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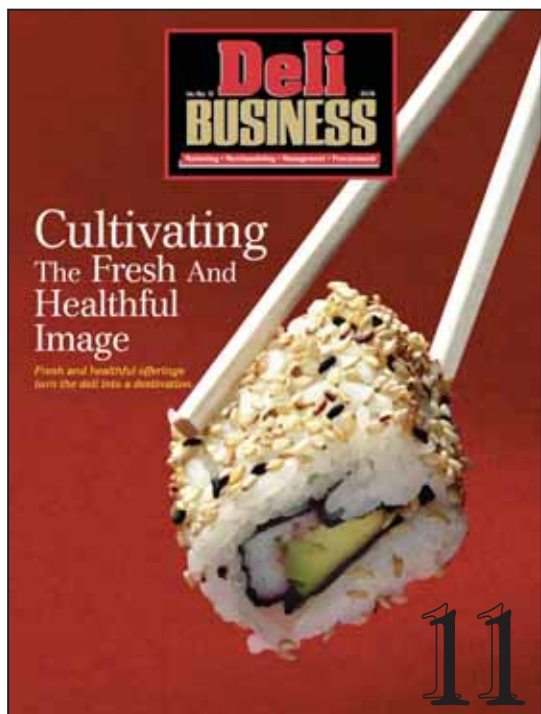
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DELI BUSINESS is published by
Phoenix Media Network, Inc.
P.O. Box 810425
Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425
Phone: 561-994-1118 Fax: 561-994-1610
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Printed in the U.S.A.

Publication Agreement No. 40047928



DELI BUSINESS QUIZ



JUDY REBUCK
Deli Buyer
C&S Wholesale Grocers
Hatfield, MA

Headquartered in Keene, NH, and with over 60 warehouse facilities across the country, C&S is an 85-year-old wholesale distributor that serves some of the nation's largest supermarket chains.

Judy Rebeck has been a deli buyer with the company for the last three years. Prior to joining C&S, she was a regional manager for floral for Supervalu.

Since changing career paths, Judy finds DELI BUSINESS to be a great source of industry information. "I've only just started to read it," she says. "The last few issues have been very helpful. I loved the *Cheese Guide*. It gave me a lot of information and was terrific for someone like me who is relatively new to this business."

As the winner of the DELI BUSINESS Quiz, Judy wins an iPod Nano.

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To win the DELI BUSINESS Quiz, the first thing you have to do is enter. The rules are simple: Read through the articles and advertisements in this issue to find the answers. Fill in the blanks corresponding to the questions below, and either cut along the dotted line or photocopy the page and send your answers, along with a business card or company letterhead, to the address listed below. The winner will be chosen by drawing from the responses received before the publication of the June/July 2007 issue of DELI BUSINESS. **The winner must agree to submit a photo to be published in that issue.**

Quiz Questions

- 1) What is the phone number for InnovAsian Cuisine? _____
- 2) In what city is Tribe Mediterranean Foods located? _____
- 3) What is the e-mail address of Redondo Iglesias? _____
- 4) What is the toll-free number for Bobak's? _____
- 5) What is the Web address for Ventura Foods? _____
- 6) What is the toll-free number for Groezinger Provisions? _____

This issue was: ☐ Personally addressed to me ☐ Addressed to someone else

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Sleeping With The Enemy



By
Jim Prevor
Editor-in-Chief of
DELI BUSINESS

Smithfield Deli Group, a division of Smithfield Foods, has entered into a licensing agreement and launched a one-year test of Subway-branded deli meat and cheese. The program kicked off at 150 Pathmark stores in the New York/New Jersey area including south to Pennsylvania and Delaware. The plan is to expand the test to other stores through the first half of the year.

It is an intriguing concept that raises real issues. It is easy

enough to see why Smithfield would elect to produce the line. To them it is another brand and another opportunity to partner with retailers. It is unclear how the line will be positioned but the Smithfield Web site refers to it as "Subway-branded premium deli meats and cheeses to be offered within the full-service deli counter at mass retailers and grocery stores nationwide."

An opportunity to market a product such as this should be carefully considered by every retailer.

For many the instinct is to recoil — "Subway? Isn't that the enemy?" — and resist the idea of giving any publicity to a competitor. And, indeed, there is a substantial benefit to Subway in having its label displayed in deli cases across the country. Consumer impressions matter and every deli case window provides lots of impressions. Plus, it is something of a zero-sum game.

The impressions given to Subway are impressions that can't be gathered by a retailer's other branded partners or by its own private-label line. And since few private-label lines have much in the way of advertising budgets, it is consumer impressions that build these private label brands.

Though supermarkets selling product with a restaurant name on it is nothing new, this is a little different. It is common for retailers to capitalize on locally popular restaurants by selling some well-known restaurant brand of barbecue sauce or pasta sauce as a specialty item. In South Florida, for example, there is a popular Italian restaurant from south Philadelphia named Café Martorano, and in the Publix near DELI BUSINESS headquarters you can find Café Martorano Spicy Sicilian tomato sauce. Of course, Publix deli doesn't sell any fresh sauce and very little ready-to-eat Italian food.

Same goes with other items such as frozen White Castle brand hamburgers or refrigerated Nathan's Famous hot dogs. Although we might consider all restaurants competitors to deli departments, in fact, few delis sell many cooked hamburgers and hot dogs and, in any case, a frozen or refrigerated product is a different animal than a fresh, ready-to-eat product.

What makes this situation different is that many delis today have sandwich programs that are direct competitors to Subway and similar chains. It seems to argue for pushing back and resisting giving any publicity to competitors.

There is, however, always another side. In this case, one could argue that restaurant chains have spent billions to develop brands and retailers should ride that star. In the case of Pathmark, it might be a smart decision. It has a private label known as ChefMark but it is no Kirkland or President's Choice — and if Pathmark can have an exclusive in its market on Subway brand, it might substitute for a high-end private-label brand.

It is not clear that the NY Metro area is really the place to test this brand. New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia probably have the densest assortment of Jewish and Italian delis in the nation and, whereas Subway may be perceived as a quality brand in much of the country, in NY Metro, it is perceived as a cheap alternative to a sand-

One could argue that restaurant chains have spent billions to develop brands and retailers should ride that star.

wich at a good deli.

The decision hinges on what the retailer is looking to accomplish. If the long-term goal is to develop credence for the store itself and the store brand, then it really makes no sense to give credence to brands identified with competitors for the consumer dollar. But for many retailers, that is too ambitious a goal. They want to have some shelf space that costs them X a foot and sell product that returns the retailer 5X a foot, and the one-year test is really to determine if consumers value the Subway brand sufficiently to pay a high enough price and buy in sufficient volume so that the store will be able to do that.

In fact, some stores have gone further than selling meat and cheese under a restaurant brand. Some have brought the whole restaurant into the store and operated food courts. Boston Market, the sworn enemy of supermarket deli operations and whose presence launched the HMR movement, now has chilled ready-to-eat product in over 1,300 supermarkets, hot rotisserie items in over 90 stores and hot soup bars in over 75 stores, not counting a frozen food line put out by H.J. Heinz.

A willingness to adopt restaurant brands is probably not the right way for everyone. Once again, it depends what one is looking to accomplish. If a chain is looking to build a store name into a quality brand itself, then bringing in a food court of fast-food restaurants won't help with that strategic goal. But it might boost sales and profits right away. To know the right tactics, you first have to know the right strategy. **DB**

EDITOR'S NOTE: One issue that makes this particular Subway venture unusual is that Smithfield doesn't actually make the meat and cheese used at Subway restaurants. Although the Smithfield product will probably be better quality, it could cause consumer confusion as consumers might encounter different flavor profiles, nutrition information and even different product. Those trying to duplicate their favorite Subway Restaurant sandwich at home may be frustrated.

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Wal-Mart's Philosophical Dilemma



By
Lee Smith
*Publisher of
DELI BUSINESS*

Defining a business is not an easy task. In a capitalistic economy, success is often viewed as synonymous with profits because, ultimately, the success of a company depends on its profits. Of course, profits are essential, but the problem arises when maximizing corporate profits supplants the reason for being and becomes the de facto mission statement.

The U.S. railroads of the 19th century are a classic example of an industry that didn't understand its purpose. Failing to see their mission was providing fast, efficient, affordable transportation, they defined themselves as the "railroad industry." By the early 20th century, its purpose had evolved into a huge profit-making machine that defined itself by profitability and not by mission. By failing to understand the greater good, it overlooked the significance of trucking, automobiles and airplanes.

Therein lays Wal-Mart's current problem. Do you know Wal-Mart doesn't have a mission statement, although the mission has been broadly expressed as "Everyday low prices with exceptional customer service?" That is hardly a mission statement that drives decisions. It sounds more like a catchall phrase that means something to everyone and nothing to anyone. More importantly, it means nothing to Wal-Mart. How low is low price and what is exceptional customer service?

The statement becomes more powerful when you add the target customer, usually defined by Wal-Mart as the paycheck-to-paycheck consumer. A more powerful mission statement then becomes, "Satisfying the paycheck-to-paycheck consumer with everyday low prices and exceptional customer service." That is the purpose or greater good that has driven Wal-Mart to success, profitability and growth.

The mission to make life better for the paycheck-to-paycheck customer has resulted in a corporate culture that supports driving excess costs out of the system. The culture has corporate executives in small plain offices with folding chairs. Their suppliers' offices in Bentonville are just as Spartan. The promise of a free dinner is frowned upon and a free lunch is grounds for dismissal — all for the greater purpose of driving costs down, resulting in a great company with a true reason for being.

Let me relate a personal experience that defines the greatness of Wal-Mart. The story was a personal and an eye-opening experience for me.

I have a friend who used to live in a small farming community in southern Indiana, which we visited over the holidays. The primary industries are farming, a paper mill and some light industry. Nestled there is a small city,

smaller than many of the towns where I grew up and where you can still buy a starter home for \$50,000 or a very nice home for about \$150,000. Today, the most expensive home on the market is \$325,000. The most expensive restaurant in town is family-style with entrées that average about \$15 — and include the soup, salad and dessert bar.

Now, you might think this is a poor rural community, but it's not. Life just isn't very expensive. I went looking for a nice gift and ended up at the Hallmark store where the most expensive gift was \$19. There just aren't a lot of people and the available jobs don't pay much. This is the rural America we tend to forget about.

The town's real problem is that it is run by a few families who own most of the businesses and don't wel-

come new competition. People drive 50 miles to the nearest big city to eat at a chain restaurant or go shopping. The local supermarket is owned by one of the wealthiest families in town and it is a mess. It would have been awful 30 years ago and time has not done it any favors. Or at least that is the way it was only a few short years ago.

Enter Wal-Mart. It's true that some small businesses closed down but they probably should have anyway. Wal-Mart brought reasonable prices, but prices were already reasonable. The real value was variety, quality and convenience. Wal-Mart also brought jobs, even if most of the jobs were part-time. In other words, Wal-Mart brought true value to the community.

However, Wal-Mart perceives it has reached all the customers it can; it seems to have come to the conclusion that it has maximized profits in that sector and it's time to go after new business. In doing so, Wal-Mart has begun to erode its reason for being. Decisions that were once clear are now muddled.

It wants to nibble at new businesses without making a commitment. Go organic and tease the affluent. Flamboyant advertising executives are hired — and fired; buyers are searching for products with higher margins. Executives are leaving. Big mistakes are thrown up to the cost of doing business with the excuse that the company opens so many stores each year it can't possibly be on top of everything.

