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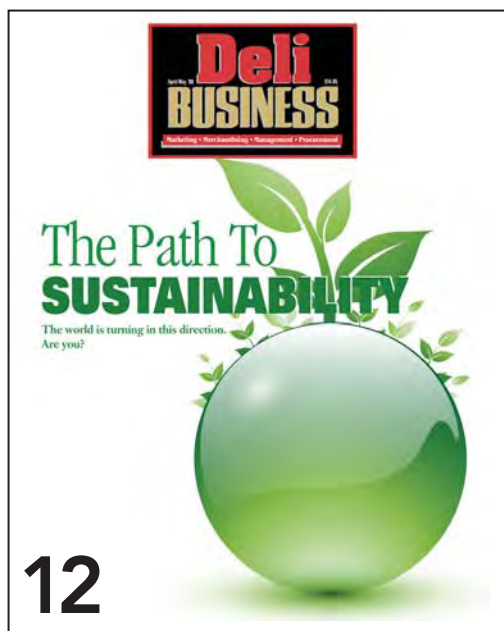
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# Deli BUSINESS QUIZ



## JULIE WERGIN-ENERSON

*Food Service Director*

*T.A. Solberg Co.*

*Minocqua, WI*

As food service director for T.A. Solberg for the past 12 years, Julie Wergin-Enerson oversees five grocery delis and bakeries, a café, plus the foodservice operations of the company's convenience stores. Throughout her career, Julie has been a devoted DELI BUSINESS reader, but had never entered the DELI BUSINESS QUIZ contest until this year. "I was going on vacation and had some extra time at the airport, so I decided to enter," she says.

Julie relies on DELI BUSINESS to stay informed about industry trends, new products and timely topics. She particularly enjoys articles about ethnic foods, specialty cheeses and packaging issues. "The magazine touches on all subjects," Julie says. "It's one of my favorite magazines and one that I read faithfully. It's fun to know if I'm really carrying out my duty to keep our stores ahead of the curve."

For submitting the winning entry, Julie wins an eco-luxury organic cotton robe.

## COMING NEXT ISSUE IN JUNE/JULY 2008

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Due to popular demand, DELI BUSINESS is expanding Deli Watch—everyone's "must-read" section for the latest industry trends and news. Please submit any announcements pertaining to industry awards or honors (company or individual), charitable donations, events, and more. We also want to hear about your promotions or move to a different company and, of course, new product information. To be considered for publication, all submissions must be accompanied by a hi-res color image (300 dpi) in JPEG, TIF, EPS or PNG format. Please email press releases and images to kmccallum@phoenixmedianet.com



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# Deli

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Reader Service No. 115

# The Quest For Authenticity



By  
**Jim Prevor**  
Editor-in Chief

DELI BUSINESS

*A poet's hope: to be,  
like some valley cheese,  
local, but prized elsewhere.*

—W. H. Auden (1907-1973), *Collected Poems*

In poetry is truth and in Auden's truth, he captures both the longings of the artisanal producer and the quest for authenticity by the consumer.

Much has been written about consumers seeking "local," and this quest has invigorated not only local "Green Markets" and farm stands, but it has also played a part in community groups resisting "big box" stores and national fast food chains. It has also affected the assortment and merchandising that supermarkets and other retailers of food are utilizing.

Yet consumer research by DELI BUSINESS and its sister publications, PRODUCE BUSINESS and PerishablePundit.com, consisting of focus groups in the United Kingdom and United States, points out that consumers have complex feelings about ideas such as "local" and "sustainability." The research provides important clues about how national retailers and marketers can tap into this *weltanschauung* while distributing product on a large-scale basis.

Although the industry thinks of "local" in the context of the environmental movement—with a focus on "food miles," reducing carbon output and supporting local green space by sustaining local agriculture—our research indicates that consumers are often thinking in more practical terms.

For example, U.S. consumers identify specific advantages they think will be derived from eating locally produced foods. They anticipate food will be fresher as it spent less time in transit. They think it will be more economical because producers or retailers save money by not transporting it long distances. They anticipate products will taste better, such as baked goods because they are fresher, and produce because it can be picked riper. Also, consumers believe foods are more likely to be prepared to regional tastes.

In contrast, consumers in the United Kingdom seem to impute a kind of nationalism to the term "local," and the residents of southern England near the English Channel seemed quite horrified when we suggested that boosting imports from nearby Calais would be a way to meet consumer demand for "local" food. Unanimously, these British consumers thought of food from the distant hinterlands of Scotland as more authentically "local" than nearby France.

What came through clearly is that consumer perceptions of "local" actually had little to do with geography. Certainly there was a small minority—let's call them "activists"—who went on about carbon footprints and global warming. This was more pronounced in the United Kingdom than in the United States, but it wasn't the mainstream in either country.

Some U.S. retailers have begun to catch heat because their "local" programs are not all that local. Whole Foods, for example, places great emphasis on its two local programs: one to support local growers and the other to support local vendors. Whole Foods has been attacked by Michael Pollan, the well-known author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, as supporting "industrial organic" as opposed to truly local production.

Whole Foods doesn't explain what makes one a local vendor, but it defines "locally grown produce" as produce that traveled no more than seven hours by car or truck to get to a Whole Foods facility. Depending on the location of a distribution center and the speed of travel, it is easy to imagine that a product

grown in Maryland and sold in Florida could qualify as a "locally grown" product.

Yet our research implies that a focus on constricting the geography to qualify as locally grown is a misguided approach. Yes, a Jacksonville, FL, shopper probably won't relate to product from Baltimore, MD, as "locally grown," but a consumer in Fort Lee, NJ, wouldn't think of a vendor from Greenwich, CT, as local either, and those cities are only 22 miles apart.

When we asked consumers in nontraditional agricultural areas if they wanted locally grown food, they were positively hostile. In Houston, one woman put it this way: "Not if it is grown down by the BP refinery, I don't want it."

What consumers seemed to really want was knowing things were done authentically, properly, by people who know what they are doing and in places where it made sense to produce these products. An example of this kind of authenticity would be the association between Napa Valley in California and wine. Consumers feel confident that this is a good place to make wine, that winemakers in the Napa Valley know what they are doing, that the grapes are right, the weather correct and the soil appropriate.

In this there is a clue. Whether we are selling cheese, meat or prepared foods from down the block or half-way around the world, the challenge is to persuade the consumer that our products are authentically produced by people who know how to make them, in a place that makes sense.

Marketing efforts need to reinforce this authenticity. Who is the person behind the product, where does it come from and why is that the right place? Each product must have pictures of real people explaining their expertise, the appropriateness of the location for making the item, and a narrative for every product.

And then a retailer becomes a kind of book seller, where each food has a story to tell and the retailer showcases those stories. And each yearns, to paraphrase Auden, to remain rooted in its place, yet appreciated everywhere. **DB**

What consumers seemed to really  
want was knowing things were done  
authentically, properly, by people who  
know what they are doing...

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# Competitive Quality



By  
**Lee Smith**  
*Publisher*

DELI BUSINESS

**D**uring a recession, the quality equation will come under scrutiny as retailers strategize to keep customers loyal and deliver compelling offers. However, it would be a huge mistake to think that shoppers are putting “quality” on the back burner because quality is always important.

Possibly because of manufacturers’ branding, packaging and promises, the term quality, which refers to a quantifiable or measureable attribute relative to other products, has come to mean an immeasurable positive difference. So, when quality is referred to within food speak, a “higher” quality is naturally assumed. Unfortunately the definition is ambiguous at best.

When consumers are asked about the importance of quality in their purchasing decisions, it often comes in last place. Since “quality” is a relative term and not defined against a quantifiable attribute, just about any other factor is going to be more important. Price, cleanliness, parking or a store’s location should be expected to be more important than the universally undefined term “quality.”

Consumers’ lack of concern about quality is not a negative and, instead, speaks of the great accomplishments of our industry. When consumers indicate that quality does not play a primary role in their choice of food retailers, what they really are saying is that there is a presumed high level of quality anywhere they shop. Regardless of how low the sale price of bologna, it is expected to be wholesome, safe and delicious. The desire to buy inexpensive bologna for the kids’ lunches does not mean it is acceptable to sell product that is out of code, slimy or made with meat from filthy plants.

The modern miracle of supermarket retailing also means that every supermarket has a wide range of culinary choices for the very budget-conscious and the upscale shopper. When seeking out luxury ingredients, virtually all supermarkets carry frozen shrimp, steaks, chops, fresh seafood, olive oils, exotic vinegars, organic milk, fresh prepared foods, top-of-the line deli meats and imported produce. And, they’re available next to the flour, sugar, kids’ cereals, potatoes, onions, American cheese and macaroni salad. People expect to pay more for whole-muscle roast beef than olive loaf, but that doesn’t mean one product is better than the other or consumers are downgrading the importance of quality.

Price alternatives will be important, lowering prices will not. Placing more emphasis on processed meats and loaves is smart, as is marketing cole slaw, potato and macaroni salads. Offering a lower price line of good quality deli meats is going to be an important step for most retailers, but it may not be enough.

One of the trends during the last 20 years has been for individuals and families to patronize restaurants on a regular

basis to the tune of about 50 percent of their food cost. The percentage has declined ever so slightly over the past couple of years, but curtailing or eliminating eating out represents a considerable savings for most families. However, the need for convenience and good quality is not going to disappear. The typical working mother or father is not going to turn into a scratch cook just because money is tight.

Fortunately, the race for “share of stomach” has forced many retailers to upgrade their prepared food programs. Even standbys like rotisserie chicken programs have improved with better equipment, better quality controls and the addition of side dishes that turn a rotisserie chicken into a complete meal option.

But rotisserie is far from the only modern option.

When there is an urge for Chinese food, a good Chinese food bar at an upscale supermarket is about one-third the cost of takeout. Inviting friends over for hot dogs and hamburgers is a fraction of the cost of going out to eat, and many retailers are offering superb sandwich programs, pizza, ribs and wings, soups and sit-down dining.

Offering good quality prepared food and meal options that are acceptable alternatives to restaurant fare is going to be the first challenge. The second challenge is to communicate and the third is to deliver.

Acceptable quality must be defined against the target audience. Fresh prepared Italian meat sauces are a great idea—but only if they are as good as or better than what the local Italian restaurant serves. While the cost must be reasonable, it does not have to be cheap.

Communication is a serious challenge because supermarkets, in general, are lousy marketers. Supermarkets’ primary selling tool is to offer specials as draws, and once the customer is in the store, the customer is expected to stumble upon more profitable items. It is the stumbling approach that has left most supermarkets reluctant competitors. If there is a compelling reason for people to shop the deli for meals, then communicate it with the same pizzazz and marketing savvy as the best restaurants in town. Announcing a dinner program between the chop meat and 10-pound bags of potatoes in a weekly flier is not going to attract new customers. The customers you want may not even read the weekly flier. They may not get a newspaper because they are getting their news over the Internet.

The last step is assuring a consistent delivery. For many retailers—even some of the best—it is just not happening, but it is a challenge that good restaurants have mastered.

If I go to Subway or Quiznos, I get the same sandwich every time I order it. Restaurants have a philosophy that they are either open or they are not. In order to succeed, retailers need to change their attitude from a “we try” to a “we do” attitude.

**DB**

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# DELI WATCH

## Transitions



**Anil Shah** has joined Fort Calhoun, NE-based Wilkinson Industries Inc. as vice president of operations. He brings a wealth of operational experience to the company, and as part of the executive management team, will work on overall quality performance goals to improve efficiencies, productivity and other continuous improvements.



**Linda L. Avila** has been named southwest retail regional marketing manager for Madison, WI-based Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB). She has extensive experience in the retail industry, especially in the specialty foods area, and will work with food retailers primarily in the southwest to promote and market Wisconsin cheese.

## Announcements



### 25 Years of Cheesemaking

Cypress Grove Chevre, based in Arcata, CA, is celebrating 25 years of producing award-winning, American goat cheese products. Founded by Mary Keehn, the company produces signature best-sellers such as

Humboldt Fog, a soft-ripened goat's milk cheese, and new American classics such as Truffle Tremor, introduced last summer.

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

Reader Service No. 401



### Vermont Cheesemaker Honored

The Vermont Dairy Industry Association awarded its prestigious John C. Finley Memorial Award to Allison Hooper, co-founder of 23-year-old Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, Websterville, VT. Recipients of the award are recognized for their outstanding contribution to Vermont agriculture as exemplified by the award's namesake.

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

Reader Service No. 402

## New Products



### Beemster Royal Garden Selection

Beemster Cheese, Jersey, City, NJ, makers of premium gourmet Dutch cheese from North Holland, presents the Beemster Royal Garden Selection. For this collection, the famous

Beemster cheese combines with the delicious elements of mustard seed, garlic, nettles and wasabi to create four new exciting flavors.

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

Reader Service No. 403



### Seasonal Cheddars

Otter Creek Organic Farm, Spring Green, WI, is now producing Seasonal Cheddars made with fresh, unpasteurized organic milk. These cheddars reflect the flavor profile of the seasonal forage available to the herd. Labeling also conveys this information; for example, the fall label reads,

"The cows that produced this cheese grazed on Wisconsin pastures of mature rye, alfalfa, clover and late seasonal annuals."

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

Reader Service No. 404



### New and Improved Mac and Cheese

JTM FoodGroup, Harrison, OH, offers its new and improved Cabin Creek Macaroni & Cheese, which is specifically designed to hold up for several hours on steam tables.

Fully cooked and then frozen in convenient

boilable bags, the product is easy to prepare yet delivers a restaurant-quality experience.

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

Reader Service No. 405



### BBQ Pork Loin Back Ribs

The Broaster Company LLC, Beloit, WI, has added a new product to its selection of quality frozen foods—the Broaster Recipe Pork Loin Back Ribs with BBQ Sauce. The ribs are individually quick frozen and conveniently packed in five-pound pouches per

case, making it easy for operators to simply heat and serve in a microwave, convection or conventional oven.

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

Reader Service No. 406



### Organic Lunch Packs

Potter Family Farms Smokehouse n' Creamery, Wilton, CA, has created pre-packaged meals featuring a fun western theme. Perfect for school lunches and kids-on-the-go, each Organic Snack Pack contains a well-balanced mix of foods, such as Wisconsin cheese, beef sticks, crackers, carrots and raisins, from four recommended food groups.

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

Reader Service No. 407



### Panini Grill Series

Electrolux Professional North America, Fort Lauderdale, FL, has made enhancements to its Electrolux DITO Panini Grill Series. The grills now feature a stainless steel chassis and front panel as well as scratch- and rust-proof cast-iron plates coated with vitreous enamel. Available in three sizes, these compact grills allow for high productivity and flexibility to plug in, cook and serve customers.

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

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# The Path To SUSTAINABILITY

The world is turning in this direction.  
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BY JIM PREVOR

Few issues have more saliency than sustainability. In the food industry, retailers around the world have seized upon the issue. So if you are a vendor to Marks & Spencer in the United Kingdom, you know what it means to follow its sustainability mantra: "Plan A. Because there is no plan B." If you sell to Wal-Mart, you've already been to summits focused on reducing packaging and have possibly toured one of Wal-Mart's new "green" supercenters.

Retailers are drawn to these efforts for many reasons. In some cases, it is the expectation of government regulation. As Jeffrey R. Immelt, chairman and CEO of General Electric, points out, "There's no percentage for any CEO in the world to run his or her business thinking that there are not going to be carbon caps someday. Because the day it becomes law, you're five years late. And you either get out ahead of these things or you get stomped by them."

Other business leaders have found in sustainability a reflection of the core purposes of their organizations. Wal-Mart's CEO and president H. Lee Scott explains Wal-Mart's commitment to sustainability this way: "It's consistent with what we say our purpose is, and that is saving people money so they can live better. We looked at what Sam Walton started and how he developed the company. It was by eliminating waste, bringing in efficiencies."

Although it is commonly used, sustainability itself is actually an awkward term; it

really is best thought of as a kind of catch-all phrase, incorporating sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and other initiatives. The term of art is really "sustainable development"—in which development is the way that people, organizations and society at large seek to improve their lot and achieve goals.

As far as what sustainable means, well, the classic definition by the World Commission on the Environment and Development, 1987, goes like this:

*Sustainable Development* "...development that meets the needs of the present with-

out compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Although the definition has a pleasing vagueness, in many ways it begs the question: How are we supposed to know what future generations are going to need?

## Definition Problematic

If you apply the definition to any actual choice, you wind up struggling. Imagine if oil was discovered in your backyard and further imagine consulting this definition to figure out what would be the sustainable thing to do.





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Visit our website or email [VlaskaasBags@BeemsterCheese.us](mailto:VlaskaasBags@BeemsterCheese.us) for more information.



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Reader Service No. 138

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

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You would pretty quickly come to the decision that extracting the oil and selling it would meet this generation's needs very well. You could use the money, and lots of people could use the oil.

But would it compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs?

It really is not very clear. For one thing, perhaps future generations will have other options, such as inexpensive solar power or fuel cell-powered vehicles and won't need the petroleum at all. Then there is this rub: If we were to simply decide that sustainable development requires us to keep the petroleum available for future generations, wouldn't that same criteria hold for future generations as well? If so, they could never touch the oil either. If future generations can't touch the oil, how would we be compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs if we used the oil right now?

In the end, the best we can say is that beyond necessities, future generations will likely value having choices just as we do.

So, if the classic definition is problematic, what does sustainable development encompass? Perhaps the greatest misunderstanding is that sustainability is often thought of as a strictly environmental initiative. It is not and cannot be. And the reason is simple: There are many things that would help the environment, but they may not be sustainable.

If a company spent all its money cleaning up toxic waste sites, that would be very environmentally friendly, but when the company fails to pay its employees their wages, it would be socially very damaging. Families would lose their homes, and children would be malnourished. It would not be a sustainable situation at all.

For that matter, if a company invested heavily in a technology that might be environmentally friendly, but uneconomic—say extensive solar voltaic cell panels on its properties in Maine—the business would start to either lose money or earn sub-par returns, making it difficult to attract the capital needed for growth. In time, the business would have to close. Once again, not very sustainable.

Sustainability by definition recognizes that businesses have economic, environmental and social responsibilities.

### Different Approaches

Our understanding of the best way to achieve sustainability is also evolving. Initially much of the focus was on doing less of a bad thing. You can hear echoes of this approach in Lee Scott's words: "...it really is about how do you take cost out, which

is waste, whether it's through less energy use in the store, through the construction techniques we are using, through the supply chain. All of those things are simply the creation of waste."

Today, however, advocates of sustainability are looking to harness the collective wisdom of stakeholders—especially employees—in the cause of sustainability.

There are basically two ways for a company to approach sustainable development. The traditional method is focused on benchmarks/best practices and on adherence to creeds/codes and standards. It is proscriptive and tends to be a "top-down" initiative. The other method

city as local opposition from unions, competitive retailers, people concerned about the viability of "main street" life, residents concerned with traffic and noise, etc., have combined to put up obstacles to Wal-Mart's expansion.

A "License to Operate," to be meaningful, must be given freely. It must be given prior to beginning the activity in question and be based on the informed consent of the stakeholders. Many times, businesses operate in multiple communities and may require multiple "licenses" from the local and national community.

Recognition of the need for such a license leads businesses to modify their

**Sustainability by definition recognizes that businesses have economic, environmental and social responsibilities.**

is focused on continuous improvement, and is viewed as a "bottom-up" process. Employees work with stakeholders to advance the cause and do things because they offer compelling opportunities to move toward sustainability.

There can be no "one-size-fits-all" notion of sustainability. In many ways, the movement is about desire, a thirst to advance a company, an industry and the world by going through a series of continuous improvement cycles—good, better, best—to take the entity to a new height.

Employees first analyze and understand a particular process, identify opportunities to improve that process—making it more sustainable—and then implement the improvements. The constant learning that comes from this problem-solving, decision-making activity serves to foster an ever more sustainable organization.

### Reasons For Being

The intellectual paradigm buster that makes sustainability logical for business consists of two concepts: "License to Operate" and "Reputational Capital."

This "License to Operate" is not the one you pick up in exchange for a fee at the county clerk's office; it is a concept associated with sustainability, recognizing that in today's world the ability of business to operate successfully can be crucially affected by the attitudes and actions of numerous stakeholders—including some the business may not even know exist.

Wal-Mart, for example, has been unable to open supercenters in city after

business planning procedures. This includes mapping out who the stakeholders are and engaging with them on economic, social, financial, environmental, technological and other subjects. In the end, this process enables a business to avoid the informal sanctions that can be imposed by the public, the media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The knowledge that a "License to Operate" needs to be obtained and sustained leads to the recognition that "Reputational Capital" can be extremely important. "Reputational Capital" is the goodwill or reputation that a business has in a community with regulators and other important stakeholders.

The key to the concept is that acquiring "Reputational Capital" is so valuable that it justifies expenditures not justified by traditional methods of quantitative analysis. If a business has no "Reputational Capital," then NGOs and others will be skeptical about the initiatives that business elects to undertake. So they might protest granting the business permits, push for regulatory and judicial oversight, and organize consumer boycotts.

On the other hand, a business rich with "Reputational Capital" will find NGOs predisposed to working with them. This business can expect open discussion as opposed to hostile opposition. A company with reservoirs of "Reputational Capital" can expect to have the ear of the government, the trust of regulators and the tolerance of the local community.

As with everything in sustainability, the

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concept is clear, but the implementation often less so. The concepts of “License to Operate” and “Reputational Capital” might encourage a business to build a solar voltaic cell array on the roof of its distribution center—as, for example, British supermarket operator Tesco did with its new distribution center in California—even if the economics of the installation don’t justify it. Why? Because the people, the NGOs, the government and many other stakeholders will think better of Tesco for not contributing to carbon emissions. In other words, building the array is a way of making a deposit in Tesco’s “Reputational Capital” account.

The problem, of course, is that the concept is not self-limiting. Tesco could have put solar voltaic panels on every store as well as on schools and daycare centers—all would have contributed to its “Reputational Capital” account. The concept doesn’t tell us exactly how far we can go in using this metric to justify otherwise unjustifiable expenditures.

Evaluations of the success of sustainability programs also pose challenges. It is easy to celebrate when businesses do good things for the world, but moral philosophy offers two ways of thinking about business ethics. The “Theory of the Good” speaks to the notion of doing good deeds and improving the world, but many of the moral attributes of business fall under the “Theory of the Right.”

These theories are often in conflict and involve issues such as promise-keeping. The “Theory of the Good” tells us it may be good for the world if a business spends its money cleaning up toxic waste dumps it didn’t create, but “The Theory of the Right” requires the business to honor mundane obligations—meeting payroll or honoring contracts—before “doing good.”

