

DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

FEB./MAR. 2010 \$14.95

The New Simplicity

Reimagining the home-cooked meal

ALSO INSIDE

PACKAGING
ASIAN FOOD
GREEK FOOD
PIZZA
FOOD BARS
BARBECUE
ROAST BEEF
SALAMI
DUTCH CHEESE
CHEDDAR CHEESE



BEEMSTER®

PREMIUM GOURMET DUTCH CHEESE

The Taste of Tradition



Beemster® cheeses come from the quiet canal lined pastures of North Holland. Since 1612 the unique Beemster region has been the home of cows that graze freely on pristine pesticide free-pastures.

Master Cheesemakers hand craft each wheel of Beemster using traditional cheesemaking methods before being sent to historical warehouses to be aged in natural conditions.

We hope you enjoy the great old world taste of Beemster imported for your enjoyment with your favorite glass of wine. This award winning smooth taste pairs well with a wide array of complimentary foods and wines for any occasion.

X-O, Classic, Vlaskaas, Lite & Farmers' Choice available in wheels or convenient individual quarter wheel packs.



For more pairing suggestions or to request a pairing guide, please visit our website:

www.beemstercheese.us



COVER STORY



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*Bringing Pizzeria Quality
to the Supermarket Deli*



NEW!
**14" Family
Size**



Pizzas for Refrigerated Deli Merchandising Available in 3 Crowd Pleasing Sizes

Stefano's pizzas are unique. Our hand stretched Semolina Crust has an unmatched natural fermentation flavor and is moist enough to deliver pizzeria quality after home baking. All varieties feature abundant toppings for great taste and exceptional value. Each item starts with a special four cheese blend of Mozzarella (for texture), Provolone (for flavor) and aged Parmesan and Romano which adds old world flavor notes. Varieties include the three top selling items: Four Cheese, Pepperoni and House Special (our original combination of Italian sausage, grilled peppers, onion, olives and pepperoni).

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*Our authentic pizzas are available in 3 sizes: 16" Extra Large,
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*Impressive appearance, great taste and exceptional value....that's how Stefano's brings
pizzeria quality to the Supermarket Deli.*

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COOKING WITH FROMAGE: COMFORT CUISINE



The Cheeses of France Marketing Council and The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), the world's premier culinary college, have launched *Cooking with Fromage: Comfort Cuisine*, an innovative new project. The Comfort Cuisine project features a collection of easy-to-prepare, tempting recipes that feature French cheeses and that put a creative twist on standard American recipes. All of the recipes are geared toward being "home cook-friendly."

The recipe collection — complete with photos and detailed instructions for busy cooks at home — is expected to translate into an increased awareness of the pleasures of cooking with fromage selections and into greater amounts and varieties of all-natural cheeses from France hitting

many more American dinner tables.

"Awareness of the varieties and availability of French cheeses in America is spreading, but the Comfort Cuisine recipes we've developed will illustrate what a difference actually cooking with fromage at mealtime can make to the final dish," noted Scott Samuel, CIA chef instructor. "Cheeses from France serve as the essential ingredient in our new Comfort Cuisine recipes, in that they add a lot of rich, unique flavors that really enhance the meal."

COMING NEXT ISSUE IN APRIL/MAY 2010

COVER STORY
Economic Update

FEATURE STORIES
Hispanic Foods
Foodservice

PREPARED FOODS
Rotisserie

DELI MEAT
Ethnic
Turkey

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS
Fresh Pasta
Sandwiches
Natural

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES
Oils

CHEESES
British Cheeses
Soft-Ripened Cheeses

COMING IN JUNE/JULY 2010

The 6th Annual People's Awards salutes industry leaders who have positively impacted their company, their community and the people around them. Go to www.delibusiness.com to nominate your choice to receive this coveted honor.

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MOMMA DIETZ SAYS:

“More than 70 years ago my father, Gottlieb Dietz, founded our company with one goal – to prepare the finest meat delicacies in the industry.

Today, his mantra 'Quality Above All Else' is carried on by the third generation of our family who is proud to offer the 'World's Best Deli Meats and Artisan Cheeses' in the finest supermarkets and neighborhood delis throughout the country.

Give your customers the ability to choose Dietz & Watson and to Expect The Best! ”

Ruth Dietz Eni
Ruth Dietz Eni
Chairman



PREMIUM MEATS AND ARTISAN CHEESES

Expect the Best



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by Jim Prevora, Editor-in-Chief

When Value & Profit Have New Meaning

The current recession has seen consumers shifting within categories — the infamous “trading down” effect. Dinner-house restaurant customers are shifting to fast food, fast-food customers to retail stores, and high-end, mainstream retail shoppers to retailers that offer significant value propositions.