Maybe it is forgetting that the 1.3 million people in its employ along with their families and friends are also its customers. Charges of discrimination and overtime violations don't go over well in communities like the one I referenced and are not forgotten easily.

Wal-Mart's real challenge is philosophical. Profitability is not a reason for being; it is the end result of existing for a reason. The "lost purpose" has been the demise of many great companies and will continue to be the death of many more.

DB

The problem arises when
maximizing corporate profits
supplants the reason for being.

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DELI WATCH

Transitions



Robert Striano was appointed chief executive officer of Hicksville, NY-based Kozy Shack Enterprises, manufacturer of refrigerated desserts and rice pudding. In his role as CEO, he will be responsible for leading the growth efforts of the company as Kozy Shack enters its 40th year of business.

www.kozyshack.com



Dan Bivona has been appointed sales director at Ronkonkoma, N.Y.-based Vormittag Associates, Inc. (VAI), an award-winning software developer. He is responsible for the oversight of a worldwide sales network of dealers plus development and implementation of sales incentives and promotions.

www.vai.net

Announcements



R & D Facility

Sara Lee Corporation, Downers Grove, IL, finalized plans for The Kitchens of Sara Lee, a multi-million dollar research and development campus. The 150,000-square-foot campus will support innovation activities for the company's North American foodservice and retail businesses and will be completed in early 2009.

www.saralee.com

Reader Service No. 401

Carousel Foods of America, Inc.

Sabra Acquisition

Sabra Go Mediterranean, based in Queens, NY, and owned by Blue & White Foods, LLC, has acquired Carousel Foods of America, Inc., a leading manufacturer of dips, spreads and desserts based in Farmingdale, NY. The acquisition adds a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility and superior research and development capabilities to the company.

www.sabra.com/products.html

Reader Service No. 402

New Products

Lamb Weston

Trans-Fat-Free Products

ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston, Eagle, ID, has introduced health-conscious food for people unwilling to sacrifice taste or convenience. Innovative choices, with zero grams of trans fat, feature appetizers, hand-held sandwiches and dessert selections. Potato selections include mashed, fried and oven-roasted.

www.lambweston.com

Reader Service No. 403



Individual Portions

Love and Quiches, Freeport, NY, presents premium-quality individual desserts and quiches sized and packaged for portability and convenience. Two quiches plus molten chocolate Lava Cake and New York Cheesecake in microwave-friendly cups are ready to eat. Each has 0g trans fat per serving and is appropriately labeled for retail sale. 12 units per case/kosher dairy.

www.loveandquiches.com

Reader Service No. 404



New Pails

IPL Packaging, Saint Damien, QC, introduces 12 Series containers/pails with IPL's unique Tamper Evident system. In 1-quart to 1.5-gallons (1-5.5 liters) sizes, they are suited for housing and marketing deli products and prepared foods, such as prepared salads, deli meat and fresh fruit, and can be labeled using IPL's unique in-mold labeling process or dry offset printing.

www.ipl-packaging.com

Reader Service No. 405



Ready! Go! Strips

Alderfer, Harleysville, PA, has launched Ready! Go! Strips in six varieties of fully cooked, carved turkey, ham and roast beef. Packaging features a nestable, reusable, microwavable container. The strips may be added to salads, wraps, fajitas, snacks, entrées and sandwiches. Varieties include Original Smoked and Honey Turkey Breast and Ham, Buffalo Style Turkey Breast and Gourmet Roast Beef.

www.AlderferMeats.com

Reader Service No. 406



Two-In-One

Structural Concepts, Muskegon, MI, unveils the Combination Preparation/Refrigerated Air Screen Case as part of its Fusion Series. The merchandiser combines a sandwich preparation area and an open deli display. Advanced air screen technology allows the open case to maintain consistent temperatures. Available in three lengths.

www.structuralconcepts.com

Reader Service No. 407



Deli Containers

Fabri-Kal, Kalamazoo, MI, has introduced the Alur [uh-loor] line of round deli containers, consisting of five popular sizes ranging from eight to 32 ounces with one common plug fit lid that is leak-resistant. The containers accept a tamper-evident shrink band and may be printed in up to five colors; six on the lid.

www.fabrikal.com

Reader Service No. 408



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



Cultivating The Fresh And Healthful Image

Fresh and healthful offerings turn the deli into a destination.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

W

hether they are starved for time, health-conscious or simply enjoy great-tasting food, consumers shopping in the deli are pleased to find fresh, healthful choices. "People are looking for healthful alternatives in food," according to Rick Schaffer, vice president of sales and marketing for Tribe Mediterranean Foods Company, LLC. The producer of Tribe Hummus is based in Taunton, MA. "Nowadays, you can go into a deli and get it fast, get it good and get it nutritious. You can create the home-cooked environment out of the deli."

"I always love looking at the deli section because it's got variety and color," says Theresa Marquez, chief marketing executive for La Farge, WI-based Organic Valley and Organic Prairie, makers of organic cheeses and organic sliced deli meats. "That's part of the fresh and healthful concept."

Fresh and healthful go hand in hand, she says. "We know fresh foods have maximum vitamins and nutrients in them. And fresh

foods are quality products, the *crème de la crème*."

According to the Health & Wellness Trends Database (HWTB) of the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI), Harleysville, PA, 76 percent of consumers say consumption of healthful, nutritious food is extremely or very important in helping them maintain a healthful, balanced lifestyle.

"The cost of health care now is two times the cost of food. That's a tremendous opportunity for delis to promote the healthful qualities of food," says Organic Valley's Marquez. "Delis already have that fresh and healthful image."

Some companies go out of their way to create more healthful products for the deli. Coleman All Natural Deli, with its complete line of natural turkey, chicken, ham and beef products, is one of them. "Our products are 98 to 100 percent fat-free. We also stay under 500 milligrams of sodium per serving," says Ed Jenkins, president of this unit of Coleman Natural Foods, LLC, based in Golden, CO.

Many deli products are inherently healthful. This is part of the reason hummus sells so well, according to Tribe's Schaffer. "Hummus as a category is considered fresh and healthful. It's very fast, it's light, it tastes good, and it's good for you. The category has just exploded in the last year. The consumer is really figuring it out — they're great-tasting products and they're really good for you."

The Natural Angle

If you are talking about healthfulness and freshness, natural and organic foods must be a big part of the conversation. According to HWTB, 62 percent of consumers polled said they first used natural foods in their quest for overall health and wellness.

"That's why the organic industry is growing by leaps and bounds these days," Marquez surmises, adding, "Our own cheese line grew almost 50 percent this year."

"The words 'organic' and 'natural' are synonymous with health and freshness in the minds of educated consumers," notes Julie Kupst, marketing team leader for Applegate Farms, producers of antibiotic-free and organic deli



Consumers look to hummus as a healthful, tasty meal or snack option.

meats based in Bridgewater, NJ.

"Consumers are becoming more aware of the effect chemicals and preservatives have on their health, and this has drawn them to food that's produced without these chemical additives," she observes. "Unlike conventionally grown food, organic food does not contain pesticides, antibiotics, growth hormones or any other chemicals. Consumers aware of this information perceive organic food as more healthful."

"Artificial preservatives and radiation are often used to extend the shelf life of conventionally produced food," Kupst adds. "Although foods that remain shelf-stable for long periods of time are appealing to retailers, consumers are becoming aware these foods are not as fresh or flavorful as foods that are meant to be consumed shortly after they are grown or produced. Often, natural products are fresher, as they are minimally processed and produced for premium taste, as opposed to withstanding travel or long shelf life."

Some people do not like the taste preservatives add. "When you put preservatives in, you change the flavor, and not for the better," Jenkins points out.

"There's a backlash from the public against preservatives," adds Schaffer.

"Whenever you have less artificial ingredients, it's more healthful," he notes.

"Some people just simply cannot have them. In our industry, we call them the chemical-sensitive," Marquez relates. "Preservatives are something that, if we can avoid them, why wouldn't we want to?"

Schaffer says Tribe is so confident consumers want natural foods that the company recently reformulated its entire line of hummus — 17 flavors — to make them all-natural. "If you look at the explosion of stores like Trader Joe's and Whole Foods — they're all about all-natural," he observes.

A Healthful Fast-Food Alternative

The deli is perfectly positioned as an alternative to high-fat fast food and frozen dinners for people on the go.

"Fast food clearly has a reputation for not being healthful," according to Rick McKelvey, director of sales for Fairfield Farm Kitchens, Inc. of Brockton, MA, makers of Moosewood organic soups and entrées and Organic Classics soups. "As supermarkets expand their prepared food options and give more healthful options, they'll get more shoppers who want to get their needs met for healthful meals on the go," he adds.

McKelvey believes delis need to include natural foods in their prepared foods lineup in order to fully serve health-conscious consumers. "Whereas there is no denying the data supporting the growth of prepared foods within full-service supermarkets, the needs of the natural and organic consumer are not currently being met," he asserts. "Our approach to positioning our organic soup products is not to replace existing soup programs. Just as there is an alternative for the consumer who wants organic dairy or organic chips, there is a customer who wants organic soups."

"We view the supermarket prepared foods sections as the 'final frontier' for this growing consumer segment," he continues. "As chains such as Whole Foods and Wegmans have proven, consumers are embracing all-natural and organic options within prepared foods. It's counterintuitive that, while most

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Traditional Diets In A Fast World

“I think people are really looking for foods that are fast and healthful,” says Sara Baer-Sinnot, executive vice president of Oldways, the Boston, MA-based food issues think tank that encourages the public to live according to the philosophy of harmonious, traditional food patterns, sustainable agriculture and healthful eating and drinking. Baer-Sinnot is the co-author — along with organization president and founder, K. Dun Gifford — of the new book *The Oldways Table: Essays & Recipes from the Culinary Think Tank* (Ten Speed Press).

“It’s easy to get fast unhealthy food, but the deli can provide foods that are healthful and fast, as opposed to going through drive-throughs,” she says. “You can buy pre-made salads or put something together very simply yourself.”

Her new book is filled with ideas for simple, delicious meals, many of which can be made from items picked up in the deli. “The deli is a place where consumers can go to get healthful ingredients” like mozzarella cheese, Asian noodles, grilled vegetables and sliced meats, she notes.

Baer-Sinnot also praises snack options in the deli. “Hummus is really wonderful,” she says. For hurried parents who do not have the time put together healthful homemade snacks like cut-up fruit and vegetables, “There are chips now with no fat. Just to put out hummus or guacamole with tortilla chips is good.”

The image of freshness makes healthful items from the deli even more desirable. “Fresh food makes things very appealing,” she notes. “If people know that the food is more healthful, it’s good, but taste is what gets people in the end. Traditional diets are truly delicious. You just need to get people to try them, and they’ll learn that they are.” **DB**



Healthful prepared foods can differentiate a deli department from its competitors.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFIELD FARMS

supermarkets are actively promoting organic products throughout their store, the only offerings in their prepared foods are rotisserie chicken programs, fried chicken and other products with artificial this-and-that. With dedication, we are confident organic prepared food sales can approach the 3.5 to 5.5 percent penetration levels currently achieved within the organic dairy and organic produce categories.”

Farirfield’s McKelvey believes that, for natural foods, supermarkets need to think outside the freezer. “There’s clearly a perception of freshness being tastier,” he notes. “People don’t think of frozen entrées as their grab-and-go dinner options. Only 25 percent of people eat frozen entrées. We are looking forward to selling far more macaroni and cheese out of the prepared foods section than we do frozen,” he says of the company’s new fresh organic dish.

