat. Oven-roasted, honey maple and mesquite-smoked types were the best-selling turkey varieties; cooked, Black Forest and honey were tops in ham; and roast, pastrami and corned topped the

list for types of beef, according to Nielsen.

Consumers now have more information on the deli meat category at their fingertips, including recipes, serving suggestions and new products.

"The explosion of the use of mobile devices during the shopping experience is a critical development for the consumer," says Tim Urban, chief operating officer at Volpi Foods in St. Louis. "This is forcing manufacturers to understand their presence in the digital landscape and to actively develop strategies in order to maximize their control and contribution to this content."

A number of demographics are contributing to increased sales, including Millennials. The challenges with this generation are that these consumers are more educated and more selective.

"Millennials represent one of the driving forces of change within the deli segment, with their push and focus on craftsmanship, quality, product knowledge and





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## MORE RETAILERS ARE ACTIVELY WORKING TO CREATE A BOUTIQUE AND SPECIALTY STORE WITHIN A STORE FOR THE DELI SECTOR.

transparency,” says Urban. “They are also a group that is very selective on engaging in promotions, discounts and conventional marketing drives.”

This is why more retailers are actively working to create a boutique and specialty store within a store for the deli sector. But it can be difficult balancing the theatre aesthetic of the specialty deli shop while controlling labor costs; ensuring proper training and communication; maintaining speed and high service levels; and offering convenience solutions, menu suggestions and pairings.

“This is a very difficult task to accomplish and requires strong vendor relationships and strong inter-departmental coordination at the store and corporate level,” says Urban.

Cross promoting at the store level not only increases average transactions, but also delivers a sense of a customized shop experience. It’s important that the cross promotions are thematically linked to seasonality and holiday events, say experts.

“In addition to being thematically linked to relevant shopping occasions, the cross promoting needs to be inspiring and relatable to the consumer,” says Urban. “This means retailers and manufacturers need to collaborate and make sure that cross promotions are thought through to the end use and application once the consumer gets home.”

Nueske’s recommends pairing its deli products with regional cheeses and breads to create grab-and-go sandwiches as well as with Wisconsin cheeses.

In terms of merchandising, cross departmental collaboration with the retailer is imperative in order to support placement and presentation within the store that will

inspire the customer.

Looking ahead, the growth in supermarkets today is in the fresh perimeter, with the fiercest competition from online coming from the center of the store. There are, however, digital intermediaries developing ordering and delivery mechanisms for fresh ingredients and meals.

At press time, the IDDBA was working on several research pieces to be released at the Dairy-Deli-Bake Seminar & Expo being held in Houston in June. Digital Intermediaries & Impact on the Retail Value Chain highlights a few of the many ways digital companies are facilitating the interaction between retailers and shoppers. Total Store Connectivity: Entertaining Across the Store looks at the connections between entertainment categories, like specialty deli meat, snacks and cookies, and explains how they fit into entertaining occasions. It also looks at ways to leverage the connections for increased profits.

### Salami

U.S. salami sales were at more than \$420 million in the year ending March 29,



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2015, according to IRI, with pounds purchased decreasing by 1 million.

"Smoked and cured meats are gaining traction, as they tend to offer unique flavor profiles, simple ingredient lists, and have a rustic charm about them," says Whalley.

Olli Salumeria Americana, a salami producer in Oceanside, CA, has experienced growing sales in authentic salami types.

"Authentic salami was new to the states years ago, but now it's becoming

something customers are more familiar with," says Jennifer Johnson, director of marketing. "Consumers know how to use it and are expecting to see it in the deli."

Formats also are changing in this segment. The company recently introduced a new larger size designed for full-service deli cases. It also offers a traditional 6-ounce chub.

Educating customers about traditional salami has helped broaden the appeal.

"From our standpoint, it's a good protein snack," says Johnson. "People want protein rather than carbs."

Olympia Provisions, based in Portland, OR, also is experiencing growth of its salami products in delis. In particular, flavored versions are gaining more ground in retail.

"We are seeing a lot of our delis looking for unique items, like our Salami Etna, which has pistachios and lemon zest, and the price point behind the glass is going up with these unique offerings and more luxury items," says Michelle Cairo, the company's chief executive. "People are looking for more artisanal products and are willing to pay for it."

In addition, the requirement for salami transparency in terms of sourcing, ingredients and production is increasing.

This has led to increased use of more natural ingredients to assist in curing products and maintaining color and extending shelf life.

Consequently, Olympia Provisions uses natural products, including cherry powder, fermented dextrose and chard and celery powder with its lines.

"I think there is so much room for

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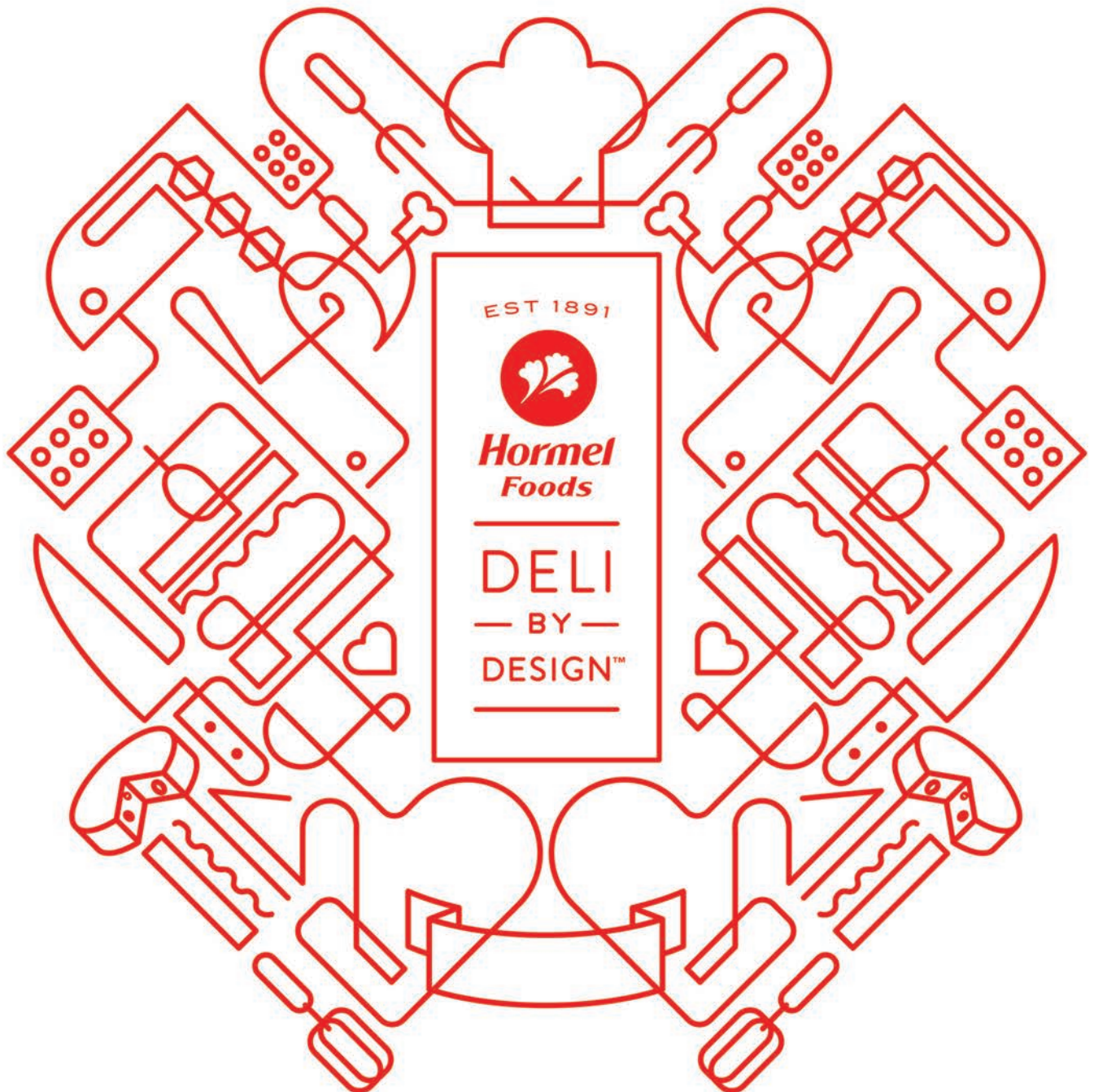
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**“WE ARE SEEING A LOT OF PEOPLE TAKING ON NEW ITEMS THAT NOBODY HAS EVER HEARD OF BECAUSE CUSTOMERS ARE SO INTERESTED IN TRYING NEW THINGS.”**

— MICHELLE CAIRO, OLYMPIA PROVISIONS

growth in the deli segment,” says Cairo. “The industry was very stagnant for a while, and now we are seeing a lot of people taking on new items that nobody has ever heard of because customers are so interested in trying new things.”