## Today’s World

While sustainability itself is complex and evaluations uncertain, this is the way the world is turning. Just look at Tesco’s announcement about the opening of its first U.S. Fresh & Easy store:

*“After great anticipation, we are thrilled to open our doors to neighborhoods in Southern California and offer them fresh, wholesome food at affordable prices,” said Tim Mason, Fresh & Easy’s CEO. “We are also excited to demonstrate our strong commitment to being a good neighbor and a great place to work.”*

*Fresh & Easy has gone to great lengths to ensure all its private label products contain no added trans fats, artificial colors or flavors, and have limited amounts of preservatives. Deliveries will be made daily to each store to*

## THE PEOPLE, PLANET, PROFIT PREMISE

**S**ustainability focuses on three separate issues: environmental, social and economic. These are expressed in different ways. One of the reasons the definitions get so slippery is because everyone recognizes there has to be a different definition than charity or altruism. In other words, only successful business practices can actually be sustainable, and it is silly to think of practices that will lead to bankruptcy as socially responsible.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development formulated a vision for sustainability by saying the practice of sustainability could help companies protect their business, run their business and grow their business.

One of the hot concepts in this arena is epitomized in a book entitled, *The Triple Bottom Line*, by Andrew W. Savitz with Karl Weber. The book focuses on helping companies achieve not only just a financial bottom line, but also a triple bottom line: environmental, social and economic success. It builds on a “people, planet, profit” model articulated by John Elkington in 1994 and expands upon his book, *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*.

For most businesses, the key is to examine their own policies, strategies and operations in terms of the following three criteria:

1. Environmental—the immediate environment in which the organization operates, such as its plants and buildings, and broader environmental issues, such as the availability of resources and materials.
2. Social—the local and the global com-

munities in which the organization operates.

3. Financial—both the financial performance of the organization and the broader economic system.

Robert Pojasek, a noted sustainability consultant and an adjunct professor at Harvard University, has developed an eight-question checklist executives can ask about their companies as they go down the path to sustainable development:

- How do your organization’s existing strategies address issues of sustainability?
- What “interests” do your stakeholders really care about?
- What are the ways in which you can measure your organization’s activities?
- In the measurement process, how can you include concerns for future generations?
- What knowledge and skills exist in your organization to help you deal with sustainability issues?
- How can your organization improve itself on a continual basis?
- What can you do to ensure that your organization is working at the nexus with the community and individuals?
- What management systems can help you integrate and manage sustainability issues more effectively?

These are excellent questions to start the process, but it is important to realize that it is a process. No organization has achieved sustainable development. It is best thought of as a goal to be working toward, a shining city on the hill in which we balance environmental, social and economic responsibilities. **DB**

*ensure all products are as fresh as possible.*

*Each Fresh & Easy store will employ approximately 20 to 30 people. The company interviews on-site at each store location, aiming to hire from the local neighborhood. Fresh & Easy intends all store employees will work 20 hours a week or more, and be eligible for comprehensive health care and other benefits. Entry-level positions will pay well over the minimum wage, starting at \$10 an hour in California, and offer a potential bonus of up to 10 percent on top.*

*As part of the company’s promise to be a good neighbor and steward of the environment, Fresh & Easy has committed to build LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified buildings, recycle or reuse all shipping and display materials, and use environmentally friendly trailers to transport food. The company also invested in Cali-*

*fornia’s largest solar roof installation on its distribution center in Riverside.*

Note the clear emphasis on sustainability. No store even five years ago would have issued that press release. The challenge is to think about what that press release can say five years from now and then align our businesses and industry with these principles and opportunities.

Remember, at the heart of sustainability is continuous improvement, so if you don’t think you are there, don’t worry. As Lao-Tzu is popularly translated: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Or, as the original is more accurately translated: “The journey of a thousand miles begins beneath one’s feet.”

In any case, the best way to get started on the path to sustainable development is, simply, to begin. **DB**



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# Seven Creative Ways To Build Sandwich Sales

Implement these sandwich-making and merchandising strategies to stay on the cutting edge

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Sandwiches have surely evolved since the 18th century when John Montagu, the Fourth Earl of Sandwich, reportedly asked a waiter to put two pieces of bread around a slice of roast beef to keep his fingers clean while at the gambling table. Whether the legend is true or not, sandwiches have become a noble meal worthy of the finest ingredients.

Indeed, 1,282 member chefs of the American Culinary Federation (ACF) ranked specialty sandwiches as the fifth hottest trend among a list of 194 items, according to a survey conducted by the Washington, DC-based National Restaurant Association (NRA). As part of the 2007 "What's Hot, What's Not" survey, ACF chefs were asked to rate the 194 items as "hot," "cool/passé" or "perennial favorite."

In retailers' delis, sandwiches are a key category, making up 7 percent of annual sales, according to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's (IDDBA) report, *What's In Store 2008*. Operators can notch this percentage up higher by implementing these creative sandwich-making and merchandising strategies.

## 1. Upscale And Downsize The Bread

"Eighty percent of people who buy bread use it to make a sandwich, and 95 percent of those who buy meat, eat it as a sandwich," says Michael Becherer, director of marketing

deli, Sara Lee, Downer's Grove, IL. "So there is always an opportunity for two sales."

As far as what breads are hot, the IDDBA's *What's In Store 2008* identifies artisan breads and rolls, flatbreads, and focaccia. Pitas also continue to be popular.

"Our most popular pita is the Pre-Open Whole Grain Sandwich Pockets," says Salem Kashou, marketing manager, Kangaroo Brands Inc., Milwaukee, WI. "It's a patented pita already cut and open, making it easy for deli operators to fill a pocket with meats, cheeses and salads. Plus, the pockets are made with whole grains and flaxseed, so they are tasty and healthy."

Small is big, according to the NRA's "What's Hot, What's Not" survey. Small plates, tapas and mezze ranked fourth overall in the 194-item survey.

Megan Warmouth, a product manager at Gordon Hanrahan, Chicago, IL, is the spokesperson for Ralcorp Frozen Bakery Products, NatureSweet Tomatoes, Hellmann's Real Mayonnaise and Knorr Soups.

"Mini sandwiches are hot now, especially when used to create signature sandwiches and upscale your menu," Warmouth says. Ralcorp's new Pannè Provincio Artisan Rolls, which ship frozen and slack out in 10 minutes, come in French, French seeded, multi-grain and ciabatta varieties. "They can be used in a number of ways," she continues. "For example, operators can make mini chicken pesto sandwiches with the ciabatta

or hot mini meatloaf sandwiches topped with caramelized onions with the multigrain."

Whole Foods Markets has tapped into this trend. The natural foods retailer offers a Petite Baguette Sandwich Platter on its catering menu at select stores. The sandwiches are sliced into bite-sized portions to serve 10 or 20 people, and fashionable fillings include curried chicken salad, hummus and vegetables, grilled chicken with chipotle aioli, and roast beef with Gorgonzola cheese.

## 2. Add Zippy Condiments

Today's customers are searching for bolder flavors. According to the IDDBA's *What's In Store 2008*, 34.9 percent of the respondents who participated in the association's December 2006 Foodservice Opportunities survey indicated they would be more likely to visit the deli if the food were more flavorful. Operators can add more zip to a sandwich by offering a wider range of interesting condiments.

Condiments can add an upscale touch without altering bottom-line profits, adding only pennies to the cost of making a sandwich. The payoff, however, adds up to big dollars in sandwich sales.

Many condiment manufacturers have responded to this demand with uniquely flavored products. For example, Rose City Delicacies LLC, Portland, OR, has introduced two spirited mustards, Grand Marnier and Tangy Triple Sec.



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"These aren't yellow mustard or common Dijon," says Diane Van Laningham, who owns the company with her brother. "These mustards have a zing for flavor and an egg-and-butter base that replaces the need for mayonnaise on a sandwich. That appeals to health-conscious consumers."

As for usage, Van Laningham recommends pairing the orange zest-flavored Grand Marnier Creamy Mustard in a ham and Brie cheese sandwich.

Delis offering pre-made sandwiches can add zesty flavor without worrying about soggy bread by including one of Sara Lee's single-serve sandwich dressings. Launched this spring, the company's line of Fresh Ideas Salad Dressings include Sweet Honey Mustard, Creamy Ranch, Savory Horseradish with Garlic, Smokey Bacon, Zesty Pepper Trio Mustard and Sub Sandwich Oil.

These restaurant-style dressings come in individual squeeze packs—perfect for the on-the-go diner who wants convenience and taste. "We suggest merchandising them in one of two ways," Becherer says. "First, operators can place boxes containing eight of these 1/2-ounce portion packs on the deli counter and sell them individually. Or, the dressings, which are sold in bulk packs of 100, can be merchandised with the sandwich for a small additional charge."

Last year, Conroy Foods, Pittsburgh, PA, introduced its Deli Bistro line of sauces. The line offers three Asian flavors—Oriental Mustard, Hot Ginger and Sweet Chili Pepper, and three Hispanic flavors—Roasted Chipotle, Cilantro & Lime and Mesquite Smoked. "These ethnic-inspired sauces allow deli operators to create one-of-a-kind signature sandwiches in the deli," says president Jim Conroy.

Beyond these new flavors, Conroy suggests co-branding the company's Beano brand sauces around a holiday sandwich theme. "Feature an Italian sandwich made with Beano's Original Submarine Dressing, called 'Little Italy,' for Columbus Day," he suggests. "Or, a corned beef sandwich made with Beano's Heavenly Horseradish Sauce, called 'Luck of the Irish,' for St. Patrick's Day. Or, a roasted chicken wrap made with Beano's Authentic Southwest Sauce, called 'Grande Deluxe,' for Cinco de Mayo. Featuring a promotional sandwich once a quarter around a holiday will increase both sandwich and condiment sales."

### 3. Satisfy Gourmet Tastes

According to the IDDBA's *What's In Store 2008*, sandwich concepts emerging from today's delis include the use of premium, authentic and aged meats, and specialty cheeses such as Brie and cave-aged blues.

Fiorucci Foods Inc., Colonial Heights, VA, has introduced its Rostello line of European-style cooked turkey, ham and pork products, which are marinated in a spice mix, glazed with a balsamic reduction and then slow-roasted over an open flame. "This is a new area for us," says John Jack, vice president sales and marketing. "It's propelled by the growth in specialty sandwiches. To assist consumers in their search for 'that something different,' place premium meats front and center in the deli case. Also, use these products to create a 'Special Sandwich of the Day' and promote it to customers with clear signage."

**Slicer Tidbits**

**W**hen it comes to slicers that cut deli meats and cheeses, sanitation and reliability are two main concerns. "Many slicers today are aluminum, which is a porous metal and cannot be cleaned 100 percent as stainless steel can," explains Bob Adams, vice president sales and marketing, Globe Food Equipment Co., Dayton, OH. "As for reliability, slicers in which the knife is driven by metal gears tend to break less often than those that are belt-driven. Overall, you'll keep your slicer in operation better and longer by sharpening the knife, cleaning the slicer and oiling it on a regular basis." **DB**

Italian-style meats continue to gain in popularity within the realm of specialty sandwiches. "Gran Biscotto is a whole-muscle steam-cooked ham that is ideal for paninis," says Pierre Zreik, chief operating officer, Rovagnati USA, Clifton, NJ. "It can also be sliced and layered with Fontina cheese on brioche to make a cold sandwich. Mortadella is another staple for paninis, while porchetta, a roasted double pork loin, is ideal for making a triple-layer sandwich along with salami, Fontina and marinated pitted olives."

Rovagnati also has just introduced a smoked prosciutto called speck. "It's a smoked, dry-cured product 1- to 1 1/2-inches-wide like bacon," says Zreik. "Use speck, for example, with goat cheese, walnut butter and a semolina or whole wheat roll to make a sandwich."

Signage is a critical tool in the effort to educate and entice customers to try specialty meats. "Use buzz words on signage as 'way finding' signs that help customers navigate through deli selections," Zreik says. "For example, for Gran Biscotto, words like 'steam-cooked ham,' 'less salt,' 'sweet taste,' and 'good with...' are ideal."

Sampling is also key, Zreik says. "Slice a piece in front of the customer and let them taste the product," he advises. "You really need that operator interaction, especially with new or unknown products."

Today, upscale operators are using sliced Italian cheeses, Gruyères, Fontinas and Brie in gourmet sandwiches. "Unique cheeses combined with different meat-and-vegetable combinations are in vogue," says Thomas Hauswirth, marketing manager, Emmi USA Inc., Valley Cottage, NY.

Like meats, aged and flavored cheeses, are in demand. "The attitude about cheese in some delis is to stick with the basics for sandwich making," says Michael Evan Blum, director, Beemster USA, Jersey City, NY. "Others want to offer something new and exciting. We've found that consumers are willing to pay more for a sandwich made with a cheese that has an intriguing flavor."

In March, Beemster introduced its wasabi-flavored traditional Dutch cheese. "It's an interesting blend of yellow with a hint of green," Blum says. In addition to this cheese, Beemster created three other unique cheeses—one flavored with nettles, one laced with mustard seed and one infused with garlic.

According to Blum, Americans think of cheese as an added ingredient, while Europeans think of cheese as the main filling in a sandwich. "Not all customers will make this jump in thinking, but some will," Blum says. "Our wasabi-flavored, mustard seed or nettles-flavored cheeses are robust enough to make sandwiches on their own, along with an artisan or whole grain bread and good European butter."

### 4. Offer Everyday Healthy Options

Although premium brands are popular, nearly 50 percent of consumers are not purchasing premium-priced deli meats from the service case, according to research data from Counter Intelligence, an annual proprietary study of over 12,000 deli consumers nationwide conducted by Jennie-O Turkey Store, Willmar, MN. Armed with this information, Jennie-O Turkey Store seized the opportunity to increase sales of its deli meats by introducing Deli Favorites, an affordable, healthy product for everyday meal solutions.

Consisting of oven roasted turkey breast, hickory-smoked turkey breast, tender browned turkey breast, and reduced-sodium turkey breast, the line has earned the American Heart Association (AHA) stamp of approval. The fat, sodium and calories of a two-ounce serving are clearly indicated on the packaging label.

"When we looked at the market, we wanted to provide customers with an afford-

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able product as well as a healthy option," says Jennifer Templer, associate product manager-deli division. "Retail prices may vary on Deli Favorites, but generally the products have a mid-range price point with respect to the premium and value items present in the case."

To further drive home the product's healthy message, sandwiches can be prepared using whole grain breads and fresh produce, and then paired with quality, healthy sides. By bundling nutritious sandwiches with healthy sides as a complete meal solution, delis are doing their part to help consumers feel good about their food purchases—all for a reasonable price.

Fend off everyday boredom by incorporating ingredients that add excitement, such as tart apples, guacamole, olive tapenade or roasted peppers. Artisan and specialty breads also lend interest.

"Sandwiches are not just white bread, mayo and lunchmeat anymore," Templer says. "A little creativity goes a long way in the kitchen."

### 5. Vary The Veggies And Toppings

Often, it is the little things that turn an ordinary sandwich into something extraordinary. For example, Zingerman's Deli in Ann Arbor, MI, offers a selection of spreads and

veggies as add-ons for its sandwiches at a nominal per-item price. Choices include tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, preserves, hummus, carrots, piquillo peppers, avocado spread, roasted red pepper sauce and pesto.

Greenhouse-grown NatureSweet Tomatoes provide the perfect sandwich complement. "Many operators are using cherry tomatoes as sides in place of salty chips or in the filling of sandwiches," says Gordon Hanrahan's Warmouth. "Cherry tomatoes can be chopped and added to chilies, black beans, shredded cheese and scrambled eggs to make a Southwestern-style breakfast wrap."

Hummus is another fast-growing category. "It spreads easily and ties in well with many deli offerings, including olives, feta and other assorted, small-cut vegetables," says Kangaroo Brands' Kashou.

Many consumers looking for flavor and crunch without the fat and calories are turning to pickles. Pickle flavors, ranging from dill, spicy hot, picante, garlic, and tart and tangy, can really pick up the pace of a sandwich.

"Our pickles come in five flavors, four sizes, with four retail price points," says Stef Espiritu, vice president of sales and marketing, Van Holten's Inc., based in Milwaukee, WI. "The pickles are packaged in single-serve, stand-up pouches for easy merchandising on the deli counter and informal bundling with sandwiches."

dising on the deli counter and informal bundling with sandwiches."


### 6. Bundle Sandwiches As A Meal Deal

At Jungle Jim's International Market, an upscale single-store retailer in Fairfield, OH, sandwiches are bundled with other items and marketed at an all-inclusive price. The store's box lunch program features 10 sandwich choices, each paired with a choice of a deli salad, pickle and frosted chocolate brownie with Ghiradelli chocolate chips. Sandwiches include such combinations as ham with a jalapeño Cheddar spread, roast beef and Cheddar with a pub-style horseradish sauce, and grilled chicken and Monterey Jack cheese with a cranberry-orange spread.

According to the IDDBA's *What's In Store 2008*, 83.8 percent of supermarket delis have self-service refrigerated cases, 67.2 percent have soup bars, and 56.8 percent have salad bars. "Sandwiches and soups or salads make an ideal meal deal that can easily be implemented in the deli," says Gordon Hanrahan's Warmouth. "Combinations like this are profitable because they command a higher price point than soups, salads and sandwiches by themselves."

Warmouth shares three tips for combos

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from Unilever Foodsolutions, parent company of Hellman's Real Mayonnaise and Knorr Soups. "First, customers can't buy combos if they don't know they're available," she says. "Second, a good rule of thumb is that combos should offer the customer a clear savings of at least 30 cents. The greater the savings, the greater the combo's draw. Third, a combo should be versatile—a bowl of soup with a half sandwich or small salad, or an 'add on' cup of soup or side salad with a sandwich or entrée salad for an incremental cost."

As far as implementing a combo or meal bundling program, Warmouth cites these additional recommendations from Unilever Foodsolutions. "Analyze the deli's menu," she says. "How many soups, salads and sandwiches are currently on the menu? Are combos currently menus? If so, are they actively being promoted? Think beyond the standard 'take two' combos. Offer suggestions such as healthy combos. Low-fat soup and fat-free dressings are an example of thinking beyond generic."

Sandwich combos also can be component driven for consumers to make themselves. "Sandwiches are the No. 1 lunch and No. 2 dinner item," Sara Lee's Becherer says. "Make it easy for customers to prepare sandwiches for dinner by merchandising a pound of meat, a half pound of cheese, condiments, chips or a deli salad, and a beverage for a meal deal. Physically group the items next to one another, and use signage or an ad in the chain's flyer to announce the deal."

## 7. Sell 'Em Hot

Consumers want delis to offer better hot sandwiches, according to the IDDBA's Food-service Opportunities survey. Approximately half of the respondents, 50.7 percent, indicated they would be more likely to visit supermarket delis and hot food sections if they served great hot sandwiches.

Raley's, a privately owned supermarket chain headquartered in West Sacramento, CA, introduced a menu of hot panini and gourmet sandwiches in 2006. Customers looking for an on-the-go meal can choose from 13 delicious sandwiches, including five hot grilled panini sandwiches. Panini choices include the Tahoe Panini—honey ham, Brie, sliced apples and stone-ground mustard on a ciabatta roll—and the Napa Panini—prosciutto, fresh Mozzarella and Parmesan, tomatoes and fresh basil leaves on flatbread.

According to Sara Lee's Becherer, 32 percent of people eat a sandwich with lunch and 18 percent eat a sandwich for dinner. "That's one in five customers who dine out in a restaurant for dinner that choose a sandwich," he notes. "There's a big opportunity for delis to capture this business."

Moreover, the hot sandwich category affords condiment makers another opportunity to showcase their products. "Beano brand condiments work incredibly well on hot sandwiches," says Conroy of Conroy Foods. "Operators can use the All American Sandwich Spread to create a unique reuben sandwich. The Wasabi Sandwich Sauce can be used on a salmon or crab cake sandwich, and the Original Submarine Dressing goes well on a hot grilled panini sandwich."

The *Evolving Sandwich Report*, published in 2006 by Technomic Information Services, Chicago, IL, singled out the rise in popularity of on-the-go breakfast sandwiches. Kangaroo Brands' Kashou notes that hand-held and breakfast foods are two of the faster growing trends in retail and foodservice. In early 2008, the company relaunched its individually wrapped, easy-to-prepare omelet pitas.

"In the deli, the breakfast category is untapped and ready for explosive growth as demand for prepared foods moves beyond dinner and lunch," Kashou predicts. **DB**

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# On-Trend Slicing Cheeses Turn A Profit

Bolder flavors and natural cheeses spearhead the growth of this category

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Today's customers who shop the deli for slicing cheeses are looking for both the "tried-and-true" and the "something new." That combination of loyalty and curiosity offers operators a great opportunity to gain incremental sales as well as turn customers on to the latest taste trends.

"The deli is still the place for regular cheeses such as American, Cheddar and Swiss," says Steve McKeon, president of Roth Käse USA Ltd., Monroe, WI. "All delis usually carry a low-fat and/or reduced-sodium cheese among their core offerings. For us, Munster is a traditional cheese most stores have behind the counter."

While these cheeses are perennial favorites, sales in this category are declining, says Mikael Horsboll, marketing director of Arla Foods Inc., Basking Ridge, NJ. "Most consumers want something with more exciting flavor," he says.

Horsboll's observation is right on the money. According to *What's In Store 2008*, published by Madison, WI-based International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), consumers are favoring natural over processed cheeses and are willing to try something unfamiliar with a bolder flavor. Furthermore, the IDDBA's report included the findings of a survey conducted by the California Milk Advisory Board. In this survey, 90 percent of the respondents said they liked cheeses with added natural flavors and two-thirds indicated they would pay more for a cheese if it had more flavor.

## A Yen For Natural And Flavored

"Consumers are looking for quality, consistency and taste," says Jay Allison, vice president of sales and marketing, Tillamook Cheese, Portland, OR. "Because of this, we've seen an upward trend for natural and flavored cheeses."

Indeed, sales of natural cheeses increased 10 percent from 2001 to 2006, according to *Cheese-U.S., March 2007: Executive Summary*, published by Chicago, IL-based Mintel International. "Naturally aged cheddars, rather than processed, have more complex and fuller flavors and give customers more



options for use," Allison says. "Our Sharp Cheddar slices very well, and our new flavored cheddars are now available in a five-pound loaf for slicing. These flavors include Garlic Chili Pepper Cheddar, Smoked Black Pepper Cheddar and Garlic White Cheddar."

