



## ALSO INSIDE

Entrées  
Cross-Merchandising  
Deli Take-Out  
Packaging  
Breads  
Ribs And Wings  
Rotisserie  
Ethnic Foods  
Salads  
Snack Foods  
Goat Cheese  
British Cheese  
Wisconsin Cheese

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*Saluting Industry Leaders*



## DELI MEAT SUPPLEMENT



*Deli Meats 2007*  
starts on page 51





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### Pilgrim's Pride Deli Products – Solutions for Today's Consumers.

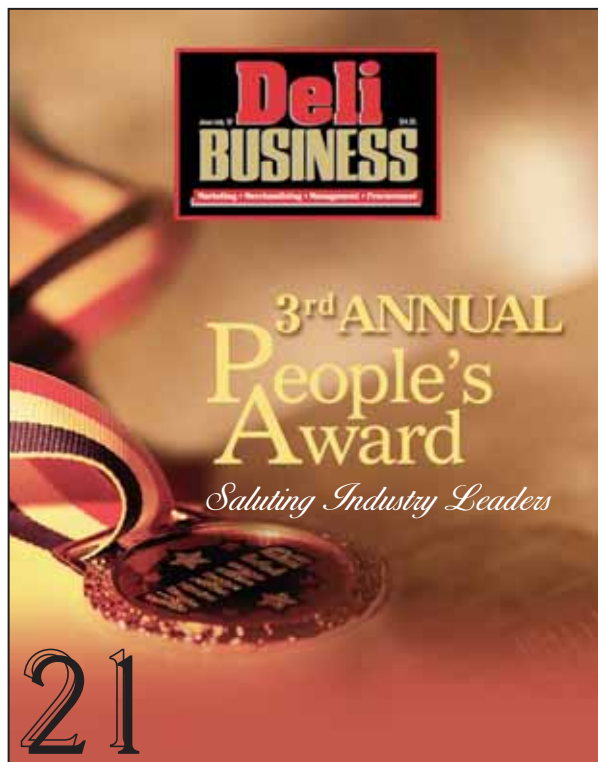
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## DELI MEAT SUPPLEMENT

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# DELI BUSINESS QUIZ



## PATTY RISPOLI

Deli Supervisor  
Food Circus Supermarkets, Inc.  
Middletown, NJ

Patty oversees the sales, merchandising, profits and labor for all 10 stores of this family-owned business, which operates its stores under the Foodtown Food Circus banner. She has been with the company for four years but has been in the business for over 30 years.

She also sits on a committee for ad programs. Purchasing is done at the store level, but she approves all vendors. DSD purchasing is set up through corporate.

Patty reads DELI BUSINESS for the "information about products and what's going on in the marketplace. It gives me contacts for prospective vendors. I started reading it when I started here. The company got it for me and it's the only business magazine I have asked to keep."

As the winner of the DELI BUSINESS quiz, Patty wins an iPod Nano.

## WIN A PORTABLE HAMMOCK

With the lightweight portability of backpack beach chairs, this fold-down hammock sets up easily anywhere. Tubular steel frame and nylon sling. Weighs just 25 pounds so it can be carried easily. Supports 250 pounds. Built-in book holder and drink holder pockets, inflatable pillow.

## HOW TO WIN

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

## Quiz Questions

- 1) What is the IDDBA booth number for Summer Fresh? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the toll-free number for Kangaroo Brands? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What is the fax number for Principe? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is the email address for Rostello? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What is the Web address for Placon? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What is the phone number for Marzetta? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send answers to:

**DELI BUSINESS QUIZ: June/July 2007 Issue**

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Reader Service No. 165



# Tesco To Test Our View Of Delis



By  
**Jim Prevora**  
*Editor-in-Chief of*  
**DELI BUSINESS**

**T**he future of the supermarket deli industry is likely to be decided in the next few months as Tesco, the giant U.K.-based retailer, rolls out its Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market stores in southern California, Las Vegas and Phoenix.

The concept — 10,000- to 15,000-square-foot stores, heavy to private label, fresh and prepared foods, a strong dose of organic and natural products served with a green, sustainable consciousness, all priced at a mass market level — poses a direct threat to the supermarket deli in its present iteration.

As warehouse clubs and Wal-Mart Supercenters rolled across America over the past 15 years, most conventional supermarket executives came to feel they could not beat the price points of these formats.

The strategy became to be the anti-Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart was large and unwieldy, so promote the smaller neighborhood store. Wal-Mart required a drive, so promote nearby shopping. Wal-Mart was weak on perishables, so promote the full range of perishables, promote organics, service, whatever Wal-Mart was not. If you want to know what this produces, look at something like a Safeway Lifestyles store.

Tesco's new concept, however, cuts this positioning off at the knees. Smaller and more local, Fresh & Easy makes a claim to be more convenient than a traditional supermarket.

The competitive edge in perishables and prepared foods is also being undercut. Tesco's finance and strategy director defined its efforts this way: "In America we are positioning it [Fresh & Easy] in between America's Whole Foods Market, which does fabulous food unbelievably expensively, and Wal-Mart, which is as you would expect. We want great quality and price."

Tesco is riding the newest wave in consumer analytics, which is looking at customers based not on demographics or psychographics — all very *yesterday* — but on behavior.

Here's a glance at Tesco's promotional material: "People aren't like eggs. You can't put them in boxes, so we don't bother... Instead of focusing on the differences between people, we simply try and understand what are the really important things that everybody wants from their regular shopping trip? We then design stores that deliver those things better than anyone else, and put them where people are — in their neighborhoods."

This provides more questions than answers — everybody doesn't want the same thing. Tesco operates everything from tiny convenience stores to giant hypermarkets, which implies lots of people want lots of things at different times. Which is what Tesco is targeting — and counting on.

Instead of identifying an individual as a Safeway shopper,

Wal-Mart customer or Whole Foods fan, Tesco, picking up the most sophisticated analysis of IRI and ACNielsen data, is looking at the various shopping experiences most consumers incur and looking to be the best at a few of them.

We don't have Tesco's secret list, but from the facts we know, we can speculate it probably wants to be the king of the "topping off" shopping trip. Let consumers do a big monthly or twice-monthly stock up at a warehouse club or super center, but when they need to restock perishables or pick up something fresh and delicious for dinner, let them come to Tesco.

It is not a convenience store in the American sense — heavy to beer and tobacco

— but it is located nearby and easy to get in and out of without massive checkout lines.

It is possible Tesco may have identified an underserved retail segment in the food industry in America in 2007 — an extraordinary achievement in and of itself.

Suppliers are salivating because how often does a new retailer that conceivably could open thousands of stores appear on the scene? Yet the implications of Tesco go beyond being another buyer in the market. The logic of its concept, if successful, could transform food retailing.

If consumers stock up at warehouse clubs and super centers and fill in perishables and prepared foods at 10,000-square-foot neighborhood stores, when would they go to the supermarket? Put another way: How can you be the anti-Wal-Mart and the anti-Tesco at the same time?

The issue for all retailers is not who "our customer" is; we now know "our customer" also shops in plenty of competitors. The key is to ask, "Why is this customer shopping here, now?" Once you know that, the store can be merchandised to excel at serving the needs of the key shoppers.

Part of this has to involve product differentiation. In the United Kingdom, all chains work arm in arm with suppliers to develop extensive lines of differentiated private label products to meet the taste, convenience and pocketbook needs of the shopping occasions that draw people to those stores.

For far too long, product development at manufacturers has gone on almost in isolation from retailers' customer data, and retailers have waited passively to be presented new items. If retailers are to recognize the shopping experience they attract and then orient themselves to exceeding consumer expectations for those trips, they will need to become proactive in the search for the products to meet their needs.

Top retailers such as Costco and Whole Foods have been leading in this field. With Tesco's opening, the available niches will become narrower and consumer expectations will get higher. Only those deli operations contributing value to the shopper experience are likely to survive.

**DB**

With Tesco's opening, the available niches will become narrower and consumer expectations will get higher.



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# Appreciating The Change-Makers



By  
**Lee Smith**  
*Publisher of  
DELI BUSINESS*

**P**rofessionally, June is a special month for me. Not only is it the time for IDDBA, but it is also the time for the DELI BUSINESS issue that salutes 10 industry leaders. Each year, we pick 10 individuals, nominated by their peers, out of many worthy contenders.

This honor goes to individuals who have made and are making a difference in business and the world. They are passionate about what they do; being in the retail deli, cheese or foodservice industry is more than a job. It has also been more than just building a career, regardless of whether that was their initial goal.

These people have surpassed their job requirements — they make differences in other people's lives. They are influencers and motivators, educators and leaders. I hope you get as much enjoyment learning more about them as I have.

Working on this project is one of the high points of my year because it speaks to what the deli industry is all about. When I began my career over 30 years ago, the deli industry was a big deal in the New York metropolitan area but not much of anything anywhere else. For the most part, deli was defined as meat, slicing cheeses and some salads. In the New York metro area, it also included rotisserie chicken, smoked fish, puddings, a few entrées and specialty cheeses. On the West Coast, it amounted to pegboard meat under the auspices of the meat department.

Today, the industry has evolved to where the delis of 30 years ago have few commonalities with today's departments. Defined in its broadest terms, today's deli industry includes its traditional core products but also foodservice concepts, olives, ethnic foods, specialty cheese and specialty meats.

Since DELI BUSINESS was launched in 1996, the leap in quality, new products, offerings and even sub departments is more than I would have imaged possible in such a short period of time. Ten years, ago we were still monitoring the number of stores that added delis to their lineups.

In 1991, 71 percent of stores included deli departments and the average store had fewer than four full-time employees. By 1996, 81 percent of stores included a deli department but the average department still employed about five full-time employees and fewer than 10 people in total.

In 1996, home meal replacement (HMR) was the buzzword, referring to meal concepts consumers could buy from the deli or other departments to replace the chore of home cooking. It also was largely viewed as wishful thinking. Supermarket delis were seen as bastions of convenient, affordable and, outside of the staples, terrible food. It was

hard, if not impossible, for most industry executives to image a world where chain-store delis routinely won "best of" competitions for sandwiches, hot food bars, olive bars, Chinese food and sushi.

Contrary to the pessimists' naysaying, deli departments have morphed into a mighty force. They have become the predominant seller of high-quality specialty cheese and meats, changing the consumer landscape; specialties not affordable or available 10 years ago are now routinely found in retailers around the country. Without the volume of chain-store retailers, many of these products would not be imported at all.

Who would have guessed a club store would be the No. 1 seller of prosciutto di Parma? Who would have thought consumers would think of supermarkets as having the best rotisserie chicken? Not just in one store or chain that does an exceptional job, but across the country?

Then again, the nature of the deli department has changed along with the nature of supermarkets. Supermarkets have evolved, even with consolidation, into a schizophrenic blur of personalities. There are club stores and mass marketers, specialty and organic food chains — and traditional supermarkets that are often not very traditional, with virtually all venues, including a deli department that often has sub departments for foodservice or specialty cheese.

Today, it is hard to imagine an operator not including top-quality deli, specialty cheese and foodservice concepts in its lineup.

The growth of the deli department both in sales and quality has been nothing short of phenomenal, which is why it is so important to acknowledge individuals who have contributed to its great success. It is hard to find anyone in this group who set out to change the landscape of retailing, much less who started with the goal of making this industry a career, but everyone has, in fact, done these things.

Among our 10 honorees are individuals who brought the world of international branding and quality to the forefront, changed the way consumers view prepared foods, improved quality standards and led the industry to new levels of safety and wholesomeness. Proud of their companies and their standards, they have introduced new products and informed us about regionality and authenticity. These are people who have taken us from mystery-meat spreads and chicken roll to new standards of taste and quality. Mostly, they have made us care.

These are the change-makers, and we have a lot to thank them for.

These people have surpassed their job requirements — they make differences in other people's lives.



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[jjack@fioruccifoods.com](mailto:jjack@fioruccifoods.com) | 800-524-7775





# DELI WATCH

## Announcements



### VAI Joins IBM

Vormittag Associates, Inc. (VAI), Ronkonkoma, NY, already an IBM Premier Business Partner and a leader in enterprise solutions for the distribution, manufacturing, retail and service industries, has joined the IBM System i Vertical Industry Program (VIP). The "all-in-one" IBM System i business computing platform can provide a unique business advantage and specialized, local expertise can expedite the implementation.

[www.vai.net](http://www.vai.net)

Reader Service No. 401



### Training Program

J.J. Keller & Associates, Inc. of Neenah, WI, introduces *Bloodborne Pathogens: Exposure in the Workplace*, a program designed to raise employee awareness in order to reduce risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens. At the core of the program is a 22-minute, close-captioned video that employs a "risk-control" approach, dramatizing a workplace scenario

to advise employees on how to better protect themselves and use safe practices.

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

Reader Service No. 402



### Championship Cheese Contest

Wisconsin's Master Cheesemakers, Madison, WI, were well represented among top-tier winners at the March 2007 United States Championship Cheese Contest, the nation's largest and toughest technical cheesemaking competition. In total, 12 Wisconsin Masters won 22 awards, and cheeses produced by or with the involvement of Master Cheesemakers won 15 percent of all Best of Class medals at the contest.

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

Reader Service No. 403



### 2007 Award Winners

Gallo Family Vineyards, Modesto, CA, announced the winners of the 2007 Gallo Family Vineyards

Gold Medal Awards, including Outstanding Dairy: Michael/Carol Gingrich, Daniel/Jeanne Patenaude (Uplands Cheese Company, Dodgeville, WI) for Pleasant Ridge Reserve Cheese; and Outstanding Meat and Charcuterie: Hugh Fitzsimons (Thunder Heart Bison, San Antonio, TX) for Thunder Heart Bison.

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

Reader Service No. 404

## New Products



### Yukon Gold Potatoes

ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston, Eagle, ID, is now offering a complete line of Lamb's Supreme Yukon Gold potato products, including IQF Hash Browns, Chef Cut Fries, lightly whipped Mashed Potatoes and skin-on Natural Wedge Cuts.

All are put through the exclusive LW Private Reserve process to maximize flavor and ensure premium quality.

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

Reader Service No. 405



### 3 New Pitas

Kangaroo Brands, Milwaukee, WI, has added three new all-natural pita products: Omelet Pita (Cheese Omelet and Santa Fe Omelet), Whole Grain Sandwich Pockets, and four varieties of pita chips (Sea Salt, Whole Grain French Onion, Garlic Herb and Cinnamon Sugar). Kangaroo has been baking pita pockets since 1979.

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

Reader Service No. 406



### Soy Tortilla Chips

Genisoy, Tulsa, OK, introduces a new line of heart-healthy baked soy Tortilla Chips available in Nacho Cheese and Lightly Salted flavors. Offering a blend of taste and nutrition, the new Tortilla Chips deliver seven grams of soy protein, are free of cholesterol and trans-fat free. Only 110 calories per serving.

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

Reader Service No. 407



### Digital Coffee Brewing

Wilbur Curtis, Montebello, CA, introduces Curtis ThermoPro Brewing Systems that make gourmet coffee brewing instantly easy with advanced Generation Three (G3) Technology and state-of-the-art vacuum-sealed servers. Whether brewing for restaurant table service, a hotel lobby or the neighborhood C-store, this innovative system delivers user-friendly operation and optimal flavor that will keep customers coming back for more.

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

Reader Service No. 408



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



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# DELI WATCH

## New Products



### Healthful Kids' Food

Pilgrim's Pride Corp., Pittsburg, TX, introduces EatWellStayHealthy Kids Chicken Nuggets and Popcorn Chicken with less than half the calories, half the carbohydrates and 80 percent less fat per serving than the leading national brand. The baked nuggets feature the USDA-regulated word "healthy" on the packaging and are certified to use the American Heart Association (AHA) "heart-check mark."

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

Reader Service No. 409



### Display Cases

Structural Concepts, Muskegon, MI, introduces the new Harmony series, a line of narrow — less than 34" deep — merchandising display cases, designed to glide easily through standard door openings.

The line includes refrigerated and non-refrigerated service cases. Harmony also offers combination cases with a baffle system that converts refrigerated display areas to non-refrigerated.

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

Reader Service No. 410



### Microwave-Safe Containers

Genpak, Glens Falls, N.Y., introduces Smart Set Pro microwave-safe rectangular containers available in 12-, 16-, 24, 32- and 48-ounce capacities with optional, microwave safe, snap-on, stacking lids that offer leak free display and transport. The new rectangle and

existing round microwave safe containers work for hot and cold meals and desserts or dine-in and carryout food applications.

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

Reader Service No. 411



### Durable Cooking Bags

CMS (Carroll Manufacturing and Sales), Avon, OH, offers Flavorseal high-abuse cooking bags with handle. The bags can be cooked in temperatures up to 230° F and are resistant to punctures from ribs and other meats with protruding bones.

They are available in widths from 6 to 12 inches, can be cut to any length and are vacuumable.

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

Reader Service No. 412



### Reel Rinses

Fisher Manufacturing Company, Tulare, CA, offers a versatile reel rinse system ideal for pre-rinsing soiled dishes, spraying down work areas, cleaning floors and more. The units combine quality, convenience and ruggedness. Choose from 12-, 30-, 35- or 50-foot hoses to make water convenient in all kitchen areas; self-locking with an adjustable ball stop for maximum convenience.

[www.fisher-mfg.com](http://www.fisher-mfg.com)

Reader Service No. 413



### Seven Varieties

Kraft Foodservice's Nabisco Division, Glenview, IL, has added Lorna Doone and Planters to its popular 100 Calorie Packs snack line that includes Oreo, Chips Ahoy!, Cheese Nips, Wheat Thins and Honey Maid. Convenient snacks in portion-controlled packages

are perfect for health-conscious consumers. Each pack contains 0 grams trans fat, 2 to 3 grams of fat and zero cholesterol.

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

Reader Service No. 414



### Energy-saving Equipment

Electrolux Professional, Fort Lauderdale, FL, has incorporated energy-efficient features into its operator- and earth-friendly foodservice equipment. Using less water and energy than other conveyor dishwashers with equal productivity, the Conveyor Dishwasher Line is the highly efficient solution for medium- to high-output ware-washing demands.

[www.electroluxusa.com/professional](http://www.electroluxusa.com/professional)

Reader Service No. 415



### Specialty Meats Trio

Volpi Foods, Inc., St. Louis, MO, introduces a distinctive combination of specialty meats: garlic-rich Genova Salame, sweet Coppa and savory Mortadella. Pre-sliced for added convenience, this original trio of authentic Italian meats is available in ample portions and easy-to-use packaging. It's simply a sandwich waiting to happen.

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Reader Service No. 416



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# ENTRÉES — Center-Plate Expectations Grow

*People have less time and expect more from their local and supermarket delis, such as full foodservice.*

*By Trisha J. Wooldridge*



Lack of time is a problem for many — if not most — American consumers. Workweeks that exceed 40 hours or are outside the traditional nine-to-five schedule combined with families that have two wage earners have led to an increased demand for convenient, on-the-go food that is also fresh and healthful.

Delis are stepping up to meet these needs by offering full entrées — either from vendors or made fresh at the deli — to hungry and rushed patrons. Since deli offerings run the gamut from pre-packaged entrée options to full-service dining experiences that compete with restaurants, there are many factors to examine, from equipment to food to consumer demand to store resources.

“Consistent and proper store level execution is critical to any successful deli and prepared foodservice program,” explains Todd Griffith, national sales manager for Alto-Shaam in Menomonee Falls, WI. “Quality must be consistent, costs must be controlled and deli staff must be able to create and sup-

port a ‘consumer dining experience.’

“This requires a firm commitment to foodservice program development at the corporate level. Retailers need to know and understand their customers and their needs.”

“On-the-go lifestyles continue to drive convenience and demand for single-serve products,” notes Amy Brooksbank, marketing manager for Harry’s Fresh Foods in Portland, OR. “Traditional family dinner doesn’t mean ‘made from scratch’ anymore!”

## Tools and Equipment 101

Whether cooking, reheating or displaying, delis need to consider their equipment.

According to Nate Jackson, national sales manager for BKI Worldwide Inc. in Simpsonville, NC, “If it doesn’t look good, it doesn’t matter how good that mac and cheese tastes — the customer won’t buy it.” Thus the importance of having the what he considers the “best display.” Delis need to make sure they have the right equipment for displaying the food.

Holding equipment, a heated display and something to re-thermalize food are the basics Griffith suggests. For delis looking to make entrées in-house, he lists fryers, rotisserie ovens and convection ovens or, better yet, combi-ovens. A combi-oven (short for combination oven) is a single piece of equipment with multiple functions. “This cooking technology,” says Griffith, “provides a means of menu production flexibility including steaming, baking, roasting, poaching and broiling. This can not only reduce space and operational costs but also eliminate the need for redundant equipment, saving on capital expense as well.”

“You can also combine steam and convection and send humidified air through the cooking chamber. When you combine these, you have a super cooking system that is faster and retains more moisture in the food,” Jackson states.

The two top pieces of equipment Jackson recommends are the combi-oven and the fryer. The fryer allows delis to provide a





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number of food options consumers demand and consider staple center-of-the-plate choices, such as fried chicken and fried fish. It also makes possible a number of the most popular sides, such as french fries, onion rings and fried vegetables.

BKI's Jackson and Alto-Shaam's Griffith agree on the importance of long-term planning and commitment when it comes to the equipment purchasing and fulfilling the food-service concept.

"It's important to take a macro view of the deli operation in order to effectively evaluate where revenue enhancement or cost reduction is possible," says Griffith.

"It's important not to commoditize," adds Jackson, who mentions the growing problem with super stores cutting into supermarket profit margins with lower priced commodities. "People discriminate with food. You're pulling people in by differentiating yourself from big super stores by upgrading to hot-food offerings."

"Store level support is critical," Griffith advises. "Seek partnership with suppliers that have the resources and experience to support the departmental initiatives and don't forget about the ability to change the direction of the program should sales and con-

sumer preference so dictate. Take advantage of the resources that are available."

#### Meeting Meat Demands

While vegetarian entrées are a growing trend, the majority of consumers demand

***While vegetarian entrées are a growing trend, the majority of consumers demand some form of animal protein to sit center plate.***

some form of animal protein to sit center plate. Rotisserie chickens continue to be popular. [Editor's note: Please see *Rotisserie Cooking Flies High* on page 72.] The rotisserie oven, however, can do more than cook chicken; family-sized roasts and hams are growing in popularity.

Polean Foods Inc., East Norwich, NY, added rotisserie ham to its offerings three years ago. First offered on the West Coast, these hams are now available on the East Coast as well. "It's a great product," says Peter Jazwinski, president. "It can be bought whole or sliced and can be part of deli-prepared meals. It's an alternative to poultry, not meant to replace it."

The company's rotisserie hams — available in Country Classic, New England Maple and Fine Herb — are boneless, low fat and contain no trans fats. They are sold fresh-frozen, not pre-cooked. Because they are cooked in-store, either in a rotisserie or a combi-oven, they have a long shelf life.

Real Canadian bacon, also known as peameal bacon or peameal roast, is another distinctive meat offering growing in popularity. Peameal bacon from the Real Canadian Bacon Company, Troy, MI, is made from boneless pork loins, short cut from the leaner portions, that is sweet pickle cured and rolled in a cornmeal coating. It can be positioned as a healthful protein alternative. "Peameal shows up on the Canadian Diabetes Resources for diabetics because it is low in salt after it is cooked," explains Ken Haviland, president. "It's also as lean as a skinless breast

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of chicken because we remove the fat cap. It works well with the current health trends."

Peameal bacon is also extremely versatile and can be served as part of breakfast, lunch or dinner. It can be sold as a whole roast or sliced and served on sandwiches or as the meat portion of a meal. The Real Canadian Bacon Company is developing several new products, including a French cut chop and an 8-bone roast that is perfect for a buffet-styled carving station.

Even with all these options, consumers

have not given up on red meat. "From prime rib, tri-tip and brisket at carving stations, to meat loaf and beef oven roasts in the rotisserie section, to beef pot roasts, sliced barbeque, meatballs and ground beef used as an ingredient in the hot and cold service cases, beef's ability to create a variety of dishes and options for delis and their customers is endless," says Randy Irion, director of retail marketing for Centennial, CO-based National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

Red meat has received negative spin from

some health advocates, but beef is a healthful option, Irion notes. "Calorie for calorie, beef is one of the most naturally nutrient-rich foods. A 3-ounce serving of lean beef contributes less than 10 percent of calories to a 2,000-calorie diet, yet it's an excellent source of five essential nutrients — protein, zinc, vitamin B12, selenium and phosphorus — and a good source of four nutrients — niacin, vitamin B6, iron and riboflavin."

Deli operators offering beef options must consider how the meat will be used and prepared. While "virtually any beef product will perform well in a cold service case," notes Irion, different cooking methods have different effects on different cuts of beef. "For example, in a hot application, pot roast would best perform in a moisture-controlled environment, such as a rotisserie or in a hot service case where it is frequently freshened, whereas a beef brisket or a tri-tip will hold up well in a carving station environment."

### Prepackaged For Success

If a deli does not or cannot undertake full-service entrée preparation, there are other options for prepared entrées. Many companies supply fresh or frozen complete entrées that delis can display either reheated in a hot case or kept in a cold case.

Prepared entrées, soups and sides continue to be a growing trend. Harry's Brooksbank cites a 2005 Mintel Report from the Mintel Group, Chicago, IL: "Refrigerated meals and sides are a \$1.7 billion dollar category." From 2003 to 2005, soup has grown 225 percent, chili 25 percent and sides 56 percent. The category is projected to grow 2.1 percent annually through 2010, driven by increased distributions."

Packaged products allow delis to provide the entrées and prepared foods that their customers demand. When considering what to stock, consumer demographics and dining trends, such as ethnicity, are essential factors, according to Griffith from Alto-Shaam.

"There is an increased demand for ethnic food and flavor," says Brooksbank, who also notes the growing popularity of organic and natural foods. "Organic is 2 percent of grocery industry size but 25 percent of its growth," she says, referencing the 2006 Manufacturer Survey from the Organic Trade Association (OTA), Greenfield, MA.

Deli operators would do well to heed this bit of advice from Alto-Shaam's Griffith: "Try new things and be innovative. Be creative and embrace change to better service your customers. Deli and prepared foodservice continues to be the highest-margin and largest-contributing department to store sales and profitability in the retail operation. And it continues to grow!" **DB**

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People are the foundation of any industry, and there are always individuals who are pioneers, leading the way and making their mark on the manner in which we conduct business and the direction our industry takes. These people are the evolutionaries, not the revolutionaries. By virtue of hard work and perseverance, they are leaders who influence others to succeed and to continue to grow both personally and professionally. Some of this year's nominees are well known and some are not, but they all exhibit similar characteristics.

Chosen by their peers, the nominees were selected based on the following criteria: Success in their jobs, demonstration of high ethical and moral standards, willingness to help others succeed, and industry involvement that goes beyond the quotidian requirements of their jobs. These people are leaders who deserve the accolades of our industry.



**Helen Ellis**  
Bi-Lo Supermarkets  
Greenville, SC  
Director of Deli/Bakery  
17 years in Industry

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

I got my foodservice training at Red Lobster, beginning as a food prep clerk and eventually becoming a kitchen manager. I got my start in retail as a pharmacy technician for Drug Emporium, based out of Ohio. After six months, I was promoted to assistant store manager/cosmetics buyer. I became a trainer, with responsibilities of hiring, developing store associates and merchandising cosmetics.

**Describe your work history?**

I worked in several capacities at Red Lobster, including shift supervisor and kitchen manager. I moved into retail at Drug Emporium. I joined Food Lion as a store manager and moved through the ranks to deli/bakery buyer, assistant category manager of dairy, procurement manager of perishables and category manager of deli and bakery. For the past four years, I have been director of deli/bakery business development for Bi-Lo.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

I have worked with the IDDBA Retail Advisory committee, which hosts an invitation-only retail management forum. The purpose of the forum is to bring together select retailers from across the country to discuss industry topics and examine best practices among merchants.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

I am most proud of bringing new vendors into our portfolio and working together to move our business partnerships forward. We have

grown our supplier diversity program over the past three years, affording us the opportunity to meet the needs of our consumers while staying dialed into the communities that support our organization.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

Always set high standards for yourself, lead by example and never lose sight of the power of the team. You must empower people to be decision-makers and stakeholders within their area of responsibility, or they will never feel a true connection to the work they are asked to do.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

We are continually challenged to offer fresh, convenient meal solutions. Mom will be proud to serve. With increased obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other health-related issues, our industry is going to have to find ways to offer more healthful, but still great-tasting foods. There will be a need to have a more balanced approach to meal offerings.

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

I like to travel and collect jazz CDs. I love sports, particularly tennis, basketball and football. I love reading and going to the spa.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

I guess it would be specialty cheese — Brie, goat cheese, Gouda. I love them all.

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

I don't really have a favorite. I'm always looking for the perfect balance of ambiance, food and service. This allows me to experiment with different types of foods while keeping me in tune to new restaurants.

**What is the last book you read?**

*The DNA of Leadership* by Judith Glaser.



**Nancy Hughes Gaddy**  
**Winn Dixie Stores**  
**Jacksonville, FL**  
**Vice President Deli Bakery**  
**28 years in the industry**

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

While in school, I needed a position with flexible hours and the local grocer filled that criterion. The interviewer asked if I would work in the deli bakery for a few weeks and I agreed. I quickly developed a passion for the merchandising and marketing aspect of the business and began to think about a career in the industry.

**Describe your work history?**

My first employer was Ingles Markets and I held various positions over the next years, working my way to the Carolinas as a deli bakery merchandiser. The following years were spent at Ahold in the Bi-Lo organization, holding many positions from training to operations, procurement and category management. I was then invited to return to Ingles as vice president of deli and after almost eight years in that role, I joined the Winn Dixie team as vice president of deli bakery.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

Two of the best industry organizations that I belong to are the IDDBA and the RBA [Retail Bakers of America].

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**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

I am most proud of being in a position where I can affect positive change for the associates within the departments and at the same time offer the customers quality offerings that make their daily life easier.