As another example, says McKelvey, “We have an organic sauce line. Earth Fare [a 13-store chain of health food supermarkets based in Asheville, NC] would take one of our sauces and use it with organic pasta off its shelf to make organic pasta for its hot bar.”

When it comes to selling prepared foods, McKelvey adds, “Wegmans does a great job, Whole Foods, too. People think of Wegmans not just as a place to get their groceries, but as a place to pick up their dinner.”

Fresh Can Mean Gourmet

Artisanal foods, including bread and cheese, are appealing because they are often handcrafted in small batches on-site or near where they are sold, adding that “extra something” that factory-pro-

duced foods shipped over long distances may seem to lack. Locally made foods certainly have an advantage when it comes to time spent in transit.

“Local is fresh because it’s closer,” explains Marquez of Organic Valley. Items such as farm-stand cheeses are also perceived as more natural and sustainable because they often come from small, family-owned farms, she says. And she praises the deli as a place where artisanal foods and quick, casual dining meet. “Where can you get both? In the deli. It’s a fantastic place for all of that, side by side.”

Coleman Jenkins points to the success of casual dining restaurants such as Panera, which sell items like sandwiches, soups and salads made from upscale ingredients — including antibiotic-free meats and freshly baked bread — at a premium. “I think every deli ought to have a sandwich program,” he adds. “In the natural chains, I know they sell a significant amount of their deli meat in sandwiches. They use artisan bread and fresh produce. Several chains, conventional and natural, have very successful sandwich programs. Publix does a great job with this.”

He adds, “They can use not just sliced deli meats. Our company makes antibiotic-free grilled chicken breast that you can slice and put on a sandwich or put on a salad the way Panera does.”

Marquez believes customers will happily pay to have fresh, healthful meals made for them. “You’re paying a little more for deli products because they’re prepared for you. But there’s a lot of work going into it, so you save time. And, at the end of the day, it’s often still cheaper than eating out.” **DB**



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Eastern European Meats Serve Up Old World Flavors

These ethnic specialty products offer more variety for the full- and self-serve cases.

By Duane Craig



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOBAK SAUSAGE COMPANY

Eastern Europe occupies a huge area east of Germany, Austria and Italy, running north to south from the Baltic Sea to Greece and Turkey. The countries included in Eastern Europe largely depend upon who draws the map and the context in which the term is being used. The United Nations Statistics Division lists Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine as the Eastern European countries.

Since time immemorial, the people indigenous to these lands have had diets that favor meat products. Slovaks have klobasa, a pork/garlic combination sometimes flavored with marjoram. The Hungarians have not only a traditional smoked sausage made with paprika but also winter salami described as thick and aromatic. Bulgaria is so proud of a dry-cured sausage called lukanka that they are adding it to the European Union register as a protected spe-

cialty of a specific and traditional character. It will be marketed with a special E.U. label.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the third-largest group of immigrants achieving permanent residence status in 2005 was from Europe, and Eastern Europeans made up almost 43 percent of those new residents. From 1980 to 1999, Eastern European immigration has seen marked increases. For example, the number of immigrants from Poland increased 271 percent for the 10 years ending in 1999. As of 2004, the Census Bureau showed more than 4.5 million foreign-born Europeans in the country.

The meats favored by Eastern Europeans fit naturally into the deli case as well as the self-serve case. "You can be successful at selling Eastern European deli meats in a typical grocery venue," states Stan Bobak, president of Chicago, IL-based Bobak Sausage Company, a manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer. "We do it and we've been doing it for 40 years."

Galina Pincow, co-owner of Brooklyn, NY-based International Gold Star, Inc., ethnic food products importer and distributor, defines the typical Eastern European deli product as highly flavorful, smoked and containing specific spices from the old country. She emphasizes tastes of garlic, paprika and pepper as being prominent in these foods. The flavor profile is more important to these customers than is the type of meat.

"We see changes in the flavor profile being applied more toward what type of meat or poultry is used rather than separation from the flavor," Pincow explains. "[Eastern Europeans] previously ate more pork products but today they are leaning more toward those items that are made out of veal and poultry. The interesting thing we are finding is they still want the same flavor, the same taste profiles."

For the people from Russia and the states of the former Soviet Republic as well as people of Polish descent, the idea of preserva-

What Eastern Europeans have in mind
when they think "delicatessen"



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tives and nitrates being bad for you is not yet a concern, she notes. And while they are tending to move away from cholesterol and fat, they do not necessarily see high fat content as an indicator of low quality.

"I am told the Eastern Europeans prefer a coarser and more fat-laden sausage product," adds Laurie Groezinger, president Groezinger Provisions in Neptune, NJ. "Sausage in general is a staple of the Middle and Eastern European diet and is likely to be eaten several times a day. Food and, in fact, a table that is abundant with food and drink rank very high on the scale of life values for Eastern Europeans. As is typical also in Europe, the table is the center of the universe and it is the means by which one entertains and shows favor and hospitality."

Sales of these meats trend upward and, as with other deli products, pre-packs are figuring prominently in their distribution. "We began producing sausage products for this market in the early 1990s and have seen a steady growth in production every year since," continues Groezinger. "I like to think that this is due only to the quality of our product and its growing popularity by word of mouth, but there may be market and environmental factors as well!"

"There's more and more demand for retail packs rather than bulk," adds Pincow.

While [Eastern Europeans] are tending to move away from cholesterol and fat, they do not necessarily see high fat content as an indicator of low quality.

Price Popular Items For Profit

When it comes to stocking these items for the general public, suppliers agree that starting with the fast movers is definitely the way to go.

"There are two I would definitely move forward with in today's market that I think would be simple crossovers," says William

Osanitsch, sales and marketing director for Karl Ehmer Quality Meats in Ridgewood, NY. "One is Krakauer, which is of Polish origin, and the other is Tiroler, which is of Slavic origin. Both have a hint of garlic with Tiroler being more like a cooked salami-type product while Krakauer is a ham bologna type. These are items of interest to the American market. Then there's also a very, very popular German item called biervurst."

Bobak's Bobak recommends a product like his company's Hunter Smoked Bacon. He claims these types of bacon are most commonly consumed as luncheon meat and are sold both in the deli case and in pre-packs. He also recommends three or four smoked Polish sausages and says to stock one that has a smoky, coarse grind, one that is pork only and one that is pork and beef so there is a variety of meat types.

"Our biggest sellers are our 3-pound Estonska sausage that is typically sold out of the service deli case and the 1-pound self-service Estonska," says Groezinger.

Osanitsch sees these types of cold cuts as adding another layer of prices to attract a different group of customers. "The nice thing about when you get into cold-cut items like these, you're looking at taking your

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price point down from a typical item such as a prosciutto that will cost you as much as \$15 to \$20 a pound and salami that will cost you between \$10 and \$15 a pound to an item that will cost you between \$5 and \$7 per pound," he says. "Even at the high end, they are reasonably priced."

These products also lend themselves to pricing for profit. "We fall into the specialty niche gourmet category where we can get a higher price, and the grocer is going to retail it at a higher price for a consumer who wants to buy up," says Bobak. "The margins are generally better than other categories in grocery stores. In some cases it's offering a new product and in other cases it's not necessarily bringing in a new item, just bringing in a more authentic variation of an item."

"You're looking at taking your price point down from a typical item such as a prosciutto that will cost you as much as \$15 to \$20 a pound ...to an item that will cost you between \$5 and \$7 per pound."

**— William Osanitsch
Karl Ehmer Quality Meats**

"There are always budget shoppers who will always buy at the lowest price within a category," says Groezinger, "but my overall impressions and experience within this market have led me to believe that quality and perceived good taste is worth any price within reason."

There are some tried-and-true approaches to merchandising these types of meats, but there are also some nuances that may not be readily evident.

"The main thing is to get your customers to try them," advises Osanitsch. "They've got to taste them. Passive sampling over the counter is the way to go. Americans tend to have a limited palate when it comes to these kinds of products. What do they put on their cold cut platters? They put turkey, roast beef, ham and maybe salami. So they're very limit-



Adding Eastern European deli meats can boost sales and profits.

ed on flavors. I'd like to invite the American public to try some of these products. I think they might be very pleasantly surprised."

"In the deli meats, the visual is almost as important as the flavor," adds Bobak. "We're not offering stores something to replace — we're offering something to provide a way for the customer to buy up to a more authentic, slightly pricier, better-grade product." He believes these products need a dedicated section in the case and should not be spread out and matched up with similar meats. He suggests placing them near the Italian meats like prosciutto.

Bobak also stresses the need for some education for the sales staff so they can adequately explain to customers the differences in the meats and answer price variance questions. To help out in that effort his company provides a threefold brochure that describes the differences in deli meats.

"You've got to have a category," he adds. "You're not going to be successful with one or two products. It doesn't have to be a 20-foot section but you do want to have a presence and an offering of a good deal of items that vary in price range and flavor profile."

Brand Is Important

"One must display a freshly cut 'faced' piece, preferably cut on an angle," says Groezinger's Groezinger. "Customers want to see what it is, how much fat is in it and how coarsely or finely the product is ground. The visual factor is incredibly important. If possible, it should be displayed in some manner presenting the idea of abundance. For example, have three or four pieces stacked, with the cut pieces on top of them — and be prepared to sample it if asked!"

"If you are putting these types of products into a supermarket that has clientele of this ethnic background, it's a given they will become an immediate sale," says Interna-

tional's Pincow. "The ethnic people will immediately recognize the brand of the product. If you are placing these products in a supermarket located in an area that is not familiar or does not have an ethnic following, I would say you have to do demos."

"I can also tell you from my personal experience that the general American public is more and more accepting of new foods," she continues. "So, in my perspective, if you do a demo in the store and people familiarize themselves with the product and they like the taste, you quite possibly can get this product on the shelves and make it a stable product."

Pincow maintains that the type of offerings is not sufficient to have a successful category. Offering a brand recognized for its quality is more important. These kinds of meats attract customers who seek old-world flavor, home-style cooking and flavorful tastes. "Many deli meats in supermarkets are very bland," she believes. "People seem to be afraid to make a statement with their flavors because they want to appeal to a greater scope of customers. But that's not always good."

"I think people can recognize smoked sausages have flavors they like and they will not be offended by the fact that there's more garlic in them," she continues. "It probably takes a little bravery, it takes a little risk, but the reward could be great — and I think these could be wonderful additions to any deli." Pincow emphasizes the versatility of the products and even suggests them as perfect for grilling and barbecuing.

Osanitsch believes these are not products people tend to eat in large quantities. He points out that a little bit goes a long way and that they can be flavor adventures for those looking for something different. "So, really, the bottom line is they have to taste good!"

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF POPPI ALIS

QUALITY FOODSERVICE *On The Rise*

Quality is becoming a non-issue as retailers master the art of good cooking, convenience and packaging.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

“At last, quality really matters,” says Jeffrey Siegel, president of Chloe Foods, a fresh food manufacturer headquartered in Brooklyn, NY, referring to move away from offering the lowest cost food products

Retailers are getting serious about offering foods that compete with restaurants in quality, variety and price. In fact, some retailers, such as H.E.B., Ukrop’s, Costco and Whole Foods, are destination locations for consumers looking for a great meal. While some chains may still be looking to keep prices low at the expense of quality, they are getting to be a rarer breed as time goes by.

More supermarket delis now have excellent restaurant-quality foodservice offers, from cafes within the store to catering to take-and-bake pizzas. Rotisserie offerings have expanded to include not just many flavors of chicken but also turkey breasts, pork roasts and even barbecued ribs. Sushi counters have sprouted up next to soups, hot panini grills help create gourmet sandwiches

to order, and hot and cold bars offer everything from Caesar salad to dim sum.

