

# DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

AUG./SEPT. 2008 \$14.95

## The Timing Is Right For Foodservice



### ALSO INSIDE

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## MRS. MAC'S SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN



Charleston, SC-based Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co. owes its ongoing fried chicken sales to Mrs. Nel McNaughton, who passed away in May 2008 at the age of 92. In January 1967, Mrs. McNaughton joined the company as deli manager of the Dupont Crossing Piggly Wiggly in Charleston, SC. "It was one of the first stores we opened that had a deli department with hot foods," recalls Rita Postell, spokesperson for the company. Mrs. McNaughton, or Mrs. Mac, as she was affectionately called, thought her delicious recipe for Southern fried chicken would attract customers to her counter.

"It's become an icon over the years," Postell says. "It's famous. We use that recipe in every one of our delis." The fried chicken is made fresh daily and never frozen. Each Piggly Wiggly store sells from eight to 10 cases of fried chicken every day, with each case containing about 40 pounds of chicken.

Prior to joining Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co., Mrs. Mac headed up a school lunchroom. She was very active in the community and had an established following of admirers. "She was a real person and everyone knew her reputation," Postell says. "Her recipe helped us tremendously."

## COMING NEXT ISSUE IN OCT/NOV 2008

### NEW DYNAMICS OF FOOD SAFETY

A look at a changing industry where the private sector is becoming more proactive.

### THE DELI MASTERS SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

This special supplement presents company-specific information from our industry leaders. Learn about effective point-of-sale materials, advertising programs, and innovative cross-merchandising and creative ideas about how to build sales.

### FEATURE STORIES

Packaging  
Meal Assembly Concepts

### PREPARED FOODS

Pizza

### MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

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### DELI MEATS

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### SPECIALTY CHEESES

Dutch Cheeses  
California Cheeses

### COMING IN DECEMBER/JANUARY 2009

Deli Business Specialty Cheese Guide

This comprehensive guide to European and American cheeses continues to expand with the addition of new cheeses every year. The Specialty Cheese Guide includes name, classification, brief description, country of origin, and type of milk traditionally used in making each variety.

### SUBSCRIPTION & READER SERVICE INFO

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Servings per container: 2

Amount per serving

Calories 170

% Daily Value\*

Total Fat 5g 15%

Sat Fat 3.5g 10%

Trans Fat 0g 0%

Cholesterol 35mg 12%

Sodium 1290mg 54%

Total Carb 0g 0%

Dietary Fiber 0g 0%

Sugars 0g 0%

Protein 19g

Vitamin A 0%

Vitamin C 0%

Calcium 0% • Iron 2%

\*Percent Daily Values (DV)

are based on a 2000

calorie diet.

INGREDIENTS: Ham, Mediterranean Sea Salt, Sodium Nitrite, Potassium Nitrate

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NET WEIGHT: 4 oz



## REDONDO IGLESIAS

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Reader Service No. 107



by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# A Teaching Moment

Every public policy professional, every educator, indeed, every parent comes to recognize that people, be they the general public, a classroom of students or one's son or daughter, are not equally amenable to learning at all times.

Instead, events and circumstances open the eyes to seeing, the ears to hearing and the mind to learning. The key to bringing about change is to use these opportunities when the mind is receptive to new ideas—commonly called “teaching moments”—to impart new knowledge, to light the way toward new pathways.

Teaching moments are no less important in business. Most of the time in business, we spend enormous sums of money and engage in efforts of Herculean proportions to achieve only the most minute change.

Think of the billions spent by, say, Pepsi—not to make people thirsty or even to get them to switch to Pepsi from milk or beer—just countless billions and a massive application of creative genius to get consumers to drink a little more Pepsi and a little less Coke.

Yet every once in a while circumstances conspire to create a moment that causes a paradigm shift. Few alive are old enough to remember, but as America entered World War I and a formerly parochial population was sent to fight in Europe, many realized that there would be no returning to the status quo. In the words of a famous song of the time referring to the young American soldiers, *How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Paree)*:

How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm  
After they've seen Paree'  
How ya gonna keep 'em away from harm,  
that's a mystery  
They'll never want to see a rake or plow  
And who the deuce can parleyvous a cow?

Now a unique confluence of circumstances is creating a “teaching moment” in which consumers will be open to listening to the deli industry, and if our message is profound, it can lead to a paradigm shift in the way consumers think about food and where they choose to purchase their food.

Part of the issue is opportunity: With gas prices soaring, extra trips to restaurants are less appealing. With the economy slowing, value for the dollar is a renewed value, and in a post 9/11 world, the cocooning comfort of finding meals that fit the needs of all the family members and eating them together, at home, holds strong appeal.

Of course, opportunity is meaningless unless it meets preparation. Fortunately, for over a decade now,

the industry—both retailers and suppliers—have gone through what we might call the home meal replacement shake up.

HMR has been a decidedly mixed bag, indeed a failure, in many aspects. The successes of tomorrow, though, often build on the failures of yesterday. And say what you will about HMR, it led to a revolution in quality and variety of prepared foods and broader service offerings of the deli. It has led to a far more sophisticated management system capable of handling far more than sliced meats and cheeses, and it has led to a more consumer-centric attitude.

So opportunity meets preparation. Well, as Mary Poppins sings on Broadway: *Anything can happen if you let it.*

There are many positive signs. Walk into the deli/foodservice area at Safeway's new small store concept, “The Market by Vons” in Manhattan Beach, CA, and you will find a Sheetz-like computerized ordering-and-payment system to speed up service, with a high-service and quality commitment to, for example, slice your bread to the thickness you specify. You'll find some outdoor seating to allow friends and family to eat together right on the premises. And they still tell you how much you saved as you check out.

Yet all too many retailers are still resisting consumer demand. Some retailers still see deli as a draw to get people into a store and then sell them other stuff. That is why deli drive-throughs and curbside pickup spots are still few and far between at supermarkets. That is a mistake.

When gas prices are high and budgets stressed, people are open to listening. This is our chance to not fight one another for incremental gains in market share, but to lead a paradigm shift that gets consumers to increase the percentage of their food dollar being spent with retailers by 10 percentage points.

If we are willing to meet the opportunity.

One thing is certain...just as they could not keep those doughboys down on the farm and so America changed forever as a result of World War I, eating habits will change in this crucible of change we find ourselves in. The question is: Will the deli industry seize this as a teaching moment to reeducate consumers or will we leave it to others to define a future less favorable to ourselves and our industry?

DB



*James F. Prevor*



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Reader Service No. 128



by Lee Smith, Publisher

# Deli Industry Caters To Busy Consumers

This month's cover story is about how traditional deli departments are transitioning into a mecca of prepared foods ready to serve today's consumers with ready-to-eat meals that are affordable and are competitive with local restaurants. This concept has been in the news for the past 12 years, starting with Home Meal Replacement (HMR) in the mid-1990s.

Although many people were disappointed by HMR's lack of success, even after excessive expenses and commitment, today's environment is different and deli departments need to take the lessons learned and forge ahead. The biggest difference is HMR was a top-down management-driven concept and today's drive to introduce superior foodservice offerings is driven by consumers' need for affordable one-stop shopping.

HMR was a reaction to the growing trend of eating out, which was primarily driven by consumers' growing disposable income, lack of time and the need for entertainment and socializing. HMR was never a deli concept. At one point, industry gurus predicted the demise of the traditional supermarket organization by departments and predicted stores would be built around menu planning.

This time, however, consumers are facing a number of drivers that are forcing them to travel less and reduce expenses. While disposable dollars are shrinking, time is still the most valuable commodity. Two-income working families are still the norm, and some families are looking for additional part-time work. The reasons are well known — high fuel costs, the mortgage crisis, increasing insurance costs, the tightening of lending markets and loss of jobs. We also have a generation of younger folks who didn't grow up in homes where meals were prepared from scratch, don't know how to cook and, even more important, don't want to.

This time we are not looking at a marketing concept designed to get market share back from restaurants. Instead, we are looking at consumers going back to supermarkets and other retail establishments seeking affordable and delicious foods that will save them money.

Fortunately, the industry's experience with HMR has left a solid foundation for growth, and the deli department is front and center with consumer-driven solutions. However, many retailers have still not changed their marketing to reflect their consumers' changing needs.

While efforts to add quality foodservice offers to deli departments were designed to compete with restaurants, today's consumers are looking for additional benefits. Not only are they looking for prepared foods that are on par with restaurants, but they are also looking to incorporate prepared foods throughout

the week. Consumers looking to save money and reduce gas usage have no intention of going to the supermarket every day.

Costco's rotisserie chickens are an excellent example of a prepared food offering that goes beyond "What's for dinner tonight?" Since Costco is not a typical once-a-week shopping trip for consumers, many people pick up multiple rotisserie chickens to freeze for future meals. The key is people really love Costco's chickens and find them superior to competitors.

Supermarket operators can learn a lesson from Costco and offer suggestions about freezing and thawing chicken for use later in the week. For many years, retailers have hidden the longer shelf life in fear that consumers will believe prepared foods were not fresh. A longer shelf life is now a benefit.

Now is the time to bring back family-size pot pies, meat loaf and pasta dinners. Fresh foods had a logistical problem because consumers didn't worry much about tomorrow, and restaurants were the primary option when cooking didn't tickle their fancy. Today, consumers need to worry about fixing dinner even if cooking is the least-desired option.

Cooking directions and menu planning are not the norm for deli departments, but there is no reason why it shouldn't be. While many consumers will not plan on shopping the deli for all their meals, adding a few quick-and-easy-to-serve options is a great way to plan for those nights when time is short.

Deli operators also need to think about day-part specific dining, and segmenting the deli to reflect purchasing occasions is a winning strategy. Breakfast and lunch options are the first day parts that come to mind for segmented point-of-purchase marketing.

While most deli foods are ready to eat or heat, other foods that are also fully prepared can be used as bases for enhanced meals. After all, most restaurants do not prepare everything from scratch. Recipes are ideal. Using a fresh soup as a base and adding leftover chicken makes a simple lunch into a wonderful dinner, and traditional foodservice companies have the in-house expertise to work with retailers to develop consumer-friendly meals.

There has never been a better time for deli departments to become the consumer's kitchen. The industry has the expertise, the price is competitive and we offer one-stop shopping. **DB**



A stylized handwritten signature of Lee Smith.





Ever since their founding in 1989 in Huntsville, Alabama, cheese lovers have known that Belle Chèvre's variety of all natural, fine chèvres was special. Their selection of cheeses include Fromage Blanc, chèvre discs, chèvre logs, crumbled chèvre confetti and marinated chèvre. The milk comes from their herd of goats, located just 3 miles down the road at Humble Heart Farms. It is a 100% completely sustainable agriculture and the saanen goats happily graze on rotated pastures.

Belle Chèvre is recognized as one of the best chèvre creameries in the United States, and arguably the world, by the American Cheese Society and The American Goat Dairy Association. Internationally acclaimed cheese expert Steven Jenkins calls Belle Chèvre's cheese an "American Treasure." To date, they have garnered 51 National Awards and hundreds of Honorable Mentions - not to mention accolades from the world's leading critics!

These wonderful handcrafted, artisan cheeses are not only fabulously delicious, but they are also great for your health. Learn what chefs & cheese lovers have already discovered - when you try any of their many varieties of chèvre, you'll be in for a rare gustatory experience!



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



## Transitions



**Bill Drew** has retired from the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI, as a long-time marketing executive. Throughout his career, Drew was involved in a number of key Wisconsin dairy promotion initiatives and will continue work with the WMMB as a consultant. "Bill Drew has been an outstanding advocate for Wisconsin's dairy producers," says WMMB CEO James Robson. "His dedication and integrity have been important attributes to this company for the better part of two decades." [www.wmmb.org](http://www.wmmb.org)



**David Brohel**, Madison, CT, was knighted by Norway's King Harald V, who appointed him Knight First Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit for the promotion of Norwegian trade and culture in the United States. Brohel received this honor in recognition of his achievements as president of the American Chamber of Commerce and president and CEO of Norseland Inc., Stamford, CT. Brohel also served on the board of the Cheese Importers Association of America and was president of the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association.



**Patrick Smorch** has been appointed the director of packaging sustainability at Atlanta, GA-based Georgia-Pacific. In his new role, Smorch will be responsible for Georgia-Pacific's packaging sustainability initiative, the division design team and the packaging systems optimization program. [www.gp.com](http://www.gp.com)



**Sara Hill** has joined the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Madison, WI, as culinary manager, cheese education. Her responsibilities include working with professional culinary schools, chefs and retailers around the country to increase their knowledge and usage of Wisconsin cheese. [www.wmmb.org](http://www.wmmb.org)

## Announcements



### 2008 SIAL TRAVEL PACKAGE

The Cheese Importers Association of America Inc., Washington, DC, invites members and non-members to join the organization in traveling to Paris, France, to attend the 2008 Paris SIAL show, which takes place Oct. 19-23, 2008. This travel package begins on Fri., Oct. 17, and includes accommodations, airfare, some meals, transportation and special excursions. For more detailed information, contact the organization at 202/547-0899 or go to its Web site. [www.theciaa.org](http://www.theciaa.org)

Reader Service No. 401



### WISCONSIN HONORS WOOLWICH DAIRY

Woolwich Dairy, Orangeville, Ontario, Canada, received a plaque from Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle in recognition of the company's role as an investor and employer in the state of Wisconsin. The company established its first U.S. cheesemaking facility in Lancaster, WI, to make goat cheese. Woolwich owners Tony and Olga Dutra accepted the award from the governor.

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

Reader Service No. 402



### ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Lactalis USA, New York, NY, received 2008 Achieving Excellence awards for the packaging redesign of its Rondelé brand of gourmet spreadable cheeses and for the best promotion of its cheese in 2007 with the animated movie *Ratatouille*. Sponsored by the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), the award is given in recognition of outstanding marketing and advertising efforts within the dairy industry. [www.lactalis-usa.com](http://www.lactalis-usa.com)

Reader Service No. 403



### BEST CHEESE ACQUIRES COACH FARM

Best Cheese Corp., Mount Kisco, NY, has acquired Coach Farm, Pine Plains, NY, a move that allows Best Cheese to expand into domestic production. Already a successful importer of specialty cheeses from Europe, Best Cheese hopes to improve Coach's distribution to the retail and foodservice sectors. Coach Farm, a leader in producing artisanal goat cheeses, won a Sofi award at the New York Fancy Food Show in June. [www.bestcheeseusa.com](http://www.bestcheeseusa.com)

Reader Service No. 404

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

# DELI WATCH

## Products



### TRADITIONAL PÂTÉS FROM PATCHWORK

The Patchwork Traditional Food Co., Dengighshire, Wales, United Kingdom, is now producing its pâtés in Selingsgrove, PA, for U.S. distribution. Made of only the finest ingredients, Patchwork offers such flavor combinations as Chicken Liver, Brandy & Herb Pâté, Chicken Liver, Triple Sec & Orange Pâté, Chicken Liver, Tequila & Cranberry Pâté and other combinations.

[www.patchwork-pate.co.uk](http://www.patchwork-pate.co.uk)

Reader Service No. 405



### HEAT AND EAT WINGS

Frank's RedHot, Parsippany, NJ, known for its Cayenne Pepper Sauce, has launched its first-ever line of "heat and eat" Buffalo wings as well as four mouth-watering meat snacks and a three-flavor line of pizzas. Frank's Original Buffalo Wings and Cattlemen's Hot & Spicy wings are available in 18-ounce microwavable trays in the fresh deli case. French's Foods, a division of Reckitt Benckiser Inc., is the maker of Frank's RedHot Cayenne Pepper Sauce.

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

Reader Service No. 406



### SARTORI BLENDS

Sartori Foods, Plymouth, WI, takes cheese up a notch with its Signature Blends Shaved Natural Cheeses, available in three varieties. The Caesar blend combines Parmesan, Asiago and grated Romano cheeses; the Tuscan blend is a mix of Parmesan and Fontina cheeses; and the Sicilian blend combines nutty Parmesan, Asiago and Romano cheeses.

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

Reader Service No. 407



### GREEN CREST GORGONZOLA

Seymour Dairy Products Inc., Seymour, WI, introduces Green Crest Gorgonzola, an Italian-style Gorgonzola cheese, to its premium blue-veined varieties. Based on an Old World recipe, this green-veined cheese is made from whole milk with a specially selected mold and carefully crafted in small batches. Its distinctive flavor lends character to pastas, salads, dressings, pizzas and sauces.

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

Reader Service No. 408



### NATURAL/WHOLE GRAIN STROMBOLIS

Stefano Foods, Charlotte, NC, introduces Natural/Whole Grain Broccoli Stromboli and Natural/Whole Grain Spinach Stromboli. Bearing the Whole Grain Council Stamp, each item is fully baked, packaged and labeled for easy retail handling and effective merchandising. Stromboli is great as an appetizer when sliced or as a lunch or dinnertime entrée.

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

Reader Service No. 409

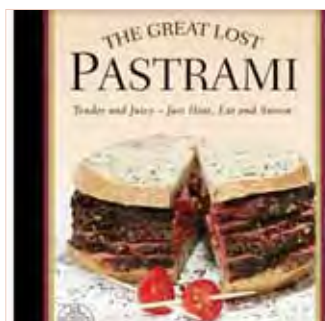


### DOFINO BRAND FONTINA

Arla Foods, Basking Ridge, NJ, unveils all-natural Dofino Fontina cheese, made in Wisconsin by Danish cheese experts. Mild and creamy in flavor with a slightly sharp edge, this cheese is perfect for sandwiches while its melting ability enhances cooking applications. Dofino Fontina is available in a variety of sizes, ranging from eight-ounce chunk packages to 10-pound wheels.

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

Reader Service No. 410



### ARTISAN DELI SPECIALTIES

Manhattan Deli-Arts, Westford, MA, offers a new line of Artisan Deli Specialties, including The Great Lost Pastrami, made from navel plate, and The Great Lost Corned Beef, made from top-quality double beef brisket. The company also introduced griddle-ready hash offerings: The Historically Essential Corned Beef Hash and The Historically Essential Pastrami Hash.

[www.deli-arts.com](http://www.deli-arts.com)

Reader Service No. 411



### PICKLES IN A BUCKET

Brooklyn, NY-based Sonny & Joe's pickles are now available in a plastic bucket in supermarket refrigerator sections nationwide. The company's original recipe for its pickles sold in pushcarts on the street is still being used today. The plastic barrels contain about 10 pickles each and come in half-sour and sour versions.

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

Reader Service No. 412

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# The Timing Is Right For Foodservice

Retailers are giving restaurants a run for their money by offering gourmet meals, customer service and amenities

*By Karen B. King McCallum*

11 12

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**"H**ello, I'd like to order the Grilled Tuna with Olive Caper Butter from The Grill and a Sopressata and Sharp Provolone Sandwich—for curbside pickup, please." Today, more supermarket delis are getting calls like this instead of local restaurants as the sluggish economy puts a damper on consumer spending. While restaurants are bracing for the worst, many retailers are finding they've hit pay dirt by offering consumers

restaurant-quality prepared foods, an array of food bars, in-store cafés and dining areas, and call-ahead curbside pickup. The evolution of the mainstream deli is approaching its zenith—and the timing could not be better.

By summer 2008, polls found that most Americans believed the United States was in a recession. In a May 2008 online survey conducted by New York, NY-based The Nielsen Company, 85 percent of respondents said the country was currently in a recession. Fifty-eight percent of respondents

expressed the same sentiment in a May survey by Port Washington, NY-based The NPD Group.