Even recognizing that people are trading down is difficult for retailers and manufacturers to deal with, and much response to such trends is counterproductive. Brand images, painstakingly established over decades or centuries, are suddenly blurred by a panic to reposition.

The real opportunity in changing times lies not in observing the obvious — the waves on the ocean; it lies in understanding the subterranean currents, the deep causes of the surface anomalies.

This recession hit like a bomb. Consumers, realizing a lifetime of value creation was suddenly lost as mortgages exceeded the values of homes and 401Ks withered, shifted gears. From a spending mode, they pivoted to a debt-reduction and asset-enhancement mode.

In a macroeconomic sense, this was a big problem. In what John Maynard Keynes called “the paradox of thrift” in his *Treatise on Money* in 1930, what is good for an individual or family — saving, not spending — is a disaster for the economy as a whole if everyone does it at the same time. One reason all the “stimulus” doesn’t work is that it’s a trickle sent to battle a tidal wave. If every American family wants to save itself into solvency — and every family should and the government shouldn’t want to stop them — even a trillion dollars spent wisely will not be able to overcome a tsunami of consumer savings.

Still, the “spending strike” was inherently a temporary position. At some point, consumers would feel they’d reduced debt sufficiently and would change spending habits — but when and how was a mystery.

The bigger question was what would be the long-range impact of the sudden wealth collapse. Some theorized we would see a neo-Depression mentality in which people hoarded money out of fear. We’re not out of the recession yet, but the suffering does not seem so widespread and the prospects not so hopeless as to create that type of response.

The psychological response to the economic changes took a specific form and is now transitioning. Beyond what people did to address their personal economic situation, ostentatious displays of wealth suddenly became unseemly. The logic was simple: Much of what people spend money on is to influence the way they feel about themselves and that, in turn, is heavily influenced by the way others view those purchases.

If one lived where many people had been laid off or were no longer getting bonuses or where housing had declined precipitously, a showy display of wealth at a party could easily come off as a slap in the face to friends and relations who could no longer afford such luxuries.

Once ostentation was “out,” the question became what would be “in.” Even if people don’t want to be ostentatious, they still want to strut their stuff. You see this as a cultural habit where wealthy people don’t walk around in suits; they dress down in jeans — but the jeans are subtly different and very expensive, and everyone who matters knows what each brand costs.

The transition that seems to be occurring in consumer thought and behavior, among those consumers who have not lost their jobs, is a transition away from ostentation and toward quality and value.

This poses some challenges for both retailers and producers, especially in the food sector, because it’s easier to sell the sizzle — the ostentation — than the steak — the quality and value.

Some retailers are perfectly positioned for this consumer repositioning. Go to suburban barbecues, where two years ago everything was proudly proclaimed to come from Whole Foods and you often find everything, even more proudly, procured from Costco.

The sense is that the food is high quality but that one can and should take pride in not being ripped off. It’s hard to gain prestige with one’s friends and family if they think you’re a sap, overpaying for everything.

This battle for the new hearts and minds of consumers will be fought in fresh foods. The definition of quality has shifted and it is simply impossible for canned vegetables, say, to be perceived as high quality. Fresh and quality, if not quite siblings, are certainly kissing cousins.

The pursuit of quality and value through packaged goods is a loser’s game. The quality is obviously identical; no store can have better quality than another, and the value proposition becomes simply a matter of price. So everyone competes until no one makes any money.

The solution is to sell fresh foods that uniquely position a store as a high-quality vendor and that allow for a price point where simultaneously consumers feel that they are getting a value and retailers get a reasonable profit. That positioning is the sweet spot in the market, and smart retailers are swinging hard to connect with consumers.

DB



James E. Prevora

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Made only a few hours after milking, BelGioioso Fresh Mozzarella complements a variety of foods with its unique texture and delicate flavor. Traditionally, this cheese is served with sliced fresh tomatoes, basil and olive oil. But don't stop there. It also enhances salads and light meals. Add it to any sandwich for a creamy wonderful flavor. The possibilities are virtually endless.

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*No significant difference has been found in milk from cows treated with artificial hormones.

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PROVOLONE	RICOTTA CON LATTE®	ROMANO	TIRAMISU MASCARPONE	UNWRAP & ROLL™	VEGETARIAN PARMESAN	PEPERONCINO®

by Lee Smith, Publisher

Moving Forward

We are on the verge of an economic recovery but the downturn's lasting implications are unknown. Currently, ostentation is out and frugality is in, but there is evidence of contrary consumer thought when it comes to actual purchasing.

