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JACKIE LOMONTEDELI 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
www.delibusiness.com
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PUBLICATION AGREEMENT NO. 40047928



PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA EXPORT GROWTH CONTINUES

The Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, Parma, Italy, recently released last year's sales report indicating another consecutive year of export growth in the U.S. In total, Prosciutto di Parma rounded out 2016 with a total production of 8.7 million hams, which signifies a 2.8 percent increase over 2015. The U.S. market is continuing to grow 7 percent, solidifying its position as the primary foreign market, and importing 623,000 hams. Although Italy is the largest market for Prosciutto di Parma and accounts for almost 68 percent of consumption, exports of the product increased by 1.2 percent, which is roughly 2.8 million hams. In 2016, 1.5 million hams (18 percent of total hams) were sliced to produce a total of 79 million packs of pre-sliced Prosciutto di Parma. Although Prosciutto di Parma whole ham sales experienced growth in 2016, overall sales of pre-sliced Prosciutto di Parma packages fell slightly by 0.9 percent compared to last year. However, despite that decrease on the global scale, alternatively, pre-sliced sales in the U.S. market grew compared to the previous year. In fact, the United States saw enormous growth in pre-sliced sales between 2013 and 2016, generating a 39 percent increase over that period. Pre-sliced prosciutto currently accounts for 19 percent of total Prosciutto di Parma production.

COMING NEXT IN OCT/NOV ISSUE

COVER STORY

Going Green

DELI MEATS

Holiday Meat Guide

FEATURE STORIESHummus
Charcuterie**PREPARED FOODS**

Pizza

MERCHANDISING REVIEWSFried Chicken
Vegetarian**CHEESE CORNER**Gruyère
Crackers**PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES**

Cooking Oil

COMING IN DEC/JAN

DELI BUSINESS will be taking a look at Retail Trends

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



CRAVE BROTHERS SWEEPS CHEESE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, Waterloo, WI, has captured two Best of Class awards in the 2017 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest. Crave Brothers Fresh Mozzarella took home Best of Class as well as the Second and Third Place awards for Fresh Mozzarella. Jalapeño Cheddar Cheese Curds was awarded Best of Class honors in the Natural Snack Cheese Category. Fresh Mozzarella adds this year's U.S. Cheese Championship honors to its previous 28 awards.

www.cravecheese.com



LA & SF SPECIALTY OPENS FACILITY

LA & SF Specialty, Los Angeles, has announced the opening of a 255,000-square-foot distribution facility in Hayward, CA. The new facility is one of four distribution facilities in the Western United States for LA & SF Specialty, which also operates in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Phoenix. The new location will allow the company to better serve its Northern California customers by increasing capacity for handling a product line of more than 7,500 items.

www.laspecialty.com



FLAVORED CHEDDARS WIN BIG

Trugman-Nash, Millburn, NJ, has announced its new line of flavored Cheddars swept the field in its category at this year's United States Championship Cheese Contest. The cheeses earned the Best of Class, 2nd Award and 3rd Award in the Flavored Pasteurized Process Cheese category. The award-winning Cheddars are the result of nearly 18 months of intense product development. Varieties include Horseradish, Bacon & Jalapeño, Roasted Garlic & Herb, and Chipotle & Onion.

www.trugman-nash.com



FIRST IN TUNA SUSTAINABILITY

Wild Planet Foods, Inc., McKinleyville, CA, has been named by Greenpeace as the number one tuna brand for sustainable sourcing policy in the organization's biennial Tuna Rankings for the second consecutive year. The organization ranked 20 well-known canned tuna brands found in grocery stores nationwide based on how sustainable, ethical and fair their tuna products are for oceans and for the workers that help get the products to store shelves.

www.wildplanet-foodservice.com

NEW PRODUCTS



DOMESTIC MOSTARDA

Quince and Apple, Madison, WI has launched the first domestically-made traditional mostarda handcrafted with mustard oil. Drawing inspiration from a 15th-century Italian recipe, the mostarda combines preserved fruits with mustard seeds and mustard oil. The Pear Mostarda combines sweet pears, apples and fresh lemons, all accented with mustard's distinctive heat. This classic Italian condiment pairs perfectly with big, bold blues, dense cave-aged Cheddars, and many cured meats.

www.quinceandapple.com



FIVE FLAVORS IN NEW FORMAT

Laura Chenel, Sonoma, CA, has introduced a new line of fresh chèvre medallions with five flavors ranging from Poppy Seed & Peppercorn to Fig & Grapefruit. Rounding out this assortment of 3.5-ounce goat cheeses is Sundried Tomato & Basil, Chives & Shallots and Original Chèvre. The small, disk-shaped cheeses in the Medallion Collection are sized for grab-and-go, and the easy-to-open pull tab enhances the practicality of the product, making it user-friendly and avoiding waste when a smaller amount of cheese is desired.

www.laurachenel.com



A HUMMUS ROLLOUT

Hummustir, New York, has introduced the industry's first USDA organic, non-refrigerated and preservative-free hummus. The packaging is designed to preserve the freshness of the ingredients without the need for preservatives. Hummustir includes three individual packets consisting of organic chickpea puree, organic tahini and spices, offering a shelf-stable hummus of up to a year before opening and remaining fresh without the use any artificial additives. GMO free. Flavors include Classic, Village Style, Mediterranean Style and Blazin.

www.hummustir.com



NEW SALSA FLAVORS

Rojo's, Cypress, CA., has unveiled new salsa flavors. These include Hatch Chile Salsa, featuring fresh tomatoes, hatch chile from New Mexico, green chili and diced onions; Pico de Gallo Salsa, a new and improved formulation boasting chunky tomatoes and onions, paired with Anaheim and jalapeño peppers; Salsa Verde, tomatillo and green chili coupled with bell, jalapeño and serrano peppers; and Mango Peach Salsa, diced tomatoes and onions are slightly sweetened with freshly-cut mangos and peaches. All are made in small batches.

www.rojossalas.com

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NEW PRODUCTS



ADDITIVE-FREE TURKEY

Butterball Foodservice, Garner, NC, has debuted Farm to Family by Butterball — a line of no-antibiotics-ever, all-natural turkey raised on local family-owned farms and fed an all-vegetarian diet. The line consists of turkey burgers, ground turkey, turkey breast and ready-to-cook roasts, and each of its eight products can be used in an assortment of menu items. Three new deli lunchmeat options are Oven Roasted Turkey Breast, Smoked Turkey Breast and Oil Browned Turkey Breast.

www.butterball-foodservice.com



BRIE IS RINDLESS

Marin French Cheese, Petaluma, CA, has launched Brie Cuisine, a fresh, single-cream, soft-ripened cheese. Unlike most traditional Brie, Brie Cuisine is produced in a rectangular 2.5-pound sheet, sans rind for easy portion control and no waste. Made with all-natural, fresh cow's milk and cream from neighboring Marin County dairies, Brie Cuisine's creamy taste and texture, together with its ease-of-use, provides a high-quality cheese with the convenience usually offered by more mainstream cheeses.

www.marinfrenchcheese.com



MEAT LINE EXPANDS

Piller's Fine Foods, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, has extended its Black Kassel line of premium dry aged deli meats with convenient pre-packaged sliced offerings. New products include Old Forest Salami, a lean blend of pork with delicate mild smoky flavor; Mustard Seed Salami, featuring whole mustard seeds and garlic; Picante Salami, featuring a kick of habañero pepper; and Speck, also known as smoked prosciutto, dry-aged for 80 days. Resealable packaging maintains moisture and flavor.

www.pillers.com



NON-GMO CHEDDAR

Somerdale International, Somerset, UK, has launched a fully-accredited, non-GMO British Cheddar. The new Westminster Sharp Cheddar has been developed in partnership with Joseph Heler, the award-winning British cheesemaker in response to growing consumer demand for non-GMO foods in the United States. Comprising authentic handcrafted Sharp, Vintage and Smoked Cheddars, Westminster Sharp is an aged Cheddar cheese matured for at least 12 months, which delivers a strong and full flavor on the palate.

www.somerdale.com



REDUCED SODIUM BUTTERS

Finlandia, Parsippany, NJ, has introduced two new premium spreadable butters. The Spreadable Butter with Canola Oil and Spreadable Butter with Canola Oil 25% Reduced Fat contain more than 55 percent less sodium than other brands, while still offering full flavor. Crafted with pure, wholesome milk from family-owned farms in Finland, the butter contains only four ingredients — butter, canola oil, water and milk minerals or ValSa, a patented milk mineral salt and ingredient in lowering salt intake in butter.

www.finlandiacheese.com



PREPARED FOODS ARE FRESH

Bakkavor, Charlotte, NC, introduced its first customer facing brand to complement its private label business. The company will use the Yaas! brand to drive innovation for on-trend flavors in hummus and dips, soups, sauces, burritos, prepared meals and sides. With this line, retail and foodservice operators have more options as they build their fresh prepared foods business, and look to reduce labor without sacrificing quality and diversity.

www.bakkavor.com



NEW PACKAGING UNVEILED

Deep River Snacks, Deep River, CT, has announced a packaging optimization for its line of kettle cooked potato chips. In addition, the company recently launched new Black Truffle Kettle Chips, its first to feature a consumer-nominated charity. A refined logo and the tagline, "Because We Give a Chip," are emphasized, while other key information, such as 'Cooked exclusively in Sunflower Oil' and '10 percent of profits to charity,' is added to the front of the bag.

www.deepriversnacks.com



SINGLE SERVING STIX

Volpi Foods, St. Louis, has introduced Salami Stix, single-serving sticks of dry-cured salame that are natural, gluten free with no nitrites or nitrates added and made with pork raised without antibiotics. Flavors include Original, Chorizo and Pepperoni in five- and 10-stick packages or single servings.

www.volpifoods.com

SOLUTION TO PRICE WARS: EXPERIENTIAL RETAILING



By
Jim Prevora
Editor-in-Chief

For the supermarket deli, it is the worst of times... and the best of times.

On the one hand, the rapid growth of the discount sector is creating tremendous pressure to reduce costs. The service deli has high costs in labor, shrink and other areas. Speaking to a reporter from the *Commercial Observer*, John Catsimatidis, who heads up the grocery and real estate empire known as the Red Apple Group, said this in regards to his New York stores:

"The traditional supermarket has gone away. Right now, we're acting strictly as convenience stores."

It's a shocking admission from one of the biggest grocers in the city's history, but it's the new reality. Catsimatidis has 35 remaining Gristedes and D'Agostinos, primarily in Manhattan — a number whittled down from 100 in New York City a quarter of a century ago.

Gristedes is offering prepackaged meat instead of a deli counter with a butcher, Catsimatidis told Commercial Observer.

The publication is a New York City based-business and real estate publication. The quote is probably off and actually refers to the meat counter where Gristedes eliminated butchers and went to case-ready meats. Most of the Gristedes stores still offer service delis — although online you can find consumer complaints that they are not well staffed. In any case, the logic is similar: If you want to cut costs — and with the explosion of good quality alternatives, such as case-ready meat and pre-sliced products in deli, you can cut labor without sacrificing too much on the quality end — one can easily see eliminating service deli as the next step.

So things seem bad for delis, and we can expect many chains to abandon service operations in order to drive costs out of the system while simultaneously speeding up the shopping experience, simplifying procurement, etc.

Yet, Catsimatidis points to a different direction:

And Red Apple Group is considering transitioning into a "private label organic-type food market" and "having more perishables, less canned foods."

The argument is laid out clearly later in the article:

Specialty food company Agata & Valentina ... has been immune to competition, according to company CEO Joe Musco. That is because of Agata & Valentina's personalized service — customers know the butchers by name — and its heavy emphasis on produce, prepared foods and overall good quality.

"Prepared foods are our signature," Musco said.

As has become increasingly clear in retail in general, consumers crave experiences. "I think there's a tremendous hunger for genuine engagement," said Kate Newlin of Newlin Consulting, a brand consultant for retailers. "If you know the guy behind the counter or he tells you, 'Here's something that just came in and you might be interested in this,' or, 'We have a sample of this,' that kind of personal service is tremendously important."

So, the gist is that BECAUSE of low cost competition, smart grocers will emphasize those areas where discounters struggle in direct competition: High service, artisan products, heavy local, in-store eating — in general an experiential kind of retailing.

Although in part this is accomplished with bountiful displays of fresh produce, seafood and prime meat programs, the essence of this experiential retailing is bakery and deli.

And if you want to be a media darling, stores with attractive food displays and high levels of service are certainly a way to do it. But there are limitations to this approach. Sure, as Newlin suggested, "personal service is tremendously important." But she needed to add, "to some people, some of the time."

Recent data from NPD Group's Checkout Tracking service found that more than 95 percent of U.S. consumers purchased something from Wal-Mart last year. The Number Two player was McDonald's, where 89 percent of consumers spent money. Is this because everyone so values "personal service"?

Maybe these are legacies of the past, but the retailer that recorded the biggest gain in percentage of Americans shopping at its stores is Dollar Tree. Again, this does not really back up the thesis that consumers highly value personal service.

In select zip codes with high incomes and education levels, there is demand for specialty markets that elevate the experience of shopping. That is why there are fewer than 500 Whole Foods stores in this country. The vast majority of America is filled with consumers who are focused on price, which is why Wal-Mart has over 3,500 giant Supercenters, over 700 Neighborhood Markets and more than 600 Sam's Club stores.

So while we will all ooh and aah at the incredible high-end deli/foodservice operations being laid out in high-income enclaves across America, the future is being written in median-income and below-median-income areas where those who can offer a discount will win the trade.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "James P. Prevora".

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GREAT CHEESE DEPARTMENTS FUEL GROWTH



By
Lee Smith
Publisher

It's a cheesy world out there. Natural cheese in the United States is growing and predictions are it will continue. According to reports from the Mintel Group, retail cheese sales in the U.S. were \$23 billion in 2015. That number represented 24 percent growth from 2010.

While sales are predicted to grow at a slightly slower rate from 2015 to 2020, Mintel estimates that retail sales will grow to \$27.7 billion by 2020. The most optimistic growth is predicted to reach \$32.2 billion. In all the reports, processed cheese sales are declining and natural cheeses are growing.

There is also stronger sales growth than tonnage/volume growth, indicating that in addition to volume, we are seeing stronger price per pound increases, concluding that specialty cheese sales are growing. Even with the sales growth, in predicting future long-term growth, the U.S. is still 19th in global per capita consumption.