The good news? As consumers react to the rising costs of food, gas and other basic necessities, delis are filling their needs for quick, fresh, healthful and less expensive meal solutions. "It's a big opportunity for growth in the deli given the economy right now," says Kathy Lenkov, manager of corporate communications and public relations, Glendale, CA-based Nestlé Professional.

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"People may not be going out as much to restaurants, but they are going to the supermarket and deli."

The NPD Group gave the industry a heads up about the changing tide of foodservice back in September 2007. Its report showed that over the past two years, foodservice operations at retail outlets—convenience stores, supermarkets, discount stores and price clubs—had posted stronger foodservice traffic growth than any other segment of the restaurant industry.

Overall, in 2008, supermarkets and convenience stores are expected to grow foodservice operations by 5 percent, according to industry consultant Technomic Inc., Chicago, IL. The company observed that consumers are "trading down to more economical foodservice alternatives."

But are consumers really trading down? That's an arguable point when delis around the country are offering gourmet meals, personal service and restaurant amenities. Moreover, foodservice companies are stepping up their game to assist delis in making the transition from "traditional" to "foodservice" deli.

"Retailers are devoting themselves to the destination shopper," says Jim Christman, sales manager food equipment, Arneg LLC. The Lexington, NC-based company manufactures freestanding olive bars as well as hot and cold cases. "The deli area is the store within the store."

On the other hand, it takes the right formula for a deli to become a destination. Space requirements, demographics and progressive leadership all figure into the mix. "Traditional stores have to be willing to do what it takes," says Nan McGrath, director of retail sales, ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston, Omaha, NE. "As a supplier, we can provide what they want, but they have to take the reins to make it happen."

## Transitioning From Traditional

According to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, Madison, WI, prepared foods account for almost \$5 billion annually in supermarkets. With so much at stake, some retailers are rethinking their strategies in the marketplace by opening smaller, more upscale stores and remodeling existing stores to accommodate shoppers looking for fully cooked meals.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PIGGLY WIGGLY/CAROLINA CO

Pioneers in this field, such as Whole Foods Market, The Fresh Market and Wegmans, have paved the way for others to follow suit. Austin, TX-based Whole Foods Market opened its original store in 1980, and today has more than 270 locations in the United States and United Kingdom. Greensboro, NC-based The Fresh Market started in 1982 and now operates 79 stores in 18 states. Rochester, NY-based Wegmans' roots go back to the early 1900s, but the company's progressive leadership has kept up with the times. In 1996, Wegmans opened its first Market Café, featuring prepared foods, at its Corning, NY, store. Today, Wegmans has 71 stores in a five-state region.

For delis trying to get out of "traditional" mode, foodservice companies are more than willing to help them attain restaurant-quality levels. "The whole retail area needs to substantially change to either compete or survive in this area," says Lamb Weston's McGrath. "Some supermarkets talk a big game, while others are doing what they're saying. Most, however, are still trying to figure things out."

When it comes to applying their expertise, ConAgra's foodservice and retail sides often team up to fulfill retailers' requests for differentiated food products. "Our groups work together, and we wind up being a multifunctional group," Lamb Weston's McGrath says. "Even with an experienced, multifunctional team, it can sometimes take as long as a year and a half to solve some supermarket challenges."

Downer's Grove, IL-based Sara Lee is

structured into three separate divisions—Sara Lee Deli, Sara Lee In-Store Bakery and Sara Lee Foodservice—that currently operate independently. "We're working on ways to merge these three divisions to provide more consumer solutions," says Rod Steele, director of category planning for deli. "It's not going to happen overnight, but eventually we'll work together."

Sara Lee Deli recently updated its Deli Consumer Understanding and Targeted Strategies (C.U.T.S.) program, which the company introduced in 2006 to provide retailers with industry and demographic data. Since the program's inception, Sara Lee has presented Deli C.U.T.S. to more than 100 retailers. "We are extremely data-oriented," Steele says. "We have reams of data and can extrapolate information about consumer insights to give retailers."

Based on Sara Lee's data, the average consumer spends six minutes at the deli counter. "We have the time and the ability to help retailers answer the question: 'How do we get consumers to the deli?'"

Other foodservice companies, however, are making internal changes. In February 2008, Nestlé FoodServices became Nestlé Professional and centralized operations in Switzerland to reflect its global resources in the foodservice business, which includes supermarket delis. "Foodservice has become a big priority on a global scale," Lenkov says. "When we're talking about trends and insights, we have the whole world now at our fingertips. The potential to pull ideas and synergies will be great for our operators."



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Nestlé Professional develops products that are ideal for deli use, such as labor-saving, ready-to-use sauces from its Stouffer's and Minor's lines. "These sauces help minimize labor, but provide really flavorful and bolder tastes for the consumer," Nestlé's Lenkov says.

The sauces also help traditional delis segue into more exciting prepared foods. For instance, Nestlé helped one retailer develop a wing bar using Minor's zesty orange and bourbon-flavored sauces. And Stouffer's

ready-made dishes present more culinary options. The company's resources can help operators with every format of the deli—hot case, cold case and grab-and-go.

"Delis need to offer traditional favorites and something more innovative," Lenkov says. "Most delis are upgrading to higher quality products, and they are offering all the menu options that restaurants offer."

### Becoming A Destination

Walk inside the Publix GreenWise Mar-

ket in Boca Raton, FL, and the aromas of freshly prepared foods waft in the air. The layout flows logically from the grab-and-go case to the prepared foods area, which transitions to the deli service counter, and then to the specialty cheese department and adjacent wine department.

Near the entrance, a separate cashier checks out shoppers who have made purchases in the prepared foods area, and in front of the store, diners fill booths and small tables and chairs. Outside, signs designate parking spaces for curbside pickup of to-go foods only—no regular groceries.

The newly remodeled Boca Raton store, which opened in May 2008, is Publix's second GreenWise store. The company opened its first Publix GreenWise store in Palm Beach Gardens, FL, and plans are under way for one in Tampa, FL. The Publix GreenWise concept marries products from the company's traditional stores with natural, organic and healthy products.

"We're very aware of trends in the industry, and customer feedback provides us with the most valuable feedback," says Maria Brous, Publix's director of media and community relations for the 900-plus chain based in Lakeland, FL. "We needed to fill a void. The beauty of our concept is that you can take a traditional shopper and not miss a beat, but also provide a wide variety of organic, natural and healthy products."

Corporate chefs design, prepare and rotate the prepared foods. "It's all done in-house," Brous says. "We've hired the best-of-the-best from the foodservice and restaurant industries to teach us. Our prepared foods area resonates with our customers."

The company's buying power keeps costs in perspective. "Our price philosophy is that our food quality is superior and meets or exceeds the outside dining experience," Brous says. "We are focused on quality and value for our customers."

The Food Emporium, A&P's New York, NY-based gourmet banner, operates 16 stores in the Manhattan area. The company has remodeled two of its locations to include an extensive "Food to Go" area. At its Trump Palace location, for instance, the store's basement offers everyday basic groceries, while the upstairs has been transformed into an extensive prepared foods area, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

"We always had the deli/subs area upstairs, but now we have a big assortment and have expanded our range of sandwiches," says Hans Heer, senior vice president and general manager of The Food Emporium. "We have ready-to-eat and ready-to-go prepared foods for our customers. New Yorkers don't have time to cook, and every-

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thing has to be fresh and trendy. Most of our customers are women, and they want healthier foods, less salt, lower fat and organic products."

In the coffee area, shoppers can eat their prepared foods and relax on Italian furniture near bright and airy windows. "It's a very clean, open area that seats from 40 to 50 people," Heer says.

Both Food to Go stores have full operating kitchens with in-store chefs. "They prepare a big part of the foods themselves," Heer says. "Some we buy from outside foodservice companies, such as salads, but we do most of our food preparation using our own recipes and chefs."

According to Heer, breakfast and lunch are the busiest times of the day. "By evening, it's different," he says. "New Yorkers go to restaurants or some buy foods to take home and eat—and not always prepared foods."

In Myrtle Beach, SC, Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co. opened in its benchmark "intuitive" store in April 2008. The Charleston, SC-based company built a brand-new store in the trendy Market Common development, a commercial/residential community that arose from a former air force base. The company worked with Marco Retail Group, Northfield, MI, to develop a concept that fits the way people intuitively shop.

"The deli area is the main focus of the store," says Rita Postell, spokesperson for Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co. "It's like your home where the kitchen is at the center. We serve a wide range of fresh foods, from sandwiches to gourmet meals. Preparation is constantly ongoing, and a café surrounds the deli area."

Again, in-store chefs prepare foods based on consumers' feedback, and the store also offers curbside pickup. In addition, it features a Dream Dinners franchise, where cus-

tomers can put together their own dinners. "We are giving you all the options," Postell says. "Sometimes, it's a little overwhelming."

The surrounding shops and community make this store a popular destination. The community appeals to retirees, young professionals and young families with children. Condo apartments top upscale shops, such as Williams-Sonoma, Brooks Brothers, Banana Republic and more.

"This development is a village concept with a lot of parks and walkways, sort of like a European community," Postell says. "The setting encourages people to be out, walk and put the social element into shopping. People can make a day of it and then go grocery shopping at the end."

### Preparing To Grow

The drive to open expanded delis comes from a general belief that delis have been mired in cookie-cutter mode far too long—something the new breed wants to avoid. "We're not taking a cookie-cutter approach," Publix's Brous says. "We continue to learn as we build the GreenWise stores, and we try to customize each store to some degree. For instance, the Boca Raton location offers more Kosher products than the Palm Beach Gardens location and doesn't have a mezzanine level like the Palm Beach Gardens store."

As companies move forward, they are assessing all their options. The Food Emporium, for example, is limited in its remodeling efforts because of the lack of square footage. It refurbished a third store but didn't have enough space to include the Food to Go concept. What's more, Heer says it takes a long time to get anything accomplished in New York.

"We're looking for locations now to expand the concept outside of a supermarket setting," Heer says. "We're looking at separate stand-alone stores; it's a concept that works."

Most importantly, market and demographic research is critical to the success of destination delis. Publix positioned its Green-



PHOTO COURTESY OF WHOLE FOODS MARKET

Wise Markets in areas with a high consumer index for healthy, natural and organic foods.

Piggly Wiggly's Postell points out that location, consumer income and other factors figure into the formula. "If it's a right fit, it will work," she says. "And if you give your customers value for the product, customer service and all the options they are looking for, it will work."

Finding the right balance between traditional and restaurant-alterative is the tricky part. "Our challenge is offering the right mix of basic and specialty gourmet items," Heer says. "We want to be the neighborhood store and provide people with what they need, but offer some gourmet things too."

Lamb Weston's McGrath believes retailers must make a commitment to change. "The real difference is that some retailers have figured it out, make fresh foods and have plenty of trained people to walk around the counter and say, 'Can I help you or do you want a sample?' Speed and convenience are important, too. In some traditional stores, you often can't find someone in the deli to wait on you. And consumers are not going to wait."

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# Make The Most Of Holiday Splurges

Use this window of opportunity to showcase luxury and familiar foods to hear bells ring

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

**L**ean times or not, shoppers will splurge this holiday season, and impulse buys in the deli will make up a large percentage of those sales. Beginning in November, consumers will look to delis to help with their holiday entertaining, from main dishes and side dishes to appetizers and snacks. Many people will want foods that are special as well as easy to prepare during these busy and exciting months.

Specialty cheeses comprise some of the most important grab-and-go holiday sales. "Holiday is clearly a key period for us, representing more than 25 percent of total sales in two months," says Gwenaëlle Lettermann, marketing director, Lactalis USA, New York, NY, cheese producers based in France. "More people entertain with specialty cheeses during the holidays, whereas only specialty cheese-addicted consumers can consume them all year long. This is true for specialty cheeses like Brie and gourmet, spreadable specialties that will help transform the party buffet into something special."

Ever-increasing in popularity, Mediterranean and olive bars are also poised to see plenty of action. "During this time of year, there is so much entertaining happening," says Mary Caldwell, marketing manager, New York, NY-based FoodMatch Inc., importers and suppliers of all-natural olives and antipasti. "Consumers are looking for special items—unique items—and they want to impress their family and friends."

According to Caldwell, the spectrum of antipasti products provides the excitement in this category. "We're always looking for new, enticing flavor profiles from around the world," Caldwell says. "We love exploring the diverse elements found in the cuisines of Morocco, France and Greece and bringing them to market."

Imported specialty meats, such as dry-cured hams, fit right in with these party foods. Kate Whittum, sales and marketing director, Redondo Iglesias USA, Garden City, NY, producers and importers of serrano ham, believes that consumers are looking for



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARCEL ET HENRI CHARCUTERIE FRANÇAISE





PHOTO COURTESY OF VOLPI FOODS

something special to serve at parties. "Our 18-month Riserva Oro is ideal for holiday entertaining because it could be part of a cocktail party, a first course for dinner or a Spanish-themed tasting," Whittum says. "It's

no-fuss, no-muss, no-bother and easy to use when everyone is strapped for time."

#### Dress For The Season

Many companies offer items in holiday

packaging to boost sales such as Dutch cheesemaker Beemster Cheese, whose Santa's Choice features two-sided packaging. "Santa's Choice is Beemster Classic cheese, which most of our customers stock year-round, but the packaging offers stores a way to merchandise Beemster that appeals to the customer's holiday spirit," explains Michael Evan Blum, sales and marketing manager, Beemster USA, Jersey City, NJ. "The cheese allows stores to build eye-catching displays that not only are sure to increase their sales of Beemster Classic (Santa's Choice), but also draw consumers into the cheese department and increase total cheese sales during the holiday season."

Santa's Choice wheels come with the unique logo on one side of the wheel and with both traditional Beemster Classic repack labels as well as the festive Santa's Choice repacks.

The beauty of this plan, Blum says, is that the packaging still works after Christmas has passed—just flip the cheeses over to reveal the usual label. "Beemster's philosophy is to provide stores with the best product and best possible marketing/merchandising assistance," Blum says. "By having a holiday item that is the same product the customers are



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used to, stores have no fear of having a holiday item at the end of the season."

In addition to festive packaging, many companies are releasing new flavors in time for Thanksgiving. "Earlier this year we launched Beemster with Wasabi," Blum says. "This cheese, especially when stores offer samples, has proved to be a huge success. We look forward to launching another very new and exciting cheese later this year to the Beemster line on a full-time basis as

gourmet spreadable cheeses will add holiday romance to any cracker or preparation."

### A Special Time Of Year

During this season, more than any other, quality matters, especially because shoppers are entertaining guests and celebrating special occasions. "The one thing we always talk about is quality over price," says Jim Sisco, vice president of sales, Savannah Food Co., Savannah, TN. "Offer the consumer a

variety of seasonal items and don't skimp on the price."

Savannah Food Co. makes frozen side dishes, including cornbread dressing and sweet potato casserole. Although it may be tempting to offer inexpensive options, Sisco says it would not be a good strategy for a seasonal buy. "They've got shoppers in these stores that don't usually buy these kinds of items," he says.

Offering foods that hint at luxury will

**DURING THIS SEASON, MORE THAN ANY OTHER, QUALITY MATTERS. "THE ONE THING WE ALWAYS TALK ABOUT IS QUALITY OVER PRICE. OFFER THE CONSUMER A VARIETY OF SEASONAL ITEMS AND DON'T SKIMP ON THE PRICE."**

— Jim Sisco  
Savannah Food Co.

well as introducing a very limited-edition cheese, one of the most sought after varieties of aged Dutch cheese."

Lactalis also will offer holiday-focused cheeses. "Our key products for the 2008 holidays are really focused on making it easy for people to wow their guests with specialty cheeses," Lettermann says.

The company is planning to unveil several products this season. "First, a Brie log that will help in preparing amazing appetizers with Brie, crackers, and a gazillion of delicious and simple pairing ideas printed on the packaging," Lettermann says. "We know that half of the specialty cheese consumers eat is consumed with crackers. This is the perfect partner for crackers—easy to slice, deliciously creamy and buttery—and it pairs well with savory and sweet flavors. Second, two special holiday flavors we developed with a French chef in our Rondelé lineup, based on key ingredients consumers love for the holidays: pumpkin and cranberry-orange. These



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## Upscale Pâtés Are Easy To Serve

The holidays are a busy time for pâté sales. "Our business is very seasonal, and customers think about pâté when it comes to the holiday season," says Sébastien Espinasse, vice president sales and marketing, Fabrique Délices, Hayward, CA. "Everybody is in party mode. The pâté holiday sales are huge from October to December."

Pâté is popular for holiday entertaining because it is perceived as an exotic and luxury item, like caviar, explains Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian Pâtés and Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ. "Newcomers to pâté always enjoy the experience of trying it," Cummins says.

Not surprisingly, Europeans have always thought that pâté is perfect for entertaining. "In France, everybody serves pâté and foie gras for the holiday meals," says Elodie Jouannel, marketing manager, Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY. "It's high-end—great quality, great flavor—and so easy to serve."

Pâtés are wonderful as instant appetizers, and Alexian's Cummins suggests filling puff pastry shells or hollowed hard-

boiled eggs with any variety of spreadable mousse. Top with a sprig of green for the finishing touch.

Increasingly, pâtés are being used as an ingredient in making special dishes. "Pâté is now being used by restaurants in a variety of dishes, such as Wellingtons, and to give richness to sauces and gravies," says Yvette Etchepare, director of marketing, Marcel et Henri Charcuterie Française, South San Francisco, CA. "We even have customers who use pâté in their egg rolls and rice dishes. Our coarse pâtés are fabulous for giving stuffing that extra burst of flavor."

Pâtés have a way of elevating the mood of any social gathering, and the unique flavor combinations from The Patchwork Traditional Food Co. are sure to spark some lively conversation. The company's lineup includes such spirited combinations as Chicken Liver, Tequila & Cranberry Pâté; Chicken Liver, Triple Sec & Orange Pâté; Chicken Liver, Bourbon & Blueberry Pâté; and Welsh Dragon's Pâté (venison liver with chili).

Based in Wales, United Kingdom,

Patchwork makes its pâtés for the U.S. market in Selinsgrove, PA. "Our pâtés are semi-coarse; what we call Welch country style," says Margaret Carter, founder of the 25-year-old company. "They are all organic and contain no additives or preservatives."

A number of new pâtés will become available in time for Thanksgiving this year. Fabrique Délices is introducing its Pheasant Terrine with figs and pistachios. Les Trois Petits Cochons will offer Wild Boar Pâté with Chestnuts and Raisins and Venison Pâté with Cranberries and Pistachio Nuts. Alexian Pâtés will offer Herbs De Provence Pâté, a country-style pâté made with chicken, rum and herbs de Provence, as well as a tofu-based vegan pâté called Curry with Bell Pepper.

Alexian's Cummins believes that consumers' interest in exotic and exciting flavors continues to grow. "I think this is a reflection of a much more adventurous population," she says. "For many years our most popular pâtés were the French classics. Now, we are reporting very healthy sales of pâtés, such as Spiced Apple

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According to Patchwork's Carter, the key to increasing sales and consumer awareness is to offer samples. “Sixty percent to 70 percent of pâté sales depend on tasting it,” she asserts. “Once someone tastes it, they are likely to purchase it.”

Meanwhile, sales of classic flavors continue to grow. “Definitely the Mousse Truffée—chicken liver and black truffle mousse—has been gaining in popularity throughout the years,” says Les Trois Petits Cochons' Jouannel.

Fabrique Délices' Espinasse notes that all the mousses are very popular now in the United States. “We can see a great move on to this new category, which is Rillettes du Périgord, or duck rillettes—shredded duck meat cooked in duck fat for a couple of hours confit-style,” he says.