Our cover story, *The New Simplicity*, on page 16 is the result of a consumer research study conducted by Olson Communications and it indicates consumers are willing to cook, sometimes from scratch, to satisfy their families' needs. Just as important is their positive attitude — they like eating at home, find cooking not all that difficult, and think home-cooked meals are more satisfying. They also like deli departments and quality prepared foods they can incorporate into at-home eating.

But whether the deli industry can rise to the opportunity being offered depends on deliverables. What segment of the industry will react fastest and with the best offers? Will restaurants offer new venues, lower prices and more flexibility? Or will retail markets react with better quality, more variety and family affordability? The economy has brought the retail industry the perfect storm of needs, desires, affordability, and pleasure, yet how supermarkets and mainstream retailers will react is an open question. Can retailers step out of their comfort zone and offer really good, quality food? Some can and do, but the majority has failed.

Some givens about these new embattled consumers exist. They are accustomed to fine dining and endless variety. They are sophisticated and want it all. There is a move to simple cuisine, but what does that mean?

We know the definition of simple has changed. We are not going to go back to the years when Tuesday night is meat loaf and Sunday dinner is baked chicken — the same recipe served week after week. Nor does "simple" mean tasteless or lacking in variety. It certainly does not mean lower quality.

Simple seems to be moving to a definition closely aligned with fresh and high quality. Rotisserie chicken is a simple, fresh product that offers real value. Fresh vegetables prepared with simple recipes are coming into vogue. Kitchens are getting bigger, not smaller as industry experts have forecasted for years.

Simple also means at-home cooking by people with a limited skill level. Scratch-cooking is becoming more popular but providing a meal is more important, so consumers are enhancing meals with prepared foods.

The real issue will not be consumers' desire, but the deli's ability to deliver. How fast can a retailer react? If mainstream retailers cannot change, there are plenty of competitors who will. Where are the opportunities?

1. *Center-of-the-plate*: Rotisserie chicken is a corner-

stone product. Simple, delicious and a good value. Other products include ribs and wings. Chicken potpie, pasta dishes and ethnic specialties offer good value. Think time. Time is still valuable and anything that takes longer than an hour to cook represents value.

2. *SIDE DISHES*: Consumers will be cooking some entrées at home. Grilled chicken, shrimp and pasta are easy to prepare, but side dishes offer an opportunity to offer more complicated recipes. They may be ethnic or as simple as macaroni and cheese, but time-pressed families may want a quick fix.

3. *Artisanal, high-quality offerings*: Specialty cheese, artisanal salami and dry-cured meat are growth categories. Restaurants and cooking shows have done a lot to refine taste buds, but eating at restaurants is becoming less of an everyday event. Besides, great cheese, deli meats and wine are much more affordable at home. Bargains, in fact.

4. *Fresh — the fresher the better*: In-store cooking and short shelf-life. Sandwiches made to order, in-store sushi chefs and Asian food bars are all good examples. In-store cooking may be coming back into vogue. Fresher is a way to compete. The fresher the offer, the better the deliverable.

5. *Vegetarian*: This doesn't mean weird food such as turkey wannabes made from tofu. It means meatless meals such as outstanding eggplant parmesan, hummus and bean salads. Every culture has delicious meatless dishes that save money and are healthy options.

What to avoid:

1. *Trans-fat*. Just get rid of it. Of course, trans fat naturally occurs in some foods, but added trans fats are not in. It has become a symbol of cheap junk food.

2. *Sweeteners in foods that don't need to be sweetened*. Americans are moving back to sugar and manufacturers are reacting. The lasagna with an overly sweet corn syrup-laden sauce is out.

3. *No taste*. When looking to save money, lack of flavor used to be a given, but not any more. Foods must taste as good as what consumers can get in a good restaurant. Adjust the price to the food, not the food to the price. If a product line is too expensive for your clientele, find a new product line.

Retailers have a great opportunity to take back the share of stomach lost to restaurants, but it is not a given.

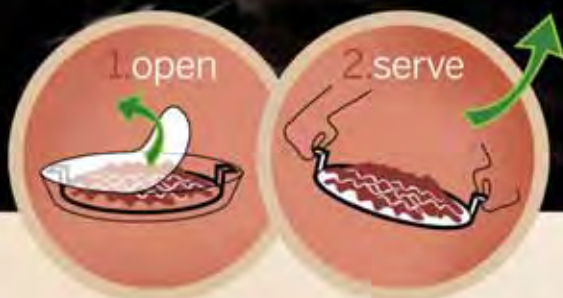
DB



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.



From San Daniele - Italy
to your table
in just a second



Principe's new innovative pull-out tray (Patent Pending) and state of the art technology brings 1,500 years of Italian fine Prosciutto making tradition to your table. This exclusive packaging gives you the same ultra thin, fresh, sweet, melt-in-your-mouth experience as Prosciutto sliced in the finest Deli.