Today's consumers are well traveled and therefore have a desire for a wider repertoire of high-quality selections. "Many customers have traveled to Italy, or to France, for example, and know what authentic natural cheeses taste like. They want to step up to these cheeses," explains Francesca Elfner, director of sales and marketing, BelGioioso Cheese Inc., Denmark, WI. "Also, more and more people are watching the Food Network and are educated about a variety of cheeses and their usages. Another trend is toward more healthful choices. You can use much less of a natural well-aged cheese on a

sandwich and still enjoy excellent flavor."

Mild Provolone has been a longtime popular slicing cheese for sandwich making, but now consumers are seeking medium and sharp varieties. "The sharp Provolone, especially, has so much flavor; it's like the mild, but turbo," Elfner says. "Many delis use sharp Provolone to make sandwiches with robust fillings like grilled portabella mushrooms and eggplant."

Although Smoked Gouda, Gruyère and Havarti have been available in the cold case, "they're just now coming into the slicing arena," says Roth Käse's McKeon. "For example, sliced Gruyère is used for sandwich making and for topping French onion soup. Some restaurants are using sliced Havarti for making Philly Cheese Steak sandwiches."

Foodservice operations often are the first to test market products, such as Starbucks,

which added an Eggs Florentine with Baby Spinach and Havarti breakfast sandwich to its menu. On the retailer front, a supermarket on the West Coast has incorporated Havarti into pre-made sandwiches sold in the deli, and a large club store now offers a smoked turkey wrap made with Havarti in its food court.

Other cheeses are lending a certain cachet to the sandwich world. "Upscale deli operators are offering sliced Fontinas and Brie for gourmet sandwich making," says

Thomas Hauswirth, marketing manager, Emmi USA Inc., Valley Cottage, NY.

BelGioioso's Elfner points to the popularity of Italian cheeses. "Sliced fresh Mozzarella is now a trendy addition to prosciutto and arugula on a sandwich," she says. "Also, slices of Asiago cheese pair well with sliced turkey, olives and sundried tomatoes."

### "Wheel" Information For Buyers

Variety is the key to a well-rounded slicing cheese program. "Different customers

look for different things, so you'll want to be able to please a broad range of requests," says Mari Meriluoto, marketing manager, Finlandia Cheese Inc., based in Parsippany, NY. "Also, offer both high-end and lower-end cheeses. Finally, source cheeses that offer good flavor and quality."

Arla Foods' Horsboll notes that consumers today are well-educated about cheeses. "If you say you carry a traditionally made cheese, it should indeed be traditionally made," he says.

Generally, high-volume cheeses display—and sell—best behind the deli service counter. "You don't want anything too esoteric behind the glass," explains Dorthe Schechter, marketing manager of Stamford, CT-based Norseland Inc. "If it's a slow seller, it could increase your shrink."

Smaller wheel sizes help increase turnover and assure fresh product. "Opt for a 50-pound wheel rather than a 300-pound one," BelGioioso's Elfner recommends. "The smaller wheel will sell faster and still make a visual impact."

Operators also should be aware of retail margins when buying cheese. "Would you rather sell 100 pounds of cheese with a 40 to 50 percent margin or 20 pounds with a 60 percent margin?" poses BelGioioso's Elfner.

Knowledgeable manpower behind the service counter also provides an opportunity to expand and increase sales. "Post a small cheat sheet on each of the cheeses so the deli staff can educate customers about a cheese's history, flavor, selection and usage tips," Horsboll says. "Sampling is an excellent way to encourage tasting and, ultimately, make a sale."

One of the best ways to merchandise a deli's cheese department is with the word "hand-picked," Elfner says. "Let customers know you've put thought into your selection. Make it your point of distinction."

As Emmi USA's Hauswirth puts it, "A gourmet consumer will always decide on upscale sliced cheeses."

On a side note, some delis price slicing cheeses by the half-pound rather than by the pound. This practice, however, should be clearly communicated to the consumer to prevent confusion at the cash register.

### Pre-Sliced Piques Interest

Not only should delis offer a variety of slicing cheeses behind the glass, but also in the grab-and-go case. "This way, you suit two different customers and two different occasions," Roth Käse's McKeon says. "For example, the time-rushed consumer can quickly grab pre-sliced product from off the shelf. At another time, if they're having a party, the customer may want to patronize

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the deli service counter to buy a certain cheese and have it sliced to order."

Time-starved consumers who don't want to wait in line have led the demand for pre-sliced cheeses. "They add a convenience to the deli department and are growing in sales," says Emmi USA's Hauswirth. "There is good variety on the market; however, there are some areas in the country where pre-sliced cheeses have not taken off, namely in the New York area."

Without the advantage of operator interaction, packaging takes on a more important role in selling a pre-sliced product. And packaging innovation is raising the bar for pre-sliced, quality cheeses.

"We've revamped our packaging to pro-

vide as much information as possible," Roth Käse's McKeon says. "This includes a photo of a sandwich recipe made with the cheese, recipe ideas and a variety of ways the cheese can be used."

Norseland has introduced Fresh-Pak packaging for its Regular and Lite Jarlsberg products. Cheese slices are arranged in an eight-ounce, resealable rigid container that protects the product and retains the moisture, aroma and flavor of the cheese. It also allows the cheese slices to easily separate.

Delis can also experiment with flavored slicing cheeses by introducing them into the grab-and-go case. "Pre-sliced packs allow you to bring in a smaller quantity and test consumer reaction," McKeon says.

By offering a variety of basic slicing cheeses as well as natural and flavored varieties, delis will be in step—and on trend—with what today's consumers are seeking. "Americans are becoming more like Europeans," McKeon says. "They don't want to deprive themselves of good food." **DB**

## Thick Or Thin

**W**hat's better? Thick or thin sliced cheese? Not surprisingly, the optimum thickness "depends on the customer," says Tillamook Cheese's Jay Allison. "Our products range anywhere from one-half ounce to one ounce in weight."

Thickness preferences also depend on usage. "There is a trend for thinner slices for sandwiches. At the same time, you'd want a thicker slice of cheese when melting, for example, over a hamburger," says Norseland's Dorthe Schechter.

Some companies have tried to market extra thick slices, says Arla Foods' Mikael Horsboll, "but the product has failed. The usual is typically a standard slice or thin slice."

Thin slices have sandwich-making advantages in the deli. "You can fold thin slices of cheese—meats too—and make a sandwich look bigger than if the slices were laid flat on the bread," says Bob Adams, vice president of sales and marketing, Globe Food Equipment Co., Dayton, OH.

When sourcing a slicer for cheese, Adams recommends a gear-driven rather than a belt-operated model. Here's why: "Cheese is thick, dense, gummy. As a result, cheese residue builds up on the knife when slicing. This will cause the knife pulley to slow, while the motor continues to operate at the same speed. This difference in speed between the knife pulley and motor causes friction, and over time, will increase the likelihood the belt will break. This won't happen with a slicer where the knife is driven by two metal gears." **DB**



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# The Roast Beef Revival

Premium lines, unique flavors and natural products are giving new life to this deli meat

BY LISA WHITE

Consumers' renewed interest in roast beef is generating more sales in this deli meat segment—a good sign in light of today's lean times. Though roast beef has typically held its own beside turkey and ham at the deli counter, sales at one time were on a downward spiral because many people were striving to reduce red meat consumption.

In an October 2007 database report, prepared by the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, in conjunction with FreshLook Marketing, based in Hoffman Estates, IL, roast beef dollars in the third quarter of 2006 were \$5.79 million compared with \$5.85 million in the third quarter of 2007, an increase of more than 1 percent. In comparison, turkey increased about 1.7 percent while ham experienced only a .2 percent increase.

"Over the last 25 years, turkey has grown to become the king of the deli meats," says Jason Grobbel, president of E.W. Grobbel Sons, Detroit, MI. "Recently, though, roast beef has begun to rival turkey in supermarket delis."

The uptick in roast beef sales can be attributed to several factors, primarily the marketing of higher-end products, the introduction of unique flavors, and the presence of more minimally processed products. Together, these trends have revived the roast beef category.

## Premium Branding

Roast beef behind the deli service counter typically includes a selection of top round "cap-off" and flat round roasts available in medium, medium-rare and rarer degrees of doneness. Grobbel markets a flat round roast beef, which is designed to be sliced thin and present a lean but tender beefy profile. The company's cap-off products—meaning the cap of the top round, the *gracilis* muscle, has been removed—include a medium roast beef and a premium, medium-rare product.

Cap meat is the common term for the *gracilis* muscle, which lays on top of inside round, according to Bruce Belack, vice presi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAVERICK RANCH

dent of sales and marketing, Vincent Giordano Corp., Philadelphia, PA. "Between the cap and the inside round (also known as top round) is a natural seam or membrane of fat. When the cap is removed, an operator has less shrink and a 100 percent yield."

Suppliers say the upswing in premium roast beef sales means increased profit potential for the delis. "We are seeing more growth in premium roast beef categories," Belack says. "These buyers are mainly Baby Boomers who are seeking higher quality."

Hand-trimmed of all fat, Vincent Giordano's Homestyle, Seasoned and Deli Smart roast beef lines are marinated, coated with a signature blend of herbs and spices, and then slow-roasted in temperature-controlled ovens to preserve flavor.

Although retailers had been trending toward one brand across all items in the deli, they are seeing the benefit of touting higher-

end roast beef lines—and branding their own premium-quality roast beef. "Years ago, the supermarket brand represented value that directly reflected a lower quality," Belack says. "Today's retailers want their own brand to represent the highest quality and superior nutritional values. Consequently, consumers are reading labels more than ever. This is confirmed by breaking sales records for Black Angus beef."

## Flavorful And All-Natural Options

Flavored roast beef is spicing up the category like never before. At press time, Vincent Giordano was working on launching roast beef lines with Chipotle and bourbon barbecue flavors. "We are trying to bring something different to the table to get new business. These flavors are exciting," Belack says.

Baton Rouge, LA-based Manda Fine Meats specializes in Cajun roast beef, which

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the company originated. The company also offers a variety of spicy options in its Four Star meat line and recently introduced Cajun Prize line of deli roast beef.

Manda Fine Meats uses post packaging pasteurization (PPP) when processing its roast beef lines. In this process, products are briefly reheated after final packaging to help reduce any cross-contamination. "What has changed in this segment is that the product is safer," CEO Bobby Yarbrough says.

In addition to flavored roast beef, many supermarket delis are incorporating natural roast beef into their lineups. Though small compared to the traditional segment, natural roast beef is gaining in popularity.

The primary demographics for natural products are female shoppers with children and the younger, food-conscious generation. "These consumers understand natural and organic foods from a labeling standpoint," says Charlie Moore, vice president of marketing, Denver, CO-based Maverick Ranch.

Belack says this is because consumers today are more aware of nutritional information. "People are more concerned with what they are consuming and are looking closer at nutritional information on the products they are purchasing," Belack says. "I don't know if all-natural is a good fit for all deli cases, but

natural and organic products are hot sellers."

John Bogert, chief marketing officer, Coleman Natural Products, based in Golden, CO, says an increasing number of consumers are seeking natural roast beef, which contains no preservatives as specified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Coleman's all-natural products are made without preservatives and from cattle raised without antibiotics or added hormones or growth promoters. In addition, the cows are fed vegetable diets.

Maverick Ranch's goal is to focus on its nine newest items to establish these lines in the category of natural and uncured meats. "We worked for two years on research and development and have invested a lot of money," Moore says. "To realize that cost, we will concentrate on these lines rather than develop other products. Natural is a difficult category to enter because of the decreased shelf life; we need to find a good substitute to replace the preservatives. If we can't meet or exceed the national brand equivalent in terms of flavor, moisture and texture, we won't put out the product."

Increasingly, natural roast beef is part of a deli's lineup. "For most retailers, it isn't the only item they offer, but it is an important one. If they don't offer it, customers will go

to other retailers that do," Bogert says.

Though a significant price gap exists between all-natural and traditional roast beef, consumers seem willing to pay more for "all-natural." Says Bogert, "For our consumers, price is not a factor. They will try to save money in other ways so they can spend more on these meats."

### Beefing Up Sales

Despite its popularity, roast beef needs to be properly marketed and merchandised in the deli, especially flavored varieties and high-end lines. One way to introduce new roast beef varieties is through a sandwich program. "Wegmans is an example of a retailer that offers a great sandwich program," Belack says. "They offer sandwiches near the front door, which is convenient for people who are looking for a quick lunch."

Manda's Yarbrough recommends focusing on the aesthetics of the deli case. "Overall eye appeal is key," he says. "Roast beef products should be well stocked and positioned so the face of the product is visible. Deli personnel also need to sell the product."

To stay competitive, delis must offer a varied selection of roast beef and focus on innovative merchandising techniques that appeal to a wide demographic. **DB**

## Authentic Cajun Deli Meats by:



Manda Fine Meats is not another "Me Too" product line. Manda's unique authentic cajun line compliments any Deli program, not just trading business but rather producing long lasting incremental deli sales!

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- ✓ Cajun Turkey Breast
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For more information please contact:

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

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# Deli BUSINESS

Marketing • Merchandising • Management • Procurement

## IDDBA Dairy-Deli-Bake 2008 Convention Planning Guide

New Orleans, LA • June 1-3, 2008



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New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau



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Chloé Farms offers a wide variety of olive solutions in order to meet the needs of your retail environment; from our handcrafted olive bars to our prepacked line of olives and our signature olive jars. Our line of unrivaled products include a large variety of Mediterranean specialties; such as olives, olive oil and antipasto favorites. Experience the exceptional taste of the Mediterranean.

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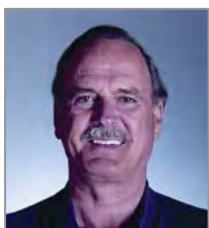
The International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's (IDDBA) 44th Annual Seminar and Expo will be held June 1-3, 2008, in New Orleans, LA—the home of legendary music and extraordinary food. The theme for this year's show is “Super Mardi Gras,” and “foodies” from all over the world will celebrate the rebirth of this beautiful city.

The IDDBA continues its tradition of program excellence with another world-class seminar lineup of top-rated speakers. This year's featured speakers include: Paula Deen, John Cleese, Malcolm Gladwell, Emeril Lagasse, Lou Holtz and Tony Snow.

## SPEAKERS



Paula Deen



John Cleese



Malcolm Gladwell



Emeril Lagasse



Lou Holtz



Tony Snow

## SEMINARS

### SUNDAY, JUNE 1

#### HEALTH & WELLNESS: THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN CONSUMER

8:00-8:30 am

Dr. Elizabeth Sloan, Sloan Trends Inc., presents an analysis of the driving forces and nutrition trends in the dairy, deli and bakery categories.

#### LEAD, FOLLOW OR GET OUT OF THE WAY (AM I THE LEADER I NEED TO BE?)

8:30-9:20 am

Learn 11 key leadership skills from Harold Lloyd, president of Harold Lloyd Presents, who will give you the insight, tools and techniques to lead and motivate your team.

#### WINNING HER WALLET BY MEETING HER MIND

9:20-10:10 am

Dr. Christopher Gray, vice president, Shopper Psychology, Saatchi & Saatchi X, delves into the minds of consumers to understand the influences shaping attitudes, decisions and purchase behaviors.

#### THE TIPPING POINT

10:30-11:30 am

Author of two best-selling books, Malcolm Gladwell discusses why change happens so quickly and unexpectedly, and how you can recognize the trends and activities that predict tipping points.

#### GAME PLAN FOR SUCCESS

11:30 am-12:30 pm

Whether in sports, business or life, you need a game plan. Legendary football coach Lou Holtz shares his philosophy of having a strong work ethic, paying attention to details and learning by asking questions.

### MONDAY, JUNE 2

#### ON THE EDGE: OPERATING IN A FLAT WORLD

8:00-8:15 am

Rick Goodman, senior vice president, Smithfield Foods, dis-

cusses share of market and market penetration issues to you help pull back from the edge.

#### FOOD TRENDS: THE GOOD TIMES

8:15-9:20 am

Carol Christison, executive director of IDDBA, tracks the trends and innovations impacting our business. She highlights the trends, products and behaviors affecting how we go to market now and in the future.

#### BAM! THE MAN AND THE MAGIC

9:20-10:20 am

National TV personality and award-winning chef Emeril Lagasse presents “Emeril Live.” Experience the magic that makes this man a best-loved chef.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVITY

10:40-11:40 am

John Cleese, one of the most influential comic writers and actors of the past 40 years, shows you how an element of creativity in the business world can reap untold dividends.

#### BEHIND THE MASK: THE FUTURE OF RETAILING

11:40 am-12:30 pm

Supermarket Guru Phil Lempert explores global supermarketing initiatives, revealing the strategies behind the tactics driving growth and creating new opportunities and shopping experiences.

### TUESDAY, JUNE 3

#### HEY Y'ALL— IT'S PAULA! FROM BAG LADY TO FOOD QUEEN

8:00-9:00 am

Author and star of two cooking shows, Paula Deen is a self-made success story. Behind that big smile and big hug personality is one of the sharpest minds in food marketing.

#### ELECTION 2008: FADS, CHADS & CHOICES

9:00-10:00 am

Tony Snow, former director of speechwriting for President George H.W. Bush and former press secretary for President George W. Bush, gives you an insider's look at the presidential candidates.

**ACH Food Companies**
*Memphis, TN*

ACH Food Companies Inc. is your key source for high-performance zero trans fat frying oils and baking shortenings. With trusted brands such as FryMax, Mazola and Sweetex, ACH offers the widest array of solutions available in the industry. ACH also offers a variety of other fine products, including Karo corn syrup, Argo cornstarch, Tone's spices, Twinings Tea and a full line of non-dairy cheeses. [www.achfood.com](http://www.achfood.com)  
IDDBA Booth #4821


**Alderfer Inc.**
*Harleysville, PA*

Alderfer Inc. is a manufacturer of quality pork, beef and turkey products, which are fresh, naturally wood-smoked, slowly cured and hand-trimmed. Alderfer products are never frozen, contain no fillers or MSG, and are fully cooked.

[www.alderfermeats.com](http://www.alderfermeats.com)  
IDDBA Booth #2155


**Alexian Pâtés & Specialty Meats**
*Neptune, NJ*

Alexian offers many unusual varieties of pâté, providing unique taste experiences. Alexian is the ultimate in freshness and quality: no preservatives, artificial flavors, coloring, or additives. Its extraordinary flavor selection has now been widened with the arrival of the new Herbs de Provence pâté, a chicken country-style pâté seasoned primarily with lavender, along with other herbs.

[www.alexianpate.com](http://www.alexianpate.com)  
IDDBA Booth #1759


**Anco Fine Cheese**
*Fairfield, NJ*

The specialty cheese division of Schratter Foods Inc., Anco distributes gourmet cheese brands such as Ile de France, Il Villaggio and St. André. For 70 years, Ile de France has enjoyed an excellent reputation in the United States for its Brie and goat cheeses. Il Villaggio offers 11 varieties of the most popular and traditional Italian cheese specialties.

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

IDDBA Booth #3315


**Atlanta Foods International**
*Atlanta, GA*

Atlanta Foods International is your closest source for many of the world's finest gourmet foods. We feature the most complete variety of domestic and imported cheeses, chocolate, specialty meats, and gourmet desserts. We also offer the expertise in assisting our food-service customers with menu development, custom spice blending and culinary employee training.

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

IDDBA Booth #4415


**BelGioioso Cheese Inc.**
*Denmark, WI*

BelGioioso Sliced Fresh Mozzarella, in one-pound and two-pound thermoform logs, help to remove a labor-intensive and sometimes dangerous food preparation step. The uniform slices are perfect for caprese salads or sandwich applications, and the thermoform logs are packed without water to ensure freshness and extra shelf life for operators. BelGioioso Fresh Mozzarella won Best of Class at the 2007 U.S. Cheese Championship contest.

[www.belgioioso.com](http://www.belgioioso.com)  
IDDBA Booth #1629



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Spring Fancy Food Show,  
Chicago, April 27-29, Booth #2400.  
800-927-9473 [www.alexianpate.com](http://www.alexianpate.com)


**Photography Opportunities**

The IDDBA Dairy-Deli-Bake 2008 presents a wonderful opportunity to take photographs or videos of products in the Show & Sell Merchandising Pavilion. Pictures and/or videos, along with the IDDBA's plan-o-grams and tip sheets, make it easier to remember the hundreds of products and actionable ideas presented at the show. When implemented, these ideas and products can impact a business operation immediately. Just be sure to ask permission before photographing an exhibitor's booth. If photography isn't your forte, the pavilion offers a free photo CD highlighting all the exciting displays and merchandising ideas, but attendees must sign up in person to receive it.

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For Hot Case, Cold Grab & Go, Cold Service Case



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 **Cold Service Case**

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Along with a comprehensive product offering, we provide customized training manuals and effective promotional and marketing tools that will help you create and maintain a successful Asian Foods program in your deli. We have a proven record of success in Asian Deli!



Visit us at  
**IDDBA**  
New Orleans  
June 1-3, 2008  
Booth 4223

**Best Cheese Corp.**

Mt. Kisco, NY

Best Cheese Corp., importers of distinctive European specialty cheeses, is your source for great cheese.

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

IDDBA Booth #1801


**Bunge Oils**

St. Louis, MO

With Bunge Oils, you can expect less of the things you don't want (trans fats) and more of what you do want (taste and performance). The Bunge team is committed to specialized, value-added food ingredients, technology and service.

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

IDDBA Booth #2757


**Butterball LLC**

Mount Olive, NC

Experience the taste and tradition of Butterball in a city filled with both. Visit us in the "Big Easy" at the 2008 IDDBA show and discover why Butterball is not only the "big" name in turkey, but also the "easy" choice for retailers who want to keep their customers coming back for more.

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

IDDBA Booth #2915


**California Milk Advisory Board**

Modesto, CA

The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) is one of the largest commodity boards in the United States and has received national acclaim for the effectiveness of its promotional programs. The CMAB is an instrumentality of the California Department of Food and Agriculture and is funded by the state's 2000 dairy farms. The CMAB's mission is to encourage California milk and dairy products consumption through promotion, education and research.

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

IDDBA Booth #2001


**Cedar's Mediterranean Foods**

Bradford, MA

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods...Extreme Mediterranean Foods for Extreme Customers. No makeover required! We're more than just hommus with the introduction of our new line of Tzatziki Greek-style yogurts and new fat-free hommus selections.

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

IDDBA Booth #1338


**Chloé Foods Corp.**

Brooklyn NY

From our own fields in Greece directly to you, Chloé Farms—a division of Chloé Foods Corp.—is proud to offer our full line of olives, Mediterranean specialties and oils. Our family of brands also includes Blue Ridge Farms' prepared salads, EZ Cuisine entrées, Joshua's Kosher Kitchen Old World favorites and Texas Superior Meats grill-ready skewers.