Most specialty cheeses are used for eating out of hand, on a cheese board, or for snacking and entertainment. However, foodservice uses are growing both at home and in restaurants. Grilled cheese sandwiches made with specialty cheeses and often more than one cheese as well as meats, vegetables and unusual condiments are gaining in popularity. Fondue and Raclette are being found on more menus and, depending on where you live, the hottest appetizers may be deep fried cheese curds or poutine — a Canadian favorite.

If you are a retailer, what are the next steps? First, specialty cheese is impossible to ignore. Yes, the dairy case may sell commodity natural cheese blocks, rounds and half-moons. However, the deli and/or the cheese department is driving dollar sales with better quality and variety.

For high-volume stores or markets that cater to more affluent customers, specialty cheese is becoming a sub-department of the deli. To take advantage of the growth, specialty cheese needs to be more than just a self-serve case with pre-wrapped cheeses.

The first step is to bring life to the department. Sell a mix of commercially pre-wrapped high-volume cheeses and individual cheeses that are also pre-wrapped but wrapped in a special way to let the cheese breathe. They are often found in beautiful individual containers and boxes preserving the cheeses' integrity. Then, there are the cheeses that should be cut to order, giving the customer a chance to ask questions and taste before buying. This is

often beneficial for cheeses with a short shelf life or varieties that are very expensive.

Next, show and sell creative cheese ideas. A Camembert torte made with pesto and pine nuts in the middle makes for a great value-added take away. Prepared cheese plates appropriate for smaller groups of people advertise a retailers' catering abilities. Varieties easy to pick up with a loaf of good bread or crackers makes for a quick dinner.

Cheese gadgets also add sales and inspire customers. These may include cheese knives, special cheese paper for wrapping leftovers, books and guides. Fondue is back in style and fondue pots are a needed solution. Raclette is an easy meal, and the Raclette warmers range from show-stopping centerpieces to simple and inexpensive kitchen gadgets.

The next step may be for cheese departments to add prepared foods to their lineup. Needed is a special refrigerated case to keep prepared foods fresh and uncontaminated from yeasts, mold and bacteria found in natural cheese. Maybe it is time to separate great cheese dishes from the deli prepared food section. Goat cheese tartines, special cheese sandwiches, marinated Mozzarella, savory pastries, quiche and pre-shredded fondue mixes should be added to the cheese department.

There is one more ingredient to success and I wonder if it may be the key ingredient to growth — educated and passionate cheese mongers. I know it is every retailer's quest — how to employ passionate associates dedicated to their craft. On the job training is ok, but what will drive these people to spend their spare time reading and seeking out new cheeses, because that is what a great cheese department needs?

I can only suggest that every retailer who is serious about growing specialty cheese go the American Cheese Society Annual Conference. There you will find hundreds of people taking the Certified Cheese Professional exam and most, if not all, have spent the better part of a year studying, forming study groups, taking courses and buying books. These people will inspire you and your organizations.

As a colleague of mine who went to the ACS Conference this year stated, "I've gone to trade shows and conferences all over the world for many industries, but I've never met so many people who are so dedicated to their jobs. Really, it is not the job, it is cheese they really care about."

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GO TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS



Deli back-to-school programs earn high marks

BY JEFFREY STEELE

Someone once said there are three good reasons to become a teacher: June, July and August. But all good things come to an end for both teachers and their pupils. When they do, supermarket delis enjoy great opportunities to earn high marks with back-to-school programs, presenting fresh items ideal for time-pressed families.

There's every reason supermarket delis ought to be top of mind, as parents prepare their youngsters for a return to the hallowed halls of academia. And that's particularly true if they value fresh, healthy foods their kids will enjoy.

"The deli section continues to be one of the most-important departments in the supermarket, as more shoppers read labels and seek out fresh food options," says Jen-Ai Stokesbary, marketing director with Niwot, CO-based Boulder Organic Foods.

"Nutritionists often advise people to shop the outer perimeter of the store — where the deli typically is [located] — to find better-for-you foods."



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One advantage delis enjoy is flexibility. That is an enormous aid in giving consumers solutions that work in back-to-school programs. So says Jason M. Morin, president of Rainmaker Foods, a Manchester, NH firm forging strong relationships between food manufacturers, customers and brokers in the food retailing industry.

"Unlike the prepackaged meals, like Lunchables, delis have the advantage of assortment flexibility, meaning they can give the consumer more and fresher options," he says. "The downfall of prepackaged meals is the manufacturer is making every decision for the consumer. In deli, the flexibility exists to give the consumer multiple choices when putting together meals and pairing those as desired."

Staple products for back to school don't just revolve around lunch, continues Morin. "Convenient breakfast options are important, as well, as many students are also eating breakfast at school," he says. "Convenient meals-to-go for dinner are also something to consider to help families make the after-school hours easier."

A number of considerations should be kept in mind by retailers when planning supermarket deli back-to-school programs. They involve carefully balancing both health and convenience, as well as meals and snacking. While convenience is key in deli, and price is less important, consumers and especially parents are looking for healthier and better-for-you options, he says. These include antibiotic-free organic meats, non-GMO items, foods with fewer

ingredients and items with no preservatives.

"For back to school, retailers should focus on making 'snack packs' and convenience items in the deli side case more prominent," says Morin. "Many of these items exist today and offer parents a great option for kids' lunches."

Retailers should also focus on snacking, he adds. Many consumers still purchase deli meats and cheeses by the pound to make sandwiches at home. "However, they may not have decided on snacks yet while they are waiting at the deli counter," says Morin. "Retailers should be prepared to offer items near the deli point of purchase that complement lunch time in school. Again, these should be snack packs like hummus and chips or veggies, fresh chips and salsa, cheese and crackers and the like."

New And Healthy

There are a number of new products ideal for back-to-school marketing in delis.

The biggest innovation at Taunton, MA-based Tribe Hummus is its focus on clean labels and relaunching of the company's organic products. It offers 2-ounce servings geared for lunch boxes.

"This coincides with back to school," says John McGuckin, chief executive. "We are removing artificial preservatives, flavors and colors for a 100 percent clean label, in response to consumer demand."

He says there has been a lack of innovation in the hummus category, which has suffered from fatigue, and clean labels are expected to reinvigorate it.

"In terms of clean labels, this category has lagged behind others," says McGuckin.

Ideal for this year's back-to-school season is a new product called Melanie's Medleys, from Schwenksville, PA-based Don's Food Products, maker of Don's Salads line.

"Melanie's Medleys is a new product we test marketed in St. Louis and Cleveland," reports Carl Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development. "It is ancient grains like quinoa, freekeh, farro and pearled barley mixed with fruits and nuts and ready to eat. America has learned to eat yogurt, and now there are millions of yogurts. But the next big thing is the breakfast grain, which is a snack grain, an indulgent grain and an after-school grain. Back to school is ideal for Melanie's Medleys, because kids can eat it in the car on the way to the bus stop, at lunch, in mid-afternoon and forget about the [candy] bar. Pop the lid and go. You can eat it cold, you can throw it in the microwave and make it indulgent."

Don's Food Products also recently introduced its line of Artisan Deli Salads.

"We have chicken, tuna, classic Italian tuna with Ditalini pasta, capers and olives and a seafood salad," says Cappelli. "These are all natural, with no artificial flavors, colors or preservatives."

Boulder Organic Foods makes garden-fresh, certified organic refrigerated soups merchandised in stand-alone soup coolers at the entry to the deli section and next to other prepared foods like salads and sides in grab-and-go deli coolers. They are found in select supermarket and mass retailer deli sections nationwide.

"Back to school can be a busy time when everyone needs quick, nutritious meal options, and Boulder Organic soup has 15 varieties to suit every family member's taste buds and diets," says Stokesbary. "All Boulder Organic soups are certified gluten-free, many are dairy-free and all are free of preservatives, MSG, wheat, peanuts, egg, soy, shellfish and sesame. They're also lower in sodium than most soups and are made with a variety of wholesome ingredients families can feel good about serving and eating."

For example, Boulder's new gluten-free Chicken Noodle soup, which will be available in Target stores this autumn, is a prime example of a classic soup that kids will love, says Stokesbary. The soup joins a lineup that includes such perennial favorites as Tomato Bisque, Broccoli Cheddar,

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At Cincinnati-based Kroger, organic salsas, guacamole and hummus items are popular at back-to-school time. Freshly-prepared grab-and-go style salads, sides and sandwiches are a hit, says Roanoke, VA-based Allison McGee, spokeswoman for Kroger's Mid-Atlantic division. This year is bringing more gluten-free, organic and non-GMO free breads and baked goods and new granola flavor options.

"We have an assortment of Kroger store staples, including pinwheel sandwiches, freshly-prepared salads, pasta and potato salad, as well as super-food salads like kale and grain salads," says McGee. "We also have healthy snack options, such as veggie chips, pita chips and assorted flavors of crackers. Baked goods in our arsenal include cookies, two-bite brownies and mini cupcakes."

Keys To Effectiveness

When planning back-to-school promotions, ensure the words "convenience" and "variety" are in promotional headlines, recommends Morin.

"Affordability is important, but not paramount," he adds. "If something is really going to save someone time — in thinking, preparing or other ways — price is less important. Something that's easy to put together, for example, like carrot sticks and hummus, shouldn't be a lot more costly than buying the two items on their own."

Also, think about cost per serving or cost per meal, he says. These are real numbers that consumers do think about. How many lunches/dinners will I get out of this? How many servings will I get out of this? Compare your offerings to the cost of quick-serve restaurants.

"If someone can get a complete lunch next door at Panera for less than \$10, you're not going to be successful with \$11.99 lunch meal deals perceived as a similar value. "The same goes for breakfast and dinner," adds Morin.

Boulder Organic Foods' Stokesbary is convinced setting is critical to success. "Store location should be considered so displays are in a part of the store where parents and children will be most likely to see them," she says. "It can also be useful to place complementary products next to each other with pairing notes so shoppers can purchase items that can combine to create a full meal. Since many parents

today read labels, messaging focusing on the products' nutritional benefits and convenience will be most important."

For his part, Cappelli says retailers intent on successful back-to-school promotions should create space in the dairy case for their back-to-school items.

"Carve out space in that deli or dairy case for back-to-school items like Melanie's Medleys or Artisan Salads," he says. "They're all available in pre-packs. In the center of your store, you want to put all the stuff like backpacks together in one place, and in the deli and dairy cases, you'll want to put all the back-to-school items together, as well."

The emphasis should be on promoting convenience, according to Cappelli. "The segment has gotten simpler and more toward grab and go," he reports.

"It's no longer Mrs. Cleaver taking two hours preparing lunches. Families are busy, they need to find things that are easy to shop, easy to buy, easy to refrigerate and easy to use. Consumer- and retailer-friendly means it is easy to stock and

items that are organic or natural in order to provide added options for busy families with big and small kids."

Timing Is Everything

Planning for back-to-school programs should begin before school lets out for the summer, says Morin. But as for actual implementation in the deli, one week before the start of school is fine. "Because most items purchased in the deli are consumed the day of or within a couple days, it doesn't make sense to be out there too soon," he says.

Rules differ for items with extended shelf life. In those cases, it may help to get your customers thinking about the back-to-school season before rivals do, he says.

Finally, because many children of working parents attend day camps, back-to-school promos should exist year round, says Morin. "Convenience, quality and affordability are what customers look for every day."

At Boulder Organic, the belief is back-to-school timing starts in August.

Kroger's back-to-school promotions traditionally begin at the end of July and can extend into September.

easy to grab, and also yummy and totally ideal for back to school."

According to Morin, delis can keep customers coming back by putting a new, healthier spin on a traditional item, and by also offering new and creative recipes that customers can easily follow in their kitchens. "Customers are often just looking for ideas they can create at home, so having recipe kits are on trend," he says, adding retailers can stay ahead of online sellers by leveraging advantages companies like Blue Apron don't offer. They can invariably offer service from friendly, helpful employees, and always display fresh items consumers can see before they agree to purchase.

Kroger trumpets several keys to success, including great variety in choices, fresh product and exemplary customer service, says McGee. "Recently, we have recognized the need for more healthy and diverse school lunch options as well as healthy, easy-to-make snacks for after school. We are expanding to include more

But a little bit of a head start never hurts. "Delis should consider teasing back-to-school items to families at the end of July," advises Stokesbary. "It also makes sense to continue this promotion into the beginning of school as a reminder to families of the easy, nutritious lunch and dinner options available to them."

Kroger's back-to-school promotions traditionally begin at the end of July and can extend into September. "However, we run promotions throughout the year to make sure children in year-round schools can take advantage of our low-price deals," says McGee.

As at other supermarkets around the country, back to school brings a treasure trove of excitement and warm feelings. Says McGee, "Our best memories include seeing the smiles on children's faces when they come in to pick up their school supplies, select their new backpack and lunchbox, and choose their favorite deli items for lunch."