Espinasse has found that it is important to offer American consumers some pork-free products. “Pâté is a very difficult category and a very seasonal product,” he explains. “By having pork-free product, we can reach customers, such as

Jewish, Muslim and the rest of the population that does not eat pork.”

Natural products are also increasingly important to the category. “Our products are made by using meat and poultry raised without added hormones or antibiotics, never fed animal by-products and raised by farmers and ranchers who care about animals and the environment in which they live,” Fabrique Délices' Espinasse says. “People are very cautious about what's in their product.”

Pre-packaged slices have become a must-have for delis. “I see a very strong trend toward retailers favoring the pre-packaged pâté in place of cut-to-order pâté,” Alexian's Cummins says. “There is a lingering belief that pâté packaged at the ‘factory’ is perceived to be less fresh than the pâté cut personally. This is seldom true, and I believe today's shopper prefers the convenience and speed that the grab-and-go package offers. And, in the case of re-packaging or cutting and re-wrapping, the retailer is spared the cost of labor and carrying the risk of bacterial contamination in environment and handling.”

Les Trois Petits Cochons' Jouannel also believes in the merits of pre-packaged pâté slices. “The creative packaging makes it easy to be displayed, hung in the deli case or just stacked against each other,” she says.

Consumers get an extra benefit from packaged pâté because it stays fresher longer. “With the excellent shelf life of our slices, they can keep it in their refrigerator for unexpected guests,” Marcel et Henri's Etchepare says.

No matter how it is offered, pâté needs to be cross-merchandised with cheeses, olives, cornichons, crackers, baguettes and wine. “When serving pâté, we suggest using a neutral-flavored cracker, such as Melba toast or a similar cracker,” Patchwork's Carter says.

And pâtés need not be limited to one area of the store. “While visiting a store in Canada, I was amazed to see pre-packaged pâté of all sorts and brands merchandised in several locations in an IGA store,” Cummins says. “They were in cheese, deli and meat departments, and near prepared food offerings.” **DB**



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serve you well, according to FoodMatch's Caldwell. "We work with brands whose people are truly artisans and put thought and care into recipe development or curing processes," she says. "Their care and expertise result in delicious products—products that taste the way they would if you were actually in Greece, Italy or France. They transport you."

Serrano ham is another item that allows consumers to "spoil" their guests. "Redondo

Serrano is ideal for parties because there is no preparation involved or special handling, and as a host you look brilliant serving it because it's obviously premium, au courant and delicious," Whittum says.

While exotic items tempt consumers to splurge at this time of year, it is important to offer familiar classics as well. "Beemster appeals to a very wide consumer base, which makes choosing a few Beemster varieties a success for any host," Blum says.

"The age range of a Beemster consumer is from child to adult, and our cheeses attract people who have had limited exposure to specialty cheeses all the way up to wine and cheese connoisseurs."

**"HAVE PRODUCT IN STOCK AND START PUSHING IT AT BUSY TIMES STARTING AFTER LABOR DAY. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT CUSTOMERS WILL DEMAND IT DURING THE HOLIDAYS."**

—Kate Whittum  
Redondo Iglesias USA

For instance, Beemster Vlaskaas can be used to make fondue, which has enjoyed renewed popularity in the United States. Beemster X-O- and Classic go well with nuts, fruits and condiments such as honey. Additionally, Beemster cheeses can be used in cooking to make any prepared appetizer much more exciting.

More and more, ease of preparation is an important factor. "The selections we provide for olive and antipasto bars and multi-deck programs make it incredibly simple to grab a bunch and, in minutes, put together a stunning and mouth-watering platter," FoodMatch's Caldwell says.

When it comes to customers in a hurry, party platters are an easy way to encourage sales. "How much more convenient and simple could it be for the consumer than to have the platter made up for them?" Caldwell poses. "Delis have the option of controlling the products and weights they put into a party platter by having the platters available by order. Alternatively, they could offer a special on the Med bar and let consumers create their own. Deli buyers should confer with their sales reps on the best way to maximize profits on platters."

Although consumers are more willing to splurge on fat and calories as well as dollars, healthfulness can give an item a great advantage. "During this time of year, there's always a lot of discussion and tons of media cover-

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age—whether it's newspapers, broadcast radio and TV or consumer magazines—about how to 'stay good' with all of the parties and food gifts surrounding people," Caldwell points out. "Almost the entire Food-Match product line is within what the Mediterranean Food Alliance considers a healthy diet. By centering holiday dining and entertaining around foods in the Mediterranean Diet, consumers can relax and enjoy without feeling guilty."

#### Push Sales Further

A good display will give shoppers multiple uses for each item. Divina, a founding member of the Mediterranean Food Alliance, provides brochures and displays for its olive and antipasto bars, and for participating supermarkets in the Mediterranean Food Alliance's "From Your Cart to Your Kitchen" program.

"Divina has outstanding point of purchase

(POP) campaigns that drive home the healthy, easy and convenient message," says Caldwell. "Market Plates by Divina uses seasonal products combined in an easy recipe with products from the Med bar. This helps consumers work with what is in season while still enjoying their favorite out-of-season product, such as Divina Roasted Red & Yellow Tomatoes, without sacrificing flavor or quality."

Delis can help consumers by providing ideas and solutions. "People are really lost in front of that cluttered specialty cheese case, and anything to help them find easy and delicious ideas that will wow and please their guests will be a no-brainer," Lactalis' Lettermann says. "Show a brie tort, distribute recipes and group products that would pair well, such as a brie log plus crackers plus orange jam."

In addition, shippers and racks give nor-

mal products an elevated perception of quality and uniqueness. "It's a great way to highlight entertaining and gift-idea products," Caldwell says.

Beemster USA's Blum knows how important it is to remind shoppers of gift-giving ideas. "Beemster is a cheese that is very durable and travels well, whether it is in the car on the way to a party or in a FedEx box as part of a gift basket being sent to a friend or family member," Blum says. "I have received wonderful feedback over the years from customers of *igourmet.com* who have received Beemster in many of their different holiday gift assortments, all of whom rave about the condition that the cheese arrives in and its fantastic taste."

And when it comes to gifts, think outside the box. "Olives and antipasti are fantastic gifts," Caldwell says. "Consider bringing distinctive stuffed olives, such as almond or citrus, and the makings for a classic martini as a unique hostess gift. Bring something unusual or eclectic to parties or the office potluck. It's a fun, festive way for people to try something they normally would not have picked up on their usual shopping trip. Stores can easily suggest these ideas to their shoppers through a number of merchandising options, from mailers to in-store announcements to simple signage."

Beemster's Blum emphasizes the role that imagination and creativity plays in selling products. "The consumer likes to buy a product that the deli manager knows about and is able to tell its story through a fun and enthusiastic method," he says. "I have seen everything, from handmade posters about Beemster's artisanal craftsmanship being made by H-E-B deli managers, to elaborate displays, including milk cans and fake grass. Most recently, we had the unveiling of Beemster Graskaas, a very rare spring milk cheese. Lunds and Byerly's stores in Minneapolis, MN, built magnificent displays, and some employees even dressed the part to help excite the customers."

Because consumers have so many demands on their time—family, work, travel—they want help with entertaining ideas at the holidays. "That combined with a holiday 'urge to splurge' on tasty treats, which they wouldn't add to their weekly basket," Redondo's Whittum says. "Just get it in front of them. Feature it as a weekly special in September or October; put shelf talkers for 'Easy Entertaining' next to pre-sliced Redondo Serrano; stock pre-made holiday platters during weekends starting in the fall; and, most importantly, have product in stock and start pushing it at busy times starting after Labor Day. This will ensure that customers will demand it during the holidays." **DB**



# Hummus Riding The Crest Of The Health Wave

The center of the Mediterranean dip category, beneficial hummus continues to post increases in sales

BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE

**H**ummus is spelled many different ways depending on its country of origin, but this Mediterranean dip speaks a universal language when it comes to U.S. consumers. During the 52-week period ending June 14, 2008, New York, NY-based The Nielsen Company tracked dollar sales of hummous, hummus, hommus, chumus, etc., in food/drug/mass merchandiser stores (excluding Wal-Mart), which totaled \$214.1 million. During the same period, the equivalized unit volume (16-ounce basis) totaled \$38.2 million. In comparison, during the 52-week period ending June 16, 2007, hummus sales totaled \$164.0 million and the equivalized unit volume totaled \$29.6 million.

"We've seen hummus sales increase 30 percent year after year," says Rodrigo Troni, chief marketing officer of Sabra Dipping Co., Astoria, NY. "Sabra alone has almost a 30 percent share of the hummus market."

Brooklyn, NY-based Sonny & Joe's launched its brand of hummus in May 2008, but vice president of sales Howie Klagsbrun has been involved in the hummus category for over six years. "The category as a whole is on fire with double-digit growth for more than 10 years," Klagsbrun says. "This category is showing no signs of slowing down."

Consumers across the country are buying hummus in record numbers. According to The Nielsen Company, in the 52-week period ending June 14, 2008, supermarket shoppers in Boston bought 171 percent more hummus than expected for a market its size. Miami supermarket shoppers followed next, with 114 percent buying more hummus than expected and New York shoppers buying twice as much hummus than expected.

From the East Coast to the West Coast, hummus is riding the crest of the "healthy diet" wave. Its main ingredient, the chickpea,





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is high in nutrients and fiber and contains no trans fats—the type of fat associated with bad cholesterol and heart disease. Other ingredients, such as lemon, olive oil and garlic, also have healthful effects on cholesterol and heart disease.

“With all its health benefits, it is no wonder hummus has been around forever,” Klagsbrun says. “Hummus contains no trans fats or animal fats, has no added sugar, and contains more protein per ounce than ground beef as well as iron and fiber. Hum-

mus is also dairy-free and gluten-free.”

Additionally, the flavors and textures of hummus offer consumers a different experience with each product that hits the market. These factors not only drive impulse sales, but also encourage repeat sales as consumers incorporate hummus into their regular diets.

#### Ever-Evolving Flavors

A wide variety of flavors are giving original or classic profiles a run for their money.

Companies are embellishing hummus products with roasted red peppers, garlic, garden vegetables, chilis, horseradish, olives, sun-dried tomatoes and fruit.

“Our most popular flavors for years have been original, roasted garlic and roasted red pepper hummus in that order,” says Nicole Day, vice president, Mediterranean Delights, Saxons River, VT. “The original flavor remains No. 1, but now roasted red pepper and our chipotle pepper are rivals for second place. In talking with hummus consumers, I am noticing that people seem more open to trying new flavors than they have been in the past.”

Garnishes, such as pine nuts, Feta, sesame seeds, chopped olives and other ingredients, are topping hummus products. Sabra recently introduced new flavors to its extensive lineup of garnished hummus: sun-dried tomatoes, caramelized onion, cranberry and fig, chipotle, and peppadew.

The company developed its chipotle flavor to attract male consumers who wanted a bolder flavor profile. “Our consumer studies show that more males tend to prefer this flavor, and they typically eat it when watching football games or other sporting events,” Troni says.

Peppadew hummus affords an in-between taste sensation that’s not too sweet or spicy. “Once people try hummus, the adoption rate is very high,” Troni says. “After tasting hummus, consumers describe Sabra’s products as fresh, authentic, healthy and great tasting.”

Prior to launching its line, Sonny & Joe’s tested various formulations and flavors to find out what hummus consumers wanted. “Real hummus lovers—those who have tried homemade hummus—have told me that ‘commercial’ hummus just does not taste right,” Klagsbrun explains. “Our goal was to perfect hummus—to create a ‘homemade’ version for retail capable of going up against the best restaurant or specialty hummus out there.”

According to Klagsbrun, hummus should not be overwhipped or too loose. “We have captured the proper consistency and density of the dip,” he says.

The company offers seven flavor varieties, all of which come pre-garnished. “Hot Enough Hummus?” is for the consumer who likes a little heat in their food, Garlic Addiction is for the real garlic lover, and Hummus M’asabaha is for those who want a real Middle Eastern flavor,” Klagsbrun says. “All the dips are ready to serve—and ready to party.”

Some manufacturers, however, are changing the texture of hummus to be creamier, lighter and smoother. Northfield, IL-based Kraft Foods’ Athenos brand introduced a creamier product with a variety of

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garnishes. "The Athenos NeoClassic Hummus is a smooth, creamy twist on the Athenos hummus we introduced in 2007," says Dan Alesia, promotions manager.

Meanwhile, Richfield WI-based DCI Cheese Co. launched a low-fat hummus fortified with vitamins and calcium under the brand name Meza VitaHummus. Available in three flavors—traditional, garlic and pepper and olive—each serving provides the recommended daily allowances of Vitamins A, C and E and 10 percent of calcium needs. Each serving contains only two grams of total fat, about half the amount of regular hummus.

#### Promote Its Many Uses

"Hummus is such a versatile product," says Mark Smith, vice president of sales, Cicero, IL-based Wild Garden, distributors of Wild Garden Hummus dips, pita chips and snacks. "In the Middle East, consumers literally use it at every meal. It's almost comparable to the way Americans use butter. Using hummus as an ingredient for products like tuna and chicken salad instead of traditional mayonnaise is an opportunity."

The versatility of hummus is what makes it so successful. "It's not just a dip," Sabra's Troni says. "It can be used as a spread, as a

micro-meal with bread and vegetables, and as a healthy snack."

Recipes showing hummus as more than a dip or condiment give consumers a reason to

### "USING HUMMUS AS AN INGREDIENT FOR PRODUCTS LIKE TUNA AND CHICKEN SALAD INSTEAD OF MAYONNAISE IS AN OPPORTUNITY."

—Mark Smith  
Wild Garden

purchase the product on a regular basis. Signage explaining the health benefits of hummus is also essential to promote sales.

"Consumers are ready to try new tastes,

but may have less experience with Mediterranean foods like Feta or hummus," Athenos' Alesia says. "They may have tried them in a restaurant, but are uncertain how to use them at home in a meal or for entertaining. Providing usage ideas can help educate consumers and encourage purchases."

Delis can capitalize on hummus sales by stocking a few favorite flavors based on the store's demographic and rotating additional flavors each quarter. Signage should let customers know these selected flavors are available only for a limited time.

Furthermore, delis looking to cater to the ever-growing vegan, vegetarian or health-conscious crowd should include vegetable-and-hummus wraps as a staple item on the menu. Even if hummus is not on the menu, putting together a demo plate of hummus and chips or hummus and cold cuts goes a long way to boost sales.

"It's tried and true that product demos and samples are the best options for getting new customers," says Frank Chow, DCI Cheese Co.'s marketing manager. "Highlight hummus in sandwiches as a spread, or offer a tray of cold cuts with hummus. There is no better way to market than to demo."

In addition to demos, displays serve as

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"silent salespeople." Every company will argue its product needs more space, but deli real estate is limited and in high demand. Therefore, manufacturers are getting creative with shippers and cross-promotions. Athenos' new shipper for its pita chips can be placed right next to its hummus products in the cold case. In addition, the shipper highlights the brand's tie-in to the summer movie, *Mama Mia!* Labels on both the pita chips and hummus products advertise free music downloads from the movie.

While space may be limited, it's important to group hummus and Mediterranean foods together. Along with hummus, people will expect to find flatbreads, pitas, pita chips and other Mediterranean accompaniments.

"If delis want to build the category, they need to put it where people can see it," says Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Ward Hill, MA. "If you move it from one side of the case to another, regular purchasers will hunt for it. Devote shelf space and have proper

signage for this Mediterranean category."

Sonny & Joe's Klagsbrun adds that delis should not be afraid to take the deli department to the next level. "Make your refrigerator cases the ones people talk about and come back to," he says. "A deli that makes a decision to separate itself from the ordinary will make a name for itself and thrive. By raising the bar to better quality and eye-catching, creative packaging, delis will create more profits for their departments."

### Mediterranean Accompaniments

Along the Mediterranean Sea, farming, fishing and seaports created the need for grab-and-go meals long before "grab-and-go" was a term. With so many merchant ports, marketplaces provided foods that buyers and sellers could eat quickly and easily. Hummus provided protein while salads and relishes provided other nutrients.

Although hummus is often marketed as a Middle Eastern food, it also comes from Greece, where tzatziki, a thickened yogurt flavored with garlic, dill and cucumber, is a familiar food. Labne, a strained yogurt, is a major ingredient in tzatziki, but it's also a hot, new product on the market by itself.

"It's a great dip for pita or as a garnish," says Ross Baghdassarian, president, Karoun Dairies, Sun Valley, CA. "But it's also a good tenderizer for meats or a base for cream soups. It's a healthy alternative to sour cream and cream cheese."

Tabouleh and chickpea salads bring in Middle Eastern or North African influences. Tabouleh, a mix of parsley, bulgur (cracked wheat), tomatoes, red onions, lemon juice and olive oil, pairs well with hummus as a salad or relish. Tahini, a thick paste made of ground sesame seeds, is often used in making hummus or babaganoush, a purée of roasted eggplant that, like hummus, has many different spellings.

Sonny & Joe's makes an assortment of Mediterranean dips and spreads, such as open-flame roasted Eggplant Babaganoush, Sautéed Eggplant, Turkish Dip and Moroccan Matbucha, a cooked red pepper and tomato salad.

After conducting market research, Sabra changed the name of its Sautéed Eggplant to Sautéed Mediterranean Vegetables. "We redefined the name and made the product more mainstream," Troni explains. "It's all-natural, very fresh and healthy for you."

The Mediterranean Sea packs a lot of culture into a small geographical area, and this is clearly reflected in the Mediterranean foods found in the deli section. Give customers a taste of how vast the potential is by posting a map and asking, "Where do you want to eat today?"

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# Thinking Beyond The Center Of The Plate

Supplementary grab-and-go items can easily multiply sales by filling the rest of a shopper's plate

BY BOB JOHNSON

When consumers come to the deli to buy, they often have a primary purchase in mind—what some in the industry call “the center of the plate.” It could be meats, cheeses, prepared foods, sandwiches or another food considered central to the dining occasion. Getting consumers to gaze beyond the center of the plate can trigger the purchase of related products. And these second or third looks at supplementary grab-and-go items can translate into substantial sales.

“It is our opinion that people go to the middle of the plate first, and then look at the side of the plate second and third,” says Jim Schloss, corporate vice president for sales and marketing, Smithfield, VA-based Smithfield Foods, producers of more than 50 brands of pork, beef and turkey products.

Small add-ons to main deli purchases can multiply into bigger profit margins. The trick is to feature the right stuff—condiments, snacks, dips, appetizers and other complementary products—and display the items in an appealing manner.

## Ethnic-Inspired Impulse Buys

Supplementary products should be unique enough to catch consumers' attention. “The unusual, the new and the ethnic are grabbed and gone,” says Jim White, co-founder of FGF International, Concord, Ontario, Canada. Under the brand name Fabulous Flats, FGF makes numerous varieties of naan, a hand-stretched flatbread with many applications.

“Versatility is critical,” White says. “When you buy naan, you can use it for a wrap, dipping or a base for pizza. People don't want to have six breads in the house; they want to have one—and when you take naan home, you take home other products.”

A naan purchase might net \$6 worth of hummus or guacamole. At the higher end, naan can be used as a pizza crust, leading to \$15 worth of ingredients, such as a jar of sauce, cheeses, pepperoni, peppers, olives and mushrooms.