Principe Foods USA, Inc.

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www.principefoodusa.com

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Transitions



Jim Basta is the new vice president of retail sales for Emmi – Roth Käse USA, Monroe, WI, taking responsibility for overseeing all retail sales activity as part of the company's extensive product portfolio. Basta has been with Emmi USA since 1992 in various sales roles, most recently as part of the company's western regional sales manager. Prior to joining Emmi USA, he was a regional manager for Dinsdale Marketing. He has 29 years of experience with consumer packaged goods companies.

www.emmiusa.com



Mark Kleinman has been named CEO of Blue Ridge Farms, Brooklyn, NY. A veteran food industry and consumer products leader, Kleinman has served as executive vice president and general manager of ConAgra Foods' Hebrew National business unit, and at Group Danone he established a strongly profitable Canadian subsidiary. Most recently, Kleinman founded and led Global Junction Group. His other big brand experience includes Hallmark Cards and Kraft Foods.

www.blueridgefarms.com

Announcements



SNOWBOARD GIVEAWAY

DCI Cheese Company, Richmond, WI, has unveiled a Winter Olympics-themed giveaway of 300 snowboards promoting Black Diamond Cheddar cheese. The enter-to-win contest will run through Feb. 28, 2010. Consumers can enter for a chance to win one of 300 snowboards by visiting the deli case at participating retailers. Ballot boxes will be located next to the displays of Black Diamond Cheddar products at the deli cases of participating retailers.

www.dcicheeseco.com



LOAF LOVE TOUR

The Tillamook County Creamery Association, Tillamook, OR, rolled out the Loaf Love Tour, which will bring its cheese to more than 100 cities in nine western states, Illinois and Texas. The Loaf Love Tour consists of a trio 1966 Standard VW Microbuses retrofitted to resemble Baby Loafs of Tillamook Cheddar. The buses will stop at grocery stores, neighborhoods and special events. Tour attendees will receive Cheddar samples, free recipes, coupons and other Loaf Love giveaways.

www.tillamookcheese.com

New Products



CAMPBELL'S FOODSERVICE LAUNCH

Campbell Soup Company, Camden, NJ, announces its North America Foodservice division has launched Campbell's Select Harvest 100 percent natural soups in Foodservice. Campbell's retail line of Select Harvest soups was the company's fastest growing soup line last year. Campbell's Select Harvest foodservice soups are packaged by the case, each of which includes three 4-pound 100 percent recyclable plastic trays of soup. The soups are available now and cost \$31-\$33 per case.

www.campbellsoup.com



EXTRA LARGE WAFFLE BASKETS

De Boer Food, Sanford, FL, introduces Chocolate Coated Waffle Baskets. Measuring an average 6" wide and 2" tall, the Jumbo Waffle Basket is much more than just the base for a dessert. They can be filled with a little over 8 ounces of dessert heaven. The ultra-premium Belgian chocolate coating gives these rich waffle baskets, that ultimate touch of class and decadence. Three smaller Belgian chocolate-coated sizes (Large 4.5", Medium 3.5", Mini 2") and a 3.5" un-coated are also available.

www.deboerfood.com



ENERGYWISE REFRIGERATION SYSTEM

Structural Concepts, Muskegon, MI, offers its new EnergyWise refrigeration system, making open-front refrigerated display cases both customer friendly energy-saving. EnergyWise reduces energy consumption by more than 50 percent, saving 28.7 kilowatt hours per day and up to \$1,000 a year in electricity costs. The new technology offers the benefits of reduced operating costs and environmentally friendly operation. Cases with EnergyWise encourage impulse sales without needing doors to conserve energy.

www.structuralconcepts.com



ALL-NATURAL RISOTTO CHIPS

New York Style, New York, NY, has launched Risotto Chips. All-natural and gluten-free, they are made with whole-grain brown rice, Arborio rice flour, whole-grain corn flour and sesame seeds and are lightly seasoned with natural herbs and spices. Available in three flavors: Spicy Marinara — tomato, onion, green pepper and a hint of red pepper; Parmesan & Roasted Garlic — creamy Parmesan and roasted garlic; and Sea Salt — simple and classic.

www.newyorkstyle.com

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**

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burrata

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New Products



PRODUCT AND SERVICE INITIATIVES

Kettle Cuisine, Chelsea, MA, has launched a number of product and service initiatives designed to better serve the foodservice and retail deli industries, including six new soup varieties and 10 lab test-approved gluten free soups. It will group its product portfolio into ten on-trend flavor and nutritional categories making it easier for operators to find soups to meet guests' demands and will offer a range of new support services and turnkey point-of-purchase solutions.