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

**Cryovac Division - Sealed Air Corp.**

Duncan, SC

Cryovac-Sealed Air Corp. presents its new Grip and Tear Bag and HangPak Bag vacuum shrink bag. The Grip and Tear Bag's easy-open knifeless design helps keep fingers, counters and utensils clean, and can be used for processed meats, cheeses and fresh red meats. The HangPak Bag shrink bag is ideal for boneless, consumer-sized cuts of processed meats.

[www.gripandtear.com](http://www.gripandtear.com)
[www.CryovacHangPak.com](http://www.CryovacHangPak.com)

IDDBA Booth #2548


**DCI Cheese Co.**

Richfield, WI

Don't miss DCI Cheese Co. at Booth #1308 at the IDDBA in New Orleans. DCI will introduce a new consumer specialty cheese line in partnership with renowned chef Mario Batali. Mario will make an appearance on Monday, June 2, to autograph his newest cookbook, *Italian Grill*.

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

IDDBA Booth #1308


**Emmi (USA) Inc.**

Valley Cottage, NY

Emmi (USA) Inc. imports a variety of delicious cheeses from Switzerland as well as cheese and chocolate fondues. Emmi produces Swiss-style yogurts in eight great flavors and a premium coffee drink made with selected fresh roasted coffee beans, which are ground to make rich espresso that is mixed with milk (available in four varieties: Macchiato, Cappuccino, Mocca and Light).

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

IDDBA Booth #4633


**Finlandia Cheese**

Parsippany, NJ

In response to growing consumer demand for bolder-flavored aged cheese, Finlandia is launching the "Black Label" brand with three premium aged cheeses: Emmental, Gouda and Gruyère. All three Black Label cheeses have undergone rigorous quality controls to ensure they meet the highest standards of our master cheesemakers. Like all of Finlandia imported cheeses, they are all-natural and naturally lactose-free with no added hormones.

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

IDDBA Booth #4433


**Fiorucci Foods Inc.**

Colonial Heights, VA

Fiorucci Foods introduces three new Rostello products, all featuring the all-natural, European flavor that has made the Rostello Roasted Ham such a success. The Rostello recipe for quality begins with hand-trimmed, premium whole-muscle cuts only, which are then marinated in a steeped broth prepared with more than 20 Old World herbs and spices, glazed and slow-roasted over an open flame. These unique flavors are now available in both bulk service deli pieces or in pre-sliced exact weight packages.

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

IDDBA Booth #2256


**FoodMatch Inc.**

New York, NY

FoodMatch is an importer and manufacturer of specialty foods from the Mediterranean. Pitted, chopped, sliced and diced are just a few reasons our products make convenient, time-saving and delicious ingredients. From olive/antipasto bars to prepared foods to retail and pre-packed deli cups, FoodMatch offers solutions for any channel.

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

IDDBA Booth #1647

**FoodMatch** INC.

**Great Lakes Cheese Co.**  
Hiram, OH

Great Lakes Cheese is showcasing a broad array of cheese varieties, packaging and retail programs that have made it a leading supplier to dairy and deli departments. On display will be an ensemble of shreds, bars, slices, processed cheeses and deli loaves featured in Great Lakes' storebrand programs.  
[www.greatlakescheese.com](http://www.greatlakescheese.com)  
IDDBA Booth # 1618



**Hormel Foods Corp.**  
Austin, MN

Our super-premium deli solution, DiLusso Deli Company, features premium meats and cheeses, a sandwich and a salad program. Introducing Hormel Grab-N-Go Deli Entrées in six varieties. Also featuring our Hormel line of bulk deli meats and cheeses, Party Trays, Appetizer Trays and Pre-sliced Deli Meats.  
[www.hormel.com](http://www.hormel.com)  
IDDBA Booth # 3715



**InnovAsian Cuisine**  
Kent, WA

InnovAsian Cuisine is your Asian meal solution for hot case, cold service case and grab-and-go. We offer a full line of fully cooked, convenient Asian entrée kits, proteins, sauces, rice, noodles and appetizers. Along with a comprehensive product offering, we provide customized training manuals and effective promotional and marketing tools to help you create and maintain a successful Asian foods program in your deli.  
[www.innovasiancuisine.com](http://www.innovasiancuisine.com)  
IDDBA Booth # 4223



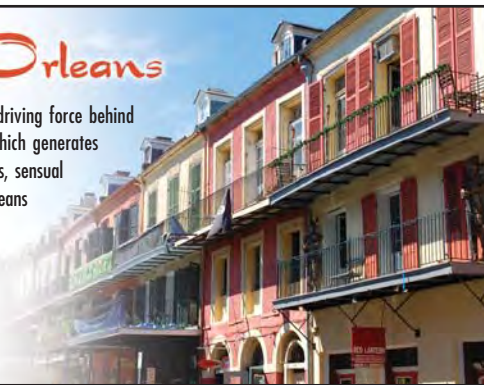
**Jennie-O Turkey Store**  
Willmar, MN

Jennie-O Turkey Store introduces Deli Favorites Turkey Breasts, a new line of deli turkey with the great taste and health-related attributes traditionally found in premium favorite deli products, now at a lower cost. Deli Favorites fully complies with the nutrition standards of the American Heart Association and satisfies deli consumers who prefer to spend a little less without sacrificing great taste or premium quality.  
[www.jennieo.com](http://www.jennieo.com)  
IDDBA Booth # 3823



## Thriving New Orleans

The New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau is the driving force behind New Orleans' most important industry—tourism—which generates \$5 billion in visitor spending. Today, the cultural riches, sensual indulgences and unparalleled service that define the New Orleans experience continue to flourish, as they have for centuries. The most celebrated and historic core of the city is thriving—the French Quarter, Faubourg Marigny, Central Business District, Warehouse and Arts District, Magazine Street, and Garden District. There has never been a better time to visit New Orleans.



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For over 30 years, Rovagnati has been a cutting-edge company in Europe producing high quality charcuterie. Deli counter products such as cooked ham, mortadella, Prosciutto Di Parma, Speck and other Italian Specialties are now available in the USA.

For more information contact Pierre Zreik, CEO  
**Rovagnati USA, Inc.**  
973-772-4446 • Fax: 973-773-4433  
[pierrezreik@rovagnatiusa.com](mailto:pierrezreik@rovagnatiusa.com)

Please visit us at IDDBA - Booth # 4657.

### La Panzanella LLC Seattle, WA

La Panzanella LLC welcomes a new member to its Croccantini family, the two-bite Croccantini Bites. This rustic Italian cracker has been reduced to a 1 3/4 by 3 1/2 size, making it easier to use for hors d'oeuvres, antipasto or cheese platters, and alongside dips and spreads. They are available in six-pound bulk cases in original, whole wheat, rosemary and black pepper flavors.  
[www.lapanzanella.com](http://www.lapanzanella.com)  
IDDBA Booth #2149



### Norseland Inc. Stamford, CT

Norseland Inc. has formed strategic alliances with Westland Kaasexport B.V., Holland, and Lacteas García Baqueros, S.A. of Alcazar de San Juan, Spain. The company is solely responsible for U.S. sales, marketing and distribution of Old Amsterdam brand of Gouda from Holland, and the sales, marketing, distribution and logistical responsibilities for Lacteas García Baqueros.  
[www.norseland.com](http://www.norseland.com)  
IDDBA Booth #2333



### Nuovo Pasta Productions Ltd. Stratford, CT

Nuovo Pasta Productions is an artisan specialty pasta maker specializing in chef-quality, handcrafted fillings using only the finest, all-natural ingredients to create unique flavor combinations. Nuovo also markets a line of gourmet sauces that accent our innovative pasta products, and are great additions as dips, spreads, toppings or marinades. Come see us at IDDBA and experience our Tradition of Innovation.  
[www.nuovopasta.com](http://www.nuovopasta.com)  
IDDBA Booth #2250



### Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese Consorzio Emilia Romagna, Italy

Parmigiano Reggiano is a 100 percent natural, additive-free PDO cheese made from the milk of specially fed cows in its place of origin, Emilia Romagna, Italy. Only wheels that measure up to strict industry standards earn the oval brand and words "Parmigiano Reggiano."  
[www.parmigiano-reggiano.it](http://www.parmigiano-reggiano.it)  
IDDBA Booth #4015

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### Prosciutto di Parma (Parma Ham) Parma, Italy

Prosciutto di Parma is a 100 percent natural, nitrate-free PDO product produced exclusively in the hills around Parma, Italy. It is cured with sea salt only for a minimum of 400 days. Only hams that pass rigorous inspection can be branded with the Parma crown.  
[www.prosciuttodiparma.com](http://www.prosciuttodiparma.com)  
IDDBA Booth #4015

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### Queso Campesino Denver, CO

Sample all of our authentic Mexican cheeses, including Asadero, Oaxaca, Cotija, Panela, Fresco, Quesadilla, Muenster Enchilado, plus our line of cremas. We will feature our new imported Menonita, made by Zaragoza, one of the largest milk companies in Mexico. We also will offer samples of our new high-quality chorizo, also imported from Mexico.  
[www.quesocampesino.com](http://www.quesocampesino.com)  
IDDBA Booth #3655



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## The Shopping Experience

Consumers today are looking for "experiences," and by making shopping fun, retailers can create the "shopping experience." It doesn't have to be dancing cows or races in the parking lot, it can be tasting experiences, mood shopping or special events.

Connect with customers by introducing a new twist or idea to "kick things up a notch." It's that connection that solidifies customer loyalty. Research studies have proven it is a lot easier to retain current customers than try and get new ones. At the IDDBA Dairy-Deli-Bake 2008, the best and brightest merchandisers have created displays to entice customers into coming back again and again to see what's new.

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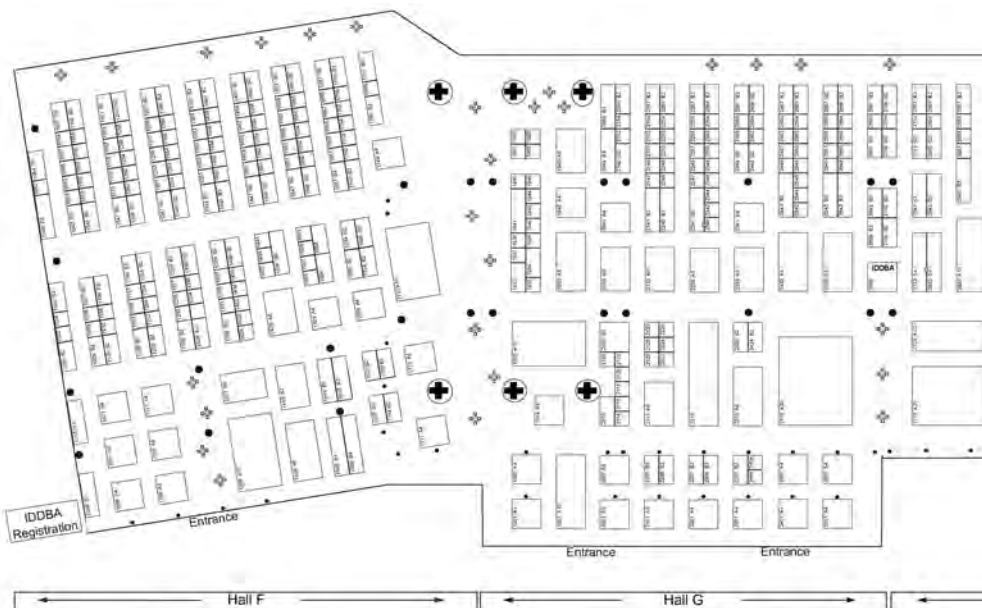
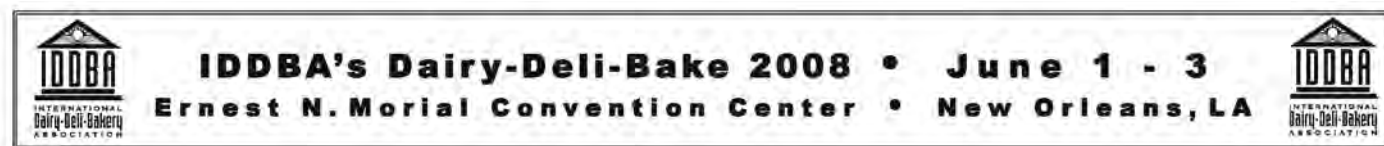


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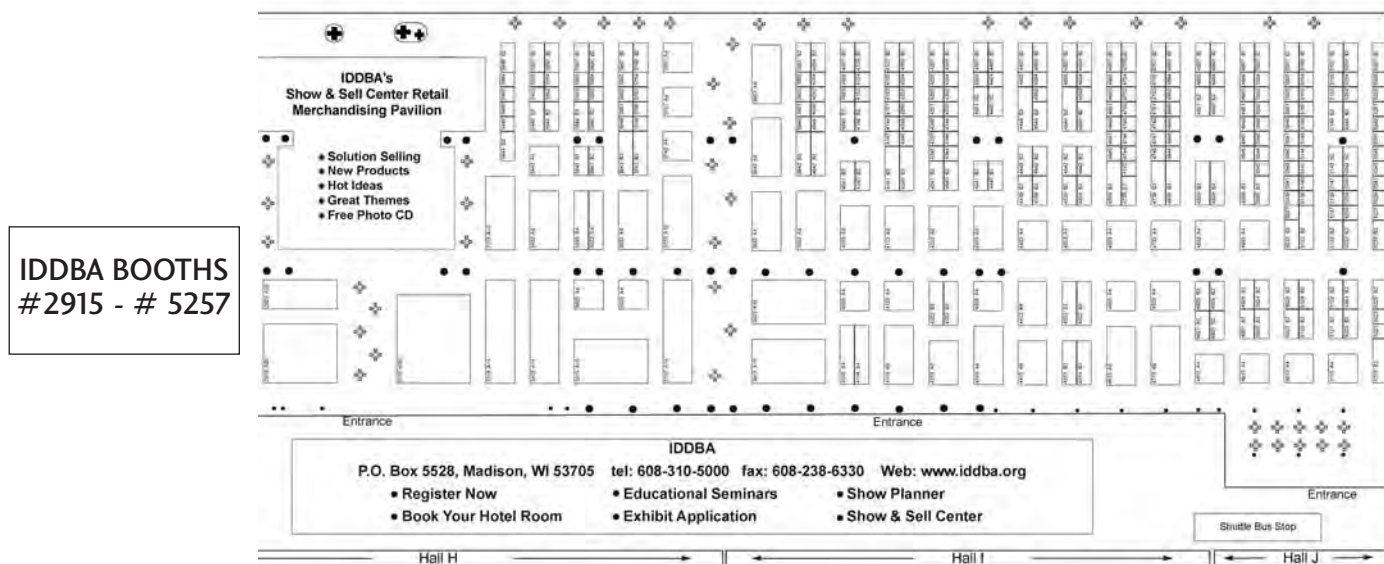
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 #1008 - # 2857**



**IDDBA BOOTHS  
 #2915 - # 5257**

ver.mar08

**Rovagnati USA Inc.**  
Clifton, NJ

CEO Pierre Zreik, who launched Rovagnati USA in June 2006, imports all products from Italy where the Rovagnati brand is a household name. The goal is to be a household brand in the U.S. Rovagnati offers the best steam-cooked ham, Gran Biscotto, and the best mortadella, Gran Mortadella Rovagnatella. In addition, Mr. Zreik brings in Prosciutto di Parma, speck and other Italian specialties. Please visit our booth to sample a slice of heavenly prosciutto.  
[www.rovagnatiusa.com](http://www.rovagnatiusa.com)  
IDDBA Booth #4657



**Rubschlager Baking Corp.**  
Chicago, IL

Rubschlager Baking now has 17 products bearing Whole Grains Council stamps. Stamps indicating 100 percent Whole Grain appear on six items, with the rest bearing Excellent or Good stamps. Rubschlager, whose specialty has been whole-grain products since 1913, is pleased with consumer recognition of the importance of whole grains.  
[www.rubschlagerbaking.com](http://www.rubschlagerbaking.com)  
IDDBA Booth #2344



**Sabra**  
Astoria, NY

Sabra—Discover the rich, smooth, delicious flavor of Sabra Hummus. Visit our booth to see how you can join in on offering your customers the fastest growing brand in the Mediterranean dips and spreads category.  
[www.sabra.com](http://www.sabra.com)  
IDDBA Booth #4625



**Sandridge Food Corp.**  
Medina, OH

See the fresh, delicious new salads, soups, and dips from Sandridge! These delectable, full-flavored salads and soups are all trans fat-free with many other better-for-you benefits, including preservative-free, gluten-free, vegetarian and high fiber. And check out the savory new dips for home entertaining that are sure to please.  
[www.sandridge.com](http://www.sandridge.com)  
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**Sartori Foods**  
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[www.sartorifoods.com](http://www.sartorifoods.com)  
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[www.leangenerationdeli.com](http://www.leangenerationdeli.com)  
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## INTERVIEW



Carol Christison

In April, Deli Business publisher/editorial director Lee Smith spoke with Carol Christison, executive director of the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI, about the upcoming Super Mardi Gras Seminar and Expo in New Orleans. Their conversation focused on New Orleans' rebirth and the speakers, programs and products you'll find at this year's event.

**Deli Business:** Many people I've talked with have lauded the efforts the IDDBA has made to support New Orleans—the most damaged city by Hurricane Katrina. It would have been so easy to walk away. I understand the city is ready for us, and it's maybe even better than before. What should attendees expect?

**Christison:** We are so excited about New Orleans and hope the industry understands that the members of IDDBA really care about New Orleans. We know that hosting this show in that wonderful city is important to the local economy and to the resumption of business as usual. We're anticipating over 8,000 food professionals who want to see the city's rebirth. At the same time, they'll experience the latest developments in our industry, sample the newest products, re-engage with customers and vendors, learn new consumer trends, and give themselves a professional shot in the arm. That's a tall order but very doable. The IDDBA show is the only food show that brings together the buyers and sellers that are totally focused on dairy, deli and bakery products and services.

When it comes to the city, attendees will see a renewal that's evident in the hotels, the convention center, the restaurants, the tourist attractions and the shops. We believe many people will wonder why they waited so long to go back. The city is ready. Millions and millions of dollars have been spent to remodel, repurpose, and re-engineer the venues that made this city so popular. You only have to talk to a few of the locals to understand how important our support is and to feel good about the decision to go back. It was the right

decision and the right time.

**Deli Business:** There is always talk about security and safety in New Orleans, and the newspapers haven't been kind. Are there any precautions attendees should take? Are all areas safe?

**Christison:** Personal safety should be everyone's priority, no matter what city they're in. Let's face it, every city has areas that are unsafe and it's foolish to venture there. There has been negative "press" about New Orleans. When I talked with the city officials, they quickly pointed out that it's very easy for a TV personality to visit and broadcast from areas that were devastated and may never be rebuilt. But, while showing the storm-ravaged areas, these same celebrities stayed in four-star hotels and ate at the best restaurants. They're saddened that the wonderful things about the city don't make the news. Sadly, the negative issues make better 30-second sound bites. Like all major cities, some areas aren't safe. We urge attendees to practice good personal safety habits, and we publicize those every year—not just in New Orleans. Stay in well-traveled public areas, don't go out alone, be aware of your surroundings, don't flash money or credit cards, don't abuse alcohol or become disoriented. Use common sense and the buddy system.

**Deli Business:** This convention has always been more than just a trade show, it is a gathering of people all working toward a common goal. It's a place where people from a wide range of companies and their products and services come together. The IDDBA seems to focus on people and ideas.

**Christison:** We try to offer a blend of programs, products and people to give attendees, be they buyer or seller, a competitive edge. We hear retailers comment that they can see new products in their office every day. That's absolutely true. They can. But they can't see all of the products, all of the vendors, all of the ideas, at the same time. That's the value of a trade show that's focused on your product areas. This show makes it easy to comparison shop and to find that new idea that's going to make your operation a little more appealing or a little more profitable. You need to hear or see things at the same time that your competition does. If you wait for the product to come to you, in your office, it could have already captured market share for the competition.

We believe that, all things being equal, people want to do business with their friends. And that's what we've done—brought friends together. We encourage exhibitors to attend programs and to hear what their customers are hearing. It makes a great icebreaker when visiting them later. If you can talk about a speaker, an idea or a great event, you've demonstrated that you have a lot in common, have shared values and shared experiences. That's an important part of building your personal network.

**Deli Business:** Speaking of great people

reminds me that IDDBA has another great speaker lineup. Can you give me the "inside scoop" about who we are going to see and hear?

**Christison:** While they might not apply the label to themselves, our attendees are "foodies." They're in the business, and it's important to hear about the people who've become successes in the food business, to hear ideas that will help to sell more food or grow our businesses, and to be challenged to learn and grow professionally. And, if you can do it with humor or actionable ideas, that's even better.

This year, we have Emeril Lagasse and Paula Deen—both food stars who created a persona and developed a public following. You need vision and imagination—that's where John Cleese (Monty Python fame) and Malcolm Gladwell (author of the *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*) come in. And, by the way, if you haven't seen John Cleese's Cheese Shop sketch, you need to go to YouTube.com and check it out. It's hilarious. Speaking of hilarious, we've added Lou Holtz, a very motivational coach who uses humor to teach important lessons. We have Tony Snow, former White House press secretary, who will give us the insider scoop on the election. Supermarket Guru Phil Lempert will talk about the "Future of Food Retailing." Dr. Christopher Gray, Saatchi and Saatchi X, will speak about how to use shopper psychology to get the consumer to buy more. Dr. A. Elizabeth Sloan will be presenting key findings from the new IDDBA research project on the "Health & Wellness Consumer." Crowd favorite, Harold Lloyd, will be presenting on how to be a better leader. Rick Goodman, IDDBA president, will be talking about "On the Edge: Operating in a Flat World." And, I'll be talking about trends.

**Deli Business:** How about what we are going to see?

**Christison:** For years, marketers have told us that we have to start targeting the individual consumer by offering customized products and services. This year, we're starting to see how big an opportunity that might be. First of all, it's awfully hard to do much customization when you're operating in a commodity world; but it is coming. One of the things we're seeing this year caught the imagination last year, but didn't translate into all departments. This year it's there. What we're seeing is more "Small is the new big" type products: multiple-miniatures, bite-sized eats, three smaller varieties (think tiny burgers, here). It started in restaurants as "flights" or "courses" and is starting to pick up, not just at retail but for consumers who want something different. Originally, some of the micro-breweries that offered five or six different mini beers caught the consumer's attention. If you're sampling something and don't like it, it's much easier to ignore a small sample than a big portion.

**Deli Business:** It seems as if the industry, even though it's growing at a rapid pace, is still an industry where people matter and know one another.