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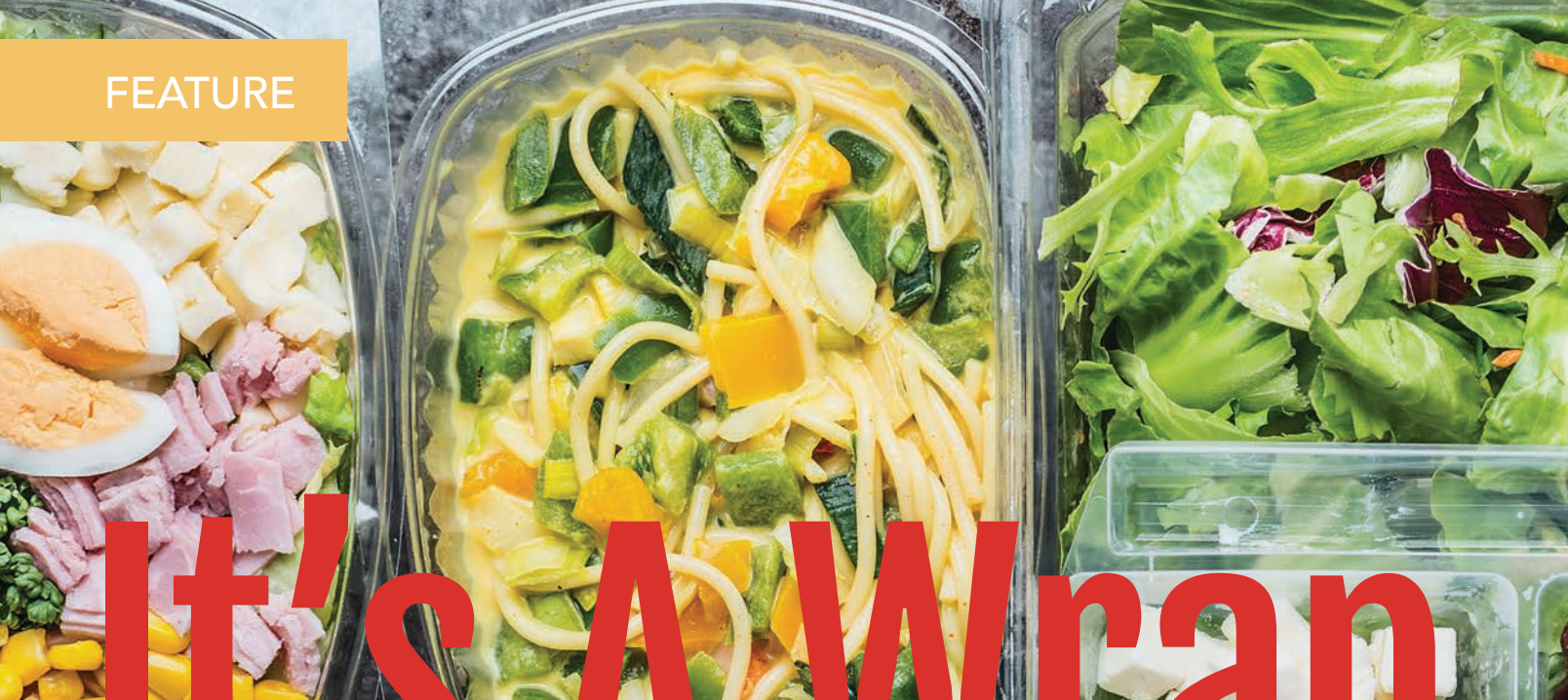
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It's A Wrap

Deli food trends drive packaging innovations

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

Years ago, packaging was just that — packaging. Bare, square, utilitarian containers to carry food home from the deli. Not anymore.

Today, as supermarket delis expand prepared food offerings to compete with restaurants, there has been the realization that what sells, transports and often doubles as serviceware or plateware needs to be just as enticing, convenient and functional as the food itself.

It's no wonder then that the foodservice packaging market is projected to grow at 5.23 percent annually through 2022, when it will become an \$84.33 billion industry, according to the May 2017 — released *Food Service Packaging Market by Material, Packaging Type, Application — Global Forecast to 2022*, by the Seattle-based Markets and Markets Inc.

"Food trends come first, then the packaging," explains Lynn Dyer, president of the Foodservice Packaging Institute (FPI), in Falls Church, VA. As such, "packaging is always evolving to meet the needs of the foodservice industry. Supermarket deli operators should stay up-to-date with foodservice trends, which influence both new ideas for prepared food offerings and the packaging that best complements it."

Street food-inspired dishes ranked second in the top 20 food trends identified in the *What's Hot 2017 Culinary Forecast*, a

survey of nearly 1,300 professional chefs by the Washington, D.C.-Headquartered National Restaurant Association (NRA).

Suitable Solutions

"Hot food — specifically street food-style presentations — are increasingly leading the market, and this is having a huge impact on packaging," says Steve Olk, category manager for Planglow USA, based in West St. Paul, MN. "As such, food concepts originally cooked and eaten on the spot are now traveling further and further afield, as Americans consume growing numbers of meals at their desk, in the car or on-the-go."

Fish tacos are a good example of a street food that's found favor in the deli, according to Jason Horbac, assistant product manager for supermarkets and processing at Sabert Corp. in Sayreville, NJ. "Since these can be messy, the packaging response has been to create something that will keep the taco upright and separated from other foods served at the same time. Our compostable divided inserts do this by fitting inside a variety of molded fiber pulp compostable bases, which helps with packaging inventory control, and have clear recyclable lids for merchandising. This enables operators to sell something like fish tacos with lemon slices or sauces on the side."

Asian-inspired street foods, such as

rice bowls and pho — a Vietnamese noodle soup with either chicken or beef — are other foods transitioning from strictly food-service to supermarket delis.

"We made a variety of sturdy, versatile portion cups with lids that can easily handle both hot and cold items such as these. The cups are made from sugarcane, which is renewable and compostable and is an excellent alternative to petroleum-based packaging," says Steve Rosse, vice president of product strategy and development at Eco-Products in Boulder, CO. "We're also working on packaging out of the same and other renewable and compostable materials that can hold fried foods like a dip and egg rolls, without the egg rolls losing their crispness, and a new distinctive-looking round sushi container."

On the operator side, companies have created more efficient ways for delis to expand their menus with restaurant-quality results. For example, Sealed Air, based in Charlotte, NC, developed a vertical pouch bag in the early 1990s to dispense liquids, such as condiments.

More recent technological innovations have expanded uses of this pouch system to foods that are a mix of liquids and solids, such as soups, taco meat, meatballs and sauce, and wet salads like macaroni and coleslaw, which keeps these ingredients perfectly combined.

"The pressure to expand deli offerings to the restaurant level has caused operators to deal with additional factors, such as shrink, labor and consistency," says Mike Rosinski, Sealed Air's marketing director for smoked and processed meats. "The advantages of the vertical pouch bag technology are many — less packaging, less transportation costs, smaller required storage space and easier disposal. The bags can essentially replace the traditional foodservice #10 can."

Size Matters

There's a need for both personal as well as party-sized packaging in the deli, according to FPI's Dyer. Individual, or portion control dimensions are being driven by the rise in snacking.

Consider that 76 percent of Americans snacked or ate between meals daily in 2014, a figure that grew to 83 percent of consumers in 2016, according to the 2016 *Snacking Occasion Consumer Trend Report*, published by Chicago-based market research firm, Technomic Inc.

"Convenient snack packaging continues

On the operator side, companies have created more efficient ways for delis to expand their menus with restaurant-quality results.

to grow in the deli area," says Andy Blackmore, director of sales and marketing for Display Pack, in Cedar Springs, MI. "Also, smaller families are driving smaller portions and, therefore, smaller package sizes. Custom packaging is helping play a role in portion control while minimizing food waste from larger servings that cannot be consumed in time."

Display Pack, in conjunction with Milliken & Company, with members of the Show & Sell Committee representing Tyson Foods, Inc., Rich Products Corp. and a recognized retailer, recently launched the 'Pick Your Plate' idea that can meet deli shoppers needs for anything from a quick bite on the go to light dinners for busy families. The concept features a rigid plastic

tray with four wedge-shaped spaces where customers can place individual 10- or 20-ounce lidded tubs of pre-packaged hot or cold food. Shoppers can also opt for a single container without the tray. All concept components are microwaveable.

Catering Convenience

The other end of the spectrum needed for deli packaging is for catering.

"Catering was once the forté of the deli, but foodservice operations are now going after this business. This means the deli needs to adapt and instead of offering only sandwich or meat and cheese platters, move into items like taco or burger bars, which have unique packaging opportunities and challenges," says FPI's Dyer.

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The 'blended meal', or part pre-purchased convenience foods and part at-home cooking, is a growing trend, according to *Five Eating Attitudes and Behaviors to Watch in 2017*, published December 2016 by the NPD Group, headquartered in Port Washington, NY.

"Convenience is still a major need for shoppers of the prepared foods department, for example, a package that is easy to carry, easy to use and easy to dispose of," says Rebecca Casey, senior director of marketing for TC Transcontinental Packaging in Montreal, Canada, which acquired the Lenexa, KS-based Robbie Flexibles, now named TC Robbie, last year. "However, a major shift we are now seeing is that retailers are having to cater to the consumer on an entirely new convenience level. The younger adults are entering the shopping/cooking world and can find this a tad bit intimidating. They want packaging that has verbiage that includes reheating instructions, ingredient lists and even what types of sides would blend with their choice of meat/seafood."

One of the company's new packaging products, Oven N Done, speaks to this consumer need. The way it works is that retailers prepack fresh-cut veggies with seafood or poultry to create healthy, quick-fixing solutions. This new pouch can be merchandised in the deli cold case. The shopper then selects a prepacked, chef-prepared meal, goes home, places the bag in the oven or microwave, reads the cooking times preprinted on the bag, pushes the button and dinner is served.

Eye Appeal is Buy Appeal

The deli's unique opportunity over restaurants is its ability to give customers a look at the food before ordering. It's

this eye appeal that translates into buy appeal. Packaging is now enhancing this register-ringing effect in a couple of ways, ranging from the technical to merchandising levels.

"The newest packaging products for deli foods combine high levels of clarity for ultimate merchandising of food and heat-resistant plastic for heat and eat applications," says Emily Blair, business development manager for Milliken Chemical in Spartanburg, SC. "One of the challenges of increasing shelf life in rigid packaging is that it can increase the milkiness of the packaging, or in other words, reduce the clarity. Therefore, we partnered within the industry to develop NX UltraClear PP (recyclable polypropylene) food packaging that allows brands to get longer shelf life on their products without losing too much of the clarity."

Focus group research conducted by Milliken that looked at retailers'/food brands' ability to capture more value with premium packaging revealed 60 percent of consumers are willing to pay up to 5 cents more for packaging that provides more clarity or heat resistance over conventional packaging, according to Blair. The research also showed that 86 percent of buyers are more likely to buy fresh-prepared foods in the store perimeter if they are packaged in clearer, heat-resistant packaging.

In addition to using new materials, explains Display Pack's Blackmore, "We continue to use minimal design features with less ribbing to heighten product clarity while testing to ensure the package structure remains strong enough to withstand processing and distribution."

New packaging designs promote greater buy appeal via innovative shapes, sizes and colors, which help break up standard shelf

displays and heighten consumer recognition of an item on a shelf, says Blackmore. "We are always incorporating ways for the packaging to stack and nest together efficiently for merchandising. Having a neat display of fresh foods in clear packaging attracts consumers and helps heighten product quality."

Indeed, one-third of U.S. adults believe that high-quality food packaging is an indicator of product quality, according to the *Global Packaging Trends 2017* report by Mintel, a global market research firm headquartered in London.

Healthy Food, Healthy Packaging

Consumers want to eat more healthfully, according to *U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2015*, published by the Arlington, VA-based Food Marketing Institute.

Today, shoppers are looking for the same standards in their packaging, says Sabert's Horbac. "Demand for environmentally-friendly is not going away. Instead, it's now an important part of doing business."

Oil-based plastic is a dying breed, as resources are finite and damaging to the environment, according to Planglow's Olk. "For this reason, many of our packaging products utilize our unique plant-based bio laminate, which not only biodegrades in a waste water environment, but can also be disposed of in a home compost heap. What's more, the bio laminate also extends the shelf life of sandwiches and wraps, provides products with a superior barrier against oily dressings and rich fillings, and serves as a window bypassing the need for a separate windowing process."

Sixty-six percent of consumers surveyed are willing to pay more for sustainable goods, according to *The Sustainability Imperative, New Insights on Consumer Expectations*, published by New York City-based Nielsen in October 2015. Millennials are the most willing to pay extra for sustainable offerings at 73 percent.

New styles of sustainable packaging can increase deli rings, rather than add to product costs.

"The branded finish of our sustainable packaging has allowed some of our customers to raise their price points up an average of 15 percent, for example, due to the more premium, professional finishes, despite the cost of our products remaining competitive with the rest of the market," says Planglow's Olk.

With today's deli packaging, it's more than simply appearances.

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Spoonfuls Of Opportunity

Methods to tap into increasing soup sales

BY MANDY ELLIS

Fast, flavorful and fresh, soup is quickly becoming the hottest grab-and-go item in the supermarket deli. As consumers ride the healthy eating trend, soup fits the mold with its convenience and meal replacement qualities as well as its wealth of styles including vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, non-GMO, low fat and low sodium.

"We've seen the fresh soup category continue to grow over shelf-stable," says Sandy Rega, senior director of marketing at Kettle Cuisine, based in Lynn, MA. "And consumers are shopping the center aisles less and the perimeter more."

According to Chicago-based research firm IRI's February 2016 "Top Trends in Fresh: Prepared and Specialty Foods" webinar, fresh-prepared soup sales grew steadily at a rate of 23 percent in 2015. Additionally, Mintel's November 2015 *Soup* report states 38 percent of soup purchasers believe refrigerated soup is healthier than canned soup.

"As the presence of fresh food continues to grow, soup is an integral part of that growth," says Bob Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, headquartered in Fall River, MA. "Soup continues to grow in packaged and hot to-go, and in foodservice; it's now overtaking salads as the number one appetizer."

Supermarket deli executives can create steaming sales this fall by tapping into trends in ingredients and nutrition, stocking comfort flavors, utilizing cross merchandising opportunities, and zeroing in on the most soup-friendly demographic, Millennials.

A Wealth Of Health

"Retailers should have a good variety of fresh, healthy fall soups that provide nutrition, as the better-for-you trend is exploding," says Joanna Terry, founder and chef at Souperb, based in San Francisco. Fresh soups, especially ones with local or sustainable ingredients, no additives or preservatives and health call outs, are exactly what the in-demand soup group, Millennials, is seeking.

Refrigerated soup saw a 52 percent burst in sales between 2010 and 2014, according to Mintel's report, and thanks to Millennials' spending power and demand for more natural foods, sales are



expected to grow another 26 percent by 2020. “We’re seeing Millennial consumers are a generation focused on overall wellness and good eating habits,” explains Rega, “Soup complements that lifestyle so well, and they see ingredients are wholesome, there are vegan and gluten-free options, and it’s quick and convenient.”

Mary Shepard, director of sales, retail and foodservice at Fortun’s Finishing Touch Sauces, headquartered in Kirkland, WA, says instead of cooking lunch and dinner at home, Millennials are eating at the grocery store bar more frequently, and are on the hunt for clean, real ingredients in the fast grab-and-go style of the deli bar.

In The Loop On Soup

“It has to be real food and real soup; that trend is going up and will stay,” says Shepard. “Customers want to know what the ingredients are, and no artificial anything because they’ll look.”

With customers gaining more knowledge about what they eat, the clean label trend isn’t going away anytime soon.

“Clean labels are very important right now,” says Greg Powers, chief executive of Niwot, CO-based Boulder Organic Foods, “You’re seeing manufacturers trying to clean up their labels so most of the ingredients are items consumers can pronounce and find in their pantries.”