www.kettlecuisine.com



FOODSERVICE RECIPE COLLECTIONS

California Avocado Commission (CAC), Irvine, CA, has available new foodservice recipes for the 2010 California avocado season, which lasts from March through September. CAC's foodservice recipe collections, including free California Avocado Commission recipe collections — the *Culinary Companion* CD, and *Magic of the California Avocado*, *The Foodservice Menu Guide* and *Too Hot Not To Be Cool* brochures, are available on its web site.

www.CaliforniaAvocado.com/Foodservice



HONEY VINEGARS, GLAZES AND SAUCES

Honey Ridge Farms, Brush Prairie, WA, has introduced three new lines: Artisan Honey Vinegars — Lemongrass Coriander, Sundried Tomato & Tarragon and Fire Roasted Chili; Honey-Based Glazes — Orange Chili, Ginger Lime, Cranberry Chutney and Sweet Chili (gluten-free); and Honey-Based Grill Sauces — Mild, Medium and Hot (also gluten-free). All three lines combine locally sourced Grade A honey with natural herbs, seasoning, spices and other ingredients.

www.honeyridgefarms.com



DEEP STEAMTABLE PANS

The Vollrath Company, LLC, Sheboygan, WI, has introduced Super Pan Super Shapes steam table pans in deeper sizes: 4" Deep Full Oval, 4" Deep Half Oval, and 3½" Deep Wild Pan. Made from 22-gauge stainless steel to withstand demanding commercial applications. The 300-series stainless steel is durable, easy to clean, and provides excellent thermal transfer for reduced energy costs. Super Pan 3 covers fit over full- and half-size Super Shapes pans.

www.vollrathco.com

New Products



MICROWAVABLE PACKAGING

Anchor Packaging, St. Louis, MO, offers its newly re-designed Micro-Raves M700 Series: 10 new SKUs, including four platters, four interchangeable matching lids, and two combo packs. Polypropylene vented anti-fogging lids are available for hot displays and warming units, and along with the polypropylene platters, will withstand temperatures up to 230° F. A cold lid, made of crystal clear PET, is ideal for cold case merchandising.

www.anchorpac.com



RECLOSABLE DELI TRAY

Sealed Air Cryovac, Duncan, NC, introduces the Deli-Snap! tray, a high-barrier lidstock, snap-on-lidded tray for processed deli meats and cheeses. The tray is fitted with a reclosable snap-on lid. After removing the lidstock barrier film, the snap-on lid can be put back on the tray, allowing the consumer to open and close the package for the life of the product. Consumers can then reuse the package once the product is finished, with the 8-ounce Deli-Snap! tray being the ideal size to store a sandwich.

www.cryovac.com



HOLDING CABINETS

Eagle Foodservice Equipment, Clayton, DE, has introduced a full line of Panco transport holding cabinets for heating, proofing, and heating/proofing processes. These cabinets feature durable all-aluminum construction and accommodate full- or half-size sheet pans. Eagle's patented Temp-Gard airflow design provides even temperature distribution throughout, keeping food at optimum conditions. Temp-Gard improves airflow, distributing air evenly throughout the space.

www.eaglegrp.com



SAFETY GLOVES FOR FOODSERVICE

CMS, Avon, OH, offers barrier control products to prevent food contamination and protect workers at the same time. Its new Flavorseal safety product line includes blue vinyl gloves. A latex-free hand protection alternative, the gloves reduce allergy risk and are more easily seen should they fall into the food. CMS also offers color-coded frocks, especially valuable for food processing or foodservice as part of an operator's complete Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points (HACCP) program.

www.cmsflavorseal.com

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International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association