I completed Richard Petty NASCAR Driving a couple of years ago. I got out on the track for a ride with a professional driver and my first thought was, "Why do I think this was a good idea?" I knew I had to go through with it and I did — with one of the top speeds of the day. My next goal is to skydive and it will have to be a tandem jump, otherwise I may not make it out of the plane.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

I believe good leaders teach, coach and mentor their associates. There is so much to learn and we all learn new things everyday, otherwise life would become very dull.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

I see the industry continuing to move toward foodservice-type formats. Everyone is time-challenged and needs quality, quick, convenient meal solutions they feel good about serving their families. Customers also want more options.

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

I like being on the water. I spend time doing volunteer work as I believe we each have a responsibility to give back to the community.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

The traditional grilled hot Reuben sandwich with a deli pickle on the side.

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

My favorites are small, local places that have the taste and flavor of the neighborhood.

**What is the last book you read?**

*Your Best Life Now, Become a Better You: 7 Keys to Improving Your Life* by Joel Osteen.



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**Richard T. Goodman (Rick)**  
*Smithfield*  
*Smithfield, VA*  
*Senior Vice President*  
*23 years in the industry*

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

I started working for a food broker right out of college. I did the retail store work in Charlotte, NC, where I got to know a lot of great people and learned the grocery industry.

**Describe your work history?**

After doing store field work with the food broker for a year, I became an account manager for Armour/Swift Eckrich calling on Piggly Wiggly in Charleston, SC. I've held various management positions and had to move nine times. Currently, I am senior vice president of Smithfield working with our deli, foodservice and research and development divisions.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

IDDBA is the only organization due to time constraints. I am vice president now and will have the honor of being president in 2008 and 2009.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

My family. I've been married 20 years and have four children.

The business moments are associated with building a team. Pulling together good people to make a great team fills me with pride.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

There are several qualities I try to adhere to; here are a few: Lead by

example. You can't be an expert on everything so don't try to be; find an expert and get help. The team is more important than any one member; if you have a bad member, cull him or her out. Listen to your customer. Have fun when you can because work and stress will find you.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

I see deli continuing to move toward foodservice — great food served by great people. The deli department will become a "signature" restaurant that also sells sliced meats and cheeses.

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

My four children are active in sports, school and life. Along with that I have a small farm — I call it a farmette — with 11 dogs, nine cats and seven horses. Between work and animals, I try to play a little golf. My most recent passion has been to watch my boys play football.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

I'm 6' 5" and weigh 280 pounds — I cannot pick out one food. I love deli fried chicken and pork chops out of a hot bar, hot doughnuts and a fresh, clean salad bar. Of my products, my favorite is Smithfield Virginia ham and Swiss cheese. We also make a mean pre-cooked rib.

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

I will lay out a few according to my mood, the occasion and who I'm dining with (in alphabetical order): Chic-fil-A, Gibsons Steak House, Texas Road House, The Smithfield Inn, The Smithfield Station, Waffle House. I could put down another 20 that I feel do a great job.

**What is the last book you read?**

*A Death in Belmont* by Sebastian Junger.



**Allison Hooper**  
*Vermont Butter & Cheese*  
*Websterville, VT*  
*Owner*  
*23 years in the industry*

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

I'd say my beginning was in France. In 1980, I was as a French major in college and working as a cheesemaking apprentice on farms in Brittany and Haute Alps.

**Describe your work history?**

In the early days, I was the cheesemaker and Bob Reese, co-founder of Vermont Butter and Cheese, would sell it. I was also involved in developing milk supplies from about 20 farms. I also handled marketing, public relations and the burning issues of the day. Today, 32 people work for us.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

I'm the founding president of the Vermont Butter and Cheese Council. In 1996, Bob and I received the Vermont Small Business Persons of the Year. I was president for five years; we started with 12 members and now there are 43. I was the president of Vermont Business for Social Responsibility in 1994. Currently, I'm the president of the American Cheese Society.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

Bob and I are proud we started the business with virtually nothing — we each invested \$1,200 in cash — and slowly built up the goat milk industry in our state. We had to create the infrastructure and the market by introducing crème fraîche and European-style cultured butter to the

United States. By being the first artisan-style cheesemaker in Vermont, we served as a catalyst for building that industry.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

To let go. The best decision we've made is to hire people smarter and more skilled than we are. So much so that I sort of feel like the village idiot when I'm surrounded by so much talent. But it is gratifying to hire fabulous people who can take your dream and really make it happen.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

I'm taken by the interest people have in learning about this product; I could never have predicted this 20 years ago, certainly not in Vermont. The demographics weren't right for purchasing expensive cheese. Good cheese is no longer for consumers with lots of disposable income — it's become a question of quality not wealth.

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

With three teenage boys, there is not a lot of time to develop hobbies. I spend a lot of time at ice-hockey rinks, basketball courts and baseball fields. I do love to hike and I run every day.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

Certainly cheese. My favorite kind of cheese? It's a toss up between Roblochon cheese and Comté... with a nice dry sausage.

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

Julliane's in Paris is great.

**What is the last book you read?**

*Snow* by Orhan Pamuk.





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**Martin Mitchell (Marty)**  
**Certified Laboratories**  
**Plainview, NY**  
**Managing Director**  
**38 years in the industry**

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

My first job was at a smokehouse unloading trucks of fish, which encouraged me to go to school! In high school I worked at a luncheonette and in college at the snack bar in the cafeteria.

**Describe your work history?**

My first job out of college was at Blue Ridge Farms. I began to use Certified Laboratories and became friendly with its director, Bernard Tzall. By 1977, we became partners. He semi-retired in 1981 and a few years later I became director. Later, I acquired other laboratories. The lab in Merced, CA, is the first third-party lab to get accreditation by the USDA VESP Program, that tests almond exports for aflatoxins. In 1980, I became the technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

I'm the technical director and editor of the *RFA Technical Newsletter* of the Refrigerated Foods Association, but I'm also a member of the International Association for Food Protection, National Environmental Health Association, National Fisheries Institute and the New York State Association of Milk, Food and Environmental Sanitarians, among others.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

I'm proud I've mentored and advised fine people who have become

recognized as experts in the industry. I hope and believe I will leave the world a better place and that others are better for having known me.

Personally, I'm proud of my children. I'm also extremely proud of seven grandchildren I share with my significant other.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

Allowing good people to do what they're good at. There are people I have worked with for 27 years. Finding people who work well together and provide each other with what is needed to be successful is great.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

I see food safety remaining an important issue for the next decade or so. I see changes in the regulatory environment making it necessary for industry and government to reinvent the way they work. I would like to see the industry take control of its own destiny. Basically, we know better than the government about how to make safe foods.

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

I love to travel and I've just returned from a one-week cooking class in Italy. It dawned on me recently — my whole life revolves around food.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

I have a love affair with food — good cheese, processed meat, olives, smoked fish! I could eat every meal at the deli counter.

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

El Buco in Sorrento, Italy

**What is the last book you read?**

*Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond.

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**Nancy R. Radke**  
**Ciao, Ltd.**  
**Syracuse, NY**  
**President**  
**19 years in the industry**

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

I published a culinary newsletter based on my research and travels in Italy. After nine years of solitary writing, I decided to combine what I knew — Italian food and the Italian language — with who I knew — several individuals in Italian food producing consortiums and make a pitch designed to get me out into the public arena. The Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano Reggiano needed someone outside the distribution chain to help coordinate their activities in the United States. I was there to create an information office for them and to act as their eyes, ears, hands and feet in this market. That was 17 years ago.

**Describe your work history?**

I have been fortunate to invent my job and be entrepreneurial in my approach to promoting Parmigiano Reggiano. My work gave me the opportunity to network with individuals in all aspects of the food trade, which led to work with other Italian cheese consortiums like Gorgonzola and Taleggio in the mid-'90s and more recently with the Cooperativa Produttori Latte e Fontina Valle d'Aosta. Working with Parmigiano Reggiano also afforded me the opportunity to exercise my art school degree and create recipe books and promotional materials that reflect the beauty and the utility of the "King of Cheeses." I have also had the opportunity to teach and train consumers and retailers alike, and have made several appearances on TV cooking shows, most recently with Mary Ann

Esposito on her *Ciao Italia* PBS show. Currently my office is partnered in a three-year E.U. co-financed promotion with Lewis & Neale, Prosciutto di Parma's U.S. agency, to promote and advertise two very special European Originals — Parmigiano Reggiano and Prosciutto di Parma.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

IACP, International Association of Culinary Professionals; CCP (Certified Culinary Professional); American Cheese Society; Cheese Importers Association; IFEC, International Foodservice Editorial Council.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

When I first began working for the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano Reggiano, I guess I came down a bit hard on a retailer and was asked, "Who do you think you are — the Parmigiano Reggiano police?" At the time I was horrified someone would think that of me, but after encouraging the Consorzio to register its marks with the U.S. Patents and Trademarks Office, I did find myself increasingly getting involved in policing and defending the Consorzio's valuable marks both in the marketplace and in court. I am proud to have been able to protect the good name and the good will developed over centuries of quality production by generations of dedicated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese producers. Next time you see me, be sure to ask to see my badge.

I'm also very proud of co-authoring *Dinosaur Bar-B-Que: An American Roadhouse* with John Stage, the owner and creative force behind three honky-tonk, biker-friendly, blues-playing barbeque restaurants by the same name in New York state. John had an awesome story and it fell upon me to tell it in his voice and to work with him to resize the restaurant-portion recipes to home-size servings. Jim Scherzi's photos and Holly Scherzi's graphic design really put the Dino vibe into the book. Our efforts won the National Barbeque Associations "Best BBQ book of 2001" nod. Next time you see me be sure to ask to see my tattoo.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

I lead by being useful to employees, colleagues and clients. The Zingtrain folks call it "servant leadership" and I ascribe to the notion.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

As Americans realize that where food comes from matters, the industry will come under increasing pressure to be accountable by providing consumers with field to fork assurances of quality, authenticity and food safety.

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

Hiking in the Adirondacks and Italy. Teaching healthful cooking to children and teenagers.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

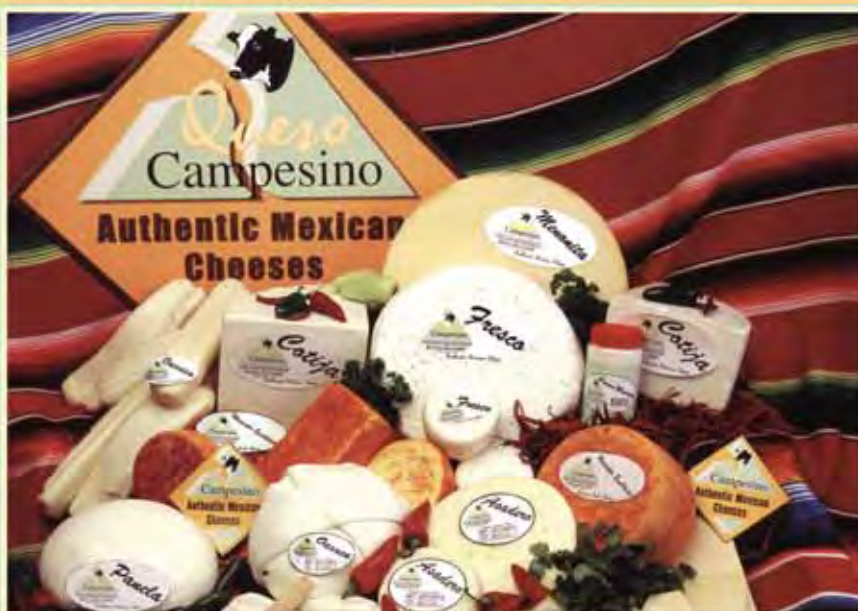
Prosciutto di Parma and rotisserie chicken

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

Aquavit in Minneapolis, MN; San Domenico and Estiatorio Milos in New York City; Dinosaur Bar-B-Que in Syracuse, NY

**What is the last book you read?**

*The Dark Heart of Italy: Travels Through Time and Space Across Italy* by Tobias Jones



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**Jeff Siegel**  
**Chloe Foods**  
**Brooklyn, NY**  
**President**  
**31 years in the industry**

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

I was working with a Fortune 500 company and had an argument with my boss. My dad said why don't you come and work for me? So, I started working for family business, Blue Ridge Farms, then a mom-and-pop business.

**Describe your work history?**

I worked in the paper and cotton industry. With Blue Ridge Farms, I got a chance to work in the plant, learning the food business and concentrating on things like new product development as well as working with the sales team to develop it into a large company doing business nationally.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

Most of my life is spent working. With four daughters, there isn't much time for anything else. I was nominated for a leadership award, Boy Scouts of America, and I have been active in fund-raising activities for various charities.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

Personally, my four daughters and having graduated from Cornell University among the top percentile. Professionally, the work I've done with Blue Ridge. By the time I sold my shares to Chloe Foods, Blue Ridge was doing up to \$85 million in sales.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

I believe in competitive management — letting managers have authority to make decisions within a team framework, but also having them compete. Encouraging them to be entrepreneurs among themselves, so that they all strive to be presidents and CEOs.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

The cycle is getting away from service deli to pre-packaged. People are increasingly skeptical of products handled by others, which is a tremendous challenge for a company like mine. I feel I'm being challenged by customers as the service deli gets softer and prepackaged grows. I'm more involved in the selling, marketing and merchandising of a project and asking myself how should we invest monies in marketing, merchandising and different equipment.

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

Again, I don't do much outside work. But, I do enjoy reading, keeping active and staying in shape. I'm a big basketball fan.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

My wife is from Brazil and she has been turning me on to wonderful cheeses. I've never been much of a cheese person, so I am experimenting with that now. I've also become something of a connoisseur of olives. The variety out there is wonderful.

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

Palm Steak House in New York City.

**What is the last book you read?**

*Pistol: The Life of Pete Maravich* by Mark Kriegel.

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**John J. Sullivan**  
*Norseland*  
*Stamford, CT*  
*President and CEO*  
*24 years in the industry*

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

I was offered a key account manager position with the Dorman Cheese Company in 1983, calling on the New York retail trade.

**Describe your work history?**

I have held numerous positions in sales and marketing. With Norseland, I was hired in 1992 as the eastern division sales manager, then national sales manager, director of sales and marketing, vice president sales and marketing, executive vice president and now CEO. I was a key account manager for Dorman Cheese and promoted to national sales manager in the mid-'80s.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

I am a member of the board of directors of the Norwegian American Chamber of Commerce, and also I am currently on the executive committee and the board of directors for the IDDBA.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

Being able to grow in this industry regardless of the circumstances.

On a personal level, watching my 17-year-old and 12-year old grow and managing to be successful with the support of my family. It is not

easy to be 100 percent committed to your career and at the same time try to be a good parent

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

Simple. Lead by example. I will not ask anyone in my organization to do anything I have not already done or am willing to do as well. I would rather listen first and speak later. I believe in striving to achieve a balance and allowing the management team there to manage business.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

The global position is for continued consolidation and the balance of power is with strong brands being able to support their existence in the global retailing community. There is more and more pressure on retailers to meet their margin goals, while still offering attractive brands to consumers. At Norseland, we do not sell cheese — we build brands. And, I believe that, as industry shifts, the longevity of brands will outlast new products that come about from time to time.

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

Golf. Don't have much time really for much else.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

Jarlsberg!

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

Balthazar in New York City

**What is the last book you read?**

*The Innocent Man* by John Grisham



**Nancy R. Wingfield**  
*Director, Foodservice*  
*Ukrop's Super Markets*  
*Richmond, VA*  
*21 years in the industry*

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

I was working in the restaurant/hospitality industry, and one of the chefs urged me to go work for the local grocery chain, Ukrop's. It was launching its Central Kitchen prepared foods program and retail cafés and grills. I never intended to be in foodservice. It just became my career path sparked by my interest in management and personal zeal for learning more about foods.

**Describe your work history**

I graduated college, moved to Richmond and took a summer job at the Jefferson Hotel. I was offered a position as restaurant manager at its fine dining establishment. After four years in the hospitality industry, I went to work for Ukrop's. I worked in the stores for three years and for the past 15, I have worked in various foodservice roles at the corporate level. I currently am the director of foodservice for Ukrop's Deli and Bakery.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

I have participated in IDDBA's retail forums. I serve on J. Sergeant Reynold's Community College Culinary Advisory Board. I currently serve on the board of Ten Thousand Villages, a non-profit fair-trade retailer.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

Being able to grow professionally throughout my career. I enjoy work-

ing for an organization that has been an innovator in the industry and is passionate about quality and customer service..

On a personal level, I am most proud of being a mom and helping guide my son to grow and develop as an individual.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

I think retailers and manufacturers will explore and rethink how we can best leverage the global and technological world to impact on food variety and how we can make fresher, higher quality product available more efficiently. The consumers' definition of convenience and quality will require further knowledge about ingredients and safety. All this said, improved efficiencies and varieties will fall short without attention to service.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

Lead by example and be the same person "on" and "off" the field.

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

Spending time with my son and attending his school and sport activities. I enjoy watching professional sports, playing golf once or twice a year, catching up with friends. Any day at the beach is a good day.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

I have a lot of favorites in the cheese category, but really enjoy some great classics, such as fresh mozzarella with basil and tomatoes.

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

Colombia Restaurant in Tampa, FL, and Artisanal in New York City.

**What is the last book you read?**

*Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell





**Voni Woods**  
**Giant Eagle**  
**Pittsburgh, PA**  
**Senior Director of Deli**  
**30 years in the industry**

**How did you get your start in the industry?**

I started while in college. I wanted to be a court reporter and worked in the deli to pay my tuition.

**Describe your work history?**

I was promoted to deli manager a year after starting. I later became the company trainer and then a head buyer. I got a supervisory role in retail and in operations and merchandising in the early '90s. Since 2002 I've been senior director of deli at Giant Eagle.

**What industry organizations have you belonged to and what titles have you held?**

I have been a member of IDDBA as a retailer since 1980. I became an active committee member in 2000. Currently, I am a board of directors' member. I am also a retail member of the American Cheese Society.

**What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

I am most proud of my family, especially my two children graduating from college! At Giant Eagle, I am proud of my company and the team of fabulous professional women and men I work with.

**What is your leadership philosophy?**

I am told my leadership style exudes positive energy and optimism

and I coach and build confidence. I try to celebrate achievements by teams and individuals to show how much I appreciate great performance above and beyond expectations.

**Where do you see the industry going?**

I see deli meats, cheeses, salads and ancillary items that are incredibly delicious and good for you, yet convenient and even indulgent in a way that makes you feel good about what you eat, feed your family and serve in your home. I see our supplier community offering innovative solutions to safety, wholesomeness and convenience.

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

I volunteer as wedding coordinator at my church as well as serving on the Pastor Council. I love to travel with my husband and family.

**What is your favorite deli food?**

Right now my favorite food is a plate of fresh imported filled pasta topped with imported butter and lots of grated Parmigiano Reggiano! I love to snack on pita chips and Giant Eagle fresh salsa with extra cilantro! Our Kitchens make a sandwich called the Screaming Eagle made with Dietz & Watson Santa Fe Turkey and hot banana peppers that I love!

**What is your favorite restaurant?**

I don't eat out much because my husband cooks for me at home, but if a restaurant is in Vegas, it's one of my favorite!

**What is the last book you read?**

I go back to *Becoming a Category of One* by Joe Calloway and *Winning* by Jack Welch.

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# Cross-Merchandising Increases Register Ring

*Offering consumers “something extra” is a great way to build loyalty — and profits.*

*By Barbara Robison*

Today, it is all about flavor. Whether the deli offering is Italian pizza, Greek salad, Japanese sushi, vegetarian sandwiches, Latino quesadillas or barbecued chicken, flavor is key. Even beverages, breads and desserts must be more flavor-oriented than ever before. Savvy deli operators know this. They not only incorporate new and heightened flavors into the standard foods they offer, but they also provide customers with a selection of savory items that complement the deli fare.

“People are looking for outstanding flavors and a blend of seasonings is becoming more and more popular, whether used at home or on take-out items,” says John L. McBride, vice president, sales and marketing, Magic Seasoning Blends, Inc., New Orleans, LA.

A new Chef Paul Prudhomme’s Magic Seasoning Blends program provides deli operators with 10 flavor choices for rotisserie seasoning. “During the first nine months, the program has been very successful. The finished products come in 24-ounce foodservice containers, which are easy to use and assure a consistency of flavor for the customer,” McBride adds. The favorite blended flavors are Honey Barbecue, New Orleans, Little Italy and Chipotle Chile. A new blend, Just Plane Good, was recently introduced.

Flavors have become more complex, especially as the awareness of ethnic cuisines has become more sophisticated. Chefs, especially, have brought new flavor combinations to the fore by emphasizing cuisines from individual countries, and even areas within a country. Food and its flavors have become much more region specific.

Fruit flavors are a current trend. A deli located in a Southern California Bristol Farms market — the chain is based in Carson, CA — exposes customers to a wide assortment of fruit spreads, including sweet grape mustard and wine jelly, above the deli cheese and salad areas. A selection of spe-

cially flavored crackers and breads is also part of the display.

34-Degrees Foods with Latitude, based in Denver, CO, offers a variety of products imported from Australia. Among them is a variety of fruit pastes — pear, spiced cherry, plum and apricot. Craig Lieberman, company founder and president, recommends pairing the pastes with specific cheeses and meats in the deli. “Spiced cherry paste complements blue cheeses or soft-ripened cheeses,” he explains. “The plum paste is excellent with pork or lamb items. Other items we market that can work well in the deli are muscatel raisins, spiced cherries, olive oils and varietal wine vinegars.” The company also provides full-color shelf talkers with wine and cheese pairings, recipe cards plus demo and sampling programs.

Olive and olive oils, combined with other herbs and spices, use basic Mediterranean flavoring principles that can heighten interest in the deli. “Olive oils can be displayed near the breads and crackers, or some markets feature them on top of the olive bars. Seasoned jarred olives, Italian mixed vegetables, pickled grape leaves and capers are other items that can be successfully merchandised on or near the olive bar,” states Heather Innocenti, marketing director, G.L. Mezzetta, Inc., American Canyon, CA.

“Placing our olive tubs near the cheese



PHOTO COURTESY OF LA PANZELLA LLC

case is an excellent way to build extra snack sales. The tubs travel well and are ideal for picnics and other outdoor outings. The olive snack-sizes offer the customer an opportunity to try different olive varieties and are especially good for cheese platters. Our sliced jalapeños complement the deli sandwiches and cold cuts,” she adds. The company provides display racks and brochures for cheese and wine pairings.

## Crackers And Breads

Flavored crackers and specialty breads have definitely come into their own. Today’s customers are fortunate there is such a large selection, based on cuisines and flavors from many countries. A display of these accom-



paniments in the deli makes it easy for customers to pick and choose complementary flavors for their favorite meats and cheeses. If a deli features soups, an array of savory crackers and breads can provide extra rings at the register.

Dr. Kracker, Dallas, TX, is a supplier of artisan-baked flatbread crackers in many textures and flavors. According to George Eckrich, director of sales and marketing, "Many consumers don't know how to use flatbreads, so demos are very effective in the

deli. Sampling allows people to taste the products and allows us to stand behind our money back guarantee. H-E-B [H.E. Butt Grocery Co., San Antonio, TX] samples our crackers with its chicken salad and spinach dip. Whole Foods Markets [based in Austin, TX] finds garlic and lemon-flavored hummus and the flatbreads are a perfect combination." The best seller of the traditional flatbreads of Germany is the Klassic 3 Seed cracker. The Seeded Spelt cracker is good for those consumers with wheat intolerance.

LaPanzanella LLC, Seattle, WA, has taken the Italian route, marketing its croccantini in eight different flavors. "The texture is very crunchy, and the flatbread has a rustic appearance with subtle flavors. It can be eaten just as a snack or as a complement to soups, salads, cold cuts and cheeses. We do have a display rack available, although some markets, such as Gelson's [based in Encino, CA] arrange the products on top of the olive cart," says general manager Antonio Galati. Whole-wheat, tomato oregano, onion, garlic, rosemary and fennel are among the flatbreads marketed.

Another type of cracker offering comes from Venus Wafers, Inc., Hingham, MA, which markets a "Deli-Catessen" line of gourmet crackers, based on an original old-world Armenian recipe. "Sampling is a natural way to introduce customers to more unusual breads, such as our flatbread, Lavasch. It is also an easy way to promote two items — crackers with cheese, special spreads or even less familiar cold cuts. CaPeachio's, a water cracker, is available in different shapes, sizes and six flavors. It is our fastest growing item," states CEO Bill Ammerman. The company can supply pre-packed display shippers.

Pita bread, a Middle Eastern round, wheat flatbread, has been experiencing increased popularity. It can be used with sauces and dips, such as hummus, or it can serve as a sandwich wrap. In some Middle Eastern cuisines it is even used as a pizza-type dough. Some pitas are flat and others have pockets, good for stuffing.

Toufayan Bakeries, Ridgefield, NJ, is known for its pita breads. According to Karen Toufayan, sales and marketing, "We have a variety of pita breads, but we also market Pitettes, which are bite-size versions of the original pita bread. They are excellent to serve with dips, sauces and cheese. Our regular pita bread complements tuna or chicken salad, so a display near the deli salads helps customers find an ideal wrap." The company also markets bagels, lavash, breadsticks, and even Snuggles, a fun roll for hot dogs and sausage.

Toufayan offers special promotions to help move its products with other deli items. One market offered customers the purchase of a Toufayan pita at a much reduced price with the purchase of three pounds of a specific deli meat.

Taking advantage of the increased interest in organics, Partners, a tasteful choice co., Seattle, WA, markets all-natural and organic artisanal flatbreads and crackers. "One important feature of our products is their lower salt and sugar content and mild flavors. This allows the crackers to complement any

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cheese, soft or hard, mild or strong flavored. The crackers can be served with soups, salads, smoked salmon, tapenade, bean dip, guacamole and salsas," states vice president Cara Figgins. "Passive demos are helpful in showing how to use the crackers. We supply crackers for a passive demo and participate in paid active demos because sales increase when stores offer serving suggestions."

Southern California outlets of Monrovia, CA-based Trader Joe's frequently offer their customers samplings of special crackers and breads with different cheeses and spreads.

One Southern California Ralph's Fresh Fare market, a new format from Compton, CA-based Ralph's, arranged small tables at the four corners of a rectangular cheese display case for cross-merchandising other deli items. Each table held baskets filled with a fine straw-like material. On one table the baskets had containers of marinated olives, baskets on another table held a selection of horseradish sauce and mustard. The two other tables were used for passive demos, with cheese cubes, summer sausage and a selection of flavored crackers and breads.

Cheese straws, a popular appetizer from the South, are ideal to include near deli breads and crackers. The combination of fla-

vorful cheese and a selection of other flavors make them an easy way to add an extra touch to deli soups, salads and sandwiches.

"Our cheese straws contain over 50 percent real Wisconsin Cheddar or Parmesan cheeses. They are all natural baked and have no trans fat," states Cathy Cunningham Hayes, president and CEO, Geraldine's Bodacious Food Company, Jasper, GA. "On top of the cheese case seems to be the best location for them, but we can provide a wooden rack for displays in other areas of the deli. The traditional flavor is the No. 1 seller and chipotle flavored is second. A new product is Tuscan, flavored with rosemary and a mixture of Parmesan and white Cheddar cheese."

The company also markets three flavors of bite-size gourmet cookies just right for a quick snack or a sweet ending to a deli meal.

Ralph's Fresh Fare has displayed bite-size chocolates over the cold soups. Bristol Farms has offered small packages of date/walnut wedges, almond nougat and chocolate with glacé fruits and nuts. All are a perfect size for customers who want just a bite of sweetness after they enjoy a deli soup or salad.

### Condiments

Condiments are an important aspect of any deli marketing program. Beaverton Foods, Inc., based in Hillsboro, OR, markets a selection of condiments, including mustards and horseradish. "The demand for wasabi sauce has really increased. Several markets prominently display the wasabi in the sushi department. However, it is now used for other foods as well as Japanese sushi. We also have a cheese fondue product marketed under the Rheinlander label, which just needs heating up. It makes a nice deli item. Currently, distribution of the fondue is limited basically to the Pacific Northwest," states Domonic Biggi, vice president, sales and marketing.

Pickles provide another way to heighten flavor in deli menus. Van Holten's, Waterloo, WI, makes the Pickle-In-A-Pouch, the ideal accompaniment for the deli sandwich and grab-and-go sections. "Our individually packed pickle is the perfect junk-food alternative to go with a deli sandwich. With a high-end graphic display case, a stand-up pouch and no refrigeration needed, it is readily merchandised to create an impulse buy in the deli. Our stand-up pouch, developed about three years ago, has been a driving factor in our phenomenal growth over that same period because it's easy to display," says president Steve Byrne.

Herlocher Foods, Inc., State College, PA, recognized for its dipping mustard, has a successful official licensed collegiate program



PHOTO COURTESY OF GERALDINE'S BODACIOUS FOOD COMPANY

with a number of colleges, offering promotional opportunities for markets in the college regions. "We have a new program, offering foil-covered 2-ounce plastic cups of dipping mustard. This works well in the deli sandwich area or included in party platters. Bridgford Quality Foods, based in Chicago, IL, is currently including the cups in packed meat deli trays and has packed almost one-half million cups thus far," reports president Neil Herlocher.

Private labeling of condiments is major part of the business of Woeber Mustard Manufacturing Company, Inc., Springfield, OH. "We custom design the mustards and horseradish sauces, working with our technology people and the customer's people. Sometimes they see something they like and want duplicated or they may provide us with a recipe. We're known for our honey mustard; other popular condiments are horseradish sauce, wasabi sauce and cranberry honey mustard," says Rick Schmidt, vice president, national sales.

"American tastes have become zippier, and deli customers are looking for products to add that extra bit of zip," notes John Slaymaker, president and owner, Kelchner's Horseradish Products, Dublin, PA. "We've had a family business since 1938 and market our horseradish sauce and mustard primarily in the Mid-Atlantic region. Handling these products in the deli area next to the ham and sliced meats makes it easy for customers to add additional zest to their sandwiches and party trays."

Tapatio Foods, LLC, Vernon, CA, manufactures a special hot sauce popular with many deli items. Luis Saavedra, Jr., general manager, says the sauce allows a person to taste the meal and then the product's heat. The company markets the sauce in 5-, 10- and 32-ounce and 1-gallon sizes. Recently a 7-gram individual packet has been introduced. "The packets are ideal for roast beef and pastrami sandwiches and can add a touch of flavor to pizzas, omelets and bagels with cream cheese and avocado." **DB**

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# Deli Take Out — Challenging Restaurant Supremacy

*More and more consumers are looking to innovative deli departments for their take-out options.*

*By Bob Johnson*

The deli department faces increasing competition from other food venues, including convenience stores and restaurants, but the deli can stand out from the crowd by offering a more healthful line-up of take-out foods.