Health-minded customers are flock-

ing toward the perimeters, and they desire products that are as close to homemade food and flavors as possible. If soups have labels filled with familiar, wholesome ingredients, they’re more likely to purchase them, whether they’re in hot soup wells or the refrigerated section.

Trending alongside clean labels are cauliflower and Asian-style soups. Identified by dietitians as “healthy,” cauliflower has been gaining traction as a fall ingredient over the years and is still a big plus for purchasers. New ethnic varieties, like ramen and pho, have been exploding on entrée menus, with ramen showing a 33 percent increase and pho 17 percent, says Technomic’s 2016 *Left Side of the Menu: Soup & Salad Consumer Trend Report*. The report also mentions 38 percent of consumers say they would consider ordering an Asian-style soup. And in order to keep the supermarket deli retail sector current, following blossoming restaurant trends is a must.

Fall Fundamentals

“Seasonality in fall means you’ve got squash bisques, butternut bisque is everywhere, pumpkin soups, root vegetables, and mushrooms and chestnuts are huge,” says Jaime Mestan, director of bistro products at Bistro Soups & Chili, in Chicago. Varieties like chicken noodle, tomato bisque, Tuscan white bean, chicken vegetable chili and grilled chicken chowder are

popular in fall, as well.

Beyond the staple fall soups though, is the rise of a classic style with a plus one claim. Customers are seeking out an extra wow factor, and manufacturers are staying current by adding twists like maple syrup or cayenne pepper to a squash soup, or an extra call out like proteins raised without hormones or antibiotics. Terry says Souperb’s styles of Carrot Pistachio and tarragon, and Broccoli with Almond do well in fall because they’re exciting artisan soups that add more flavors and variety to the overall selection.

“It’s a way of recognizing the fact that consumers are looking for that comfort profile they’re familiar with, but might be even more interested if it has a unique flavor characteristic that they haven’t seen before,” explains Powers.

Shepard says no matter the trend, comfort soups are always the biggest sellers from Tomato and Chicken Noodle to Cheddar Broccoli and Clam Chowder. “We’ve got Butternut Squash with sweet potato. Millennials want something a little fun, but those soups are like an 80/20 rule; 80 percent of the sales are comfort soups,” she says.

Positioning For Purchase

Having a rotating selection of interesting hot and on-the-go soups, visuals and sampling are a few ways retailers can increase sales during fall soup’s rush hours of lunch, dinner and snack time.

Creating an assorted selection of soups with the variety customers crave maintains interest and helps spike sales. “When retailers diversify and not only have private label, but several other branded options, it draws a lot more attention to the category, leading to greater sales overall,” says Powers.

And those multi-brand, multi-flavor deli soup sections that are convenient in terms of ready-to-eat and ready-to-heat are the most successful. Prepackaged soups in clear containers in the refrigerated section sitting next to hot soup bars offer an extra chance for sales, as it allows consumers to grab soup to eat now and later. Visuals, like colorful pictures of ingredients and explanations of nutrients, help draw customers in, as do multiple container sizes. For those on the go, the 16-ounce size is popular, while 32-ounce cups work for families.

But what’s the ultimate way to position and sell soups? Sampling. “That’s how you get more visibility, especially with soups,” says Mestan, “If you get something into

a customer's mouth, nine times out of 10 they'll want it and come back for it. And, the companies that provide the soups are more than willing to give retailers extra product for sampling."

Designing A Destination

With the rise of the grocerant, it's more important than ever to craft the deli soup section into a destination. By making the area front and center with four to five soups and call outs for everything from non-GMO and low fat to cream-based and hearty stews, consumers will start thinking of it as a place rather than a part.

To help increase traffic, the hot bar needs to be next to the grab-and-go area, with signage directing purchasers where they can pick up soup to go or where hot soup is ready to eat now, says Kettle Cuisine's Rega. She also suggests doing a promotion to kick off the fall season and get consumers thinking about soup. Because deli customers know they can grab both hot and refrigerated soups, it drives them to the store for lunch, dinner and snacks. Via word of mouth, repeat customers and marketing, your soup department goes from passerby to major stop.

With the rise of the grocerant, it's more important than ever to craft the deli soup section into a destination.

Powers says the best example of a retail soup destination is Safeway. By placing a refrigerated soup island within the front doors, Safeway created a massive private label program. "The key is to focus on how you merchandise the product, and make it accessible and visible to your customers," he says, "A great place is near sandwiches and salads in the deli section, because those are two of the best matches for soup. If you merchandise them together, you'll likely see sales in both categories."

Because of restaurant promotions, Sewall says consumers are conditioned to eat pick two's, like a soup and salad or a soup and sandwich, and delis can capitalize on this. "Retail is competing with restaurants more than ever, and retailers have to be cognizant of what's going on to compete effectively," he says. "You have to make

sure you're always positioning soups as a meal deal so you're taking full advantage of what the consumers are doing in terms of foodservice."

Through offering a meal deal or pick two, retailers can introduce salad and sandwich customers to soup and vice versa, encouraging them to purchase several items they may not have otherwise considered. And connecting them to other facets of the department helps improve sales while building the foundation of a destination for lunch, dinner or snacks. When merchandised together, soups, salads and sandwiches also make the purchase decision easier; the easier the process, the more likely a sale is. By planting the seed of the supermarket deli as a quick, healthy meal option, consumers return for repeat business, helping the bottom line.

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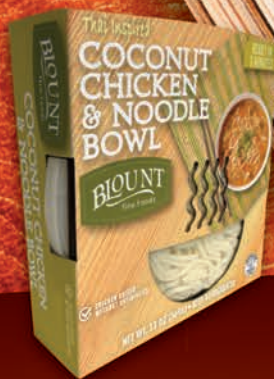
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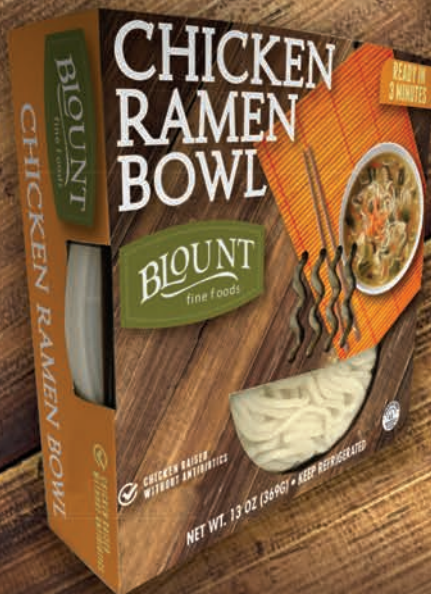
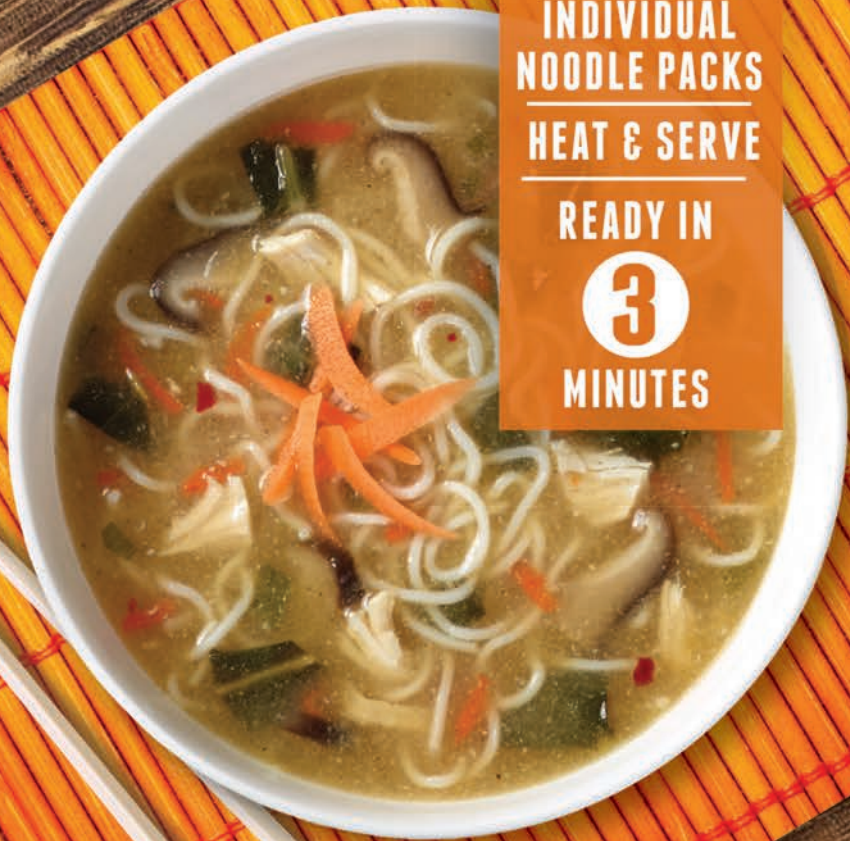
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Castella Evolves With The Industry

For 25 years, Castella has been servicing the evolving needs of the specialty food industry. With roots firmly planted in foodservice, Castella's increasing presence on grocery shelves and leadership in Mediterranean bars across the country is a testament to this growth. Family is at the heart of this business - the ideals of two generations, from father to son, have merged to create a specialty food company unlike any other.

While upholding the traditional standards of quality and value, Castella is committed to continue evolving by focusing on innovation and sustainability.

It has been two decades of growth that has marked Castella's success.

The company was established in 1992, when the family opened a 20,000-square-foot facility in Hicksville, NY. Seven years later, Castella doubled its space and relocated to a more modern 46,000-square-foot facility in the state's Farmingdale suburb. To keep up with demand, in 2002 Castella expanded to the Midwest, opening a 23,000-square-foot distribution center in Wood Dale, IL.

Expansion continued in the years following, but this time with acquisitions. This included the purchase of Millflow Spice Corp. and Regal Extract Co. in 2003, which made Castella one of the largest spice companies in the Northeast. It then acquired the assets of Salvati Foods in 2004.

A year later, the company moved to a 100,000-square-foot state-of-the-art warehouse in Hauppauge, NY.

In 2012, Castella's Midwest Division relocated to a 66,000-square-foot facility in Addison, IL.

Three years ago, Castella launched sustainability initiatives, focusing on reduction of carbon emissions. These were expanded on last year, with its use of more than 95 percent renewable energy.

Today, Castella prides itself on an extensive offering of products, including specialty domestic and imported cheeses, including Greek Feta, Graviera, Kaseri, Kefalograviera, Kefalotyri and Manouri; Kashkaval, Parmesan from Italy and U.S. Domestic Feta; a selection of oils, including olive oil, infused oils and cooking oils sold under the Aegean, Castella, Lira, Olio Casa and Pegasus brand names; a variety of vinegars and infusions; olives from around the world; the Regal brand of colors and flavors; spices, seasonings and herbs; soup bases and sauces, including Barbecue Sauce, Hot Sauce, Soy Sauce, Steak Sauce, Sweet and Sour Duck Sauce, Teriyaki Sauce and Worcestershire Sauce; and specialty items from Italy, Turkey and Greece.

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Fulfilling the Demand for Fresh

As consumers become more health and wellness focused, the demand for fresh, nutritious products that are convenient and ready-to-eat continues to surge.

"Today's consumers search for ways to help make meal preparation quick, easy and nutritious," says Dionysios Christou, vice president of marketing for Del Monte Fresh Produce N.A., Inc., Coral Gables, FL. "They also search for on-the-go fresh offerings in deli departments, convenience stores and other retail channels."

Committed to meeting the needs of customers and consumers who are interested in healthy portable products, Del Monte Fresh Produce focuses on three main factors: innovation, product assortment and convenience.

Innovation

In early 2017, Del Monte® Smoothie Kits and Del Monte® Vegetable Noodles were introduced as healthy options that take all of the prep work out, making it even faster and convenient for consumers to prepare delicious and nutritious snacks and meals.



The smoothie kits provide an easy and fun way to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and are available in four healthy mixtures: Antioxidant, Super Fruit, Energizer, and "C" Your Vitamins; and are all 100% preservative free.

The noodles align with recent consumer trends focusing on healthy alternatives to carb-heavy pasta noodles and are available in seven delicious flavors. They are sold ready to add to salads or to cook.

Product Assortment

Del Monte Fresh Produce offers a growing variety of items to meet the needs of this expanding and demanding consumer segment. In addition to the smoothie kits and the vegetable noodles, the company also offers single-finger bananas and a wide range of Del Monte® Fresh Cut Grab-N-Go fruit and vegetable products that includes fruit medleys, spears, chunks, trays, and salads.



Convenience

With the on-the-go consumers in mind, Del Monte Fresh Produce recently developed new packaging by including innovative features such as non-spill, re-sealable containers. The Del Monte® Fresh Cut Grab-N-Go fruit and vegetable lines also come in tamper evident packaging with large, clear nutritional panels. It fits conveniently in car cup holders and is great for those with a busy lifestyle.

Sales and consumption of Del Monte Fresh grab-and-go items continue to grow year after year as consumer's become more aware of the types of quick, healthy options available to them.



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YUCATAN Guacamole®

The Evolution of Yucatan Foods

After studying food science and technology at the University of California, Davis and a year at Lawry's R&D Center in Los Angeles, Ardy Haerizadeh realized working for larger companies wasn't for him.

"I was very close to the senior food scientists I was working for, but there wasn't a position open in that role, so I found a job as a lab technician," he says.

One of the senior food scientists Haerizadeh worked under became a mentor, teaching him recipe development and then recommending that he interview for a plant manager position at a guacamole company. Haerizadeh was just 22 years old.

"I showed up in my suit with an empty briefcase at Sunny Avocado," he says. "The entrepreneur who ran the company was 29, and he wanted to show me the plant."

To Haerizadeh's surprise, he was immediately whisked off on a plane, driven across the Mexican border in a rented car to the plant and offered the job on the spot. This was in 1990.

"The company's owner told me he wanted me to stay there, so I checked into a motel, called my mom and told her I wasn't coming home," he says. "I didn't speak any Spanish at the time, so I showed up at 11 a.m. for my first day of work after getting lost."

After working for the guacamole company for about a year, Haerizadeh recognized that there were many internal problems with the company, which was going bankrupt. Growers eventually took it over and, at only 23, Haerizadeh was thinking this was an industry where he could hang his hat on his own.