PHOTO COURTESY OF INNOVARE

In addition to great-tasting meats, sandwiches beg for ethnic-inspired condiments, such as Beano's brand of Deli Bistro Sauces from Pittsburgh, PA-based Conroy Foods. This new line features tangy flavors like Cilantro & Lime, Roasted Chipotle, Mesquite Smoked, Hot Ginger, Sweet Chile Pepper and Oriental Mustard. The company also produces other sauces and condiments.

Likewise, the popularity of Asian main dishes leaves the door wide open to impulse buys of appetizers, sauces and dips. Kent, WA-based InnovAsian Cuisine recently introduced a line of frozen thaw-and-sell, case-ready Asian appetizers under its Carry-Out Cuisine brand. The new appetizer line is doing well, and the company plans to add more varieties in the fall, according to co-founder Mark Phelps.

## Get 'Em To Spend On Snacks

“Snacks have been around so long, it's hard to think of them as a trend, but the snack category continues to launch products,” says Daryl Thomas, director of marketing, Nottingham, PA-based Herr's Inter-

national. Herr's produces a wide variety of potato chips, pretzels, tortilla chips, cheese curls, popcorn and other snack items.

Sandwich programs naturally draw customers looking for crunchy complements, such as Herr's Kettle Cooked chips. “The chip has gone full circle and now has more crunch and texture,” Thomas says. Herr's kettle chips come in a variety of flavors, like jalapeño and Buffalo wing, and colors such as blue and toasty brown russet.

Consumers also are seeking natural or healthful snacks. “Consumers today are really reading labels—even guys,” FGF's White says. “People don't want crap in their food.”

Products with no preservatives, trans fats or hydrogenated oils can be merchandised as healthier-for-you foods. Customers are also looking for fewer calories, and many suppliers have gotten that message.

“Low-fat or fat-free lines fit in well because the deli is one of the more health-conscious areas of the store,” says Warren Wilson, founder of Princeton, NJ-based The Snack Factory. The Snack Factory makes Pretzel Crisps, a baked, thin pretzel



containing no trans fats, saturated fats or cholesterol, for crunching or dipping. Portion-control snack products are a growing trend, Wilson says, and The Snack Factory offers a 100-calorie pack of Pretzel Crisps.

The company recently introduced Ciabatta Crisps in two flavors, Sun-dried Tomato & Parmesan and Rosemary & Garlic. The all-natural crisps pair perfectly with bruschetta, soft cheeses, soups and salads, dips and spreads, or as a stand-alone snack.

"People used to say they wanted to eat healthier, and now they're actually doing it," says Patrick Ford, vice president of Raleigh, NC-based Ford's Food Inc. "People are becoming more educated." Ford's makes a full line of all-natural, fat-free Bone Suckin' barbecue sauces as well as one and a half-ounce bags of all-natural nuts.

The nuts—available in such flavors such as Fire Dancer, Jalapeño Nut and Margarita Mix—contain no preservatives and are gluten-free. "Gluten-free is a big buzz word," Ford says. "We're finding that more and more people want gluten-free because they are intolerant to wheat, barley and rye."

#### Strut Your Stuff With Class

Upscale products lend a certain cachet to a deli, but also require innovative packaging

and a classy setting. Displays featuring wooden racks, woven baskets, and props in other natural materials impart a sense of attention to detail and quality. "Today, there is a more upscale look to deli displays," Herr's Thomas says.

Port Washington, NY-based Tryst Gourmet LLC produces chicken and seafood appetizers and dips. "We make value-added, premium dips and spreads," says Bob Ferraro, vice president of sales. "We're introducing premium seafood dips and targeting the kind of customer who buys smoked salmon. Some deli buyers are looking for these upscale products."

Tryst's products for the cold case are conveniently packaged. "Ours are in a package that's ready to go," Ferraro says. "You have to make the items convenient."

That's the reason Alpharetta, GA-based InnoWare Enterprises LLC, makers of premium plastic takeout containers, redesigned its OctaView line to include portion cups. "We've added a two-ounce portion cup that snaps into the lid of the OctaView packages," says Tracey Murphy, product manager.

A groove inside the container tightly secures the cup in place. The OctaView line is color-coded to handle foods: bone white for cold and black for hot or cold.

#### Location, Location, Location

To profit from the second look, it is essential to place grab-and-go products in a strategic location, such as chips near sandwiches. Some products have two or three places where they logically belong. Condiments can be merchandised on top of the deli counter, on top of the cheese island or near grab-and-go sandwiches. Convenience is the highest priority in deciding where to locate these supplementary items, according to Conroy of Conroy Foods.

The Snack Factory's Wilson believes Pretzel Crisps belong near food bars. "All the delis have a salad or soup bar now, and that's where I think it makes sense to display Pretzel Crisps," he says.

Another option is to create a "theme" space within the deli for like products. "Group similar ethnic offerings together to create international sections so consumers can choose from complementary options," advises InnovAsian Cuisine's Phelps. "Decorate cases with props, like Asian chopsticks, fortune cookies or Asian bottled sauces."

Such displays drive home the point that a central food purchase needs more than one secondary item to fill the plate. "Triggering purchases of those additional items is critical with grab-and-go," FGF's White says. **DB**

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# The Morning Wake-up Call

Big opportunities rise and shine for on-the-go breakfast items in the deli

BY BOB JOHNSON

**T**he early part of the day is presenting the newest opportunity for growth in the deli section of the supermarket. "Breakfast seems to be a meal that is gathering more interest among delis," says George Kashou, vice president of sales and marketing for Milwaukee, WI-based Kangaroo Brands, makers of pita pocket sandwiches, pita breads and pita chips.

Widely positioned as the most important meal of the day, breakfast is eaten by exactly half of Americans seven days a week, according to

*U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2008*, published by Arlington, VA-based Food Marketing Institute (FMI). However, many people skip this meal for an average of 5.2 breakfasts a week. The FMI reports that breakfast consumption is strongly related to the availability of time: 68 percent of retired shoppers eat breakfast seven days a week compared with 45 percent of those still active in the workforce. The FMI also found that households with children, especially older ones, are actually less likely to eat breakfast.

What does this mean to supermarket delis? In the FMI's estimation, working consumers' lack of time to eat and prepare breakfast is creating a big opportunity for retailers to provide fast, on-the-run solutions to start the day off right.

Nutritional studies continue to reinforce the benefits of breakfast as part of a balanced diet. The mission of the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, an organization of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, is to advance and promote dietary guidelines for Americans as well as conduct applied research and analyses in nutrition and consumer economics. The organization advocates eating three healthy meals a day and nutritious snacks comprising ingredients from each food group. On a sample menu for a 2,000-calorie food pattern on its Web site appears a scrambled egg-and-black bean breakfast burrito—just the kind of quick, appealing meal consumers are seeking to jump start the day.

The majority of Anaheim, CA-based Don Miguel Mexican Foods' line of hand butcher-wrapped breakfast burritos can be found in the grab-and-go cold case in the deli. Each burrito contains whole eggs as well as a variety of cheese and other protein combinations, such as smoked ham, chorizo,

beans, bacon and sausage. These items can be bought on the run and heated in the microwave at the office.

**“THE BREAKFAST  
PART OF THE DAY IS  
GROWING, AND DELIS  
CAN CAPITALIZE ON  
THE OPPORTUNITY...BY  
PROVIDING FLAVORFUL  
GRAB-AND-GO ITEMS  
IN UNIQUE FORMATS.”**

—Kathy Lenkov  
*Nestlé Professional*

“We do some breakfast burritos at the service deli, but it's not a huge business for us,” says Bill Parker, executive vice president,

Don Miguel Mexican Foods. People buying breakfast at the service deli generally tend to eat the burritos in the store or soon after leaving the store, Parker adds.

As more consumers compress shopping trips in the car to save on gas and time, delis are in an envious position to lure business away from convenience stores and quick serve restaurants (QSRs). Consumers who frequent the deli for breakfast are more likely to pick up other items they'll need for lunch or dinner.

**Arouse The Taste Buds**

To successfully compete for the breakfast market with convenience stores and QSRs—and a store's bakery department—delis must offer items that are a cut above the rest. “The breakfast part of the day is growing, and delis can capitalize on the opportunity and take share from quick serve restaurants by providing flavorful grab-and-go items in unique formats,” says Kathy Lenkov, manager of corporate communications and public relations, Nestlé Professional, Glendale, CA.

The company recently introduced a variety of flatbread and croustade products specifically for the breakfast market under its Hot Pockets brand. “The new Nestlé break-

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fast items have an upscale appearance, unique formats and restaurant-inspired flavors," Lenkov says.

Nestlé's flatbreads come in two breakfast varieties. One flatbread product is topped with pork sausage, scrambled eggs, red and green peppers, and shredded Cheddar and Mozzarella cheeses. The other is topped with pork sausage, scrambled eggs, Mozzarella cheese and a gravy sauce. The flatbreads can be thawed and cooked in either the oven or microwave.

Breakfast Croustades are available in two varieties as well: a bacon, egg and cheese filling surrounded by maple-flavored dough, and a spicy pork sausage, egg and cheese filling surrounded by light flaky dough. The croustades hold well in dry heat up to two hours after oven cooking.

In addition to offering unique breakfast solutions, delis must respond to consumers' demand for high-quality coffee. "A strong coffee program is critical to compete,"

Lenkov says, referring to the growing number of coffee houses, convenience stores and QSRs serving premium coffee.

The Food Emporium, based in New York, NY, with 16 stores in the Manhattan area, offers its customers premium Illy coffee from Italy in its gourmet-concept stores with a "Food to Go" prepared foods area. "Breakfast and lunch are our busiest times of the day," says Hans Heer, senior vice president and general manager of the Food Emporium. "We offer coffee in the morning, and customers can buy bagels and muffins from the bakery and hot foods, such as bacon, eggs and other specialties, from the deli area."

With or without a jolt of caffeine, Kangaroo Brands' line of omelet pita sandwiches will wake up consumers' taste buds. The line consists of a Cheddar Cheese Omelet Pita; a Santa Fe Omelet Pita filled with onions, peppers and Monterey Jack cheese; a Ham and Cheese Omelet Pita; and a sausage-and-cheese Western Omelet Pita.

Shipped frozen, the omelet pitas have a 10-day refrigerator life, and hold up for two or three hours after being microwaved. According to Kashou, the all-natural omelet pitas contain 50 percent less fat than traditional breakfast sandwiches.

"People don't think of pitas for breakfast," Kashou explains. "The traditional breakfast offerings include biscuits, muffins and croissants. But consumers are looking for higher quality and portability. It's the easiest sandwich to eat."

Each omelet fits inside one half of a pita pocket, and can easily be eaten using one hand, leaving the other hand free to push a shopping cart or drive a car. "Early morning shoppers need food that is easy to handle," Kashou says.

### Set The Alarm To Go

Portability applies as much to packaging as it does to the food in the breakfast program. "Holding bag sleeves for single-serve items and a bakery-type box for easy, multiple carry-out items are a must," Lenkov advises. "Well-stocked delis should have items that can be eaten as a single item on the go or packaged for takeout to feed groups at business meetings or other early-morning gatherings."

Both the holding bag sleeves and carry-out boxes should merchandise the visual and aromatic appeal of the product as well as feature the deli's logo and/or brand names, Lenkov adds.

Many suppliers are introducing products that take convenience to new levels when preparing traditional breakfast menu items. Olymel Foods, based in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada, produces several varieties of bacon, including pre-cooked bacon products and bagged Canadian bacon.

"There are a lot of items—from pre-cooked eggs to pre-cooked bacon—that are helpful if a deli is trying to put together a breakfast program," says Steve Eldridge, marketing associate for Olymel Foods. Pre-cooked items reduce labor and can be an important element in a breakfast grab-and-go program, he adds.

Delis hesitant to implement a breakfast program should measure its value in terms of the new consumers it will bring to the deli as well as the money they spend for breakfast. The wholesale price for Kangaroo Brands' omelet pita is about 80 cents. "For under a dollar, you can bring somebody to the deli," Kashou says. "If a deli focuses on having one quality breakfast item, you can bring new customers to the deli. This is a great way to bring early morning shoppers to the deli. Only 25 percent of grocery shoppers commonly shop the deli section."

**DB**



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# The Great Italian Debate

Along with naming rights, manufacturers from both sides of the Atlantic question the correct use of the word “Italian”

BY TODD MCFLIKER

**A**H, THE FLAVORS OF ITALY—THEY ARE SO DEEPLY INGRAINED IN AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS that Italian foods are seldom considered “ethnic” today. Instead of losing appeal over the centuries, Italian foods tug tighter at the heartstrings of American consumers. Whether consumers are buying Italian-style foods made in the United States or products imported directly from Italy, they are finding an ever-growing selection. Moreover, the competition for market share is keener than ever between domestic manufacturers and Italian exporters. The core of the debate is the definition of “authentic.”

“I call Americans intuitive consumers,” says Shelley Forrester, president of Forrester Network LLC, a brand and business growth consulting firm in Weston, CT. “Italy means



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something to them—the heritage, the love of the land, the love of family—that's what many Americans are looking for. It's very emotional. Many Americans are Italians, have Italian heritage, have traveled to Italy or want to be Italian."

While legalities protect some product names and descriptions, the cultural differences between the two countries are key to understanding the strong feelings that "authentic" brings about in a discussion. These emotional battles have pit American-Italians against Italians—sometimes in the same family.

In Italy, if someone is an Italian citizen, he or she is Italian regardless of ethnic heritage or last name. If a company is located in Italy and owned by Italians, the products they produce are Italian. On the other hand, if someone immigrates to the United States, becomes an American citizen and opens a business, the business is American, not Italian, and the children of immigrants are Americans—not Italians.

The United States was founded by immigrants from around the world, and therefore, is much more ethnically diverse. While Americans are supremely proud of being Americans, they often identify with their ethnic heritage. A common question asked

when meeting someone new is, "What are you?" meaning where are you or your ancestors from?

Newcomers to the United States frequently view the question as an insult rather than a conversation starter. Americans, however, are used to living in an ethnically diverse culture, in which ethnic identities are subgroups within a culture. Cities, towns and regions have different identities based on who originally settled a region. Everything from the names of cities and streets and the languages taught in schools to the types of restaurants and retail products are reflective of the emotional connection to their roots.

### Romancing Italy

America's fascination with all things Italian led New York, NY-based Zagat Survey to debut *America's 1,000 Top Italian Restaurants* this year. Zagat Survey is a widely respected publisher of guides to the best places to eat and drink in the world. In his forward, CEO Tim Zagat commented it was only fitting to produce a guide to the top Italian restaurants in 53 major markets because survey after survey showed that Americans prefer Italian cuisine to any other.

"There has been an explosion on the American market of Italian products because

they are so broadly liked," says Luca Bertozzi, president of Bertozzi Corporation of America, and vice president of marketing for MRA Management Resources Ltd. in Norwalk, CT. "Consumers have been demanding it. Sales of Parmigiano-Reggiano have grown year after year in the last decade in both consumption and dollars."

Made only in Northern Italy in Reggio Emilia, Parma, Modena and portions of Bologna and Mantua, Parmigiano-Reggiano has been produced the same way for more than 800 years. Bertozzi Corporation of America imports a complete line of Parmigiano-Reggiano products from its parent company in Italy to the United States. MRA Management Resources assists Italian food companies in distributing and marketing their products in the United States.

While America's love of Italy has spurred an increase in Italian imports, including products generally not available until recently, American-Italian producers also are seeing an increase in sales. And domestic producers have opinions about whether products made in Italy are always the best choice, most "authentic" or highest quality.

"Americans have a love affair with Italy," says Errico Auricchio, president of Denmark, WI-based BelGioioso Cheese Inc. "They

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think it's the best place in the world, but in reality it's not. There are so many articles that hype Italy as a destination and a place for good food, but not everything is perfect there. They're in love because they only see the beautiful part."

In 1979, Auricchio moved his family from Italy to start his cheese company in Wisconsin with only one goal in mind: to make great Italian cheeses. Today, BelGioioso produces over 25 award-winning cheeses, including such classics as fresh Mozzarella, American Grana, Burrata, Fontina and more.

### Coming To America

From the 1880s to the 1920s, approximately 4.5 million Italians immigrated to the United States from Italy. Over the years, this population group has continued to flourish. In 2000, the total U.S. population was 281.4 million, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, which conducts the official population survey every 10 years. Of this number, 15.7 million people fell into the Italian population/ancestry group.

Families that immigrated to the United States brought their trade secrets with them and established top-notch businesses to carry on Italian traditions. Following World War II, Italian immigration once again soared and more Italian food processing establishments and restaurants appeared on the scene, often producing Italian specialties not allowed to be exported to the United States.

As U.S. laws began to relax and allow Italian commodities into the country, cheeses and meats from Italy began to mesh with domestically produced Italian products in supermarkets. Today, Italy is a member of the European Union (EU), which is the second-largest two-way (imports and exports) trading partner with the United States, according to *The Year in Trade 2006*, published in July 2007 by the U.S. International Trade Commission.

Many people, however, believe that all products not made in Italy are "frauds" and are incorrectly marketed as Italian. And, of course, some companies have developed products with deceptive packaging with the intent of leading consumers to think those products are made in Italy.

"True Italian-made products have made great strides in the United States market," says Dr. Aniello Musella, executive director of the U.S. Italian Trade Commission in New York, NY. "However, domestic and imported products that oftentimes try to pass themselves off as being 'Italian' continue to be overwhelmingly present in the marketplace."

Therefore, the EU's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Specialty

Guaranteed (TSG) protect the reputation and quality of certain meats, cheeses and other foods. "Some Italian cheeses have a PDO, which is given to few products made in geographic areas to give accurate tractability to the products," says Paolo Grandjacquet, president of Saratoga Marketing Group, Saratoga Springs, NY. The native Italian's marketing organization lists among its clients Grana Padano PDO and prosciutto di San Daniele PDO.

"What Americans are discovering is that

Italian originals have special qualities and flavors that domestic cheeses can't capture," says Nancy Radke, director of the Syracuse, NY-based U.S. Information Office of the Consorzio Parmigiano-Reggiano and Fontina Valle d'Aosta. "Both cheeses are Italian originals, and the domestic versions differ in the type of milk used (pasteurized in the United States and raw in Italy), the production methods, and the flavor and aroma of the finished products. In a word, U.S.-made imitations cannot compare to Italian original

## A COW TALE



ONCE UPON A TIME there were two herds of cows. From high in the Italian Alps, there was the legendary VALDOSTANA breed who produced the world-renowned FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA cheese. Far to the north, there was a bunch of cows that produced a disappointing copy that was covered in red wax and bore little resemblance to the original FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA in taste or texture.

And no wonder.

The Valdostana cows were all descended from a very fine family, grazed exclusively on lush Alpine grasses, drank from pure glacial streams and went to bed every night by eight. Comparably speaking, the other cows ate like swine, drank uncontrollably, stayed up much too late and came from families of questionable origin.

Their cheese suffered accordingly. It lacked the firmness, suppleness, distinctive natural rind and the exquisite taste of the original FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA.

So why would anyone want the lesser cheese?

Well, either they didn't know the whole story, or someone had fed them a lot of bull.