"We continue to be focused as a company on healthful foods," says Wendie DiMatteo, CEO of ASK Foods, Inc., Palmyra, PA, "but the flavor and strength have to be there or you won't get the repeat sales."

As part of its emphasis on healthful foods, ASK has introduced a number of items with edamame, the Japanese word for green soybeans, an excellent source of healthful protein. One of these new items is mandarin edamame, which can be served either hot or cold. "We continue to see a focus on healthful but good tasting," DiMatteo says. "We also introduced mashed cauliflower. It looks a lot like mashed potatoes, but it is better for you."

Many deli food suppliers are concentrating on coming up with more healthful choices.

Schwan's Consumer Brands North America, Inc., based in Marshall, MN, offers the LiveSmart line of healthful deli foods that includes beef, pork, poultry and seafood, dinners, entrées, pizza and sandwiches, side dishes, beverages and deserts. All items in the LiveSmart line have 400 calories or less, no trans fat, 10 grams or less fat and 3.5 grams or less of saturated fat. All the items are low in sodium.

"Everybody is health conscious so our grilled chicken is popular — it's all natural," explains Ron Loeb, vice president for sales of Chloe Foods Corp., Brooklyn, NY. The grilled chicken is available in five flavor profiles. Chloe's family of brands includes Blue Ridge Farms, EZ Cuisine, Chloe Farms, Joshua's Kosher Kitchen and The Cookie Store. The company will soon add the Texas Superior Meats brand.

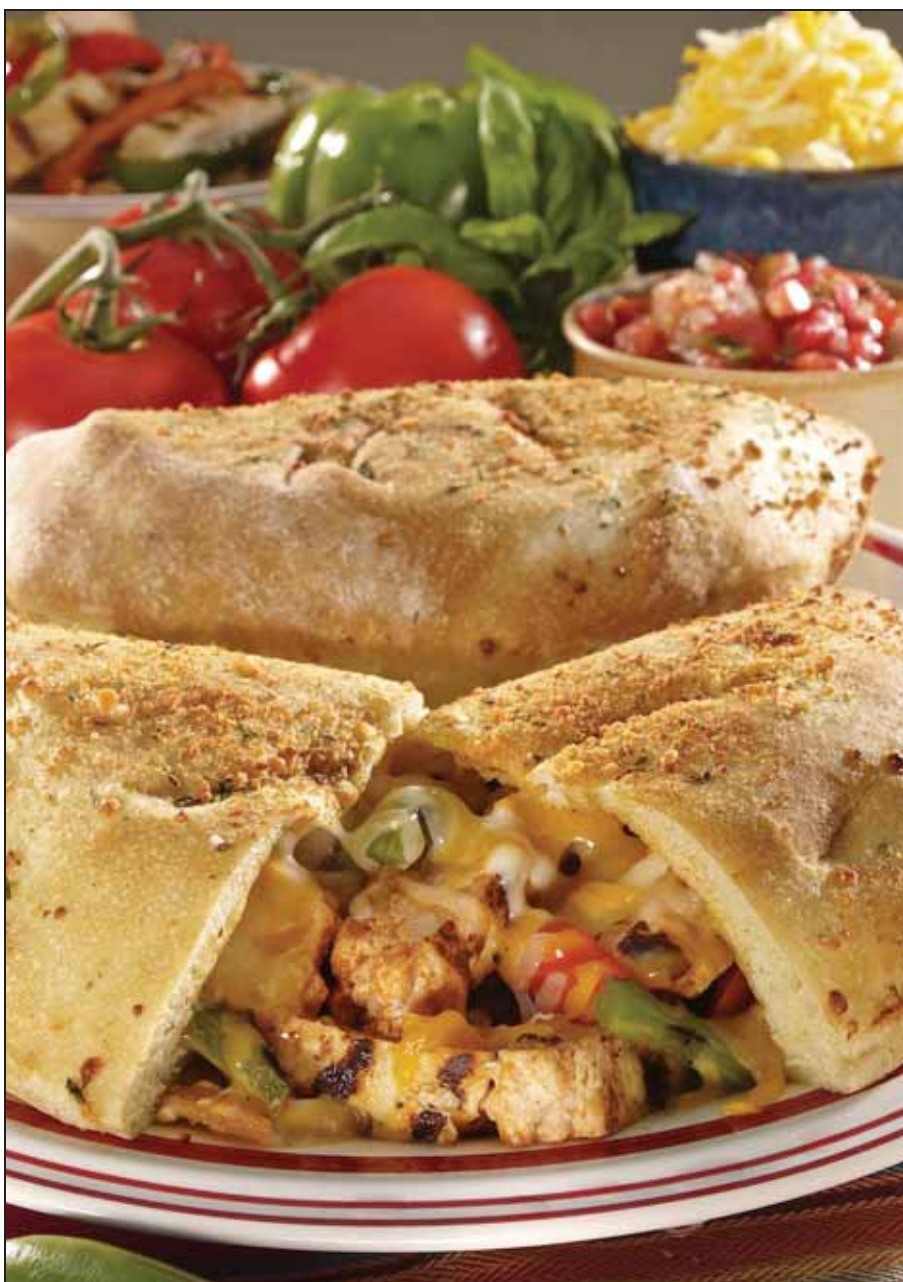


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Although consumers are looking for portability, that does not mean they are willing to forego their attraction to traditional favorites. "A traditional item like stuffed cabbage is so labor intensive that people are intrigued to see it at the deli," says Loeb. "People are interested in the traditional flavors like meat loaf, mashed potatoes and grilled vegetables."

***"A traditional item like stuffed cabbage is so labor intensive that people are intrigued to see it at the deli. People are interested in the traditional flavors like meat loaf, mashed potatoes and grilled vegetables."***

— Ron Loeb  
Chloe Foods Corp.

### Ethnic Alternatives

As the ethnic composition of the country continues to change, many producers are taking the opportunity to expand the variety of their ethnic food offerings. "We just introduced a brand new line of five items of carry-out cuisine," says Mark Phelps, vice president of InnovAsian Cuisine Enterprises, Kent, WA.

The new line features full dinners built around three different chicken entrées — chicken breast strips, sweet and sour chicken and sesame orange chicken. All three contain jasmine rice and a selection of vegetables. These meals come in a fairly large 24-ounce bowl.

"They are designed to serve one or two people and serve as a family dinner, rather than an individual appetizer," Phelps says. These meals are delivered to the retail deli frozen and have a 7-day refrigerator shelf life.

InnovAsian is also introducing two new appetizers, Chinese-style boneless barbecued ribs in a 12-ounce package and chicken pot stickers in a 7-ounce package. Each has a 14-day refrigerator shelf life.

"It's fairly early but the reaction has been positive," Phelps says. "There is interest in building the Asian grab-and-go category.



**Consumers are turning to the deli department for traditional meals that are both healthful and tasty.**

We're trying to bring something new to the category, to add some depth. We have not had a grab-and-go line before."

InnovAsian's existing line includes kits with rice dishes and appetizers. "We've offered a General Tso's chicken kit with the chicken, sauce, garnish and peppers," Phelps says. "There are a number of retailers out there that don't want to commit to a lot of labor. What could be easier than taking something out of the freezer? And we've added the quality piece."

Even companies that specialize in traditionally mainstream foods are taking a closer look at ethnic alternatives. "We are looking at other platforms and trends such as ethnic foods, easy-to-prepare products, and additional grab-and-go items," Eric Jacobson, director, refrigerated/deli, at Schwan's.

### Not Just Your Grandfather's Pizza

Schwan's specialty is pizza, the old standard that remains the single most popular deli department take-out meal. "Pizza con-

tinues to be America's favorite food and we see further opportunities with pizza because it universally appeals to all ages and areas of the country," Jacobson says. "We tested Red Baron Hot Pizzas with a retailer in January and February, and results far exceeded our goals — so we believe we have a winner on our hands.

"We are introducing the new Red Baron Hot Pizza, which is unique in the marketplace for consumers and deli retailers," continues Jacobson. "The product is very portable and convenient for consumers because it is prepared by the deli, available in individual packaging and ready to grab and go. This allows consumers to select an individual, personal size pizza in the deli department that is fully prepared and ready to eat in the store or on the go."

Schwan's has come up with a size and packaging tailored to suit the needs of the deli department. "As the No. 1 brand in retail pizza for many years, consumers are already familiar with Red Baron pizza and consider it



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to be a trusted option for lunch, dinner or as a quick snack on the go," Jacobson adds. "Red Baron Hot Pizzas are seven inches in diameter and use a rising crust. The product is designed to go from freezer to oven for operator ease. Suggested retail price is \$2.49 each and it is available in two popular varieties — cheese and pepperoni."

Some deli department pizza producers are responding to the challenge by offering new and innovative products. "We specialize in a deli pizza program — a take-and-bake

program," says Jon Newsom, national sales manager at Champion Foods New Boston, MI. The firm produces traditional round, individual-sized, deep dish, thin crust and Mexican-style pizzas. It also has a premium crust and component program as well as producing a range of specialty breads.

"We give people the option of taking home a high-quality, fresh pizza to bake," he says. "A lot of the pizza chains are competing on price. We offer a high-end, high-quality pizza at a reasonable price."

"We also have a new patented product called Take2Bake," Newsom continues. The half-pizza/half-bread stick product is ready to pop into the oven. Take2Bake is available in several pizza flavor profiles, each in combination with one of the three varieties of bread sticks.

The calzone category is also growing and

***As the ethnic composition of the country continues to change, many producers are taking the opportunity to expand the variety of their ethnic food offerings.***

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differentiating. "Our latest additions to the calzone category are items that take calzones past traditional Italian varieties," explains Alan Hamer, vice president of sales and marketing at Stefano Foods, Charlotte, NC. "These items pair flavored crusts with innovative fillings, using the calzone format to create portable, handheld entrées for lunch and dinner day parts. These items are Chicken Fajita with jalapeño flavored crust and Philly Cheese Steak with salsa crust."

"In calzones, pepperoni rules," Hamer continues and then adds, "Interestingly enough, for one of our major deli pizza customers, the Greek Goddess Pizza with spinach, Asiago, sun-dried tomato, feta and mozzarella is the top seller, reinforcing the strategy that offering exceptional items is a beneficial position for the deli."

Stefano includes a sauce with its stuffed pizza so the consumer can dip or pour it on top of the stuffed pizza ring. Mini Rip-n-Dip, single-serve version of Rip-n-Dip Stuffed Pizza Ring, is available in three varieties. These individual portions are case-ready for the grab-and-go sections.

Stefano also produces a quiche made with 100 percent real cheese. Along with meats and cheeses, the quiche includes spinach, broccoli, sun-dried tomatoes and mushrooms added to the meats and cheeses. The quiche is packaged with the Stefano "Ready Quick" logo. "Expansion of day part of the deli is the major trend," Hamer says. "Retailers are beginning to develop a break-fast offering."

**DB**



# The Importance Of Deli Packaging

*Packaging convenience, attractiveness, safety and sustainability can impact deli take-out and catering sales.*

By Trisha J. Wooldridge

**W**ith more Americans working longer hours, fewer consumers have the time or energy to prepare meals at home, so more food is being eaten on the go or picked up to be consumed at home or at work.

Since this is food that has to travel, what is on the outside can be just as important, in some cases even more so, as what is on the inside.

The primary reason people purchase take-out food from the deli is convenience, but "Taste is No. 2," states Michael Thaler, vice president of marketing, Anchor Packaging, St. Louis, MO.

"The improved merchandising of good-quality packaging equates to increased food sales every time," notes Robert Saric, national sales manager for Placon Corporation, based in Madison, WI.

Making the purchasing experience positive is an important packaging consideration. If the consumer is picking up a fruit or vegetable tray and the tray is too flimsy, the consumer will remember picking up the olives rolling around on the back seat or the spilled dip rather than the taste of the food.

"There is some consumer dissatisfaction with leaks or anything that moves," explains Mona Doyle, president, The Consumer Network, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. She cites a large survey on packaging and brand likes and dislikes. "There are brands people like with packaging they don't like. People will buy brands they don't like for better packaging." The same holds true for take-out foods.

## The Importance Of Convenience

"Convenience is a huge factor," states Cheryl Miller, marketing, Flair Packaging International, Menasha, WI, a subsidiary of Flair Flexible Packaging, Calgary, AB, Canada. "If it's convenient and an easy thing to do, if it provides adequate nutrition, it



increases the popularity of the food item."

Convenience encompasses many factors. One is the ability to grab, go and make it home with the food intact. Another is reheatability. Oftentimes the ride home or to work can be lengthy, so the food cools. The ability to reheat an entire package in the microwave or oven is highly desirable.

"In view of the fact that in numerous households, both spouses work and are always on the go, families are using the deli

for their food preparation," explains Dr. Scott Whiteside, associate professor in the department of packaging science at Clemson University, Clemson, SC. "The ability of the deli package to reheat in the microwave is especially important to this market."

Susan Weiss, president, Plastic Packaging Corporation, West Springfield, MA, specifically cites the importance of convenience for soup from delis. "Chilled soup-to-go is big," she says. "You take the container

and you can heat and eat in the same container." The container her company makes for soup-to-go is microwave safe, dishwasher safe and reusable.

Resealing and reusing containers are also important convenience factors. "A resealable package helps portion control and can extend the shelf life of many food products," says Clemson's Whiteside.

With health concerns and portion control becoming uppermost in consumers' minds, packaging that addresses these issues is

important to the perception of quality and convenience. Shelf life also plays a role in packaging safety issues.

### Safety Concerns

Since deli take-out is almost always transported and often stored, the packaging needs to maintain the integrity of the food.

Whiteside explains some food-safety and shelf-life advancements, "We're studying new types of barrier materials for oxygen and moisture. Also, there is a major effort to

develop packaging materials that have antioxidant properties, thereby reducing certain deteriorative food reactions. The use of nanotechnology in packaging is being widely investigated by packaging scientists.

"We're investigating food packaging that has antimicrobial properties, that can reduce certain pathogenic food bacteria. Food safety is a major concern for most consumers and packaging is trying to assist in that area," he continues

There is also a move for tamper-evident seals for prepared foods and salads, according to Plastic Packaging's Weiss. Some companies already offer this option.

"We're sensitive to the idea that food must be sanitary," explains Ran Hamner, general manager for Bardes Plastics, Inc., Milwaukee, WI. "Lots of deli presentation is self-serve and customers must feel comfortable with the packaging they put the food in."

### Looks Matter

Cathy McCosham, a merchandise manager at Hubert Company of Harrison, OH, states, "Appearance plays a large role in selling grab-and-go items. You can have horrible food, in an unfortunate case, but attractive packaging will sell it."

The look of the packaging is a powerful marketing tool. Consumers want to see the food they are buying. According to Placon's Saric, "The black bottom/clear lid is still the preferred package. The contrast of the food color against the black bottom and the ability to view it clearly for freshness through the clear lid merchandise any prepared food product very well."

Some of the products Flair is creating will enhance the appearance of the food, says Miller. "Our standard line of deli bags is expanding — for things like egg rolls — with anti-fog technology."

Packaging for other prepared foods also has clear windows and anti-fog technology. The packaging can be vented when needed and can withstand the heat of the deli lights. "Some have a thicker outside of PET [polyethylene terephthalate], so there is less wilt [under hot lights] and a better presentation."

"There is a real interest in more contemporary shapes," adds McCosham.

Weiss notes, "We're looking at more non-round shapes; more squares and rectangles."

Both Weiss and McCosham refer to brighter colors, decoration and more vivid labels as growing trends in packaging.

"There's a focus on young professionals entertaining or being entertained," Hamner notes. "It's a vegetable-tray-type of presentation, fruits with or without types of dip. Seasonal specialty party trays, such as for tailgate parties, have grown dramatically. There



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# New Ways Of Packaging Take-Out

By Bob Johnson

**T**he evolution of the take-out category owes a great deal to innovations in packaging.

"Our newest package is a fried chicken bag," says Ed Sussman, co-owner of Merit Paper Corp., Melville, NY. The bag has a hexagon-shaped bottom and a rounded top, making for more economical use of space by letting the retailer put up to a dozen pieces of fried chicken in a single bag.

"It enables the fried chicken pieces to not touch as closely, which helps the batter stay crisper," he explains. The fried chicken bag also has more perforations to help keep the chicken crisp. And like the rotisserie chicken bag, it has a handle.

The new microwavable, leak-proof bag comes with a stock design or a custom

design that can include logo and name of the retailer, UPC code and ingredients. The fried chicken and rotisserie chicken bags take up less storage space and have the option of eliminating a separate label.

Merit has introduced a bag for a slab of ribs, which Sussman believes provides even greater economies than the chicken bags. He figures the rotisserie chicken bag provides a 25 percent cost savings compared to the dome, but the rib bag provides a 40 to 50 percent cost savings.

All the bags have handles and are leak proof, re-sealable and microwavable. "You can have all three products in bags, with different colors on the label for each bag," he notes.

The rise of the take-out category has led to an increase in leak-proof and microwav-

able containers and packages.

"Twister containers are a new black-bottom, clear-top, to-go solution that features a patented twist-locking mechanism on the lid and base, creating an easy-to-use secure seal," explains Mark Meyer marketing manager, paper products at Huhtamaki Foodservice, Inc., based in DeSoto, KS. "Made of polypropylene and fitted with a vented lid, Twister is microwavable and suitable for hot or cold foods."

"Another growing concern is the issue of sustainability throughout all aspects of the foodservice industry," Meyer says. "Finding ways to operate using socially, economically and environmentally sustainable means concerns us all and Huhtamaki is proud to offer solutions meeting the criteria of sustainability."

is an enhanced perception of value if a package can lend itself to be a centerpiece."

## Sustainability

"Sustainability is a buzzword now," explains Carol Zweep, manager of packaging

services, Guelph Food Technology Center, Guelph, ON, Canada. The focus on recyclable, biodegradable and less wasteful packaging is moving away from petroleum-based polymers and into renewable biopolymers.

Zweep and others cite a growing interest

in polylactic acid (PLA), a corn-based plastic. "PLA is a highly disposable material, ideal for single use," she explains. It is compostable in the right conditions, which are usually found in large waste treatment environments; it will not break down in a typical backyard environment.

The special requirements for composting and recycling can create a problem. "The infrastructure is not available or in place to handle PLA because it looks like PET," she continues. "PET can be recyclable but it requires a different treatment than PLA. Since it is easy to confuse the two, contaminating the recycling is an issue being studied."

A growing number of packaging choices, however, indicates the packaging industry realizes the importance of sustainability.

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The firm produces a wide variety of containers suitable for deli take-out. HandleWare containers are equipped with a patented, built-in handle that makes them easy to pick up and transport. Since they are made of polypropylene, they are microwavable. HandleWare containers are available with vented or non-vented lids and come in 8-, 16- and 32-ounce sizes.

"Portability is becoming an ever greater issue as customers eat on the run and in their vehicles more often each year," Meyer says. "Despite eating on the go, customers still want an attractive and functional package for their to-go meals. Providing packaging options that not only insulate and are easy to carry but also look great adds value to both the end-use customer and the deli department operator." **DB**

"Given the interest in packaging sustainability, there is an abundance of work being done on bio-polymers such as PLA, PHA [polyhydroxyalkanoate] and palm fiber, just to name a few. As we learn more about the properties of these polymers, we can develop improved sustainable packaging designs. For example, PLA weakens as its temperature increases. As a result, research is concentrating on improving its mechanical properties," says Clemson's Whiteside.

### Boxing Up The Future

Multiple products that address these consumer demands and desires in deli take-out and catering options are currently available, and many new items are in the development stage.

Flair Packaging is bringing out a vapor-

release pouch with a vent that can go directly into the microwave. The pressure opens the seal on a small vent hole. "The stand-up pouches come in a variety of sizes and are sealed in the deli by the processor," explains Miller. "They are for reheating vegetables, soups, rice, mac and cheese, and sauces."

Another innovation comes from Anchor Packaging. Its One2Four Series is a set of two lids and two bottoms that can be mixed and matched to create four different con-

tainers, explains Thaler. It provides the deli with more options and fewer pieces.

Overall, delis can expect to package their prepared foods in more convenient containers, and development to protect the safety and integrity of the food is making progress. Increased use of more functional bio-polymers is also part of the developing picture.

"The only limitations for innovations and function are the imaginations of merchandisers and packagers," notes Hamner **DB**

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**The combination of black bottom and clear lid is still a popular packaging option.**

# Beyond Basic Bread

*Getting creative with tradition.*

*By Melinda Warner*

**T**he days of ham on rye, tuna on whole wheat or Swiss on white are long past. Deli customers are looking for sandwiches made with breads and wraps in an assortment of adventurous flavors, and bread companies are responding with a dazzling array of choices.

Delis that want to attract curious, adventurous and health-conscious consumers should be offering breads, wraps, rolls, pitas, tortillas, bagels and more in a variety of flavors and made from a variety of flours.

Ken Burke, vice president of sales and marketing at Costanzo's Bakery, Inc. in Cheektowaga, NY, says customers seem to be leaning away from a traditional bakery roll. He receives calls almost every week asking for something new.

"We are seeing on a regular basis that people in the deli are trying to upscale their bread with higher-end selections and they are going for a higher-end roll for their sandwiches. We have an oat-topped wheat roll, Cuban sub roll, garlic and herb roll and Asiago cheese roll — something different and something a little upscale. People are tired of the ordinary," he says.

Deli departments are the bulk of Costanzo's business. Its breads are found in most delis in the Buffalo, NY, areas as well as nationwide. The company makes 8- and 12-inch sub rolls, hard rolls and Kaiser-type round rolls.

Many people are looking for sandwiches heavy on the filling and light on the carbs — in other words, a wrap. Therefore, many restaurants offer wrap sandwiches filled with ingredients ranging from raw vegetables to cooked meats. Even fast-food chains like McDonald's have wraps on the menu.

"McDonald's is having such success with its wraps that it is no longer a fad," says Brian Jacobs, vice president of Los Angeles, CA-based Tumaro's Homestyle Kitchen, which makes a variety of gourmet tortillas that can be used as wraps.

"What is attractive about our products is you can take a traditional sandwich and make a more gourmet, upscale offering,"



PHOTO COURTESY OF KING'S HAWAIIAN

Jacobs explains. Tumaro's offers several different gourmet tortillas — such as whole-grain, multi-grain and certified organic — in 21 flavors including Indian curry, garden spinach, roasted red pepper and black bean. All products are cholesterol free, trans-fat free and certified kosher. The company does add color to the spinach and tomato tortillas. The tortilla wraps are colorful and attractive so he suggests operators display them rolled where consumers can see them.

Wraps are also beneficial from a labor standpoint; they can be made ahead of time and kept up to 72 hours as long as the filling ingredients will hold up well. They appear to have a better shelf life than breads especially when not cut up. Rather than reinvent the menu, Jacobs encourages delis to take an existing sandwich that sells well and substitute a tortilla for the bread.

Hye Quality Bakery of Fresno, CA, is a pioneer in wraps. According to president Sammy Ganimian, "We were the first company to show people how to make roll-up sandwiches over 20 years ago at the Fancy Food Show in Los Angeles and New York." He says wraps ship well and can be stored in a refrigerator for up to eight weeks or frozen. They do not easily crack or dry up nor do they get mushy or soggy.

Ganimian believes the 16-inch Hye Roller Soft Cracker Bread has a lot of versatility. "You can take the same piece of bread and make a bunch of different presentations. They can be cut into wedges to make party trays or cut up to make grab-and-go 4- or 5-inch long sandwiches." Hye Rollers come in white, wheat, pesto, sun-dried tomato and garlic, and sour cream, onion and chives. The company offers sales support for delis in the form of recipes and suggestions for great wraps — including cream cheese, spinach, ham and turkey.

## Options Galore

The American palate is definitely becoming more sophisticated as consumers continue to explore international cuisine and breads.

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods in Ward Hill, MA, has been selling wraps for 15 years, notes Dominick F. Frocione, vice president of sales. The company began making breads with an old Mediterranean recipe for what used to be called mountain bread. Most of Cedar's recipes are Armenian/Lebanese although some reflect input from its Italian and Greek partners.

The company makes wraps in several flavors, including garlic pesto, spinach, sun-



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"The newest one we are offering, which seems very popular, is a square flaxseed lavash wrap. This is a high omega-3, more healthful bread," Frocione says.

The demand for whole grains is a strong direction in the market place. Costanzo's Burke notes much of the call for whole-grain, high-fiber breads is coming from colleges, universities and high schools. "They are asking for a whole-grain roll and we feel delis as well will be coming on board with the trend," he says. "I was at a trade show and I was asked specifically about whole-grain rolls. People want something they can say is a wheat roll. The traditional white bread roll has only 1 or 2 percent fiber; with whole grain, you are looking at a roll that contains about 6 percent fiber. Once you hit that 6 percent mark, the product is considered a whole-grain product."

#### Health Benefits

Rubschlager Baking Corp. in Chicago, IL, which began in 1913, offers a large variety of heavy, grainy, European-style 100 percent whole-grain rye bread. Its cocktail breads are often used by delis in cheese

trays, but its whole-grain rye may be due for some additional attention.

Since they are not made from wheat, they have a low glycemic factor, making them suitable for diabetics. And they need no added sugar or oils. Secretary/treasurer Joan Rubschlager says the company gets many letters from diabetics praising its healthful breads. Other varieties include soy bread with whole soy beans and black rye, which is pumpernickel with blackstrap molasses, sunflower kernels and rye flour.

More companies are offering whole-grain breads or wraps as the public embraces the health benefits of a diet rich in whole grains and high in fiber. Recently, Kings Hawaiian Bakery in Torrance, CA, added 100 percent whole-wheat rolls to its lineup. "We figured it might be important to offer this option to the consumer," relates Shelby Weeda, president. King's started in Hawaii in the 1950s and now has national name recognition.

Another healthful meal trend is the bundled meal that may include a salad or fruit to complement the sandwich or wrap. Deli operators not bundling breads and sandwiches are missing an opportunity.

To accompany an 8-piece chicken meal with rolls and coleslaw, King's provides the delis at Schnucks, based in St. Louis, MO,

with stickers saying "Made with Kings Hawaiian breads." "The bundled meal makes good sense as it ties in exactly with what the delis are selling," Weeda says. The large round rolls are also used for party platters.

Other items rising in popularity are bread sticks of all kinds and panini grills offering grilled sandwiches.

Kangaroo Brands, Milwaukee, WI, just built a new pita factory according to George Kashou, vice president and owner. Sandwiches made with pita breads continue to grow on popularity. "Pocket pita breads are seeing nice growth, especially the whole-grain variety with flax seeds," he says.

Kangaroo offers 2-ounce bags of healthful, baked pita chips for sandwich programs. These chips are baked not fried. "Pita chips should be made from fresh bread," Kashou says. "We bake fresh pita bread with no preservatives or added fats in the dough formula. The bread is sliced immediately after baking, re-toasted to remove the moisture, and then tumbled with heart-healthy sunflower oil and seasoning.

"Pita breads are growing in mainstream supermarkets as all grocery stores are moving to more healthful meals. We have seen health movements come and go and fizzle off, but this one is here to stay," he notes. **DB**

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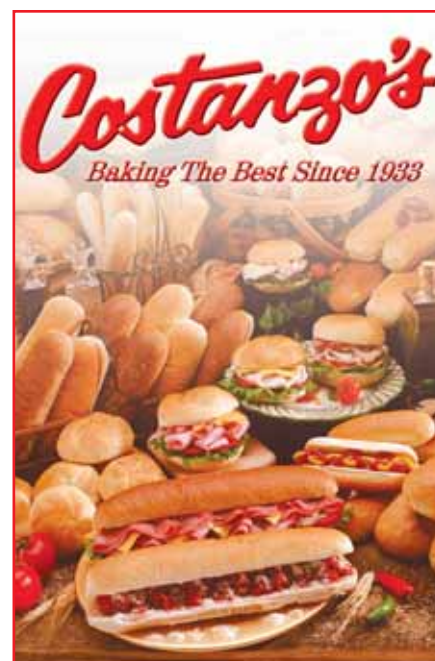
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# Two Emerging Profit Makers

*Ribs and wings are becoming deli department staples.*

By Lisa White

**I**t is easy to measure the popularity of the ribs and wings categories. With the burgeoning number of chain restaurants dedicated to these popular hand-held foods, including Buffalo Wild Wings Grill & Bar, based in Minneapolis, MN; Wingstop, based in Richardson, TX; Famous Dave's, based in Minnetonka, MN; and Tony Roma's, based in Dallas, TX, to name a few, it is no surprise that a growing number of supermarket delis are also capitalizing on this trend.

Bashas Supermarkets, a Chandler, AZ-based chain with more than 153 stores, is rolling out a new vacuum-packaged rib program that its customers can take on picnics and eat cold or heat up at home. Cincinnati, OH-based Kroger, which operates 2,468 stores in 31 states, is a big seller of wings. Even club store Costco, based in Issaquah, WA, which has seen impressive sales with its rotisserie chicken program, has added ribs and wings to its repertoire.

According to Buffalowings.com, Americans consume approximately 22 billion chicken wing pieces each year.

"Wings are the hottest thing going right now," says Dan Emery, vice president of marketing for Pilgrim's Pride, a Pittsburg, TX, supplier that carries Wing Dings, Wing Zings and Blazin' Wings. In fact, he says, this increased demand has led to a wing shortage — orders are now outstripping the supply. "The bulk of the volume is in Buffalo-style or lightly breaded wings."

Although no similar statistics are available for the ribs category, suppliers say it also is thriving. "The rib category has evolved and is more popular today than ever before," claims Terry Hyer, COO at Blue Springs, MO-based Zarda Bar-B-Q & Sauce.

## New Developments

Helping to propel these categories to new heights are several innovations and



product trends.

Maurice Lee III, president of Smokaroma in Boley, OK, believes the increased popularity of ribs and wings is due to a resurgence of supermarket delis' hot cooked food programs. "There was a big trend in hot food 10 to 12 years ago, but then it seemed like this segment died down due to the general state of the economy. Now, delis

are doing a lot more in this area," he explains.