For grab-and-go family meals, what used to be referred to as “whole meal replacement” is making a comeback in delis, says Ken Feinberg, senior vice president, Edina, MN-based Curly’s Foods, makers of pre-cooked meats, including ribs and other barbecued items. Entire meals — from the meat to side dishes to dessert — are selling better than ever. With deli offerings increasing in quality and consistency plus customers’ busy schedules, he says, “I think it’s growing now. Stores are going back to the way they used to do things, but they’re upgrading the quality.”

When it comes to restaurant versus retail, the food may be the same, but the packaging is a different story. People expect to have a mess if they turn a plate upside down in a restaurant, but if they buy the same product in the supermarket, they do not expect the package to leak — no matter what they do. One greasy carpet stain on

the car floor can be enough to turn a customer off forever.

Cheryl Miller, marketing director of Flair Packaging International, located in Menasha, WI, and a wholly owned subsidiary of Flair Flexible Corp., based in Calgary, Alberta, notes the food may be great going into a package but that is irrelevant if the consumer has a mess when he or she gets home.

Miller offers five packaging observations for retailers to take into consideration when making packaging decisions.

1. Is the packaging leak-proof? If the package leaks — and it makes no difference how a consumers handles it — it is a leaky package. If it can leak, it will.

2. Does the package have consumer appeal? New techniques allow for high impact graphics that draw consumers’ attention to displays. Customers assume packaging is functional, but retailers should be cognizant of the emotional appeal great packaging offers.

3. Is the packaging right for the product?

Trans-Fat Free Cooking

On Jan. 1, 2006, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) put into effect food-labeling regulations that require trans fatty acids – fats that have been partially hydrogenated to increase the oil's stability – be declared on the nutritional label of conventional foods and dietary supplements. This, perhaps more than the scientific findings of a direct correlation between trans fat intake and an increase of blood levels of LDL (aka "bad") cholesterol, opened the public's eyes to the use of trans fats in food.

Local governments are jumping on the issue. In July, the New York City Health Department's ban of trans fats in restaurants will go into effect. The City Council of Philadelphia has approved a similar ban that, as of press time, Mayor John F. Street is expected to sign. And cities including Chicago and Los Angeles may not be far behind.

In addition, many foodservice operators are choosing to go trans-fat free simply because they believe it is what the public wants. "I just had a conversation with an independent restaurant today in an area where there is no ban that is changing to a non-hydrogenated frying oil," says Terry Splane, vice president of marketing, Ventura Foods, LLC, Brea, CA, makers of trans-fat free shortenings, oils, margarine, liquid butter alternatives, dressings and sauces. "They were inquiring about how to handle the communication with their customer base. With the amount of press and activity, many foodservice establish-

ments just see it as the right thing to do. In many cases, the establishments want to communicate this to their customers as a positive message based on the concern for healthful eating."

The trans-fat-free trend in cooking shows no sign of slowing down. "The environment seems to be right, as the U.S. population continues to get more health conscious about its eating habits," notes Splane. Fortunately, new trans-fat-free products are continually being created to replace those containing trans fats. Although the price of these trans-fat-free oils can be a little higher, they are still very affordable.

When making the switch to trans-fat-free products, many wonder whether trans-fat-free substitutes will make the product taste or cook differently. To this Splane says, "There are many varieties and quality tiers of products within this category. The short answer is no. There are high-quality oils that will deliver against all performance characteristics, including fry life, taste and consistency. We recommend that anyone considering a conversion to trans-fat-free oils complete comprehensive testing to assure their consumers' satisfaction."

For retailers, who may fall in between regulations, it just makes good sense to take pro-active responsibility for their customers' health. It is not an issue that is going to go away and, right now, there is very little positive publicity for using trans-fats in cooking. **DB**

All too often, great food is packaged in whatever container is in stock. Ask your supplier to help you design custom packaging for signature and high volume products.

4. Are your products over-packaged?

Over-packaging has become one of the most common complaints. A better course of action is to keep packaging simple, functional and good looking.

5. Are you keeping an eye out for innova-

tions? Technologies are improving every day and manufacturers are looking for ways to improve packaging. An example is Flair's Vapor Release Pouch, which allows retailers to package products in store and consumers

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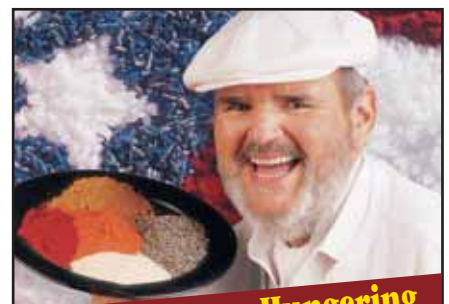
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to microwave at home without removing product from the original package, says Miller.

Consumers were introduced to the concept in the produce department where fresh vegetables come in a pouch that can be microwaved. Deli departments are just introducing similar packaging to allow foodservice products to be heated the same way. Depending on what is in the package, for example soup, customers can use the packaging as a serving container.

"While rotisserie chickens can be a loss leader for some chains, pouches of gravy, macaroni and cheese, or potato and rice side dishes displayed next to the chickens can add incremental profit. With the Vapor Release Pouches, retailers can package individual servings of side dishes in store," explains Miller. They are also perfect for kids' meals and snacks.

Pizza Is Hot (And Cold)

Almost everyone loves pizza. It is highly customizable, cheap (how else can you feed a family of four well for under \$20?), and delicious when done right.

More stores are realizing, "If they can have small kiosks where they can sell quality pizza, it shows customers that they're interested in quality," says Jeremy White, editor

in chief, *Pizza Today*, the official magazine of the National Association of Pizzeria Operators, Louisville, KY.

"I've seen some grocery stores doing their own pizza. I've seen some partner with local pizza shops or chains," says White. While from-scratch pizza can be a big draw for customers, he says, "Without a doubt, frozen pizza has improved dramatically."

Jon Newsom, national sales manager, New Boston, MI-based Champion Foods, LLC, makers of frozen prepared pizzas, says deli sales are "definitely a growing part of our business. More and more stores are doing it or getting back into it," specifically, he says, as take-and-bake. "Some of why it's making a comeback is a lot of manufacturers are making a high-end, quality pizza."

Some companies go as far as hand-tossing their crusts for an authentic mom-and-pop pizza experience. Poppi Al's in Harrisburg, PA, offers its frozen par-baked crusts alone, allowing stores to save labor yet offer a totally unique product.

"Crust is the tricky part of the pizza," explains president/owner Sandy Firestone. The crusts are also available topped. "These are really nice for a chain that does not have the personnel to do the sauce and toppings."

With frozen pizzas, there is less chance

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of running out before the end of the day. "As long as it's in your freezer, it's always available," says Firestone. "You don't have to shut down because the dough didn't proof properly or it wasn't shaped properly."

Frozen pizzas cut back on shrink. Deli operators can thaw out as many as needed on any given day. (If too many are defrosted, a good way to move them quickly is to bake and sell them by the slice.) Frozen pizzas also save labor.

For the least amount of labor, simply set defrosted pizzas out to sell as take-and-bake. Customers like these because they can have a fresh, hot pizza at home, "As opposed to ordering from a pizzeria, where they take it home and it gets cold," says Newsom.

So why do customers choose pizza from the deli over pizza from the freezer? "That's the appeal of the delis — they offer a higher-quality pizza than people may get from the frozen aisle," adds Newsom. Many deli pizzas offer larger sizes, specialty toppings and sauces. Champion even offers some half breadsticks, half pizza combinations.

Having specialty sauces, such as pesto, and gourmet toppings, such as shrimp and artichokes, can make pizza stand out. But even if only basics such as pepperoni are

offered, a retailer can do well. "In the end, I think the more traditional flavors are the ones that sell best," notes Newsom.

Smokin' Barbecue

"Barbecue is the ultimate comfort food," according to Carolyn Wells, executive director and co-founder, Kansas City, MO-based Kansas City Barbecue Society, the world's largest organization of barbecue and grilling enthusiasts. "Right now it happens to be America's favorite food. We've been through all the ethnic trends, and now we're back to our roots. It's the hot 'new' old food."

"Barbecue has enjoyed a lot of growth in the past few years," says Don McCullough, executive vice president, National Barbecue Association, Austin, TX. Between highly publicized barbecue cook-offs in cities such as New York and popular barbecue items in chain restaurants such as Applebee's, barbecue is making a resurgence.

In the past, many delis tried to make barbecue items from scratch — a tricky undertaking because very good barbecue takes expensive smoking equipment and a chef trained in the art. But more recently, items such as high-quality, pre-cooked smoked ribs have become available. Once these items

began selling well in restaurants, delis saw they could easily sell them, as well, according to Curly's Feinberg.

Barbecue can be especially great for foodservice because it holds well for a long time — after all, it is slow-cooked. Plus, says Wells, "In foodservice, people are coming up with all sorts of ways to use it — like a barbecue baked potato or a wrap."

To sell barbecue well, "I think the presentation is vital," notes Feinberg. "Look at Costco, for instance. They buy ribs from us and put them in their rotisserie. People walk by and say, 'I've got to have one of those.'"

Barbecue is versatile. "They can have any rub they want on [the basic smoked meat] and any sauce they want on it," he adds.

"Here in Texas, we don't use a lot of sauce. Other places have heavy tomato sauces or vinegar-based sauces," says McCullough. Others like dry rubs. But that does not mean you cannot serve Texas-style brisket in L.A. "People move around the country and take their tastes with them."

For those customers looking for a quick dinner, inexpensive side dishes such as baked beans, slaws, biscuits, Texas toast and corn bread easily turn barbecued meat into an entire meal.

DB



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Food Bars: The Way Americans Live Now

How to bond together high quality, good taste and immediate gratification.

By Yahia Lababidi

Food bars appear to reflect the American lifestyle — harried and demanding. Consumers want the “warm fuzzy” of home cooking but hardly have the time or know-how to prepare it. They expect restaurant variety and quality but are not prepared to pay for it. As a result, salad bars have morphed into antipasto, soup, hot food and ethnic cuisine bars to match the sophistication of consumers and their increasingly grab-and-go lifestyle.

Consumers are more health conscious — more aware but not necessarily deeply informed. They are after the patina of health without having to go too far out of their way to get it. For the retailer this means food bars must above all look good, clean and fresh since the eyes eat first, and then they must offer choices, choices, choices.

According to Mark Phelps, vice president of InnovAsian Asian Cuisine, Kent, WA, “[It’s the difference of] does it look good versus does it sound good on a restaurant menu.” What was once exotic is now almost quotidian, as Asian, Indian and Mediterranean food bars become more and more a part of the lives of people looking for options. Which is to say, food bars are also replacing restaurants as an easy and non-committal introduction to the new — new flavors, new foods, new cuisines and new cultures.

Since consumers have a fickle palate and are commitment-phobic, supermarkets offering food bars find they are high maintenance and their success rests on the level of commitment invested in them. In this respect, retailers must first consider basics, such as whether a food bar fits their operation and what image they wish to project. Identity will, in turn, dictate the format and product selection. Next, they must look for, and train, employees to ensure the constant upkeep of their bars.

At some point during these considerations, thinking of the partnership with food suppliers and equipment manufacturers is a very good idea. If all these issues are taken into consideration, food bars begin to carry their own weight, with the payoff translating



PHOTO COURTESY OF FOODMATCH

into increased traffic throughout the stores.