**Christison:** The IDDBA show is like a

microcosm of our industry. Each year, professionals in marketing, merchandising, selling, production and distribution come together for three days to exchange ideas, gain new insights, meet new people, and strengthen existing partnerships and relationships. Our business is food. And our attendees are professionals who take the business very seriously. They may change jobs or move to the other side of the business, but the relationships last forever. It's that "friends" thing again. We hear about how the Internet and conference calls and Webinars are the new way of doing business. They're important tools, but they'll never replace the value of being able to spend quality "face-time" with a customer or sample products or find that one special little entrepreneurial manufacturer who would never have gotten his foot in the door otherwise. This is the "Show of Shows" and it sells products.

**Deli Business:** What are your thoughts about our economy being in a recession?

**Christison:** Whether the economists call it a recession, an adjustment or a slowing of the economy, people are hurting. Congress has passed an economic stimulus plan, and the Federal Reserve has cut the discount rate, bailed out investment firms and lowered the rate for borrowing to 3.25 percent. The average citizen will gain a few dollars from the tax rebate, but not enough to make a real difference in their lives or soften the blow as they worry about investment losses. The big guys are getting bailed out and the little guy feels like he has an anchor around his neck.

As consumers struggle with the cost of home heating fuel and skyrocketing gasoline prices, they're hit with other price increases that come as "one-time fuel surcharges" or that they see as thinly disguised price increases. Some have said that the food industry is "recession proof," but you only need to look at the lay-offs and plant closings to know there is still pain. Higher food costs, higher energy costs, an overall weak economy, a mortgage crisis and an unpopular war are the things that cause people to lose sleep. Yes, people have to eat, but there's a reason \$1 meals are back in fast-food outlets; there's a reason people are drinking fewer \$4 cups of coffee; there's a reason more families are cooking and eating at home. It's the economy, and there's nothing stupid about the math. Supermarkets are poised to offer eating alternatives as consumers seek ways to provide food for their families.

**Deli Business:** Value is going to be a proposition many retailers are going to have to address. Is value just going back to offering cheap and sacrificing quality? Or is value going to mean offering quality products that are affordable compared to other venues, such as restaurants?

**Christison:** Value items don't have to be cheap or low quality. Value, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. If I don't have the time to cook something special and you can do it for me, that's value. It used to be the

three "p's: Price, Place, Product. Now it's the three p's—plus time. It's a time-price issue in almost every case. The value is linked to what the customer is willing to pay in terms of time and cash. The more time it takes to fix a meal, the higher the price set by the person doing the cooking. Price is determined by time, skill and ingredients. More meals are being prepared and eaten at home now because it's cheaper than eating out. In addition, you don't have to gas up the car to eat at home.

**Deli Business:** What about specialty foods—fine cheeses, dry-cured meats, upscale salamis and prepared foods?

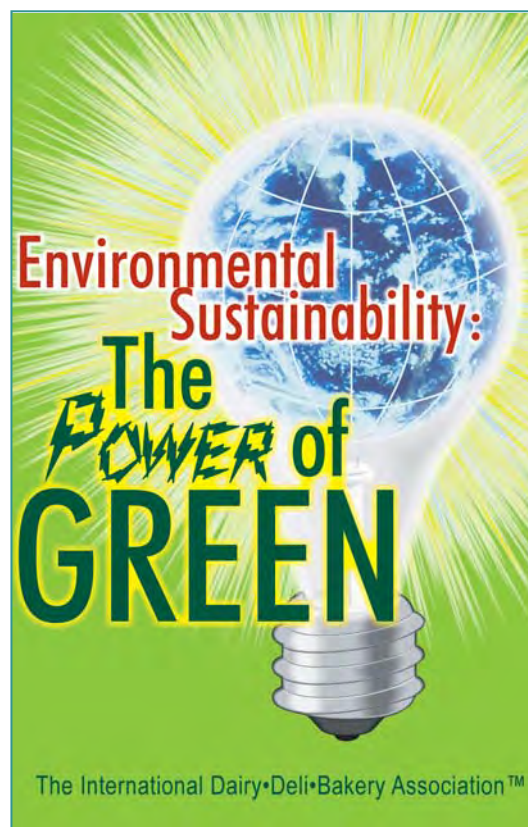
**Christison:** There will always be a market for upscale, gourmet or value-added items. Consumers may cut corners, may not have the money to go away for the weekend, may wait to buy a new car, but they will reward themselves. Rewards in the form of wonderful foods are relatively inexpensive when compared to a major purchase. Consumers might cut back on the number of meals they eat away from home or choose less-expensive outlets, but they still want to indulge themselves by experiencing new foods or buying special treats.

**Deli Business:** You know, sometimes I think I remember back a little too far, but in the mid-'70s, when we were in a gas crisis—gas was high and there were long lines everywhere—specialty foods in supermarkets boomed. They offered a special treat that could be enjoyed at home and were a value compared to going out to fine dining restaurants. Do you think we will be in a similar scenario?

**Christison:** I think people everywhere long for that kinder, gentler, simpler life when they didn't spend hours hauling kids around to different activities and actually had time to reconnect with families. I think there will be a resurgence of family dinner hours and, while maybe not home cooking, at least home eating. The challenge for retailers is to teach consumers to romance their foods by sharing information, merchandising ideas and prep methods. Teaching customers how to cook or serve or talk about their foods, teaches multiple generations. It goes to the heart of making dining an eating experience, not just meal consumption.

**Deli Business:** The information, especially the proprietary research the IDDBA has available, is tremendous. In fact, our writers use your research extensively. Are there any new reports coming out soon, and how can retailers access the information?

**Christison:** We're working with SloanTrends right now on our newest study. It's on the "Health & Wellness Consumer" and will offer insight into the attitudes and buying behaviors of this important target customer. By under-



standing their buying triggers and purchase patterns, we can better merchandise and better sell natural, organic and better-for-you products to the consumer. IDDBA members will receive a free copy of the Executive Summary. The full report will be available to anyone who wants to buy it, with members getting a deep discount, of course.

**Deli Business:** Have you done any research about sustainability? It's a hot topic; in fact, that is what our cover story is about, but it is also very confusing. Maybe worse is the feeling that you understand some of the issues, but are helpless to do anything about it.

**Christison:** Last winter, we published a report called *Environmental Sustainability: The Power of Green*. We had such a positive response that the Board has just agreed to offer the full study as a FREE download to IDDBA members. Now, they already received the summary of the results—this download is for the entire study. The information is so timely and topical that we want to get it out to as many of our members as possible. This is the first time we've ever given away a report, especially one as comprehensive as this. It includes best practices, surveys and a template for creating your own environmental strategic plan. The printed study is also for sale to non-members, but members can download it for free.

**Deli Business:** Thanks, Carol. It's always good to talk with you, and the coffee pot is empty. I'd also like to thank you and the IDDBA for getting us back to a favorite venue and a great city.

**DB**

**Stefano Foods**
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Stefano Foods presents its new 16-inch Take & Bake Pizza, an authentic North End-style pizza made with 100 percent real cheese. Available in three topping styles—four cheese, pepperoni and house special—this fresh refrigerated pizza is ready-to-serve from the oven in 14 minutes or less.

[www.stefanofoods.com](http://www.stefanofoods.com)  
IDDBA Booth #2715


**Sugar Brook Farms**
*Verona, WI*

Sugar Brook Farms showcases Kelly's Kitchen Gourmet Cheese Balls, a new quartet of party essentials in a variety of mouth-watering flavors. These include Asiago Rolled in Red Pepper Seasoning; White Cheddar with Chardonnay Rolled in Almonds and Hazelnuts; Chocolate Chip Havarti Rolled in Almonds and Hazelnuts; and Strawberry Shortcake Butterkase Rolled in Graham Crackers. Innovative packaging ensures freshness for 90 days.

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

IDDBA Booth #1949


**Swiss-American Inc.**
*St. Louis, MO*

Founded in 1938, Swiss-American Inc. is now considered a leading importer and distributor of cheese and deli items with import licenses dating back to the 1940s. Currently, Swiss-American cuts and wraps over 300 varieties of cheeses for thousands of delis weekly. Swiss-American also stocks over 500 varieties of imported, domestic and deli specialties daily.

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IDDBA Booth #2401


**Unilever Foodsolutions**
*Lisle, IL*

Unilever Foodsolutions, creator of Hellmann's, Lipton and Knorr, introduces sweet and tangy Hellmann's Real Whipped Salad Dressing, made with 100 percent canola oil. Delicious and nutritious, the product contains no high-fructose corn syrup and no artificial colors, flavors or preservatives. It's available in three convenient packaging options that will fit right in back of house.

[www.unileverfoodsolutions.us](http://www.unileverfoodsolutions.us)

IDDBA Booth #1546


**Ventura Foods LLC**
*Breckenridge, CO*

Built on a tradition of hard work, quality products and listening to customers, Ventura Foods specializes in a select group of related products. The company manufactures deli frying oils, bakery shortenings, salad dressings and sandwich toppings.

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

IDDBA Booth #2141


**Vincent Giordano Corp.**
*Philadelphia, PA*

"Exceeding your expectations" sums up the premium oven roasted deli beef the Vincent Giordano Corp. is currently selling to major retail supermarkets and foodservice sandwich chains nationally. In a high beef market, consumer demand is still strong for a premium roast beef, and Vincent Giordano's offers the best!

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

IDDBA Booth #3457


**Volpi Foods Inc.**
*St. Louis, MO*

Volpi Foods Inc. introduces Hot Capocola Rotola, a new addition to its line of artisan, dry-cured meat products. This rotola, or "little wheel" in Italian, combines thinly sliced Capocola ham and red pepper spices, which are then hand-rolled in whole milk Mozzarella. The rotola is available in eight-ounce packages through select U.S. distributors and retailers or via the company's Web site.

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

IDDBA Booth #4839


**Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board**
*Madison, WI*

WMMB will feature new cheeses from America's Dairyland. Examples include Seymour Dairy's Gorgonzola, Sartori Foods' Signature Blends, Arla Foods' Fontina and Saxon Homestead Creamery's world-class line of artisan cheeses.

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IDDBA Booth #1731



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# Sales Of Middle Eastern Foods Are Skyrocketing

Merchandise the healthful attributes of these flavorful foods to lure unfamiliar consumers

BY BOB JOHNSON

The trend toward healthier living continues to sweep across the country, and no foods have benefited more from this movement than those from the Middle East and Mediterranean. Most of the consuming public, certainly most of the deli-consuming public, has heard the word that Middle Eastern and Mediterranean are synonymous with “healthy.”

“The greatest reason for the popularity of Mediterranean foods is health-consciousness,” says Demetrios Haralambatos, executive chef at Davidsonville, MD-based Kontos Foods Culinary. “The Mediterranean cuisine is perhaps the most health-conscious in the world. I’m talking about east of Italy. The Italian cuisine has so many carbohydrates that some people would not consider it as healthy as the cuisine in Greece, Cyprus, Tunis or Israel.”

But many consumers are unfamiliar with even staple items in the Middle Eastern diet. “If you ask typical consumer about tabouleh, hummus or falafel, they’ll think you’re talking a foreign language,” says Mark Smith, director of the Wild Garden division of Cicero, IL-based Ziyad Brothers Importing. “But those same consumers know they will live better if they eat better.”

The promise of good health may entice consumers to try these foods, but the fabulous taste of these foods will bring them back clamoring for more. Smith recently demonstrated four different microwavable “vegan” vegetarian Mediterranean dishes and received positive responses from the majority of consumers who tasted them.

“A lot of Mediterranean foods have the draw of a flavor you’ve never experienced before,” Smith says. “Most of the products are ridiculously healthy. Most of them are



PHOTO COURTESY OF ATHENOS

vegetarian, even vegan vegetarian. But they all taste really good!”

## Hummus Tells The Story

Hummus, a healthy spread or dip made from garbanzo beans, is one food that tells the story where the Middle Eastern category is heading—or skyrocketing. Ten years ago, ACNielsen did not even have a hummus category, Smith says.

Since 2003, however, growth in this category has been consistently on the rise, according to *Facts, Figures & the Future*, a monthly e-publication published by The Lempert Report/Consumer Insight Inc. and

sponsored by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) and ACNielsen. Tracking U.S. food, drug and mass-merchandise stores (excluding Wal-Mart), Nielsen Strategic Planner data found that hummus sales of all varieties in 2007 (52 weeks ending 11/3/07) rose to \$184.2 million, a 33.3 percent increase over sales during the same period in 2006, which netted \$138.2 million in sales. In 2003, hummus sales took in only \$82.6 million.

The key to getting new customers to try this unfamiliar food is to offer hummus in a wide variety of flavors that are familiar and popular. “I would recommend carrying a minimum of 12 flavors of hummus,” says

Dominick Frocione, vice president sales, Ward Hill, MA-based Cedar's Mediterranean Foods. "Different flavors are driving the hummus category. People who don't know hummus try it because they like some of the flavors."

Cedar's makes about 15 flavors of traditional hummus as well as a new line of five flavors of organic hummus. All of its products are certified Kosher under the Rabbinical Council of New England.

"Plain original hummus is still popular,"

says Salem Kashou, marketing manager, Milwaukee, WI-based Kangaroo Brands. "Anything lemony is popular in hummus, and so is roasted vegetable hummus."

Traditional hummus has a gritty texture, but olive oil is used to make most hummus in the United States smoother. "The biggest change in hummus is in the texture," Frocione says. "The original hummus products were authentic, with more grit in them. Our newer products are creamier. Customers are telling us they like the creamier product."

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## The Challenging Falafel

The falafel has been a staple in Arabic and Israeli diets for centuries.

"A falafel is just a vegetarian burger; the base is garbanzo beans" explains Mark Smith, director of the Wild Garden division of Ziyad Brothers Importing.

This "vegetarian burger" usually has ingredients that make it far healthier than the common fast-food burger. "You usually put it in a pita bread, which can be whole wheat, and include other healthy items like lettuce and tomatoes," says Nassem Ziyad, general manager of Ziyad Brothers Importing.

But the customary way to cook a falafel is to fry it in a vegetable oil. "Unless you fry the falafel, it falls apart when you eat it," Smith says. "Falafel is one of the few Mediterranean foods that some health-conscious people will not eat. Everything in it is very healthy until you fry it, and then the health benefits go out the window."

But if it is fried right, the health benefits can be largely maintained. "Falafels can be made healthier providing the actual maker of the falafel does not work with oil below the proper temperature," says Demetrios Haralambatos, executive chef at Kontos Foods Culinary.

At 375 degrees the falafel becomes crisp, but absorbs a minimum of fat, according to Haralambatos. At cooler temperatures, the falafel absorbs too much fat. When the oil is hotter than 400 degrees, the falafel can burn. "It is crucial you stay within the temperature range," Haralambatos says.

This can be difficult to accomplish because most supermarket delis do not have automated fryers that guarantee the oil is at the right temperature while cooking. "We are now offering a pre-made falafel that has been fried and frozen," Haralambatos says. "The user can reify it, heat it in a toaster oven or microwave it."

It is possible, but not advisable, to bake falafel. "You can bake falafel with a layer of olive oil on the bottom of the dish," Ziyad says. "But falafel has traditionally been crunchy on the outside and softer on the inside. That takes frying."

Just because falafels are deep-fried shouldn't deter consumers from enjoying them. "If you eat anything in moderation, you'll be happy in life," says a philosophical Ziyad.

**DB**

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## The Magic Of Greek Grape Leaves

**S**tuffed grape leaves, or dolmades, are a familiar Greek contribution to Mediterranean cuisine. The leaves are filled with rice and a combination of mint, cumin, allspice and other spices. The different preferred combinations of spices are particular to different regions of Greece. Occasionally carrots or other vegetables are added to the stuffing.

"The filling in vegetarian grape leaves is very traditional," says Nassem Ziyad, general manager of Ziyad Brothers Importing.

Finding the right mix of spices for the rice filling is an art best practiced by people with centuries of experience. "Ninety percent of the stuffed grape leaves are imported from Greece or Turkey because the customers seem to like them more," says Dominick Frocione, vice president sales, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods.

According to Ziyad, stuffed grape leaves are displayed in the cold case, and can be set off with feta cheese or lemon slices to provide visual contrast. "But they can be served hot or cold," Ziyad says. **DB**

Pita chips, also known for their healthy attributes, are the natural product for cross-merchandising with hummus. According to Frocione, sales of both pita chips and hummus tripled during one of Cedar's recent cross-promotion campaigns. And George Kashou, owner and vice president of Kangaroo Brands, reports that whole grain pita chips are his company's most popular item.

"Hummus is very versatile, as consumers like to use it for dipping, but also for healthy snacking and for 'micro meals,'" says Rodrigo Troni, chief marketing officer, Astoria, NY-based Sabra Dipping Company LLC.

Rick Schaffer, vice president sales and marketing at Tribe Mediterranean Foods, believes hummus is the perfect dipping food. "Pair hummus with pita chips, carrots or anything you can dip."

Since Tribe Mediterranean Foods introduced its organic line of hummus products a year ago, the company has been registering increased sales. The line accounts for 15 percent of Tribe's hummus sales and is heading toward a 25 percent share. Recently Safeway Stores signed up to include the company's organic hummus in its natural foods sections nationwide. "It has exceeded expectations," Schaffer says.

The Lempert Report notes that hummus is a primary meal abroad, while Americans treat it mainly as a dip. "Hummus is only starting its journey in America, with household penetration barely reaching 10 percent," Sabra's Troni says. "So hummus still has huge room for growth as consumers discover how versatile and good it is."

Although hummus sales are setting records, Mediterranean dips and spreads include more items than just hummus. Tribe, for instance, also produces bruschetta, an Italian salsa-like dip.

Cedar's Frocione speculates that bruschetta could be the next biggest item to reap big profits, as more consumers become aware of

these healthy but flavorful dips.

"Mediterranean dips and products in general are doing well," Schaffer says. "They are fresh, new, exciting, modern and trendy."

**"PEOPLE ARE  
TRENDING TOWARD  
MEDITERRANEAN  
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WANT TO TRY  
SOMETHING NEW. IF  
YOU KEEP THE SAME  
PRODUCT MIX, YOU  
AREN'T OFFERING THEM  
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—Jeffrey Siegel  
Chloé Foods

### Much More Flavorful Olives

Nothing in the deli says fresh, exciting and trendy like a well-stocked olive bar. Consumers may think they know olives, but many are unfamiliar with the crunchy, flavorful experience of quality olives.

"The black Lindsay olives in a can and green olives in a slender jar are the two types of olives most consumers are familiar with," explains Jeffrey Siegel, president of Brooklyn, NY-based Chloé Foods. "Those are thermal olives. We sell perishable refrigerated olives.

It's a totally different eating experience. The refrigerated olives are much more flavorful. These olives are crunchier and have a nice bite and a nice taste."

At a minimum, a well-stocked deli department should feature four kinds of olives, according to Siegel. In addition to the familiar black and green olives, a deli should also carry Moroccan and purple Kalamata olives from Greece.

Kalamata olives are the most popular olives in the world, Siegel says. Chloé Foods grows its own Kalamata olive trees in the Greek Kalamata region. Olives from anywhere else cannot really be called Kalamata, he points out.

Variety is an important selling point in an olive bar, and Chloé Foods offers no less than 40 olive products. But variety means more than offering the same four-to-six products. It also means rotating in different kinds of olives regularly. "People are trending toward Mediterranean foods because they want to try something new," Siegel says. "If you keep the same product mix, you aren't offering them anything new. Keep the mix fresh."

Kevin O'Connor, senior vice president sales, New York, NY-based Food Match Inc., sees a continuing increase in items such as dolmades, beans—including large bean salads—and rice and grain salads. "What has become more prominent in the last year or two is antipasto or mezze items in the olive bar," says O'Connor. "High-end stores used to have 18 or 20 items in their olive bars, but now they have 30 or 40."

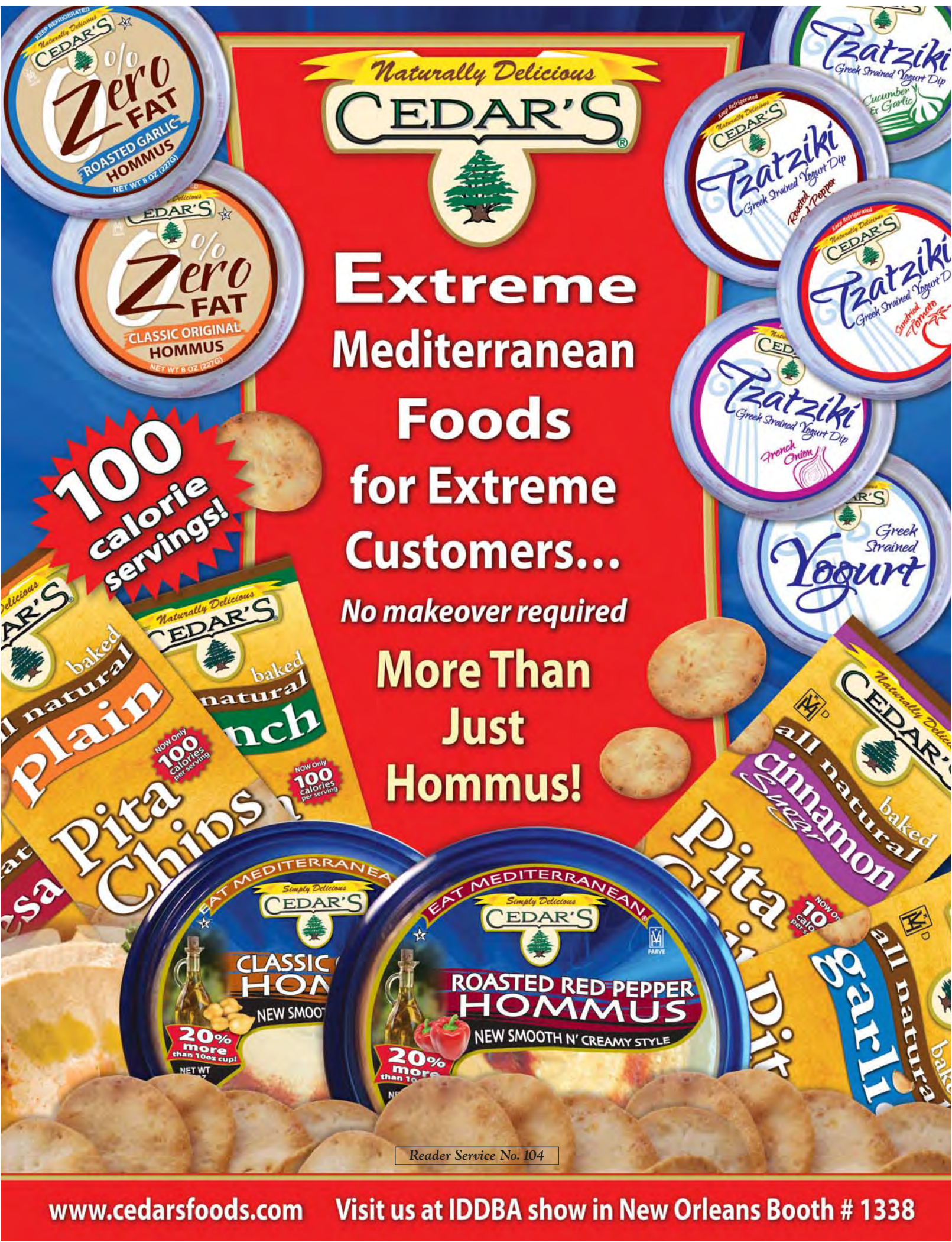
How much variety a deli can offer, however, depends largely on how much space a store can allocate for the olive bar. Often the bar consists of a pushcart holding different olives and related products.