### Roast Beef

The focus on quality has had a significant impact on the roast beef segment.

IRI reports that deli roast beef sales for the year ending March 29, 2015 totaled close to \$720 million or more than 70 million pounds, with total beef dollars up 4.2 percent.

“There is a definite trend of major retailers increasing the quality of private label brands,” says Bruce Belack, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Philadelphia-based supplier Vincent Giordano Corp.

In the past year, the company has had increasing requests from retailers seeking ABF (antibiotic-free) meats, with the majority switching to these lines.

With this demand has come the challenge of fulfilling the need with limited raw product and the resulting increase in retail pricing, which can negatively impact sales of these products.

“As retailers make this switch to ABF products, the supply will increase at some point, which will help reduce the cost of raw materials,” says Belack. “Right now, we’re dealing with sticker shock to fill the beef demand as it is.”

In the same vein, an increasing number of roast beef suppliers are finding value in updating packaging technology.

Vincent Giordano recently invested in an HPP or High Pressure Pasteurization system.

“This offers a dramatically longer shelf life, while maintaining a high-quality product,” says Belack. “It also allows for the elimination of preservatives.”

Recently, the higher-priced beef market has corrected itself, which has led to an increase in sales. This is predicted to continue in the year ahead.

“People still want their beef,” says Belack. “Continued relief in raw material costs are projected for 2016, and Millennials looking for fresh, healthy products in the deli are having an impact on this segment.”

### Organic & Natural

Only a decade ago, the bulk deli case had traditional meats, but this area is slowly

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being taken over by lines that are organic and/or natural, as more consumers seek minimally processed products with fewer preservatives.

Today, it's all about transparency, authenticity and sustainability, as more consumers want to know what products are about and details about the origin.

"The differentiators are the health attributes and ingredients that consumers are looking for in the products served in the deli area," says Sebastian Friedman, brand manager at Hormel Foods Corp., based in Austin, MN. "It's no longer just about low salt and low fat, as the focus shifts to deli meats with more simplified ingredient statements." NYDP Deli-Patrol in Westford, MA, shifted its processing approach, as the demand for natural deli meats began to grow.

"In terms of trends, the ever-growing interest in natural deli products is clear," says Dan Estridge, the company's chief flavor officer. "People are concerned with nitrates and nitrites, and many are willing to pay a premium for these items."

Seeing the potential of the natural deli meat segment in the United States, French ham producer Madrange recently added Jambon Maison to its lineup.

"The pigs are humanely raised and fed antibiotic-free diets, and the hams are crafted from hormone-free meat with no nitrites or nitrates, artificial coloring or water," says Shirley Hall, marketing and public relations manager for New York City-based Paris Gourmet, which handles the Madrange brand in the United States. "The ham is baked in its own juices and put through the HPP process."

To meet the demand for cleaner labels, a number of companies have found clean label replacements for traditional, functional ingredients. Processors like NYDP Deli-Patrol have simplified its labels to appeal not only to the sought-after Millennial market, but also to an older generation interested in a healthier lifestyle.

### Pre-Sliced

There has been steady growth in presliced sales, as more supermarket delis slice meats for quick sales in self-serve cases.

Pre-sliced deli meat made up more than 12 percent of deli meat share dollars in the 52 weeks ending March 28, 2015, according to Nielsen. This was an increase of almost 3 percent from the year prior. The top five pre-sliced deli meats in terms of



category share were turkey, ham, salami, Italian specialty and beef.

"Retailers are offering more grab-and-go products to appease the Millennials and those customers who don't want to wait at the full-service counter," says Belack. "These deli meat sections have become increasingly popular, because the perception is these meats are still sliced fresh."

In this category, HPP packaging has become more prevalent, as it helps preserve the shelf life of sliced meats without the use of preservatives.

Pre-sliced meats can go against the trend of those looking for minimally processed product, however.

Look carefully at pre-sliced products, says Estridge, as those that are labeled as natural can include meat that is very processed.

Newer technologies have provided options for manufacturers looking to satisfy consumer demands.

NYDP Deli-Patrol cooks single cuts of meat one at a time without the use of bags.

"What we're doing is not new technology. In fact it is not technical, and more difficult and costly," says Estridge. "For this reason, it may not be indicative as to where the industry will go."

### Party Platters

In the deli-prepared food category, deli platters are a small blip, only making up just over 3 percent of share of dollars in the 52 weeks ending March 28, 2015, according

to Nielsen. However, this is a more than 3.5 percent increase in category share compared with 2014, so there is potential for these products.

In IDDBA's 2015 High Stakes in Food Safety in Dairy, Deli, Bakery and Prepared Foods report, meat and cheese platter sales ranked the highest at close to \$165 million, followed by sandwich platters with almost \$102 million and cheese platters at almost \$68 million. The "other deli platter" category had the highest growth at 30.5 percent, followed by salad platters at almost 26 percent.

"The service and offerings are front and center for the industry, not just as products on the shelf, but in the way programs are represented at the store level for the convenience of consumers," says Kevin Rider, senior marketing manager at Dietz & Watson in Philadelphia, PA. "As a brand, a lot of it comes behind the quality of products, which have to taste great, but also the service level in developing platter programs."

Today's customers are looking for simple entertaining solutions, and deli retailers can provide this with innovative deli meat platters. This also provides an opportunity to showcase day-to-day offerings for potential sales of individual products in the future.

"There is a lot of potential from a service level in providing solutions for consumers and making their lives easier," says Rider.

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# Wings Take Flight



## For many consumers it's hard to get enough of this popular snack

BY BOB JOHNSON

**W**ings have taken flight as the culinary centerpiece for many summer activities — so much so that demand is often stronger than supply.

The greatest challenge for a deli wings program may be making the popular poultry items available at times of peak demand, as finding an adequate supply may be the only thing holding back a continued increase in sales this season.

When it comes to the sauce, simple may be better. There are still just two flavors, barbecue and Buffalo, that account for a large majority of the wings pretty much everywhere in the country.

"Nationwide the red sauce, the Kansas City style barbecue sauce, is the winner," says Pat Ford, co-owner of Ford's Food Inc., Raleigh, NC. "You do have regional differences. In South Carolina they want

more mustard. In the Midwest they want more dry wings with rubs."

Ford's makes a line of barbecue and other sauces under the Bone Suckin' brand, and pays particular attention to offering a more healthful, cleaner label alternative. The company is noticing increased interest in wings.

"Wings seem to be on the increase," says Ford. "We're seeing more searches on our website for recipes."

But as long as the two mainstay flavors are available, there is room for a little experimentation.

"Buffalo and barbecue will always be popular but we're seeing very nice growth with Sriracha boneless wings and also seeing more stores serving antibiotic-free products," says Steve Ross, marketing manager at Brakebush Brothers, Inc., in Westfield, WI. "Tenderloins remain popular, as are wings and boneless wings,

but more locations are offering signature sandwiches, wraps and customizable selections."