"At the time, my sister was dating an investment banker from Morgan Stanley with a Harvard degree, who was fascinated with entrepreneurship and helped fund our startup," he says. "He is now my brother-in-law and still on the board of Yucatan Foods." "This is when we started Yucatan, which was called Camden Fruit Corp. at the time, and our brand name was Aztec Avocado."

With salsa outselling ketchup in the early 90s, Haerizadeh knew the potential of Mexican food was huge. At the outset, Camden Fruit only sold a 2- and 6-pound size of guacamole to the foodservice market. He built a plant in Mexicali, thinking that offering a better product at a cheaper price would lead to success.

"This was in 1991, when our products were 100 percent geared toward foodservice," he says. "But long story short, the products were not selling. We had 120,000 pounds of pulp we couldn't sell."

The company shut down the plant and closed shop in Mexico but, continued sales efforts in the US.

But Haerizadeh wasn't about to give up. He started selling his product from his Toyota Corolla, which had a modified trunk to contain the avocado pulp. After making the rounds to Los Angeles restaurants and hotels in Palm Springs, he began building a cadre of small local distributors to help get his product out to the marketplace and hired a co-packer.

After two years, the company's manufacturing facility was moved to Central Mexico and a 1-pound size of guacamole was added to the lineup, which was still focused on foodservice.

"The first 15 years of the business was strictly foodservice, but the problem was there wasn't a lot of margin and the co-packing model in Mexico didn't provide much efficiency when dealing with bigger restaurants and chains," says Haerizadeh.

It was decided that the best way to build equity in the company was to move into retail. Sam's Club became the company's first customer.

"After walking in there and offering our product, which was 95 percent avocado and 5 percent spices, they took us on," says Haerizadeh. "Then we realized how loyal the retail business was compared to foodservice and saw real success."

Haerizadeh credits Sue Barkson, a former buyer at Ralph's Supermarkets, with helping Yucatan get a foothold in the retail industry.

"The first customer is always the toughest, since no one wants to be the first to take a risk on a new company," says

Haerizadeh. "Ralph's gave us our shot."

Yucatan then went on to secure other chains, including H.E.B. and Publix.

But what helped secure its spot on retail shelves was a Time magazine feature on organic guacamole.

"This was pivotal for us and helped when we walked into sales pitches," he says. "Eventually, Walmart and Kroger became customers."

Yucatan eventually got out of the foodservice segment all together, brought on a new partner and hired three sales vice presidents to focus solely on retail. The company then divested of all its overseas business in Japan, China, France, Australia and Dubai to concentrate solely on North America, including the U.S., Mexico and Canada.

This has led to the company becoming the number 2 brand in the United States and number one deli brand.

Yet the company has continued to evolve while moving forward.

When its co-packing model was no longer working, Yucatan built its own 100,000-square-foot Mexico manufacturing facility in February last year, which can handle up to 120,000 pounds of product a day and has room for expansion.

"I give kudos to our sales, marketing and operation team, who grew our sales with one hand tied behind their backs," says Haerizadeh, who now serves as CEO of the company. "Now Yucatan is in a strong position to have bigger margins and put that into our sales and marketing efforts."





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The Deli

— It's Where It's At For Dinner

Entrées are a fast-growing opportunity, especially for retailers offering a variety of options

BY BOB JOHNSON

Consumers want a dinner that does not require the time and effort it takes to cook, or the expense and inconvenience involved in eating out. They also want several options to choose from.

"Shoppers are looking for a full menu of meal options in stores," says Brett Erickson, director of value-added products for the Certified Angus Beef brand, Wooster, OH. "They want restaurant quality and variety that appeals to multiple generations and their unique family dynamics. Some stores are evolving to include a sushi bar, smoke house and pizza oven, bringing the appeal of restaurant-prepared foods to the store level. By specializing in meal options and sourcing top-quality fresh ingredients, the retailer appeals to more consumers."

The growth in dinner entrées at the deli is nothing short of staggering, according to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery

Association's (IDDBA) *What's in Store 2017*. It reports deli entrée sales went up 17 percent in just the last two years.

Capturing a piece of this fast-growing action may take a variety of quality products – rotisserie chicken is still king but beef is trending – and more than anything else it takes investment in quality deli staff.

"Retailers, and particularly the deli, are in the people business," says Larry Montuori, vice president of sales for Nuovo Pasta Productions Ltd., Stratford, CT. "The foremost concern should be to engage the guest as they approach the deli and help educate them on what is available and how to use those components and ingredients. If the person waiting on you does not understand the products they are serving, what confidence do you have as to how that product was prepared?"

The people are at least as important as the products when it comes to meeting

customers' expectations.

"Retailers must become consultants to their guests by understanding the products they have available, then explain how to use them to create a wonderful eating experience," says Montuori. "This is no small task, however it is one that will pay off with consumer loyalty and consistent repeat business."

It may even pay to have a chef in the house and available for a brief conversation, as consumers look over their choices for tonight's dinner entrée.

"Retailers need more specialized staff in the deli area, which may increase labor costs," says Erickson. "We're starting to see chefs in stores full-time, helping to give retailers that restaurant appeal. Other challenges come with managing inventories and case displays, training to assure food safety and simply keeping up with evolving food trends."



If the deli is to be the place for dinner, consumers need to know they have come to the right place that has options for quality entrées and, if they need it, help making a choice.

"Stop thinking about the product and start thinking and talking about what the department represents to the consumer," advises Eric Le Blanc, director of deli/bakery marketing at Tyson Foods, headquartered in Springdale, AR.

Fresh And Convenient

The deli definitely has a decisive advantage over the dinner competition, be it a restaurant or home cooking, when it comes to convenience.

More than 80 percent of the rotisserie or fried chicken at the supermarket deli is sold grab-and-go, according to *What's in Store 2017*, as are more than 70 percent of the beef, pork, shrimp or ribs, and half the ethnic dishes.

"Grab-and-go appeals to all segments and household needs," says Erickson. "Just as with dining out, customers appreciate the opportunity to choose what's for dinner tonight for each family member. Prepared meals help individuals and families enjoy high-quality, freshly-made foods in an easy, convenient way. When they walk into the store, they can see all the choices, not just words on a menu."

For entrées in the case, hot or cold, pricing by the portion rather than by the pound can make for an easier and more efficient customer experience.

"When a consumer looks at a price per pound, it's hard to know how much their family needs," says Jeffrey Siegel, chief executive of Farm Ridge Foods, Islandia, NY. "When they see a portion with a price, they can figure that out easily. Restaurants are not selling by the pound, they're selling a meal."

One way for the deli to take advantage of the convenience edge is to cross merchandise entrées with sides and salads in a meal deal.

"Meal bundling gives customers an easier option for grab-and-go," says Erickson. "Retailers can promote specific items and introduce new products by bundling the meat, sides and accompaniments into a meal. Customers see it as a better value than purchasing individual components and realize it's much more cost effective than dining out."

Although the meal deals may offer con-

venience, however, it is worth coming back to consider the question of whether you have the staff on the deli floor that can pull it off.

"There's a push toward meal programs," says Siegel. "We're seeing a lot of that out there; but it's hard to train at a retail level if you have high turnover."

In the supermarket deli, convenience also means when you buy your entrée you

are already in the place where you can buy toilet paper or milk for tomorrow morning's breakfast cereal.

"A carefully planned and executed grab-and-go section allows shoppers to enjoy the food they want to eat in the comfort of their own home or wherever they choose to eat it," says Erickson. "They can purchase dinner and a few staples in one visit. If you're running low on milk, you



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can pick it up, too. The supermarket deli is an appealing place to shop and customers know the products are specially-prepared for best results at home."

According to Le Blanc, more than 60 percent of rotisserie chicken purchases also involve purchases of other items that are not part of the dinner.

"This unique aspect of convenience is something most supermarket retailers don't seize on," he says. "A key part of the value proposition is the ability to purchase other items. Don't run from it, embrace and market it."

In this broader sense of the word, the deli is even more convenient than the competition that delivers to your door after you order via the internet, telephone or mail.

"People use the mail order solutions because someone is acting as a consultant and showing them what components best go together and how to assemble them," says Montuori.

"The supermarket deli personnel can be that consultant."

The online competition may offer a convenient package including everything you need to quickly assemble dinner, but they do not deliver toilet paper and tangerines.

"With the advent of online meal kits, some customers may prefer a pre-assembled meal kit with a recipe and fresh ingredients that have been portioned and are ready to cook," says Erickson. "Shoppers may want the satisfaction of preparing a meal, and a packaged kit makes

for easy preparation. Delivery service and focus on featuring meal options online also give consumers more options and opportunities to choose your stores."

High Quality Options

Among dinner entrées, there is no simple, overarching trend when it comes to which items people are choosing.

According to the 2016 edition of the IDDBA's *What's in Store*, the rotisserie chicken on the periphery of the deli still towers over the competition, but beef, sausages, seafood and Mexican entrées are all enjoying strong double digit growth.

Offering options is important, even more so in situations, not as common as they once were, where an entire family is going to gather around the table for dinner.

"Families are on the go and have differing food preferences around one table," says Erickson. "Retailers can help individualize their meal needs. The deli, hot foods and grab-and-go sections offer retailers the opportunity to create a destination for meals and a few staples, all in one convenient stop, which has great value for customers looking to save time."

One important challenge that comes with offering variety, however, is avoiding the need to throw out significant amounts of unsold food.

"As much as retailers want to know what's trending, they are also looking for ways to get deeply involved with entrees without having to tolerate a high level of

shrink," says Siegel. "That's a goal we are working on with our customers."

One useful strategy is to only put out as much of an entrée selection as you think will sell.

"We have developed a lasagna roll up kit," says Siegel. "Instead of putting out a 5- or 6-pound lasagna, you put out a half dozen portions. Instead of having a chicken parmesan dinner, you can have a kit that would let you put out six pieces."

A Fresh Appearance

The ingredients in all the entrées must be of quality, which in the deli means they must be and look fresh.

"Customers expect restaurant or freshly-made quality in the foodservice deli," says Certified Angus Beef's Erickson. "That means sourcing the finest ingredients, even building the offerings around specialty products or brands. With quality as the foundation, retailers can create a unique identity and become a destination location in their own right in the marketplace, just as a restaurant would. The retailer then has created a platform to communicate a message of quality with their customers that makes them want to shop the deli for meals."

One place to look for a sense of consumers' preferences is the services offering home-delivered packages that can easily be turned into a balanced, delicious dinner.

"The competition is not so much within the store, but rather the mail order meal solutions being offered," says Nuovo Pasta Productions' Montuori. "Consumers want clean ingredient decks with bursts of flavor. This can be accomplished through the use of spices and fresh, flavorful ingredients. They bring fresh ingredients that stimulate the senses and creativity. Retailers need to take advantage of the solutions consumers are utilizing and show how they can be created in the store."

The clean, fresh-looking entrées should convey the food is of restaurant quality, only more convenient and less expensive.

"It is certainly more cost-effective to purchase a meal solution from a deli versus a restaurant," says Montuori. "The challenge is to have quality ingredients rather than opt for low-cost ingredients, like whole muscle chicken breast versus a chopped and formed patty, or Nuovo artisan raviolis with chunky fillings accompanied by a light sauce or brown butter and Parmigiana Reggiano versus a commodity ravioli drowning in tomato sauce." **DB**

A Versatile Cheese



Four fresh ways to sell more Mozzarella

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

Mozzarella has been ingrained in American culture as a staple, yet it has quite a history.

According to culinary legend, Marc Antony of Cleopatra romance fame loved the soft, white, mild-tasting cheese made from rich water buffalo milk so much that he shipped a herd of these animals from Egypt to Rome. Yet, the first written record of this cheese wasn't until 15 millennia later, when Italian Renaissance chef, Bartolomeo Scappi mentioned Mozzarella in his 16th century cookbook, "Opera dell'arte del cucinare".

Over time, Italian followed by U.S. cheesemakers discovered excellent-tasting fresh Mozzarella could also be made from cow's milk.

Today, this cheese is a staple in the specialty cheese category, where it represents 9.3 percent of dollar sales, up 3.5 percent over the year prior, according to 52-week data ending April 29, 2017 supplied by the Chicago-headquartered Nielsen Perishables Group.

"There are a number of varieties of cheese that make up the fresh Mozzarella family," explains Mona Hassani, New York-based marketing intern at the Buffalo, NY-headquartered Lactalis American Group, which represents the Italian Galbani-brand. "For example, Burrata, made in Puglia, Italy, is a fresh buffalo Mozzarella with the addition of buffalo-milk cream making for an extra creamy taste. Provolone and Provolone Affumicata are produced similarly to fresh buffalo Mozzarella, but contain much less liquid. Provolone is often preferred to fresh Mozzarella or sometimes mixed together with it, for example in pizzas, especially in the Campania region of Italy. New inventions occasionally appear on the market in Italy, such as fresh Mozzarella blended with olives and Burrata mixed with smoked salmon. However, it is the traditional fresh Mozzarella that is most popular."

Here are four ways to sell more Mozzarella in the deli:

1. Tell The Story

"The tradition, who made it, how it was made, such as what type of milk is used, that's what's important. Shoppers today want to know how their food is made," says Fiorella Cutrufello, national sales representative for the East Haven, CT-based

Calabro Cheese Corp., a fourth-generation, family-run cheesemaker, which makes its artisanal rBST-free Mozzarella from milk purchased from local dairies. "That's why it's important to educate your customers. We offer a laminated picture of the family and our products that can be placed on the counter. It's a great way to start a dialogue with shoppers."

Debbie Crave, vice president of Waterloo, WI-based Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, named the state's 2017 Family Business of the Year, agrees. "Farmstead, family and sustainability is what we want people to know about our cheese. For example, milk from the barns and milking parlor is pumped directly to the cheese-making room by a pipe laid under the road. That's how fresh our cheese is. We tell this story on our package."

2. Sample, Sample, Sample

"In-store demos are a great way to train deli employees and teach customers about fresh Mozzarella," says Mark Federico, Jr., vice president of operations at the family-run Narragansett Creamery in Providence, RI.

During the spring, summer and fall, Federico and his employees also regularly sample the company's cheeses, including fresh Mozzarella, at local farmer's markets.

"Farmer's markets have a slower feel where you can often take some time and talk with customers about the product. We let them know at what retail stores they can buy our cheeses when the farmer's market isn't open. As a result, our retail supermarket delis near these farmer's mar-

kets are among the best-performing for sales of our products."