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George W. Bush



Stephen Dubner
*Superfreakonomics:
Unexpected Solutions*



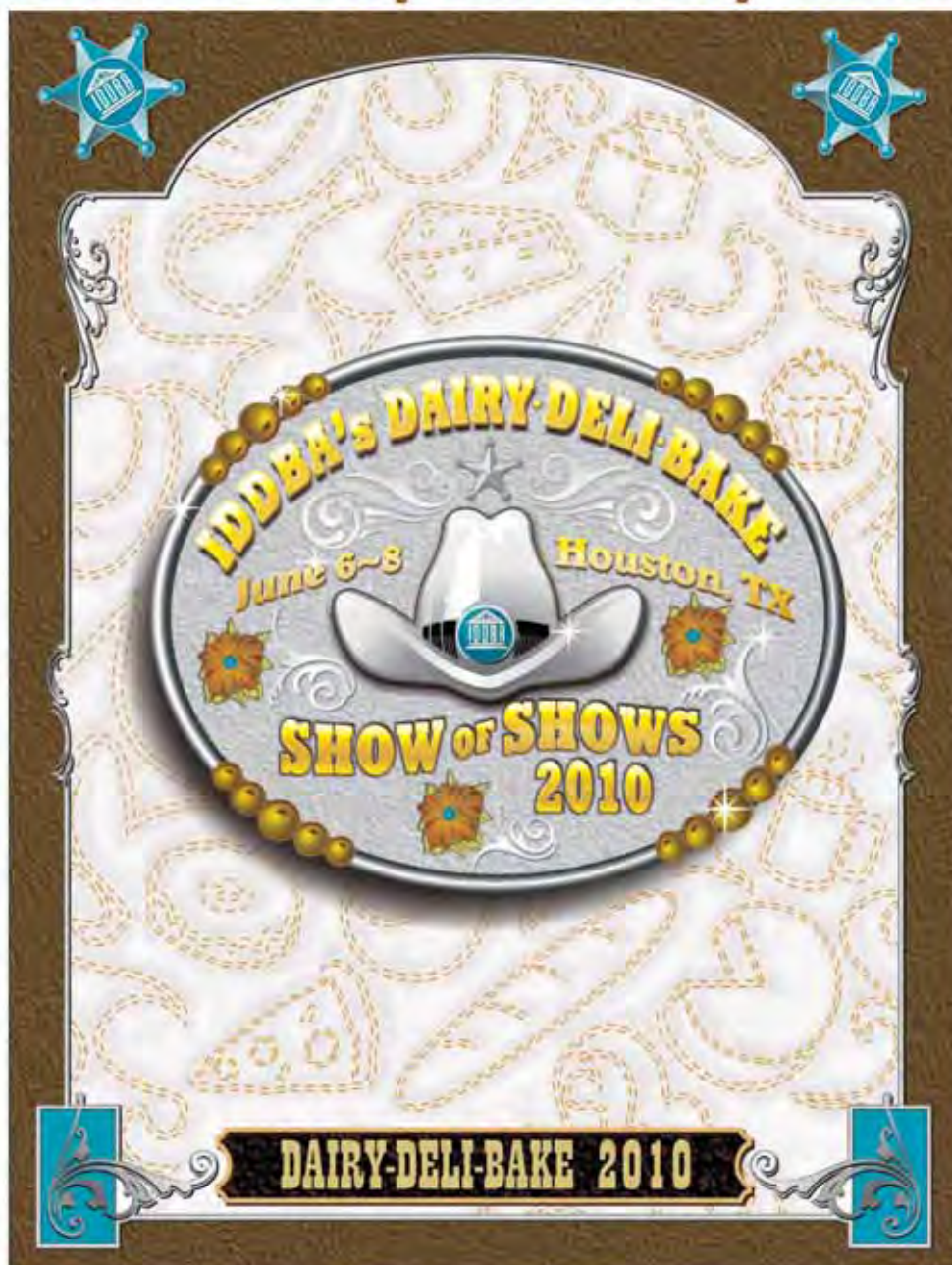
Harry Balzer
*Eating Patterns
in America*



Dr. Rosita Thomas
*Consumers In The Deli
& In The Bakery*



Mike Ditka
*ACE—Attitude, Character
and Enthusiasm*



Rachael Ray
Recipe for Success



Daniel Burrus
*Technology-Enabled
Innovation*



Harold Lloyd
*Catching the Wave
of Change*



John Pinette
*Show Me The Buffet:
I'm Starving*



Ben Stein
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The New Simplicity

Reimagining the home-cooked meal

BY SHARON OLSON

Today's consumers are eating at home more often and, according to a new on-line survey, most say they're cooking from scratch at least once a week. It might not be fancy, but consumers consider their home cooking fresh, satisfying and just the way they like it.

Olson Communications, a Chicago, IL-based food marketing firm that specializes in trend spotting in the food business, surveyed 221 consumers about what inspires and satisfies them when they cook at home. The study focused on deli shoppers who frequently dine in casual restaurants to get their perspectives on cooking at home compared to their dining experiences away from home.

With so many consumers reporting scratch-cooking at home, the researchers expected to find consumers redefining scratch-cooking based on the growth in new, speedy scratch convenience foods and meal kits that offer up a quasi-scratch-cooking experience. Yet consumers of all ages were quick to define "scratch cooking" as cooking with raw ingredients, from a recipe or not.

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The vast majority of consumers who often cooked at home also relied on a range of classic, fully prepared choices from their local deli as part of their home meal experience. Those who reported cooking from scratch did not necessarily mean that all elements of the meal were made from raw ingredients. The study findings point to a shift in the value proposition for convenience.