Health, Pleasure, Convenience

When it comes to Asian foods, InnovAsian Cuisine attempts to design the menu around what the top-selling Asian offerings are in the retailers' marketing area. However, “This does not mean we limit to those items because with such a mobile society many people have tried different dishes,” explains Phelps.

For Phil Meldrum, president of FoodMatch, New York, NY, Mediterranean foods are not as much about ethnic cuisine or food replacement as about health and supplements for dishes (such as olives, beans, antipasto, etc.) “When people think Mediterranean, they think healthful. Everyone knows olive oil is good for them so concern for health and nutrition is the No. 1 driver.” The idea is to buy a few items — what Meldrum refers to as “the hero ingredients” — and then create your own dish. He defines hero ingredients as artichokes, roasted tomatoes and the like.

“We want to appeal to those with heightened awareness who are looking for health, pleasure and convenience and offer

them an easy, tasty food experience,” he continues. “We’re more like pantry bars; our approach is not to turn into prepared foods [with that level of maintenance].”

Space: The Next Frontier

The other great consideration, of course, is space. The food bar must justify how much space is allocated and for what. “Volume and turnover dictate this, as most retailers are concerned about shrink or throw-away. It is a good idea to rotate specials of the day, or week, as many people are willing to try new things versus having the same menu every day. The big sellers should be there every day,” Phelps explains.

As someone experienced in providing equipment for foodservice, Nathan Jackson, national sales manager, retail for BKI-Worldwide, Simpsonville, SC, recognizes “The trend in food bars is more choices, higher end, closer to a restaurant offering. With this trend continuing, retailers will rely on suppliers who understand their need for equipment that can help support a movement towards higher-end deli food selections.”

Understanding how important it is for retailers to maintain a distinctive image, BKI

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provides custom solutions including custom color options to match store décor packages. And, in a world where less (space) is more (options), BKI has come up with "global series hot cases that have reduced overall dimensions while still providing standard 1½ size well dimensions, and the ability to consolidate full- and self-serve displays within one heated display case," he notes.

InnovAsian has partnered with retailers in developing freestanding walk-around hot Asian bars. "We have learned that deli and foodservice personnel have a more difficult time maintaining the Asian bar the further it is away from their cooking/prep stations. The closer they are, the more they can monitor, stir and refresh the display," Phelps relates. Moreover, in-line self-serve bars or hot food bars with a dedicated prep person overseeing the display seem to perform better, he says.

FoodMatch's Meldrum agrees partnering with retailers is critical. "We view it as our responsibility and accountability to help them manage the real estates they work for us with a focus on the educational part." This means, in addition to bringing to retailers FoodMatch's understanding of consumer needs, what has worked in the past and coming with new ideas, FoodMatch strives

to educate the consumer to make informed choices, for example, how to pair items, as well as offering guidance on what foods complement each other.

Safety: Raising The Bar

Food bars do not reward dalliances, and there are many challenges to maintaining them. Phelps summarizes the top three as "maintaining temperature, keeping displays clean and theft — eating before checkout." Basic health precautions might include sneeze guards or shields to protect food and long-handled utensils that are less likely to slip into the food and require fishing out. Routine surveillance is required to check on cleanliness conditions as well as food temperature at least every two hours to ensure neither hot nor cold foods are kept in danger zones (40° to 140° F).

For such temperature-related safety issues — including, keeping food hot enough to be safe, but not to dry out — more technological solutions are required.

According to Dr. James Cox, director of operations at All QA Products, Mount Holly, NC, "There are two types of safety issues to consider — contamination of food materials by users and any intrinsic food-borne pathogens that could proliferate."

Food-safety issues resolve themselves into the types of food and maintenance of temperature. For example, high-protein food is of special concern if it escapes monitoring and scrutiny for any length of time, whereas raw vegetables are of less concern. (In this connection, most salads in food bars are typically purchased pre-made, with shrewd operators applying laborsaving lessons from their restaurant counterparts such as pre-cut fruits and vegetables.)

Highly prepared high-protein foods need to be kept at certain temperatures — and for palatability need to be served hot. All QA's answer to walking the tightrope of safe temperature is a digital infrared thermometer that measures the external temperature of foods (hot or cold) without touching them, thus avoiding risk of contamination. Or, there is what All QA president Janet Cox calls the "greatest thing, lately" — thermometers that come with an add-on probe to measure internal temperature of foods such as soups and casseroles.

"You don't want to probe everything but it means the difference between measuring the surface temperature of a chicken versus getting the inside story," suggests Cox. While infrared thermometers are prevalent and can be used to determine the temperature of everything — from pipes to air conditioners — those specifically designed for food can even break through steam.

Equipment suppliers for the foodservice industry, such as BKI, are of necessity sensitive to these hot and cold issues. Its Global series heated display cases, for example, enable end users to adjust holding temperatures for a variety of products. By being able to adjust temperatures for a wide assortment of products, the retailer can merchandise these products optimally for an extended period of time, explains Jackson. **DB**

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Asian Foods — From Ethnic To Mainstream

More and more consumers are turning to the supermarket deli for these popular cuisines.

By Barbara Robison

Asian Foods are growing in popularity throughout North America, offering special marketing opportunities for supermarket deli operations. While Chinese is still the most popular Asian cuisine, more consumers are trying many of the other cuisines within the Asian category.

Chinese, Japanese and Korean are the Asian cuisines that spring to mind for most people. However, interest in the cuisines of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and India is growing. By examining all the Asian cuisines and products available, deli operations can develop new and exciting opportunities, especially for highly sought-after younger customers.

What's In Store 2007 from the International Dairy, Deli, Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, cites a report in *U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2006* from the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), Arlington, VA, that grab-and-go is the mindset of 18- to 25-year-old consumers. They spend the most on away-from-home foods of any age group, according to the report. In the same IDDBA publication, Y-Pulse, LLC (a youth foodservice research company), Chicago, IL, suggests that global cuisines, including Indian, Chinese and Thai, are becoming increasingly popular with the young crowd.

For the grab-and-go customer, Lee Kum Kee (USA), Inc., City of Industry, CA, is promoting its authentic Chinese sauces for dipping sandwiches, similar to the popular French dips. Gregorius Haradiran, marketing executive, explains, "A mainstream market might offer a Vietnamese sandwich with a dipping sauce mixture of hoisin and fish sauces or perhaps a Thai sweet chili sauce and rice vinegar mixture.

"A market in Texas is successfully selling a marinated meat sandwich, using a mixture of one-half oyster sauce and one-half soy sauce. Our chili garlic sauce is another alternative for sandwich dipping. It provides a spicy flavor and garlic aroma," he continues.

"The Asian dipped sandwiches give a market a distinct advantage over the regular,



PHOTO COURTESY OF BANZAI SUSHI

boring old sandwiches and can create excitement with the customer base," he adds. The company's plum sauce is recommended for duck, but it also complements chicken and turkey.

"Lifestyle trends are driving a fresh-food

"Customers are looking for higher quality and more natural ingredients when selecting Asian foods."

— John K. Coates
Discovery Food LLC

revolution and the grab-and-go section in delis is growing. We work with retailers to offer options that consumers can use as a snack or a mini-meal. For example, combining two or three egg rolls with a dipping sauce gives consumers the convenience and flexibility they want. We currently offer large egg rolls in a 2.5- or 3.0-ounce size, as well as pot stickers. The company is working on other new items for use in the deli, which we hope to have by mid-year," according to Eric Jacobson, commercial director, refrigerated/deli, Schwan's Consumer Brands North America, Inc., Marshall, MN.

"We provide labels so retailers can easily repack our bulk egg rolls for a refrigerated grab-and-go option, or use with other deli products. This provides a value-added opportunity for extending usage of the product," he adds.

"Customers are looking for higher quality and more natural ingredients when selecting Asian foods," states Jon K. Coates, director of sales, Discovery Food LLC, based in Hayward, CA. "We market a selection of Asian appetizers, such as pot stickers and egg rolls, under the Ling Ling label. Our business in the deli section of the market is growing and we're receiving more and more inquiries about our products from market deli operators."

From Ethnic To Mainstream

Most Asian food suppliers believe main-

stream markets offer greater sales-building opportunities for their products because many of the older, more traditional Asian populations prefer to prepare their ethnic foods at home. "We are concentrating on the ready-to-heat meal solutions for the general population, not just a particular ethnic group," states Vrej Kolandjian, CEO and president, Chung's Gourmet Foods, Houston, TX, a division of Yellowstone Brands, Ltd.

"The deli has a definite role to play in terms of freshness for the customer. Our all-natural spring rolls, dim sum and pot stickers offer that fresh, flavorful taste and we have special deli packaging. Ralph's and Albertson's in Southern California are markets currently handling our products," he continues.

Soy sauce, an item not limited to a particular Asian cuisine, is popular with both ethnic and general populations. "One reason soy sauce is used so often is because it is a flavor enhancer. It provides what is called the fifth taste or 'umami,' which makes flavors pop," Kolandjian notes.

Soy sauce is naturally brewed with three ingredients, soybeans, wheat and salt. Its fresh, clean taste fits into many cuisines. For deli operators it can be an important ingredient in their presentations.

"Our soy sauce is available in 1/2-gallon, 1- and 5-gallon containers, as well as a cube pack, for deli operations. We also have lower-sodium sauce, and small packets that can be added to grab-and-go or other Asian combinations," says Debbie Carpenter, food-service manager, national sales and marketing, Kikkoman International, Inc., San Francisco, CA.

Asian food is the second fastest growing ethnic food category, second only to Mexican food, according to Mark Phelps, vice president, InnovAsian Cuisine LLC, Kent, WA. "It's really a fusion of Asian cuisines that has a place in the deli, including the refrigerated salad cases, the hot cases and



PHOTO COURTESY OF BANZAI SUSHI

the grab-and-go section. Our selection of Carry-Out Cuisine entrées, such as General Tso's, sweet and sour, and sesame orange chicken, or Mongolian beef, come in large rice bowls with attractive sleeves, to provide fresh looking packages for the deli. To offer more healthful products, we do not use MSG [monosodium glutamate], most products have no trans fat and we are looking at the possible use of more organic ingredients." The company plans to introduce a new line of grab-and-go appetizers for the deli refrigerated case in March.

Continuing Popularity Of Sushi

Sushi is one of the major growth areas for Asian foods in supermarket delis, according to the FreshLook Marketing Group, Hoffman Estates, IL. When the company compared random weight Asian deli prep sales for 2005 and 2006, it found that sushi sales increased by 38 percent, from \$29,255,909 during a 52-week period in 2005 to \$40,378,040 in 2006.

"Sushi bars are popular in delis in the California Bay Area, and we're also seeing more Oriental fruits being offered," reports Ruth Webber, editor, *DeliMag of Northern California*, published by Perishables Food Council Magazine of Northern California and Nevada, Sausalito, CA. She says there is an enormous amount of fish being prepared in Asian ways and noodle bowls, such as Mongolian beef, are popular. "Consumers like to fill noodle bowls with meat and a variety of Asian flavored vegetables."

According to Henderson Mar, president,

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Banzai Sushi/Entrees, Inc., Seattle, WA, "Sushi bars are growing and interest in our flash frozen, 100 percent natural sushi products is also growing. The products are produced under the most stringent conditions, meeting strict requirements of 13 European countries since the late 1990s. We have up to 12 different combinations, packed in trays, which a deli operation can thaw two or three at a time for 90 seconds [in the microwave], to provide fresh-tasting sushi. This provides food safety assurances, product consistency, portion and inventory controls, and minimizes waste. We also have bulk slices available in a case, and the deli can thaw as many as needed to put into their own deli trays. Our products are now in 50 Whole Foods stores across the country."