"You have to have enough space to work with," says Heather Innocenti, director of marketing, Vallejo, CA-based G.L. Mezzetta Inc. "For an olive bar, you can start with as few as six varieties, or you can have a dozen or more. We do 12 to 15 different varieties of olives."

G.L. Mezzetta provides a combination of its specialty olives in a tub for retailers who do not have the space for a full-fledged olive bar. This tub allows the deli to display a higher-end selection of olives, but only occupies a footprint measuring 24 by 42 inches.

Regardless of size and variety, the olive bar must be properly maintained. "The olive bar should be clean and well organized," says Anthony DiPietro, vice president, Jeannette, PA-based George E. DeLallo Co. "Cleanliness is essential. The team should clean and fill the olive bar every morning, and should check it regularly during the day."

The olive bar should be checked every



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hour or two, and even more often during high-traffic weekends or when it's placed out of eyeshot of the deli area. "Everything should be full, but not so full that items spill over into other items," DiPietro says.

Placement of the olive bar is key when trying to entice consumers to try these tasty items. "An olive bar should be placed prominently near like items," suggests DiPietro.

Good pairings for the olive bar include Mediterranean cheeses, antipasto, cured meats or bakery items. DiPietro suggests coordinating the olive bar in such a way that contrasting colors draw attention.

"The interest in the Mediterranean diet has never been greater," G.L. Mezzetta's Innocenti says. "It is healthier, but it also has a flavor impact. We recommend cross-merchandising olives with like items—such as French bread, wine or peppers. We do a lot of pepper products like roasted red peppers, jalapeños or peperoncini."

### Ready To Go Crazy

Peperoncini, a spirited smallish pepper originally from Greece, falls somewhere between jalapeños and bell peppers. "It's not hot like a jalapeño, but it has a balance between heat and sweet," Innocenti says. "It is crunchy and piquant." Golden Greek Peperoncini, G.L. Mezzetta's No. 1 product, is most commonly found on antipasto platters or used to jazz up sandwiches.

Exciting the taste buds is part of the fun of trying Middle Eastern and Mediterranean foods. "Pita breads, pita chips, feta cheeses and olives are the mainstay products," says Kangaroo Brands' George Kashou. "More high-end stores will also have Middle Eastern items like tabouleh." Tabouleh is an Arabic side dish consisting mainly of bulgar, a variety of spices and olive oil.

Mediterranean salads, such as tabouleh or a chickpea salad, are good candidates to takeoff beyond one's imagination. "Look for a breakthrough in other forms of Mediterranean salads that capture the hearts and palates of Americans," says John McGuckin, executive vice president of sales, Sabra Dipping Company. "A line of Mediterranean vegetables, Mediterranean salsas and bruschettas will make a major impact as they bring tasty, interesting and healthy alternatives to snacking and entertaining."

Food Match's O'Connor sees an expansion in the range of spices in Mediterranean foods at the deli. "I'm talking about Moroccan spices or Tunisian spices," he says. "Things that are bringing the flavors of the world to the deli."

Variations of panini sandwiches can be found in Greece, Israel, Tunis, Italy and Cuba, and a deli should have at least four dif-

## Middle Eastern Cheese: Feta And Beyond

**F**eta, by far, is the best known among the Middle Eastern cheeses. "The feta is the biggest category of the cheeses; maybe 70 percent of what we sell in the category is the feta," says Ross Baghdassanian, chief operating officer, Sun Valley, CA-based Karoun Dairies. But even within the feta cheese category, there are important differences, such as products made from sheep's, goat's or cow's milk. The company offers seven different varieties of feta alone.

Athenos feta cheeses come in traditional and reduced-fat, tomato and basil, garlic and herb, lemon garlic and oregano, roasted bell pepper and peppercom flavors. "A well-stocked deli should have feta in both chunk and crumbled forms and in a variety of flavors as well as both regular and reduced-fat offerings," says Chris Urban, associate brand manager for Northfield, IL-based Athenos. "Feta can be used wherever a zesty-flavored cheese would enhance a dish—a topping for salads, pasta, vegetables and fruits. Other great uses for feta are to stir it into hot cooked rice, sprinkle on baked potatoes, blend into tomato sauce, crumble into stuffing or add to pizza."

Lisa Miner, New England regional sales manager for Johnstown, NY-based Euphrates Inc., believes that Kolios, from Greece, is an essential, if not perhaps the most popular cheese. "Bulgarian and French Feta are known to be more creamy and rich; however, they carry a price tag to match that great taste," Miner says.

The number of Mediterranean cheeses a deli should carry should be based on region and consumer demand. "Ideally, I think it is safe to assume that a well-stocked higher-end deli would offer a nice selection from different regions, including

soft, semi-soft, hard and spreadable cheeses," Miner says.

Ackawi is another important Mediterranean cheese, according to Baghdassanian. This is a versatile brine cheese with a squeaky bite. It can be used as a table cheese with fruit, or in sandwiches. When Ackawi is used as a melting cheese, it holds its shape better than Mozzarella.

Baghdassanian also singles out Naboulsi as a popular Mediterranean cheese. Made with black caraway seeds, the cheese is salty and cooked, and generally used as a table cheese.

Karoun Dairies has also developed its own product called Tyrone's California cheese—a health-oriented cheese low in salt and light tasting. "A lot of health-conscious people really love the California cheese," Baghdassanian says.

Consumers are ready to try new tastes, but may have less experience with Mediterranean foods. Sampling and providing consumers with usage ideas through signage, in-store cooking classes and recipes can help educate consumers and encourage purchase. "Cross-promoting feta with complementary products, such as bagged salads and salad dressings, chicken and pasta, is another excellent way to help consumers 'find' the product in the store and realize its versatility," Urban says.

Mediterranean cheeses can be effectively cross-merchandised with Greek olives, olive oil, Greek yogurt, Mediterranean-style breads or shepherd's salad. "These cheeses are growing in popularity and Americans are becoming more adventurous about trying new foods," Miner says. "We as a nation love food. We want change, like variety and crave new foods. These cheeses are proof."

**DB**

ferent types of paninis, notes Kontos Foods Culinary's Haralambatos. This minimum offering should include beef, chicken, ham and vegetarian paninis.

The single most important part of merchandising this growing category is highlighting the inherent healthfulness of these foods. "Bring the health attributes to the consumer's attention," suggests Kangaroo Brands' Salem Kashou. "At least get them to pick up the package and look at it."

Chloé Foods' Siegel expects the popularity of Mediterranean foods to last longer than

other food fads. "We're into a Mediterranean phase," he says. "Hopefully, it will last longer because Middle Eastern and Mediterranean foods are also healthy, nutritious eating. The whole heart-healthy thing is working for us."

Sound nutrition is why Middle Eastern and Mediterranean foods are more than a trend; they are an essential part of an entirely different way of living and eating. "The health trend is not a trend anymore—it's a lifestyle," Wild Garden's Smith says. "Mediterranean foods are ready to go absolutely crazy."

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# The Trans-fat Tune Up

Healthful and nutritious oil changes are taking place under the hoods of deli deep fryers

BY KAREN B. KING MCCALLUM

Americans needed a major overhaul in the effort to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes, which meant trans fatty acids—or trans fat—had to get flushed out of our systems. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) passed a regulation in 2003 requiring food manufacturers to list trans fat on all Nutrition Facts and some Supplement Facts panels as of January 1, 2006.

Since then, a movement has been under way to ban trans fat from restaurant foods to prevent clogged arteries across the country. In December 2006, officials in New York City passed a regulation banning trans fat from restaurant foods, and in February 2007, Philadelphia followed suit. In the wake of these regulations, other major cities and entire states are considering similar bans.

Along with restaurants, retailers such as Associated Food Stores Inc., No Frills Supermarkets and other major grocery chains have been tuning up their deli departments with oil changes. “What spurred the change was the labeling requirement,” says Alan Hiebert, education information specialist for the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA), Madison, WI. “Communities are insisting on zero trans fats. We’re living in a country that has an overweight problem, and consumers are hungry for information about what is in their food.”

But consumers haven’t stopped craving the crispy fast foods cooked in oil behind the deli service counter. “Fried foods cooked in our deli departments include fried chicken, foods in the potato category such as potato logs, corn dogs and burritos,” says Barry Holinski, director of bakery/service deli, Associated Food Stores.

Based in Salt Lake City, UT, Associated Food Stores is a cooperatively owned wholesale distributor to almost 600 independently owned supermarkets in an eight-state region. Last year, the company converted its deli operations to Nutra-Clear NT, a zero



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trans fat canola oil produced by St. Louis, MO-based Bunge Oils.

Typically, foodservice operations have used partially hydrogenated oils because of their shelf life and stability. Increasingly, though, supermarket delis are turning to high oleic canola, high oleic sunflower, soybean, corn and oil blends to lower consumers' cholesterol levels. Many retailers say these trans fat-free oils maintain food taste and texture, improve fry life, and result in overall cost savings. Better yet, they're helping patrons reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

### The Skinny On Trans Fat

Trans fat is formed when liquid oils are converted into solid fats during the chemical process of adding hydrogen to vegetable oil. Although partially hydrogenated fats and oils are the principal sources of trans fatty acids, trans fat occurs naturally in milk, milk products and meat.

Trans fat acts like saturated fat in the body by raising low-density lipoprotein—LDL or “bad” cholesterol—which can increase the risk of coronary heart disease. It also lowers the high-density lipoprotein—HDL or “good” cholesterol—in the blood. At the same time, fats and oils are essential to a healthful diet, but the total amount of fat consumed as well as the type of fat makes a difference to heart health.

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005, published jointly every five years by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture, the recommended total fat intake for adults is between 20 percent and 35 percent of calories. Most dietary fats should come from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids. Sources of Omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids are liquid vegetable oils, including soybean, corn and safflower oils. Plant sources of Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids include soybean and canola oils, and plant sources rich in monounsaturated fatty acids include vegetable oils such as canola, olive, high oleic safflower and sunflower oils. Oleic acid is a monounsaturated Omega-9 fatty acid found in olive oil as well as canola and sunflower oils.

The FDA defines “zero trans fat” as less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. A serving size is 14 grams.

### Zero Trans Fat Options

Today's market features a wide range of zero trans fat oil products, affording a variety of health benefits, flavor profiles and kitchen applications. “No oil is 100 percent fat free,” explains Scott Erickson, foodservice marketing manager, Cargill Specialty Canola Oils



PHOTO COURTESY OF BUNGE OILS

Group, Minneapolis, MN. “High oleic canola and high oleic sunflower oils have the best nutritional value. Retailers have to look at the nutritional statement of oil, and our oil is trans fat-free per serving.”

Cargill manufactures Clear Valley High Oleic Canola Oil, which can be used for deep-frying, salad dressings, sautéing and more. “Operators used to buy a frying oil and then a sautéing oil,” Erickson says. “People understand the value of having one oil in the kitchen for every application. It reduces the number of SKUs they have to carry.”

Like Associated Food Stores, No Frills Supermarkets, based in Omaha, NE, switched to Bunge's Nutra-Clear NT last year. “We are a 100 percent trans fat-free frying operation,” says Jeff Grier, No Frills Supermarkets' deli merchandiser. “Chicken is our most popular item, but we use it for all our deep-fried foods.”

An Omega-9 canola oil, “Nutra-Clear NT is the lowest in both trans fat and saturated fats. It has the best health profile,” says Bill McCullough, Bunge Oil's director of marketing. “You have to look at trans fats and saturated fats together.”

In addition to Nutra-Clear NT, the company's product line includes Pour'n Fry NT, a soybean/canola blend, and Amaizing NT, a corn/canola blend. Both products also contain zero grams trans fat per serving. Neutral-flavored Nutra-Clear NT and Pour'n Fry NT do not transfer taste to foods, while Amaizing NT reflects the taste that corn oil imparts to foods.

Nutra-Clear NT also is a multitasking product in the deli kitchen. “Operators can use the same oil for deep frying and for making mayonnaise or vinaigrette dressings in

back of house,” McCullough says.

Mel Fry Free Canola Oil from Ventura Foods LLC, Breckenridge, CO, is another low linolenic/high oleic high-performance oil, “Deli frying oils consist of canola, corn, sunflower and soy,” says Kevin Bowlby, director of national deli sales. “All of these oils come in trans fat-free versions, but canola is preferred because of its low saturated fat. Mel Fry Free Canola Oil is non-hydrogenated and provides the lowest in saturated fats of all deli frying oils.”

Memphis, TN-based ACH Food Companies Inc. began introducing zero trans fat products about three years ago and continues to add new products. FryMax Sun Supreme, the company's best performing product, is an identity-preserved high oleic sunflower oil. “The higher the level of monounsaturated fats, the more beneficial the oil is for health and performance,” says Tom Bandler, national business director for oil products.

The flavor profiles of ACH Food Companies' products vary according to customers' needs. “FryMax Sun Supreme has a neutral flavor; it allows the flavor of the finished product to come through,” Bandler says. “We have other products for customers who want the flavor of the oil to enhance their products.” For instance, Mazola ZT Cotton Supreme Clear is a blend of cottonseed and corn oils, and Mazola ZT is a blend of corn and sunflower oils.

Other companies, such as Warsaw, NC-based Whole Harvest Products, intend to keep their oils pure. “No blending,” says Wilma Taylor, Whole Harvest's national sales coordinator, referring to the company's natural soy products.

To make Whole Harvest's SmartFry brand, oil is extracted from soybeans via an expeller pressed process. “Our product is physically refined,” Taylor explains. “Using this process, we don't extract 100 percent of the oil, but we get the best oil. SmartFry retains its natural Vitamin E and Omega-3 fatty acids.”

Neutral-flavored SmartFry is most commonly used for frying chicken and seafood. “It does not transfer flavor from one food to another,” Taylor says. “Your chicken won't taste like fish and vice versa.” In addition to multipurpose SmartFry, the company markets Whole Harvest Culinary Oil for salads, sautéing and baking.

### High-Performance Fry Life

Besides improving the nutritional value of cooking oils, manufacturers are producing zero trans fat oils with longer fry life. Oils break down when heated and have different smoke points—the temperature at which

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they begin to deteriorate. Therefore, the fry life of oil directly impacts a deli department's bottom line. Ensuring oils are heated at the correct temperature and conducting tests to compare fry life are essential to saving money. Moreover, oil costs in general are rising due to volatile market conditions, so getting the most frying time for the buck is even more important.

"There are basically two levels of trans fat-free frying oils: economy and low linolenic/high oleic high-performance oils," Ventura Foods' Bowlby says. "Economy oils have the least amount of fry life, and the low linolenic oils fry like premium hydrogenated oils without that process."

According to ACH's Bandler, monounsaturated fats are very stable with just one double bond, which makes these oils last longer. "FryMax Sun Supreme has 80 percent to 85 percent monounsaturated fat compared to high oleic canola oil, which has about 70 percent monounsaturated fat. This makes FryMax Sun Supreme have a longer fry life," Bandler says.

In order for customers to compare products, ACH conducts fry tests lasting anywhere from two weeks to two months. "We'll take pictures of the oil and product, and chart its fry life so the customer can determine the results," Bandler says.

Before choosing Bunge Oil's Nutra-Clear NT, Associated Food Stores tested three different oils. "It lasted longer in the fryer and fried our products better," Holinski says.

No Frills Supermarkets also conducted several fry tests before choosing Nutra-Clear NT. "We factored in the quality of the product and the nutritional value," Grier explains. "It was the best quality—but not the least expensive."

Upfront, the cost per case for these high-performance oils is higher, but deli operators are advised to look at price on a cost-per-day basis. "A lot of times managers are looking at the cheapest oil to bring in, but that oil is spent after a few days," Grier says. "If you invest in a better product, you'll have better fry time. It's a much more efficient use of your dollar."

The ability to use high oleic canola oils for numerous kitchen applications also adds value to the cost. "You have to look at the total cost per day of the product," Cargill's Erickson says. "Just because a case is less expensive doesn't mean your cost to use the product is less expensive."

Changing the mind-set of deli operators to buy a more expensive product is key to making the transition. "Switching to an economy oil is tempting because of case cost; however, the consequences of having poor food quality will be even more expen-

sive," Ventura Foods' Bowlby says. "Buyers need to be aware of what is being offered."

ACH's oils provide multiple solutions for deli operators to manage costs. "Costs are a moving target right now. The oils are very volatile, and some are higher than others," Bandler says. "Our customers have multiple products—varying either from a cost or performance standpoint—to choose from."

According to Whole Harvest's Taylor, SmartFry is competitive in price and top of the line in terms of fry life. "If your deli operator uses the oil correctly, the oil will have longer fry life and save you money," she says.

## **"THE CHALLENGE IS TO GET OPERATORS TO CHANGE THEIR OIL PRACTICES. YOU CAN REALLY PUSH THE OIL WITH PROPER OIL MAINTENANCE."**

—Bill McCullough  
*Bunge Oils*

### **Changing Oil Practices**

To maximize the fry life of trans fat-free oils, deli departments may need training in the care and handling of these products. "The challenge for us is to get operators to change their oil practices," says Bunge's McCullough. "You can really push the oil longer with proper oil maintenance." To that end, the company works with customers to educate them about cleaning the equipment, changing filters and skimming the oil.

When Associated Food Stores proposed switching the oil in its delis to Nutra-Clear NT, some of the stores were indecisive. "We are coop, so we couldn't force this on our stores," Holinski says. "They had to buy into the idea. What we discovered is that some of the stores weren't using the right temperature, they weren't changing the oil properly or they weren't filtering it on time. Bunge did a lot of roadwork and training to correct these situations."

For No Frills Supermarkets, Bunge's on-site assistance made the conversion easy. "Bunge came in and gave us tips on managing the oil and usage, such as frying temperature, reducing moisture from the product and making sure the oil is filtered every three

loads," Grier says. "The oil is a little more expensive, but you will get longer fry time if you maintain it properly—and if your people are well-educated."

According to Ventura Foods' Bowlby, a training/service program is the only way to get delis to use the oil correctly, manage the fry station and help direct stores to offset costs. Ventura Foods Deli Division offers a Deep Fry Quality Management Program that includes fry station kits, training materials and store/staff training programs.

"Reluctance to make the switch usually comes in the process of learning about the types of oils available and making the choice to a more expensive trans fat-free oil," Bowlby says. "Hype was also a contributing factor in that chains were not sure if the trans fat-free move was a fad. It's not—it's here to stay."

Cargill also provides consulting services to its clients. "We take our cues from our customers," Erickson says. "If they need fry management kits, or someone to speak to operators, we can provide it. We can mobilize those things to help them train future and current staff."

Because the new generation of oils has a unique color, food safety issues also come into play. "Operators need to know when to discard the oil and to watch the quality of the food," McCullough emphasizes. "Old gauges may not apply. We have special color charts to better represent the clear, clean profile of these oils."

Health, performance and taste are the standards to consider when switching to trans fat-free oils. "You don't want your customers to know the difference in foods," McCullough says.

Indeed, No Frills Supermarkets took a cautious marketing approach at first. "We didn't want our customers to think our chicken would not taste as good," Grier says. "But we've had good customer reaction."

As the company moved forward, it placed 20 by 28-inch full-color posters in every deli department and used window clings for a while to announce the switchover. Print ads for its fried chicken regularly feature the Nutra-Clear NT logo.

Associated Food Stores prepared flyers and brochures and positioned easels on top of hot cases to inform customers about its move to a zero trans fat oil. "The relationship between the store and the customers is better because we are doing it for them," Holinski says.

As IDDBA's Heibert observes, retailers are doing their customers a disservice by not making the switch. "They would do themselves a favor to say they are promoting trans fat-free products and to inform customers about nutrition issues," he says. **DB**

# Italian Cheeses Pledge Allegiance To Their Country

Imports of inimitable cheeses offer consumers unparalleled diversity

BY ELIZABETH BLAND

The campanile is ringing loud and clear in the cheese community. At last, the antiquated Italian notion of campanilismo—allegiance to one's own proverbial campanile, or hometown "bell tower"—has paid off. Stringent regionalism has resulted in a country of inimitable cheeses with traceable histories and unparalleled diversity. Moreover, the cheeses are as unique as the people who make them.

As masses of Italian immigrants landed on American soil over a hundred years ago, they brought with them their culinary traditions as well as their allegiance to home regions. Cheeses are part of this immigration story as they are imported from all over Italy—some from rich farmlands and others from barren islands, some delicate and some sturdy, and many with names still written in the local dialect. Never before has there been such a variety of Italian cheese available in the United States.

Under the watchful eye of the Italian consortia and devoted artisanal cheesemakers, Italy's cheeses do not stray from the motherland. They maintain their campanilismo in several ways. Currently, 33 Italian cheeses are protected by the European Union's Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO), which guarantees a cheese's authenticity. The PDO designation is the equivalent of Italy's Denominazione di Origine Protetta (DOP). In addition, traditional artisanal cheesemakers produce countless non-PDO quality cheeses.

"Every PDO cheese has to have a complete set of production records," says Nancy Radke, director of the U.S. Information Office for Parmigiano-Reggiano and Fontina Valle d'Aosta, and president of Ciao Ltd., Syracuse, NY. "As food becomes more and more expensive and Americans become more and more worried about their safety,



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRANA PADANO

we are going to want to know where our food comes from.”

### In The Beginning

After the first wave of PDO heavy hitters—Asiago, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Grana Padano, Pecorino Romano, Provolone Valpadana, Fontina, Gorgonzola and Mozzarella di Bufala Campania—Americans became enamored with Italian cheeses. What were once humble products of a faraway land grew into an international powerhouse of jet-setting celebrities.