Smokaroma's products, which include equipment, spices and point-of-sale material for ribs and wings programs, can be found in Boone, IA-based Fareway Store's 80-plus units in Iowa.

To get consumers to give up the idea of going to a restaurant and spending \$20 on a rack of ribs, they need to be informed about

the quality and affordability of these foods in supermarket delis, says Ken Feinberg, senior vice president of Curly's Food in Edina, MN. "It's very important for retailers to capture some of these foodservice opportunities."

Curly's offers foodservice packs of pre-cooked ribs that delis can heat up and sell in the hot case.

The biggest challenge of producing ribs in the deli is cooking time. "To cook ribs properly, you need to smoke them for four to eight hours. It is difficult to create restaurant-quality ribs in a retail setting. But now, pre-cooked product has simplified the process," Feinberg explains.

There also have been innovations on the packaging end. For example, Merit Paper Corp., based in Melville, NY, has developed an alternative to the traditional plastic dome and lid containers. According to Ed Sussman, co-owner, the company offers a bag for ribs that is hexagonal, leakproof, has a handle and is both reclosable and microwavable. "These bags offer a cost saving of between 40 and 60 percent over the plastic dome packaging.

"Also, because they take up less space, these products can reduce warehouse distribution costs. This adds up to reduced labor, handling and freight expenses," he continues. The bags can be customized with up to eight colors and graphics, including the store logo, ingredient labels and UPC codes.

### Equipment Innovations

From an equipment standpoint, there have been developments that help simplify the production of ribs and wings.

The Yield King 200A rotisserie line from Marion, IL-based Southern Pride is a 'plug and play' unit that serves as a combo and convection oven, smoker, steamer and holding cabinet. According to Jack Griggs, marketing manager, what a five-stage cooking feature makes this unit unique.

"Its 40 preprogrammed menus can produce 65 slabs of ribs at one time," Griggs relates. "The unit also will remind users to load the wood chips and replace the water in the steam pan. In addition, it features two internal meat probes that can signal when product has reached the proper temperature and automatically stop the cooking cycle." In addition, the oven can be programmed for one-touch cooking of specific products.

Southern Pride also offers two gas-fired rotisserie lines, but Griggs acknowledges that many stores find it difficult to accommodate these large units. "Some stores are designing these rotisseries into their delis so the front of the oven is inside the store and the back is outside. This eliminates venting issues and saves floor space," he says.

## To Sauce Or Not To Sauce

**W**ith the many sauce options these days, delis have to choose not only what sauce will accompany their ribs and wings lines but also whether to offer this condiment on the side.

"Nowadays, we're seeing delis sell ribs without the sauce, providing customers with the option of choosing their own type," says Ken Feinberg, senior vice president of Curly's Food in Edina, MN. "For years, whole chickens have been offered with different seasonings and now we're starting to see this with ribs and sauce."

Offering sauce on the side also allows for the different preferences in each region. "For example, out West consumers prefer sugar-based sauce, while in the Carolinas they like it vinegar based. In the East, they prefer spicier sauces, while in Texas it is the traditional barbecue-style sauce that sells best," Feinberg explains.

Mike Denticio, executive vice president at La Nova Wings, based in Buffalo, NY, agrees that unsauced rib popularity is growing in today's delis because regional sauces are received differently. For this reason, his company offers an unsauced version of its fully cooked rib line that delis can customize with different sauces.

La Nova also offers a variety of wing lines that can be complemented by rib sauces. "For example, we can marry our wing flavors with different rib sauces so the two items can have matching sauces." **DB**

For delis interested in smoking their own ribs and wings, Smokaroma has a unit that takes up between four and six square feet. Its new vertical display units are able to display more than one product at a time. "We are looking at adding a countertop model that will take up only a couple of square feet and that is geared for delis with limited space. We also are moving toward more modern equipment that is programmable to make it easier for delis to get into smoking meats," Lee notes.

### Merchandising Success

There are a number of ways ribs and wings can be marketed and merchandised for added visibility and appeal.

The key to merchandising ribs and wings in the deli is romancing customers. "There are a lot of people around the country who believe they are in the ribs business. But, if you asked them on a wholesale level how many ribs they're moving, most retailers are not happy with the movement they see," relates Zarda's Hyer.

"Consequently, the ribs and wings categories are underdeveloped in most stores. Underneath these items exists an entire barbecue category. Delis need to let customers know they have something special and provide a lot of options in this category," Hyer continues.

Stores that do well in merchandising these items have a variety of marketing components that come together and deli directors that have a vision. "We work with stores to pull these different aspects together, including signage, ads and creative product bundling," he concludes.

Feinberg agrees, saying delis that market ribs and wings with sides will get larger rings. "Those buying chicken will buy mashed potatoes or pasta salad. Rib customers can pick up coleslaw or baked potatoes. Hot sides should be merchandised by the ribs and chicken."

Rib and wing combos are another option. "We are embracing rib and wing combos, where we split wings in half and offer a 2- or 4-bone rib section. Both reheat in the same amount of time, so they can be marketed as a meal," explains Mike Denticio, executive vice president at La Nova Wings, based in Buffalo, NY.

The main thing is to let consumers know when barbecue is available. "If a store is just offering these items on Friday, then that's when they are in the barbecue business. They need to market using flyers and in conjunction with events like the Final Four, the Super Bowl or even major holidays. But ribs and wings are not just an occasion food anymore, so stores can capture consumers during mid-week, as well," Hyer says.

Prominent signage also provides added visibility, says Pilgrim's Pride Emery. "If retailers are merchandising these items in a clear deli case, static clings can help bring visibility to the brands and draw added attention."

Many predict ribs and wings will continue to be profitable segments for supermarket delis. "People are starting to get it," Hyer notes. "We are at the point now where more retailers are embracing these categories."

Feinberg agrees and predicts there will be continued growth in these segments. "I would be shocked if we didn't see more co-branding, with delis partnering with local barbecue restaurants. These are big growth categories." **DB**



- *Deli Meat Dilemma*
- *The World Of Dry-Cured Ham*
- *On Roast Beef*
- *Deli Sliced Meat —  
New Competition Brings  
New Challenges*



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# Deli Meat Dilemma



Photo courtesy of Daniels, Inc.

THE DELI MEAT CATEGORY IS CHANGING, AS SUPPLIERS ATTEMPT TO REINVENT THIS SEGMENT WITH MORE HEALTHFUL AND UPSCALE PRODUCT PROFILES.

By Lisa White

With a history of product recalls and food safety concerns, the deli meat category essentially had no place to go but up. And rise it has, with today's tighter food safety controls and a bevy of upscale product lines geared toward attracting the increasing number of health-conscious consumers.

According to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, sliced meats make up 28 percent of the deli sales dollar, with consumers purchasing sliced-to-order lunchmeats on average of 2.9 times a week.

The most popular deli variety is ham, with a penetration of 44 percent, reports ACNielsen, a research firm located in Schaumburg, IL. Turkey (40 percent), roast beef (22 percent), bologna (21 percent) and salami (17 percent) posted double-digit penetration rates, while chicken (7 percent), pastrami and corned beef (6 percent) and liverwurst (5 percent) were last on the list.

"There has been such a negative spin put on cold-cut items that it's hurting the deli business," says William Osan-

itsch, sales and marketing director at Karl Ehmer in Ridgewood, NY. "As far as the health aspect, the industry is beginning to respond. However, it's a complex area to respond to because it's very difficult to make all-natural smoked meat and have a [decent] shelf life," he says.

## Emerging Trends

Recent data from the American Meat Institute (AMI), Washington, D.C., confirms consumers want leaner lunchmeat without compromising taste. A recent AMI study indicates that among deli meats with a more healthful profile, dollar sales of those described as lean — 90 to 94 percent fat-free — were higher than those falling in the fat-free, light and low-fat categories. Lunchmeats with more healthful formulations, such as nitrate/nitrite-free and antibiotic-free, also are selling well.

"Delis are focusing on more healthful products, such as gluten-free and all-natural premium offerings," note Tom Collins, director of marketing for Willow Brook Foods,

Springfield, MO. In response to this, the company recently launched its Lifestyle deli meat line, featuring all-natural turkey and chicken. The four flavors include oven roasted, smoked, kettle fried and herb seasoned.

In addition, natural and organic meats are an emerging category, according to Erik Waterkotte, director of marketing for deli products at John Morrell & Co., Cincinnati, OH. "From consumer momentum and awareness, it is clearly a trend.

The dollars will catch up with the hype [eventually]."

Capitalizing on consumers looking for convenience, more delis are taking a second look at their pre-sliced deli meat programs. In the past, retailers concentrated on slicing bulk product for the grab-and-go area, Waterkotte says. "There was very little branding and these meats were not a big promotional item or category. But today, deli tubs are big business."

Derek Bowen, director of marketing

for deli business at the Sara Lee Food Group, Downers Grove, IL, agrees, noting, "We are seeing thinner slices and better packaging."

Private labeling also has become more common in the deli meat segment. Collins is seeing more retailers developing multiple labels for premium, mid-tier and low-cost store brands.

"For the past couple of years, we have seen private label brands going head-to-head with the refrigerator peg section in terms of quality," says Bowen, adding that this competition has forced deli meat suppliers to rethink their game plans.

According to Karl Ehmer's Osanitsch, this is not easy to do. "How do we put a positive spin on deli meats? Many manufacturers are making a lower-quality product to reach a lower price point. This affects the market nationwide. If you make lower-quality deli meats that don't taste good, you turn people off. It's a price vs. quality situation."

Karl Ehmer offers high-quality chicken products, including chicken bologna, sausage and franks. "We insist on maintaining our quality level, but [the current climate] makes it more difficult to market a more expensive product," he adds.

Still, many insist the number of consumers seeking better-quality deli meats continues to grow. "In the bulk case, in particular, we are seeing growth in the super-premium category," Bowen says. "The more expensive brands are selling as well as natural meats." In response to this, Sara Lee has introduced a super premium bulk meat line called Gourmet Selections From the Kitchens of Sara Lee. The natural pre-sliced meat has no fillers.

More upscale packaging is in line with the trend toward higher quality. For example, tubs are no longer an indulgence, but an expectation. "We have an upscale tub with a snap lid that is shallow to fit in refrigerator meat drawers," Bowen says. "Locking in deli meat freshness is key to keeping the quality level up to consumer expectations."

Chris Bekermeier, marketing manager of retail deli at Butterball, based in El Paso, TX, agrees and notes the focus is now on innovative products and eye-catching packaging and marketing. "In the past decade, consumers have become more apt to buy their food on impulse, so aesthetics are much more important now than in the past. Within grocery stores, lunchmeats are aiming for more convenient packaging. These factors are creating competition for the deli in general. The deli must do everything it



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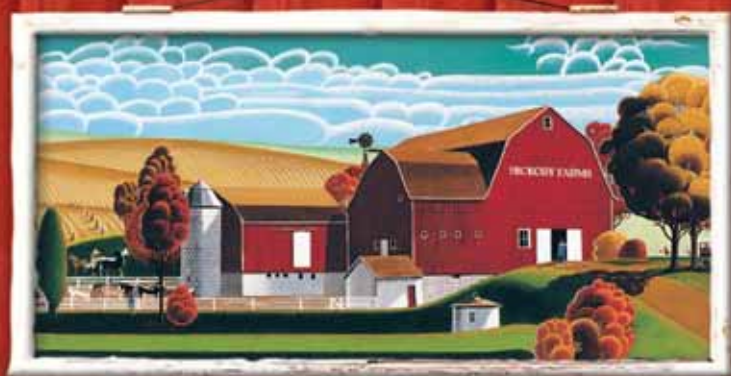


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## A Closer Look At Specialty Meat

In the past, specialty meat was not a profit center in supermarket delis. Times have changed. Today, this segment is emerging, full of possibility and promise, because of the growing number of consumers who want to emulate their dining experiences abroad.

Imported meats like prosciutto di Parma, prosciutto di San Daniele, Jamón Serrano, Speck, European dried sausages, pancetta, pastrami and European-style salame are highly respected in the deli industry.

At the same time, however, many are unfamiliar with these products and how they are differentiated.

- **Bresaola:** Lean, air-cured beef made from the loin. Ruby red in color with a sweet aromatic flavor. Serve in an antipasto drizzled with extra virgin olive oil, lemon wedges or shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano.

- **Chorizo:** Spanish-style cured, ready-to-eat sausage made of smoked pork and pork spiced with garlic and paprika. Can be eaten alone or with Manchego cheese. Use in recipes such as paella. Mexican chorizo needs to be cooked.

- **Copa:** Dry-cured pork-butts. Sliced thin; a regular on an antipasto platter.

- **Jambon:** French for ham. Pair with

Dijon mustard, French Comté cheese or make a sandwich on a buttered baguette.

- **Jamón Serrano:** Dry-cured ham from Spain; aged a minimum of one year to 15 months. Bold meaty flavors; often cut in thick slabs or thin slices. Enjoy alone for a snack or with wine or olives.

- **Mortadella:** Where Americans get the name bologna (mortadella originated in Bologna, Italy), mortadella is made with beef and pork, cubes of pork fat and seasoning. Some Italian-style and German varieties contain pistachios. Often used on a sandwich or as an addition to an antipasto platter.

- **Pastrami:** Highly seasoned beef made from the brisket or round that is dry-cured, smoked and cooked. Serve hot or cold in a sandwich on rye bread.

- **Prosciutto di Parma:** Made strictly in the province of Parma, this ham is salt- and air-cured, but not smoked. Hams are cured in total for at least 400 days and some for as long as 30 months. Only salt may be used as a treatment. Branded with a five-point ducal crown and a PDO seal, the European Union's assurance of authenticity. Sweet-salty flavor with a slightly chewy consistency, longer aged hams will have a more intense, meatier flavor. Best sliced paper thin.

- **Prosciutto di San Daniele:** Made in the region of Friuli, this PDO salt-cured ham is protected by the San Daniele Consorzio. Aged a minimum of 14 months, it is air-cured and has a sweet, melt-in-your-mouth flavor.

- **Saucisson:** French for a large sausage. Saucisson de sanglier is a French air-dried salami-like sausage made from wild boar meat sometimes with the addition of pork.

- **Speck:** A traditional dry-cured, moderately salted (not more than 5 percent in the finished product) smoked raw ham with additional spices from the Alto Adige area where Italy, Austria and Switzerland meet. Speck Alto Adige is a Protected Geographical Indicator (PGI) product from Italy that must be cured for 22 months.

Sebastien Espinas, vice president of sales at Fabrique Delices, Hayward, CA, says smoked meat and cured salami work well in the deli. "They can be cross-merchandised with patés and cheese. The best turnaround for these products is in the bulk and grab-and-go areas," he advises, adding that pairing these meats with wine also works well.

"The specialty meat segment usually contains single-muscle meats that have

can to be convenient for shoppers."

### Increasing Appeal

Grabbing the consumer's attention also applies to displays, where convenience, as well as eye appeal, is key.

According to Bowen, retailers should apply category management. The Sara Lee Deli Cuts program takes category management traits from other parts of the store and brings them into the deli, using the data to optimize the deli's product offering. "Retailers need to look at their demographics and consider this with their case products. It is important to remember that merchandising depends on the store. The more customization we can bring into the deli, the better."

The merchandising vehicle is different with each retailer. "Retailers continue to use delis to differentiate themselves from their competition, so we can't come out with a one-size-fits-all solution from a marketing standpoint. We have to be dynamic and customize the program for each customer because that's the right way to compete," Bowen explains.

Cross-merchandising can also help maximize consumer attention. "For example," says Willow Brook's Collins, "the meat in the sandwich program can reflect the store's premium deli meat program."

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*"Flavor Says It All"*



been trimmed and smoked, in addition to imported hams from France or Italy," explains Laurie Groezinger Cummins, president of Groezinger Provision, based in Neptune, NJ. "Also charcuterie items like paté and rilette [meat that is slowly cooked in seasoned fat and pulverized into a paste], as well as some larger diameter slicing sausage with an ethnic flavor profile are popular."

According to Groezinger, today there is a much stronger demand for more variety and a greater appreciation of quality in both domestic and imported deli products. "When I came into the meat business in 1980, the delis were really boring and all the same. No one was willing to sell anything over \$5.99 per pound back then, but today consumers will pay \$10.99 per pound. This is because people are traveling more frequently and the culinary experience is broadened."

Because most people eat with their eyes, visual display is key, she notes. "Freshly facing products and offering free samples is not waste or shrink — it is an investment."

Because today's consumers do not have the time to put meals together, many are turning to the deli for dinner, notes Yvette Etchepare, director of marketing at Marcel et Henri, based in South San Francisco, CA. She says specialty meats bring something different that is easy to prepare and serve to the table.

Theme marketing around these products, such as April in Paris, Cinco de Mayo and the Chinese New Year, are ways to bring added attention to specialty meats.

These products are complemented by a number of specialty foods that can be incorporated into deli displays. Cross-merchandising suggestions include:

- Butter
- Fruit
- Manchego cheese
- Mozzarella and other fresh cheeses
- Mustards
- Nuts
- Olive and nut oils
- Parmigiano-Reggiano
- Savory spreads
- Specialty breads and crackers
- Specialty Olives
- Wine or sherry

Specialty meat slicing and presentation is an art, reports *Specialty Food* magazine. Proper merchandising and ease of purchase also can help boost sales.

**DB**

Butterball's Bekermeier believes delis must leverage their strengths in freshness and quality in order to stand out from the packaged lunchmeats and fast foods they compete with. "In marketing, it's important to focus on what makes a product or service unique. Most retailers recognize the deli is one of the few areas in their stores that allows them to create a distinct position within the consumer's mind vs. their competition. Delis have the ability to create an entirely unique user experience for every consumer they encounter. It is important to take advantage of that."

It is important to take advantage of that."

Butterball is focusing on reaching the deli consumer in-store. Some events are centered on cents-off coupons alone, others include sweepstakes. "Another opportunity we leverage is to provide recipes and tips that demonstrate new and non-traditional uses of our products to increase demand. The ultimate goal of what we do is to create excitement among our demographic for our products

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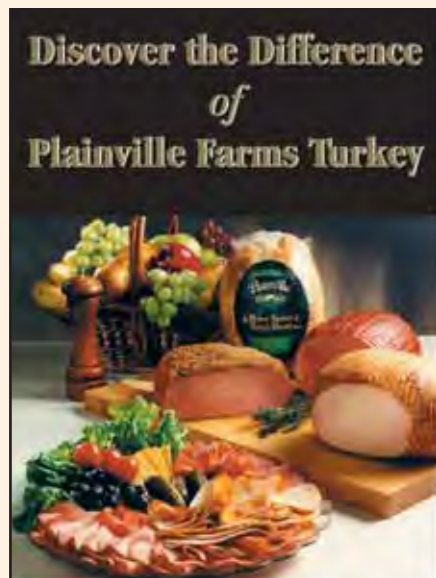


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## Salami Trends Vary

**T**rends in salami mirror the trends in other food categories. Consumers are looking for more healthful varieties that are high quality. These include both organic and natural salami selections.

Well-traveled consumers also are looking for different flavors, leaning toward spicy and ethnic varieties from different regions around the world.

According to *The Food Lover's Companion* (Barron's Educational Series, Inc.), salami is an uncooked but safe to eat sausage that tends to be boldly seasoned (particularly with garlic), coarse, dry and rarely smoked. They are usually air-dried and vary in size, shape, seasoning and curing process. Most are made from a mixture of pork and beef although kosher salami can never contain pork.

Salami characteristics vary depending on the kind of meat it contains, the proportion of lean to fat and the fineness or coarseness of the grind. These meats can be exclusively pork, or be a mixture of pork and beef. They also can be produced from venison or other game meats, veal, poultry, goose, lamb and goat. Generally, a salami's ratio is 70 percent lean and 30 percent fat, but this can vary by recipe or the style being produced.

Enzo De Luca, owner of Siena Foods Ltd., based in Toronto, ON, Canada, says people are looking for salami that is authentic in terms of appearance and flavor profile. Siena is launching a line of organic salami that addresses the growing awareness and demand in this category. "These products will have a very short ingredient list and cost three times the price of regular salami. Not all retailers will be able to sell it," he explains.

Francesca Rivas, marketing manager at Cappola Food, North York, ON, Canada, agrees the trend toward more healthful products has had an effect on the salami segment. "More people are buying more healthful products. Organic is a big trend and natural products are huge." In response, Cappola is developing an organic salami line as well as a no-nitrate-added product. "This would do well merchandised in a deli's organic section with signage that states these products have no additives or preservatives."

and offerings. We like to reward current, loyal users while also enticing new users to the brand," Bekermeier adds.

Looking ahead, Willow Brook's Collins predicts continued growth in thinly sliced meats and healthful alternatives.

"Consumers are looking for better

Low-fat salami does not necessarily have to be a budget buster. According to Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing at Bronx, NY-based Cibao Meat Products, the company's Salami de Pueblo is a chicken salami that is low in both fat and price.

Higher-quality and leaner salami products are more desirable, says Giovanna Varricchione, marketing director at Colombo Importing in Woodbridge, ON, Canada. "In addition, consumers are looking for the convenience of presliced products," she adds.

Today's salami consumers prefer bold flavors and strong tastes. "People want flavors like peppercorn and Italian deli profiles. We're looking into areas such as the German peppered salami format to overlap with what we currently offer," relates Rivas.

Sonja C. Elmauer, marketing manager at Freybe Gourmet Foods Ltd., based in Langley, BC, Canada, sees significant growth for coated specialties, including its Parmesano Salami, Garlic Salami and Pepper or Gipsy Salami. Freybe uses traditional salami recipes to create lines free of trans fat, MSG, gluten and lactose, with the exception of Parmesano Salami. "Our European production style focuses on fermentation and the natural air-drying process, which takes up to 60 days," she says.

Although salami is a mature market, Rivas says natural and more healthful lines may help revive the category. "Retailers need to communicate to the public that salami isn't just for sandwiches. It can be used in cooking, positioned as a snack or used as an antipasto item, as well. And this meat can be merchandised in sections dedicated to promoting the different salami producing regions, similar to wine."

Varricchione agrees, saying people want to try different salami flavors from various parts of the world. "People want a taste of everything. Versatility is key." More salami is being used in deli hot food programs and sampling is more prevalent than in the past, she adds.

Elmauer recommends retailers carry at least six salami varieties. "Salami should be sliced thin to have lot of flavor. Demonstrations or tasting will help to sell specialties as well as recipes. Also, the presentation of small salami chubs and sliced products in the grab-and-go section can help gain the interest of different consumers." **DB**

quality and convenience, so the more solutions the better," Sara Lee's Bowen notes. "As long as brands and retailers offer solutions, the deli meat category will grow. The deli needs to be the first stop, and if we do our job and the retailer does its job, we can accomplish this." **DB**



# The World Of Dry-Cured Ham



Photo courtesy of Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma

ALTHOUGH DRY-CURED HAM MAKES UP JUST TINY PORTION OF PORK PRODUCTS, THIS HIGH-END DELICACY CAN BRING IN BIG BUCKS.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

**D**ry-cured hams, also called air-cured hams, have become increasingly popular in the United States. Because they are sold and eaten uncooked, some Americans may once have thought of the “raw” product as strange or even repulsive. However, times are changing.

“The Internet, traveling abroad, etc., have made us more curious and adventurous and have exposed us to other cultures,” notes Filena Fernandez, marketing specialist, Webeco Foods, Inc., Miami, FL, importers of fine cheeses, meats and specialty products from Europe. And, she adds, dry-cured hams are part of the fast-growing trend toward Mediter-

ranean cuisine. “The Mediterranean diet is becoming increasingly popular for its variety of flavors, health benefits and lifestyle.”

“We saw interest in prosciutto expand rapidly in the late 1990s,” says Davide Dukcevic, sales representative, Daniele, Inc., Pascoag, RI, makers of Italian-style products, including prosciutto and smoked prosciutto (also called speck). “There are several reasons, including the booming economy, the Food Network and the proliferation of gourmet magazines, allowing consumers to try tastier — albeit more expensive — gourmet foods. Prosciutto has become much more main-



Photo courtesy of Abraham of North America, Inc.

**Several regions of Europe and North America create distinctive dry-cured hams.**

stream, thanks to Mario Batali, Lidia Bastianich and even David Chase [creator of *The Sopranos*!]"

Spain's tapas — or small plates — have taken hold in many American restaurants and homes, and many Americans are recognizing that Spain's famous Serrano ham is an important part of Spanish cuisine. "The market for Serrano is growing. It's still in its infancy," relates Adam Moskowitz, COO, Redondo, USA, Long Island City, NY, producers and importers of Serrano ham.

According to Fernandez, Serrano ham is eaten in Spain "mostly as a tapa, by itself or accompanied by other Spanish cured meats and cheeses. It is great in a bocadillo, too," she says, speaking of the small sandwiches popular as a snack or light meal.

As Americans try dry-cured hams, they are learning these products have a high level of flavor satisfaction. "You don't eat that much at one time. So yes, you might buy a package of Prosciutto di Parma that costs \$5 for three ounces, but you may only eat one ounce," says David Biltchik, of Consultants International Group, (CIG) Washington, D.C.-based advisor to the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, Parma, Italy.

According to Biltchik, the United States is the No. 3 importer of Prosciutto di Parma, behind only France and the United Kingdom. And, he says, "Our sales increase in the States every year."

Although theirs may be the most famous, Italy and Spain are certainly not the only countries to produce high-quality dry-cured hams. "In Europe, every region has their specialties," says Claas Abraham, CEO and president, Abraham

of North America, Inc., producers and importers of dry-cured ham in Germany, Spain and Belgium and importers of Italian hams.

Many American companies also follow in the European tradition of curing hams. "My grandfather started the business in Triest, Italy, and my father

a necessary part of the process in more humid regions, which is why, for example, German hams are smoked while Prosciutto di Parma is not. Some hams, including Serrano, develop mold on the outside much like aged cheese, which adds to the meat's flavor. For smoked hams, the type of wood available further affected the flavor of ham from each region.

"Essentially, the flavor comes from the air, the salt you use, the time it cures and, if it's smoked, the smoke you use," Abraham explains. Different salts are used in France and Belgium than in Italy or Spain. Some regions also add spices.

Although many excellent European-style hams are made in the United States and elsewhere, many believe the end result is different because the terroir affects the end product in subtle ways.

For example, factors such as the mold in the air or the food the pigs eat differentiate Serrano produced in Spain from serrano produced in Mexico. This is the reason Abraham imports ham from four

**Dry-curing meat was originally a method of preservation without refrigeration. Pigs were slaughtered in the winter, then the meat was salted and dried. As the weather became warm, the curing process ensured that the meat would be safe to eat.**

brought it to the United States in the 1970s," says Dukcevic. "The processes are virtually the same. Perhaps the biggest difference is that the hogs used for prosciutto di Parma are much larger than the American pigs we use for our domestic prosciutto, so our prosciutto tends to be smaller."

### ***What Is Dry-Cured Ham?***

Dry-curing meat was originally a method of preservation without refrigeration. "It was the only way they could store fresh meat," explains Abraham. Pigs were slaughtered in the winter, then the meat was salted and dried. As the weather became warm, the curing process ensured that the meat would be safe to eat. "It stops the process of bacteria growth," he says.

While mountainous areas offered dry summer air, smoking sometimes became

different countries. "We could make all those products in one region, but they wouldn't be the same," he says.

### ***Authenticity Costs More***

It can be easy to mix up one cured ham product with another. For example, several are labeled "prosciutto" or "Italian prosciutto," which can easily be mistaken for prosciutto di Parma. In fact, the word "prosciutto" has become synonymous with dry-cured ham from Italy.

"When the consumer spends \$20 a pound for prosciutto di Parma, it's worth it because we guarantee every step of the way," explains CIG's Biltchik. "The first essential is the raw material. What pork meat are you using? Prosciutto di Parma can be made only from Italian pigs raised in a certain part of Italy and fed certain food," he explains. "Part of their diet includes the whey from Parmigiano-Reg-



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Reader Service No. 127

## Country Ham: A Southern Specialty

**A**s Americans learn to appreciate European cured hams, some are beginning to notice the quality dry-cured hams traditionally made in the southern United States.

As immigrants came from Europe hundreds of years ago, they brought recipes for cured hams with them. Over time, these have changed and taken on flavors and styles of their own. Today, this specialty is best known as country ham.

As in Europe, country hams developed in areas best suited to curing — where the winters are cold but not so cold that the hams freeze, and summers offer perfect conditions for curing. In areas that tend to be more humid, smoke is often a bigger factor in the process.

Most cured southern hams are sold cooked or ready-to-cook (usually by frying or baking), possibly because of an old,

unfounded fear of trichinosis. But as more raw cured hams are consumed by Americans, producers are making country hams specifically to be eaten that way.

Convincing the public that rustic country ham can be every bit as “fancy” as European hams may take some work. Burger’s Smokehouse in California, MO, makes a premium ham with a name that does not exactly evoke white-tablecloth restaurants — “Attic Ham.” These hams are aged at the top of the company’s 4-story aging facility; the warmer air near the top of the building hastens the aging process, resulting in a mature-flavored ham after one year.

“The good news is people are paying such a high cost for these imports, and we’ve got American counterparts right here that are every bit as good,” says Steven Burger, president. Perhaps, after a taste or two, consumers will agree. **DB**

giano cheese.”

(American producers will argue European pigs are not necessarily better or better fed. “American pigs are corn-fed and the quality is second-to-none,” Dukcevic claims.)

Then comes the preparation. “The curing process [for prosciutto di Parma] uses only salt — no nitrates, nothing. There are very, very few cured products that can say that,” relates Biltchik. The Consorzio follows every step of the process to guarantee each ham with its label is up to snuff.

The making of Spain’s famous Serrano ham must also follow strict rules. Webeco’s Fernandez describes the making of Serrano as an “artisanal process — just excellent quality leg of pork, Mediterranean sea salt and time. Tem-

perature and humidity are regulated to simulate the four seasons of the year, as it was since the beginning of time.”

Consumers are willing to pay a higher price for Spanish Serrano because it is unique and the quality is excellent, believes Redondo’s Moskowitz. “You weren’t able to eat Serrano ham in the United States 10 years ago. It’s a unique and exclusive product. It’s extremely special. Anybody who appreciates Spanish culture knows that this is a national product that is eaten with pride in Spain. Every time you take a bite, it brings you right back there.”