"Sushi is even being served in public schools now," says Kikkoman's Carpenter.

Sushi is emphasized in a Whole Foods market in Southern California, with chefs behind a sushi bar preparing products to order. The sushi bar also offers six noodle bowls and six grilled rice bowls, as well as a wide selection of attractively packaged sushi for grab-and-go customers. Udon and soba noodles plus a sushi catering menu are also available.

A Ralph's Fresh Fare market deli in southern California features a separate small self-serve bar topped with crushed ice, which holds individual grab-and-go containers of a selection of sushi.

Beyond Sushi

While the sushi bar is a highlight in Whole Foods, Asian cuisine is available in other locations within the deli section. Ready-made sandwiches include Thai chicken wrap, Southwest tofu and Tibetan tofu wraps and an eggless tofu salad. In the

refrigerated entrée case, spring rolls, chili roasted duck, Oriental orzo salad, Asian BBQ salmon and curry chicken salad are available. In the grab-and-go section, tofu sticks with Ranch dressing, Hainanese steamed chicken, chicken teriyaki bowls with white or dark meat, pad Thai noodle salad, Unagi BBQ fresh water eel and spicy Szechuan salmon with rice are among the offerings.

At that same Southern California Ralph's, packaged seasoned squid and vegetables, fresh cut fruit and chopsticks are also placed on the ice with the sushi containers. In the refrigerated service deli Oriental sauced chicken drumettes, grilled teriyaki chicken and Szechuan chicken salad were available.

For customers seeking a meat alternative in the deli, tofu, a custard-like food made from soybeans, can be the answer. Tofu picks up whatever flavors are in the accompanying foods. "Mori-Nu tofu comes in six varieties and is made from non-GMO (genetically modified organism) soybeans. It is the only tofu available in aseptic packaging, which increases nutrient retention and flavor, while insuring food safety," says Susan Bucher, director of sales and marketing, Morinaga Nutritional Foods, Inc., Torrance, CA. "Our tofu makes a wonderful eggless egg salad."

Fish and seafood also have a variety of applications for Asian foods in the deli. "Interest in Pan-Asian cuisines has been growing throughout North America. This is especially true of shell and fin fish, which are our specialties. Our all-natural shrimp products in Asian format packages are particularly popular. Dishes such as shrimp chow mein and crispy walnut chicken are examples of entrées that work well for a supermarket

Vietnamese Food In The Deli

Vietnamese cuisine is an area of growing interest among Asian foods. Lotus Vietnamese Restaurant Frozen Foods, Minnetonka, MN, operator of six Vietnamese restaurants in that state, is now marketing an Asian food line for delis. Among the products are egg rolls, wontons, all natural battered tempura chicken and five natural sauces, including sweet and sour, spicy stir-fry, lemon and sweet ginger.

President Craig Kosciulek says, "We have no MSG in our products and we use a light batter with less oil for the tempura products. The products are sold in frozen form and heavy batters are not used. The wrappers are especially crispy and flaky. The meat is precooked for safety reasons, but nothing else is cooked. Therefore, when served the product is fresher and has less oil. We stress quality."

DB

deli. We also market a dim sum line for the refrigerated case and entrées, like Mongolian beef, lightly coated shrimp and sweet and sour chicken, for the hot case," reports Davy Lam, president, Tai Foong USA, Inc., Seattle, WA.

Asian food suppliers support deli marketing of their products in a variety of ways. A deli operator can use Kikkoman's Web site to print coupons for full-case purchases of the company's soy sauce. The coupons can then be redeemed for a rebate by attaching them to the invoice. The company provides a quarterly newsletter on Asian food trends and foodservice product information with periodic promotional offers is also available.

Chung's Gourmet Foods works with its national brokers on cooperative promotional advertising programs with markets, making sure the products are available in the market.

Tai Foong works closely with Martin Yan, the popular Chinese chef, and the company can provide a personal appearance by Yan for a market that has a large promotion of Tai Foong products. The company also conducts special off-invoice promotions four or five times a year for deli operations. **DB**

Cheddars: Know Your Region

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

While it is true that small companies are making “regional-style” Cheddars from regions other than their own, such as English Farmhouse-style produced in America, most regions are known for specific types. Here is a quick primer on what you should expect from each country and its specific regions.

The United States And Canada

“We don’t really have a system with geographic indicators like in Europe,” explains Jed Davis, director of marketing for Cabot Creamery, based in Montpelier, VT. Even so, Cheddars still tend to vary from region to region because of taste preferences as well as environment.

In Wisconsin, “It’s the terroir that really makes the difference from other parts of the country,” believes Sid Cook, president, owner and master cheesemaker, Carr Valley Cheese Company, Inc., LaValle, WI.

As a result of Wisconsin’s lush grasses, natural minerals in the soil and lack of sulfur, “We have more fruitiness,” in the cheese, he says, similar to notes of grapefruit. “California has more sage-y flavor.” Plus, he says, “Cold weather stimulates more butterfat in the milk,” giving the cheese a richer finish.

Wisconsin and California Cheddars tend

to be much less sharp, or acidic, than the New England Cheddars.

According to Erin Shirkey, brand manag-

Distinct locales produce distinctive Cheddars.

er, Great Lakes Cheese Company, Hiram, OH, makers of Adam’s Reserve New York Extra-Sharp Cheddar, “The soil that New York has to offer really makes our Adam’s Reserve what it is.” She believes the high acidity of the soil is transferred to the grass, which is transferred to the milk, which makes the cheese sharp. “You’re probably going to taste that it’s got a little more bite to it — it’s more acidic than it is in Wisconsin.”

According to Davis, Vermont Cheddars are similarly sharp.

“You get out to the West Coast and they’re used to a Colby or a mild or medium Cheddar,” says Shirkey. However, “Flavor preferences all across the United States are broadening,” which means that some people are learning to enjoy a sharper Cheddar.

“We’re finding that the stronger-flavored cheeses are coming back again, when for

years people wanted milder cheese,” adds Phil Robertson, vice president operations, Blaser’s Premium Cheese and Crystal Lake

Cheese Factory, Comstock, WI. “Wisconsin had gotten to a point where it was making plain, milder cheeses. Now it’s making things with a stronger, bolder profile.”

Not all Northeastern cheesemakers agree that their Cheddar is sharp. “In our case, people who are looking for sharpness are encountering a richness of flavor,” says Peter Mohn, vice president, Grafton Village Cheese Company, based in Grafton, VT.

“WE’RE FINDING THAT THE STRONGER-FLAVORED CHEESES ARE COMING BACK AGAIN, WHEN FOR YEARS PEOPLE WANTED Milder CHEESE.”

**— Phil Robertson
Blaser’s Premium Cheese
and Crystal Lake Cheese
Factory**



PHOTO COURTESY OF WIDMER'S CHEESE CELLARS

Specialty Cheddars reflect the region in which they are made.

Many large-scale American cheeses, including Adam’s Reserve, are made not by hand but by machine. “We combine modern technology with old-world philosophy,” says Shirkey, adding that the machines help the company create a more consistent product.

Most American Cheddars are aged in non-breathable barriers, such as plastic or wax, so they retain more moisture than a bandage-wrapped, or natural-barrier, cheese most often found in Europe. These barriers keep outside flavors from penetrating the cheese and also cause the cheese to retain more moisture, resulting in a smoother texture. “These still get crumbly and appear more dry [as they age], but it’s not because they’ve lost moisture — it’s because the moisture becomes bound by the protein,”

says Joe Widmer, owner, Widmer's Cheese Cellars, Theresa, WI.

Some, like Carr Valley, choose to use a natural barrier, letting more flavors from the outside affect the cheese and letting more moisture out, making the product more crumbly. Until recently, this was a hard sell in the United States. "Americans all want to slice their cheese," explains Cook.

That is slowly changing. Because of demand, says Cabot's Davis, "We'll be partnering with another cheesemaker to make a

natural-mold Cheddar" in the near future.

Grafton Village also plans to start making natural-rind Cheddars in the near future. "It will allow us to create a second line of traditional cave-aged bandage-bound Cheddars," to complement the vacuum-sealed Cheddars the company already makes, according to Mohn. "We've got a long history of making Cheddar here in Vermont, but it's always been a 'modern' Cheddar. There's some interest in going back to traditional cheeses," he continues.

Natural And Organic Cheddar

Most specialty Cheddars are from grass-fed cows, whether they are out to pasture nearly all year, as they are in New Zealand, or graze part of the year and eat preserved grasses during colder months, as they do in England and Wisconsin.

Chad Pawlak, president, Grass Point Farms and Wisconsin Organics, Thorp, WI, says cheeses made from the milk of grass-fed cows are not only more healthful but also richer tasting. "Omega-3 and -6 ratios are in better balance," he explains. "I think it's a creamier, richer flavor."

Along with an interest in cheese from grass-fed cows is a growing interest in organic cheeses, though the trend is moving more slowly than the fluid milk trend. "It's expensive to do [make organic cheese], and you want it to be something someone can afford to buy," says Jed Davis, director of marketing, Cabot Creamery, Montpelier, VT.

"You've seen a ton of growth in organic fluid milk," says Jim Grande, vice president of sales and marketing, Blaser's Premium Cheeses, Comstock, WI, a company that makes organic and conventional Cheddar. "It's driven up the cost of the milk used for organic cheese."

"I don't think it's price as much as it is the availability of the cheese," points out Pawlak. "Most deli cheese is a quality, premium-based product. If you put an organic Cheddar in the deli, it's going to blend right in" in terms of price.

Davis agrees with that point. "We had a line of organic Cheddar and it was well-received. But our biggest challenge was obtaining enough organic milk when we needed it," he says.

More common — and less expensive than organic — are Cheddars made from recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH)-free milk, although the added expense of having them certified hormone-free means not all companies choose to put that on their label.

Specialty Cheddars are also often made using sustainable farming methods, which higher-end customers tend to appreciate. "As a producer, sustainability is very important to us," says Sid Cook, president, owner, and master cheesemaker, Carr Valley Cheese Company, Inc., LaValle, WI. "We've been in business for over 100 years. We want to make sure we can continue for the next 100 years." **DB**

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PHOTO COURTESY OF KERRY GOLD RESERVE CHEDDAR CHEESE

Irish Cheddar takes on a rich golden color without adding annato or dyes.

Cheddars made in the Northeast tend to be white, not colored yellow, unless otherwise requested. Wisconsin Cheddars are usually tinted yellow with annato. "It doesn't add any flavor, but people eat with their eyes," notes Blaser's Robertson.

"The English Cheddars, I would think,

would be very close to a New York Cheddar," says Great Lakes' Shirkey, because the first Cheddar to be made in the United States was made in New York State by English settlers. They decided New York was a great place for Cheddar, she says, because "It had the most similar environment to

what they had in England."

Mohn feels his Vermont Cheddars also hold some similarities to those made in England. "It's similar to the English Farmhouse cheeses in mouth feel and texture," he explains. But, as for flavor, "It has a cleaner taste impression. It's more aligned with the

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The popularity in the United States of raw milk cheeses is growing.

American palate."

English/Irish

Cheddar originated in England almost 500 years ago, according to Maria Walley, Cheese From Britain, USA, Cincinnati, OH, exporters of Cheddar from West

Country Farmhouse Cheesemakers, a group of 12 Cheddar producers who have a Protected Designation Origin (PDO) from the European Union that dictates its cheese must be made according to traditional recipes and processes.