3. Display Something For Everyone

"Showcase fresh Mozzarella with other fresh cheeses in the deli's specialty cheese case," recommends Narragansett Creamery's Federico.

The Lactalis American Group's Hassani agrees. "The best way to sell fresh Mozzarella is to display it either in a cooler case or ice bin, although the latter is less convenient. Coolers can be branded with specific point-of-sale materials, such as shelf trays, easel cards or recipe tear-pads to give customers inspiration about how to use the product."

Beyond this, many retailers carry several SKUs of fresh Mozzarella, especially those that are most in demand.

"Both the 8-ounce ball and the 16-ounce log as well as the 8-ounce ciliegine cup (cherry size balls) are our best-selling Galbani-brand fresh Mozzarella products," says Hassani.

Mozzarella balls and logs account for 57 percent of the fresh form of this cheese sold at retail, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data. Ciliegine comes in next, comprising 9 percent.

Ovolini (egg-sized balls) and perlini (pearl-sized balls) are popular sizes.

Ciliegine, ovolini and perlini as well as bocconcini (bite-sized balls) are sold in a water, whey or brine solution that helps the cheese retain moisture.

Thermoform-packed Mozzarella, which is not in a liquid, should also be included among the display offerings, suggests Jamie Wichlacz, marketing and public relations manager for Green Bay, WI-based BelGioioso Cheese Inc, which manufactures 8-ounce balls and 16-ounce logs, both sliced and unsliced, in this form. "The thermoform product is easy to use over pizza or in sandwiches like paninis without having added liquid get into the dish."

The company also offers its Unwrap and Roll product, which is a sheet of fresh Mozzarella that lends itself to filling with ingredients, such as tomatoes and basil. BelGioioso took this concept one step further with its pre-filled sheet with prosciutto and basil leaves. Both make easy and elegant appetizers or snacks.

Snacking is the new trend in the fresh Mozzarella market, according to the Lactalis American Group's Hassani. To meet this demand, "Galbani has launched





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Aging Room, BelGioioso Pulaski Plant, WI December 2016

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its new snack ball range, a pack of 10 0.7-ounce individually-wrapped fresh Mozzarella balls for on-the-go snacking. The company has also launched its snack sticks, delivering a new format for consumers to eat fresh Mozzarella in a mess-free, easy-to-eat stick."

Hassani notes, "These snack products can be cross-displayed in additional locations in the supermarket, such as in the produce department next to tomatoes, basil and other ingredients that are commonly used with fresh Mozzarella or in the snacks cooler next to the cashier."

4. Go Beyond Caprese Salad

"There is a dizzying array of uses for fresh Mozzarella," says Daniel Wavrin, cheesemaker and co-founder of Ferndale Farmstead, in Ferndale, WA, who with his father and uncle, the dairy owners, decided to fill a niche for traditionally-crafted Italian cheeses such as Mozzarella to set their products apart from the Cheddars for which the Pacific Northwest is well-known. "It is truly astounding how versatile this cheese is."

Caprese salad, made with fresh



Mozzarella slices paired with tomatoes, basil and a drizzle of olive oil, is a traditional way to serve this cheese. Uses as a pizza and crostini topping are also widespread. Offering customers usage ideas beyond these is a great way to increase sales.

"We offer a recipe that combines strawberries, mint, olive oil, balsamic vinegar and ovolini in a salad. Other ideas include a grilled cheese sandwich with fresh Mozzarella, tomato, bacon, basil and avo-

cado and our Crave Burger, with a chunky tomato sauce with fresh Mozzarella melted on top," says Crave.

Sales are strongest for fresh Mozzarella in the summer season and closely linked to tomato season. However, says Narragansett Creamery's Federico, "remind customers fresh Mozzarella is a great ingredient for cold-weather dishes like pizza, lasagna and chicken Parmesan to promote sales year-round." **DB**

Capitalize On The Restaurant Burrata Trend

Burrata, the 'Cadillac of fresh Mozzarella, is something to put on the retail radar for the deli's specialty cheese case. That's because this rich buttery-flavored product is taking the restaurant cheese world by storm, appearing on menus in everything from cheese boards to pasta entrées. In fact, *Food & Wine* magazine named Burrata one of its top 10 food trends of 2016.

"Served with ingredients such as olive oil, balsamic vinegar, prosciutto, even pesto and fresh bread, Burrata is an easy appetizer to make at home," says Jamie Wichlacz, marketing and public relations manager for BelGioioso Cheese Inc., which manufactures and markets retail packs of Burrata in 2-, 4- and 8-ounce containers.

Burrata, which means buttery in Italian, has its roots in fresh Mozzarella first made centuries ago in Italy. Fast forward to the 1920's, when Italian cheesemakers innovated the idea to take bits of Mozza-

rella left over from the day's production, mix it with fresh cream and tuck it into the ball-shaped Mozzarella's center. Importation of Burrata into the United States started only a few years ago. BelGioioso was one of the first U.S. companies to make this cheese for nationwide distribution.

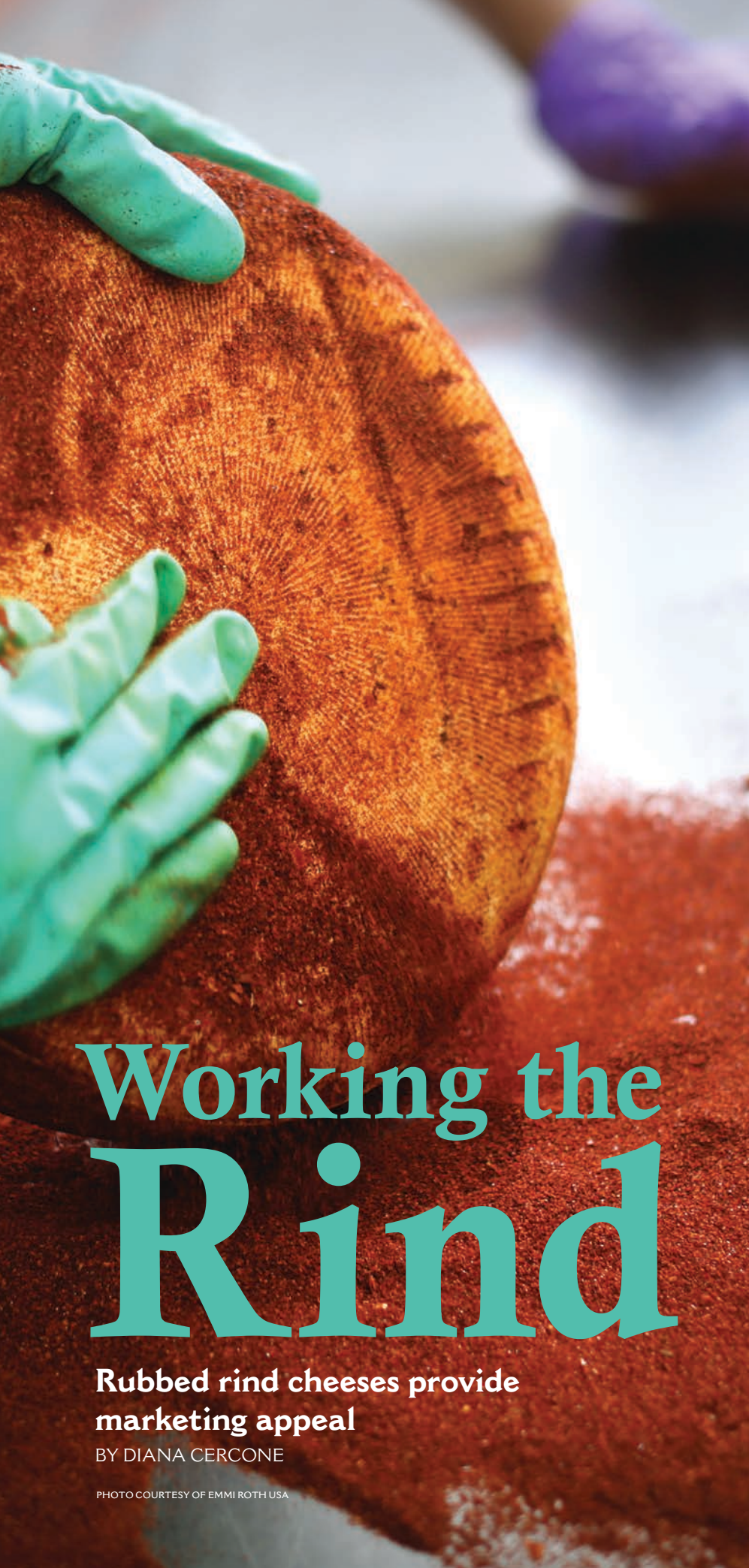
Other U.S. companies now make Bur-

rata. For example, the Narragansett Creamery in Providence, RI, rolled out its new line in 4- and 8-ounce containers earlier this year.

More recent twists on Burrata are flavored products. For example, the Calabro Cheese Corp. in East Haven, CT, makes a plain version flavored with imported Italian black summer truffles.

"We're looking at perhaps making a Burrata stuffed with capers in salt like in Sicily," says Fiorella Cutrufello, national sales representative. **DB**





Rubbed rind cheeses are gaining in popularity — and not just among specialty cheese shop patrons. More and more supermarkets are listening to their savvy customers and carrying these exceptional cheeses. With their eye-catching colorful rinds, these dairy queens are changing the sea of predominantly white landscape of supermarket cheese counters.

And it's not just the cheeses' eye-popping rind colors and textures that are creating the allure. It's also their aromas and flavors that are resonating with customers.— and guaranteeing supermarkets a growing demand.

So how are these cheeses doing it? And how can supermarkets tap into selling more rubbed rind cheeses to their customers? To find out, I spoke with several noted cheesemakers and a cheese importer who are breaking the mold with their rubbed rind cheeses.

The five cheesemakers are Beehive Cheese, located in Uintah, UT; Emmi Roth, USA, Fitchburg, WI; Rivers Edge Chèvre, Blodgett, OR; Sartori, Plymouth, WI; and Schuman Cheese, Fairfield, NJ. Though Roth and Schuman also import rubbed rind cheeses, Forever Cheese in New York only imports cheeses and products from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Croatia. All six have won awards for their rubbed rind cheeses.

Rubbed rind cheese is one of many types of rind treatments. Though rubbed rind cheeses date to cheesemaking's early beginnings, they were usually rubbed simply with olive oil or a salt wash.

Today's consumers tend to be well-traveled, exposed to many different spices and tastes and crave new experiences to duplicate at home.

The rubbed rind cheeses of today reflect that. They're more sophisticated — crossing borders and bridging traditions to create exciting, new flavors with spices, herbs, beer or wine. The rubs impart their flavors into the cheese paste, complementing them without overpowering the integrity of the cheese.

Pat Ford, co-owner of Beehive Cheese

Working the Rind

Rubbed rind cheeses provide marketing appeal

BY DIANA CERCONI

PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMI ROTH USA



PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMI ROTH USA

co, explains it this way. “American palates are becoming more sophisticated. And American cheesemakers are becoming more adventuresome. We’re not tied down to centuries-old traditions. We’re not afraid to take risks.”

More Sophisticated Palates

That’s not to say traditional artisan cheesemaking isn’t followed. It is, but with the added element of interesting flavor combinations, such as Beehive’s Barely Buzzed, a unique espresso and lavender hand-rubbed cheese.

An easy way for supermarkets to convey rubbed rind’s interesting flavors, says

Ford, is to use short descriptive words posted above the cheese that pique a customer’s curiosity. For example, for Beehive’s Barely Buzzed, a supermarket deli might use “Coffee & Lavender Rubbed” or “Hand-Rubbed with Habanero and Lime” to describe one of the three rubbed rind cheeses crafted by Schuman Cheese’s Yellow Door Creamery brand.

Recipes are another great way for supermarkets to not only introduce a rubbed rind cheese to their customers, but also to expand its value to them, says Allison Schuman, national account manager and fourth generation of family-owned Schuman Cheese. “Recipes allow consum-

ers to discover the versatility of the cheese. This could turn a cheese purchased for an event or gathering into a supplement for a gourmet omelet the next morning.”

Plus, having recipe cards next to a rubbed rind cheese, adds Schuman, “has stopping power. People get inspired by seeing an interesting or beautiful recipe.”

Suggest Pairings

In addition to recipe cards, pairing suggestions are helpful, says Molly Ripinger, assistant brand manager at Sartori Cheese, which makes nearly a dozen hand-rubbed rind cheeses using spices and specialty ingredients. “The pairing suggestions remove inhibitions consumers might have by putting cheese in a familiar context, such as with burgers, in pasta dishes or with approachable flavors, such as fruit preserves and nuts.”

This approach also addresses cross marketing. “Not everyone goes to the cheese counter every time they visit the store,” says Jodie Wische, vice president of specialty sales at Emmi Roth. “So bring the cheese to them where they frequent often or shop for one item.”

For example, supermarkets could display a cheese that complements certain fruits, wines or beers in their respective departments. Featuring a rubbed rind cheese in a deli sandwich or in a gourmet dish in the prepared foods and take-out departments are two more innovative and effective ways to cross merchandise.