Brakebush Brothers is a 90-year-old family business making a wide variety of chicken products, including wings.

Ross believes there is greater competition than ever as an increasing number of outlets have moved to step up their quality.

"More and more delis and convenience stores are serving restaurant quality food," he says. "Quality food, variety and consumer-friendly convenience lead to foodservice growth in these segments. Consumers are expecting quality, and delis and convenience stores have stepped up their offerings. Fresh, home-style cooking is showing growth and bringing in consumers."

Some producers believe there are as many as a half dozen flavors worth con-





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## “IN THE NEW YORK METROPLEX AREA, THE HISPANIC POPULATION IS DRIVING RETAILERS TO OFFER BOLDER FLAVORS,”

—TED MAGUIRE, HAIN PURE PROTEIN

sidering in a wings program.

“There are five or six common flavors that probably make up 85 percent of the wings market,” says Ken Meyers, president of Panorama Foods in Braintree, MA. “There’s Buffalo, teriyaki, Asian sweet and sour, barbecue; chipotle and Sriracha are coming on strong.”

Panorama produces Buffalo and barbecue sauces — including Wing-Time brand Buffalo wing sauce — as well as breeding for chicken and other menu items.

To learn about consumer taste in wings sauce, according to Meyers, check the center of the store to see what customers are already buying to take home.

“The deli trends tend to follow the retail shelf,” says Meyers. “One of the best windows we have is to look at what people are buying on their own.”

It is also worth paying attention to demographic changes that could influence tomorrow’s sauce flavor preferences.

“In the New York metroplex area, the Hispanic population is driving retailers to offer bolder flavors,” says Ted Maguire, chief sales officer at Hain Pure Protein in New Oxford, PA. “They are driving bolder flavors like smoked chipotle. Retailers are paying attention to holidays like Cinco de Mayo with flavors like lime cilantro.”

Even with a food as deliciously messy

as wings, a little time spent on the nutritional side can be a good investment.

“A lot of people are eating very healthy, so the cleaner the sauce the better,” says Ford. “It should be free of major allergens, and it should also be gluten free. A lot of people are eating organic chicken wing sauce. Ours is not organic, but it is GMO free and gluten free. You need to have a sauce that is easy, that won’t fail.”

Wings scored an impressive 7-percent-plus increase in deli sales for the 52 weeks ended March 28, 2015, according to the What’s In Store 2016 report from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), to reach \$636 million.

But even that healthy growth rate represents a cooling of the wings market brought on by an inability to supply the potential demand.

“The issue with wings is you had double-digit growth for many years, and now there is not a great supply of them,” says Eric Le Blanc, director of marketing at Tyson Foods in Springdale, AR. “That is constraining growth. There’s not enough

# HEALTHIER OILS CAN BRIDGE THE GAP

## All fried chicken is not created equal

BY BOB JOHNSON

**W**hile most of us have joined the movement toward healthier eating, we are also still drawn to the unique and irresistible taste of fried chicken.

An important way the deli can bridge this gap between a healthy respect for good nutrition and this delicious guilty pleasure is to use better for you cooking oils, and let customers know about it.

“Omega-9 Canola Oil can deliver a healthier option for food companies,” says Mary LaGuardia, Omega-9 oils market manager at Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis. “Because it is uniquely high in monounsaturated fats, has among the lowest saturated fats of commercial cooking oils, and has zero trans fats, this oil can be used to create food products and menus with improved nutrition profiles without compromising quality or performance.”

Food fried in even the healthiest of oils *will* have a few more calories, but some calories are better for you than others.

“Anything that is fried absorbs some of that oil,” says LaGuardia. “If someone is looking to have the fried food experience, this lets you use better-for-you fat. It is more heart healthy. Omega-9 Canola has the lowest level of saturated fat of any oil out there.”

Part of the sales job is to use labels, signage, and even in-store dietitians or nutritionists to explain in clear language why the oil is better for you.



“Consumers are not only seeking products made with healthier oils, but also want products made with simple ingredients they would find in their own kitchen,” says LaGuardia. “Going back to the 2015 Food & Health Survey, nearly half of consumers are looking for clean labels when making their food purchase decisions, and 37 percent avoid preservatives entirely.”

Cold pressed olive oil has a label as clean and easily comprehensible as anything you could use to fry chicken.

“Extra virgin olive oil can be used for deep frying, pan frying, sautéing and baking,” says Maia Hirschbein, oleologist at California Olive Ranch, Chico, CA. “It is a fruit juice unlike soybean, canola, corn, rice bran and many other seed and bean oils



supply so there's not much promotion."

The greatest challenge for retailers is lining up enough wings, and making them highly visible.

"Out of stock means a disappointed customer," says Brad Dunn, director of retail deli at Koch Foods, Inc., in Park Ridge, IL. "There is continued tremendous popularity of good fast food at retail deli locations, and the challenge is to have good quality food ready for the consumers at the peak times they are buying the product."

Solve the issue of supply and visibility for peak times, and this is a fairly simple product to handle, with two familiar flavors dominating the category.

"When all is said and done it's barbecue and Buffalo for wings," says Le Blanc. "The vast majority of wings are those two flavors. You hear a lot about Sriracha, but there is not a lot of volume. There are breaded wings, too, with savory and hot profiles. The regional differences in wings come down to the fourth or fifth flavor, so they don't amount to much."

Wings are associated with indoor social rituals such as watching spectator sports



programs on TV with friends, as well as outdoor summer events such as parties, picnics, games and barbecues.

"You have a lot of women buying wings to bring home," says Le Blanc.

"Most of them are eaten by men. Wings customers tend to be younger. There are a lot of Millennials. The industry only grows so many chickens, and the demand for wings is tremendous."

**DB**

which have to be refined, bleached and deodorized. No hexane gas has been used in the extraction of extra virgin olive oil. The result is a healthy oil with a very favorable eight to one ratio of omega 6 and omega 3 essential fatty acids. It is rich in anti-oxidants that fight against cancer, inflammation, coronary artery disease and diabetes. It is also rich in vitamin E and K."

While increased sales can defray the cost of higher quality oil, the real key is careful management that allows for longer use.

"Optimum fry point for all oils is 350 degrees," says Hirschbein. "Many seed and bean oils begin to smoke at about 400 degrees whereas a good extra virgin olive oil with a low free fatty acid level, .02 to .04, will have a smoke point above 425 degrees."

LaGuardia estimates that, properly managed, Omega-9 oil will also last long enough to pay for the premium.

"The unique fatty acid profile of Omega-9 Canola Oil allows for longer, cleaner frying," she says. "The price tag on the gib of oil is going to be more, but it has a longer frying life. It's going to last 50 percent longer and cost 50 percent more."

Using cleaner oils can also significantly reduce the frequency with which you must filter.

"The quality and type of oil used affects the degree to which it can be filtered and the frequency with which it needs to be filtered," says Giovanni Brienza, spokesperson for Frontline International, Cuyahoga Falls, OH. "Different oils have different characteristics that will cause the oil to react differently to temperature changes. In addition, different fry oils react better when contaminants like water and debris — such as crumbs from bread — are introduced. It takes balance and a lot of weighing out different advantages and disadvantages."

Frontline International designs, manufactures, and distributes commercial foodservice equipment for the storage,

handling, and disposal of cooking oil.

"The real question should be what kind of value you are getting from your fry oil program," says Brienza. "Does the oil last long enough to justify the cost? And are you cleaning the oil and then recycling it to redeem the highest value on the resale market? Remember, fry oil is a commodity and its sale can more than pay for filtration equipment as well as other equipment used to empty and properly store the oil prior to collection."

Consistency in changing the oil after frying a specified amount of chicken, *not* after a set period of time, is important in maintaining the taste of the food.