"Farmhouse Cheddar has an open texture and distinctive bite, leaving you almost being able to taste farmhouse aromas," says Adrian Hurrell, business development manager, North Downs Dairy Company, Somerset, England, makers of West Country Farmhouse Cheddar. The longer the Cheddar is aged, the more "farmhouse flavor" the cheese will have.

"English Cheddar tends to have a more complex flavor profile at an earlier age than most other Cheddars," explains Walley. "English cheese also has a different texture. It is a bit drier."

English and Irish cheesemakers will each argue their own Cheddar is better because of the natural environment in their regions, but methods for making these cheeses remain very similar.

"Irish Cheddars are more smooth than sharp," says Molly O'Loughlin, brand communications manager for Kerrygold Reserve Cheddar Cheese, Irish Dairy Board, Wilmette, IL. "They're strong, but we don't call them sharp or acidic."

Because of the natural beta-carotene in the grasses, Irish Cheddar takes on an appealing rich golden color without the addition of annatto or dyes. O'Loughlin says the milk used to make Cheddar comes only from cows that are grazing. When the weather is bad and they must be fed silage, the milk is used for something else to prevent the cheese from taking on a "fermented" flavor

Sheep's And Goat's Milk Cheddars

Although cheesemakers are reluctant to call cheese made from goat's and sheep's milk "Cheddar," many are making Cheddar-style cheeses from these milks. "We produce some cheeses that are made somewhat like Cheddar with straight sheep's and straight goat's milk," says Sid Cook, president, owner, and master cheesemaker, Carr Valley Cheese Company, Inc., LaValle, WI. "With the sheep's milk Cheddar-style that we make, it's a very hard, firm, Cheddar — almost like a Parmesan. It's almost a granular texture because of the components in sheep's milk. You have a much higher fat content and a much higher protein content" than with cow's milk.

"Most goat's milk Cheddars in America have a hard, wooden texture. Our goat Cheddar is more creamy," says Cook. "The goat's milk Cheddar that we make has a clean, Cheddar-y flavor. I would say it tastes woody, wooly, earthy. And it's sweeter" than cow's milk Cheddar.

Goat's and sheep's milk Cheddar-style cheeses are gaining popularity, according to Cook. "Our sales go up 20 to 30 percent each year. The flavor profiles really differentiate them from other Cheddars." **DB**

that silage can give it.

As a result of the naturally high butterfat in the milk, "Our Cheddar isn't very dry — it's more of a soft, creamy, smoother texture," she adds. "It's really rich and creamy."

Australian/New Zealand

Because they are made in the same part of the world, Australian and New Zealand Cheddars have much in common.

"What makes a New Zealand Cheddar different from anywhere in the northern hemisphere is that most of the soil is volcanic in origin," explains Tony Meredith, category director of dairy foods for Ft. Lauderdale, FL-based Fonterra Brands Americas, Inc., a division of Fonterra Cooperative Group, based in Auckland, NZ, and importers of Mainland Cheese from New Zealand. The rich soil and lots of sunshine almost year-round result in rich grasses filled with beta-carotene. "It makes our Cheddar quite yellow," he continues.

"You taste strong flavors at the beginning and a nice creamy finish," Meredith adds. "Some people call it cow-y, some people call it barn-y. It has a richer flavor." Much like



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— David Voremberg
Jana Foods, LLC

British Cheddars, New Zealand Cheddars are usually aged in breathable rind. This, and the natural makeup of the milk, allows it to become drier and more flavorful faster, according to Meredith. "A 2-year-old aged New Zealand Cheddar will sample the same as a 4-year-old Canadian or Vermont Cheddar — it ages faster. You get more piquant flavors and more of the calcium lactate crystals form," giving older Cheddars more of the crunch prized by fans of specialty aged Cheddar.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WIDMER'S CHEESE CELLARS

Specialty cheddars have complex flavor profiles and textures.

Like the traditional Cheddars of Ireland and England, Australian and New Zealand cheddars are usually aged in a natural rind. And, like British Cheddars, milk is not used to make Cheddar during the months when the cows are not grazing. As with New Zealand cattle, Australian cattle are able to

graze most of the year. "In my opinion, Aussie Cheddar is less acidic, creamier, and has a softer — albeit somewhat grassier — flavor than other Cheddars," says David Voremberg, president, Jana Foods, LLC, Secaucus, NJ, importers of Australian cheese. **DB**

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Reader Service No. 123

Italian Specialty Cheeses

By Karen Silverston

High-quality Italian specialty cheese may be dwarfed in volume by its commodity sibling, but it has astonishing breadth and a much higher growth rate.

To feed the fascination with cheese that is pushing all categories, importers are visiting more regions and going deeper into the regions they know. They are working with producers and consolidators who pick up limited-quality cheeses here and there, helping producers who otherwise would not export.

Buyers attending the 2007 Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco, CA, met and talked with artisans and experts at exhibitors' booths.

Crystal Food Import Corp., Lynn, MA, brought in Giovanni Guffanti Fiori, cheese ager for Luigi Guffanti 1876, in Piedmont, Italy. "Customers are looking for artisan products. In Italy, a 'stagionatore' [cheese ager] is not as familiar a profession as in France," says Stephanie Ciano-Pace, vice president of sales and purchasing.

"Giovanni works with farms, taking products fresh from the farm to keep in his caves, working with some sub-distributors. They age the cheeses to perfection, sometimes washing the rinds, changing the cheeses a little, developing them. He may

wash one with wine, put herbs on it or age it for a length of time that is unusual. Some have grape must on the outside, others rose-

Discerning consumers are pushing the astonishing growth in high-end artisanal imports.

mary or juniper berries. He sells to fine cheese shops in Italy. It's not everyday Italian," she continues.

"Specialty cheese has become much more pervasive," proclaims Joan Allen, director of marketing, Arthur Schuman, Inc., Fairfield, NJ. "Everyone from the cooking stores to the high-end retailer is offering specialty cheese to meet the growing demand. The high-end, imported cheeses have a history, a tradition and very fine quality. The clubs have been a big contributor because they have national distribution, demo programs and their mission is to bring in new and exciting products. Costco [Issaquah, WA] has given it a good kickstart. People who never had access to the cheeses because the distribution network couldn't

get it there fast enough now can experiment and learn more."

According to Tom Slattery, general manager of Castelli USA, LLC, based in Little Falls, NJ, with main offices in Reggio Emilia, Italy, importers of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Italian specialty cheeses under one brand, "We see our growth coming from giving consumers authentic Italian cheese from the regions they should come from. A lot of cheeses come in to the United States and are sold at lower cost but don't have the same quality."

"The euro being higher makes the products more expensive for the consumer, so there needs to be a justification for the price. Traceability — meaning, if a product is bad, you'll be able to trace it right back to the animal at the farm where it was raised — is a powerful guarantee for consumer and trade alike. Understanding this is helping to justify the cost," explains Paolo Grandjacquet, president, Saratoga Marketing Group, Saratoga Springs, NY.

"Where the quality and the specificity are [documented], we are seeing growth — even if the authentic cheese is more expensive," notes Emmanuelle Hofer Louis, director of marketing, Anco Fine Cheese, Moonachie, NJ.

"We've just completed resetting stores in Louisiana, Arizona and Ohio, where we have domestic parmesan as well as Parmigiano-Reggiano PDO," she adds. "The Parmigiano-Reggiano PDO has higher sales. One should not assume that a consumer who has tried a PDO product does not go back to it."

"Marketing needs to educate consumers about the value of the consortia seals and the yellow and blue PDO logo. You can use the logo on the label only if you have the approval of the consortium. You submit the label to the consortium — which is also checking the quality of the cheese," Hofer Louis continues.

The retailer needs to make the distinction between cheese produced domestically, in Argentina or elsewhere, versus cheeses such as Parmigiano-Reggiano PDO and Grana Padano PDO.

"The consortium is defending the cheese because it does have a personality of its



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANCO FINE CHEESE

Price is no obstacle to a buying public looking for high-end artisanal imports.

own. Only the consortium-approved cheese from the defined production zones may be called Parmigiano-Reggiano or Grana Padano. For PDO products, protecting the name means respect for the traditional recipe starting with the breed, where the animal is grazing, where the craftsmanship of the production and aging take place. The aspect, texture, flavor profile of [non-PDO cheeses] have nothing to do with the PDO-defined place of origin," states Hofer Louis.

Producers stand to gain if they are willing

cheese was classified as mozzarella, grana and pasta filata. Today there are popular Italian cheeses in every category. Stunning, fragrant alpine cheeses, soft-ripened single and mixed milk cheeses and Gorgonzola, one of the world's great blue cheeses, originate in northern Italy, along with the famous Parmigiano-Reggiano PDO and Grana Padano PDO. Cow's milk dominates and cheese is also made from goat, sheep and mixed milk.

"There is a trend toward offering a PDO

cheese from an artisan who makes fewer wheels or ages it longer, or using milk from a special breed," explains Michele Buster, owner of Forever Cheese, Long Island City, NY. Buster sources Ca de Ambros' cheeses, including the popular washed-rind Taleggio PDO, in Val Taleggio's alpine foothills.

Buster also sources a line of cheese from an artisan in Veneto, where cheese is sometimes preserved in ashes or in wine must. "He uses traditional regional methods of

IN THE BATTLE FOR AUTHENTICITY, WINNING IN THE MARKETPLACE IS THE PRODUCER'S CARROT, TRACEABILITY THE STICK. CONSUMERS GET A PRODUCT WITH THE INTEGRITY IT WAS DEFINED TO HAVE.

to work with competitors. "By setting up standards and concentrating on quality control and marketing, they can present their product as a guaranteed high-quality, traceable product," says Nancy Radke, president of Syracuse, NY-based Ciao, Ltd., a culinary consultancy specializing in marketing Italian food products with a specialty in cheese, and director of the U.S. information offices for Parmigiano-Reggiano and Fontina Val d'Aosta.

Given recent domestic produce issues, consumers are receptive to the benefit of traceability. "Documented traceability assures consumers this product has guarantees of people really watching it. PDO is great for people who want quality assurance about their food source. We know what fields the feed came from, which cows ate it, what was the state of health of the cows the milk came from. It should give consumers real comfort," says Radke.

In the battle for authenticity, winning in the marketplace is the producer's carrot, traceability the stick. Consumers get a product with the integrity it was defined to have.

Northern Italian Cheeses

It was not too long ago that Italian

THE TALE OF TWO FONTINAS



ONCE UPON A TIME, LONG, LONG AGO in a tiny village nestled high in the Italian Alps, a magnificent cheese was born: FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA, a firm and supple cheese renowned far and wide for a unique flavor that reflected the lush alpine grasses, succulent wildflowers, and pure mountain air.

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Reader Service No. 100

American "Italian" Cheese

Nuances of taste, craftsmanship and diversity of Italian specialty cheese are linked to their place of origin and cannot be duplicated. But awareness and heritage cannot be confined.

"Italians emigrated here and began making their cheeses. The cheese is different because the cows graze on different land and the cheese is aging in different air. We make good cheese in America. You have to respect the cheese and you want to make known where it came from," says Lou DiPalo, co-owner of DiPalo's Fine Foods, New York, NY.

Competitions confirm a movement toward quality. American producers won three of seven medals at the 2006 World Cheese Awards (WCA), London, England, in the Fresh Mozzarella Ball (Cow's Milk) class, and for the first time in the 19-year history of that class, an American producer won a gold medal. Mozzarella Fresca, Inc., based in Concord, CA, won the gold and bronze medals for Fresh Mozzarella Ball.