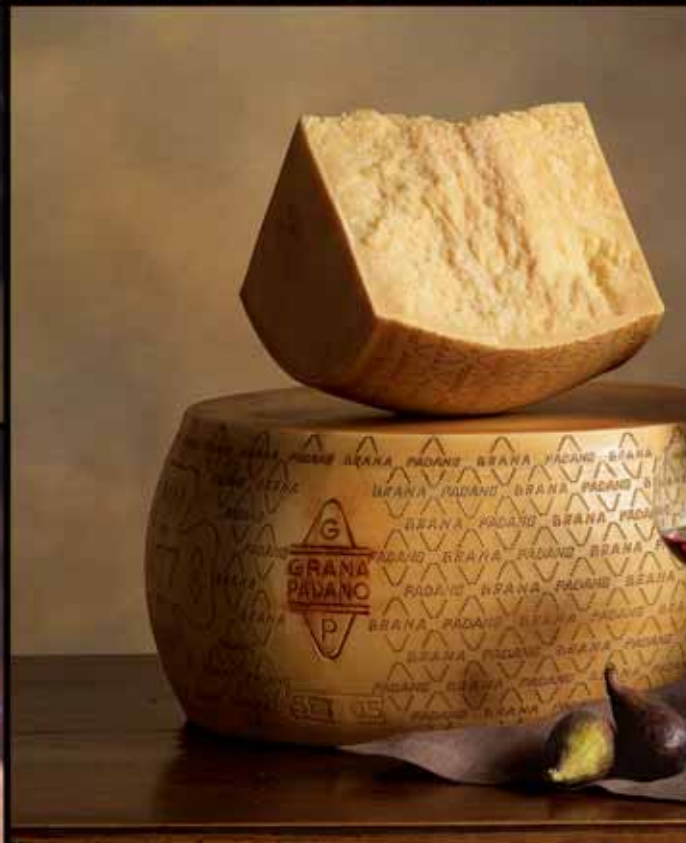



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# CONSORZIO PER LA TUTELA



## The Importance Of Maturing The Cheese

**Grana Padano** is the most popular Protected Designation of Origin (PDO or DOP in Italy) cheese in the world. It is still made only with milk from the Po Valley, in Northern Italy, following a traditional recipe first created by the monks that lived in the region around 1000 AD. The monks first started producing **Grana Padano** as a way of using left-over milk. After months of ripening, the cheese became harder in consistency and grainy in texture and, in the process, the flavors and aromas developed.

There are a number of strict quality checks in place while the cheese is maturing in the facilities. Each and every wheel is inspected, cleaned and turned every 15 days. Only after a minimum of nine months and subject to a number of strict tests can the wheels that pass be granted **Grana Padano** status and be branded with the logo.

## Age Sementation: A New Chapter

When making a great cheese, aging is important; as time passes it undergoes a range of physical, chemical, and microbiological changes that affect flavor and taste.

**Grana Padano** PDO takes at least nine months to mature, but it often arrives in stores around the

world at 15 or 16 months.

For many years, only cheese sellers have been educating the consumers on the difference in taste, flavor and texture between the different stages of maturity.

Recently, the Consorzio Tutela **Grana Padano** established the **Grana Padano** PDO "segmentation", backed by Italian and European Community authorities to help consumers chose the right age profile according to their particular taste.

Now it will be easier to choose broadly from three different age profiles depending on personal taste and usage - **Grana Padano** PDO, **Grana Padano** PDO aged over 16 months, and **Grana Padano** PDO. "Riserva" (over 20 months).

## How Will These Grana Padano Cheeses Be Branded?

**Grana Padano PDO: 9 to 16 months**



The trademark on the cheese wheels identifies them as **GRANA PADANO** PDO. Without this mark, the cheese is not allowed to be called or sold as **Grana Padano** PDO.

The popular, yellow-diamond-shaped mark must also appear on the packaging of wedges and grated cheese so that consumers know they are purchasing genuine **Grana Padano** PDO. This logo can be reproduced only by approval of Consorzio di Tutela **Grana Padano** and guarantees that the content of each

package originates only from genuine whole wheels.

The most noticeable characteristics of this type of cheese are its grainy texture and pale color; it has quite a delicate creamy taste.

**Grana Padano** PDO is usually served in chunks during a meal or as an appetizer but it can also be used grated on a variety of dishes. This age of **Grana Padano** matches perfectly with young, fruity chilled white wine.

**Grana Padano over 16 months** **OLTRE 16 MESI**

Consumers who prefer a more mature cheese must look on the packaging for the **Grana Padano** PDO logo and the specific age indication "Oltre 16 mesi" (over 16 months).

For this type of cheese, aged well beyond the minimum allowed for **Grana Padano** PDO, production costs rise, which justifies a higher price.

It reveals a soft straw-yellow color and a more significant grainy texture. With the aging process, there is less internal moisture so the cheese becomes more crumbly which means it can easily be used as shavings or slivers. This cheese contains scents of milk, cream and butter, but also of dried fruits. The **Grana Padano** ripened beyond the 16 months calls for a slightly tannic wine, a red with a moderate intensity and character, yet still young and fresh.

**Grana Padano Riserva**



**Grana Padano** RISERVA is aged for at least 20



# DEL FORMAGGIO GRANA PADANO



months but can reach a maturing time of 24 months.

**Grana Padano RISERVA** is the most mature of the segmentation and aimed at the most food savvy consumers who are looking for the very best in quality and taste.

Since 2005, **Grana Padano** PDO wheels will receive the extra branding "RISERVA" only after extra tests on its external appearance, the cheese's structure, color and flavor have been requested by the producer.

As for the best **Grana Padano** the guidelines and additional checks for the RISERVA cheese needs to display very specific characteristics which include:

- "Scelto sperlato," indicating that the wheels is immune from any type of external and internal imperfection
- Evident grainy texture with a clear flaky structure
- Pale yellow, hay-like, homogeneous color
- No abnormal smell
- Delicate and fragrant, yet distinctive, taste

Either grated or used as part of recipes, **Grana Padano RISERVA** is the 'guest of honor' at any dining room table. The **Grana Padano "RISERVA"** looks more mature than its younger counterparts as it is slightly darker in color. Increased aging gives it a richer and fuller taste though never overpowering. Also, it reveals aromas of nuts,

fruit and hay.

The wine to accompany **Grana Padano "RISERVA"** should emphasize the unique characteristics, but not overwhelm it, wines that are soft but tannic, with medium alcohol content work well.

RISERVA works very well to round off a meal particularly when paired with sweet dessert wines ("passito" for example) or served as part of a cheese board with nuts, fruits such as figs and chutneys.

## Other Elements On The Packaging

Beside the yellow mark of **Grana Padano** PDO and information relating to its age, the following should be displayed on the packaging:

- The authorization number for such type of packaging allowed by the Consorzio di Tutela **Grana Padano**
- The mark D.O.P. (PDO) with which the European Union recognizes **Grana Padano** PDO as a quality product and guarantees its origin and production method.
- The term "Garantito dal Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari e Forestali ai sensi dell'art. 10 del Reg (CEE) 501/06." (Guaranteed by the Ministry of Agricultural Food and Forestry Art. 10, CEE Registry 501/06).



*According to the Grana Padano Consortium data compiled in 2006, Grana Padano is the most consumed PDO cheese in the world, with close to 30,000 tons exported annually.*



For more information on  
**Grana Padano,**  
visit [www.granapadano.com](http://www.granapadano.com)

Reader Service No. 101



products because they lack authentic terroir.”

Since 1997, Miami, FL-based Lucini Italia has been importing products from Italy, such as olive oil from Tuscany and balsamic vinegars. Under its Lucini Italia brand, the company also sells Italian-produced sauces, soups and other products. Now, the company is bringing in three-year aged, organic Stravecchio Parmigiano-Reggiano. “Our Lucini Italia Organics’ 3-Year Aged Organic Parmigiano-Reggiano is hand-cut on-site where the cheese was formed and aged, by hand, in Parma, Italy,” says president David Neuman.

Other companies, proud of their Italian heritage and devotion to Old World standards, believe that products made in the United States are just as Italian—referring to a style of products rather than country of origin—and based on recipes passed down through families, imported equipment from Italy, and a strong tradition of quality. In fact, some producers believe American companies must adhere to stricter government-mandated quality controls, resulting in fresher and better tasting products.

Yet Italians speak passionately about the wholesome or organic nature of their prod-

ucts using the same recipes and manufacturing processes. The company’s products include Riserva Prosciutto, which undergoes a lengthy aging process just like prosciutto di Parma, a line of deli meats called Rostello, and a host of other Italian deli meats. “They are every bit as good as their counterparts in Italy,” says John Jack, Fiorucci’s vice president of sales.

But Tony Zarek, director of North American sales, Little Falls, NJ-based Negroni Corporation of America, insists that “imported is always better.” Negroni’s Italian deli meats are made in Northern Italy. “The animals are bigger, more mature and a leaner piece of product is produced in Northern Italy,” Zarek says.

Any Italian manufacturer of meat or cheese will assert that U.S. products do not compare because of the time spent aging and fully developing them. “Authentic Italian products are produced by guidelines that have been in existence for years, and sometimes, centuries,” says Sherrie Zebrasky,

retail adviser to Principe Foods, Los Angeles, CA. “These products are made by artisans with special training who follow the guidelines and traditions of their ancestors.” Principe imports prosciutto di San Daniele as well as prosciutto di Parma, speck Alto Adige and other meats.

American manufacturers will argue that the recipes and processes they use are just as “authentic.” Take, for instance, Fiorucci Foods Inc., based in Colonial Heights, VA, a manufacturer of specialty meats. Back in 1850, Innocenzo Fiorucci opened a store in Norcia, Italy, to make deli meats using cherished family recipes with the help of Old World artisans. The company became one of Italy’s leading manufacturers of specialty meats. Today, the company exports its PDO Fiorucci Prosciutto di Parma, made in the Parma region of Italy, to the United States.

In 1985, Fiorucci Foods opened a facility in the United States to produce meat prod-

ucts using the same recipes and manufacturing processes. The company’s products include Riserva Prosciutto, which undergoes a lengthy aging process just like prosciutto di Parma, a line of deli meats called Rostello, and a host of other Italian deli meats. “They are every bit as good as their counterparts in Italy,” says John Jack, Fiorucci’s vice president of sales.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF VOLPI

ucts. In the case of Parmigiano-Reggiano, producers also emphasize the grasses the cows feed on as being a major factor in the taste of the finished cheese.

In the opinion of BelGioioso’s Auricchio, grasses are not nearly as important as people are led to believe. “Marketing hype and articles make consumers think that grass is the most important thing, but it’s not,” he says. “People think grass is 90 percent of what makes a cheese good; it’s about half a percent. The freshness of the milk is the most important thing in making good cheese—and a trained workforce.”

And when speaking of products being “wholesome,” it depends on how clean the manufacturing facilities are, not necessarily how good meats or cheeses taste. “It’s okay to make cheese with flies in the plants in Italy,” he says. “Here, they would shut you down; the United States is superior.”

Auricchio also believes the United States

equipment to replicate traditional methods and processes, such as Stratford, CT-based Nuovo Pasta Productions. However, producing the company’s pasta products in the United States guarantees that Nuovo’s customers will receive fresh, quality products.

“One of the advantages of making all our products in our state-of-the-art facility in Connecticut is that our products arrive to our customers at the peak of quality with a minimum of shipping and storage,” says Tom Quinn, Nuovo’s vice president of sales.

Ensuring that fresh products reach consumers is another reason BelGioioso’s Auricchio believes U.S. products have the upper hand. “Cheese that comes in from Italy is not always as fresh,” he says. “Our cheeses are always fresh.”

Auricchio maintains the position that manufacturers in the United States are equally—if not better—qualified than Italian manufacturers. “You can import everything

equipment to replicate traditional methods and processes, such as Stratford, CT-based Nuovo Pasta Productions. However, producing the company’s pasta products in the United States guarantees that Nuovo’s customers will receive fresh, quality products.

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from Italy—even screws—but you don't need to do that," he says. "Why is equipment better in Italy?"

American consumers have been led to believe that made in the U.S.A. means not as good, Auricchio explains. "But I don't think that's right," he says. "From a scientific point of view, we have many advantages. We have a good supply of milk, we're close to farmers, we are subjected to cheese testing and testing of milk sources. It is more scientific and more properly done here than in Italy."

### Products Find Their Place

Nevertheless, U.S. consumers are increasingly embracing Italian-made products. According to recent data released by the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, U.S. sales of prosciutto di Parma reached 6.55 million pounds in 2007, a record 20 percent increase over the previous year. "We are extremely pleased about the growing popularity of prosciutto di Parma in the States," says Ruth Lowenberg, senior vice president of New York-NY based Lewis & Neale Inc.,

a marketing agency representing the consortium of Parma ham producers in the United States. "Despite the growing concerns about the two economies on both sides of the Atlantic, our exportation of hams hasn't slowed down. In fact, prosciutto di Parma is the most preferred Italian-cured ham in the United States with an 85 percent share of the market."

Prosciutto di Parma's flavor and reputation are among the reasons for its growing popularity. "It is a PDO product, which guarantees its quality and what we call in Italian *tipicità*, similar to *terroir* in French," says Riccardo Mapelli, product manager, Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ. "This means that the flavors in the ham reflect the land, the weather and the production methods of the Parma area. Consumers look for Italian PDO products like prosciutto di Parma because they know the product is genuine. Each ham is branded so you can find out where the pig was raised, who the farmer was, where it was slaughtered, when the meat started to cure and who cured it."

Savello USA Inc., an importer of Italian foods based in Wilkes-Barre, PA, brings in products from Italian meat maker, Leoncini, which makes a full line of deli meats, including prosciutto di Parma and Langhiranese Prosciutti. In January 2009, Leoncini plans to introduce a cooked, smoked pancetta to the American market. According to Cesare Gallo, president of Savello, men, women and children adore Italian meats and cheeses because they like their "tradition, quality and taste."

Fairly new to the U.S. market is speck Alto Adige PGI, a lightly smoked raw ham with a slightly milder taste than northern smoked hams, yet zestier than hams produced in southern European regions. Distribution has been building slowly, with most major markets covered. "Consumer reaction to the taste has been remarkable," says Dario Chiarini, account supervisor, Colangelo & Partners, a public relations firm in New York, NY. "Because of the smoking and spicing, speck Alto Adige has another flavor dimension that prosciut-

to di Parma or jamón serrano cannot offer."

Some Italians say Americans are missing the essence of true artisanal Italian products because the market is flooded with replicas—products meant to taste like the original but have very different ingredients. "This is particularly true in balsamic vinegar, which is often sold with many additives other than what makes up true balsamic—trebbiano grapes," says Seymour G. Pond, president of Somerset, NJ-based Pondini Imports, an importer and distributor of Italian organic cheeses, oils, vinegars and other products.

Homegrown companies, however, offer consumers a taste of the Old World as well as classic Italian creations. In the 1950s, George DeLallo began selling premium quality meats and cheeses to individual households, and in 1955, opened a retail store in Jeanette, PA. Over the years, George E. DeLallo Co. Inc. has expanded into manufacturing products under the DeLallo brand and nationally distributes the finest, authentic-quality Italian foods, antipasti, olives and more.

In addition to DeLallo's domestic-made products, "the wide selection of antipasti we offer includes Roman-style artichokes and Bella di Cerignola olives, both of which are grown in the Puglia region of Italy," says Anthony DiPietro, DeLallo's vice president and import manager.

### A Matter Of Emphasis

"Italian food is growing," observes Pierre Zreik, CEO of Rovagnati USA Inc., a manufacturer and importer of Italian meats based in Clifton, NJ, whose parent company is in Italy. "Italian specialty deli meats and cheeses are made with the consumer in mind, meaning they are wholesome and tasty."

According to Zreik, criticism of American deli meats and cheeses lies in the belief that Italians place more emphasis on taste and wholesomeness, while American manufacturers are more concerned about obtaining lower price points even if it means lowering the quality of a product.

U.S. manufacturers believe that is a general statement and does not apply to all U.S. or Italian companies. In reality, the divide between Italian and U.S. producers is a complicated issue. It's a matter of which Italian foods consumers are used to eating, which foods evoke memories of Italy and which foods they feel comfortable with.

"True authenticity comes in taste, and in taste there is the tradition of taste and the taste of the consumer," BelGioioso's Auricchio says. "Taste depends on what you're used to; it's not a question of superior taste. You can develop and train your palate to a certain extent. But if you don't like it, you don't like it."

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSORZIO PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA



# Refrigerated Soups Offer Simple Solutions

Culinary flavors, homemade goodness and nutritional buzzwords keep soups fresh and trendy

BY KATHARINE KAYE MCMILLAN

**T**rendy flavors and new twists on old favorites are making refrigerated soups the hottest items in the deli. Cutting-edge culinary recipes and “better-for-you” ingredients are just some of the reasons fresh chilled soups are heating up sales. Moreover, consumers are finding that refrigerated soups are a breeze to serve as a filling meal or snack.

Refrigerated fresh soup sales have grown dramatically since 2002, according to Chicago, IL-based Mintel International Group Ltd., a leading market research company. Mintel’s report, *Soup-US-September 2007*, segments soups into six categories: ready-to-serve wet soup, condensed wet soup, dry soup, ready-to-serve broth, refrigerated fresh soup and frozen soup. Over a five-year period, sales of refrigerated fresh soups through food, drug and mass channels (excluding Wal-Mart) soared from \$8 million to \$101 million and continue to skyrocket at a double-digit pace. Double-digit growth is expected to continue through 2012.

Who is buying soup? “People of all ages buy soups, from 18 to 80-plus years old,” says Shirley Leonard, marketing manager, Medina, OH-based Sandridge Food Corp., makers of salads and refrigerated soups.

More and more working moms, teenagers, single people and Baby Boomers are turning to “visually fresh” soups for convenient heat-and-serve or grab-and-go meals. “Homemakers can bring soup home and make a meal in a few minutes,” says Bob Sewell, vice president, sales and marketing, Fall River, MA-based Blount Fine Foods, makers of organic, all-natural and flavor-intensive soups. Soup can be a meal replacement or a go-with for salads, sandwiches or breads, he adds.

As a fast food, soup is gaining ground across the board because it can go from microwave to table or desk in minutes. What’s more, consumers have a world of flavors from which to choose. “Soup appeals to consumers of all backgrounds with busy



PHOTO COURTESY OF KETTLE CUISINE

lifestyles who demand convenience foods, but refuse to sacrifice quality,” says Jim Hostetler, vice president of marketing, Walnut Creek, CA-based Basic American Foods, owner of Harry’s Fresh Foods, which produces fresh soups, sides and entrées.

## Flavor Ranks First

Mintel’s consumer research found that flavor is the most important factor influencing soup purchases; it’s more important than price, health benefits or brand. More than half of soup-eating respondents (56 percent) indicated they “like to try new flavors.”

“Consumers want restaurant-quality soups with cutting-edge flavor,” says Jerry Shafir, founder and president, Kettle Cuisine Inc., based in Chelsea, MA. Kettle Cuisine offers more than 70 varieties of soups, chilis and chowders, and services more than 5,000 restaurants, cafés, delicatessens and supermarkets in the eastern United States.

Cutting-edge means unexpected pairings of flavors—fusions of global, ethnic and

regional American tastes. “Shoppers are exposed to global culinary trends and look for soups that are as good as what they could make at home or order in a fine restaurant,” Basic American’s Hostetler says.

Blount Fine Foods’ Sewell observes that trends seem to start on the West Coast and then move to the East Coast. “Retailers like to see how they sell on the West Coast first,” he says.

With restaurants introducing emerging flavor trends, consumers are exposed to unique soups, which has led to the demand for robust, gutsy and spicy flavor profiles. Among Blount’s new offerings is Thai Shrimp with Shiitake Mushrooms. “Retailers like to follow restaurant trends as closely as possible,” Sewell says. “And Oriental style is well received.”

Middle Eastern-inspired soups, such as Thai Red Curry and Moroccan Lentil, represent the kind of “innovations in ethnic flavors that consumers are interested in,” Kettle Cuisine’s Shafir says.