"Cooking oil can and does alter the texture, color and taste of fried food," says Brienza. "Done properly it affects it in delicious ways. But specifically when the oil should be changed or filtered gets more at the personality of the operation. That is, the oil change-out and filtration program really becomes a part of the recipe, flavor consistency, and, ultimately, the brand and reputation of the store. For that, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' quantitative test to say it is time to discard the oil."

The bottom line in using healthier oil is the ability to communicate to consumers that the deli has thoughtfully created a better for you fried chicken program.

"America's fear of fat is diminishing as consumers are now more concerned on the type of fat rather than the amount," says LaGuardia. "Data shows they are seeking fewer bad fats and more good fats. According to International Food Information Council's 2015 Food & Health Survey, two-thirds of consumers who use the ingredients list for purchasing decisions are specifically looking for the type of fat or oil in the product. The same survey revealed 56 percent of consumers are trying to limit saturated fat in their diet."

**DB**





# FRIED CHICKEN DEFIES THE HEALTHY FOOD TREND

**Make it crisp and tasty, and consumers will forgive the rest**

BY BOB JOHNSON

**H**ealth concerns are driving one of the most powerful deli trends of our time. But there are exceptions to this rule.

After a brief slump, consumers are coming back to the comforting appeal of fried chicken.

"Fried chicken has recovered the last few years; it is growing," says Eric Le Blanc, director of marketing at Tyson Foods, the Springdale, AR-based company that produces chicken, pork and beef products.

According to the What's In Store 2016 report from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), the dollar value of deli fried chicken sales rose by more than 6.5 percent in the year ended June 27, 2015, and came up just a handful

of crunchy drumsticks short of the \$850 million mark.

The buzzwords that move fried chicken are not healthful and nutritious, but are instead crunchy and delicious.

"Fried chicken and rotisserie have extremely different customers," says Le Blanc. "Fried chicken customers are lower income and have larger families. The fried chicken customer is not concerned about health; they just want it to taste good."

New and improved ways of presenting the product also might be helping to take full advantage of its durable popularity.

"There have been major improvements in store signs behind the counter where the product is purchased," says Brad Dunn, director of retail deli at Koch Foods, Inc., Park Ridge, IL. "Some stores are getting

into lighted and visual ads on the menu boards. Point-of-purchase signs that the consumer can see on the product itself and the warmer where it being kept hot are working."

Koch Foods produces a line of prepared chicken products, including wings, tenders, nuggets, and breast fillets, strips and chunks.

Packaging also can play a role in keeping the product appetizing all the way home.

"There are more tear-away smaller packages for easy use by the consumer that are still effective for the purpose of keeping the product warm and vented so it doesn't get soggy," says Dunn.

If cooking hits the sweet spot that leaves the meat soft and juicy with that distinctive crunch of a shell, the flavor



profile leaves room to make a distinctive impression.

"The basics with fried chicken are crispy breading, moist meat and pepper in the breading," says Le Blanc. "Everyone's got their own breading formula. A lot of it is done in store, so you can have your own flavor. People want a sweeter, more peppery flavor in the South and Southeast. Hot and spicy is the latest new trend in fried."

Proper cooking time and temperature are essential for offering the unique experience of biting through the crunchy crust to reach the succulent meat.

"The key to quality is cooking at the correct temperature and holding the right amount of time," says Le Blanc. "People are cooking chicken breasts at 200 degrees Fahrenheit and that dries it out. The most common complaints are that it was cooked too long or that it is too dry, which is the same thing. Use the recommended temperature. People are cooking fried chicken too long because they are concerned about food safety."

It may be worth keeping an eye on the small, but likely growing, market for fried chicken that makes a few concessions to good health.

"The Whole Foods of the world will only carry the clean ingredients," says Ted Maguire, chief sales officer at Hain Pure Protein in New Oxford, PA. "We offer clean ingredient breading in bulk or on

chicken pieces. Some people only want to buy antibiotic-free chicken tenders with clean ingredient breadings."

The Tyson Foods survey published in the spring of 2015 confirmed that 41 percent of consumers wish restaurants would offer healthier options for indulgent foods, and 43 percent would be very likely to order healthier options if they were offered.

"The market is ready for new healthier options on menus," according to the company's summary in the spring 2015 issue of its Insights & Discovery. "Tyson Foodservice has a full line of products made with all natural ingredients that contain no preservatives, no artificial colors and are minimally processed to help you build better-for-you menu items that are better for you and better for your customers."

That line of products includes crumb-coated wings and chicken tenders.

The Tyson survey of national chain restaurants found that the fastest growing health claims are, in order, that the food is

## **"PEOPLE WANT A SWEETER, MORE PEPPERY FLAVOR... HOT AND SPICY IS THE LATEST NEW TREND IN FRIED."**

— ERIC LE BLANC, TYSON FOODS

"healthy," "natural" and "gluten free."

There may be relatively untapped possibilities with fried chicken as with rotisserie chicken to cross-merchandise and offer customers meal deals.

"Very little cross merchandising is being done," says Le Blanc. "When we have eight pieces of chicken, we don't sell a meal. The customers would like it to be easier to get a meal, but not nearly enough retailers offer this. If you're going to offer a meal, why not add dessert."

The meal-deal option could be particularly beneficial with fried chicken because the customers tend to have large families.

As to the issue that fried foods in general — and fried chicken in particular — may not be the most healthful choice, don't worry about it. According to the most recent IDDBA report, "not fried" ranks high on consumers' lists of the characteristics of healthy food, just after "fresh" but ahead of "natural." Nevertheless, sales of America's favorite fried protein remain brisk.

**DB**





# TECH TIME

## Advancements are improving the deli experience

BY KEITH LORIA

**T**ake a look around the deli and you might recognize some equipment that was predicted in shows such as “The Jetsons” or “Star Trek,” as today’s deli experience is enhanced by improving technology in the foods being prepared, the machines doing the job and even the way customers are choosing their food products.

At the most recent Expo Milano, a six-month universal exhibition of world-changing concepts, an interactive screen was on display that had an X-Box Kinect inside, allowing consumers to touch a digital pad at hand level and have details about the provenance of an item displayed at eye level. Simply by using hand gestures, customers could highlight a particular food to find out its nutritional content, where it came from, its carbon footprint and allergens.

Robotic arms were also on display, dispensing food and speeding up the time people spent online. This is something that people could expect to see inside delis in the next five years.

But of course, it’s not all high-tech gadgets that are affecting the future of the deli. New technology is also helping the foods people eat become healthier and tastier. Here are a couple of companies that are taking advantage of new innovations to better prosper.

### A Food Enhancer

John Weaver, global sales manager for Sunsweet Growers, Inc., based in Yuba City, CA, notes Sunsweet has been quite keen on promoting new ingredient uses for

all of its products during the last few years.

“We get the sense that almost all manufacturers are reacting diligently to increased consumer demand for minimally processed ingredients. A definitive trend, especially from Millennial consumers, is to look for clean and clear labeling on just about everything they buy,” he says. “That means reducing ingredients, especially if those ingredients might be perceived as being manufactured and artificial. For food manufacturers, this can create difficulties relating to purely functional ingredients that promote consistent quality and shelf stability.”

For Sunsweet, that created opportunities. The company promotes natural, minimally processed fruit products that have a multitude of functions like moisture enhancement, fat substitution, sugar reduction, and lower spice loads, all while boosting flavor much in the same way that vanilla magnifies taste in baked goods.

A switch from using phosphates in food has led to the introduction of Sunsweet’s liquid plum extract that is used as a food enhancer.

“The variety of plum used for our plum extract has a unique chemical composition that makes it high in total sugars, fiber, polyphenols and antioxidants,” says Weaver.

“Of special interest is the fact that almost one third of the sugar takes the form of natural sorbitol — a sugar alcohol. Since this sugar alcohol is not absorbed by the body but passes undigested into the large colon, from a nutritional standpoint it is not counted as a carbohydrate or sugar. This means that we get sweetness

with a relatively low-sugar content, and low-glycemic index and even lower-glycemic load.”