Another PDO dry-cured ham from Italy is prosciutto di San Daniele, similar to prosciutto di Parma, but definitely not the same. Regulated and inspected by the Consorzio del Prosciutto di San

Daniele, this regional ham is produced in the heart of Friuli where the river Tagliamento flows just a stone’s throw away.

By law, San Daniele prosciutto must be made with the fresh thighs of Italian-bred heavy pigs in excellent health. And the standard that pigs must meet, such as the dietary restrictions that demand a regime based on the finest cereals and whey, are extremely rigorous.

Parma hams use slightly more salt, according to Alberto Minardi, general manager of Principe Food USA Inc., Los Angeles, CA, an importer of both San Daniele and Parma hams. “The fact that San Daniele uses less salt results in a sweeter-tasting product.

“The animal used to produce San Daniele has a much wider and bigger leg, so when you slice San Daniele, compared to Parma, the slice of San Daniele is much longer, while Parma has a particularly rounder look. The longer legs provide more raw materials to work with, therefore the average San Daniele finished product is always a pound, pound-and-a-half bigger than Parma.”

### Educating Consumers

Telling shoppers about the many types of wonderful dry-cured hams available is key to sales. “Education is still often a big hurdle,” says Dukcevic of Daniele. “One way to help consumers out is to give them ideas of how to eat prosciutto. Cross-merchandising helps tremendously. Sell packages of pre-sliced prosciutto in the produce section with melons or figs, in the bakery by the Italian bread or in the wine section with a Barolo.”

“The easiest answer is to put a slice on their tongue,” says Moskowitz about Serrano ham. “Demo it. Slice it up. Put it on the counter. Do a taste test.”

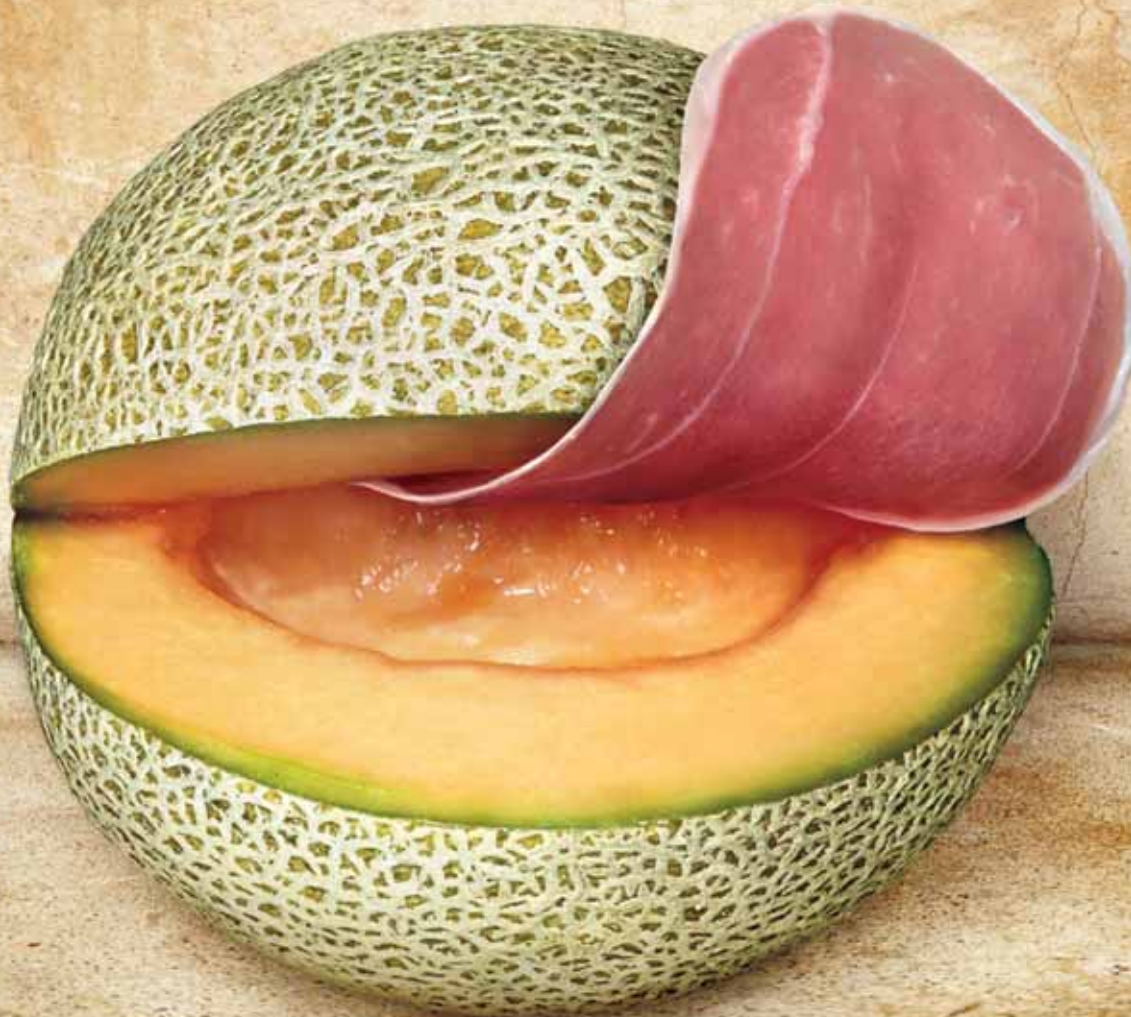
Biltchik fears under-educated shoppers may believe they are getting a bargain with lower-priced cured hams that may not taste the same. “It’s a little bit like buying wine. You need a knowledgeable employee advising customers about the difference in the products out there and why this one might be worth the money,” he explains.

Minardi recommends carrying and sampling only the best dry-cured hams, because customers do not always differentiate between them. “[Consumers] just remember that they like prosciutto or don’t like it. If I offer you a bad prosciutto, you will always remember it. If I offer you a good prosciutto, you will always remember that, even if you don’t remember the brand.” **DB**





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Reader Service No. 160

# On Roast Beef

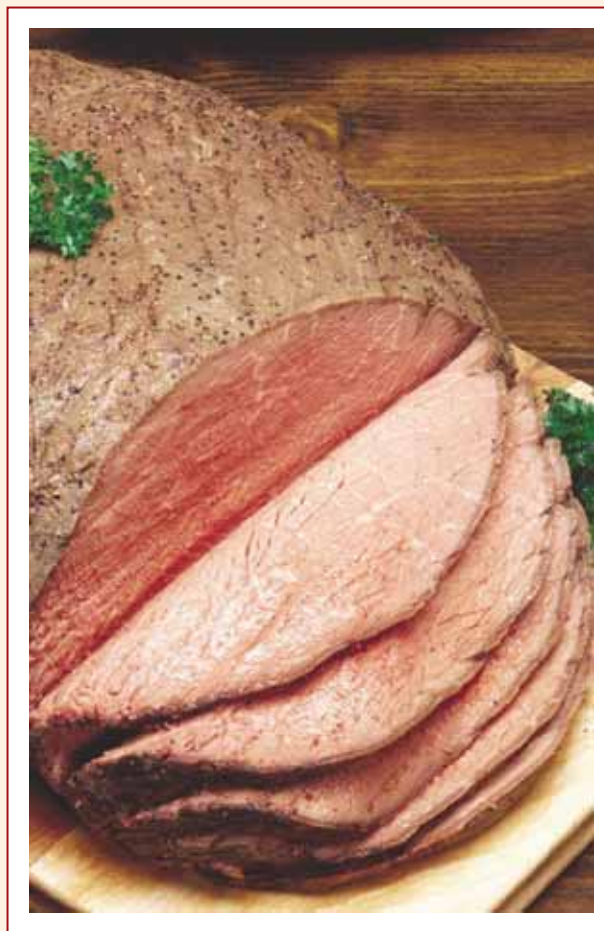


Photo courtesy of Vincent Giordano Corp.

THIS POPULAR DELI FAVORITE HAS ITS OWN SET OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

By Russ Lane

**S**labs of roast beef might not require the processing of ham or offer turkey's seemingly endless flavor derivatives, but deli meat's sacred cow has its own set of considerations of doneness, preparation and safety.

The choices available to roast beef purchasers are of a different nature. Though some flavor profiles exist and grow more popular, there is less concern with smoked-honey-baked-mesquite-with-a-twist-of-lemon flavor profiles and a greater emphasis on doneness. Like any beef product, preferences for roast beef's degree of doneness, or temperature, can vary wildly among regions and markets; as the U.S. population redistributes itself across the country, the regional differences are shifting in tandem. Rare today, well done tomorrow.

"Roast beef's the hardest category to manage because of that," says Tom Guse, an associated product manager for the foodservice division, Hormel, Austin, MN. "You have all these different SKU variations, and when you factor all those different cooking temperatures on top of that, it can be a challenge."

The regional taste differences point to roast beef's uniqueness in a sea of pork and poultry products; selecting a roast beef brand involves less concern with flavor than with how the beef was raised, cooked and prepared for shipping. Food safety continues to be an ongoing concern and distributors generally look for the latest technologies to stay ahead of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) curve. The more popular, new roast beef products focus on more healthful versions of the age-old beef — natural, additive-free and organic beef products are among the newest products available.

## *A Matter Of Degrees*

With roast beef, one temperature does not serve the entire country. "It depends on the market and the area of the country you're in," says Vincent Giordano, president Vincent Giordano Corp. headquartered in Philadelphia, PA.

The eastern United States generally prefers very rare roast beef, while the Midwest and Southern states prefer their beef



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closer to medium or well, he explains. Though opinions of regional tastes of beef slightly vary among industry leaders — all manner of temperature preferences are attributed to the South — most agree that New England states like their beef as rare as possible.

"You follow the population trends: Florida and the Southwest, for example, are where people are moving," Giordano of Vincent Giordano notes. "Now you've got a transition of people bound to those markets from the East or Northeast. You have a demand for people who've moved to those markets."

Tastes can change on a smaller scale as well, Hormel's Guse says. He notes that particular communities can have their own standards separate from region. "In a lot of operations where you might have senior citizens, they prefer something medium to medium well. If they don't get that color, they'll send it back. I noticed it quite a bit in Kansas City and San Francisco."

Though Giordano recognizes that the shifting regional tastes tend to be gradual, these changes can also spike and create new markets instantly.

According to Bobby Yarbrough, co-owner of Manda Fine Meats, Baton Rouge, LA, his Cajun-inspired roasts found new markets following Hurricane Katrina, which scattered scores of former Louisiana residents throughout the country. Eventually, new delis sought his product to meet the demand.

"After Hurricane Katrina, we got calls from new markets for people who wanted Southern Louisiana roast beef," he explains, citing new markets emerging in Texas, Tennessee and Missouri. Many Louisiana residents relocated to these states following the storm's aftermath. "Eventually, they call us."

Practical matters enter the temperature equation for purchasers looking for new products, Guse notes. How long the beef is displayed might affect which beef temperature is ordered. "You have to think about it; if you're going to slice it right away, medium is the way people go. If you're going to use it in the shift, you almost want a medium rare. The longer you have it sit out, the more it will affect the color," he explains.

To accommodate regional differences, new markets or concerns for inventory, Manda cooks roasts to order. Giordano does the same. Larger outfits such as Hormel and Smithfield Foods, headquartered in Smithfield, VA, prefer to set order thresholds for roasts of different

temperatures to ensure a steady supply.

Product of all kinds is available; it boils down to the age-old struggle of keeping up with an evolving customer base. "It's all about people and where

The label must explain the use of the term natural (such as no added colorings or artificial ingredients; minimally processed)." In contrast, the definition of organic is several pages long and

## The spinach crisis of 2006 averted the public's attention away from beef safety, but that food crisis has not prevented the deli industry from adhering to its long-established strict standards.

they're moving to," according to Giordano. "The good operators will recognize their market demographics and change with them."

### Natural Products

Roast beef can develop multiple flavor profiles in addition to Manda Meat's Cajun line. Giordano plans to create Tex-Mex and numerous other flavors.

But the biggest advance in roast beef keeps pace with most of the headlines. "I would say a lot of that consumer pressure on health is starting to filter into the foodservice arena," Guse explains, noting that Hormel looks to include roast beef in its Natural Choice line of additive-free meats within the year.

Health aspects, organic foods and "natural" foods continue to engage consumers, and these trends are finding their way to the deli counter. Maverick Ranch Natural Meats, Denver CO, has offered additive-free meats since the late '80s, before the trends developed.

With the deluge of "natural" products entering the marketing, some distributors find the terminology is becoming increasingly complex.

"Natural — it's the most confusing terminology," explains Jim Schloss, Smithfield corporate vice president sales and marketing. "All-natural can mean a lot of things. Truly all-natural is a product that is made with natural ingredients — you can't pump it, you can't rub it with anything that isn't all natural. It's a very difficult terminology, and people have bastardized the whole process."

The USDA considers a natural product one that contains "no artificial ingredients or added color and is only minimally processed (a process which does not fundamentally alter the raw product)." . .

requires at least three years real time to be put into effect.

Natural involves careful attention to everything from the livestock to the final production and packaging, says Schloss, who urges buyers to be clear on what grounds a product bases its claim of it being natural.

### Food Safety Issues

Natural may be the latest trend, but the industry has long been concerned with issues of health and food safety.

According to USDA research, cross-contamination of meat can breed intestinal disease *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), as well as foodborne illnesses *Salmonella*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Giordano believes the spinach crisis of 2006 averted the public's attention away from beef safety, but that food crisis has not prevented the deli industry from adhering to its long-established strict standards.

Though the USDA supervises and inspects all meat makers for safety practices, many are taking additional measures to ensure the safest product possible. Giordano plans to stay ahead of USDA standards and inspections by using a combination of infrared technology and pasteurization techniques he developed with food safety company Unitherm Food Systems of Bristow, OK.

Yarbrough notes that Manda has replaced the traditional lactate and diacetyl sprays with an anti-microbial injection and wash on all products to ensure their safety. "The industry was trying to catch up to the HACCP inspection system," he claims. "In our opinion, it was a no-brainer to apply these to the these products. We don't ever stop — I don't think you can."

**DB**



# Deli Sliced Meat — New Competition Brings New Challenges



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FOODSERVICE AND EVEN OTHER IN-STORE DEPARTMENTS ARE THE COMPETITION.

By Bob Johnson

Overall sales of deli department sliced meats have suffered in recent years from a slow, steady decline. "The total category has continued to decline by 1 to 2.5 percent in dollar sales over the last year," according to Derek Bowen, director of marketing for Sara Lee Food Group, based in Downer's Grove, IL. "In terms of the data, this was the third year in a row of declining sales for sliced meats at the deli section."

Other insiders agree the recent trend for the deli sliced meat category has been slightly down. "I think the category is staying the same; it might be ticking down a little," notes

John McVay, vice president for operations at Vincent Giordano Corp., Philadelphia, PA.

"We're seeing flat to declining sales of sliced meats in the deli section," says Tom Collins, director of marketing at Springfield, MO-based Willow Brook, which sells bulk turkey, ham and chicken for slicing in the deli section.

The single most important cause for this downward trend has been the rise of competition from the foodservice sector.

"We're doing more and more sliced meats for foodservice," notes Rhonda Murphy, marketing director for House of Raeford Farms, Inc., Raeford, NC. "For us the sliced meat is



© Photographer: Diana Lundin | Agency: Dreamstime.com

**The key to combating slumping sliced deli meat sales is offering quality and variety.**

going up. We're having double-digit growth with the foodservice sector." Raeford sells sliced meat that is stacked, shingled or set up with a piece of paper in between the sandwich portions. The firm produces all varieties of turkey — turkey pastrami, turkey bologna, turkey ham and oven roasted turkey. "We don't do a lot of sliced meat for delis; we do some bulk that they slice in the store," Murphy says.

The foodservice institutions have done a capable job of seeing and filling the demand for convenient sandwiches. "The overwhelming popularity of the quick sandwich restaurants is one cause of the decline," Bowen says. "The Quiznos and Subways of the world are doing an outstanding job."

But sliced meat is far from being a lost cause in the deli department. It is possible to increase volume by learning from the sandwich shops that convenience will bring customers. And there appears to be a strong niche market at the deli counter for higher-end quality products that cannot be found anywhere else.

### *Growth in Quality Meats*

Many producers have noticed a recent growth trend in higher quality deli meat offerings.

"We see more growth overall in the higher-end products," a trend that began three or four years ago, relates Ralph Caballero Jr., vice president of Gusto Packing Company, Montgomery, IL. Gusto produces a variety of ham products, including cooked deli ham and boneless smoked ham. "Our deli loaf business is really trending up for us —

it's in a high-growth mode."

"Sales of specialty meats are going up," says Claas Abraham, CEO of Lincoln Park, NJ-based Abraham of North America, which specializes in smoked and dried prosciutto products. Abraham believes there has been a steady increase in demand for specialty meats for at least the last six or seven years.

Producers who specialize in higher-end deli meats expect to see continued growth in the next few years. "I think it

been OK at the sandwich shops, but the customer wants a lot of lean pastrami or other quality meat."

The potential market for the deli department is in the higher-end sandwiches in the \$7 range at the cash register, according to McGlade. "Don't be afraid to charge a premium for the quality sandwich. There shouldn't be a fear of jumping over the \$5 barrier if the sandwich is the best. People will come back if they remember the great pastrami sandwich or the best roast beef sandwich they've ever had."

By this way of thinking, the key to competing with the convenience sandwich shops is to offer a decidedly different product. "We're seeing a lot of growth in the quality meat, and six ounces of it rather than three ounces," McGlade continues. "It is important to combine that with good breads, like homemade rye or focaccia, and with high-quality cheese. Not only is the meat premium, but also the bread is premium."

Another quality touch he suggests is adding flavor to the profile by offering hickory, teriyaki and spicy Cajun flavored meats. "We're banking on the premium meat leading the way. We've always produced the most expensive sausage and

**It is possible to increase volume by learning from the sandwich shops that convenience will bring customers. And there appears to be a strong niche market at the deli counter for higher-end quality products that cannot be found anywhere else.**

might be trending up but in a different way than you might expect — the trend is toward an upscale deli sandwich," believes Tom McGlade, executive vice president of Vienna Sausage Manufacturer, Chicago, IL. He says the trend toward higher-end deli sandwiches has taken hold over the last two to three years.

For years the sandwich shops thrived by offering a product that was quick, convenient and offered an interesting choice of breads. "But the deli meat inside the sandwich took a turn for the worse," McGlade says. "There is a push toward the big, fat deli sandwich. The bread has

the most expensive deli meat. We suffered in the 1980s and 1990s. We think the future is in the \$6, \$7 and \$8 sandwich, rather than the \$4 sandwich."

Other producers have also noticed increasing demand for their higher-end products. "The upper-end products are expanding as consumers become more aware of them," says Mike Grazier, president of Busetto Foods Inc., Fresno, CA, "but it's expanding across the board. We've seen it evolve over the last 10 years, and it's really taken off the last two or three years. But it's just the tip of the iceberg."





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## The Competition Is Us

A considerable share of the lost deli sliced meat sales is going to other departments within the store. "Where the sales are going is to the meat case," notes John McVay, vice president for operations at Vincent Giordano Corp., Philadelphia, PA. "We do 8-ounce sliced packs they sell in the meat case for people who don't want to wait."

Tom Collins, director of marketing at Willow Brook, Springfield, MO, believes sales flattened out three or four years ago and agrees the trend is partly due to the meat counter. "The meat department has done an effective job of marketing their sliced meats, and that has had an effect on sales in the deli department." He believes some stores have tried to cut back on labor in the deli department, which can impact sliced meat sales.

"The packaged sliced meats on a peg are doing well," says Derek Bowen, director of marketing for Sara Lee Food Group, Downer's Grove, IL, who believes the increase in grab-and-go products at the deli department has impacted sales of sliced commodity meats.

"The commodity product ends up competing with the sliced meat packages," according to Ralph Caballero Jr., vice president of Gusto Packing Company, head-

quartered in Montgomery, IL.

A number of deli operations within very large retailers have tried to counter other departments' convenience edge by offering computerized ordering of sliced deli meats. "You can walk up to the deli counter a tap your order into a computer," McVay explains. "You see a menu and tap the screen to choose beef. Then you see another menu and tap to choose the brand. Then you choose the thickness of the slices, and the amount of meat you want. It's convenient because you don't have to wait to place your order."

Regardless of the strategy for increasing sales, the deli continues to have a special niche with its sliced meats. "People like to see the product sliced in front of them," McVay says. "I think that's an attraction for people. It makes them feel like they're getting fresh meat for their sandwiches."

Frequently the deli is associated with special products you cannot find anywhere else. "People want to feel like they're getting a special product when they go to the deli," notes Caballero.

And even with the recent slump in sales, sliced meats have continued to be a deli moneymaker. According to Bowen, "Sliced meat in the deli section has been declining but it is still very profitable for the retailer."

**DB**

At Busetto, the growth in higher-end meat sales has been enough to provide overall growth in sliced deli meats. "It's without a doubt the fastest growing segment of our business," says Grazier. "Our growth is in sliced. We produce salami products; we also produce prosciutto, pancetta, dry copa and bresaola."

### *Know Your Deli Customer*

There is much that the retailer can do to reverse the trend in deli sliced meat

to change. Try different products in different stores."

There are some surprises behind the numbers that show an overall decline in sliced meat sales. Both sliced turkey and sliced ham sales have declined slightly, according to Bowen. But there is a gradual emergence of thin sliced chicken at the deli. "People are now thin slicing chicken. There is growth in chicken; manufacturers are catching up in chicken. Consumers like thin sliced chicken."

**There is much that the retailer can do to reverse the trend in deli sliced meat sales, and it begins with knowing the customer.**

sales, and it begins with knowing the customer.

"Embrace tools like category management," suggests Bowen from Sara Lee. "Look at your demographics and be open

Sara Lee is hoping, for its part, to offer new products to help reverse the general downward trend. "We're doing everything we can to stop the trend," Bowen says. "We're going to be coming out with new

products that are more convenient over the next six to 12 months." He declined to divulge the specifics about Sara Lee's new products but did say, "They are grounded in insights about the consumer."

Another area for potential growth is in meats that are more "natural." "More and more consumers are asking for antibiotic-free, hormone-free, natural and organic meats at the deli counter," notes Stephen McDonnell, co-founder and CEO of Applegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ. "We expect to see more and more retailers adopting natural and organic in the deli for years to come."

"At Applegate Farms, our mission is to help change the way Americans eat meat. We're working hard to help people learn how to choose better meat but to eat less of it. We've found that once a consumer 'trades up' to a natural and organic product, they rarely go back," he adds.

Applegate has been able to ride this trend toward across-the-board growth. "We continue to see strong growth in both our service deli line and our pre-sliced, packaged deli products," McDonnell notes. "There's no question that our company has benefited from increased awareness among consumers about the positive benefits of natural and organic products. In fact, sales of natural and organic meats overall have outpaced the phenomenal growth in the natural and organic grocery categories."

Under this scenario a key to sliced meat sales is providing the customer with detailed information about how the meat was produced. "The most important tool a deli manager can use is education," McDonnell explains. "Natural and organic shoppers are well informed and very selective. Before they buy meat, they want to know how it was raised and processed."

"To best serve these customers, it's crucial that the deli staff be credible and knowledgeable about the issues that are important to the natural and organic community. Of course, that presents a huge challenge for retailers, but the payoff is worth it. Once you've earned your consumers' trust, you've won. Put pressure on your vendors to lead the effort. They are the experts, and they have the answers for you," he concludes.

But if sales of specialty items are to increase, those items must be prominently displayed. "Emphasize the specialty product," Abraham's Abraham suggests. "Don't reserve too much space for everyday items like bologna."

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# Rotisserie Cooking Flies High

*New products and updated equipment have given the rotisserie cooking category new life in the deli.*

*By Lisa White*



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In the early 1990s, the rotisserie chicken category hit its stride as a quick meal solution. In 2005, U.S. retailers sold approximately 500 million rotisserie chickens — roughly two chickens for every person in the country — a 3 percent jump compared to 2004 sales.

Today, rotisserie cooking is still gaining ground. The National Chicken Council, Washington, D.C., reports an estimated 800 million rotisserie chickens are sold annually, with rotisserie sales increasing between 5 and 10 percent yearly over the last decade, double the rate of overall chicken growth. This is one hot-foods area that supermarkets have a leg up on the foodservice segment.

The simple cooking process makes this a viable and attractive option for retailers. Meats are slowly spit-roasted using either electric or flame-fired ovens. This browns the surface, while still allowing products to retain their natural juices. Meat can be mari-

nated or seasoned before cooking.

## Rotisserie Trends

The rotisserie-cooking category has been propelled by several consumer trends, including healthful eating, consumers' infatuation with takeout foods and the theater effect, which these ovens produce in a retail setting.

"Rotisserie is a huge category for supermarket delis," says Andrew Seymour, vice president of sales, Perdue Farms, Salisbury, MD. The significant trends he sees are natural ingredients and more healthful plat-forms. For example, birds may be seasoned with sea salt rather than iodized salt.

Club stores are interested in larger birds. "We're seeing a lot of interest in larger rotisserie chickens because the club channel has done an incredible job in giving consumers great value. Retailers are taking 8-piece cut-up chickens and baking them in a rotisserie basket, which gives consumers an easier-to-

eat product," Seymour notes.

Many suppliers are working on new flavors to bring fresh life to a maturing category. However, retailers also are realizing that the more flavors they offer, the more complicated the process becomes. "You can have too many different flavors, and this becomes operationally difficult. Instead, delis are honing in on a select few that help drive volume. That is not to say we don't need new flavors, but retailers need new and exciting flavors instead of the mundane," he says.

Newer flavors of rubs or marinades, such as Tuscan, teriyaki and other ethnic varieties, are often added to chicken and other meats. Tara Downing, product manager, Robbie Manufacturing, Lenexa, KS, attributes this to the increasingly transient U.S. population. "Consumers are getting more opportunities to taste these flavors and they want to experience them in home-cooked meals."

Stores can differentiate themselves by



spicing up dry rubs to create a signature flavor. "Picking the right flavor and executing it properly at the store level is really important," Seymour says, adding that Perdue's recently introduced bourbon-flavored chicken breast that features flavor injected into the meat has been well received.

"Different stores are experimenting with different formulas. Some offer different flavors every month," says Dan Emery, vice president of marketing at Pilgrim's Pride, Pittsburg, TX. He says the most popular rotisserie varieties are home style, barbecue, lemon pepper, teriyaki and ethnic blends. "It is easy to use rubs to change flavor profiles. At Pilgrim's Pride, we inject and rub our rotisserie chicken so it is preseasoned."

### Equipment Options

Manufacturers say rotisserie ovens are not just for chickens. "We're seeing a transition in menu development for rotisserie based on consumer demand for meat variety," explains Todd Griffith, national sales manager at Alto Shaam, an equipment manufacturer located in Menomonee Falls, WI.

"A lot of the time, the food processing side needs to get creative and shake things up," he says. "When they do that, we begin seeing lots of new menu items developed, like baby back ribs, pork loin, turkey breast, Cornish game hens, meat loaf and basically anything else we can put in the basket and cook."

Robbie's Downing agrees consumers want more choice. "The biggest trend we see is retailers are expanding into other meat categories, including turkey breast and pork tenderloin. However, they are still looking for a healthful meal on the go."

Consumers are not looking for rotisserie items just for dinner. Downing believes more lunchtime crowds are seeking these products. "From our findings, most consumers perceive deli food as fresher than fast food. For this reason, more people than ever before are seeking out their deli for meal. The category continues to expand as the grab-and-go lifestyle continues to grow. That's why different meat categories are popular."

The theater effect is important, so equipment manufacturers have sought to put install equipment that maximizes merchandising, while also reducing operating costs, space and energy requirements. "Alto Shaam offers a rotisserie system that will produce a full load of product in half the time of conventional rotisseries," Griffith says. A ventless hood allows equipment to be placed in front of customers to maximize the marketing impact.

This unit's two-stage cooking capability combines high velocity convection technology with radiant heat. It also features an auto holding mode to automatically hold product

after cooking at a temperature that helps extend shelf life. "Retailers benefit because we can reduce the cost of their investment from two ovens to one without impacting production ability. The unit also has a modern, sophisticated European presence to help draw consumers' attention," he adds.

Henny Penny, Eaton, OH, is another equipment manufacturer that has focused on designing rotisseries that produce high-quality product. According to Tim Kasler, director of marketing, the units are more about performance than aesthetics. "If retailers want a modern looking unit, they will go somewhere else. Our equipment is easy to use and produces quality food," he says.

One of the biggest issues with rotisserie cooking is cleaning the equipment. Kasler has

*When it comes to rotisserie cooking, visibility is key. Theater, in addition to aroma, helps draw customers in.*

heard some buzz about self-cleaning rotisseries but does not know if this feature has come to fruition. "We try to make ours as easy to clean as possible with easy access to Teflon parts that can be soaked. Everything is removable," he says.

The rotisserie combines infrared heating with a gentle, cross-flow convection heat that provides consistent cooking both inside and out. "We offer a variety of racks and spits that can accommodate different types of products. We have baskets for small roasts or fish. Our Smart Bites program features spits and wooden skewers that hang on spits for producing meat and vegetable shish kabobs. This is a simple machine that can be used in various ways," Kasler notes.

Henny Penny has added computerized controls to its rotisseries. Users can enter up to nine cook cycles for different products. This allows store operators to press a button to set the correct cooking time and temperature. "A big concern is store turnover. With this unit, retailers don't have to worry about training new employees. They can learn to operate the rotisserie in one day by just pressing buttons," he explains.

On the packaging side, Robbie has come out with the Hot & Handy Pouch, flexible, microwavable packaging featuring a resealable zipper and handle. Targeting the bur-

geoning rotisserie wings category, the Wings to Go pouch holds 2½ pounds of chicken wings. "We're seeing more interest in the larger-sized packaging. Many supermarkets are now offering two rotisserie chicken sizes, such as a 2-pound and a 3-pound or larger version. Our pouches accommodate different sizes," Downing says.

The pouches reduce cost down the line, since they are lightweight, take up less landfill and require less space to store than traditional rigid packaging. Various pouch sizes are available for both hot and cold cases.