Don’t discount the power of live

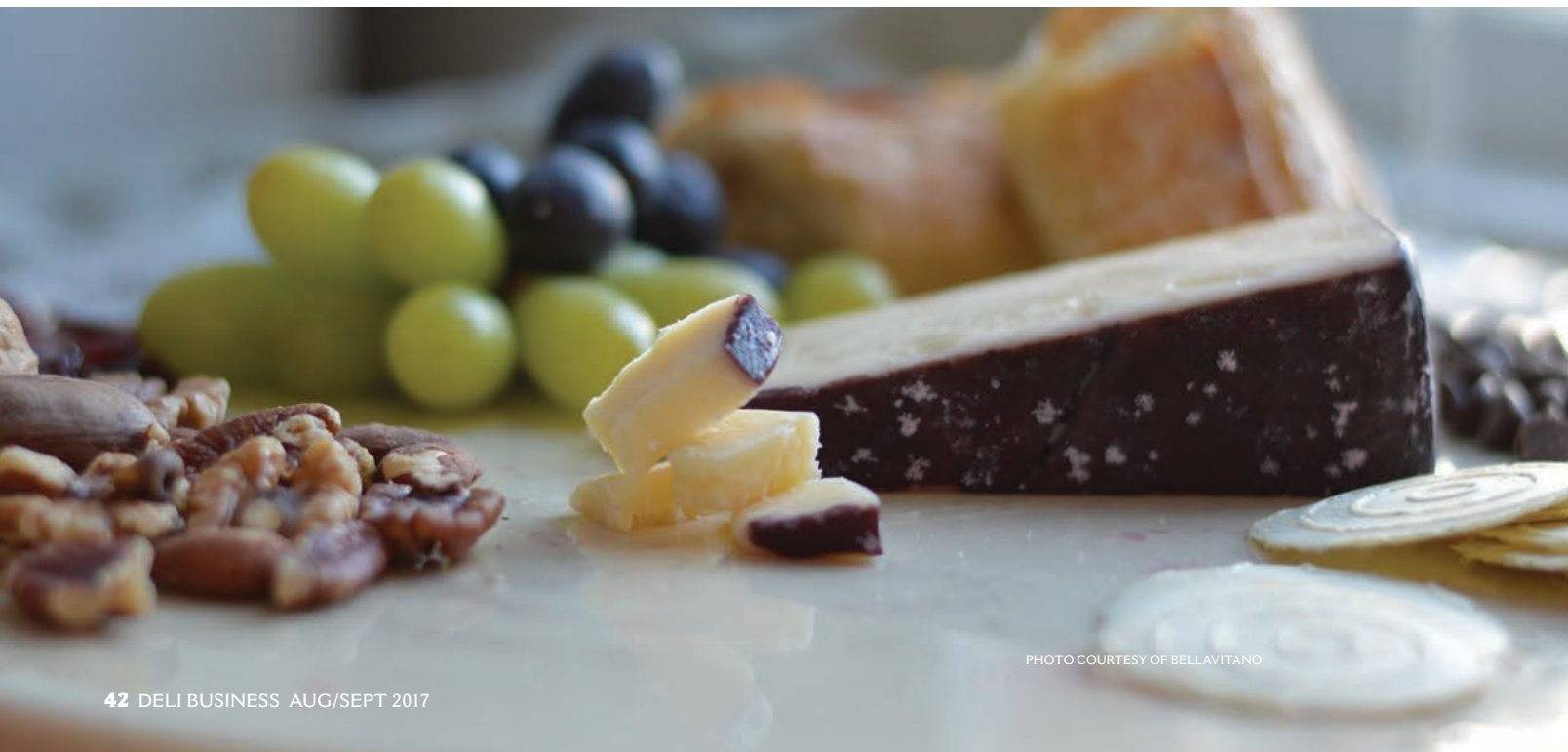


PHOTO COURTESY OF BELLAVITANO

demonstrations, offers Patricia Morford, cheesemaker, chef and owner of Rivers Edge Chèvre. Among the goat cheeses she hand crafts are several hand-rubbed rind cheeses, including Astraea, which has been hand-rubbed with extra virgin olive oil, Vietnamese cinnamon, dried chipotle peppers and white pepper; Illahee Tomme, rubbed with truffle oil; and Up In Smoke, a fresh chèvre wrapped in smoked maple leaves and then spritzed with bourbon.

One of Morford's cross merchandising demonstrations at a supermarket featured her at a demo table where she grilled fresh figs brushed with olive oil. She then topped the grilled figs with her Up In Smoke cheese and handed them to customers to taste. The demo proved so successful that the supermarket sold out of both her cheese and the figs.

Holidays and special occasions are also prime times for supermarkets to promote rubbed rind cheeses with special tastings or demos that are tied into the celebration, says Emmi Roth's Wische. At their home base in Wisconsin, they make two Roth brand rubbed rind cheeses: Roth GranQueso, hand-rubbed with a cinnamon and paprika blend and Roth 3 Chile Pepper Gouda, hand-rubbed with a chipotle, habañero and jalapeño pepper blend.

For a recent promotion at a supermarket for Roth 3 Chile Pepper Gouda, she says, they tied it in with Cinco de Mayo and cross merchandised the cheese with fresh vegetables and fruit to promote healthy living. It was also an effective way, says Wische, "to demonstrate cheeses are not only meant for a cheese plate, but also many different culinary uses."

Along with the above, Emmi Roth also recommend supermarkets use their weekly ads, mailings and social media to promote the rubbed rind cheeses they carry.

Sampling Sells

Then there's the undeniable power of tasting a cheese at the supermarket's cheese counter, says Michele Buster, co-founder of Forever Cheese. Once a piece of cheese gets into a customer's mouth, it pretty much sells itself, says Morford. Ripinger agrees, "Tasting is believing."

This also addresses why many rubbed rind cheeses can command higher prices. There's an undeniable umami taste to an artisanal cheese. It's a taste that easily registers with consumers of the special attention given to every step in the creation of the cheese — from ensuring the goat,

A cheesemonger develops a relationship between the customer and the cheese, and between the deli and the customer.

sheep or cow has been humanely raised to the artisanal craft of the cheesemaker, including the many trial runs before arriving at the desired flavor, paste and rind. For example, Ripinger notes it takes years for Sartori's team of Master Cheesemakers, scientists and researchers to create and craft the unique BellaVitano flavors, which range from fresh-cracked black pepper to Italian espresso.

Promoting a cheese's awards can also serve as a selling point. Many people don't always trust their own palate, says Morford. In that case, they may be swayed by a cheese's award-sticker and choose it over another.

Still, most agree, having a cheesemonger who is passionate and knowledgeable about cheese is the most important way a supermarket can entice customers to try

new cheeses and expand sales.

Today's consumers want to know where their food comes from. This is especially true of artisan cheeses. Consumers want to know where the cheese is made, who makes the cheese, and how the cheese is created. They understand the price of artisan cheese matches its value. A cheesemonger can reinforce this by conveying to customers the cheese's story and background and offering them tastes, as well as direct them to a cheese's website for more information and recipes.

A cheesemonger develops a relationship between the customer and the cheese, and between the deli and the customer.

Simply put, says Wische, "Those supermarkets that have a cheesemonger outsell those that don't."

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PROSCIUTTO POPULARITY ON THE *Rise* IN DELI



Find out what makes this product unique and on trend

BY LISA WHITE

With Americans seeking the upscale and unique in their supermarket delis, the popularity of prosciutto has been on the rise in recent years.

The trend in imports of uncooked prosciutto in the U.S. from Italy between 2012 and 2016 has increased by 29 percent, according to the Italian Association of Meat Producers (ASSICA), based in Milan. With regard to imports of uncooked prosciutto in the U.S., Italy has a strong leadership, with 74 percent market share among all exporting countries.

"This is a strong evidence of a growing appreciation for Italian prosciutto in the U.S.," says Nicola Levoni, president of ASSICA. "Compared to this increasing export, Italy's consumption of all pork meat products between 2005 and 2016 increased only by 1 percent. Clearly, the increased U.S. consumption of Italian uncooked prosciutto ranged well above the Italian average consumption."

With more than 100 million euros representing 7 percent of the total national cold cuts exports, according to ASSICA, the U.S. is the first non-European market for these products and the fourth-largest destination overall. Looking at the exports of dry-cured prosciutto in the last year saw the U.S. import equal more than 90 million euros, or 12.7 percent of the total value of exported Italian dry-cured prosciutto.

Defined as an Italian ham cured by drying and typically served thinly sliced, it is perfectly paired with a number of the department's other foods, whether with mustards on a sandwich, with cheese for a charcuterie plate or on a meat platter for parties or the holidays.

"Prosciutto has become more popular in the U.S., and many Italian producers are exporting to America," says Antonio Corsano, CEO at Gloucester, NY-based Veroni USA

PDO Requirements

Ancient Romans first cured prosciutto, and the name comes from the Roman word meaning 'dried by air'.

The Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma was set up in 1963, on the initiative of 23 producers with the objectives of safeguarding the genuine product, its tradition and the image represented by the designation 'Parma'. Since 1970, when the first law on Parma Ham was passed, it is the official body in charge for safeguarding, protecting and promoting the Designation of Origin "Prosciutto di Parma". Today, the Consortium represents the 150 producers of Parma Ham.

Tanara Giancarlo is a family-owned company established in 1954 and the first family business that provided PDO Prosciutto di Parma when the Consortium was established.

"Prosciutto manufacturers must respect the Consorzio's production rules, but may also have higher requirements," says Paolo Tanara, co-owner of Tanara Giancarlo.

The Consorzio requires prosciutto to be produced within 20 miles of Parma to be a PDO product as well as adhering to a minimum of 12 months curing time, although some companies cure products for as long as 18 to 24 months. The meat is preserved with salt.

This is a complex product that is both sweet and moist, since it uses the leg of the pig, which has a higher fat content.

A Category Breakdown

In the U.S., there is both domestic and imported prosciutti available.

Fratelli Beretta USA, based in Mt. Olive, NJ, produces a domestic dry-cured, natural pork and salt prosciutto following the old Italian tradition of using time and temperature during production.

The most common Italian prosciutti available in the American marketplace are Prosciutto di Parma PDO and Prosciutto di San Daniele PDO.

Prosciutto di Parma is generally sweeter, as it uses only between 4 and 6.7 percent salt during curing, while newcomer to the U.S. market, Prosciutto di Toscana is seasoned with spices, such as juniper, for a stronger taste.

"Within the PDO denomination, the



main differences are linked to the production areas," says Levoni. "Generally, the Parma and San Daniele prosciutto have a delicate taste and soft consistency, while Tuscan prosciutto has a stronger, more flavorful taste and thicker consistency. The other prosciutto are generally smaller and have a more decisive flavor that is linked to a lower fat content when compared to the PDO products."

In addition, the salt for flavoring is sometimes sourced from Sicily or Malia for different flavor profiles.

Veroni has two plants in Parma that produce its product. Its Italian prosciutto uses European legs and is less costly than Prosciutto di Parma.

"When prosciutto is sliced, you can lose 25 to 30 days for shipment, but if it's sliced in the U.S., it cannot be called Prosciutto di Parma," says Corsano.

For this reason, Veroni ships full legs treated with High Pressure Pasteurization (HPP) direct from Italy to enhance the food safety attributes.

While production has remained the same for centuries, in the last year and a half, the prosciutto market and trends have changed dramatically.

While as little as five years ago, prosciutto consumers were mainly foodies, increased exposure to this product has widened the demographic substantially in recent years.

"The level of prosciutto that they are buying varies a lot depending on the area where consumers are and what kind of offering they are able to find, but in one form or the other, more consumers are tasting prosciutto," says Bocchini. "Beretta developed an antipasto tray that gives consumers a great opportunity to try prosciutto in combination with other more familiar food flavors."

The company also will be introducing a new imported line, Prosciutto di Carpegna, this holiday season.

In terms of trends, prosciutto also fits in

with the increasing number of Americans who tend to eat cleaner and healthier.

"The perception is this meat is of higher quality," says Corsano. "It's just ham with sea salt, so it's all natural."

The fact that this meat is antibiotic-free also enhances its appeal.

"There has been a complete switch in purchasing patterns from the deli counter to the wall deli in the U.S. due to lower costs and labor," says Alberto Minardi, CEO at Los Angeles-based Principe Foods. "As a result, the Italian presliced meats like prosciutto are expanding on the wall deli."

One of the newest trends with these meats is prosciutto snack bites in grab-and-go packages.

"With larger chains, there is more of a focus on presliced prosciutto and an emphasis on artisanality and bulk product," says Minardi. "And the romance about the differentiation in prosciutto types is important to customers."

Positioning Prosciutto

The shift of presliced meats from the full-serve case to the wall deli has impacted the marketing of prosciutto.

"Signs near the deli providing information about origin and method of production generally interest the customer in trying the products," says Bocchini.

The best strategy for bringing added attention to prosciutto is sampling within the deli department.

"Our products are definitely conquering the sales promotions, the tastings and consumers' taste in general," says Levoni. "The prosciutto produced in Italy is a much imitated product. For this reason, it is important that the promotions be carried out by experienced staff able to explain the product's unmistakable features."

In order to achieve successful marketing, Levoni says it is important to possess complete and reliable information on these products, such as teaching staff how to slice and serve the prosciutto, how to preserve it properly and how to pair it with other foods or wines.

"All these features are the keys to success in the U.S. market," he says. "We must not forget the tradition and the strong connection with the territory that characterizes the products; spreading the culture of Italian meats is the most useful tool to differentiate it from other products and to bring the American consumer as close as possible to the Italian way of life."

Because prosciutto is a simple product made of just pork and salt, it can be cross merchandised with either domestic or imported cheese.

Due to its mild flavor, prosciutto also pairs best with strong cheeses as well as Grana Padano and Parmigiano Reggiano along with a variety of wine, including pro-secco, pinot grigio or chianti.

"The best way to introduce prosciutto to a new market is with monthly sampling programs," says Minardi. "The next generation is somewhat aware of these products, with Millennials walking into the segment with tastings before embedding these products in their diet."

There are many food combinations for prosciutto.

Fratelli Beretta USA recommends pairing prosciutto with cantaloupe, figs, asparagus or dry fruit. It also can be wrapped around meats, including lamb and pork chops. The company's Facebook and Instagram pages provide suggestions and recipe ideas.

"The most typical one is pairing it with melon and other types of fruits or vegetables, such as courgettes or asparagus, or to serve it as an appetizer," says Levoni. "[In addition to stronger cheeses,] it is also common to serve the prosciutto with Mozzarella and other mild-tasting cheese."

Because of its mild flavor and versatility, prosciutto can also be used as an ingredient in a variety of recipes.

"We find it used by many innovative chefs but also in more traditional cuisine, such as pasta, dressings, salty pies, roast meat and also stuffed in some types of fresh pasta, such as tortellini," says Levoni.

Looking ahead, prosciutto experts predict increasing prosciutto popularity, as more consumers seek to learn about the different origins and flavor profiles.

"By becoming more knowledgeable and demanding, the consumer encourages retailers to make more information available both at retail outlets and during tasting seminars," says Levoni. "Therefore, retailers increasingly need specialized personnel both in product management and in formulating pairings and recipes."

When prosciutto is properly positioned, and marketed seasonally with promotions geared to eating it alone or paired with appropriate items, this meat sells itself.

"Sales of this product typically pick up in the summer, but even more so over the holidays," says Minardi.