Importantly, sorbitol is an extremely powerful humectant. It can lock in moisture at very low usage rates. As an example, fresh plum extract can be used in meat and poultry products at only .5 percent of the protein block, but will boost retained moisture by 10-15 percent. This matches the usage rate and efficacy of phosphates.

“While phosphates will continue to be an essential part of many food manufacturing processes, they are a perfect example of an ingredient that many manufacturers are seeking to replace,” says Weaver. “The plum extract also boosts flavor while not adding one of its own. Most of our customers have found a need to reduce salt and spice loads by about 10 percent in marinades containing plum. Another use for this concentrate is sugar replacement in sauces and marinades. We can reduce sugar loads by as much as 30 percent in sauces and spices, with a special affinity for tomato and Asian-style sauces. Prune concentrate can be used to replace caramel coloring and darker molasses type sugars.”

### Rice Fillers

Mark McKnight, senior vice president for RiceBran Technologies, headquartered in Scottsdale, AZ, says its company is innovating with rice fillers being utilized in foods so they can be labeled as gluten free.

“RiceBran Technologies’ proprietary and process patented rice bran ingredients are naturally gluten free. Of the four



main crops that feed the world (soy, corn, wheat, rice), rice is the only crop that is both non-GMO and gluten-free," he says. "We have seen great success supplying the growing gluten-free and non-GMO marketplace. Food manufacturers are looking for healthy and clean label ingredients. Our proprietary and process patented ingredients are a great solution for many different types of food manufacturers."

In the deli segment, RiceBran Technologies has worked closely with leading sausage and meat manufacturers whereby they can create gluten-free sausages and meats using its proprietary and process patented rice bran ingredients in the formula.

"Consumers are increasingly interested in clean label foods. Our rice bran ingredients help food manufacturers achieve non-GMO, gluten-free and all-natural claims," says McKnight.

RiceBran Technologies continues to work to develop innovative ingredients, according to McKnight.

"Our new Proryza Platinum and Proryza Gold ingredients contains both protein and dietary fiber and are ideal for many different food and beverage applications," he says.

### Mushroom Matters

Pete Wilder, marketing director for To-Jo Mushrooms, based in Avondale, PA, says an area of recent mushroom innovation has been surrounding "the blend," where new technology has made possible a process of using chopped or diced mushrooms to replace various proteins as an ingredient to build a better burger, taco, meatloaf, meatball, etc.

"It has been an effective way to add flavor while reducing calories, fat and cholesterol in consumer favorites," he says. "Overall food costs in the deli can be lowered as well, as the price of beef continues to be a challenge at retail, and mushrooms help bring down the overall cost of prepared foods."

### Advancements In Equipment

Lycos Manufacturing, Inc. headquartered in Columbus, WI, has several new machinery options that can make things better for large deli manufacturers.

"What we have learned is that those type of operations typically have multiple SKUs that they would want in a shift," says chief executive, Steve Hughes. "They may not have the same product (such as potato salad) running the whole

eight hours, so what they needed was the ability to quickly change from product A to product B and at the same time have a reasonable continuous capacity of fully cooked pastas or rice or potatoes, that they could use for some type of deli side."

That led to the company's innovative Lean Clean-Flow Cooker, which helps changeovers occur quicker and better.

"The Clean-Flow is designed to work in one or two zone configurations, and may pasteurize, blanch, cook or rehydrate in one zone, cool in a second zone or be a standalone cooler in a separate machine," says Hughes. "Our process is focused on getting the product as cold as possible in the quickest amount of time."

To accomplish the latter, Lycos developed the Easy Flow Cooler — designed with deli commissaries in mind — that need to get products below 40 degrees so

dation in the package. It's also launched SkinnyPack, a thin, yet strong packaging technology that fuses a flexible, printable film to a sturdy, flexible frame.

"Both have been well received by the market," says Levesque. "The clarity today seems more important than the shelf life lost due to light."

### Old School Thinking

Not everyone in the industry feels high-tech is the answer. JoAnne Theodore, founder of Greek Island Spice, based in Fort Lauderdale, FL, notes the company is bucking the technology route and diving deeper into the hand crafted, minimally processed food movement.

"We are artisan condiment manufacturers and are actually going in the exact opposite direction," she says. "We are gaining increasing attention in the deli

**BY USING CLARIFIED POLYPROPYLENE TO MAKE OUR CONTAINER WE ENSURE HIGH TRANSPARENCY TO COMPLY WITH THE MARKET DEMAND, AS CONSUMERS WANT TO SEE THE PRODUCT APPEARANCE, FRESHNESS APPEARANCE AND COLOR, TEXTURE, ETC.**

— RODRICK LEVESQUE, IPL PLASTICS

that as soon as it's done cooking, it won't clump and stick together.

### A Plastic Solution

Rodrick Levesque, an engineer at IPL Plastics, headquartered in Saint-Damien, Quebec, says the company is supplying plastic parts (mostly polypropylene) using the injection molding process to the deli industry.

Polypropylene is a sustainable polymer, easily recyclable and without any undesirable chemicals.

"In the deli counter we served two main markets: the prepared salads and the specialty cheeses," he says. "By using clarified polypropylene to make our container we ensure high transparency to comply with the market demand, as consumers want to see the product appearance, freshness appearance and color, texture, etc."

IPL has recently launched Zero2, a light barrier technology to increase the shelf life of foods by minimizing the light oxi-

departments as mounting research points to consumer demands for healthier, clean label products and new flavor profiles that break out of old flavor standards. This is hardly new technology, rather the opposite."

### Coming Soon To A Deli Near You

With every changing month on the calendar, it seems some new piece of technology comes along to define the industry.

Samsung has already presented a WiFi-connected refrigerator and looking to the future, other companies are touting things such as smart frying pans or Bluetooth-enabled thermometers that can help deli operators prepare cooked foods. There's even an iGrill mini about to hit the market that's expected to be a hit for helping to cook perfect burgers.

It's important for delis to keep up with the latest advancements in technology and to likewise bid a fond farewell to the 20th Century.

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# FIVE DELI PACKAGING TRENDS FOR 2016

## Shifting consumer behavior reflects change in deli item containers

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

**B**right colors, right-sizing, on-the-go functionality, flexibility and sustainability are trends reshaping the food container market — trends that are primarily driven by shifting consumer preferences both in terms of food products and the materials in which they're packaged.

"As eating trends change, part of being a leader in the deli segment is to enhance food through innovative packaging that is conducive to our customers' needs," says Kathy Brady, vice president of deli and bakery for Albertsons, LLC, a Boise, ID-headquartered chain that operates 2,200 stores nationwide under 18 banners. "We want to inspire our customers to try something new."

The U.S. food container market is projected to exceed the \$31-billion mark by 2020, according to the February 2016 published report, "Food Containers: Rigid & Flexible," by the Freedonia Group, Inc., headquartered in Cleveland.

### 1. Eye Appeal, Buy Appeal

"Fresh meals-to-go are a huge trend that is sweeping the country," says Michael Newhouse, director of marketing and e-commerce for Be Green Packaging, LLC, in Santa Barbara, CA.

Shoppers today want food that looks prepared in-store even when packaged at a commissary or processor, says Marilyn Stapleton, director of marketing for Anchor Packaging in Ballwin, MO. "They want the convenience of grab-and-go displays, but also want 'just made' food. Eye-catching appeal is a key factor for any product in the deli. Packaging is designed to show off the food contents with anti-fog lid features, for example, while keeping the food looking fresh and appealing."

Innovative seal and tamper-evident mechanisms, rather than the third-party look of shrink bands, are other ways packaging can convey freshness today, say industry professionals.

Old-school ribbing for structural integ-

rity is also out, replaced by clear, rigid plastic containers that allow customers to better see the quality of food inside.

"A clear container gives the consumer the best view of the quality of the food contents," says Jack Tilley, market research manager for Shelton, CT-based Inline Plastics Corp. "It can be best to let the foods sell themselves."