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Harry's Fresh Foods incorporates a wide variety of global influences, ranging from Latin to Asian into its line of soups. Hot & Sour Soup and Egg Flower Soup take their cues from Asian flavors, while Chicken Tortilla Soup is a south-of-the border specialty.

Perennially popular Mexican and Southwestern profiles are finding their way into new formulations of old school favorites, such as Grilled Mesquite Chicken and Tomato with Roasted Red Pepper soups. "We're seeing twists on familiar soups by overlaying 'friendly' items with trends," says Wendi DiMatteo, CEO of ASK Foods Inc., Palmyra, PA. "New flavor profiles keep traditional tried-and-true favorites current." ASK Foods prepares chef-style fresh and quick-frozen soups and chilis.

Global as well as regional American influences infuse Sandridge's soups with flavor. Cajun influences spice up Vegetarian Gumbo, while a chipotle pepper base kicks up the heat in Spicy Jumpin' Bean & Vegetable.

### Top Chefs Stir The Pot

Media coverage plays a key role in consumers' search for new flavors. "Cable TV chefs like Emeril have a lot to do with increased demand for new flavors," Blount's Sewell says.

Kettle Cuisine's Shafir notes that some retailers are reluctant to wade into untested waters. "They fear the new flavors won't move, and they will be stuck with shrinkage problems given the limited shelf life of chilled soups," Shafir explains.

New taste sensations, however, are critical when it comes to satisfying customers and attracting new buyers. "Retailers can't just keep offering only the classics like chicken soup," Shafir continues. "Consumers in all demographics are demanding restaurant-quality flavors."

Retailers selling only lackluster stand-bys are missing out on the opportunity to exploit the sales of these high-margin products. To keep consumers coming back for more, soup makers are going all out to develop new flavors. Kettle Cuisine's Shafir recruited top chef Volker Frick to develop new flavor directions for his company.

"At Blount Fine Foods, we have 30 to 40 leading chefs consulting on flavors," Sewell says. The company's chefs have developed soups and chowders for major restaurants such as Legal Seafood.

Harry's Fresh Foods works with top chefs to create recipes that fit the demographics of retailers and foodservice operators. "All our soups have a culinary influence," Basic American's Hostetler says. "We develop products that meet their operational needs as well as consumer preferences."

"Listening to our customers is an important first step in developing new flavors," Sandridge's Leonard says. "We do a lot of research and conduct taste panels with consumers, customers and chefs."

Although culinary input adds to the price point of soups, restaurants have proven that patrons are willing to pay higher prices for single bowls of soup. "People are willing to pay a dollar or so more for new flavor profiles," ASK Foods' DiMatteo says. "Restaurants have pushed the envelope in pricing, and consumers are becoming more accustomed to higher prices."

Pricing, however, can be tricky. Kettle Cuisine's Shafir believes higher price points are more palatable if shoppers think they are getting more for their money. The cap in pricing seems to \$5 for a 12-ounce serving.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDRIDGE

"Being able to serve two meal-size or family-size portions makes people aware they are getting servings for \$2.50 a bowl," Shafir says. "They see it as more of a bargain."

### Soups Cast A "Healthy" Spell

Nearly every age group is looking for natural, organic and preservative-free products. Baby boomers and seniors are concerned about the effects of sodium on blood pressure and heart disease. About 70 percent of Mintel's respondents who consider health benefits when selecting soups indicated they look for a low-sodium soup.

Fresh refrigerated soups are winning consumers' approval because they are perceived as healthier, more flavorful and more like "homemade" than canned soups. Labels touting the health benefits of soup feature nutritional buzzwords, such as trans fat-free, high fiber, dairy-free and gluten-free.

"In our own primary research, consumers

voiced high fiber, no preservatives, and less sodium as major features in making a product healthy," Sandridge's Leonard says.

The low-sodium issue, however, has to be carefully weighed when creating soups. "A soup with too little sodium doesn't taste good, yet people are looking for "no sodium" or "hardly any sodium," Kettle Cuisine's Shafir says. "The danger of very low-sodium content is that consumers won't buy the product again."

Increasingly, consumers are aware of the benefits of antioxidants and bringing balance to their diets. Refrigerated soups are less processed, fresher and a meal unto itself. "People are discovering that soups fill you up," Kettle Cuisine's Shafir says. "It is ideal for those watching their waistline."

Go Appetit, Houston, TX, recently launched Cool Soup refrigerated drinkable soups. Each eight-ounce bottle contains 60 to 110 calories. "People are concerned about what they're eating," CEO Patti Melcher says. "This product is perfect next to a salad bar. Whole Foods Markets puts them in the grab-and-go case."

Go Appetit's bottled soup tucks neatly inside a divided grab-and-go package so delis can include a ready-to-eat sandwich or salad. It's an ideal on-the-go lunch.

Manufacturers are jumping on the bandwagon by creating packaging designed to include add-ons, such as nachos and handy spoons, ASK Foods' DiMatteo points out.

### Any Time Is Soup Time

According to Mintel's research, lunch is the most common time for eating soup, but the company suggests it could be positioned as a snack or possibly even breakfast. The report also suggests exploring different ways to offer soup as a meal solution, such as portable soups packaged with "mix-ins" and microwavable soups for kids or adults.

"Displays with sandwiches and salads along with soups make it easy for shoppers to plan a whole meal with ease and simplicity," Sandridge's Leonard says.

Sandridge provides delis with soup kiosks so consumers can serve themselves and buy fresh refrigerated soup by the cup. "This kiosk and pre-packaged cups of soup are the most effective ways to merchandise soup near deli counters," Leonard says.

Tubs of soups, chowders, stews and chilis suit the needs of families and large groups. "You can heat and serve our buckets of chili for a barbecue," ASK Foods DiMatteo says. "Handles make it easy to carry and store."

With consumers looking for affordable, quick-and-easy meals, retailers can turn up the heat on refrigerated soups to bring in more deli dollars.

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# Turkey Still A Major Player

Delis need to offer various price points, different flavors and pre-packaged products to cover all the bases

BY LISA WHITE

Rising food prices and a sagging economy have challenged all segments of the industry, and the deli turkey category is no exception. Pre-packaged sliced turkey and random weight turkey sales are posting fewer dollar sales than a year ago. Yet deli turkey hasn't lost its allure with consumers who desire healthful products, a medley of flavor profiles and various price points to meet their budgetary needs.

New York, NY-based The Nielsen Company, a leading provider of market and consumer information, tracked dollar sales of manufacturer, pre-packaged sliced refrigerated turkey in food, drug and mass merchandiser stores (excluding Wal-Mart) for the 52-week period ending May 17, 2008. During this timeframe, dollar sales totaled \$421.3 million—down 6.2 percent from the previous year. The equivalent unit volume (16-ounce basis) totaled \$104.7 million compared with \$113.6 million the previous year—a decrease of 7.4 percent.

Random weight turkey sales also are down slightly, based on FreshLook Marketing's data. The Hoffman Estates, IL-based research firm reports that dollar sales of random weight turkey for the 52-week period ending April 27, 2008, totaled \$1.605 billion—a 0.2 percent drop from 2007. The volume of pounds sold in this period fell by 3.7 percent, while the price per pound increased 3.6 percent.

On the upside, the turkey segment is still a major player in the deli. The Nielsen Company reports that the dollar share of sliced refrigerated turkey is holding steady, accounting for 20 percent of the total dollar share in the sliced refrigerated lunchmeat category. And FreshLook Marketing's data shows that random weight turkey accounts for 36.8 percent of the total dollar share of random weight deli meats, just a 0.2 percent decrease from the previous year.

To keep figures from dipping lower, retailers can offer a range of price points and flavors to boost turkey sales in the full-service deli and grab-and-go case.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BELGIOIOSO

## Something For Everyone

Recognized by consumers as a healthful protein, turkey is one of the most versatile products in the deli. From value-priced to premium brands, turkey is good-for-you food. According to Willmar, MN-based Jennie-O Turkey Store's *Counter Intelligence 2008* research study—an annual independent survey of 12,500 deli shoppers—several factors influence consumers' decisions to buy a specific product tier of deli turkey. These factors include product freshness, product appearance, familiarity with the product's quality, a special price for the product and a reasonable price for the product.

Premium purchasers ranked freshness first, appearance second, familiarity with quality third, special price fourth and reasonable price last. Mid-tier purchasers ranked freshness first, appearance second, special price third, reasonable price fourth and familiarity with quality last. Value purchasers ranked special prices first, product freshness

second, reasonable price third, appearance fourth and familiarity with quality last.

The survey also asked consumers what would make them try another tier; for example, what would make a value shopper try a premium-tiered product? Consumers consistently responded that product samples, special prices and coupons would influence their purchase. Overall, however, 48.9 percent of the survey respondents routinely purchase premium/specialty deli turkey products, while 31.7 percent purchase medium/good quality products and 19.4 percent purchase value-priced products.

As more consumers hunker down to ride out the current economy, many retailers are capitalizing on private label deli turkey sales as they try to differentiate themselves in the marketplace. When times are lean, house brands offer consumers cost-effective alternatives to branded turkey. Jennie-O's *Counter Intelligence* study found that private label deli turkey sells very consistently with

leading national brands of premium deli turkey products.

Clearly, delis need to give consumers a range of choices, especially behind the service counter. "It's important that consumers have options in the full-service deli," says Tony Rao, brand manager-deli, for Garner, NC-based Butterball LLC. "When faced with only premium and super-premium turkey products, these customers will move to the pre-packaged section."

Recognizing the need for a mid-range product in its deli repertoire, Jennie-O Turkey Store introduced its Deli Favorites line for everyday meal solutions. This line of bulk turkey breasts also has earned the American Heart Association Stamp of Approval for its heart-healthy attributes. "These products feature fresh graphics that highlight the nutritional content, including percentages of fat and sodium, in addition to the number of calories per serving," says Jennifer Templer, Jennie-O's associate product manager for deli.

While some consumers are looking for value- and mid-range priced turkey products, the majority of shoppers are moving toward premium brands—and increasingly, these turkey products sport all-natural or organic labels. Natural and organic meats and poul-

try have transcended upscale food stores to become commonplace in supermarket delis. In the past, people in the upper income bracket typically bought these products, but now others with less disposable income are favoring them as well.

Michigan Turkey Producers Co-op, Grand Rapids, MI, makes all tiers of products, but the company has experienced the most success with premium products. "There is certainly a greater demand for natural and organic products by mainstream and specialty markets alike," says product manager Kyle Maas. "That's why we grow and process organic and antibiotic-free/animal by-product-free turkeys."

Beyond the actual ingredients used in processing the meat, retailers are concerned about the care and feeding of animals. "The concern for animal welfare is another growing trend—so much so that buying preference is being given to processors that use Controlled Atmosphere Stunning," Maas says. "We were one of the first in the nation to implement this system. In addition to being much more humane, Controlled Atmosphere Stunning has greatly improved the quality of our meat."

Many consumers are associating quality and better tasting meats and poultry to the

way animals are raised. "Today's consumers are much more aware of where food comes from and how animals are raised, and this has propelled the popularity of natural and organic meats," says Gina Asoudegan, marketing coordinator for Applegate Farms, a natural and organic meat supplier based in Bridgewater, NJ. "It's key that delis understand who these customers are and how they are making their purchasing decisions. If retailers know their customers' purchasing habits, then they can offer products to suit that demographic."

Both the natural and organic segments offer a great deal of price elasticity because they are belief-driven categories. "Consumers who feel a certain way about the environment or the treatment of animals won't switch to conventional products just to save money," Asoudegan says. "Instead, they may buy less of a product or cut back somewhere else."

According to Tedd Heilmann, general manager of organic meat supplier Organic Prairie, La Farge, WI, the growth of organic meat sales is significant and substantial. "Mass markets are paying attention," Heilmann says. "In the past three years, the trend in organic meat has been toward more convenient items, like pre-packaged."





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Nevertheless, the premium turkey segment is not immune to the price increases and challenges facing other meat categories. Based on the Consumer Price Index from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Center in May 2008, poultry prices had increased by 0.8 percent—an increase of 4.5 percent compared to the same time last year. Higher feed and energy costs in 2007 and early 2008 caused poultry prices to rise faster than normal.

"No doubt rising grain and energy costs will have some impact on sales," Michigan Turkey's Maas says. "With corn climbing into the \$6 to \$7 range, manufacturers have no choice but to pass some of this along. The upside for delis is that other segments, such as foodservice, are feeling the crunch too."

Typically, organic products command higher prices than traditional products. "The traditional meat industry is focused on high grain prices, and we have similar concerns in the organic segment because our prices are about 10 percent higher," Organic Prairie's Heilmann explains. "But there have been substantial price increases in the traditional meat segment as well."

Organic meat suppliers also are dealing with supply-and-demand issues because growing demand for these products has put a strain on availability. Farmers must undergo a lengthy process to become organic suppliers, which adds to the price equation.

"We always try to predict the growth rate, so we can develop and source new growers to help us meet growing consumer demand," Heilmann points out. "However, many have underestimated our category's growth rate."

### Keeping Abreast Of Flavor Trends

Along with natural and organic products, flavor varieties continue to spearhead sales of deli turkey. Meanwhile, perennial favorites, such as hickory-smoked, mesquite, Cajun and pepper flavors, dominate the category. For New Oxford, PA-based Hain Pure Protein Corp., producers of all-natural Plainville Farms turkey brand, hickory-smoked turkey is a big seller, says Ed Jenkins, executive vice president of sales and marketing. "Mesquite also does well, but only sells between one-half to two-thirds of hickory-smoked turkey's sales," he explains.

For more adventurous palates, American regional and flavor-specific profiles are emerging on the scene. "These flavor profiles mirror trends in the foodservice industry," Butterball's Rao says. "We are seeing flavor blends like mandarin orange and citrus lime and Tex-Mex that bring flavors together in a unique way."

In line with these flavor offerings comes Butterball's latest product—Butterball Original Tomato Basil Turkey Breast. Rubbed with tomato basil seasoning, this whole turkey breast is available behind the glass in the deli.

In general, many suppliers are staying true to the big three flavors—oven roasted, slow smoked and honey roasted. "Although I'm seeing a lot of companies doing flavors, like Hillshire Farms' 20 flavors in tubs, our company is sticking with the turkey staples," says Amy Shesto, marketing manager, Patrick Cudahy, a meat supplier based in Cudahy, WI.

Moreover, retailers are looking for classic deli turkey products to add to their prepared food programs, while consumers want a

basic foundation for turkey club or panini sandwiches. "Turkey is very versatile, and people are moving toward it in this economy," Applegate Farms' Asoudegan says. "Classic flavors and traditional meats will sell more briskly."

### Premier Packaging

According to Jennie-O Turkey Store's *Counter Intelligence* study, product freshness tops the list of reasons consumers cite for shopping the deli. Consequently, today's packaging designs for pre-sliced, pre-packaged turkey products underscore the perception of product "freshness."

"In the last year, the biggest success has been the conversion from zipper packs to plastic tubs," Hain's Jenkins says. "This is despite the fact that this packaging is not environmentally friendly, and consumers can only reuse so many tubs. But the appeal is preservation. Consumers think meat lasts longer in the tubs, and they perceive it as being fresher."

Patrick Cudahy recently began offering sliced turkey in European-style tubs with molded lids and an updated logo. "We are seeing a decrease in the four by six-inch packages, although there is still a need for them," Shesto says. "They are geared toward value and Baby Boomers prefer them, but four-by-sixes have been trending down because of the tub popularity. People are interested in new and unique packaging."

In addition to tubs, Organic Prairie's Heilmann says the company recently transitioned to a facility that provides resealable standard peel-open packaging.

Butterball's Rao predicts the pre-sliced deli turkey segment will soon see more packaging innovations in the full-service sector. "Consumers are looking for extended shelf life without additives and preservatives," Rao says. "In the coming years, there will be alternative executions other than standard deli meat sheets and plastic bags. We will see more user-friendly packaging that helps extend product shelf life without adding to the cost. Packaging also will provide more information about product shelf life for confused consumers."

Because of its healthful profile, turkey is likely to stay in vogue in the deli department. "We will see more flavors and antibiotic-free turkey varieties, because retailers are demanding them," Hain's Jenkins says.

On the other hand, without an economic upswing, Patrick Cudahy's Shesto predicts the presence of more value-priced turkey brands. "We may see more value turkey that includes other ingredients, rather than just turkey breast, to help drive costs down," she says.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIE-O TURKEY STORE

# The Legacy Of American Specialty Cheese

Branching out from foreign roots, U.S. cheeses tout their heritage and innovative style

BY ELIZABETH BLAND

**R**oots grow in many directions, but their sources also come from many directions. While American cheese has its origins in foreign tradition, it is branching out into new territories and even traveling abroad.

International styles continue to affect the domestic market today. On the one hand, Americans are developing a palate for imported cheeses; on the other hand, they want to buy and eat locally for economic, environmental and cultural reasons. American cheesemakers accommodate this demand with innovative, award-winning products. However, in spite of the surge in domestic cheese sales, cheesemakers must ensure their cheeses stay rooted in this new food culture through publicity, consistency and consumer education.

## From The Ground Up

One way U.S. cheesemakers can gain exposure and education is to join an organization. Such organizations range from small, local guilds to internationally recognized associations like the American Cheese Society (ACS), based in Louisville, KY. In 25 years, the ACS has grown into an institution that is not only useful for cheesemakers, but also for the trade industry in general. "It started out as a grass-roots organization," says Fermo Jaeckle, CEO of Roth Käse USA Ltd., Monroe, WI, "and for a few years, there was a struggle to accept people who were making cheese not just for a hobby, but were doing it for business purposes. I think at this stage of the game, the ACS realizes there are people doing this as a business."

Allison Hooper, president of the ACS and co-founder of Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, Websterville, VT, explains the current position of the ACS. "The mission of the ACS has always been historically to help educate cheesemakers and to promote American cheese," she says. "The services we provide are: 1) a forum for cheesemakers to come together and talk to each other, and 2) a place to meet buyers, to have



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARTORI FOOD CORP

all the retailers and distributors together, and to present products."

## And The Award Goes To...

The awards U.S. cheesemakers have won at both domestic and international competitions are evidence of the quality they are producing. Among the most prominent contests are the Annual American Cheese Society Competition sponsored by the ACS, the World Championship Cheese

Contest hosted by Madison, WI-based Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, and the World Cheese Awards in London.

Sid Cook, president and certified Master Cheesemaker of Carr Valley Cheese Company Inc., La Valle, WI, creates American originals that pique the interest of the judges, consumers and trade alike. His ventures have led to collaborations with chefs at the Carr Valley Cooking School. "We like to be on the cutting edge instead of the trailing



tail,” Cook says. “We try to be very innovative with our products. We try to win awards with them.”

Prominent retail names take advantage of the Internet to tout their numerous awards, such as Montchevré, based in Rolling Hills Estates, CA. The company devotes an entire page on its Web site for its long list of wins since 1997, including the title of Best of Class for plain fresh goat cheese at the 2008 World Championship Cheese Contest.

**“THE PUBLIC  
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THAT IT HAS.”**

— Allison Hooper  
*Vermont Butter & Cheese*

Likewise, Montpelier, VT-based Cabot Creamery uses its Web site to showcase its awards, including “Best Cheddar in the World” at the 22nd Biennial World Championship Cheese Contest; first place in the Flavored Hard Cheese category at the U.S. Championship Cheese Contest; and first Place for Monterey Jack at the American Cheese Society Competition.