DB



Preparing For The HOLIDAYS

A look at how delis can develop enticing, festive menus

BY KEITH LORIA

When the holidays roll around, it's easy for some people to put a party platter out and be done with it, but that's just the start of an incredible array of foods one can buy in a deli department. A savvy retailer will capitalize on a gamut of high-end items to market, such as paté and other luxury food products, and become a destination for shoppers during the holiday season.

"Deli staff should be 100 percent invested in engaging and informing their customers. The department should be a solution center for their entertaining needs," says Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian Patés & Specialty Meats, based in Neptune, NJ. "Product inventory should have the high quality and enough variety to support this mission. Consider having as many department demos as possible or passive sampling stations as practical to offer your customer a fun place to do their shopping and a variety of new tasting experiences."

Alexian supports this belief by offering sampling inventory direct from its plant simply with an e-mail or telephone request.

Vanessa Chang, marketing and education manager for Creminelli Fine Meats, based in Salt Lake City, says deli departments should create an experience and merchandise products together that do double duty as seasonal food offerings for a party or as gifts to share.

"This is the season where people are willing to spend a little more and try food they might not usually pick up the rest of the

year," she says. "Items that are considered a luxury like truffles, bubbles (Champagne), foie gras and craft chocolates, are all wonderful menu items for a party and also great gifts."

Jaline G. Isidor, marketing manager for Cibao Meat Products, located in the Bronx, NY, says during holiday season, consumers are in a rush to make sure everything is picture perfect, running around getting everything done in the kitchen.

"A way to beat the odds on such a busy day is by offering high-end deli products to guests to help with their appetite," says Isidor. "Our products are good to eat as soon as you buy them, and no cooking is necessary. Therefore, you can get ahead of the game in the kitchen while guests are entertained with the wonderful seasonings of the products."

Mary Shepard, director of sales/partner for Fortun Foods, Inc., headquartered in Kirkland, WA, notes "quality and fresh" really needs to be the emphasis to capture the customers' interest.

"You want the 'wow factor,' something unique and those treasure hunt findings," she says. "That customer wants to look real good to their guests. When entertaining, less work is best, and deli departments should be going after this audience."

Bryce Thorne, senior director of sales, East Region, for Rise Baking Co., headquartered in Minneapolis, says the holidays offer an opportunity for retailers to capture additional high-dollar sales by building large displays of long shelf life party platters.

"Crispy bars and cookies are a great item to push around the

holiday season,” he says. “It’s great for consumers who do not have the time to bake.”

What To Carry

When thinking about selections in the deli, retailers should offer what the caterers are doing —high-end quality products that offer easy application.

Sebastien Lehenbre, senior brand manager for the newly-renamed Savencia Cheese USA LLC, headquartered in Mahwah, NJ, says deli departments should fuel the treasure hunt with an extended seasonal offering, spike consumers’ interest with elements of surprise, but make it easy to adopt and implement.

“Merchandise as you would serve it — with charcuterie, chutneys, honey and jams — and propose solutions, such as cheese platters and pairing recipes,” he says. “The more visual, the better.”

Some of the cheese offerings that come out for the holiday season from Savencia include Brie with truffle and Cranberry Apple gourmet spreadable cheese.

Fortun Foods offers chef-inspired, clean ingredient, true restaurant-finish sauces. From a Lemon Dill Caper with white wine to a Spanish Romesco with saffron, Shepard says consumers can pour the sauces over any protein and their guests will think they have been cooking all day.

“Sauces are the hardest to replicate, consistency issues, cost of ingredients and who has the time to make it?” she says. “Elevate with real quality from your grocery store.”

When it comes to paté, Cummins says it should include four SKUs at a minimum, though six SKUs is ideal.

“Of these, two should be a country style or coarse cut (paté Champagne, for example), two should be creamy and spreadable (such as a truffle mousse) and one or two can be of the vegetable variety,” she says. “These in addition to a variety of cheeses from around the world and some dry-cured meats and sausages would be ideal.”

In terms of meats, Chang says to think of both premium and convenience.

“Customers have more of a budget during the holidays, but not always so much time, so having time-consuming customer transactions reduced with some ready-to-go merchandising of prosciutto, coppa, etc., are helpful, especially for last-minute shoppers,” she says. “Iberico de bellota, pata negra, but also special/limited edition varieties from charcuterie artisans can be



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Cross merchandising is key during the holidays to create optimum sales. Product sampling through demos is a great way to cross merchandise and introduce pairings, such as a mousse paté or cheese with a cracker that is displayed nearby.

“Cross merchandising is important for that consumer to see the pairing for themselves,” says Shepard. “Give them choices, and they will figure out their menu. Steak with Peppercorn sauce can be merchandised in the deli so they can visualize and take home complementary items together. Their biggest competition is the restaurant fare, so give them high-quality and the customer will pay more.”

For example, she suggests providing real fresh-roasted turkey gravy versus artificial flavorings.

Enticing Pairings

Sometimes you have to think outside the box for pairings and get creative.

“Salami and crackers go hand in hand for a quick appetizer. You can also pair them with green plantains and frying cheese, since that is a very popular dish amongst



the Hispanic community,” says Isidor. “If you thinly slice the product combined with two slices of baguette, a thin slice of tomato, a toothpick holding it together and top it off with an olive, you just made yourself a fancy mini sandwich. Repeat this several times and before you know it you’ll have an elegant appetizer dish that only took a matter of seconds to complete.”

Rise Baking often sees sales pick up during the holidays for its gourmet cookies, artisan breads and dips. Thorne says retailers can help themselves by creating displays that tie in other departments.

“Gourmet white chocolate pumpkin cookies merchandised in 24-count packages, partnered with produce around the table display with pumpkins, corn stalks, etc., will create an enticing fall seasonal table display,” says Thorne. “Utilize deli meat brands to promote sandwiches made from bakery artisan bread and rolls.”

working with retailers to develop a category plan for each holiday well in advance. Combining our items with other departments to produce large displays of product cross merchandised with other store items to create the look and feel of the holiday season is the best way to attract more customers and increase sales.”

“A picture is worth a thousand words,” notes Cummins, who says in-store posters or banners, trifold brochures, website photos and social media posts are all very effective in communicating and inspiring creative and delicious entertaining ideas that are out of the realm of ordinary.

“For example, not just Brie, but Brie with dripping honey, paté de campagne with an orange marmalade and abundantly filled charcuterie platters should be on display,” she says.

Shepard asserts word of mouth is the most powerful marketing possible.

“As the saying goes, a great experience you tell two or three friends, a not-so-great experience you will tell 10 or more,” she says. “Quality will sell, and retailers can be that destination for the very best.”

Keep in mind, today’s consumer is becoming very savvy; they are demanding fresh foods and they are demanding clean ingredients. This trend is moving forward at a rapid pace, and supermarket retailers have to jump on board to be relevant and capture that business.

“Offer the very best,” says Creminelli Fine Meats’ Chang. “It may be pennies more, but give that consumer the option to choose. The great experience they will have entertaining or providing upscale fare just for their families will reap many awards.”

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Getting The Word Out

In stores, retailers can create eye-catching displays that attract shoppers, but manufacturers also help promote their products to increase sales.

“We are on Facebook and have a YouTube channel where you can find many of our recipes,” says Isidor. “We make sure to have great photographs and try to draw people into the stores —especially around the holidays.”

Rise Baking’s Thorne advises to create holiday entertaining brochures that are published well in advance to get people thinking about the items early.

“Sample new gourmet products and get people to try and purchase on impulse,” he says. “As manufacturers, we should all be

ON THE HORIZON

New, exciting and indispensable offerings



By
Jeffrey Spear
President - Studio Spear
www.studiospear.com

If you enjoy food shopping as much as I do, and whether it's in supermarkets, specialty food stores, healthy living environments or big box operations, encountering new and exciting ingredients, prepared foods and emerging brands is always an exhilarating experience. This being said, the likelihood of making new discoveries in mainstream channels, especially at the deli counter, is severely limited.

To improve upon this dynamic, I attend lots of trade shows and patronize restaurants of distinction all over the globe, seeking out innovative upstarts that are effectively challenging the culinary status quo. As I've discovered, there are a number of breakthrough producers, brands, ingredients and trends that are sure to delight your customers, strengthen loyalties and increase sales.

Clean And Natural: The demand for foods that are free of preservatives, questionable additives and artificial ingredients has been prevalent for a while and is on the rise. While there are a few options in the deli case that can be described as clean and natural, these are a minority. In addition, and specifically at the service counter, there is no practical way for consumers to read labels or make purchasing decisions based on anything more than product name, tasting (if offered) and price. If you are not already changing your offerings to a cleaner and more natural selection, the time to act is now.

Locally Made: There is an abundance of localized deli brands in this country that are comparable, or in many cases superior, to those offered by the big industrialized players. Whether you are seeking charcuterie, cheeses or prepared foods, these products tend to be cleaner, natural and have an engaging heritage that will delight your customers.

For cheese alone, there are amazing varieties produced across the United States. The state of Wisconsin has more than 600 varieties, types and styles of cheese, many of which are still unknown to consumers. According to Rich Mende, director of channel programs at the Madison, WI-based Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, "We recognize that production volumes from our smaller operators can be a challenge, but this is something we hope to help retailers overcome. By educating retailers on the vast variety of high-quality specialty cheese Wisconsin has to offer, there is an incredible opportunity to improve the way retailers engage with their customers and better meet their needs."

Ethnic Foods: Consumers remain eager for new culinary experiences, especially foods they have enjoyed in restaurants and are eager to try at home. While Korean flavors like kimchi, sriracha and gochujang have been trending for a while,

there is growing interest in flavors from South America, such as aji, sofrito, plantains and golden-berries. Let's not forget that flavors from countries in Southeast Asia such as cardamom, lime, coconut, lemongrass and sambal, which are also quite popular. Even American flavors, including watermelon, maple, rhubarb and brown butter have become fashionable. If you have not found ways to integrate any of these influences, especially in sandwiches and prepared foods, you are probably losing favor with customers.

Vegetarian: With a growing consumer preference for healthier food choices, meatless dishes are becoming increasingly popular. This accounts for the growing popularity of breads, salads and side dishes featuring ancient grains such as quinoa, amaranth, millet, freekeh and farro along with recipes that exploit protein substitutes including edamame, lentils, exotic mushrooms, tempeh, tofu and seitan. If you have not already implemented a vegetarian program, the time to jump on this particular bandwagon is now.

Snacking: While sweet and salty snacks are abundantly stocked in the center aisles, these products are perfect for cross promotion in the deli department. Healthy, ethnic and vegetarian snacks such as Way Better's Black Bean Tortilla Chips, Dang's Sticky Rice Chips, Banana Joe Crispy Thin Banana Chips and chickpea-based Hippeas Puffs are wonderfully different, delicious and exotic, can provoke conversation and will enhance the overall experience at the deli counter.

And let's not lose sight of the fact consumers are snacking throughout the day and shunning sweet and salty treats of questionable nutritional value. With a glut of high-protein meat snacks flooding the marketplace, the opportunity for the deli department is unmistakable. A few innovative products worth considering include Duke's Hatch Green Chile Smoked Shorty Sausages, Lorissa's Kitchen Szechuan Peppercorn Steak Strips and Ruby Bay Orange Ginger Salmon Jerky.

Considering how competitive food retailing has become, and the growing number of sales environments available to consumers, making the shopping experience engaging, compelling and enjoyable is a no-brainer. At the deli department, relying on large format brands is certainly easy to manage. Unfortunately, this practice is more about keeping store management happy, not the customer.

For retailers interested in maintaining customer loyalties and increasing revenues, keeping a constant watch on the horizon, understanding emerging trends and preferences, and embracing "what's new" makes a whole lot of sense.

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CLEMSON BLUE CHEESE: A SOUTHERN CLASSIC

Clemson Blue Cheese's namesake is South Carolina's Clemson University, and the artisan cheese has quite the story to tell.



Its history dates back to 1940, when a Clemson University dairy professor cured the cheese in the damp air of the Stumphouse Mountain Tunnel near Walhalla, SC. Production was moved in 1958 to the college's Newman Hall, where air-conditioned ripening rooms replicate the temperature and humidity of the unfinished railroad tunnel, originally the Blue Ridge Railroad's vital link from

the Charleston port to the fertile Midwest. The project began in 1852 but North-South hostilities in 1859 halted its progress. After the Civil War, attempts to reactivate the project failed and the tunnel was abandoned.

Clemson University purchased the tunnel in 1951, and Operation Blue Cheese continued experimentally. Milk from the college's Brown Swiss and Holstein herd was used to make the cheese, first produced on campus and then driven 30 miles to cure in the Stumphouse Mountain Tunnel. That continued until 1956 with the opening of the much-anticipated Agricultural Center in the university's Newman Hall.

In 1958, blue cheese production from start to finish was accomplished on campus and still is.

Clemson Blue Cheese is made the old-fashioned way using milk from the university's dairy, then salted, waxed and aged for six months. When ready, every hoop is scraped and packaged by hand.

In 2009, it ranked among the best in the nation at the 15th biennial U.S. Championship Cheese Contest in Green Bay, WI, and after 76 years remains a Southern staple.

Today, it is available for purchase both on campus and online.

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 email DeliBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com. For more information contact us at (561) 994-1118.

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INFORMATION SHOWCASE

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BelGioioso Cheese, Inc.	39	Cheese	877-863-2123
Blount Fine Foods.....	26-27	Soups	800-274-2526
Castella Imports	28-29	Mediterranean Specialties	866-CASTELLA
Couturier North-America, Inc.....	2	French Cheese	518-851-2570
Del Monte Fresh Produce	30-31	Guacamole.....	800-950-3683
Dietz & Watson Inc.	17	Deli Meats.....	800-333-1974
Fortun's Finishing Touch Sauces.....	48	Soups	888-988-1045
George E. DeLallo Co.	52	Cookies	800-433-9100
Hormel Foods Corporation.....	19	Deli Meats.....	800-523-4635
IDDBA.....	7	Trade Association	608-310-5000
Inline Plastics Corp.....	21	Packaging.....	800-826-5567
Ken's Foods Inc.	15	Dressings	800-633-5800
Piller Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd.	35	Deli Meats.....	800-265-2628
Placon	51	Packaging.....	800-541-1535
Pocino Foods Co.	47	Deli Meat.....	626-968-8000
Pomi USA.....	5	Tomatoes.....	732-541-4115
Refrigerated Foods Association	13	Trade Association	770-303-9905
Arthur Schuman, Inc.....	43	Specialty Cheese	973-227-0030
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