There is also a move away from black packaging to more natural-looking designs. This includes the use of bold colors. For the past three years Direct Pack, headquartered in Azusa, CA, has offered colors such as orange and lime green in its recycled PET Bottlebox line of one-piece hinged and two-piece containers. The company also offers prints such as a patriotic red-white-and-blue plaid for summer promotions. Direct Pack will work with retailers on custom colors and prints.

"When a client switched from black to green-colored packaging for its salads, grab-and-go sales increased by 22 per-



cent,” says Laura Murphy, vice president of sales and marketing for Direct Pack.

## 2. Size & Shape Matter

The popularity of ethnic ingredients and right-sizing fueled by the snack trend are leading packaging manufacturers to expand outside the box when it comes to pack size.

**“SQUARE CONTAINERS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY DESIRED IN DELI APPLICATIONS DUE TO THEIR GOOD UTILIZATION OF SHELF SPACE, STACKABILITY AND EXCELLENT MERCHANDISING OF ITS CONTENTS.”**

— JACK TILLEY, INLINE PLASTICS

On one hand, there’s the bigger-is-better trend. “We’ve seen an increase in demand by operators for a larger sandwich box,” says Steve Olk, category manager for Planglow USA in West St. Paul, MN. “This stems from the use of higher quality or ethnic breads like naan [Indian oven-baked flatbread] that are often bulkier. As a result, our extra-large sandwich box is 40 percent larger.”



On the other hand, there is small single-serve packaging. Companies such as the Sabert Corp. in Sayreville, NJ, and Direct Pack, recently launched four-compartment containers. These are single-serve containers that can hold four different items without the migration of one item into another.

“Four-compartment rectangular trays are popular in tableware. Just look at what retailers like Williams-Sonoma are selling. This same concept is needed in the deli, where packaging serves as a convenient utensil for a snack or meal,” says Kenton McDonald, Sabert’s cold collection category manager.

Direct Pack designed its quad container, in which each indentation holds a

portion-controlled 3 ounces, for a super-market deli operator to be able to create custom and distinctive snack packs that appeal to adults. Foods merchandised in these packs include meats, cheeses, hummus, produce items like baby carrots and other items such as candy and nuts. The operator successfully merchandises these packs in a mix-and-match manner of three for \$10.

As for shape?

“Square containers are becoming increasingly desired in deli applications due to their good utilization of shelf space, stackability and excellent merchandising of its contents,” says Inline Plastic’s Tilley.

The company just introduced its Safe-T-Fresh SquareWare line of clear

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO DEVELOP NEW PACKAGING?

The answer? Anywhere from two weeks to nine months, depending on a number of factors.

“Lead times for innovative packaging obviously vary in terms of complexity of the product,” says Jack Tilley, market research manager for Shelton, CT-based Inline Plastics Corp. “However, with the advancement of rapid prototyping technologies, the developmental time for new products continues to decrease.”

Compostable packaging made from 100-percent recycled paper takes one of the shortest turnaround times.

“We don’t need to build molds,” says Wes Gentles, vice president and general manager for the Norcross, GA-headquartered Rock-Tenn Converting Company d/b/a Fold-Pak. “That means we can go from concept to trial in two weeks and full production in four to six weeks.”

Custom packaging companies can offer a shorter lead time on innovation.

“We can create a custom pack in 90 days versus the industry standard of six to nine months,” says Laura Murphy, vice president of sales and marketing for Direct Pack, Inc., in Azusa, CA. “This is because on average it takes eight to 12 weeks to build the needed tools, whereas we have in-house tooling which makes us faster.”

Pack type and size impacts time requirements.

“In some cases, we can utilize components from current tooling to produce similar sizes,” explains Marilyn Stapleton, director of marketing for Anchor Packaging in Ballwin, MO. “In other cases, new technology or new materials can cause a longer development time. From six to eight weeks to 18 to 20 weeks are typical lead times for many new packaging products.”

DB



**“THE DELI’S CUSTOMER TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE, CARES ABOUT WHAT’S RIGHT FOR THE WORLD. WE AS A PACKAGING MANUFACTURER, ARE LOOKING AT HOW WE CAN USE RECYCLED MATERIAL, AND CREATING THE NEXT STEP PRODUCT THAT WON’T END UP IN A LANDFILL. IN OTHER WORDS, HOW WE CAN GET TO ZERO WASTE.”** — WES GENTLES, NORCROSS

tamper-evident square containers. These extend shelf life and provide eye-catching merchandising that results in less shrink and increased impulse sales.

### 3. On-The-Go Functionality

Consumers today are increasingly opting for grab-and-go dining. As a result packaging must adapt to this trend and assure the consumer that the food travels well, says Jason Horbac, assistant produce manager for the Sabert Corp.

“Lids that remain securely in place during handling and transport to avoid messy spills, lids that reclose, and tabs for easy opening, all combine to bring the customer back for more,” says Anchor Packaging’s Stapleton.

Future development in packaging will be in response to consumer on-the-go eating preferences, according to Inline Plastic’s Tilley. “Packaging is being developed to successfully merchandise, transport and protect food contents. Rigid plastic containers specifically are ideal to fulfill these requirements.”

### 4. Flexibility — We Are Family

Deli operators, especially those who package items at store level, are moving away from a one-size-fits-all strategy in favor of offering a selection of packaging sizes that can fit a range of foods.

“We have seen a consolidation of packaging SKUs and within that consolidation operators want flexibility for hot and cold food,” says Be Green Packaging’s Newhouse.

To meet this need Sabert Corp. offers a packaging collection where 10 SKUs can meet all needs.

“Not only does this generate SKU reduction and flexibility for the operator,

it also produces a brand presence by creating a distinctive and differentiating ‘family’ approach rather than the ‘scattered’ look of packaging in the deli,” says Horbac. “What’s more, our collections come in molded fiber pulp compostable bases with recyclable plastic lids as well as PET plastic. Therefore, an operator can choose to merchandise its organic, vegetarian or local items in pulp and other items in plastic.”

### 5. Sustainability — Green Is Good

Sustainable packaging will continue to be a big trend, say experts.

“Green packaging is and will continue to be a hot topic due in part to new legislation in states like California governing non-landfill packaging and by strong

consumer demand,” says Be Green’s Newhouse. “These trends are impacting design in terms of being compatible with major composting and recycling facilities, but also aesthetics for display purposes. At the same time, it is a huge misconception that compostable or biodegradable packaging is more expensive. This is simply not true. Price point depends on the application and requirements for each package.”

One of the latest sustainable packaging products is Fold-Pak’s Bio-Plus® Terra II, which was introduced last fall. The five-item line offers leftover, entrée, lunch, dessert and salad compostable packaging, which uses recycled Kraft paperboard but replaces the PLA lining found in its predecessor with a coating technology that can be used in hot, cold, wet and dry applications. This packaging is currently in use at a large natural foods retailer.

“There is a lot more interest in sustainability in the foodservice arena now, especially among Millennials,” says Wes Gentles, vice president and general manager for the Norcross, GA-headquartered Rock-Tenn Converting Company d/b/a Fold-Pak. “This shopper, the deli’s customer today and in the future, cares about what’s right for the world. We as a packaging manufacturer, are looking at how we can use recycled material, and creating the next step product that won’t end up in a landfill. In other words, how we can get to zero waste.”

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**Deli**

**Study Confirms Benefits Of Pecorino Romano Cheese**  
by Dr. Anna Nadda, University of Sassari and Sebastiano Bassi, University of Cagliari  
Posted: Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 11:34AM EST

NEW YORK, Dec. 2 (PRNewswire) - The Universities of Sassari and Cagliari (Sardinia - Italy) in conjunction with a team of doctors from the United States, announced today the results of a six-year long research study confirming that Pecorino cheese contains high amounts of CLA (Conjugated Linoleic Acid), an Omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acid naturally found in certain food groups, and which shows bioactive properties for humans.