America's fascination with Italian food tipped off importers to emerging trends, such as Atalanta Corporation in Elizabeth, NJ. “We have been developing our Italian cheese program over many years,” says Tom Gellert, vice president of Atalanta. “I spent two and a half years living in Italy to help promote the program. Margaret Cicogna has played a crucial role in making us the most important importer of Italian specialty cheese. We carry every DOP [PDO] cheese from Italy and, in total, have over 350 Italian specialty cheeses.” Atalanta works with Agriform, Sommacampagna, Italy, to supply the U.S. market with several PDO cheeses, including Grana Padano, Asiago and Monte Veronese.

**“THE FACT THAT  
GRANA PADANO LISTS  
THREE DIFFERENT AGES  
SHOWS CONSUMERS  
THAT THERE ARE  
SUBTLE DIFFERENCES,  
AND DEPENDING ON  
YOUR USES, YOU CAN  
CHOOSE A YOUNGER  
OR OLDER ONE.”**

—Paolo Grandjacquet  
Saratoga Marketing Group

Dennis Panozzo, president of Monti Trentini USA LLC, the importing subsidiary of Caseria Monti Trentini SpA, Grigno, Italy, was attracted to the cheese business for both prospect and heritage. As a first generation Italian-American with family roots in the Asiago region, Panozzo

## When In Sardinia...

**D**o as the Romans do! Pecorino Romano may owe its name to the city of Rome in the mainland region of Latium, but today most Pecorino Romano PDO comes from Sardinia, the Mediterranean island where over seven million sheep roam the mountain pastures, plains and rocky coastlines. Sheep-raising is an ancient tradition in Sardinia, and when the demand for Pecorino Romano exceeded production capacity at the end of the 19th century, major manufacturers relocated to Sardinia. They brought with them their master cheesemakers and salters, and today Pecorino Romano is still made according to the original recipe.

Two of the best-known cheeses native to Sardinia are Pecorino Sardo PDO and Fiore Sardo PDO. Most of the sheep's milk from the island goes toward the production of Pecorino Sardo, and both fresh and aged versions are available. Fiore Sardo, also known as Nuraghe d'Oro, is a traditional hard cheese based on whole sheep's milk.

Through a rustic open-fire smoking process, the rind darkens to its characteristic color. The wheel is then cured with olive oil and aged for four months for grating.

Sardinian cheeses are made all over the island. One producer, Sardaformaggi, draws its milk from the north-central mountainous areas known for their rich pastures and quality sheep's milk. Besides Pecorino, Sardaformaggi also offers a compact goat-and-cow blend called Capradora via Atalanta. In the south of Sardinia are the lower plains where the producer Ferruccio Podda SpA is located. Cesare Gallo of Savello notes, “One of the best known cheeses in Sardinia is Podda Classico, not PDO, a combination of cow's milk and sheep's milk cheese.”

Sardinia's most unusual cheese is a tangy, creamy delicacy called Casu Marzu. The base is a Pecorino Sardo that has been purposefully infested with cheese fly maggots. In spite of American curiosity and sense of adventure, this cheese is not available in the United States. **DB**

recounts, “I was a mechanical engineer. The reason I got into cheese is that I saw the increase in the category of Asiago.” Panozzo recalls that between 1999 and 2007, Asiago was one of the fastest growing cheeses in retail. The hard domestic Asiago had made its way from retail into foodservice, showing up everywhere from bagels to Caesar salads. “That's what helped push the exposure of the name,” Panozzo notes. Once the name was out, imports rolled in, and consumers discovered the original Italian-born Asiagos, both fresh and aged.

Many core cheeses of Italy are still gaining ground in the United States. Such is the case with Fontina PDO from the Valle d'Aosta in northwestern Italy. Fontina is a historic mountain cheese made from the raw milk of cows grazing on carpets of fresh wildflowers. “The cows play a central role in the Valle d'Aosta,” says Ciao's Radke, “and because of that strong interest, people take their dairy products extremely seriously.”

So seriously that the region holds an annual cow-fighting contest called “The Battle of the Queens,” held in a soccer arena where dominant dairy cows lock horns. The cow that wins the heavyweight title appears on the front page of the local newspaper wearing a sizable bell around her neck. “She is a super cow,” explains Radke. “The cheese made from her milk will go for more money because it is made from super milk.”

Not to be ignored are the staples of the Grana family, including Grana Padano and Parmigiano-Reggiano. Marketing for these cheeses has been fierce as both cheeses have paired up with prosciuttos in campaigns—Parmigiano-Reggiano with Prosciutto di Parma and Grana Padano with Prosciutto di San Daniele. Paolo Grandjacquet, president of Saratoga Marketing Group, Saratoga Springs, NY, works closely with Grana Padano and Lou di Palo of New York's Di Palo's Fine Foods. Grana Padano is the best-selling cheese in Italy, and according to Grandjacquet, its volume has nearly tripled in the United States over the past 10 years. Grandjacquet describes the versatility and range of this cheese. “The fact that Grana Padano lists three different ages shows consumers that there are subtle differences, and depending on your uses, you can choose a younger or older one.”

On the Parma front, Ruth Lowenberg, senior vice president of Lewis & Neale Inc., New York, NY, works with Ciao's Radke to promote Parmigiano-Reggiano and Prosciutto di Parma through in-store demos, chef training, trade training and videos. The partnership of cheese and ham has proven successful. “It is not just one premium product from Italy, but two,” Lowenberg says. “Cross-merchandising de-commercializes them a bit and makes the tasting in the supermarket a sort of ‘happening.’”

# GRANA PADANO:

## ITALY'S FAVORITE CHEESE

Grana Padano is a grainy, hard cheese which has been made in Northern Italy in the Padana Valley for over 1000 years.

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- Grana Padano is a versatile cheese that is delicious on its own with an aperitif, can be enjoyed on a cheeseboard served with fruits or walnuts, or included as an accompaniment to a variety of dishes.
- New "Riserva", a premium vintage aged over 20 months trades customers up
- Grana Padano contains over 8 key vitamins and minerals one of which is calcium phosphorus which is a recommended source of nutrition for athletes, pregnant women and children.
- Grana Padano is being supported in the US by an extensive US marketing programme which includes advertising, PR and sampling.



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

Not all importers of big name cheeses compete at the big store level. The Rogers Collection, Portland, ME, imports and distributes artisanal Italian cheeses that are highly seasonal and low in production. Among its offerings is the Red Cow Parmigiano-Reggiano, known for its rich flavor and high protein content.

### What's New In The Old Country?

Never ones to stagnate, Italians are con-

stantly coming up with new variations of old cheeses, and even reviving forgotten cheese recipes for the modern market. Andrea Berti, assistant Italian cheese buyer at Atlanta, sees growth in the area of flavored cheeses and what he calls "extravagant" cheeses—visually striking cheeses such as those soaked in wine, rolled in hay, wrapped in leaves or coated in pepper.

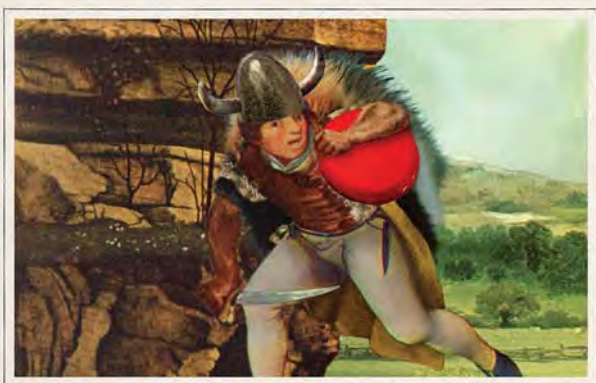
In light of rising milk prices and the difficult Euro situation, a pricey cheese must

prove itself. "In order to justify the higher price, the cheese needs to have an added value," Berti says. "To me, the easiest way to reach that is a clearly visible added value." Among his favorite eye-catching and palate-pleasing cheeses are Millefoglie al Marzemino from the Veneto, a wine-soaked cheese with veins of purple, and Piedmontese Toma Blu alle Erbe, a blue cheese aged in hay.

Truffles are a constant source of excitement and sales. John Nitti, president of Isola Imports Inc. Chicago, IL, imports truffled Tomini and Robiola from Piedmont and a Mozzarella di Bufala with truffles from Cilento in Campania. Atlanta boasts two Tuscan truffle cheeses from il Forteto—Boschetto al Tartufo Bianchetto, a smooth cow-and-sheep blend packed in a small basket, and a firm sheep's milk wheel called Cacio di Bosco al Tartufo.

One up-and-coming cheese style is northeastern Italian mountain cheese. Crucolo, a fairly new cheese on the market, is coming to America via Savello USA Inc., Wilkes-Barre, PA. Crucolo is a washed-rind cow's milk cheese from the Valsugana area of Trentino, a hotspot for fashionable cheeses. Crucolo comes in a mountain-sized

## THE GREAT CHEESE ROBBERY



ONG, LONG AGO a group of Swedish warriors descended upon their Danish neighbors and stole everything in sight including a cheese with a legendary reputation. The Swedes were elated but little did they know that the cheese they had stolen from the Danes wasn't the legendary FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA. It was merely a copy of the cheese that the Danes had stolen from the Italians; and not a very good copy at that. The Danish Fontina lacked the firmness, suppleness and subtle flavor of the original FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA—a flavor that reflected the lush Alpine meadows and pure glacial streams of the Italian Alps.

And the Swedish Fontina? To be kind, it bore little if any resemblance to FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA—a regrettable situation for many.

Namely, those who continued to pay for the original.

And only got a copy.



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## Turin's Salone Del Gusto 2008

The Salone del Gusto, or "Hall of Taste," is Slow Food's premier food event held every two years in Turin, Italy. This year the fair runs from October 23rd to the 28th and takes place in the old converted Fiat factory in Turin's suburb of Lingotto.

Artisan producers from around the world come together to showcase traditional and authentic products. The show keeps an Old World marketplace atmosphere, complete with aisles dedicated to key products such as cheese, cured meats and olives. Under one roof, the event unites specialty producers, media and trade for the promotion of artisan food traditions.

Salone del Gusto is the main event for the Slow Food movement, which bills itself as "a nonprofit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world." **DB**

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Reader Service No. 136

wheel, and has small eyes, an intense bitter-sweet flavor and a texture suitable for melting. "Crucolo is a fantastic product with a great consistency, says Cesare Gallo, president of Savello. "The limitation is what you want to do with it."

From nearby Alto Adige comes Stelvio, an alpine cheese that achieved the prestigious PDO status in 2003, as well as others, including Alta Badia and Lagrein, the latter treated with local red wine.

Alongside these showstoppers are the ubiquitous Robiolas from Piedmont and Lombardian PDO cheeses, such as aromatic washed-rind Taleggio and Gorgonzola, both piccante and dolce. While novelties in some markets, these cheeses have become staples in others.

As America becomes more aware of geography and terroir, regional products take on new meaning. With a touch of campanilismo, importers expose Americans to new

cultures. Along with other cheeses, Isola's Nitti promotes products from his homeland in southern Italy. "I love Puglia, so I bring in a lot of products from Puglia," he says. Among his Pugliese specialties are Baked Lemon Ricotta, a cheesecake made with water buffalo milk, and Burrata, a fresh Mozzarella ball filled with cream and strands of cheese. Nitti describes the art of completing a pizza with Burrata. "After you bake the pizza, you open the Burrata over the top. The buttercream and stracciatella pieces spread all over the pizza," he says.

Nitti reports that consumers are buying lesser-known regional cheeses, but it is up to the retailer to promote them at the store level through demos and dialogue. Still, the first step lies in the trade realm. "It all

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— Nancy Radke

*Ciao Ltd. and U.S. Information  
Office for Parmigiano-Reggiano and  
Fontina Valle d'Aosta*

depends on the importer to get the stores to put new items in," he says. "Then we can see increased sales of these products."

Italian cheeses run the gamut from creamy to hardy, but they have one thing in common: They are all flavorful reflections of their regions. "It is amazing how provincial our splendid Italians are," says Ciao's Radke. "That is also their strength and the reason why so many of their beautiful products remain today."

Whether in their homeland of Italy or thriving across the seas, Italian cheeses keep sight of the campanile, the cultural center that keeps them alive. Each time a bell sounds in a tower—or on the neck of a queenly cow—somewhere its echo beats in the heart of an Italian cheese. **DB**

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# The Charm Of Raw Milk: Is It Flavor, Tradition Or Prestige?

Traditional raw milk cheeses are steering the category in new directions

BY ELIZABETH BLAND

**A**dored by many yet shunned by others, raw milk inspires raw emotions across the cheese board. In spite of U.S. restrictions on raw milk cheeses, this category maintains a strong position in the marketplace. Not only are the all-time favorites remaining all-time favorites, but lesser-known varieties are also moving onto the shelves of America, and for the first time in history, raw domestic cheeses are traveling abroad for retail sale.

Consumers buy raw milk cheeses for different reasons, and it can be difficult to determine why a certain cheese has success. Is it the characteristic raw milk flavor? Is it the prestige that raw milk evokes? Or is it simply a by-product of tradition? A true Parmigiano-Reggiano will always be—by default and by Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO)—made of raw milk.

A raw milk cheese is made from unpasteurized milk as opposed to cheese made from pasteurized milk. Pasteurization is a heating process designed to eliminate unwanted bacteria. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires raw milk cheese—domestic or imported—to be aged at least 60 days at 35 degrees Fahrenheit or above. The heat also destroys much of the microflora in the milk—both the “bad” and “good” bacteria as well as flavor-producing enzymes. After extensive aging, a raw milk cheese becomes too dry and too acidic to support bacterial growth.

Parmigiano-Reggiano, valued for its high nutritional value and low moisture, is the only raw milk cheese allowed for consumption aboard the International Space Station. “The fact that the Space Station is using raw milk cheese attests to its safety,” says Nancy Radke, director of the U.S. Information Office for Parmigiano-Reggiano and Fontina



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROGUE CREAMERY

Valle d'Aosta, and president of Ciao Ltd., an international culinary consulting firm in Syracuse, NY.

With complete flora intact, raw milk cheeses have earned a reputation for being full-bodied in flavor with greater complexity and depth than their pasteurized counterparts. Todd Druhot, cheese buyer for Atlanta Foods International (AFI), Atlanta, GA, and a judge for the American Cheese Society (ACS), believes raw milk gives cheese more nuance. "Raw milk shows more of the seasonal changes of the cheese," he says. "In the spring, French Morbier has a different profile than Morbier produced in the fall."

Although new-world producers are gaining ground in the raw milk category, the world's most famous raw milk cheeses are those from Europe, many with traditions dating back thousands of years. According to Radke, the demand for these classic raw milk cheeses has not necessarily increased, yet has remained stable in the face of competitors and imitators. "Our market is pretty much established," she says, noting that in making cheese, most Italian raw milk producers maintain their raw milk tradition instead of making special versions for the export market. "The benefit of these aged cheeses

is that we can taste them as the Europeans do versus tasting older 'young' cheeses or watered-down aged cheeses."

**"THIS IS A  
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—David Gremmels  
Rogue Creamery

Tom Gellert, vice president of Atlanta Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ, points out the importance of raw milk products to the

import industry. "Raw milk cheeses have always held a prominent position in the Atlanta collection, not so much because they are raw, but because, as an importer, we bring in so many cheeses from Europe where using raw milk is part of the cheesemaking tradition," he says. "Customers look to Europe for name-protected cheeses, many of which are made with raw milk."

Similarly, AFI's raw milk line is European-driven and boasts a strong French component with Comté, Bleu d'Auvergne, Fourme d'Ambert and Livradois Morbier at the forefront. "Most of our raw milk cheeses are imported," Druhot explains.

Alongside the European selections at AFI are American rock star raw milk cheeses, including soft-ripened Constant Bliss from Jasper Hill Farm in Vermont, Beecher's Flagship Reserve from Washington, Uplands Pleasant Ridge Reserve from Wisconsin and Rogue Creamery cheeses in Oregon.

Founded in 1935, Rogue Creamery is making raw cheese history as the first American producer to export a raw milk cheese to the European Union (EU) for retail sale. After more than two years of working with legislators and organizations such as the FDA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the ACS, Rogue Creamery



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earned the required accreditations and certifications. Rogue Creamery's Rogue River Blue, a raw cow's milk cheese wrapped in Clear Creek pear brandy-soaked Syrah and Merlot grape leaves, is now selling at Neal's Yard Dairy in London. The Whole Foods Market in London carries the company's entire line of six blue cheeses. Soon these products will be available in Paris and Amsterdam as well.

"This is a monumental change in dairy for a raw milk, American handmade cheese to be exported, and for our government to create standards allowing American raw milk cheesemakers to take advantage of markets in the EU," says David Gremmels, president and co-owner of Rogue Creamery.

Variety in raw milk products is increasing nationally and internationally. Importers and distributors do not limit themselves to the standard choices anymore. "We don't only focus on the big name raw milk cheeses," Atalanta's Gellert notes, "but we also seek out lesser-known cheeses from smaller producers. One recent trend is mountain cheese from the Alps—especially from Germany, Austria and northern Italy—where the

cheeses are traditionally raw and aged."

Some of these cheeses come with a twist. In Bavaria, Alps' True Cheese coats sheep's and cow's milk cheeses with alpine flowers, herbs and wax, and Schönegger flavors wheels with King Ludwig beer and even carrots. The classic raw mountain style extends into Lombardy where Valtellina Casera is a staple.

Raw milk cheese has become a recognizable and highly marketable category. "Raw milk and natural rind are good buzz words," says AFI's Druhot. "Raw milk cheese is easier to sell than just a piece of plain cheddar. It also gives the salespeople more to talk about with customers."

However, calling raw milk cheese an actual category has its snags. Often the consumer seeks out a style of cheese or a certain flavor profile without even realizing the cheese is made of raw milk. "I don't think they are buying mountain cheeses because they are raw milk," explains Fred Chesman, import manager at Atalanta. "If mountain cheeses were made out of pasteurized milk, people would still buy them just because they are mountain cheeses." Indeed, the suc-

cess of pasteurized Alto Adige cheese supports this theory.

A cheese need not be raw to be good. Cabot Clothbound Cheddar, which won "Best in Show" in the 2006 ACS competition, is a perfect example of how an excellent cheese can come from pasteurized milk. "I thought that was a great thing for a pasteurized cheddar to win the ACS title," says Allison Hooper, president of the ACS and co-founder of Vermont Butter & Cheese. "When we started making rinded, aged little goat cheeses, we started making something with a lot of great character and a flavor that you would normally associate with raw milk cheeses. I don't think quite frankly that the average American consumer can really taste the difference in a raw and a pasteurized cheese. We don't have the long tradition of eating raw cheese in this country to recognize that difference."

Given the current laws, quality pasteurized cheese will always have its place in the U.S. specialty market, but the charm of raw milk lives on in its flavor and its image—and in its taste of ancient dairy history and of cheese conquests to come.

**DB**

# The Soul Of Spanish Cheese

This relatively new category continues to consistently grow in U.S. delis

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

It is essential for buyers to become familiar with Spain's classical cheeses as a growing number of Spanish imports cross the Atlantic to the United States. A relatively new category, Spanish cheese has been expanding consistently for the past 10 years, according to Jeffrey Shaw, marketing director for the Trade Commission of Spain's Foods from Spain, New York, NY. "In 2007, we had 10 percent growth in volume and 20 percent growth in value over 2006. In consumer dollars, cheese from Spain has grown to a \$112 million category," Shaw says.

Boasting more than 100 cheeses, Spain showcases its offerings at Alimentaria, a biennial food and beverage exhibition held in Barcelona. The country's exhibit is aptly titled "Spain, Land of 100 Cheeses."

"I probably know about 50 of them," says John Ciano, president, Crystal Food Import Corp., Lynn, MA. "Their cheese is their own creation. Even when there are similar types in the region, they're all different from each other because of the types of milk, the grass the animals eat and the cheese production methods. It's not something they create in volume."

In terms of quality, the number of cheeses Spain protects with its Designation of Origin (DO) or Geographical Indication (IG) has increased to 24. At the 2007 World Cheese Awards in London, the country's DO cheeses accounted for 26 of Spain's 40 medals. DO is the same as Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO), as it is more commonly known in the United States.

"There is brilliance and excellence coming out of Spain in classics and novelties," says Michele Buster, owner of Forever Cheese, Long Island City, NY.

A typical cheese from Spain is semi-mature to mature and made from milk of indigenous sheep or goats. But typical does not reveal the country's phenomenal range of cheeses. An ocean to the west, a sea to the east, a high continental land mass and mountainous terrain foster diverse types: fresh, creamy, blue, smoked, aged, and fermented; with paprika, wine or toasted corn-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHEESE FROM SPAIN

meal; made from cow's, sheep's or goat's milk or a mix of milks.

Imported Spanish cheese is not a commodity. "They're for eating, served on a platter with fruit, nuts, honey or cured meat," says Food from Spain's Shaw.

The following describes some of Spain's classics by region:

## Northern Spain And Pyrenees

Northern Spain, called "Green Spain," is both maritime and mountainous. Like Ireland, it offers exceptional grazing for cows. Mellow Tetilla and lightly smoked San Simón, both from Galicia, are teardrop-shaped, creamy and accessible. Washed-rind Arzua-Ulloa from Galicia and piquant, red-colored Afuega'l Pitu from Asturias are both fragile and limited in supply.

Limestone caves in the Picos de Europa Mountains are the source of remarkable cave-aged blue cheeses, such as intensely veined Cabrales, spicy Valdeón, lightly smoked Gamonedo and piquant Picón Bejes-Tresviso. It's important to distinguish Cabrales, Spain's signature blue cheese, which is made in Asturias, from Valdeón, which is made in neighboring León. Some

Valdeón is sold inaccurately in the United States as Cabrales despite the "Queso de Valdeón" logo on the producer's label. Leaf-wrapped Valdeón is its own cheese and deserves to be respected for its geographical indication just as green-foil wrapped Cabrales needs to be respected for its protected name. Both Cabrales and Valdeón may be made with blended milk, a practice of rural farmers who customarily raised multiple types of livestock and made cheese without segregating milk types.

Sheep dominate the landscape in the Pyrenees Mountains, where Idiazábal and Roncal reign as the area's quintessential aged, unpasteurized milk cheeses.

## Coastal Spain And Islands

"Toward the Mediterranean coast, the climate becomes hot and arid, and goats tend to be the main livestock," says Foods from Spain's Shaw. Named for their region, Murcia and Murcia al Vino are made from milk of the Murcian goat. Murcia may be made from pasteurized or unpasteurized milk. When made from unpasteurized milk, Murcia Curado is creamy and tangy, while its wine-bathed sibling is floral and smooth.