A cheesemaker can fill up an entire trophy case, but ultimately the value of these prizes lies in the bottom line. While awards give cheesemakers bragging rights among peers and selling leverage in the trade industry, they do not necessarily translate into status on the retail shelf. A consumer who does not understand the significance of “raw milk” or “farmhouse” faces an even greater challenge in deciphering lists of trade awards and obscure acronyms.

Contest organizers are working to increase the brand recognition and value of their awards by assisting cheesemakers with marketing campaigns. The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association provides a marketing packet for winners, including an awards ceremony portrait. On the ACS Web site, award-winners can download a winner logo, and in 2007, the ACS began experimenting with a new marketing tool—a



PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA MILK ADVISORY BOARD

winner sticker for retail cuts of cheese.

“To be able to say that you have won at the ACS competition is a great plug,” says Vermont Butter & Cheese’s Hooper. “The public relations capacity of the ACS is really formidable. We must never underestimate the branding power that it has.”

According to Heather Fiscalini, director of sales and marketing, Fiscalini Cheese Co., Modesto, CA, awards helped increase demand for its raw milk Bandage Wrapped Cheddar. “Our cheese won awards before we even had cheese to sell,” she says. “We made our Bandage Wrapped Cheddar in 2001 and submitted it to the ACS in 2002, where it won ‘Best Farmhouse Cheese’ in America. We had to ramp it up immediately because of that award.”

### American Terroir

Some awards do not come in gold, silver or bronze, but rather in the form of mainstream media exposure and international success, such as the prestige of having Fiscalini’s Bandage Wrapped Cheddar featured in *O, The Oprah Magazine* in November 2007. “Certainly when Oprah had it on her O List and called it the best Cheddar on the planet—well, you can’t be hurt by that,” Fiscalini says.

When Rogue Creamery in Central Point, OR, became the first U.S. cheese company

to export raw milk cheeses to Europe, it made international cheese history. One of the break-through American cheeses was the legendary Rogue River Blue, which the company began shipping this year to Neal’s Yard Dairy in London. Rogue Creamery also ships its entire line of six blue cheeses to Whole Foods Market in London. Independent retailers in Paris and Amsterdam are also selling Rogue Creamery’s products.

“It was certainly a very bold move to export to a land that is known for the quality of its cheese and has its reputation for that quality cheese deeply rooted within the cultures of Europe,” says David Gremmels, president and co-owner of Rogue Creamery. “We were nervous about the first export of American cheese. We were very proud to be well received at the Kensington Whole Foods store and Neal’s Yard Dairy. The cheese sold well.”

Rogue River Blue is a raw cow’s milk with a taste of Oregonian terroir. “It represents a place in the Rogue Valley,” Gremmels says of the leaf-wrapped blue. “It is not only representative of the autumnal milk that we make the cheese with, but of the maceration of the syrah grape leaves that we hand pick. It is one of those cheeses that is truly unique in character to the place where it is made.”

Becky Ryan, managing director of retail sales and marketing, Sartori Food Corp.,

## California Artisan Cheese Guild

**T**he California Artisan Cheese Guild (CACG) may be a young organization, but its members have many years of experience producing renowned artisanal, specialty and farmstead cheeses. Based in Petaluma, CA, the CACG includes producers such as Laura Chenel's Chevré, Vella Cheese Co., Cypress Grove Chevré, Meyenberg Goat Milk Products and more. Founding members created the organization to support and encourage the California cheesemaking community by celebrating and promoting the Golden State's artisan cheeses, providing education, and collaborating with chefs, dairy scientists, retailers and other cheese enthusiasts.

To mark the launch of the organization in 2006, the guild presented History of Excellence Awards to three honorees in recognition of their cheesemaking expertise and personal commitment to the industry. The honorees included Ignacio Vella, owner of Sonoma, CA-based Vella Cheese Co., whose company has been making handcrafted cheeses since 1931; Franklin Peluso, namesake of Los Banos, CA-based Peluso Cheese, who is known for his rice flour-rubbed Teleme cheese, and Laura Chenel, namesake of Sonoma, CA-based Laura Chenel's Chevre, who helped pioneer the production of goat's milk cheeses. Peluso and Chenel have since sold their cheese companies.

The organization sponsors several tasting events throughout the year, such as this year's Artisan Cheese Festival, a three-day event held in Petaluma where attendees tasted cheeses, sipped wines and nibbled accompaniments. In June, the organization participated in the Sunset Celebration Weekend, where festival goers lined up at the CACG table for samples. And in August, the guild will help coordinate the cheese education and tasting pavilion at the Slow Food Nation event, which will be held in San Francisco from Aug. 29 to Sept. 1, 2008.

Membership to the CACG is open to any individual who has an interest in California cheese. For more information, go to its Web site at <http://www.cacheeseguild.org>. **DB**

Plymouth, WI, points out that American terroir extends even to the cheese factory itself. She attributes the special flavor of Sartori's award-winning SarVecchio Parmesan partially to a blending of traditions. "It goes back to the plant where they make the cheese," Ryan says. "This was one of the original Kraft plants. I'm a big believer in terroir. There is something about the milk, where it's made, how it's made and what is going on in the plant."

Such variety and quality in American

cheese creates the potential for exporting product. Gremmels explains that not only is exporting to Europe profitable and prestigious, but it is also sensible. "The United States is importing a large amount of cheese, and there are these empty containers that need to go back to Europe," he explains. "It was actually very cost-effective to ship the cheeses to Europe."

Gremmels hopes one day to see the cheeses of fellow American producers on the boats along with Rogue's. "Certainly if

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there were more cheeses per pallet, it would be even more cost-effective."

### Domestic, Imported or Both?

Besides the increased quality of American specialty cheese, common reasons cited for its popularity are economic: the weak dollar, the high cost of production in Europe, the price of milk, the shortage of fuel and the processing of milk into whey. "For years we have been pitted against great European cheeses," says Vermont Butter & Cheese's Hooper, who believes a previous challenge for American cheesemakers was translating their story to the consumer. "Now, with pricing, it doesn't take as many words to get the consumer to come over to the domestic side," she says. "Everybody is talking about American cheese in the food world. People are writing about it, blogging about it, teaching about it, and consumers have an interest in learning about it."

John Gruender, sales executive of Swiss-American Inc., St. Louis, MO, adds that the improved quality of domestic cheese has contributed to the shift. "Many people don't realize that because the specialty cheese business is growing, imports are down," he says. "This is the second year of decline for imports. A lot of it has to do with the Euro

and a lot of it has to do with us getting better at making cheese."

From the import camp comes another point of view. Tom Gellert, vice president of Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ, does not see

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— *John Gruender*  
*Swiss-American Inc.*

the increased popularity of domestic cheeses as a threat to imports, but rather as a boost for the specialty market in general. "It's great

that specialty cheese imports have spawned artisanal cheese production in the United States, which gets more and more people excited about specialty cheese," Gellert explains. "Of course there are also consumers who are looking for PDO cheeses from Europe. As an importer, we make sure to carry all of these so U.S. consumers have the best of European artisanals as well as U.S. classics."

### Roots Around the World

Cheesemakers can reconnect with their family roots through the cheese they produce. For example, Fiscalini's Lionza, a mountain-style cheese, is named for the tiny hamlet in the Swiss Alps where the Fiscalini family lived for more than 300 years. "We decided if we are making cheese, we wanted to definitely have a cheese that our ancestors would have made," Fiscalini says.

Many U.S. cheesemakers with European cheese heritage have expanded their repertoires to suit the various cultural preferences of the American market. Styles from other continents are appearing on shelves: Middle Eastern labane, Indian paneer and an array of Latin American cheeses.


Swiss-American's Gruender cites the growing Hispanic population and the increased popularity of Hispanic cuisine as motivation for launching a new line of cheese. "What sells in Puerto Rico is a lot of imported Spanish and Dutch cheese, and Queso de Papa," Gruender says. "The No. 1 item in Mexico is a Queso Fresco type, very fresh and crumbly, that you can sprinkle over tacos and enchiladas. Our line, la Sabrosa, is geared toward the Mexican market."

Mike Wimble, vice president of sales and marketing for Yancey's Fancy, Corfu, NY, recognizes the importance of demographics in designing and marketing American cheese. "What do people really want to buy?" he asks. "Down in Alabama, we really sell a lot of pimienta spread. We blend the jalapeño and pimienta for the Southeast." Cheesemaker Brian Bailey also has created a Champagne Cheddar made with local wine for New York's Finger Lakes area.

Wimble describes a parallel trend of experimentation and tradition in the United States, noting that along with an interest in more exotic cheeses, there is still a craving for the familiar. "You buy other cheeses, but you still go back to your roots and how you were raised. You can say, 'We've got all these wonderful cheeses out there in the world,' but people will still go back to what they like and what they grew up on."

Novelty versus nostalgia? In the modern American cheese world, there has to be a little of both.

**DB**



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# French Cheeses Accent Tradition, Terroir And Taste

Consumers and connoisseurs alike are discovering the joie de vivre of fromage

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

More varieties of French cheese are coming to the United States than ever before, and they are bringing their name, quality and sense of place with them. “French cheese-makers are widely regarded as great cheese-makers—perhaps the greatest,” says David Grotenstein, merchandising manager for Union Market, Brooklyn, NY, and the judging chair for Louisville, KY-based American Cheese Society. “A strong French presence raises customers’ expectations not only for their cheeses, but for everything at the cheese counter.”

The notion of “terroir” is very dear to French artisan cheesemakers, and the country boasts 44 Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC) cheeses among a treasure trove of 1,000 cheeses. For clarification, AOC is the same as the European Union’s Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), but AOC is a much older designation. To learn about AOC cheeses is to learn about tradition and terroir.

“The point of the AOC system is to protect the name of ‘terroir’ products (cheese, wine or other specialty foods) and their traditions—the savoir faire that goes into their production and to make sure the product reflects the specific characteristics and richness of the region in which it is made,” says David Rozenberg, associate brand manager, BC-USA Inc., New Holland, PA.

“A real connoisseur of cheese knows that when you eat a French cheese, you taste history,” says Cécile Delannes, ambassadress of the French Cheese Club, College Park, MD. “Imagine the level of expertise you reach when you make a cheese for centuries like Epoisses, Chaource, Saint Marcellin, Comté—they’re matchless.” The French Cheese Club comprises producers Berthaut, E. Graindorge, Lincet, L’Etoile du Sud and



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHEESES OF FRANCE





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PHOTO COUTESY OF FRENCH CHEESE CLUB



PHOTO COUTESY OF BOURSALT

Rivoire-Jacquemin, which teamed up to promote their personality-infused cheeses in the United States.

### Comté Reigns In France

Comté is France's No. 1 AOC cheese, and Rivoire-Jacquemin produces several brands of Comté wheels as well as pre-packaged Comté. At 80 pounds, it's the gentle giant of the Jura Mountains. "In a specialty department, choices of Comté in the United States are extremely varied: multiple affineurs, selectionneurs and importers," says Jean-Louis Carbonnier, president of Carbonnier Communications, New York, NY, which represents the Comté Cheese Association in Poligny, France. "And of course, Comté is made in many different parts of the Jura Mountains, in many fruitières where each has its own terroir."

Importer and cheese consultant Daphne Zepos, of Essex Street Cheese Co., New York, NY, calls Comté a cheesemonger's cheese because each wheel and season tastes different. "One might be a little artichoke-y, the next like caramelized onions—and you want that variety," Zepos says. "There are flavor wheels about Comté's characteristic aromas. Its texture can be wonderfully velvety. After you've swallowed and you're exhaling, it is fragrant and creamy, with this aftertaste of butter and cream."

Issaquah, WA-based Costco Wholesale offers members of its U.S. club stores pre-packaged Comté. "Because Costco does so well selling fine wines, it's a natural transition to buy these cheeses," says San Diego, CA-based Tony Rizzo, Costco's buyer for the Southwest region. "I'm very impressed with the food safety practices I saw in France. They're detail-oriented and stick to tradition. The passion we saw in the artisan cheesemakers comes through in their cheese."

Affineurs with many years of experience apply their knowledge and personal style to the aging process of such cheeses as Comté, Salers and Laguiole. "They have to know the conditions of the cheese, when it was made and make the necessary adjustments to have a perfect product at the end," says Edouard Damez, bakery, deli and cheese buyer for H-E-B Central Market, an eight-store chain based in Dallas, TX. "You are getting a product that must be outstanding."

### Flying In Freshness

To ensure freshness and quality, U.S. importers use different modes of transatlantic transportation to bring consumers French cheeses. "French cheeses are a very important part of our business—both by air and by boat," says Rich Rosenberg, vice president of sales and purchasing, Cheezwhse, Armonk, NY. "Flying it in costs more money, but if it isn't fresh, consumers are not going to buy it at store level. And our French air imports are a showpiece that upscale stores depend on."

Anco Fine Cheese, Fairfield, NJ, offers a wide variety of interesting and unique artisan cheeses. "Our air program represents most of the terroirs that France offers," says Emmanuelle Hofer Louis, Anco's director of marketing. "We're finding this gives consumers the best experience for the cheeses that do not have enough shelf life to be shipped by boat."

French selections arriving to the States via air transport run the gamut: fresh goat's milk cheeses coated in herbs or spices; soft-ripened cheeses such as Saint Marcellin, Camembert and Chaource; washed-rind Le Montagnard, elegant triple crèmes, blues, and classics such as Pont l'Évêque and Livarot. Also on the list are Anco's unusual sheep's milk varieties like soft-ripened Peral,

washed-rind Caruchon and Brebiou.

"French is the biggest category for us on the imported side," says Helder dos Santos, sales manager, Chicago, IL-based C.E. Zuercher & Co. "What a lot of people want from France is soft cheese, and we do a really good job of taking care of those. There's more care needed to get them to the end user in good shape."

### Tweaking Tradition

In the realm of protected names, however, each AOC makes its own rules regarding which cheeses qualify for this distinction. Not all raw milk cheeses can be legally imported; therefore, some AOCs allow cheeses made from pasteurized milk to qualify for the designation. For instance, Epoisses was once a raw milk cheese, but the appellation has changed to include pasteurized milk. "You can produce Epoisses from both pasteurized milk and from raw milk, but Roquefort can't be anything but raw," says Eric Duchene, head of food and wine, French Trade Office, New York, NY.

Wash-rind Epoisses won a gold medal in the Open Soft Cheese category at the 2008 Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association's World Championship Cheese Contest in Madison, WI. "There is almost a sensual attraction with Epoisses' powerful aroma, creamy texture, and rich, salty flavor," says French Cheese Club's Delannes.

Roquefort's hallmarks include beautiful blue-green veining, well-balanced saltiness, creaminess and spice, and a hint of the sweetness of sheep's milk. "Most stores have multiple French blues, such as Bleu d'Auvergne, St. Agur and La Roche," says Jeff Babcock, cheese category manager, European Imports Ltd., Chicago, IL. "Specialists may carry multiple styles of Roquefort because of its stature. We offer several—

Société, Papillon and our own selection, Life in Provence.”

Flavor profiles of soft-ripened cheeses, however, are evolving and improving. Le Chatelain Brie and Camembert in addition to Le Rustique Camembert and Coulommiers have been tweaked using pasteurized milk.

Francois Kerautret, executive vice president, Peterson Co., Auburn, WA, is introducing two new Camemberts to the market made from pasteurized milk, Whole Foods Hervé Mons and Le Pommier. With their

such as French Cheese Club member Lincet's triple crème, Délice de Bourgogne. The brainchild of 18th-century epicurian Brillat Savarin, this cheese is irresistibly creamy, buttery and melting.

Varieties of Brillat Savarin may be fresh, affiné (cured with a rind) with much more intensity, or flavored with cranberries and other fruits. Lincet's velvety Brillat Savarin exudes a milky aroma with a faintly lemon sour tone.

Cheese specialist Roland Barthelemy,

who is featured on Ile de France's Web site, works with Maison Boursault to develop recipes using this cheese. “Boursault is a petite, very rich and decadent triple crème, with a taste almost like sour cream,” says Anco's Hofer Louis. “It has a skintight exterior and a dense, creamy interior.”

#### Goat's And Sheep's Milk Cheeses

Atlanta Foods International, based in Atlanta, GA, is bringing in Jacquin's highly anticipated Spring Reserve Selection, which

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—Emmanuelle Hofer Louis  
*Anco Fine Cheese*

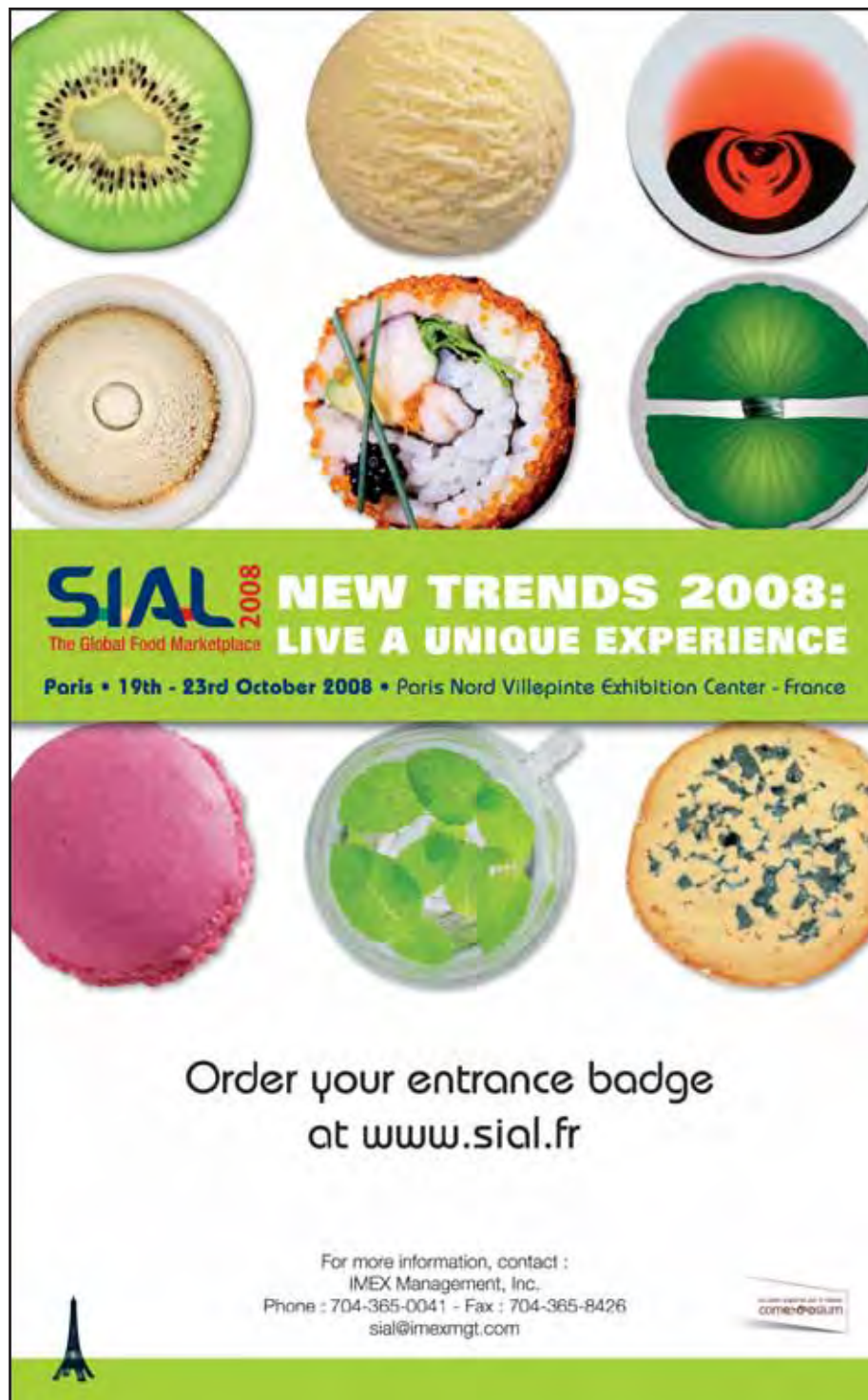
affinage and lactic ferments, these cheeses have a texture and aroma similar to raw milk Camemberts and adhere to all U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations.