The study, conducted in Sardinia, Italy from 2003 to 2009 by Dr. Anna Nadda, (University of Sassari, Italy) and Prof. Sebastiano Bassi (University of Cagliari, Italy), along with Dr. Mark McGuire, a Professor in Lactation at the University of Wisconsin, confirmed that Pecorino cheese contains high amounts of CLA.

Pecorino Romano cheese typically presents 3-5 times higher CLA compared to cow's cheeses.

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**Hormel Foods Continues Reductions In Product Packaging**  
by Hormel Foods  
Posted: Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 11:34AM EST

Hormel Foods continues to create packaging reduction projects focused on corporate responsibility strategies.

**John Wm. Macy's Introduces WheatSticks**  
by John Wm. Macy's CheeseSticks  
Posted: Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 11:34AM EST

Available in Jalapeno Pepper and Garlic Romano flavors, WheatSticks are made from thin layers of whole-wheat sourdough, aged cheeses and select seasonings.

**American Cheese Society Announces Transition To Self-Management**  
by Christine Hyatt, American Cheese Society  
Posted: Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 11:34AM EST

The move is the outgrowth of ACS's steadily increasing membership, financial stability and a three-year strategic planning process to secure the association's sound infrastructure.

**Walkers OATCAKES**  
The Scottish cracker with a whole lot of goodness

**Vermont Butter & Cheese Celebrates Anniversary With New Packaging**  
by Vermont Butter & Cheese Company  
Posted: Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 11:34AM EST

Vermont Butter & Cheese Company is introducing a new name, Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery, and new packaging.

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# CROSS MERCHANDISING: Create A Meal... Or A Snack



## Customers have questions; retailers should be ready with the answers

BY BOB JOHNSON

**C**ross merchandising can answer the question what's for dinner or lunch, or even breakfast or a snack. And when the deli is a source of those answers, the experience can definitely be a cut or two above quick-service alternatives.

"We're at a point where there is so much competition that cross merchandising gives customers an alternative for lunch or dinner," says Jennifer Hamann, vice president at Olson Communications in Chicago, IL. "You can offer a complete meal. They're still making it at home, but they don't have to start from scratch."

Olson Communications, which works exclusively in the food industry, has been helping clients build their brand and develop communication strategies for more than a quarter century.

"People use the deli for meals at holidays or for events like tailgating," says Hamann. "You need to convince them to

come every day, and not just special occasions. You do that with pairings that make sense and are simple."

It takes imagination to concoct effective combinations, and this essential ingredient can come from the supplier, the retailer or a fruitful meeting of the minds.

"We do a lot of collaborative things," says Bob Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods in Fall River, MA. "We're doing a promotion with Raley's Family of Stores that is phenomenal. We produce sides in 12-ounce bowls. They have a deal where you buy a whole chicken, you get three sides bowls [for a single price of] \$19.99. We were collaborative on that one, but Raley's took the lead. It creates a "meal deal." The kids can have mac and cheese with their chicken, mom can have a spinach and kale, and you also get a sweet potato dish."

Blount's Fine Foods has been rooted

in seafood since the Blount family came to work the New England oyster beds after the Civil War. Today, the company has branched out to produce a full line of higher quality soups and side dishes.

### Offering Value, Participation

"You have to create value," says Sewall. "If you have fresh pasta and fresh sauce, that's a natural. There are combinations that include some locally grown or produced ingredients. Your real competition could be the restaurant in the parking lot. If you create value, it's an opportunity to bring the customer into your store."

The deli can win the meal deal wars both on quality and on providing the consumer with an opportunity to assemble the meal at home.

"Consumers often want the satisfaction of participating in the meal," says Mary Shepard, director of sales for retail and foodservice at Fortun Foods, Inc., in



Kirkland, WA. “It is still important for that shopper to feel as if they are preparing a meal for the family, and not just grab and go from the deli. I think cross merchandising can be very effective if it is promoting ‘a meal option’ for that consumer. For example, retail fresh soup that can pair with a salad from the deli, or a finishing sauce that can pair with protein from the deli. Show how easy it is to make a gourmet meal by putting the two together.”

Fortun Foods, named for founding chef Kevin Fortun, has been producing gourmet sauces, soups, chowders and chilis for more than 25 years.

“Fresh sauces that can change a whole meal are becoming a huge category,” says Shepard. “Ingredients are especially important — not high in sodium, not full of sugar — but real restaurant quality.”

A meal deal can provide the ingredients for lunch or breakfast just as easily as the more traditional deli dinner.

“A lot of retailers are doing a combo deal where you get soup and a sandwich,” says Sewall. “If you have good coffee, you can have a deal that also includes steel cut oatmeal or cinnamon apples.”

There also are intriguing combinations of deli products that make for a distinctive, appetizing snack.

“There are many possibilities for cross merchandising in the deli: meats and cheeses, produce and salad dressings, cheese and crackers, fruits and dips,” says Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager at Valley Lahvosh Baking, Fresno, CA. “Valley Lahvosh is a carrier cracker, so it’s a natural fit for the cheeses, meats and vegetables found in the deli. Consumers can create interesting hors d’oeuvres with our smaller-sized crackers or use the larger sizes for a healthy crust option for pizzas.”

Pretzel Crisps increased sales significantly after they were moved from the grocery section to a new home in deli.

“We have found that consumers are shopping more frequently around the perimeter of the store, seeking fresh and better-for-you options, which reinforces our deli section placement of Snack Factory Pretzel Crisps,” says Bryan Dobson, senior director of marketing at The Snack Factory in Princeton, NJ. “With each new innovation, we identify which perimeter section best fits the product in both product style and related items. Most recently, we decided to place our new tortilla chips in the deli section where the product is organically complemented by other

deli items like hummus, fresh salsas and guacamole.”

Decisions about placement and cross-merchandising opportunities within the deli are guided by information gleaned from customer purchase decisions.

“We make it a point to closely monitor consumer purchasing data to learn about other products that are typically bought in the same cart as Pretzel Crisps,” says Dobson. “This insight occasionally leads us to potential partner products outside of the deli. Wine brands have historically been a

good partner for us — after all, what’s better than wine, cheese and Pretzel Crisps?”

The Snack Factory is preparing to use this approach to find the natural partners for its newest product, tortilla chips.

“As the first new innovation under the Snack Factory umbrella beyond Pretzel Crisps, the introduction of tortilla chips now gives us an opportunity to cross merchandise with a new set of foods which we look forward to exploring in the coming days,” says Dobson. “To start, we’ll look to promote the product alongside fresh



salsas made within the deli of individual accounts and then branch out from there.”

### Cross Merchandising Storewide

Other suppliers also find natural snack companions in the deli department, and throughout the store.

“Our field team has great success with shelf-stable sliced meats, like pepperoni from Boar’s Head and store brand products,” says Eric Van De Wal, vice president of marketing at The Snack Factory. “The key is not to always couple and cross merchandise with just deli products. If we show the grocery and produce department that we are partners to the overall store, then we can merchandise our product storewide.”

“Success happens when our sales people cross merchandise with what is on sale, like bottled water or kids’ juice boxes,” he says. “Cross merchandising our products at full margin with these sale items increases the overall profitability of the sales item because of the blended margin.”

Sara and Warren Wilson began merchandising Pretzel Crisps under the Snack Factory label in 2004, after they sold their highly successful New York-style pita and bagel chips to RJR Nabisco.

Sometimes a cross-merchandising opportunity can be built on helping customers see entirely new ways of using familiar ingredients.

“There are deli salads that make good



depends on the supplier and how aggressive and innovative they are. If they have partners they work with that supply other items in the deli, they can offer a combination deal.”

Some say this sort of imagination is part of the package deli retailers should expect from the people selling them products.

“The supplier should absolutely be giving the retailer ideas to cross merchandise and the benefits,” says Shepard. “Some retailers are very savvy and know what a great marketing strategy this is for the

says Bonsignore. “Ultimately, it’s in the supplier’s best interest to show retailers and, in turn, consumers how to use their products.”