### Visible Merchandising

When it comes to rotisserie cooking, visibility is key. Theater, in addition to aroma, is what helps draw customers in.

"A lot of retailers are putting rotisserie hot cases by the front door, so customers are tripping over them on the way in," Pilgrim's Pride's Emery says. "Prominent deli displays independent of the hot case are a good idea so customers don't have to wait in line."

Purdue's Seymour says point-of-sale material, such as counter cards and easels, are essential. "Retailers also need a consistent feature program announcing to consumers that these products are available. They need to keep them visible in weekly flyer sheets and provide store level training so associates understand the products."

Labeling also is important. Perdue provides rotisserie labels with the flavor highlighted. "We also buy industry data from Deli Scan that gives us insight into how different categories are growing. We can share this information with customers to show them how they are doing [in sales] compared with the national average. Our Definitive Deli program helps find effective ways to merchandise and promote our products. We look at trends, promotions and merchandising support to help drive volume," he adds.

Most importantly, retailers need to have enough product available during peak times, typically between 4:00 and 7:00 PM. "Our new pouch allows retailers to have rotisserie items ready in the hot case or behind the service counter for people who are in a hurry," says Robbie's Downing.

Suppliers predict rotisserie foods will continue to dominate the deli. Seymour believes a handful of retailers will learn how to optimize rotisserie chicken by utilizing leftovers in chicken salad and soup. "They can add value to those products, but it takes a huge commitment. Still, we are seeing significant growth in this. Some retailers are even cooking chickens specifically for chicken salad."

With new products, flavors and technologies, rotisserie cooking is poised for a resurgence in today's deli.

DB

*More Americans are looking to delis for ethnic food items.*

**D**elis are seeing skyrocketing sales of ethnic ingredients and prepared foods as Americans embrace cuisines from around the world. "We've got more ethnic restaurants opening up as different ethnic cultures get assimilated into our society," reasons Dominick Frocione, president of sales, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Bradford, MA, makers of hummus, salads, wraps, spreads, pita chips and desserts and importers of Greek Feta cheese. "As we get more people coming into the country, they'll bring in their foods, and Americans will continue to try them."

Mark Phelps, vice president, InnovAsian Cuisine Enterprises LLC, Kent, WA, an Asian food manufacturer offering frozen bulk entrée kits, rice and appetizers, as well as grab-and-go family-size meals and appetizer packs. "If you look at the foodservice side, there are teriyaki shops, Thai and Korean barbecue. The popularity of the P.F. Chang's of the world. There's more positive experience with the foods, and they're becoming more mainstream."

trend toward ethnic foods. "More people are learning how to use andouille sausage, for example. They see it in recipes and they see it with the chefs on TV and are creating more of a demand for it."

Americans are eating out more and bringing more food in from fast-food restaurants and delis. As a result, according to Fracione, "We're a lot more open to ethnic foods than we were 20 years ago, when we weren't eating anything our parents didn't make at home."

"The world's not so big anymore," notes Yarborough. "They've learned more about other people's cooking and have had a



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Reader Service No. 105



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**More sophisticated American palates are the reason for increased ethnic deli offerings.**

chance to try more ethnic foods, and they like them."

"American taste buds are changing. People are much more open and receptive to trying new things these days," notes Rick Schaffer, vice president of sales and marketing, Tribe Mediterranean Foods, headquartered in Los Angeles, CA, makers of hummus, tahini and tabbouleh.

As demand increases, "I see more retailers are opening their ethnic sections and offering more things," relates Frocione.

Schaffer believes that, to a large degree, the success of ethnic products comes from the "Americanizing" of many of these foods. "Hummus started out as a Middle Eastern product, but it's more of a mainstream product now. It's kind of lost its ethnicity. Manufacturers are making foods that are less edgy — they have more broad appeal."

Americanization is not the only change these foods have undergone. "Fusion" has become a hot word not only in restaurants but also in recipes. "You get a lot of fusion recipes where you put a Hispanic spin on an Italian dish," says Frocione. Now fusion has begun crossing over to the deli. Although hummus was once thought of as strictly a Middle Eastern or Mediterranean food, even that category is expanding into other ethnic cuisines. "We're working on some Asian profiles," he relates.

Other companies offer items that lean toward more authentic tastes. "We opt to go with very pronounced authentic flavors," says InnovAsian's Phelps. "They say our taste buds are becoming duller as the population is aging, so we're looking for bolder flavors to have a more positive experience."

Manda's Yarborough agrees many consumers are looking for authenticity in ethnic

foods. One of the reasons Cajun has become so popular, he claims, is "Because it's got fullness of flavor. It used to be, 'Put on the red pepper and let's call it Cajun.' What you see today — the items that have stayed on the market — are items that have a real Cajun flavor profile. It's a roundness of flavor — a marriage of different kinds of spices — that makes it Cajun."

Highly flavored foods also offer the opportunity to eat more healthfully without sacrificing flavor. "It used to be you ate something for a health reason," explains Yarborough. "It

didn't always taste good. It was bland. There's no reason to eat bland any more."

"Good-for-you foods are starting to taste good," agrees Schaffer. "As technology evolves, you can make a product that tastes pretty good and is good for you."

### Hot Bars Offer Opportunities

Grab-and-go meal solutions make up a large part of ethnic foods sales in delis. "I definitely think the delis have put more emphasis on takeout. You're seeing more variety and more upscale offerings," notes InnovAsian's Phelps.

Delis can offer something most fast-food restaurants cannot — the option to buy items from several cuisines at once. For example, if every member of the family is in the mood for something different, "You go into a supermarket and you can grab something for you, your wife, your child and a loaf of bread, all from one spot," he adds.

Retailers now have more and higher quality choices in pre-made foods than ever before. "We can provide retailers with a full portfolio to compete with stores making Chinese food from scratch," says Phelps. When they offer shoppers hot bars such as these, "A lot of retailers realize their programs have been successful. It becomes a shopper's destination."

But even when labor is reduced by using bulk prepared foods, hot bars still require some attention. Pre-packed grab-and-go items that customers can heat at home eliminate labor completely. "These items are already packaged, so there's no effort whatsoever for the retailer," says Phelps.

### The Big Players

While cuisines such as Indian, Cajun and

Caribbean are gaining ground in delis, the major cuisines continue to be Hispanic, Italian, Asian and Mediterranean.

Mexican-American food has long been popular in the United States, but other Hispanic items are making headway. "For the deli, being that the hot-food section is really growing, the sweet plantain slices have been our most popular item," says Alfredo Lardizabal, vice president, MIC Food Division, Miami, FL, manufacturers of frozen plantain products, yucca (cassava) fries, fruit pulps for Caribbean dishes and a new item called cheese fingers — frozen pastries filled with cheese or cheese and guava that can be sold hot or to be heated at home.

"Plantain slices can be so versatile. They can be served as a side with virtually any-

***"They say our taste buds are becoming duller as the population is aging, so we're looking for bolder flavors to have a more positive experience."***

***— Mark Phelps  
InnovAsian Cuisine  
Enterprises LLC***

thing. It fits any plate, from chicken to meat to fish," explains Lardizabal. And plantain slices do not require constant turnover. "After you place them under the hot lights, they can hold up several hours without losing their integrity. You're really going to get 100 percent yield out of these."

MIC also offers whole baked plantains for more health-conscious consumers. "The great thing about a whole baked plantain is you can go ahead and stuff them. They're often filled with ground beef and cheeses and served as a center plate," Lardizabal explains. They can also be served as a side dish or even as a dessert.

"We actually provide recipe or serving ideas on postcards for people to grab or to get with their purchase," adds Lardizabal. "Basically, we just make the person aware that you can use it any which way." One use



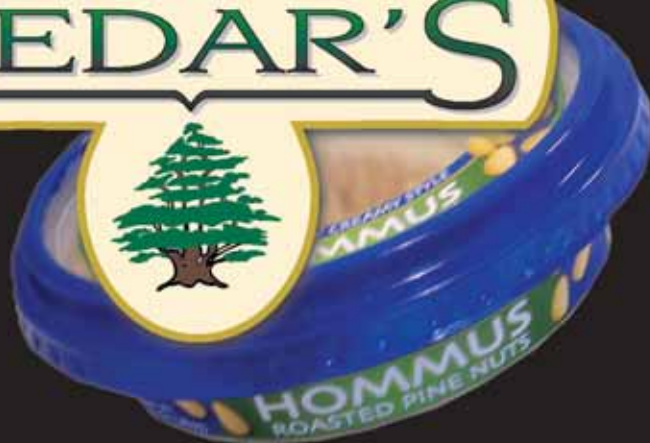
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Reader Service No. 129

## 6 Ways To Increase Sales

### 1. STOCK IT.

Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Bradford, MA, recalls a time when many retailers were afraid to put hummus on the shelves. Today, hummus is a major item in delis in much of the United States. "Once it became available in the supermarket, customers had the ability to try it. If it has that exposure in the supermarket, it will sell."

He urges retailers to continue offering customers new ethnic items and to give the items time to catch on. "You don't know if it's going to sell if it's not on the shelf. Part of the equation is that the retailers have to give the product the opportunity to sell."

For example, advises Alfredo Lardizabal, vice president, MIC Food Division, Miami, FL, makers of plantain products, "I don't think retailers should be so fearful to try selling plantain slices in the deli. Delis should really give them a chance. Once they are offered, people will definitely pick them up. They're definitely most popular in Florida and the New York/New Jersey areas — anywhere where there is a large Hispanic population. But it is growing from there. I think it was a more a matter of distribution than the product not being liked. Once it's out there, you'd be surprised to see how it moves. The key is having the product available to the customers."

### 2. CREATE A DESTINATION.

"The biggest thing retailers can do is to group ethnic foods together," says Frocione. "We try to get our retailers to put hummus in one area and pita chips very close by. If it's all together — four or five items that mix in together really well — it's going to sell. You need to make ethnic a destination. If a customer sees ethnic foods as a set, it may entice them to be a first-time buyer. Maybe it crosses category lines, but it makes a section. Don't make them hunt all over the store to find the components they want to buy to create a meal."

### 3. PLAY UP UNIQUENESS

Items such as prosciutto di Parma, Greek Feta cheese and andouille sausage have special qualities discerning customers appreciate. "One thing retailers could capitalize on is that there are products out there that are truly authentic and truly original," suggests Robert Yarborough, CEO, Manda Fine Meats, Baton Rouge, LA. "It's an opportunity to differentiate themselves from another supermarket. And people like authenticity."

### 4. ADVERTISE

#### THROUGHOUT THE STORE

Does your supermarket sell a similar item in the freezer section? "Put a little poster on the freezer door saying, 'This product is also available in the deli,' so people know they can buy them hot to take home," says Lardizabal. Many customers will want to buy both — some for now, and some for later.

### 5. CROSS-PROMOTE

"Promote more in a theme format," suggests Rick Schaffer, vice president of sales and marketing, Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Los Angeles, CA. "Have a Mediterranean food sale and advertise a lot of products in a theme format. Maybe create recipes and say, 'Buy this, this and this and save \$3 on your purchase.'"

### 6. EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS

"Not one retailer has ever asked us for a recipe," says Schaffer, who is happy to offer recipes that use Mediterranean products for publication in store fliers and on store Web sites. He believes a great way to encourage customers to buy more ethnic products is to tell them new ways to incorporate these items into their own kitchens. Stores need not develop their own recipes, he says. "The best source of information is your vendors." **DB**

he recommends is substituting a hot baked plantain for a banana in a banana split. "The different uses and different presentations run from A to Z. It's so versatile that it really opens a lot of possibilities.

"Another item that's really hot right now is yucca fries," according to MIC Food's Lardizabal. "That item is a root — much like a potato. There's a comfort level. There's nothing too exotic about it. And people who know it love it and eat it."

Normally, Lardizabal says, "Yucca fries are very labor intensive, so we've taken that labor away and delis can just heat them up. They're pre-cooked and we've already cut them into what looks like steak fries. That item is probably going to be as big as the plantain, one day."

Along with its place on hot bars, Italian food has a strong presence among the specialty meats and cheeses. "[Italian food] is exciting. Obviously, I'm biased, but after you have a slice of our capocollo, everything else tastes forgettable," claims Davide Dukce-

vich, sales representative, Daniele, Inc., Pascoag, RI, makers of Italian-style products including deli meats, Pepper Shooters (peppers stuffed with prosciutto and provolone) and prosciutto-and-mozzarella rolls.

Recently, the company introduced a line of products made from hormone-free pork and all-natural ingredients, including sea salt and turbinado sugar.

"Prosciutto is always a strong seller, as well as salame. Pancetta sales are growing thanks to celebrity chefs using it so often in their meals," reports Dukceovich, who also notes, "People seem to be gravitating toward combinations. Our prosciutto-and-mozzarella panino rolls and Pepper Shooters do well. I also think mortadella will take off as people realize that it is such a tastier alternative to baloney."

Perhaps in part because of the Mediterranean diet trend, Mediterranean foods are more popular than ever. "If you look at the Mediterranean food pyramid, it's much more healthful than what Americans are eating,"

notes Cedar's Frocione. "I do think that some people are looking to eat more healthfully. They hear the Mediterranean diet is healthful, so they're looking for Mediterranean products."

The hummus category is a large part of the Mediterranean foods trend. "The hummus is still on fire. The growth is phenomenal," says Frocione. Companies continue to roll out new flavors and styles, which so far have resulted in more new consumers each time. "We have a whole new variation of hummus coming out that is more European — it's creamier, with toppings."

The biggest growth in Asian food seems to be in branching out to new products. While stir-fried Chinese food and Japanese-style sushi continue to be hot sellers, "Thai is definitely growing," says InnovAsian's Phelps. "Noodles are popping up in all different kinds of applications. And I definitely think the appetizer area will continue to grow and expand. People like hand-held, portable food." **DB**



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Reader Service No. 166



# Healthful And Versatile Deli Salads

*As health-conscious consumers look for convenience and variety, the deli department stands out as square one.*

*By Bob Johnson*

Salad selections at the deli must offer something special, but at the same time, they must also be available without delay. "Convenience is important," notes Ron Loeb, vice president for sales, Chloe Foods Corp., Brooklyn, NY. "If you have both parents working, they want convenience."

"Customers are not looking for the full plate," he adds. "They are looking for individual items so they can choose."

One of the best ways to satisfy consumers is to offer convenience while providing options that look homemade and fresh. "People are looking for a more made-from-scratch appearance," says John McCarthy, senior retail marketing manager at Reser's Fine Foods, Inc., Beaverton, OR.

Some suppliers are finding that the answer to the dilemma of offering both convenience and a homemade touch is salad kits.

"We have a new line of premium potato salad kits," McCarthy notes. "What we're going for is a made-from-scratch appearance, a home-style appeal." In order to achieve that made-from-scratch



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# How Does \$45 Billion Sound?



That's the value of the U.S. spend for sweet snacks in 2005. Between 2000 and 2005 the market grew by 15 percent, yet growth for the next five years is forecast at just over 4 percent.\*

*"The fact consumers no longer define 'snack' with such strong reference to chocolate, sweets and crisps is one factor shaping the future of the snacking industry. Traditional impulse categories such as confectionary and savory snacks are under increasing threat from new product formats—especially those consumers consider to be more nutritious."*

Daniel Bone, consumer market analyst, Datamonitor

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## The Healthful Have It

By Lisa White

**A**lthough supermarket delis have long been known for mayonnaise-based salads and sides — think potato salad, coleslaw and macaroni salad — the increasing number of more healthful salads on the market may change this perception.

In this realm, lighter dressings like vinaigrette that reduce calorie and fat content are more prevalent, says John McCarthy, senior retail marketing manager at Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR. "With side dishes, manufacturers are being more vigilant about sodium content."

Along with less mayonnaise, there are more salads available with healthful ingredients, such as vegetables, pasta and beans. "The whole-grains trend also is big with deli salads," notes Shirley Leonard, marketing manager at Sandridge Food Corp. in Medina, OH.

Today's consumers are demanding "cleaner", more healthful options. Leonard says this includes anything from no preservatives to all-natural, vegetarian or vegan, gluten-free, low-fat, high-fiber, low-sodium, etc. Sandridge offers a new summer salad line, including chipotle potato, conqueso pasta and mojito bean, which are all vegetarian and gluten-free.

Jim Daskaleas, vice president of product development at Walker's Food Products Co., based in North Kansas City, MO, believes that today it is all about formulation. "Today's suppliers are striving to create a high-quality, wholesome product with as many natural ingredients as possible. Still, with a lot of food safety issues to contend with, we have to respect some of the preservatives because it keeps the integrity of the products intact."

Taunton, MA-based Tribe Mediterranean Foods recently reformulated its well-known brand and removed all the preservatives to create an all-natural product, according to Rick Schaffer, vice president of sales and marketing. One of the biggest challenges in doing this was maintaining an acceptable shelf life. "Because we pasteurize what we make, we were able to overcome this obstacle. As a result, our all-natural product has a 90-day shelf life," he says. "Using today's sophisticated technology, many companies are able to make healthful and nutritional products that taste good."

The growth of the hummus category is a testament to the increasing popularity of the healthful deli food category. According to research firm Information Resources (IRI), Chicago, IL, hummus sales are topping \$150 million a year.

Still, some industry insiders say supermarket delis should do a better job keeping pace with today's healthful food trends, since this has not been the case in many instances. For example, although there has been a noticeable increase in the organic segment in the grocery aisle and produce department, the deli has not seen the same surge in the prepared



PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDRIDGE FOOD CORP.

salad and side dish segments.

"Everyone is interested in organics and everyone tries it, but it is still early for many consumers to jump onto this bandwagon," explains Leslie Gordon, business development manager at Summer Fresh Salads, based in Woodbridge, ON, Canada. Although it has been slow going, this is an up-and-coming category that will see increased popularity in the future, she says, adding, "For us, we're concentrating on expanding the whole-grain category."

Robin Carr, division manager at Aunt Pearl's Food Products in Columbus, GA, agrees. "We offer traditional Southern comfort foods, so our customers aren't thinking about organic with our offerings. Still, we don't use a lot of preservatives."

Some experts are skeptical of organics and the connotation of these products. Dave Adams, a Monterey, CA-based consultant and produce sales and product developer with more than 24 years of experience in fresh food development, says healthful foods do not have to be organic. "That's a lot of baloney. No one can prove this food is safer or more nutritious than traditional products. It is almost like organics have the Atkins halo." Because organic produce utilizes more land and resources to grow fewer products, there are higher production costs, he notes.

Yet, some companies are seeing the potential in the organic category and developing new product lines with this in mind. According to Schaffer, Tribe recently introduced an organic hummus line. "Organics are a hot category. At the other end is the trend in all-natural products."

With the continued focus on America's obesity epidemic and the push for less preservatives and more healthful ingredient profiles, this category is poised for even more growth in the future.

**DB**

appearance, the kits have less dressing, a slightly larger dice on the potatoes and garnish.

The potato salad kits were rolled out at the retail level in March, but the early response has been excellent. "We've gotten positive response because more people

want that fresh appearance," Reser's McCarthy adds. The potato salad kits are available in three varieties — loaded baked potato salad, premium potato salad with egg and premium blue cheese potato salad.

New salad kits are also available from a number of producers. "We are rolling out

kit salads," says Kym Feldman, national sales manager, Hans Kissle, Haverhill, MA, which manufactures a full line of salads including, potato, pasta and specialty salads and coleslaws.

The company's recently introduced line of salad kits, which were widely available



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for the spring salad season, includes everything needed to create unique salads. "They are shipped to the deli in components rather than already put together," Feldman explains. "We got phenomenal feedback in our testing for the kit salads."

Hans Kissle is working on a new line of all-natural salads. "We hope to have these out by the summer of 2007," he says.

A line of salad component kits called Prepared for You from Wheeling, IL-based Orval Kent comes with all ingredients already chopped, sliced, measured and packaged. The wide variety of salads includes both salad staples and contemporary flavor trends.

Orval Kent produces chicken, egg, ham, macaroni, pasta, potato and seafood salads as well as vegetable salad and refrigerated fresh-cut fruit.

### Eat Well

Salads offer an opportunity to appeal to the rising consumer interest in more healthful foods.

"The trend towards more healthful salads including whole grains is part of the new healthful lifestyle that everyone is pursuing," says Leslie Gordon, business



Successful sides offer consumers healthful eating and convenience.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHLOE FOODS

development manager, Summer Fresh Salads, Woodbridge, ON, Canada. "I believe it is becoming a way of life, not just a trend." The company produces a wide line of salads that includes 7-grain, wheat berry, multi-grain, Tuscany bean and Greek vegetable.

"Summer Fresh has an extensive selection of salads made with whole grains," Gordon says. "Whole grains are definitely part of a more healthful diet. We still make mayonnaise-based salads because there is always a demand for them, but we like to offer a wide variety of products."

Pilgrim's Pride Corporation, Dallas, TX, is also working hard to satisfy the demand for more healthful deli choices. "We just started the EatWellStayHealthy line last year," says Dan Emery, vice president for marketing. This new line includes tuna, chicken and turkey club salads that all have entirely healthful ingredients.

"The whole premise behind the EatWellStayHealthy line is that all the ingredients have the American Heart Association shield," Emery says. "They also meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] standard for being labeled 'healthy,' which is tougher than the Heart Association standard." These salads are available in 2½- or 5-pound tubs.

"All of these products exceed the American Heart Association's 'heart-check mark' guidelines and the USDA's requirements for featuring the word 'healthy' on the package," says Ray Atkinson, director of corporate communications.

Walker's Food Products, North Kansas City, MO, also has a number of salads that appeal to health conscious consumers, including fat-free lemon pepper bowtie pasta and fat-free lemon pepper

linguini. The 'Always Fresh' broccoli bacon salad calls for five pounds of base and three pounds of broccoli florets. The base is made with sweetened dressing, carrots, bacon, onions, sunflower seeds and a hint of vinegar.

Walker's produces a variety of fresh vegetable salads including home style

***"The trend towards more healthful salads including whole grains is part of the new healthful lifestyle that everyone is pursuing. I believe it is becoming a way of life, not just a trend."***

***— Leslie Gordon  
Summer Fresh Salads***

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creamy coleslaw, seashell macaroni salad, carrot & raisin pineapple salad, spring pea salad, red bean salad, gourmet coleslaw and sweet and sour coleslaw.

The firm also produces a line of marinated salads including cucumber & onion salad, Italian pasta salad and rotini pasta salad. Its protein salad line includes ham, albacore tuna, crabmeat and all white meat chicken salads.

*Continue on page 88*



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## Trends In Side Dishes Reflect Salads

By Lisa White

**B**ecause salads have become somewhat synonymous with sides, it is no surprise the trends in these segments are comparable. According to the 2007 *What's In Store* report from the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, side trends include:

- Upscale, chef-prepared sides with a twist of extra flavor or an added ingredient, such as marshmallow sweet potatoes, Yukon gold mashed potatoes with cheddar, red-skin potatoes with gravy, creamed spinach, green beans amandine or broccoli au gratin.
- More healthful sides, such as roasted vegetables, wild rice, squash, turnips, green beans amandine, mashed cauliflower, etc.
- Ethnic sides, such as Szechwan green beans, orange ginger couscous and spicy Mexican bean salad.

According to Jim Daskaleas, vice president of product development, Walker's Food Products, North Kansas City, MO, in the last 10 years, the main focus had been on traditional salads and sides, like potato salad, mac and cheese and baked beans. "Now it is amazing to see the high-end lines delis are offering. There are great ingredients and high value profiles."

Still, it is important these dishes are made affordable for consumers. Walker's creates signature items for deli departments. Daskaleas notes an increase in requests for Hispanic flavors and other spicy ingredients.

Rich Schaffer, vice president of sales and marketing at Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Taunton, MA, agrees hot and spicy flavors are a big trend in all food segments. Tribe offers hummus in a hot 40 Spices flavor and recently launched a chipotle variety. "People are interested in ethnic flavors and want something different," he says. "Today's technology has allowed us to be more creative with flavors."

An increasing number of retailers is trying to better complement its protein offerings with sides, notes Doug Johnson, vice president of business development at Harry's Fresh Foods, Portland, OR. "Safeway recently introduced signature sides and Country Crock is expanding its side dish line. When it comes to selling bulk sides, retailers are doing more unique things in the case."

In addition, more retailers are trying to compete with the growing number of quick-casual restaurants, and their distinctive sides are reflecting this. "We're seeing more people trying unique things with deli side dishes by upscaling their ingredi-

ents," Johnson adds. Taking a more upscale approach to traditional mac and cheese, Harry's recently launched a Tillamook mac and cheese line.

Comfort foods are still popular in today's delis. According to Robin Carr, division manager for Columbus, GA-based Aunt Pearl's Food Products, last year the company introduced a new corn casserole that delis can bake from frozen and merchandise with dinners. "We plan to introduce different vegetable casseroles and have a number of other things in development," he says, adding that smaller sizes geared for one or two people are also popular.

Dave Adams, a Monterey, CA-based consultant and produce sales and product developer with more than 24 years of experience in fresh food development, also notes the continued popularity of comfort foods in the deli, but he believes the service deli has a way to go when it comes to hot side dish offerings. "The hot side segment is not doing as well as other segments. It is more than five years behind where it needs to be. This is because retailers don't have a dedicated space or a good selection, and they don't know how to cook food healthfully. Delis are targeting only one or two shopper demographics, without appealing to the demographic that has more disposable income."

The product offering and seasonality mindsets need to change. "I am working with a company that offers a sweet potato casserole. When we talk with retailers about it, though, they are sometimes ambivalent because they don't understand why they should offer sweet potatoes year-round. If you look at restaurants like Boston Market, they sell 7 million pounds of sweet potatoes a year in less than 600 stores. That is great insight deli retailers need to have. It doesn't matter what season it is, delis need to have good-tasting food that executes well at the store level."

Adams predicts there will be more major brands such as Kraft stepping into retail delis with well-known or unique product offerings. "I foresee more attempts at pulling brands into the deli. This may also occur with restaurant brands.

For example, Boston Market currently has an agreement with Albertsons, which sells its branded takeout items. Big manufacturers will start eyeing the deli, figure out a better way to re-thermalize and hold prepared foods and make the hot food programs successful."

Keeping a close eye on flavor and ingredient trends can go a long way to helping supermarket delis keep their side dish options up to date while at the same time a profitable component of their prepared foods program. **DB**

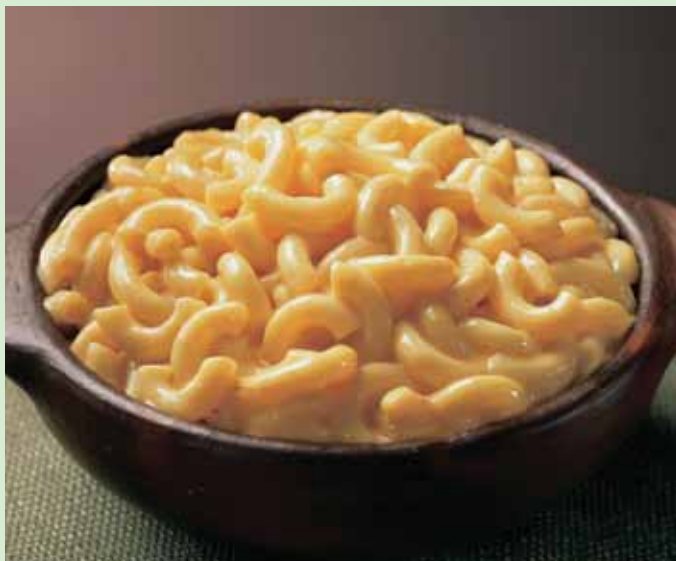


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## Keys To Merchandising

By Lisa White

**S**alads and sides are big business. According to *Fresh Facts 2006*, from the Perishables Group, W. Dundee, IL, side salads ranked second in the deli department's top five prepared food categories, with a 16.4 percent share of total prepared food sales, an increase of 17.7 percent from the year prior.

FreshView deli PLU scanner database from Fresh Look Marketing Group (FLM), Hoffman Estates, IL, reports sides make up about 3.9 percent of all deli prepared dollars. Side sales were approximately \$195 million for the 52-week period ending April 2, 2006, making it the sixth largest deli prepared category. Supermarket delis sell about 83 million pounds of sides.

Many agree that success in salads and sides is dependent mostly on how these items are merchandised and marketed. If customers are not aware of a store's selection, they will most likely pass right by.

Retailers can take advantage of a number of strategies to bring these profitable items to the forefront.

Leslie Gordon, business development manager at Summer Fresh Salads in

Woodbridge, ON, Canada, says offering an enticing selection is important. "A lot of supermarkets are still only offering the basics at the full-service counter, and I don't understand why this is. It is more profitable to offer upscale salads. Delis will get a higher percentage margin and higher dollar margin per pound. Offering a continuous variety is key."

Keeping a clean look in the deli also is important, not only from a food safety standpoint but also from a food appearance standpoint. "Deli consumers are different than the consumers who just shop the rest of the store," Gordon says. "A smaller percentage of supermarket shoppers go into the deli. These people are looking for fresh foods, and they tend to stay away from shelf-stable, packaged items."

Signage also is a key component and should be visible and eye-catching. For Walker's Food Products in North Kansas City, MO, the biggest marketing tool is signage stating its products are made from signature famous recipes, says Jim Daskaleas, vice president of product development. "Without signage, delis are committing salads to the

me-too category. These are comfort foods, so focusing on the fact that these are our recipes is most important."

Daskaleas agrees with Gordon that consumers expect high-quality products in the deli. He recommends retailers focus on café style menus that list a variety of products for impulse buys. "What has happened is salad companies have tried to become the McDonald's of the industry [offering the same product lines to all retailers]. Instead, grocery stores need to team up with independent salad manufacturers that make specific signature recipes geared for their demographic."

The success of bundling items and cross-merchandising has always been positive for the deli. "We are seeing more multiple purchase deals, such as two for \$6, along with cross-merchandising with other deli items," says Doug Johnson, vice president of business development at Harry's Fresh Foods, based in Portland, OR. "Today's consumers are looking for upscale items and trying different products, like ethnic dishes."