“I think American consumers are ready to appreciate these differences, but we have to sell Camembert as if selling strawberries: Quickly!” Kerautret says. “If you want it to be good, it won't be good forever. Otherwise, we'll have to go back to items that look good and last forever.”

New Camembert au Calvados from French Cheese Club member E. Graindorge marries two Normandy classics. “It's lightly flavored with Calvados,” says French Cheese Club's Delannes, referring to the apple-flavored brandy.

Le Roulé hails from Burgundy. “It's made from fresh cow's milk and cream, spread out on large mats, sprinkled with herbs or cranberries, and hand rolled to form a pinwheel,” says Richard Kessler, vice president of marketing and sales, Fromartharie Inc., New Fairfield, CT. “It's pretty, with widespread appeal, and great for cooking.”

New packaging protects delicate cheeses



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la cuisine est un art  
come-dodum



is made from pasteurized milk and currently maturing in France. "We're excited about these goat cheeses, and we'll have them for the holidays," says Todd Druhot, gourmet cheese buyer and director of Atlanta Foods' cheese importing program. "Because they were made in April and May, they're the best milk, and there's an assortment of shapes in each package, so they're interesting for the retailer. When you see the same cheeses in stores in France, they're encased in mold, but when you cut into them, they still have a nice, white chalky center and aren't overripe. They taste wonderful."

Sevre et Belle produces a very traditional, creamy, non-acidic goat cheese. "The company creates its own cultures and sources milk only within 30 kilometers of the dairy," says Amel Chevrollier, Interval Export's marketing manager based in Trappes, France. In the United States, importer Interval USA is headquartered in Fort Lee, NJ.

French Cheese Club member L'Étoile du Sud exports pasteurized goat's milk cheeses such as Boucantrin, made in the village of Loubressac, and Le Provençal, a soft white specialty cheese from Provence.

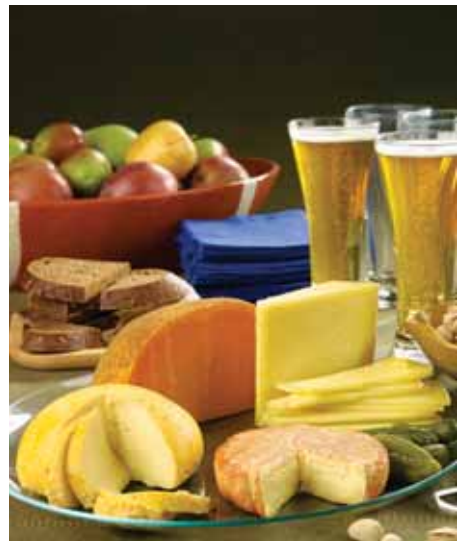
The cheesemaker also exports Rove des Garrigues, named for the twisty-horned Rove goat. "This little fresh goat cheese is like eating a piece of wild thyme steeped in milk," says Jill Forster, imported cheese lead organizer for Kowalski's Markets, an eight-store chain based in Woodbury, MN.

P'tit Pyrénées, aged 70 days, is made from sheep's and cow's milk. "It's interesting because it's mixed milk, with the very particular sheep's milk flavor and the roundness of the cow's milk," says Pascal Vaydie, import sales director, Lactalis USA, New York, NY. "New Valbreso Light fills a demand for a light product that tastes good." Valbreso Light is made from 100 percent sheep's milk and contains 55 percent less fat.

### New Arrivals

Valcrest, a Rhone Alps co-op, produces regional goat's milk and cow's milk cheeses, including the Bourdin and Curtet brands of Saint Marcellin, Saint Félicien and Vache de Chalais. The company also is branching out into goat cheese canapés. "We're making Cerises and Aperichèvre as well as ready-to-bake, oven-safe Le Cocktail and other hors d'oeuvre trays for retail and foodservice," says Francoise Magis, sales manager, Valcrest America Corp., New York, NY.

Anco is introducing a line of sliced French cheeses: Brie and Fol Epi in eight- and 25-slice packs. "The thin, round, foldable, interleaved slices are great for upscale sandwiches and burgers," says Anco's Hofer Louis. "You have portion control and no waste."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CHEESES OF FRANCE

Soignon's Crumbled Goat Cheese won the gold medal for retail packaging at the 2008 Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association's World Championship Cheese Contest. The resealable pouch stands by itself and holds four-ounces of tender, tangy, perfectly crumbled fresh goat cheese, salad-ready.

"It's completely natural," says Dominique Pénicaut, CEO, Couturier North America, Warwick, RI, importers of Soignon. "Just fresh, unripened goat cheese, with no additives or preservatives, from our farmer cooperative in Poitou." Other Soignon products include logs, mixed-milk Chaubier, goat Brie, Bûche, Chabichou de Poitou and Crottin.

Crème de Chaource was created in response to demand from French chefs using Chaource in recipes who wanted something as spoonable as Cancoillotte. "Try Crème de Chaource melted on a piece of toast—it's delicious," says French Cheese Club's Delannes.

To heighten consumer awareness about French cheeses, the Cheeses of France Marketing Council is touting "The Fromage

Plate" as part of its "Parlez-vous fromage?" campaign. The Fromage Plate features maître fromager and noted author Max McCalman's recommendations for exploring the variety of French cheeses and the different ways one can prepare French cheese plates. The Cheeses of France Marketing Council represents the interests of all imported French cheeses.

"A simple idea like designing and displaying an appealing 'fromage plate' at retail will stimulate consumer involvement and drive at-home usage," says Portland, ME-based Mike Collins, Cheeses of France's U.S. marketing director. "The fromage plate makes purchasing cheese fun. It's an easy way to entertain and a great way to experience the wonderful tastes and textures of the cheeses of France."

Steeped in terroirs and traditions, French cheesemakers are bringing variety and creativity to the U.S. market. And for many Americans, the phrase "Parlez-vous fromage?" needs no translation.

**DB**

# The Rhetoric Of Italian PDO Products



By  
**Lorenza Passeffi**  
President  
Volpi Foods Inc.  
St. Louis, MO

I am a reluctant but fierce warrior in a battle that has been waged against my family, my company and my passion. The controversy has at its core a century-old decision made by my great uncles, who are now long gone. Their decision? To make premium Italian-style, dry-cured meats and sell them proudly in the United States.

It would seem an unlikely conflict, but the global business of specialty food can be a brutal one. Our detractors' attacks—including name-calling, referring to us as "frauds"—are not founded on a failure on our part or even a concern about the quality of our meat products, but rather the fear of losing sales to us. In a way, I am flattered.

Like the champagne wars sparked by protectionist French Champagne makers, the prosciutto war is at its heart a battle over naming rights. Our company, Volpi Foods Inc. and a handful of North American producers are under assault because of our bold efforts to utilize Old World processes in making our products and then to tell the world about our traditions and products.

Our critics, led mainly by the attorneys hired by the prickly Prosciutto Consorzio di Parma, argue that because our products aren't made in Italy, we violate national laws and international treaties when we describe them using any references to regions in Italy or for that matter the word "prosciutto" in general.

It might be helpful to know the etymology of the word prosciutto since this is a war of words after all. Prosciutto comes from the Latin word "perexsuctum," which means, "dried of liquid." It doesn't mean, "dried in Italy" or "dried of liquid in Italy." This is an important point of debate as Italian producers have looked to block our use of the word in describing our products.

For our Italian competitors, the plan has been to use any means necessary to distinguish meat products produced in Italy from those produced in other countries. The not-too-subtle message has been that only products made in the "old country" are legitimate and deserving of a particular Italian-flavored name or description. They say that as Americans we should be limited in our ability to compare our processes and methods to those in Italy—even though our Italian ancestors have handed them down to us. In Volpi's case, it was my father.

Through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the acronym PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) has come to embody protectionism for certain products in some countries. The PDO extends the safeguard of the Controlled Designation of Origin mark, adopted by numerous countries to designate a certain product originating from a specific region or country. These products have certain qualities and features that are essentially a result of the natural or human factors in the production process in those regions or countries. The PDO has become a marketing roadblock for

many U.S. producers, preventing them from even referring to Italy or Italian traditions in the production of their dry-cured meat products for fear of sparking a lawsuit.

I understand the logic used in establishing these marks, and like those for wine, they have their place in the marketplace. What concerns me is that some producers, attorneys and nations have come to view the PDO not just as a geographical, material or process acknowledgement, but also as a guarantee of quality. Do not be fooled; PDO is not a brand like Volpi. There are excellent producers of PDO products and sub-par brands of PDO products. PDO status does not constitute assurance the product is of high quality.

At Volpi, we adhere to the traditional processes used in Italy and have gone to great lengths to educate our workforce on the art and science behind making our products. Because we are American and innovative, we continually add to the old, seeking to improve upon a sound base. Being true to your heritage, yet creative in your approach to market is a strength of Americans. Being desirous of premium-quality products, we forge ahead with vertical coordination with local family farms, raising breed-specific animals. The United States produces the best meat in the world. Given our standards, utilizing the best from the Old World and adding the freshness of the New World does have its advantages. We are different because we work at being different. Excellent quality foods are made all over the world. Even in America!

Where do we go from here? Jettisoning the harsh rhetoric is the first step toward détente. As you can imagine, it pains me when I see our products attacked by other companies, overseas consortiums or slick attorneys looking to cash in on a brawl.

I am not ignorant to the reasons for this battle. The United States is a country of immigrants who have a passion for traditional foods and high-quality products. It also happens to be one of the largest markets for specialty foods, and its consumption of high-quality salumi is in its infancy, which makes it a prime target for growth. I may understand their zeal, but I caution against their approach in attacking home-grown salumi processors. I would suggest there is room for everyone, and that enacting laws and regulations to block the competition is not only petty but bad business.

The Volpi history is rich with Italy, overflowing with the culture, heritage and flavors of the country my family once called home. When my great uncle left Milan to come to America, he made a promise to himself and a commitment to his customers. Volpi products would not only taste like the Old World, they would be produced with the same attention to detail and passion for the craft of dry-curing meat.

Like my father and uncles before me, and hopefully like my son and daughters after me, I am a salumiere, proud to share that tradition with anyone interested in making or consuming premium dry-cured meats. It is my promise and my commitment.

**DB**



## FDA Publishes Antimicrobial Food Additive Guidance

25.june.08

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/antguid2.html>

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has posted a guidance document on "Microbiological Considerations for Antimicrobial Food Additive Submissions." The document addresses substances that are and are not considered food additives, and then provides an overview of antimicrobial food additives, illustrating best practices along the way.

This guidance document, as noted in its introduction, is directed at questions regarding microbiological data requirements for food additive petitions, food contact notifications, and threshold of regulation requests that are unique to the use of antimicrobial food additives and food-contact substances. This guidance will assist petitioners and notifiers in designing studies to determine whether an antimicrobial food additive achieves its intended technical effect. Also, it discusses microbiological data that may be necessary to demonstrate that an antimicrobial agent will be safe for the intended use.

## PENNSYLVANIA: Washing Mushrooms Stalls Germs, Extends Shelf Life

06.june.08

Penn State Live, University Park, PA

<http://live.psu.edu/story/31269>

A two-step process of washing harvested mushrooms greatly inhibits the growth of food-borne pathogens and extends their shelf life, according to Penn State food scientists.

"We have found that the washing process limits growth of pathogens such as listeria and salmonella in whole mushrooms," said Robert Beelman, professor of food science at Penn State. "The protective effect of washing was more pronounced in sliced mushrooms, which are more prone to bacterial growth than unsliced ones."

The mushroom business in the U.S. has boomed in recent years, with total annual sales touching nearly \$1 billion. But the industry has also been plagued by recalls, following reports of contaminated products.

Beelman and Naveen Chikthimma, instructor of food science, and Luke LaBorde, professor of food science, studied how washing affected the survival of food-borne pathogens such as listeria and salmonella in whole and sliced mushrooms.

In their study, the researchers divided a 15-kilogram batch of *Agaricus bisporus* mushrooms—the button variety, which is the predominant edible species worldwide—into two equal groups, one of which was washed. Using a process patented by Beelman, the

researchers first washed the mushrooms with an antibacterial solution, and then washed the mushrooms again with a neutralizing solution containing preservatives that inhibit browning.

Next, the mushrooms in both groups—washed and unwashed—were inoculated with food-borne pathogens. Researchers found that washing mushrooms before inoculating them with pathogens significantly reduced the growth of both listeria and salmonella. The pathogens grew more rapidly in sliced mushrooms, but to a significantly lesser degree in the washed ones. Researchers think the slicing causes the release of nutrients in fluids within the mushrooms, which provides a nourishing environment for growth of microbes.

"The two-step process helps remove soil residue off the mushrooms and prevents them from getting spoiled by non-pathogenic bacteria," said Beelman. Beelman, whose work was funded by the Mushroom Council, says the findings have important implications for not only preventing mushrooms from going bad, but extending their shelf life as well.

## CALIFORNIA: Eco-Safe Announces Results Of Challenge Study Of Ozone Vs. Chlorine

17.june.08

Eco-Safe Systems USA Inc.

Tarzana, CA

Michael Elliot

<http://www.worldstockwire.com/viewpressrelease/prD/490/>

Eco-Safe Systems USA Inc. (OTC: ESFS) reports excellent results from a commissioned challenge study of disinfection effectiveness of ozone vs. chlorine. Several months were spent designing testing protocols for a study, which would measure the relative killing power of ozone vs. chlorine against salmonella spp., *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *E. coli* O157:H7. Eco-Safe commissioned the study at the request of a large fast-food restaurant chain. The study was designed through the joint efforts of Dr. Al Baroudi, president of Food Safety Institute, International and the restaurant chain, and was executed by a third-party commercial institution licensed to handle and study pathogenic bacteria in the United States.

The data generated in this study proved the Eco-Safe ozone wash procedure to be 10 times more effective than a 20 parts per million (ppm) chlorine wash on produce tested with a high bacterial load. Chlorine at 20 ppm is the historical disinfectant of choice when a kill intervention process is applied for produce items destined for public consumption.

**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).

tion in the fast food and retail foodservice industry. However, during the investigation phase of project planning, it was discovered that in many cases, end-point distributors of these products do not utilize a chemical wash procedure of any type, including chlorine. For this reason, Eco-Safe Ozone Disinfection Systems are designed to automatically provide disinfection to the water whenever the tap is turned on, requiring no special employee intervention or training.

Eco-Safe Systems president Michael Elliot said, "Although there are many published scientific studies which document the superiority of ozone vs. chlorine disinfection, one of our prospective clients requested a specific study pitting ozone and chlorine against certain deadly bacteria found in our food supply. As anticipated, this study found significant benefits from using ozone rather than chlorine disinfection, not the least of which is ozone's green, organic protection, creating none of the carcinogenic by-products associated with chlorine. One of the factors warranting such an expensive study was the demand that the testing conditions conform to real-world situations in the foodservice industry. We went to great lengths to refine testing procedures that would speak directly to our clients' needs."

"*E. coli* O157:H7 devastated the spinach industry two years ago and *Salmonella* Saintpaul has already crippled the tomato industry this season. Ozone water disinfection can deliver many benefits which will increase food quality and safety at a lower cost to producers and processors," said Dr. Baroudi. "At a time when some consumer victims are paying for this unnecessary agony with hospitalization, or even death, as well as when the nation's growers, brokers, restaurants and food retailers are suffering from millions of dollars in lost business, Ozone Disinfection is a government-approved intervention process that can be used for safety, illness prevention, and to rebuild confidence in the food industry."

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## Blast From The Past

# Sandridge Food Corporation

I

n 1965, Vincent R. Sandridge began his journey to create a fresh refrigerated foods company known today as Sandridge Food Corporation. An entrepreneur with a passion for food, Vincent founded S&S Distributing, a food distribution company, in

1960. He worked out of a basement in Cuyahoga Falls, OH, and locally distributed Carl Buddig Meats and a product line called Gourmet Salads using a 10-foot truck. In 1965, Vincent bought Gourmet Salads, which merely consisted of a handful of recipes, stirring paddles, some pots and pans, and a few small customers. Bathtubs were sufficient to handle the batch sizes.

However, demand for prepared salads continued to grow, and in 1966, the company moved into a larger facility in Medina, OH. Another move resulted in the company's current 135,000-square-foot plant. In 1988, S&S Distributing and Gourmet Salads united to become Sandridge Food Corporation.

Vincent's son, Mark, joined the company in 1976, and by the



early 1990s, he had become CEO of the company. S&S Distributing was sold so the company could focus on manufacturing, and a series of acquisitions from 1990 to 2003 grew the company into a manufacturing giant.

Although Vincent passed away in 1999, the business continues to be a family affair, with Mark's younger brother, Mike S. Sandridge, serving as senior director of foodservice development, and his younger sister, Toni Sandridge, heading up transportation. Now, Mark's sons, Jordan and Dane, are learning the business. Today, the company manufactures over 450 different products and has a fleet of trucks for nationwide distribution.

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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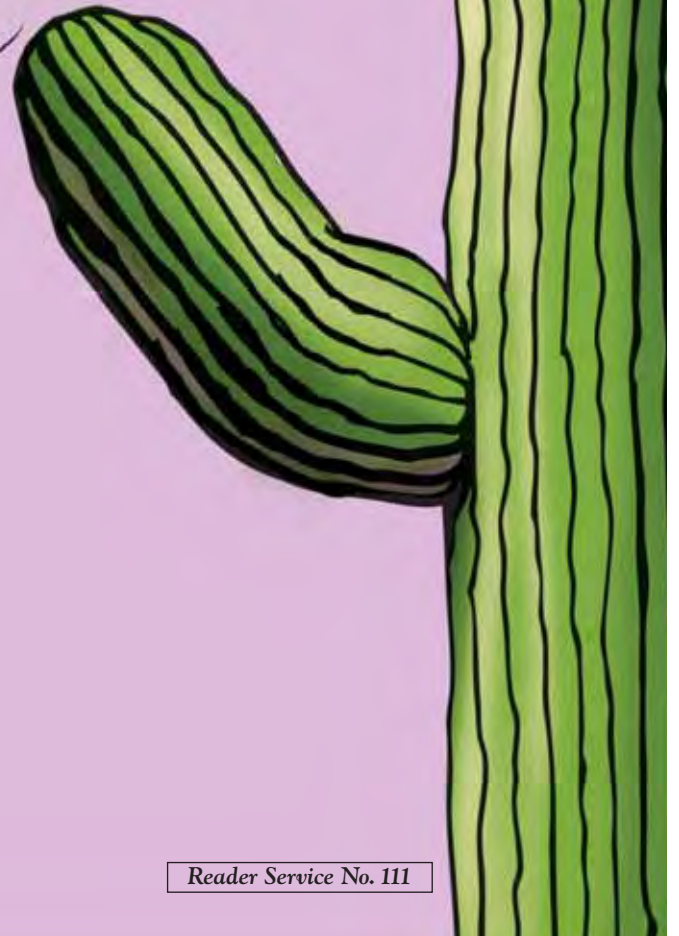


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