Regardless of where they come from, clear and creative ideas add to the value of the products merchandised together.

“It is all about convenience and looking for fresh ideas,” says Shepard. “Marketing meal ideas is brilliant. The majority of shoppers come in without an idea about what they will make for dinner; the time is usually right before dinner. Customers need quick, convenient meals with easy preparation. I think bundling the idea and pricing it together is again another advantage and convenience for the consumer. They want ideas and this helps them make a quick decision with perceived value.”

Sometimes just the power of suggestion from arranging ingredients next to one another can increase sales — even without a special combination price. “We have found that just displaying the products together on a separate point of distribution is all that is needed,” says Van De Wal. “Merchandising with a promotion helps; but we still move cases off promo.”

That means information effectively communicated can move product even without a price break.

“Although promotional pricing never hurts, I think it’s more important to let the shopper know what to do with the items you are featuring together,” says Bonsignore. “That can be done with signage, photos, recipes and serving suggestions.”

**DB**

**“ALTHOUGH PROMOTIONAL PRICING NEVER HURTS, I THINK IT’S MORE IMPORTANT TO LET THE SHOPPER KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THE ITEMS YOU ARE FEATURING TOGETHER.”**

— JENNI BONSIGNORE, VALLEY LAHVOSH BAKING

toppings for sandwiches,” says Hamann. “It comes down to being able to provide an idea to the customer. You can do that with recipe cards, or sampling.”

Good ideas addressing which items to display together are invaluable, and they can originate with either the supplier or the retailer.

“It goes both ways,” says Hamann. “It

impulse consumer. Keep them in your department or they will venture to the frozen meal aisle.”

Developing collaboration on cross-merchandising programs is part of a good relationship with suppliers.

“Cross merchandising can start with either the retailer or the supplier, and probably works best when it’s a partnership,”



# DUMBING DOWN THE DELI

## — A REVERSIBLE TREND



By  
**Jeffrey Spear**  
*President - Studio Spear*

If you've been paying attention, food has become a source of entertainment for a significant number of people all across the country. The culinary craze that started with the emergence of the Food Network more than 20 years ago has become a national obsession. In fact, being called a foodie no longer describes the few individuals who enjoy cooking and have demonstrated a deep interest in the culinary arts. Nowadays, anyone who considers themselves cool and groovy is, by default, a foodie.

Perhaps you've experienced this phenomenon. When food appears on the table, whether at home, in restaurants, or served simply from a sidewalk vendor, foodies are compelled to take photos and marvel at its existence. In situations where ingredients are exceptional, preparation is meticulous, and presentations are spectacular, food is elevated to high art and placed on pedestals. It becomes an object of desire — generating levels of awe and admiration typically associated with iconic treasures such as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, van Gogh's Starry Night or da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

Seeing how this phenomenon has penetrated all walks of life, how is it that mainstream grocers fail to exploit these new dynamics? Why is it that, rather than providing depth of variety and obvious opportunities for buyers to experience exciting new flavors, improved quality, and/or better performing foods, choices remain limited to a few mediocre national brands that lack authenticity, utilize unnatural ingredients, and embrace questionable manufacturing practices?

While traces of dumbing down can be found throughout the store, it is overwhelmingly prevalent in the deli department. This is where product formulations for mainstay proteins including ham, roast beef and turkey have remained virtually the same for decades and choice is limited to just one or two brands. While ready-to-serve and heat-and-serve meal solutions are making valuable contributions, and ethnically inspired recipes are slowly finding their way into the display case, there seems to be a reluctance to stray too far from potato salad, cole slaw or other such staples that feature mayonnaise as a dominant ingredient.

Sadly, getting deli managers and store buyers to become more responsive — to showcase foods that are more than subtle variations on an existing theme, or provide access to new and innovative products and/or emerging ethnic flavors — is not terribly easy.

So what is it about supermarkets in general, and deli departments specifically, that makes them so reluctant to respond to consumer preferences? Can anything be done?

It all starts with improving access to new product information. While both trade and consumer publications are full of new ideas and highlight emerging trends, the leading edge in culinary innovation is on display annually at U.S. based trade shows including the Fancy Food Show (San Francisco, New York), International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (Houston) and Natural Products Expo (Baltimore, Anaheim). For buyers with access to international markets, the shows to attend are Sial (Paris), Alimentaria (Barcelona) and Gulfood (Dubai). These are the places where producers feature every manner of foodstuff imaginable in both traditional and non-traditional configurations, setting precedents for the way we approach, purchase, and enjoy food.

If you do not have the time or resources to attend trade shows, another way to experience innovation is to stay abreast of what some of the leading chefs and restaurateurs are featuring on their menus, especially as appetizers and/or small plates. In many cases, consumers come into contact with new foods and new styles of preparation in restaurants. Assuming they enjoy the experience, they will look for ways to recreate these dishes at home. Accordingly, these are some of the offerings you want to be sure are available at your store. Plus, there are promotional opportunities to exploit by creating tie-ins with renowned local chefs and restaurateurs.

No matter which foods you carry, an overriding issue for consumers is proving authenticity and product integrity. So, instead of pushing bargain-priced equivalents that are compromised in terms of ingredients, flavor and performance, opportunity can be found by stocking genuine foods direct from their source. For example, instead of promoting domestic Parmesan, stock Parmigiano-Reggiano. Instead of industrialized deli brands that embrace questionable ingredients, stock artisanal meats that are 100 percent traceable. And it should go without saying that, if you have a qualified local producer (within a 100 mile radius), feature their products as best of breed.

The bottom line is consumers eat out frequently, admire celebrity chefs, watch food-related reality TV, appreciate good ingredients and look for ways to prepare new culinary experiences for themselves at home. All you need is genuine variety and truly authentic products. And should the opportunity arise to modify your selections even further, check out a few trade shows, visit some good restaurants, and stock better brands. Whatever changes you make, be sure to share these developments with your colleagues and customers.

**DB**

# TRUST & TRADITION

**C**ustomer trust has to be earned, and for meat and cheese supplier Isaly's, this has been a main focus for decades.

The company's story begins in 1833, when Swiss cheesemaker Christian Iseli (later Americanized to Isaly) and his family emigrated from the hills of Switzerland to the hills of Monroe County, OH, taking with them Isaly's most precious possession — his copper cheese kettle.

Generations of Isalys carried on the family trade, expanding from cheesemaking to dairy farming. This included delivering bottled milk from house to house in horse-drawn carts. Eventually, Isaly Dairy Co. was created to sell farm-fresh dairy products and a variety of fresh deli meats and cheeses through Isaly's own chain of tri-state retail stores.

A tradition was born, as families visited the stores seeking the now legendary Skyscraper cones, hand-packed ice cream, butter, cheese, baked ham, bologna and Isaly's signature Chipped Chopped Ham. An acronym was even made to remember how to spell Isaly's correctly — I Shall Always Love You Sweetheart.

Production of Isaly's Chipped Chopped Ham became streamlined after its stores were equipped with a slicer that could chip the ham. In the 1979 article Klondikes, Chipped Ham & Skyscraper

Cones: The Story of Isaly's by Brian Butko, H. William Isaly recommended using the leanest ham and setting the slicer to 0, the finest setting, then picking the product up with tongs and placing it gently on wax paper.

"It's like making a martini. Do it gently, so you don't bruise it," he said.

The appeal of chipped chopped ham grew with returning World War II GIs, who were used to Spam. Eventually, processors changed the name of spiced ham to chopped ham.

Today, the tradition holds strong, as Isaly's Original Chipped Chopped Ham and Barbecue Sauce, deli meats and cheeses are available in supermarket delis and convenience stores, while the company's Old Fashioned Ice Cream is served at PNC Park, home of the Pittsburgh Pirates.



East Liberty Store on opening day, April 14, 1932.

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