A few years ago, “time” was identified as the new currency as the market was flooded with more and more fully prepared or ready-to-prepare convenience foods. Today hard currency is more real than ever, and consumers are demonstrating they’re very savvy when it comes to scrutinizing the value of convenience. They’re also learning that cooking is not really that difficult, thanks to both food television and a growing food culture that demystify the art, techniques and satisfaction of cooking. Value systems are shifting and the experience of a meal at home is winning out more and more over the perceived indulgence of dining out.

The Motivation To Cook At Home

Saving money is the driving force behind much consumer behavior in today’s marketplace and it’s no different when it comes to cooking. Ninety percent of consumers surveyed said they’re cooking at home at least

once a week, with approximately half of those respondents reporting they cook at home every day.

The top reason for cooking at home was to save money (81 percent). However, 72 percent said they’re cooking at home to get their meals exactly the way they like them. The more frequently respondents cooked at home, the more important they rated characteristics such as “getting good ingredients” and “to get just what you want.”

Consumers talked about how easy it was to have it all when dining at home, and one comment captured it perfectly, “I love lots of flavor, I love ethnic foods and everything **must** be low in fat.” Healthful foods and lots of fresh vegetables were a major plus for home meals as well. Study respondents also reported they like the nutritional integrity of cooking at home. Many comments claimed “no artificial ingredients, easy to make/cook, not a lot of sodium” as major benefits of home-cooked meals. There were lots of comments on the value of good ingredients that were more affordable at home such as “good olive oil” and “really good wine.”

Convenience was another factor consumers attributed to home dining that the researchers did not expect. In verbatim comments, consumers reported making home-cooked meals often took less time to prepare

and cook than getting restaurant takeout that required driving to a restaurant, waiting and then reheating and serving at home. There were even some mentions of the lack of excess packaging that made home meals feel better.

The Home Dining Experience

When eating at home, the majority of consumers (78 percent) are dining with their immediate family, spouse or partner. Consumers 18 to 24 years old and between 35 and 54 were most likely to be dining with their immediate family. Those in the 25- to 34-year-old category and seniors 55-plus were most likely to be dining with a spouse or significant other. Only 13 percent of consumers said they dined alone and even fewer, just 4 percent, said they dined with an extended family.

Restaurants have long held the enviable position as the destination for dining experiences, yet consumers are talking about their home dining experiences with the same passionate vocabulary that was once reserved for special occasion dining out. In this study, consumers talked about wine and candlelight with their home-cooked meals. They also talked about “a nice romantic setting” and table arrangement that complemented the meal. The joy of eating with real silverware instead of disposables was an additional benefit of dining at home.

The majority of respondents in all age groups reported they were the cooks for home meals. Overall 63 percent reported cooking the meal themselves; 12 percent said cooking was a family experience and only 4 percent admitted to bringing the meal home from a restaurant to reheat and serve.

Ideal Meal Satisfaction

Fresh ingredients were considered important or very important to 94 percent of consumers asked to describe their ideal dining experience at home. Healthful ingredients were noted by 90 percent and local fruits and/or vegetables were noted by 74 percent. Although organic fruits and vegetables and chef-branded items appear trendy, two-thirds or more of respondents to the survey did not see them as important in creating an ideal home dining experience.

Luxuries such as home-delivered restaurant meals or an in-home chef preparing a meal were actually chosen by very few respondents (4 percent and 2 percent respectively). These choices speak to an emergence of consumer preference for a new simplicity that delivers an authentic experience over a fancy dining experience.

Prepared foods from the deli play an important role in defining the ideal meal for



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41 percent of consumers. Forty-nine percent of consumers noted unique spices as part of the ideal home dining experience.

Cooking Styles

When asked about cooking styles, three-fourths or more respondents reported cooking from scratch and reheating leftovers for another meal at least once a week. The most frequently used ingredients in scratch-cooking were commodity items — meat (92 percent), vegetables (92 percent) and dairy (78 percent). Although consumers identified healthy ingredients as very important to them in their ideal home meal, fewer of them reported using grains (63 percent), fresh fruits (57 percent) and fish (52 percent) in their scratch-cooking.

Spices were some of the most commonly mentioned ingredients used by scratch-cooks. Many noted the availability of a wider range of ethnic spices and the convenience of specialty spice packets that made it easy to prepare more exotic recipes with ease.

When 80 percent of consumers surveyed reported reheating as an important cooking style, they were asked whether they were reheating home-prepared foods or restaurant leftovers. Ninety percent said they reheated leftovers from home-cooked meals at least once a week; two-thirds noted reheating meals from dining out.

The largest number of consumers who reported cooking from scratch daily were those who dined with a spouse or significant other followed closely by those dining with their immediate family. Respondents dining alone were least likely to be scratch-cooks.

Half to three-fourths of the respondents are using the same cooking styles with the same frequency as a year ago. The largest shift is with scratch-cooking, with 30 percent of respondents saying they're cooking from scratch more than a year ago.