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The Balearic Islands are suitable for raising cows, and Menorcans have exported Mahón for centuries. The pressed, uncooked square cheese—salty, milky and moist when fresh, and flavorful and tart when aged—exists in many versions. Mahón Curado is aged a minimum of 50 days and up to one year. “Mahón is straightforward,” says Forever Cheese’s Buster. “As it ages, the more assertive and flavorful it becomes. Most of the aged ones are unpasteurized milk.”

At five months, Mahón is a very dry and assertive cheese. “If the rind has been rubbed with virgin olive oil and paprika, it develops a burnished terra-cotta color,” says Emmanuelle Hofer Louis, director of marketing, Anco Fine Cheese, Fairfield, NJ. The company also distributes the Corazón de Ronda line of PDO cheeses.

The Canary Islands are subtropical and dry, more suited to goats than cows. “Majorero has an esparto-patterned exterior and is semi-firm, but made from goat’s milk,” says Food from Spain’s Shaw. Majorero, mild when young and slightly spicy when aged, is made on Fuerteventura Island—just 60 miles off the coast of Morocco. Palmero comes from La Palma Island. Both cheeses have been exported since the 1500s.

### Central Spain

Rising 2,000 feet above sea level, Central Spain is the birthplace of sheep’s milk cheeses, such as Manchego, Zamorano, Torta de La Serena and Torta del Casar (see sidebar for more information). It’s also the origin of Ibóres, which is made from unpasteurized milk of three goat breeds native to Extremadura: Serrana, the nearly extinct Verata and Retinta goats. The regulations for Ibóres allow farmhouse producers to label cheeses aged a minimum of 100 days “Artesanos.” Ibóres is buttery on the palate, slightly tart, and may be paprika-rubbed.

### Ibérico And More

In Spain, Ibérico is widely produced and outsells Manchego, which is the most commonly sold Spanish cheese in the United States. “Ibérico is on the table for breakfast, lunch and dinner in most Spanish homes,” says Richard Kessler, vice president of marketing and sales, Fromartharie Inc., New Fairfield, CT. “It’s in the food they cook, and it’s a great snacking cheese. It’s typically less expensive, and there’s more go around.”

Fromartharie markets Solera’s Andanzas Ibérico, a blend of 50 percent sheep’s milk, 30 percent goat’s milk and 20 percent cow’s milk. Kessler attributes the added depth and complexity of the cheese to a higher percentage of sheep’s and goat’s milk.

Though the percentage of milk varies by

## Sheep’s Milk Cheeses From Spain

Spain’s archetypal sheep’s milk cheeses can be differentiated like estate wines: Manchego, Zamorano, Navarre’s Roncal, Idiazábal from Basque Country, and Extremadura’s Torta del Casar and Torta de La Serena. Each is made in a specific location from long-established breeds.

“A Manchego sheep whose milk is being used for Manchego cheese can graze only on the grasses that grow in that region,” says Jeffrey Shaw, marketing director for the Trade Commission of Spain’s Foods from Spain. “The animals are not being given feed. Every Manchego carries the DO [PDO] symbol and a unique number. People who like a milder, smoother cheese get the younger version and those looking for a bigger, intense flavor go for the older. A nutty flavor is clearly definitive of a Manchego, especially ones aged at least six months. As they age, they get drier and crumblier, with much more biting nuttiness, and these tend to be more expensive. A generic sheep’s milk cheese may have intensity, but won’t have that nuttiness.”

Intense, buttery and complex, Zamorano is made in Castile-León from milk of Churra and Castellana sheep. “Zamorano and Roncal both tend to be produced on a small scale,” says Jeff Babcock, cheese category manager, European Imports Ltd., Chicago, IL.

Full-flavored Idiazábal is made from milk of Latxa and Carranzana sheep, and Roncal is produced from Latxa and Rasa sheep. “Idiazábal’s smoky flavor is traditional,” says Emmanuelle Hofer Louis, director of marketing, Anco Fine Cheese. “Shepherds made the cheese in high pastures during summer and stored the wheels in their huts (txabolas). Roncal is creamy and buttery, similar in shape and size to Idiazábal, but not smoked and different in color.”

Viewers of public television cooking shows are getting a glimpse of Spanish

cheeses on *Made in Spain*, hosted by Asturian-born José Andrés, chef/owner of seven Washington, D.C., restaurants. “Roncal is very popular among the niche consumers—Whole Foods and other stores carry it,” says Taylor Griffin, president of The Rogers Collection, Portland, ME. “José [Andrés] will have people going into their local supermarket to find Roncal. It will help Spanish cheese make the leap from being a specialty niche to a mainstay among deli cases around the country.”

Torta del Casar and Torta de La Serena are cheeses shepherds made for their own use in Extremadura, where transhumance—the transfer of livestock from one grazing area to another with the changing seasons—is being revived on a small scale. Cardoon thistle (*Cynara cardunculus*), a member of the artichoke family, is mixed with water to make hierbajuajo, used instead of animal rennet to coagulate the unpasteurized Merino sheep’s milk.

“The slight bitterness in the finish is attributable to the thistle rennet,” says John Greeley, president of Sheila Marie Imports, North Reading, MA, a division of Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA. “The floral aroma is probably attributable to what they graze on. The oils in the plants survive in unpasteurized milk and add to the aroma of the cheese.”

Max McCalman, maître fromager and dean of curriculum at Artisanal Cheese Center, New York, NY, calls tortas the ultimate party cheeses in his book *Cheese, A Connoisseur’s Guide to the World’s Best*, because the way they are eaten inspires conviviality.

“Tortas are soft and spoonable,” says John Ciano, president, Crystal Food Import Corp. “As they age, they lose moisture and develop a semi-soft consistency. When they’re young, you cut the top off and dip your bread in them.” **DB**

maker, most agree that cow’s milk will not exceed 50 percent of the blend. “If you pay attention as you taste, it takes you through all three milks,” says Doug Jay, president, Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA.

García Baquero Ibérico, distributed by Norseland, blends 40 percent sheep’s, 35 percent goat’s and 25 percent cow’s milk.

Named for the fields around La Mancha where it is produced, “Campo de Montalbán is a well-made, balanced cheese; it’s not acidic or bitter as more aged mixed-milk cheeses I have experienced tend to be,” says Forever Cheese’s Buster. “I love it for its butteriness and the way it changes with the seasons.”

Garrotxa, a goat cheese from Catalonia made from pasteurized milk, has a mellow flavor. “Garrotxa doesn’t have a DO yet, but is the first well-known Catalan goat cheese that came to this country,” Buster says.

Tronchón, named for a village in Aragón, is made from goat’s, sheep’s or mixed milk. Monte Enebro from Castile-León is a ripened, flattened cylinder with a blue-gray rind and dense goat milk paste. And Rosey Goat, Solera’s semi-firm goat’s milk wheel, is blanketed in rosemary.

“All these other cheeses need to thank Manchego for leading the way,” says Atlanta Foods’ Jay. **DB**

# Salami Chubs Worth Their Weight In Sales

Pump up this category by offering traditional and contemporary varieties

BY LISA WHITE

Convenient and versatile, salami chubs give consumers another option when purchasing salami and deli operators a continuous opportunity to increase the self-service case's profitability. These hearty gems stand out from the rest of the pack because of their shape, flavor varieties, and longevity on the shelf and in the refrigerator. German, Italian and Hispanic salami chubs continue to appeal to consumers who want traditional flavors, while chubs sporting unique shapes and high-end ingredients are catching the eye of gourmards and health-conscious consumers.

Piller's Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd., Waterloo, Ontario, offers its best-selling salami flavors in chub format—Old Forest, Gypsy Brand and Mustard Seed—all of which are part of the company's Black Kassel brand. "Not everyone wants to shop the deli's full-service case and wait in line for sliced product," says Dave Brandow, director of sales and marketing, corporate foodservice and export. "This format is relatively new, but is becoming more popular because it is consumer friendly."

Different production processes and ingredients determine the texture and taste of salamis. Some varieties are firm, while others have a softer consistency. Curing preserves dry salami, making it safe to eat without heating. Whole dry salami can keep for several years when the casing is uncut. Once cut, a tightly wrapped chub can be refrigerated for up to two weeks.

Deli chub selections should include a traditional array of international salami comprising Genoa salami, sopressata, pepperoni or Calabrese hot salami as well as German hard salami, says Matt Curl, regional sales manager, Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA. Atlanta Foods distributes numerous salami chub products from its suppliers.

"A true Genoa salami is produced from pork, while hard salami contains beef and pork," Curl explains. "Genoa salami was developed in Italy, and hard salami is a German product." Demographics also figure prominently in the sale of chubs. For instance, Genoa sells better in the North-



PHOTO COURTESY OF PILLER'S SAUSAGES & DELICATESSENS LTD.

east, and hard salami does better in the Midwest, Curl relates.

Salami geared toward the growing Hispanic market offers delis additional marketing opportunities in this segment. Miami, FL-based Webeco Foods distributes Lugareño Brand, a maker of salami popular with South Florida's Hispanic population. The company takes its name from the little town of Lugareño, Cuba, the home of its founders before immigrating to the United States.

According to Webeco marketing specialist Filena Fernandez, all Hispanic sausage products are called "salami." Lugareño Brand's products include chorizos, considered the "hot dog" of the Latin world, and salchichóns, cantimpalos and chorizóns, larger salamis produced in chub format.

Webeco Foods also distributes Cibao Meat Products, headquartered in Bronx, NY. Like Lugareño Brand, Cibao Meat Products specializes in Hispanic salami. Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing, says a typical Hispanic salami line consists of Longaniza, a sausage link available in Mexican and Dominican varieties, and salchichón, a farmer-type sausage.

## From Traditional To Contemporary

In addition to traditional salami chubs, the market for high-end, artisan-style salami is growing, Atlanta Foods' Curl says. Hand-crafted salami in this segment boasts Old-World curing methods. Columbus Distributors, based in Hayward, CA, and Molinari & Sons, located in San Francisco, CA, employ an aging process that results in gradual mold growth on the dry salami—an essential factor in dry curing salami for these San Francisco area producers.

Supermarket delis will always offer tried-and-true salami brands, but the more successful stores will accent these lines with more salami varieties. Fresno, CA-based Busseto Foods introduced its full line of dry-cured salami back in the early 1980s, according to president Mike Grazier. The company offers a wide selection of gourmet chubs, including Sopressata Calabrese, an award-winning salami that combines red chile peppers and dried fennel. "We kicked it up a notch, coating the salami with herbs and peppercorns," Grazier says.

Busseto Foods also is launching a line of natural salamis that have captured retailers'

interest. "Many delis are starting to include natural salamis in their lineup," Grazier says.

To be classified as a natural product by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the product must not contain preservatives, artificial flavoring or color ingredients, and are minimally processed. "There is definitely a trend toward natural products in the United States," Piller's Brandow says.

For consumers looking for heart-healthy options, Piller's recently introduced a heart-shaped salami called D'Amour. Its unique

shape helps drive home the fact that this brand has 40 percent less sodium than traditional salami, making it more heart healthy.

Brandow says more consumers are looking for products with less sodium. "It is similar to the trans fat and MSG concerns over the last few years," he says. "Sodium is the next focus. There will be an increase in low- and no-sodium products over the next few years because of heart issues."

Piller's contemporary line also includes snack-size salami products similar to other

meat snacks currently on the market. These are made without fillers or binders.

By the same token, Busseto Foods recognized consumers' desire for smaller, snack-size portions. "We offer a small-diameter dry salami nugget product geared for kids' lunchboxes and snacking. The bite-sized pieces have sold very well for us," Grazier reports.

### The Selling Power Of Chubs

According to Atlanta Foods' Curl, deli salami chubs need to have a quality point of difference from the ones sold in meat departments and big box stores. Besides offering a wide selection of chubs, delis should provide samples of lesser-known varieties and place signage in strategic areas to help educate consumers about the salami's origin, consistency and flavor.

"Today's consumers want something different and outside the norm," Piller's Brandow says. "The salami selection should not necessarily be geared toward a certain region, but more toward flavor variety."

Natural salamis typically sell at a higher price point. "If consumers understand the differences in natural versus traditional meat, they will typically pay more," Busseto Foods' Grazier explains.

In addition to providing samples, entice customers with complementary items, such as cheeses, crackers and breads. "This provides consumers with ideas on how to serve the salami," Grazier says.

According to Atlanta Foods' Curl, smaller salami chubs should tie in with gourmet cheese offerings. "Artisan salami, in particular, complements Italian cheeses like Parmigiano Reggiano," he says.

Piller's offers a flavor guide that can be displayed by its product lines to help educate people about the different salami types. "Our salami chubs work well as hors d'oeuvres. They can be carved out in the middle and used as a small cup to hold an olive or some Brie cheese," Brandow recommends.

When it comes to Hispanic products, bilingual signage is important as well as aggressive marketing during holidays such as Cinco de Mayo. "We advocate merchandising deli meats with Hispanic cheese products, tortillas and other Hispanic items to create a separate section," Cibao Meat's Soto says. "And we offer a sampling program so shoppers will try something new."

Lugareño Brand products are often prominently displayed in wooden peg racks. Occasionally, the company offers price promotions as an incentive to try the line.

Traditional and contemporary flavors, different shapes and sizes, and a wealth of merchandising opportunities make salami chubs worth their weight in sales.

DB



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# TechNews

## **WISCONSIN: UW-Madison Extension researchers develop resources to assist small meat and poultry processors**

25.feb.08

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

[http://www.meathaccp.wisc.edu/HACCP\\_models/](http://www.meathaccp.wisc.edu/HACCP_models/)

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension faculty has developed web-based resources to assist small meat and poultry processors with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) implementation. Resources have been developed in three areas: validation of critical limits, development of HACCP plans and evaluation of raw-product temperature deviations.

Validation of Critical Limits: Processors looking for scientific validation of critical limits, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and corrective actions can now refer to published research-based information available through the University of Wisconsin's Center for Meat Process Validation: [www.meathaccp.wisc.edu](http://www.meathaccp.wisc.edu). The Web site is devoted to sharing the center's peer-reviewed research results in support of processors setting critical limits and responding to process deviations for all HACCP product categories: slaughter of beef and pork, raw-ground and raw not-ground products, heat-treated shelf-stable products, fully cooked not shelf-stable products, and not fully cooked, not shelf-stable products.

## **University of Georgia Offers Course On "Hands-On HACCP For The Fresh-Cut Industry"**

**COURSE TITLE:** Hands-On HACCP for the Fresh-Cut Industry

**DATE:** May 20-22, 2008

**LOCATION:** University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia

Sponsored by The University of Georgia, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, Department of Food Science & Technology

Are you ready for the future?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s Food Code strongly recommends that all retail businesses which handle, distribute or process food products develop and implement a food safety plan. The FDA has based its guidelines on the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). The fresh-cut produce industry is facing ever-tightening scrutiny from the FDA and consumers to improve food safety. Be prepared!

Why should I attend?

This program has been specifically designed for the fresh-cut industry and is accredited by the International HACCP Alliance. The goal of this program will be to

provide you with the skills and knowledge to design, implement, document and maintain HACCP in your fresh-cut business. Our short course provides a unique program of lectures and work group discussions from a broad-based faculty of food microbiologists, HACCP experts, and authorities from academia, industry and government. The work group sessions provide interaction with HACCP authorities who have developed and implemented successful HACCP programs in fresh-cut processing plants.

Who should attend?

Owners, plant managers, quality assurance personnel, production supervisors, field inspectors, marketing directors, and anyone responsible for designing and implementing field and fresh-cut food safety programs.

This training program is accredited by the International HACCP Alliance.

## **FSIS Establishes Outreach Training Program Area To Assist Establishments And Educate Employees**

03.march.08

Dallas, TX

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Small\\_Very\\_Small\\_Plant/s/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Small_Very_Small_Plant/s/index.asp)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) today announced a new program office dedicated to supporting the agency's continued efforts in outreach to small and very small plants and education of FSIS personnel.

The Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training (OOEET) will provide consolidated access, resources and technical support for small and very small plants to better assist them in providing safe and wholesome meat, poultry and processed egg products. This program area also will ensure that all FSIS personnel have the necessary training to effectively carry out their assigned duties. The OOEET will collaborate with state inspection programs in sharing training materials, providing technical advice and conducting outreach activities.

"Ensuring the safety of the nation's food supply makes good public health sense as well as good business sense," said under secretary for food safety Dr. Richard Raymond. "Owners and operators of every plant size need resources and tools for food safety success, so continued education through a rigorous outreach program is a critical long-term agency priority."

This reorganization will consolidate the agency's existing outreach, training and state program liaison functions and staff into a unified outreach program area and will enhance the consistency, efficiency and uti-



**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).

lization of resources. In addition, the OOEET will provide:

- More rapid and consistent delivery of key services to serve better the needs of small and very small plants,
- One-stop access to information and technical assistance,
- Continuing publication and assessment of guidance and information to ensure consistent application of public health regulatory policies,
- Enhanced relationships with our public health partners,
- Continuing evaluation of the effectiveness of FSIS programs focused on small and very small plants, and
- Improved collaboration with other USDA agencies on the needs of small and very small plants.

The establishment of OOEET enhances the agency's ongoing effort to assist small and very small plants with implementing food safety and public health regulations. In 2005, FSIS embarked on this effort by hosting listening sessions to learn what these establishments needed most. What followed was a rigorous outreach program to assist plants in improving their HACCP plans and, overall, to achieve greater regulatory compliance through education and information. The OOEET will serve as a key partner with industry in this important and worthwhile effort.

For more information about FSIS outreach to small and very small plants, visit the FSIS small plant Web site.

# Looking For Integrity?



By  
**Jeffrey Spear**  
President

Studio Spear LLC  
Baltimore, MD

If you had a choice between foods that are pure and healthy, or laden with additives and chemical substitutes, which would you pick? The answer to this question, in a nutshell, explains the demand for organic products.

In the groundbreaking movie *Network*, newscaster Howard Beale sticks his head out the window and yells, "I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore." Perhaps consumers have finally had enough with food-related contaminants and health scares and aren't going to "take it" either. The recent recall of 143 million pounds of frozen beef from Westland/Hallmark Meat, not to mention problems associated with imported products, is more than enough to confirm more needs to be done.

It's not as if mainstream food producers are malicious and have embraced the sentiment, "If it don't kill 'em, it won't bother 'em." To be wrong about this simply boggles the mind. I've visited enough facilities to know most companies promote food safety and care deeply about product integrity.

## Say What?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service Web site defines organic food as "produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation."

Although this sounds fantastic, the Web site also declares, "USDA makes no claims that organically produced food is safer or more nutritious than conventionally produced food." Needless to say, the merits of organic food remain somewhat unresolved.

When I've asked deli brand meat producers why they are not labeling and promoting their products as organic, the frequent response is that the process of obtaining certification is cumbersome and the effort required to manage it all is simply too expensive.

While the Organic Trade Association reports that organic product sales continue to grow exponentially in the United States, these sales are estimated to be less than 3 percent of total retail sales. Without exaggeration, and in spite of tremendous potential, the organic category is still in its infancy with plenty of room to grow.

Steve McDonnell, founder of Applegate Farms, says,

"Organic food is definitely an evolutionary stage in consumer buying habits. Consumers are becoming more educated and interested in the source of their food, and now have a better understanding about the implication of their food choices."

Based on McDonnell's outlook, the shift toward organics is rooted in education. This means that, for the government regulators, food producers and retailers alike, providing accurate, consistent and meaningful information about the organic attributes of their products is essential. Before consumers will buy all things organic, they need to know what it means to be labeled organic in the first place.

According to Nielsen, consumers buying deli meats tend to operate in "auto-pilot" mode, making purchasing decisions based primarily on what's familiar and not necessarily looking for

"what's new." Considering that organic foods are very much "what's new," this means that packaging design and labeling need to work harder to cut through the clutter and attract attention. It also means that labels—and the information they communicate—have to be even more convincing and compelling.

## Organics As A Destination

With the undeniable outcry for greater food integrity—and organic foods being the most likely solution—it makes sense for retailers to help consumers find and understand organic products. While I've seen plenty of deli departments segment products by category (i.e., cheese, meats, salads) and by brand, I have yet to see them set aside territory specifically for organics. With the exception of Whole Foods and specialty stores themed toward things all-natural, it's difficult to find organic deli foods altogether. In addition, there is very little information either on display or available to take home that helps consumers make more informed buying decisions.

While segmenting shelf space and providing brand literature is a good start, organics won't mean a whole lot in the deli department until more of the manufacturers embrace certification and offer a broader variety of organic food choices. And until there are more universally accepted standards for the production, labeling and marketing of organic products, producers won't be in any particular hurry.

I believe that producers and retailers embracing a visionary approach and willing to invest in organics in the short term will reap significant rewards in the longer term. I simply don't believe that consumers will continue to support disingenuous brands. While the term "organics" may be the word for today, product integrity is a philosophy for all time.

DB

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# Blast From The Past



S

ince beginning operations in 1934 from its headquarters in Santa Barbara, CA, Jackson-Mitchell's Meyenberg Goat Milk Products has established itself as a leading manufacturer of goat milk products. In 1868, Swiss-born John B. Meyenberg, immigrated to the United States and invented the process of evaporating unsweetened condensed milk. The process of heating canned milk to 243 degrees, and then cooling it to 90 degrees allows the milk to maintain a shelf life of five-plus years. The patent for the evaporated milk process became extremely valuable during the Civil War and for those who did not have refrigeration. In 1885, the U.S. patent helped start the Pet Milk Co., which evolved into the Carnation Milk Co.

The son of Meyenberg, John P. Meyenberg, had a passion for goat's milk and branched off to become Meyenberg Goat Milk Products. In 1934, Harold Jackson bought the company from Meyenberg because his infant son, Robert, suffered from cow milk allergies and digestive problems.

Today, Robert D. Jackson owns and operates the company with his wife, Carol. They have taken a small, evaporated milk company to the nation's largest manufacturer of goat's milk. With herds of 26,000 goats and 52 dairies residing in the green valleys of central California and the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas, Meyenberg produces over 20 million pounds of goat milk annually. The company makes ultra-pasteurized whole, low-fat and powdered goat milks, as well as goat butter, goat cream cheese, five goat jack cheeses and aged goat cheddars.

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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Reader Service No. 124

Packed by DeLallo in our own 3rd party audited facility solely dedicated to the production of olives and antipasti.

All of your favorite DeLallo items are available in:

- Cups in Oil**  
8 varieties
- Cups in Brine**  
5 varieties
- Organic Cups:**  
5 brine varieties  
5 oil varieties

\*packed 6 cups to a case. 7-12oz size.

For more information contact [info@delallo.com](mailto:info@delallo.com)