Many stores, both large and small, have turned the deli into a successful

*Continued on page 90*

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Isabelle's Kitchen, Inc. of Harleysville, PA, uses little or no preservatives and no sulfites or MSG. The company also operates Salad Bar Tenders, a full service food-service distributor. Salad Bar Tenders offers a complete menu of items including fresh precut fruits and vegetables.

### Make Mine Versatile

Deli suppliers are trying to help satisfy numerous consumer desires — and reduce shrink — by offering versatile salad products.

"We supply multiple application products," says Jimmy Daskaleas, Walker's vice president for product development. "You need to rotate inventory because you don't want to stay too long with something."

One of these multiple application products from Walker's begins as a cold baked potato salad with onions, chives, sour cream and cheese. This salad becomes an entirely different item if it is heated. "As soon as you heat it up, it changes the flavor profile," Daskaleas says. "The cheese

melts and the other flavors are also brought out in a different way."

This potato-based item changes yet

***Deli suppliers are trying to help satisfy numerous consumer desires — and reduce shrink — by offering versatile salad products.***

again when milk is added to create a potato salad. Daskaleas came up with this multiple application approach after learning over the course of a lifetime in foodservice

that you must find creative ways to use your inventory and minimize shrink.

"Now we are seeing a real blend of dishes," says Wendy DiMatteo, ASK Foods Inc., Palmyra, PA. "We are seeing more of the side dishes and entrée salads." ASK has a line of fresh preservative-free salads including Pennsylvania Dutch potato, home-style redskin potato, cream slaw, original macaroni and three bean salad.

ASK recently introduced an asparagus dish that can be either a salad or a vegetable side. "This spring we introduced an asparagus spear vinaigrette with pepper ribbons," DiMatteo says. This new product can be served hot or cold.

ASK also has a line of protein salads including white meat chicken salad, chunky tuna salad and egg salad. The firm has a wide variety of pasta salads such as garden rigati, cholesterol free vegetable pasta and Italian cheese tortellini.

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## Keys To Merchandising (Cont.)

*Continued from page 88*

lunch spot. This has happened despite the many fast-food and quick-casual dining spots competing for the same customers.

Robin Carr, division manager at Aunt Pearl's Food Products, based in Columbus, GA, describes a small chain with a booming lunch business, despite a nearby Red Lobster, upscale restaurant and bevy of fast-food chains. "People go there to buy lunch, choosing meat and two or three sides. That store is selling a lot of meals. Many of these places have tables customers can eat at, too."

Today's delis are not what they were a decade ago. "Delis have expanded on what they do, and this applies to all stores, no matter what the size. You don't have to be a large chain like Publix or Kroger to have a sophisticated deli," Carr says.

Shirley Leonard, marketing manager at Sandridge Food Corp. in Medina, OH, believes delis can make their programs unique through unique bundling and merchandising. "By displaying deli salads with soups and sandwiches, they create an impulse purchase. By bundling them together at a special price, they become more of a destination place for lunches and can be more competitive

with restaurants. But they have to merchandise them together and give consumers this meal solution without them having to plan it out."

Sampling, too, has increased in the deli to help introduce customers to new or unique items. Carr says these programs have increased in the last five years. "Some delis have a permanent setup, with sampling programs going on several days a week. This is typically best accomplished during the lunch or dinner hours."

Displays also have become more sophisticated and expansive. Dave Adams, a Monterey, CA-based consultant and produce sales and product developer with more than 24 years of experience in fresh food development, is seeing more multi-deck store displays. "These are 4½-foot-high rectangular shaped displays that customers can easily walk around. They are very inviting."

Today's delis are doing a better job of keeping shelves well-stocked and assembling products so they are appealing to customers, he adds. "Delis will have soups, sandwiches and salads displayed together so consumers can buy multiple products and get out of the store more quickly."

Adams notes Wegman's has done an impressive job with its displays. H.E.B. and Safeway have made it more convenient for customers by placing an additional cash register by the prepared foods area so customers coming in for meals do not need to stand in long checkout lines at the front of the store.

"Safeway, in particular, has done a great job with bundling. Its 75 to 80 Lifestyle store concepts bunch prepared foods appealingly. And this section is located in the front and to the side of the store, so it is more convenient and visible for customers," he notes.

In terms of merchandising, it is important to attract preteens and teens to the deli because they will be the primary deli department shoppers in five years. "Delis are not taking enough time to strategize and get them in there. Some stores do a good job with strong sampling programs, but most don't," Adams says.

Successful merchandising equals increased sales and profits in the deli. Employing a variety of methods, including sampling, signage and enticing displays, will help draw customers to the department and increase register rings as a result. **DB**

unique identity. And salads are a good place for the deli department to strut its unique stuff.

"The big niche is being able to help people develop their own recipes," says Daskaleas. "We provide upscale professional recipe development."

The goal at Walker's is to help retail deli clients develop unique, upscale, signature salad products. "Take sun-dried tomatoes, balsamic vinegar and other upscale ingredients, and you can build a salad that becomes your signature item," Daskaleas explains. "The general trend is getting away from 'me too.' You need to make a statement that you're different from the guy down the street."

Reser's has also introduced a new line of spring salads that are upscale bulk salads with vibrant color, flavor and flair, according to McCarthy. One of Reser's new spring salads is Thai ginger noodles with shrimp, green onions, carrots and peas, which all add to the flavor and color profile. McCarthy believes there are opportunities for ethnic salads from specif-

ic areas. People are looking, for example, not just Asian food but specifically Thai food.

***"The general trend is getting away from 'me too.' You need to make a statement that you're different from the guy down the street."***

***— Jimmy Daskaleas  
Walker's Food Products***

Among the new spring salads from Reser's are California roll salad, which

includes sushi rice, edamame, pepper and imitation crab; rigatoni puttanesca, a traditional Italian salad with green and black olives and capers; Cajun-style white meat chicken pasta salad with tomatoes and Caesar dressing; and a New York deli potato salad, a traditional white potato salad, but with carrots and onions to fill out the flavor and color profile.

"People are looking for more upscale salads, and they're also looking for stronger flavor," McCarthy says.

Hans Kissle is helping deli departments develop a unique salad appeal, either through salad kits or by collaborating with the deli to create original products. "We're putting a vast variety of salad kits out there and we hope they will be well received by our customers," Feldman says.

The variety will include familiar favorites like Caesar and Waldorf salads, but it will also include some unique options. Hans Kissle is also ready and willing to work with retail clients to create salad products specifically tailored to suit particular tastes and needs. **DB**



# Snack Time In The Deli

*Offering add-ons to traditional deli purchases provides an opportunity for higher register rings.*

*By Liz Campbell*



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Americans love to snack. A March 2006 report on salty snacks by Mintel International Group Ltd., Chicago, IL, found that American consumers eat four or more snacks a day and consume more than 6.5 billion pounds of snack food annually. Salty snacks account for slightly over half of total snack sales.

Most weight-loss programs recommend eating several small meals each day rather than three large ones. Add to that the fact that nearly 65 percent of Americans are overweight (of these about 30 percent are obese), and it's not surprising that snacks perceived as healthful and/or low calorie are immediate winners with the public.

A report on *Snack Food Trends* in the United States by Rockville, MD-based Packaged Facts (June, 2006) makes it clear that while more healthful fare is certainly not the

only trend in packaged snack foods, it is by far the most important and widespread, driven in large part by a heavy national focus on children's health.

The same report points out that Americans are busier than ever. Consequently, grab-and-go options that also offer perceived health benefits are going to capture consumer hearts — and wallets.

According to the report, "Whereas some marketers are well positioned to ride the health wave, others have been rushing to come up with nutritionally enhanced products, while also scrambling to show how even not-so-healthy [sic] snacks can still fit into a healthy [sic] diet. Health-related trends that continue to gain momentum include portion control, high fiber/whole grains, cutting unhealthy [sic] ingredients (trans fats, processed sugar, fat, etc.), and

natural/organic, even as product portability and convenience remain a top priority across all categories as more Americans graze more frequently on-the-go."

Jim McCarthy president of the Snack Food Association, an international trade association headquartered in Arlington, VA, agrees convenience and nutrition are key factors in the success of a snack product. "What we've seen is an increase in people eating a fourth meal each day. They're looking for some kind of snack to fill that spot and they want 'open-and-eat' convenience," he says. "But they're looking at the package and reading the nutrition label. They respond to key words like organic, natural and whole grain. We even have member companies making tortilla chips and pretzels with whole grains."

In the grab-and-go category, gourmet

blends of traditional products have become increasingly popular.

For example, Sahale Snacks, Seattle, WA, offers a range of nut, dried fruit and spice blends in ready-to-eat packages. "Our customers are savvy and concerned about what they put into their bodies," says Heather Hughes, marketing and public relations manager. "And today, people are traveling more and tasting different foods. They like unique flavors and ours is a healthful snack that tastes like a gourmet meal."

Sahale's products are truly multinational — pemitas and pistachios flavored with figs and honey and a dash of Moroccan harissa (a peppery spice); lemon grass, soy-glazed cashews, peanuts, sesame seeds and pineapple dusted with Chinese chili for a Thai-style combo; black-peppered pecans and cranberries offer a taste of the American Southwest. And there are more. For customers in

***The deli is the best place for premium snack products because consumers in the deli are a different demographic than those in the snack aisle.***

the deli department, these offer a quick, guilt-free, munch-as-you-go option.

#### Market Drivers

While parents may do the shopping, kids are a significant component in the snack market. The *Snack Food Trends* survey states: "Because kids snack even more than adults do, it is critical that snack makers maintain a hold on this young demographic, and attracting consumers of all ages to more healthy [sic] snacks without severely cannibalizing sales of more traditional, not-so-healthy [sic] ones will be the fine line that marketers will have to walk in the coming years."

McCarthy believes young people are driving the enthusiasm for healthful snacks. "I've been in this industry for 16 years and I can tell you we were making low-fat, better-for-you snacks for years and they didn't move off the shelves. In the last couple of years we have seen significant interest from some groups of consumers, especially



**Spiced nuts are a healthful grab-and-go snack item that does well in the deli.**

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younger ones, who want something more in their snacks — like added nutritional value."

Organic is another hot button for shoppers. Indeed, he adds, nearly all the members of the Association are either investigating or already producing organic products for the snack market.

The Packaged Facts' report agrees: "In terms of health, interest in salty snack products that are organic or all natural, low-calorie, low-fat, low-carbohydrate, low-sodium or offer health-promoting benefits such as soy or the elimination of trans fat are in greater demand by consumers."

A further significant finding is that consumers may be enthusiastic about healthful food — but not at the expense of taste. The Mintel report states: "Although consumers are interested in healthier [sic] snack products, they are not willing to sacrifice flavor. Intense and full-flavor snacks remain an important trend in the salty snack market."

Basil Maglaris, senior manager, corporate affairs, Kraft Foods Inc. in Northfield, IL, explains that Kraft's research shows bland is out, while bold is in. "Consumers' tastes and preferences are expanding. They're becoming more adventurous and are looking for more distinctive and flavorful foods."

The deli is uniquely poised to capitalize on all these trends. Snacks tend to be an impulse purchase and for this reason, many shoppers avoid the snack aisle. But as a regular stop for most customers, the deli can market interesting, highly flavored and even healthful snacks to shoppers.

"We see premium snacking products delivering the best results for the deli," says Michael Holton, director of marketing for Hickory Farms, Inc. Grocery Products Division, in Maumee, OH. "These products are higher quality and meet consumer's already high expectations of the deli."

The deli is the best place for premium snack products because consumers in the deli are a different demographic than those in the snack aisle, says Warren Wilson, president of Snack Factory Inc., based in Princeton, NJ. "They tend to be a little more upscale and discerning."

#### Snack Options

What sorts of products should cross the supermarket from the grocery snack aisle to the deli?

"Consumers want flavorful premium snacks that give them an easy form of indulgence and that they are proud to share with friends and family," says Holton. "We know that today's busy shopper is looking to substitute traditional meal occasions with low-prep snacking options and looking for more substantive snacks than chips and candy." Products such as Hickory Farms pre-sliced meats and beef jerky offer a snack option for those still shunning carbs. These deliver even more convenience to already low-prep product offerings, notes Holton.

The deli is also the ideal spot for a range of high-carb but great flavored products with serious snack potential. These include the new, more healthful alternatives to potato chips — products like pita chips. In fact, the Mediterranean food category is still one of the hottest because it is perceived as healthful and natural.

Pita chips have all the crisp advantages of potato chips with less fat and calories because in general, they are baked rather than fried. George Kashou, vice president and owner of Kangaroo Brands Inc. in Milwaukee, WI, is passionate about this product and explains that properly-made pita chips should start with freshly-baked pita sheets that are cut into the right size and toasted — not baked — while they are still



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**Vegetable chips are perceived as more healthful than potato chips.**

warm. They are then gently tumbled in a variety of seasonings including garlic, cinnamon sugar, sea salt and herbs.

"Pita chips are ideal in the deli because they match so well with so many other deli products and lend themselves to cross-promotions," Kashou says. "They work with dips like hummus; they can be put on cheese platters — they're better than crackers. And they're great with cheese fondue."

Gus Shamoun, vice president of Krackle Bread Inc. in West Palm Beach, FL, has seen huge growth in the popularity of the company's baked flatbread, at least in part because it is low in fat and made naturally without preservatives. "Everyone is very health-conscious today," he says. "Our bread is toasted and the [Feta] cheese is baked onto the top of it." Shamoun sees the variously flavored Krackle Breads as a quick snack or a way to make soup or salad a heartier meal — a way to distinguish the deli's soup or salad offerings.

If proof of the popularity of these products is required, one needs only a look at Kraft. Athenos Pita Chips, its entry into this arena, are marketed through the Churny Company, Inc., Northbrook, IL, a division of Kraft Foods, which delivers specialty cheeses and Mediterranean foods to the deli and specialty cheese sections of retailers across the United States. "With 50 percent less fat than the leading potato chips, no trans fat, saturated fat or cholesterol, they meet Kraft's Sensible Solution criteria for 'better-for-you' products," says Maglaris. "At a macro level, the snacking category represents \$90 billion in sales and is a strategic growth area for Kraft Foods and Churny Company."

Taking a fresh product and turning it into a flavored snack is not new to Snack Factory's Wilson. The pioneer of bagel chips in the 1980s has turned his attention to that most American of snacks — the pretzel. "We

took the soft part out of the pretzel and left the good part — the outside," he describes. "In less than three years, the product has taken off and is going gangbusters. We've just added honey mustard and buffalo wing to our original, garlic or everything [with seeds] flavors."

The success of the product, he says, is that the consumer cannot tell they contain no fat because they really deliver on taste. And they come in convenient pouches for hungry customers who want to snack while they shop. Wilson adds a further incentive to delis, offering a free 13th package in every box for sampling. "People just have to taste these and they fly off the shelves."

A new category is emerging in the deli snack market. Remember how Mom always told you to eat your veggies? Now you can snack on them. Frito-Lay, based in Plano, TX, recently added a line of better-for-you chips made with half a serving of real fruits and veggies per ounce. Its new Flat Earth brand is just one of 45 veggie snack rollouts last year according to product tracker Mintel.

Boulder, Co-based Terra Chips, maker of veggie chips since 1990, has added Sweets & Beets, made from sweet potatoes and beets to its lineup.

Chips of all kinds pair well with the various dips one finds in the deli. As Americans find alternatives to traditional meal formats, healthful dips like hummus, artichoke and cheese-based dips are becoming a new way to enjoy chips and even fresh vegetables. Although they work very well with pita chips and other carb-based snacks, many delis are pairing cut-up vegetables or mini carrots with these dips for a take-home or take-back-to-the-office snack with healthful overtones.

A good example is J.L. Kraft Specialty Gourmet Spreadable Cheese, which was introduced nationally in September 2006. A

blend of robust natural cheese chunks (Parmesan, Asiago, Pepper jack, Feta or Cheddar) with cream cheese, vegetables (roasted red peppers, spinach or jalapeño) and herbs, it offers several flavor combinations that spread easily on crisp breads or veggies.

***"One reason the deli offers such a great opportunity for premium snacks is that it's where all the various categories mix."***

***— Michael Holton  
Hickory Farms, Inc.***

Finally, there is one snack that is almost universally loved and now it can be a guilt-free indulgence. It turns out Montezuma knew what he was doing drinking all that chocolate. Chocolate contains both antioxidants and phenolic compounds that are good for you — they help reduce bad cholesterol and lower blood pressure.

Chocolate from Green & Black, London, England combines good taste with the new hot button — organic. "Organic food is now about 3 percent of the grocery category and about 9 percent of the dairy category. But it's 12 percent of the chocolate category," says president Craig Sams. "People who buy nothing else organic buy organic chocolate." The U.K.-based company, whose products are found in higher-end groceries across America, is betting on the impulse purchase chocolate affords by rolling out a mini-version (1.3 oz) of its traditional bar.

Most of these snacks cross boundaries. Many are vegetarian, low calorie, heart-healthy, low fat, even organic. They fit most discerning lifestyles. "One reason the deli offers such a great opportunity for premium snacks is that it's where all the various categories mix," says Hickory Farms' Holton. "It provides an ideal spot for cross-presentation and an incentive to market two products together."

Using nationally recognized brands to bring customers into the deli allows for such multiple sales and selling two products rings up bigger profits for the deli. But savvy deli operators have already figured that out. **DB**



# Americans Love Goat Cheese

By Liz Campbell

**“W**hen I first came to America, I was surprised at how many big blocks of hard cheese there were in the supermarkets and delis,” says Adeline Folley, operations manager and cheesemaker at Vermont Butter and Cheese Co., Websterville, VT. “Today, there is so much more diversity — in texture, in aged vs. fresh cheese and in different milks. There’s so much more to cheese than cow’s milk.”

Folley should know because Vermont Butter and Cheese makes its products from goat’s milk. Goat cheese, or chèvre, is no longer the strictly gourmet food it once was. Indeed, its smooth texture, slightly acid/hazelnutty flavor and healthful profile have driven the popularity — and the sales — of goat cheese to new highs. The soft, spreadable fresh version of goat cheese has the advantage of being very versatile, so chefs and home cooks alike have quickly developed a host of uses for it — everything from using it in salads to stuffing it in chicken to making it a pizza topping. As a result, goat cheese has become mainstream.

Just 20 years ago, chèvre was virtually unknown outside French-influenced restaurants. Most goat cheeses available were imported from Europe. It took a few gutsy American cheesemakers to change all that.

During the early ’80s, cheesemakers like Vermont Butter and Cheese in the East, The Mozzarella Company in Dallas, TX,

No longer the realm of the well-to-do, goat cheese has become nearly ubiquitous.

and Cyprus Grove in Arcata, CA, began producing goat cheeses. They had to prove themselves to a market that had not yet discovered chèvres. But Americans were beginning to travel more, visiting other countries and trying new foods. The gourmet lexicon was expanding and along with it, the concept of artisan cheeses.

Because there was not much of a market for goat cheese in the 1980s, Allison Hooper of Vermont Butter and Cheese, took her chèvre to chefs in French restaurants in New York City, most of whom were importing goat cheese from their native country. She wanted to show them what an American cheesemaker could produce. And they were impressed enough to start buying it.

Since the late 1960s, Mary Keehn had been raising goats in Humboldt County, CA, because she wanted her children to enjoy farm-fresh goat’s milk. Carefully building up her herd, she began showing her goats and winning competitions. Inevitably, she started making cheese — fresh chèvre and blue goat cheese in the early days — and took them to a local natural food market to sell. Californians loved her Cypress Grove cheeses and through the years, her repertoire of cheeses expanded.

Paula Lambert had fallen in love with fresh mozzarella while studying in Perugia, Italy. When she came back to her home in Dallas in 1982, she took the plunge and founded The Mozzarella Company. It was not long before she was making her famous mozzarella as well as a host of specialty cheeses including award-winning goat’s milk cheeses.

While early U.S. cheesemakers like these and many others across North America were finding small niche markets, it was not until the early 1990s that goat cheese started to hit the headlines. Artisan products were beginning to be valued and goat cheese was in the vanguard.

“I think goat cheese has spearheaded the whole evolution of specialty cheese,” says John Eggena, head of export marketing for Fromagerie Tournevent, a specialty goat cheesemaker in Chesterville, QC, Canada. “When goat cheese came along, it brought a whole new dimension. I think it opened up people’s palates and took artisan food to the next level.

“I think it started with the granola crowd, but because it’s healthful, it spread,” he adds with wry humor. “You just have to see who is entering the market now. Since 2002, the big players in the cheese world are coming into the goat cheese business. That should tell you something about how popular these are now.”

Eggena is right. Large companies such as Kraft, headquartered in Northfield, IL, and Damafro, Inc. Saint-Damase, QC, Canada, are buying small goat cheese operations in order to capitalize on what they see as a continuing and very profitable trend. Thirty years ago, only 20 to 30 farms, most of them small, were producing less than 5 mil-



In the '90s, goat cheeses starting attracting attention — and a wider audience.

lion pounds of goat's milk a year. Today, goat's milk production has topped 60 million pounds and cheesemakers are desperately seeking more. Some have had to resort to importing curd from Europe — mainly Holland and France — in order to meet the demand for these cheeses. Cheesemakers such as Cyprus Grove and Vermont Butter and Cheese actually have programs in place to help their farmer suppliers to build up their dairy goat herds; some goat dairy farmers have formed co-operatives in order to mar-

ket their milk more effectively.

There is good reason for this enthusiasm for goat cheese. Goat's milk is rich in protein (higher than cow's milk) and contains potassium, vitamin A, thiamin and niacin. Goat cheese is significantly lower in calories, fat and cholesterol than traditional Cheddar or cream cheese. Some people also find it easier to digest than cheese made from cow's milk because the fat particles in goat's milk are smaller and easier for the body to break down. Although cow's milk and goat's milk

have similar overall fat contents, the higher proportion of medium-chain fatty acids such as caproic, caprylic and capric acid in goat's milk contributes to the characteristic tart flavor of goat milk cheese.

### Creativity Abounds

As the popularity of chèvre has grown,

**"WHEN GOAT CHEESE CAME ALONG, IT BROUGHT A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION. I THINK IT OPENED UP PEOPLE'S PALATES AND TOOK ARTISAN FOOD TO THE NEXT LEVEL."**

— John Eggena  
Fromagerie Tournevent

creative cheesemakers have begun experimenting to see what could be done with them. As a result, American goat cheeses have evolved through the last 20 years. What began as primarily fresh, un-aged cheeses — those familiar soft, white logs of tart, creamy cheese — have advanced to encompass a variety of flavored and aged cheeses.

The first step was adding flavors to fresh chèvre. Today, fresh goat cheese, both from North America and abroad, might be flavored with herbs, pepper, dill, garlic, sun-dried tomatoes, roasted peppers or olives, as well as with some rather esoteric ingredients. For example, Cyprus Grove Purple Haze offers the bouquet of delicate lavender and wild-harvested fennel pollen. Montchèvre-Betin Inc., Rolling Hills Estates, CA, recently added South African Peppadew, a piquant little red pepper with just a slight bite, to its line-up of flavorings.

Imported chèvres also come in a variety of interesting flavors. Président Cheese, imported from France by New York, NY-based Lactalis USA, features herb-coated chèvre logs.

Atalanta Corp. Inc., based in Elizabeth, NJ, markets 1,300 cheeses — most imported — of which 15 to 20 percent are goat

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cheeses. Its list includes a unique duo of fresh chèvres from the Périgord region of France with either fig or chestnut purée in the center.

Marcel Campion, sales manager, has seen a huge surge in their popularity. "The interest in chèvre has definitely escalated in the last three years. People used to perceive goat cheese as a strong-tasting cheese so they stayed away from it, but in reality, it's not. It's very palatable and people are discovering that." Sales have tripled in the last few years as more people are exposed to unusual cheeses through travel and dining out, according to Campion.

"I think what's driving the growth is the new romance with food as a part of life," says Michel Domingues, director of sales and marketing for Woolwich Dairy, a goat cheese producer headquartered in Orangeville, ON, Canada. "It's the influence of Europe, and premium delis are trying to communicate that. People are starting to take the time and to appreciate a small piece of beautiful cheese."

Canadian goat's milk cheeses such as those from Woolwich and Tournevent have won numerous awards. Their flavors can be savory, such as Woolwich herb-coated crottin or Tournevent's chèvre logs flavored with tomatoes and thyme, herbs or sweet pepper and spice. Or they may be sweet, flavored with rum and raisin or blueberries.

Dessert chèvre is a whole new category. Capra blended with honey, from Belgium, is one of Atalanta's top sellers, says marketing specialist Elizabeth Bland. "It's one of my personal favorites. I do a lot of trade shows and the flavored cheeses, especially the sweet ones, are doing really well."

Montchèvre's cranberry cinnamon log has proved a hugely popular combination during the holidays.

Capriole Farmstead Goat Cheeses, Greenville, IN, takes the concept to a whole new level by blending chèvre with melted Callebaut chocolate, toasted pecans and raisins soaked in Woodford Reserve Bourbon and adding liberal doses of bourbon to the mix.

Goat cheese blends well with a host of flavors and its versatility permits the easy creation of unique offerings in the deli counter. "I see a lot of people taking plain goat cheese and adding their own flavorings," explains Arnaud Solandt, president of Montchèvre-Betin. "Fruits, tapenade, roast vegetables, pesto and pine nuts — chèvre goes very well with a broad range of ingredients. There's lots of interest for delis to create new flavors to serve to their customers."

Many delis are creating signature sandwiches, panini and wraps using goat cheese

in combination with other ingredients. It melts quickly and should not be cooked, so it makes a chic topping for heat-and-serve pizza or atop a deli baked potato. A bagel becomes a gourmet treat topped with goat cheese and a little pesto, tapenade or even smoked salmon. Central Market, a division of H.E. Butt Grocery Co., based in San Antonio, TX, even offers a goat cheese quesadilla.

### Aged Goat Cheeses

While fresh chèvre sales have taken off,

the new growth appears to be in the category of aged goat cheeses. Cheesemakers are washing the surface of the cheeses as they age with molds like *penicillium* or *geotricum*, which results in a beautiful rind on the outside while the cheese retains its creamy heart. "In the last few years, it's been pretty dramatic," says Cypress Grove's Keehn. "We've seen huge growth in our aged cheese side of the business."

Solandt agrees, "One of our greatest increases in the last two or three years is our



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goat Brie. And goat blue cheese, which has been around since 1989, has suddenly taken off in the last two years." Montchèvre has combined these two flavors — Brie and chèvre — in a cheese called Cabrie.

Goat's milk Gouda from Holland has become almost commonplace at the deli counter and its rich, tangy flavor makes it an attractive alternative to traditional Cheddar, especially for those with lactose intolerance. One can even enjoy Cheddar-style cheeses made from goat's milk. Tournavent's Canadi-

an goat's milk Cheddar, Chevre Noir, is wrapped in black wax and offers a clean, mild, earthy nose and a soft goat flavor.

Aged Special Reserve Cheddar from a new kid on the block, Meyenberg Goat Milk Products, based in Turlock, CA, has been catching the attention of consumers. "We've been around since 1934 but starting making cheese three years ago," explains Ken Strunk, COO of Jackson Mitchell, manufacturers of Meyenberg products. "We wanted to distinguish ourselves from the typical soft chèvre

## Goat Cheese FAQs

Goat's milk and the cheese made from it are unique in significant ways.

- \* On a worldwide basis, there are more people who drink goat's milk than from any other single animal.
- \* Goat's milk has the same amount of protein and vitamins C and D as cow's milk but goat's milk has more vitamins A and B and riboflavin. It is also higher in calcium, potassium, magnesium, thiamin, niacin, iron and phosphorus.
- \* Goats convert all carotene into vitamin A, creating a whiter milk and thus a creamy white cheese.
- \* Many people who are lactose intolerant or have other milk-related allergies can eat cheeses made from goat milk.
- \* Goat cheese is best served at room temperature
- \* The longer goat cheese ages, the stronger the flavor profile it will develop
- \* Slimy or cracked rinds typically signify a cheese that is past its peak
- \* Fresh goat cheese should look moist. If it is air-bloated, moldy or leaking whey, it should be rejected.
- \* All goat cheeses are heat sensitive and can become grainy and separate when overheated; they should be heated just to melting point. **DB**



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so we started making Jack and Cheddar. The response has been excellent."

As with the fresh chèvres, cheesemakers are flavoring aged goat cheeses. Meyenberg's Jack cheese in a variety of flavors: jalapeño, garlic and chives and a new, rather unique portobello mushroom. The smoked version of its goat Jack cheese won first place at the American Cheese Society (ACS), Louisville, KY, competition last year. Marigold and mint is one flavor combination for caciotta from the Mozzarella Company; others include ancho chile and Texas basil.

There are even some unusual additions made to goat cheeses. For example, a Dutch company, Dorothea, adds potatoes that are aged right into the cheese. One supposes





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**Versatile goat cheese has a propensity to work well with many flavors.**

that this effectively eliminates the need for the chip and dip. Atalanta imports this unique cheese, which was created for a competition in Holland. Dorothea also makes one delicately scented with marigold flowers.

Another common treatment for aged

goat cheese is the addition of a layer of ash — usually vegetable ash — that adds to both the presentation and the taste. An Israeli goat cheese is coated in the style of Ste. Maure, a famous Loire Valley cheese, with an attractive grey-black ash that rests

upon a very thin layer of white mold.

Woolwich coats its Trefratello log and Castille disc shaped chèvres with ash. Inside its creamy heart, Trefratello has a layer of ash.

Vermont Butter and Cheese's Bonne Bouche (literally "good mouthful") is an ash-coated, aged goat's milk cheese that won instant acclaim and first place for aged goat cheese at the ACS competition.

Another much-acclaimed American cheese to enjoy the ash treatment is Cyprus Grove's Humboldt Fog, whose top and bottom are covered in ash while a thin layer of ash slices through the chalky interior of the wheel. One customer loved this cheese so much she named her son Humboldt Fog!

Wrapping goat's cheeses allows for unique flavor profiles. The Mozzarella Company wraps its cheese with large aromatic hoja santa leaves that provide a hint of mint and saffras.

Capriole produces a French-style Banon, a goat cheese traditionally made in Haute Provence that is wrapped in chestnut leaves soaked in eau de vie. Capriole's O'Banon (named for an ex-governor of Indiana) uses chestnut leaves and Woodford Reserve Bourbon.