The Lactalis American Group, Inc., Buffalo, NY, announced the acquisition of Mozzarella Fresca, Inc., Concord, CA, in January. "Fresh Mozzarella, Ricotta and Mascarpone have grown in double digits for the last 12 years. 'Natural' is driving the growth. We're supplying several chains and we are Kroger's national mozzarella partner," relates Jason Knight, Mozzarella Fresca executive vice president.

Family-owned Calabro Cheese Company, East Haven, CT, was founded in 1953. Fiorella Cutrufello, national sales manager, confirms the growth in the category. "Artisan Ricotta, Impastata and Smoked Mozzarella are the

biggest sellers. Nationally, the trend is to use the highest quality milk, combined with the most traditional taste, texture and form. HACCP certification is increasingly important."

BelGioioso Cheese, Denmark, WI, founded in 1979, is also family owned. "BelGioioso began producing Fresh Mozzarella about 10 years ago. A few people were making it here, but it was service based, and you didn't see it at retail level. The category has grown substantially. We supply curd to shops that stretch and make it daily right in their store, which is a trend now," according to Jamie Wichlacz, marketing manager.

"Key products that are increasing are the fresh handcrafted cheeses, the washed rind Italico, the blue-veined CreamyGorg, and the hard grating cheeses such as the 18-month aged American Grana," says Wichlacz. "The grana has a deep nutty flavor, granular texture and is aged on wooden boards imported from Italy. Mr. Auricchio [BelGioioso's founder] wanted to create an exclusive cheese that is similar to a cheese he loved in Italy." BelGioioso's two newest cheeses are based on classic Italian varieties and are made to order. Crescenza-Stracchino is a fresh, rindless cheese, creamy, with a hint of tartness. Burrata is an extension of the fresh mozzarella line, a high-end specialty product made by hand.

John T. Umhoefer, executive director of the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Madison, WI, sees growth in breadth. "We didn't see Gorgonzola made in the United States 20 years ago. In the 2006 World Championship Cheese Contest, I counted 14 Gorgonzola entries from U.S. manufacturers."

DB

aging cheese and adds a twist. Muffato, the new cheese, is aged in hay, marjoram, mint, and chamomile, in oak barrels," says Buster.

Publicity is drawing attention to cheeses from the northeastern provinces of Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Aged Piave is fruity and popular. Latteria Perenzin offers three lines: organic goat and cow and a traditional line including flavorful, aged Montasio PDO.

The up-and-coming Trentingrana is Grana Padano PDO from Trentino. "Trentingrana displays two logos because of its unique alpine production area — the Grana Padano PDO firebrand and the sub-consortium logo," says Lou DiPalo, co-owner of DiPalo's Fine Foods, New York, NY.

"Grana Padano PDO is introducing branding for cheeses aged nine to 16 months,

16 months plus and Riserva, 20 months plus," says Saratoga's Grandjacquet.

Aged cheeses are becoming more popular. "In the '90s people traveled extensively, tasted different foods and liked flavor profiles different from ones our parents liked. It's more toward an aged product," notes Castell's Slattery.

Sardinia, Sicily And Central Italy

In Sardinia, Sicily and throughout central Italy, especially in Umbria, Marches, Lazio and Tuscany sheep milk dominates. Cow, goat, mixed-milk and buffalo-milk cheeses are also produced.

Pecorino is an important category — DiPalo's carries over 100 varieties. Il Forteto Cooperative in Mugello produces Pecorino Toscano PDO made from the milk of sheep

pastured in Florence, Prato, Siena, Pisa, Lucca and Arezzo.

"We're seeing an array of aged, raw-milk artisan pecorinos coming from Guido Pinzani, Fattoria Brentine, a producer in Castel San Gimignano," says Barry B. Elkins, co-owner, World Import Distributors, Inc., Iselin, NJ.

"Pecorino con Foglie di Noci has a sweet delicate flavor. It is a farmhouse sheep's milk cheese wrapped in walnut leaves and cave aged," says Forever Cheese's Buster.

Burrata, a delicate, filled pasta filata pouch, from Puglia in southern Italy is extremely popular despite its fragility.

Buffalo milk mozzarella is growing in popularity and more varieties of buffalo milk cheese are being imported. Mozzarella di Bufala Campana PDO is consumed in Italy the day it is made. Arthur Schuman imports the Garofalo brand, popular in the United States year-round, especially in summer, according to Allen.

"Garofalo owns its own herd, so it is vertically integrated. There is a state-of-the-art facility for the animals and computer monitoring of how much milk they generate. The facility that produces the mozzarella is E.U.-certified hygienic, and the product has to be air-shipped to get it here next day. The key to getting these products to the American public is a good logistics department and a premier brand to work with," she continues.

In Lombardy, a grana called Sovrano is made from blended cow and buffalo milk.

In Campania, Casa Madaio produces artisan versions such as Barilotto — an aged ricotta salata, and Sbronzio — an aged Caciocavallo covered with grape must.

Agrozootecnica Marchesa di Enrico Parente & C., S.N.C., based in Grazzanise, Italy, produces the Campania Felix line, including Mozzarella di Bufala Campana PDO.

The Parente family has been raising water buffalo and producing buffalo-milk cheese for four generations. The cheesemaking facility is about 10 kilometers from the farm, where about 600 of the 1,000 buffalo are milked.

Mozzarella Affumicata, a Mozzarella di Bufala Campana PDO lightly smoked over wheat straw, retains its soft, creamy texture and fresh, sweet taste with a delicate overtone of sweet smoke. Smoked mozzarella braids have the same almost elusive sweet, fresh, toasty flavor.

The Ricotta spreads like soft butter and the aged Ricotta Salata can be grated. Caciocavallo, a 3-pound ball with a rope-tied top knot, fresh and aged Caciotta, Burrata and Tartufella, a buffalo-milk cheese with truffles complete the line.

DB

Federal oversight of food safety: High-risk designation can bring needed attention to fragmented system

08.feb.07

U.S. Government Accountability Office

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07449t.pdf>

GAO's high-risk series is intended to raise the priority and visibility of government programs that are in need of broad-based transformation to achieve greater economy, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and sustainability. In January 2007, as part of our regular update of this series for each new Congress, GAO designated the federal oversight of food safety as a high-risk area for the first time.

While this nation enjoys a plentiful and varied food supply that is generally considered to be safe, the federal oversight of food safety is fragmented, with 15 agencies collectively administering at least 30 laws related to food safety. The two primary agencies are the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which is responsible for the safety of meat, poultry and processed egg products, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is responsible for other food. In many previous reports, GAO found this fragmented system has caused inconsistent oversight, ineffective coordination and inefficient use of resources.

The complete document can be downloaded from:
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07449t.pdf>

Consumers Union calls for single agency to ensure safety of nation's food supply

08.feb.07

From a press release

Consumers Union is calling for the creation of a single food agency to ensure adequate, efficient and effective oversight of our nation's food supply. Consumers Union welcomes today's hearing in the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to bring attention to the inadequacies in the government's system to monitor food's safety.

As highlighted in last week's GAO report, the nation's food supply is a "high-risk" area in need of immediate government attention to ensure the continued safety and integrity of our food.

"Having multiple agencies responsible for making certain the food on our table is safe to eat is a recipe for disaster," said Sally

Greenberg, senior counsel at Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine. "We support the proposal for a single agency with authority, resources and leadership to oversee a safe and secure food supply in the 21st century food market."

Research and testing published in *Consumer Reports* illustrates the ineffectiveness of our current food oversight. Recent testing showed *campylobacter* — bacteria found on chicken — has nearly doubled to contamination rates of 81 percent. Yet USDA has not addressed the problem or set a standard for *campylobacter*.

Consumer Reports also found fish available in the marketplace that often exceeded FDA's acceptable "action" level for mercury. While FDA has in place a system to evaluate levels of mercury, it does nothing to remove fish that exceeds its recommended levels or even provide adequate information to warn about the risks mercury poses to unborn children.

"USDA's policy of keeping secret the names and locations of tainted meat is a prime example of the often misguided and ineffective approach to food safety," added Greenberg. "Consumers need the attention and authority a single government entity can and should be able to provide to ensure healthy, worry-free eating."

For a copy of the letter sent to Chairperson DeLauro and the House Subcommittee on Agriculture Appropriations see <http://www.consumersunion.org>.

CANADIAN NEWS:

'If you're sick, don't work'

18.jan.07

St. Catharine's Standard (ON)

Tiffany Mayer

Marilyn Lee, a Ryerson University public health professor, was cited as telling a lecture series on hygiene at Brock University that foodborne illnesses, including potentially deadly *E. coli* outbreaks, could be prevented if workplaces where produce is handled made it easier for employees to take time off when they're sick, stating, "If you're sick, don't work."

"That's easier said than done because a lot of people are paid hourly wages. If you stay home, you don't get paid. We need to pay attention to hygiene...have policies where we compensate people to encourage

Martin Mitchell, technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) and managing director of Certified Laboratories compiles TechNews.



The information has been compiled from press releases, news articles and government announcements and policy clarifications. Additional information may be obtained by contacting RFA by phone at 770-452-0660 or online at www.refrigeratedfoods.org.

workers to stay home so they're not working when they're ill. That's where I think the emphasis should be."

Lee noted such a practice could have prevented the inoculation of more than 5,000 people against hepatitis A in Edmonton six years ago when a grocery store deli employee, sick with the highly contagious liver disease, showed up for work anyway.

However, that's only one part of the solution, Lee explained.

Following a 6-month stretch in 2006 that saw spinach, carrot juice and lettuce each take turns as public enemy No. 1 after hundreds fell ill from *E. coli* contamination, Lee said hygiene controls must also be implemented on the farm.

That includes teaching food safety to farm workers — particularly in foreign countries that export produce to Canada — providing hand-washing facilities and keeping packing facilities clean.

It also means irrigating crops with potable water that is tested regularly and washing harvested produce with chlorinated water in packing plants, Lee said, adding, "We need to look at the production level, some of these developing countries where we get our produce, and help them develop policies. If we're going to continue to get produce from these countries, isn't it in our best interest to work with these people?"

Lee was quick to note the spinach contaminated with *E. coli*, which killed three Americans last fall, was grown in California. "It's not only developing countries. It can happen anywhere. We have to be diligent."

"The more we place the idea [of safeguards] in people's minds, and the more comfortable they get with it, then maybe they'll take some action," she added.

Until such practices exist, though, the consumer will remain vulnerable, she said. **DB**

Blast From The Past

A

fter immigrating to the United States from Poland in 1962, Frank Bobak founded Bobak's Sausage, Chicago, IL, in 1967. As a hobby and following family traditions, he and his wife Angeline made sausages in their home. He started Bobak's Sausage Shop in 1967 and by 1974 was operating four deli shops and making the products from a factory in the original storefront. In 1975, Frank opened a dedicated sausage-making facility. The business continued as retail deli locations and a sausage-processing plant until 1998 when the old retail storefront on the original building was remodeled and opened as Bobak Restaurant Buffet. In 1999, the business expanded its manufacturing capabilities with a manufacturing-distribution facility immediately adjacent to the original building, forming a two-building campus environment.



Blast From The Past is a regular feature of DELI BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with a brief description of the photo. Please send material to: Editor, DELI BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810217, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0217 or e-mail DeliBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com. For more information contact us at (561) 994-1118

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