A number of goat cheeses are versions of



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traditional cheeses. For example, Feta, customarily made with sheep's milk, is also available made with goat's milk and according to Montchèvre's Solandt, its slightly drier texture and lower fat allows it to crumble beautifully on a Greek salad.

Woolwich Dairy's Feta is one of its top selling cheeses, according to Domingues, who is convinced the market for goat cheese is huge. The company is betting on it by building a facility in Wisconsin. "We're nowhere near saturating the market. Fresh chèvre has become a staple already," he notes. "We believe the next phase in goat cheese will be complicated, bold flavors."

The sale of chèvres comes down to education, he asserts, and here, too, Woolwich is willing to put its money where its cheese is. It has sent its corporate chef into stores such as Wegmans to do demonstrations and cooking classes. "These really have an impact," Domingues adds. "It gets people excited about food and drives sales of more than just cheese in the deli."

While artisanal cheeses — and most goat cheeses are made in small artisan dairies — tend to be more expensive, customers are beginning to recognize their value. According to Domingues, people are looking to buy a small piece of really good cheese rather



Goat cheese sales are predicted to continue growing.

than a much larger hunk of mediocre commodity cheese for the same price.

Tournavent's Eggena is adamant. "We have to stop asking silly questions like, 'Why is artisanal cheese so expensive?' These cheeses are made in small batches, by hand. The cheesemakers and farmers are taking care of the land and the animals. These are not made at the expense of the environment. The question that should be posed is, 'Why is that cheese so cheap?'"

Savvy deli operators are recognizing the need to connect with their food that drives so many consumers these days. They are stocking interesting options such as unique goat cheeses in the deli, which brings us back to where we began — with Folley of Vermont Butter and Cheese. "It's wonderful these days in the deli," says the French born cheesemaker who trained in her native country. "There are so many fabulous cheeses. It feels like I'm in Europe." **DB**

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BOOTH # 1779



# The Great British Revival

By Karen Silverston

**A** continuing theme paralleling commercial cheese has been the renaissance of British cheese for its own sake, both within the borders and for export,” says John Greeley, president of Sheila Marie Imports, Ltd., North Reading, MA. “We’re seeing people developing their own curing caves and localization of recipes. We’re also seeing brie and goat cheese.”

## Great Farmhouse Cheddars

Each farmhouse Cheddar has its own distinct texture, complex flavors and lingering aftertaste. A few streaks of blue are common.

“A real success story has come about through Randolph Hodgson’s [of Neal’s Yard Dairy, London, England] unflagging devotion to the originality of British cheeses. He has persisted in bringing together both small and large cheesemakers to keep the option of raw milk available. Without that, you can’t make traditional Cheddar,” says Greeley.

“Cheesemakers are going back to the terrain to create traditional flavor. They are bringing the herd outside to eat. They are using traditional rennet and flora native to the landscape. Original recipes never had microbial enzymes. The cheeses are being bandaged — wrapped in cloth — so they

are even more traditional than just raw milk, and they are being made in larger sizes than cheese destined for the supermarket,” he explains.

**An emphasis on quality and provenance is raising the profile of artisanal British cheese.**

Montgomery’s in Somerset, England, makes definitive traditional Cheddar and with equally dedicated colleagues keeps Britain’s iconic cheese alive. “Traditional Cheddars have taken over volume that was assigned to commercial products,” notes Greeley.

Perhaps not surprisingly, traditional farmhouse territorials such as Lancashire and Cheshire are rare. “We knew in 1982 we had skills that were dying out,” says Edward Appleby, owner and cheesemaker of Appleby’s at Hawkstone, Shropshire, England. Appleby makes one of the only traditional versions of Cheshire, Britain’s oldest cheese.

“Making cheese is only half — storing and looking after it is the other half. Space

between shelves allows the cheese to be turned and rolled every other day. Turning keeps moisture in the cheese, but even at proper humidity and temperature it loses moisture and weight. Cheese is a living thing — it will suffocate or drown in wax or plastic, but it can breathe or mature as it wants in binding,” he explains.

Many retailers and consumers new to cheese are unfamiliar with rind. “Rind is critical to flavor development and protects the cheese through its maturing and its survival on the counter. The rind is a window to the cheese, and a healthy rind indicates healthy cheese. The rind tells the retailer what the cheese needs. If the rind is wet, the cheese needs to breathe. If it is dry and cracking, you need to prevent the loss of moisture of the cheese,” says Debra Dickerson, proprietor of Oakland, CA-based 3D Cheese, which represents Neal’s Yard in the United States.

Lincolnshire Poacher, created in 1992, was named Best Export Cheese at the 2006 British Cheese Awards held in Cheltenham, England, after winning a gold medal in the Hard-Modern cow’s milk class. “We are not constrained by the history and tradition of the West Country Cheddars — our cheese is different from Monty’s, Green’s, Quicke’s and all,” says Tim Jones, co-owner, Lincolnshire Poacher Cheese, Lincolnshire, England. Jones’ brother Simon makes the 44-pound truckles using unpasteurized milk from the farm herd.

“Historically, many creameries were set up by landed gentry or co-ops of small farms because individual farms were not large enough to invest in cheese production. Some have been going since the 1700s,” says Lynne Wood, vice president of marketing for Dairy Crest UK, Surrey, England.

“Farmstead cheeses are ever popular, but named creamery cheeses have driven the growth of high-end artisanal cheese sales. Larger retailers prefer consistency of flavor profile because that is what customers expect. Smaller specialists now go for a mix of named creamery and farmstead cheeses, as their customers are more educated to the differing nature of artisanal cheese.”

Last year, Dairy Crest launched three named creamery Cheddars, Davidstow Vintage Cornish Cheddar, Wexford Vintage



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAIRY CREST UK

Artisanal British cheeses are enjoying great success in the United States.



British Cheddars on display at Neal's Yard Dairy in London.

Irish Cheddar and Afon Cleddau Extra Mature Welsh Cheddar.

"The different soil and climate from the region of origin make the milk taste different, which gives each cheese a distinctive flavor profile. The Cheddars have been amazingly well received by U.S. consumers," adds Dairy Crest's Wood.

### Stilton, King Of The Blues

"Stilton is visually unique with its characteristic blue veining. Creamy and mellow in flavor, it is always made in a cylindrical shape, never pressed and must be allowed to form its own coat," explains Nigel White, secretary for the Stilton Cheesemakers' Association (SCMA), based in Surrey, England. Stilton must be made from pasteurized Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire or Leicestershire milk.

"Eight dairies are licensed to make Stilton. Quenby Hall is licensed to make Blue and Shirevale to make White Stilton. The other dairies are licensed to make both. Dairies are subject to independent inspection by the Stilton Cheesemakers' Association to ensure compliance with our certification trade mark [CTM] and protected designation of origin [PDO]," notes White.

"There are strict guidelines for the making of Blue Stilton, yet it can vary in flavor profile," states Wood. "Each creamery produces a slightly different flavor profile because of the milk they source and the recipe they use."

"Maturing the cheese just a week longer can significantly impact the cheese, giving a less acidic, more mature flavor and a smoother, creamier texture. This more

rounded, high-end 'matured' Stilton has increased Stilton sales in the United Kingdom, and the trend is following in the United States. As more high-end, artisanal British cheeses are imported, the United States is increasing use of cheese as the hero of the meal, not just an accompaniment," she adds.

### Diverse Blues

The 2006 British Cheese Awards named Long Clawson Dairy Stilton the Best Export Blue, and a rich selection exists beyond Stilton. Best known are Shropshire Blue, Blue Wensleydale and Ireland's first farmhouse blue, Cashel Blue from J&L Grubb, Tipperary, Ireland. Cornish Blue from the Cornish Cheese Company in Liskeard, Cornwall, England, is sweet and creamy, and Shepherds Purse in North Yorkshire, England, makes cow-, sheep- and buffalo-milk blues.

Only four years ago, Blacksticks Blue was created on Butler's Farm, Lancashire, England, where the family has produced cheese since 1932. Blacksticks won a silver medal at London's 2007 World Cheese Awards. "Blacksticks is the most unique cheese Butler's makes," says Matthew Kevill, sales and marketing manager for Epicure Foods Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ, a cheese importer and distributor that imports Butlers Farmhouse Cheeses directly from the farm.

"The third generation owner, Colin Hall, wanted to make a soft blue cheese that would be easy to eat, not too strong and not pungent. It is handmade using milk only from Butler's own herd on the main farm. He made a regular blue cheese and added annatto, which completely changed the character-

istic. It has a soft creaminess, a sweetness in the aftertaste and a phenomenal texture. It is named for a grove of chestnut trees with distinctly dark trunks," continues Kevill.

"Even in Britain many people have tasted only factory-made cheese, not farmhouse cheese. If someone says, 'No, I don't like Red Leicester,' but then they try a real Red Leicester, they see that the cheeses are worlds apart. It's important to educate the consumers to see the quality difference that farmhouse cheese offers," says Kevill.

**"BRITISH EXPORTS  
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HAVE NEW THINGS IN  
THE PIPELINE."**

**— Maria Walley  
Cheese From Britain**

### Developments

Once again, the 2006 British Cheese competition saw increases in cheesemakers (178) and cheeses (842), of which 110 are exports.

"British exports are growing faster than those from Italy or France because the British always have new things in the pipeline," says Maria Walley, marketing manager, Cheese From Britain, based in Cincinnati, OH. "A family decides to start making a cheese, or a larger co-op is looking for new fun things with some traditional methods."

An international media stir is the outcome of continuous live webcam coverage of a ripening Cheddar from West Country Farmhouse Cheesemakers, Somerset, England. Cheddarvision.tv plans to run through 2007 and received over a million visits in its first four months.

Pascal Vaydie, import sales director for Lactalis USA, New York, NY, will be introducing Lactalis' Scottish Highlands and Islands cheeses to importers at the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA) Expo and Summer Fancy Food Show in Anaheim in June. Each cheese is made from local milk in a dedicated, long-standing creamery.



Isle of Arran Medium Dunlop, aged six to nine months, is made in Torrylinn Creamery on Arran Island, Scotland. "It is a labor intensive process. They use non-standardized full-fat milk and make the cheese by hand in open vats. Compared to Cheddar, Dunlop has a little more fat, which gives it a softer and creamier texture," says Vaydie.

Rothsay Creamery on Bute Island, Scotland, makes Isle of Bute Mature Scottish Cheddar, a gold medal winner at the 2006 British Cheese Awards. It is aged a minimum of nine months. "It has some sweetness, some caramel and is very floral. It is made from milk of cows grazing rich grass and we find that in the flavor of the cheese," Vaydie explains.

"People tend to look at the age and think, 'The older, the better.' Flavor profile is more difficult to understand than age, but it may be more satisfying to focus on flavor profile," he continues. "In Mull of Kintyre Extra Mature Cheddar, you expect some bold flavor given the rugged environment and the fact that the animals spend most of their time outside." A white Cheddar with full flavor and a mellow finish, Mull of Kintyre won a silver medal at

the 2006 British Cheese Awards. It is made on the 40-mile long, 8-mile wide Kintyre peninsula of Scotland by Campbeltown



Butler Farms Blacksticks Blue won a silver medal at London's 2007 World Cheese Awards.

is said that French monks brought the recipe to Yorkshire in the 12th century and the geology, flora and protected environmental status of the area distinctively flavor the region's milk. The creamery cultures its own starters.

Artisanal British cheese is more accessible than ever. Several Kroger stores are offering traditional, cloth-bound Cheddar cut at store level. "Because the flavor is so distinctive, we wanted to make it available to customers who may never have had authentic English Cheddar before," says Tim Smith, specialty cheese and gourmet foods category manager for The Kroger Company, based Cincinnati, OH. "The product selection aims towards higher end, but not too esoteric."

"Imported cheese is a good category — it brings shoppers who spend more. Besides cheese, they buy specialty foods and wine. Retailers should look for the right mix of products that can fit in with their model, and highlight them at the right time of the year. If a cheese has been around for a couple of hundred years, there must be a reason for it," according Cheese From Britain's Walley. **DB**

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# Wisconsin Cheese

By Jeanette Hurt

**T**hough California is poised to surpass Wisconsin in overall cheese production in the near future, do not count the Dairy State out. Wisconsin not only leads the country in specialty cheese production but it also remains on the cutting edge of all things dairy.

Consider these statistics from Wisconsin Dairy Impact Web site:

- Wisconsin is home to more dairy farms than any other state — 14,000+ dairy operations or about 20 percent of the nation's total, with more than 1.2 million dairy cows.
  - Wisconsin ranks first in the number of organic and grass-based dairy farms.
  - Wisconsin leads the country in the number of cheese plants, with 136. Wisconsin cheesemakers produce more than 2.4 billion pounds of cheese annually, or 26 percent of the nation's total.
  - Wisconsin cheesemakers produce more specialty cheeses — such as Asiago, Edam, Gorgonzola and Havarti — than any other state. In 1993, Wisconsin produced 83 million pounds of specialty cheese. By 2005, that number had more than quadrupled to 355 million pounds, or increased by 328 percent.
- These Wisconsin cheese statistics follow national trends. In 2003, Americans consumed 8.8 billion pounds of cheese, at a

value of nearly \$40 billion, and one out of every 10 pounds consumed was specialty cheese, up from one in 15 pounds in 2001.

Unique geography and state support help Wisconsin cheesemakers produce some of the finest U.S. cheeses.

"Specialty cheese is the fastest growing niche in the dairy industry," says Steve Ehlers, owner of Larry's Brown Deer Market in Brown Deer, WI, and a board member of the Dairy Business Innovation Center, Madison, WI.

"I don't think people outside of the state know much about Wisconsin cheese," says Kay Schmitz, owner of Kiel, WI-based Henning Cheese, which is famous for its 12,000-pound wheels of Cheddar. "People might know the basics of Cheddar and Colby, but in Wisconsin, we have so many artisan factories and farmstead cheese operations that if you don't live here, you don't realize what's happening."

"Wisconsin has taken a long-term

approach to develop the specialty market," says Errico Auricchio, president and founder of BelGioioso, Denmark, WI. "Wisconsin is becoming a magnet for specialty, high quality cheese."

"When I first came here, Cheddar was the big thing, and everything was 40-pound blocks of Cheddar," Auricchio says. "What has happened in the last 25 years is that a lot of American consumers have traveled abroad, visited Italy, etc., and a lot more imported cheese has come to the United States."

That awareness of different types of cheese has opened up the market for more high-quality cheese to be produced in the United States."

Many regard Auricchio as the first specialty cheese producer in Wisconsin; he opened his first cheese plant in 1979. When he first came to Wisconsin, most of his cheese was not sold in the state — he sold mostly to the East Coast. Now, however, Wisconsin is a huge market for his cheese. "There's been a tremendous change in the market — so much that we don't realize it," he explains. "When I first came here, there was no olive oil at the supermarkets in Green Bay. Things have moved really quickly. We didn't sell anything in Wisconsin, and now Wisconsin has become a very good quality cheese consuming state."

The specialty cheese trend is particularly important to Wisconsin's future, as the almost-\$21-billion dairy business is the state's largest industry, with twice the economic impact of tourism. In fact, cheese is more important to Wisconsin than citrus fruits are to Florida and potatoes are to Idaho.

"Our specialty cheesemakers win more awards than any other state, than any other country," proclaims Patrick Geoghegan, senior vice president of Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI, and president of the Dairy Business Innovation Center, Madison, WI. "We are sitting on top of one of the richest cheesemaking regions on the planet, and for some reason, it is not widely known. Tastes are expanding rapidly. Cheese is very hot right now. We're sort of where the wine industry was 15 or 20 years ago. We produce over 600 varieties and types or styles of cheese, and that is far and away more than any other state."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROTHKASE USA LTD

More specialty cheeses are produced in Wisconsin than any other state.



Consider Roth Käse, a family-owned company originally from Switzerland. Five generations ago, back in 1863, the Roth family began making cheese in Uster, Switzerland, just outside of Zurich. At the turn of the century, Otto Roth, son of founder Oswald Roth, extended the family's cheesemaking enterprises into the world of exports and began sending great European cheeses to the United States.

That exporting business laid the founda-

The climate and environment in Wisconsin is perfectly conducive to growing grass, clover and other treats cows love to eat. "In Wisconsin, the land conditions and the weather conditions are similar to the places in Europe where cheese is made," says Dan Carter, a 50-year cheese industry veteran and manager of the Dairy Business Innovation Center.

"We live in one of the best places on earth to grow grass, and that's why we produce such great milk," WMMB's Geoghegan

adds. "We have pristine waters, soil that is perfect for the growing of grass, and then we have 150 years of dairy tradition behind us."

### Cheesemaker Programs

That dairy tradition goes way back. Wisconsin was the first state to grade its cheese for quality. It was the first to insist that a licensed cheesemaker oversee every single pound of cheese made in the state.

Today, Wisconsin boasts one of the most challenging licensing programs for cheese-

**"IN WISCONSIN,  
THE LAND  
CONDITIONS AND  
THE WEATHER  
CONDITIONS ARE  
SIMILAR TO THE  
PLACES IN EUROPE  
WHERE CHEESE IS  
MADE."**

— Dan Carter  
Dairy Business  
Innovation Center

tion for what is today Roth Käse USA Ltd., Monroe, WI. In 1991, Fermo Jaeckle and his cousins Felix and Ulrich Roth decided the next step would be to make European-styled cheeses in the United States. The cousins chose a region of Green County, WI, known as "Little Switzerland" for their venture. The family has since closed down the European portion of the business to focus on quality production of more than 75 different types of cheese in America. "Switzerland exported a lot of cheesemakers in the 1960s to Wisconsin," says Felix Roth. "It's really the quality of the milk."

That milk quality not only attracted Roth Käse but it also remains the cornerstone of Wisconsin's dairy industry. "Without quality milk, you don't have quality cheese. It's really that simple," says Joe Widmer, a third-generation master cheesemaker whose grandfather immigrated from Switzerland and owner of Widmer's Cheese Cellars in Teresa, WI. "All of my farmers have to sign legal documents stating that they will not give their cows any bovine growth hormones."

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## State Assistance

Several state agencies in Wisconsin help cheesemakers in their quest to come up with different or new cheeses. Pleasant Ridge Reserve, which is considered by many cheese connoisseurs to be one of the best cheeses in the United States, is one such cheese that experts helped develop.

Cheesemakers Mike Gingrich, owner of Uplands Cheese, Inc. Dodgeville, WI, and his partner at Dodgeville, WI-based Grass Dairy Inc., Dan Patenaude knew their grass-fed, quality milk needed a quality cheese recipe, and after tasting a dozen different imported cheeses, they decided to make a French Alpine cheese called Beaufort.

The Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Madison, WI, and the Center for Dairy Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, helped them come up with eight different recipes to try, and of those, one recipe was deemed best. In fact, it was that recipe that led them to twice win Best of Show at the Annual Conference & Competition of the American Cheese Society, Louisville, KY, including the award in 2001, the first year they made that cheese.

The Madison, WI-based Dairy Business Innovation Center, which was started in 2004, is another agency devoted to helping cheesemakers at both large and small companies develop and market better cheeses. The Center's

consultants work directly with cheesemakers; several have also been sent to Europe to study different methods of cheesemaking.

"Our whole goal is to do one-on-one consulting with anyone who's interested or who wants to get involved in the industry, to help them through all the rules and regulations, and finally through to the marketing and profitability," says Dan Carter, Center manager.

With such an intricate and in-depth structure of assistance, Wisconsin cheesemakers are not only able to create quality and innovative cheeses but they are also able to push the boundaries of cheesemaking.

In 1993, Bob Wills, owner of Cedar Grove Cheese, Inc., in Plain, WI, became the first cheesemaker in the country to declare his cheese was rBGH (synthetic bovine growth hormone)-free. In 2003, his became the first (and still only) creamery to have a Living Machine installed to treat the wastewater generated by cheese production. The machine purifies the water naturally, using tropical plants and microbes in a system of 10 tanks, before it empties into the Wisconsin River Basin. All the cheeses produced by Cedar Grove are organic. "I keep trying to figure out what is the next step in having the most benign influence on the environment as possible," Wills says. **DB**

makers in the country. In some states, cheesemakers do not have to be licensed, but in Wisconsin, they must complete rigorous studies in dairy science and cheesemaking before they can be licensed. They also must serve as an apprentice under a licensed cheesemaker.

Cheesemakers in Wisconsin can go on to become Master Cheesemakers. Wisconsin is the only state to offer a Master Cheesemaker program. The program, which is patterned after the rigorous standards of programs in Europe, was established in 1994, and it is administered by the Center for Dairy Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Only cheesemakers who have been making cheese for at least 10 years qualify to



PHOTO COURTESY OF WISCONSIN MILK MARKETING BOARD

enter the program. To become certified as a Master Cheesemaker of a specific variety of cheese, the cheesemaker must have at least five years of experience in making that particular cheese. The cheesemakers must also take additional classes. "The best part of the



program is the artisan courses that allow you to meet cheesemakers from other countries and share ideas," Widmer says.

Finally, the cheesemaker who is up for certification submits a sample of his or her cheese to be judged. "You can't just become a Master Cheesemaker," says Bruce Workman, owner and founder of Edelweiss Town Hall Creamery in Monticello, WI, and certified Master Cheesemaker of five different cheeses. Workman is the only cheesemaker

them," Cook says. "Our cheeses have even found their way into the hands of movie stars. Bill Cosby's had my cheese, and so has Mira Sorvino."

Cook is also at the forefront of making mixed milk cheeses — cheeses made from more than one milk. Some traditional Spanish cheeses are made from a mixture of cow's milk, sheep's milk and goat's milk, but most traditional cheeses are made from only one milk. Fortunately, not only is Wisconsin a leader in cow's milk production, but it is

also the No. 1 state in goat milk production, which makes it easier for cheesemakers to make different varieties of cheese.

"I don't think mixed milk cheeses will ever become a really big category of cheese, but consumers do like these cheeses," Cook says. "Because we make goat's milk cheese, cow's milk cheese and sheep's milk cheese, it is easier for us because we're already using all those kinds of milk so that if we have too much sheep's milk, we can make a different cheese." **DB**

**NOT ONLY IS WISCONSIN A LEADER IN COW'S MILK PRODUCTION, BUT IT IS ALSO THE NO. 1 STATE IN GOAT MILK PRODUCTION, WHICH MAKES IT EASIER FOR CHEESEMAKERS TO MAKE DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF CHEESE.**

in the country who is making traditional, big-wheel 200-pound wheels of Emmentaler cheese and whom many consider to be an expert on that cheese. He is not yet certified as a Master Cheesemaker, but he is currently working on getting his certification as a Master Cheesemaker in Emmentaler and specialty Swiss. When he receives his certification next April, it will make him the most certified cheesemaker in the state.

There are currently more than 45 certified Master Cheesemakers in Wisconsin. One of them is Sid Cook, a fourth-generation cheesemaker and owner of Carr Valley Cheese in La Valle, WI. Cook makes more than 50 different cheeses, and in the last three years, his cheeses have earned more than 60 national and international awards. Many of his specialty cheeses are considered American originals — specialty cheeses that do not have a European counterpart. For example, Cook makes Cocoa Cardona, an aged goat-milk cheese coated with a layer of cocoa and black pepper.

"We make about 20 different American originals, and nobody else does anything like

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## Federal Oversight Of Food Safety: High-Risk Designation Can Bring Attention To Limitations In The Government's Food Recall Programs

April 27, 2007

United States Government

Accountability Office

Statement of Lisa Shames, Acting Director

Natural Resources and Environment

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-785T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-785T)

Each year, about 76 million people contract a foodborne illness in the United States, about 325,000 require hospitalization, and about 5,000 die. The outbreaks of *E. coli* in spinach and *Salmonella* in peanut butter, along with contamination in pet food, have highlighted the risks posed by accidental food contamination. The attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, heightened awareness that the food supply could also be vulnerable to deliberate contamination. This testimony focuses on the (1) role GAO's high-risk series can play in raising the priority and visibility of the need to transform federal oversight of food safety, (2) fragmented nature of federal oversight of food safety and (3) limitations in federal food recall programs.

### What GAO Recommends:

While many of GAO's recommendations to promote the safety of the nation's food supply have been acted upon, others have not yet been addressed. For example, GAO recommended the executive branch reconvene the President's Council on Food Safety to facilitate interagency coordination. GAO also proposed Congress enact comprehensive, uniform and risk-based food safety legislation, analyze alternative organizational food safety structures and consider legislation giving agencies authority to order food recalls.

## FDA Issues Letter To Food Manufacturers Regarding Legal Responsibilities For The Safety Of Food Ingredients

[www.cfsan.fda.gov/%7Edms/protltr.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/%7Edms/protltr.html)

This letter from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), posted on May 4th, reminds food manufacturers they must ensure all ingredients used in their products are safe for human consumption and have procedures in place to ensure the safety of their products, as well as the safety of the packaging and processing. There is a link in the letter for advice on ensuring food products are safe for human consumption.

With Senator Dick Durbin's (D-IL) Food

Safety Amendment on May 9th, the Senate approved the Prescription Drug User Fee Act (also called the FDA Reauthorization bill), which included an amendment that affects the food industry. Senator Durbin's amendment includes:

- An early warning and notification system for human food (and pet food). The bill requires the FDA to keep up-to-date, comprehensive, searchable recall lists on its Web site. Earlier versions of Durbin's amendment included mandatory recalls.
  - Requirements that the FDA establish an adulterated food registry for imported and domestically produced food. The FDA would collect information on cases of potentially dangerous food adulteration, and importers and domestic processors/manufacturers would have to submit information to the FDA on actual or suspected adulteration of food.
  - A provision clarifying that companies are required to maintain records and that when the FDA conducts inspections, they will have timely access to documents needed to safeguard the food supply.
- Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the FDA, will work to include Senator Durbin's amendment in the House version of the FDA bill. The amendment then must be included in the final bill that is passed by both the House and Senate. It is possible the amendment will be altered or not included in the final bill.

## FDA Reports High Enrollment In Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

April 27, 2007

FDA's National Retail Food Team reports that more than 265 state, local and tribal governments have enrolled in FDA's Draft Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards. The Program Standards are designed to help reduce foodborne illness associated with retail food and foodservice establishments by promoting continuous improvement of food-safety inspection programs. Enrollees include retail-food regulatory programs from 45 states, the territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, the National Park Service, several Native American tribes and one academic institution. A complete listing of the enrolled jurisdictions may be viewed at [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ret-jur.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ret-jur.html).



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

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

FDA's Regional Retail Food Specialists continue to work closely with regulatory programs across the country to encourage enrollment and successful application of the Program Standards.

The Program Standards represent a high-level benchmark to which retail food regulatory programs should aspire. Specifically they promote:

- Adoption of science-based rules and regulations, like the FDA Food Code
- Improvements in staff training and standardization
- Implementation of risk-based inspection programs based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles
- Enhanced quality assurance programs
- Development and implementation of outbreak and food-defense surveillance and response plans
- Increases in staffing levels or program resources
- Development and implementation of strategic plans designed to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors
- Enhanced communication and collaboration with industry and consumers
- Improved accountability through the establishment of baselines on the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors that can be used to achieve measurable program outcomes.

The Draft Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards are available at the FDA Web site:

[www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ret3toc.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ret3toc.html).

**DB**



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George E. DeLallo Co. ....	35	132	Olives & Antipasto .....	800-433-9100	724-523-0981
Deli Business .....	31		Magazine .....	561-994-1118	561-994-1610
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Kangaroo Brands, Inc. ....	47	151	Pita Chips .....	800-798-0857	414-355-4295
King Cheese Corp .....	25	144	Cheese .....	626-599-8585	626-599-8513
Klondike Cheese Co. ....	106	111	Cheese .....	608-325-3021	608-325-3027
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Manda Fine Meats .....	56	115	Deli Meats .....	800-343-2642	225-344-7647
Mann Packing Co., Inc. ....	81	152	Produce .....	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
Marcel et Henri .....	22	139	Pates .....	800-227-6436	650-871-5948
MDS Foods, Inc. ....	26	116	Cheese .....	330-833-8358	330-833-1252
Merit Paper Corporation .....	45	156	Packaging .....	800-346-1560	631-454-9170
Meyenberg Goat Milk Products .....	98	145	Cheese .....	209-667-2019	209-668-4753
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Sabra Blue & White Foods .....	89	120	Hummus .....	718-932-9000	718-204-0417
Sandridge Food Corporation .....	87	146	Salads/Prepared Foods .....	800-627-2523	330-722-3998
Saputo Cheese USA, Inc. ....	71	135	Cheese .....	800-824-3373	847-267-0224
The Snack Factory, Inc. ....	5	147	Snacks .....	888-683-5400	609-683-9595
Stacy's Pita Chips .....	93	125	Pita Chips .....	781-961-2800	781-961-2830
Stefano Foods, Inc. ....	39	110	Panini Sandwiches .....	800-340-4019	704-399-3930
Summer Fresh Salads, Incorporated .....	83	133	Salads .....	877-4-SALADS	905-856-9298
Taylor Fresh Foods .....	85	164	Fresh Produce .....	209-830-3131	209-833-4517
Tillamook County Creamery Association .....	7	165	Cheese .....	800-899-1931	503-842-4481
Unilever Bestfoods Foodservice .....	13	118	Condiments .....	800-272-121	
Valley Lahvosh Baking Co. ....	103	138	Bakery .....	800-480-2704	209-485-0173
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Widmer's Cheese Cellar .....	106	148	Cheese .....	888-878-1107	920-488-2130

# Blast From The Past

# K

ing Cheese Corp. traces its origins to the late 1970s when one of its owners supervised and mastered the art of cheesemaking at a plant in Rockland County, NY. A few years later,

George and Rose Aghchikian opened up Victor's Cheese and Deli, in Palisades, NJ, making a variety of cheeses, such as Armenian String Cheese, Mozzarella, Smoked Cheese and Meat & Cheese Rolls. In 1986 they sold the business, which became the current King Cheese, and moved to California. Due to increased demand, King

Cheese now specializes in Armenian String Cheese.

With the recent move to a larger facility and obtaining USDA approval, King Cheese has re-introduced many of its earlier specialty cheese and meat products. Fresh Mozzarella is rolled with imported and domestic deli meats and sold under the Spirella brand. With distribution throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico, the Spirella line has surpassed all expectations. King Cheese is looking forward to adding new products to its growing line of specialty cheeses.



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

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