Meal Occasions

Dinner is the No. 1 from-scratch experience with 87 percent of respondents reporting dinnertime means cooking from scratch.

Sixty-eight percent reported scratch-cooking breakfasts, yet microwave or oven-baked frozen or shelf-stable meals were the second most popular cooking style. The relatively high percentage of scratch-cooking at breakfast was a surprise; when researchers delved deeper on this topic with study respondents, they found cereal and almost anything prepared in a toaster — pastries, waffles, pancakes and even toast — was considered cooking at breakfast.

At lunch, four cooking styles dominate — reheating leftovers; using prepared, frozen or shelf-stable meals; assembling prepared items



from the deli and scratch-cooking were all used by approximately half of the respondents. Sandwiches using deli meat and cheese were the most popular lunch preparations.

Culinary Education

Cooking classes appear to be more of a spectator sport than a hands-on learning activity. Although many of the respondents (71 percent) said they watch cooking shows on television, most respondents (85 percent) had not taken a cooking class. Two-thirds of respondents said they watch cooking shows on television to learn new cooking skills and inspire their own recipes, and a higher percentage (83 percent) said they watch cooking shows for entertainment.

Consumers said these shows provide not only technical information but also inspiration and entertainment. Not surprising, those who never cook report watching cooking shows for entertainment, with a few mentioning they learn new cooking skills. Those who cook at least once week are much more interested in learning new cooking skills and following food trends.

Even food television is evolving to be more relevant to today's consumers who are more focused on value and authenticity than ostentatious consumption. The Fine Living Network, a cable channel created in 2002, is slated to be phased out this spring to be replaced with The Cooking Channel.

The Deli Opportunity

The majority (79 percent) of consumers reported using prepared deli items for their home meals. Of the respondents who used

prepared deli items, sides were most often mentioned (65 percent), followed by hot entrées (50 percent), salads (48 percent) and sandwiches (46 percent).

Forty percent of respondents considered purchasing prepared foods from the deli important in creating their ideal dining experience at home. Fifty-seven percent of those who never cook from scratch consider prepared foods from the deli important to their ideal home dining experience. Shoppers who rarely cooked from scratch were more likely to purchase hot entrées, sandwiches, sides, salads and desserts from the deli. Sides and salads were the most purchased categories of deli foods by daily scratch-cooks.

A wide range of chicken preparations, including rotisserie, fried, fingers, salad and wings, was most often mentioned. Rotisserie chicken was noted as a high-value item because it could be used for multiple meal occasions.

Shoppers often reported picking up items with time-consuming preparation, signature flavors, and lots of ingredients or exotic spices. The study pointed to opportunities for delis to offer up best basic salads and more exotic ethnic specialties and sides, providing value at both ends of the spectrum.

Salads included a wide selection of specialty salads but the classics — potato salad, pasta salad and coleslaw — topped the list. When consumers were asked why they purchase salads and sides in the deli to complement their home-cooked meals, they noted familiar flavors and the elimination of lots of preparation time chopping, mixing and seasoning these items when they prefer to focus their attention on a main dish.

Pasta salads are a perennial favorite, and mac and cheese received a strong number of mentions. Consumers noted indulgent preparations that include multiple cheeses and luxury ingredients make these items worth the splurge to complement a meal. Consumers were more likely to price-shop basic recipes than signature preparations.

Potato salads are another favorite, and shoppers noted interest in on-trend preparations that included roasted potatoes, sweet potatoes or specialty seasonings. Here, too, signature recipes were less price-sensitive than basic recipes.

Even when consumers reported scratch-cooking, they often considered prepared salads and side dishes an important part of the complete meal experience. Today, consumers seem more than willing to reimagine their meals at home with fresh, healthy ingredients to satisfy their hunger without breaking the bank. They often look to their local deli to help complete that simply satisfying, authentic meal experience.

DB

Packaging Can Increase Impulse Sales

Catching consumers' attention is the first step in making the sale

BY ANNA WOLFE



PHOTO COURTESY OF INNOWARE

First impressions are lasting impressions. Unique shapes, colorful, informative graphics and unexpected materials can help differentiate a product from the competition. In short, how a product is packaged can make or break a sale.

"A great package does the first thing it must do and that is to compel the consumer to pick up the product, and the messaging then must speak to the consumer, which ultimately leads to purchasing the product. The spark of a good design, vibrant colors and placement of product can often help drive impulse sales," notes Penny Sweeney, communications manager for Robbie Manufacturing, Lenexa, KS, known for its flexible packaging. "Packaging is the most important advertising effort for a brand — it should lead the consumer to an emotional reaction or desire."

Dave Byrne, stock line sales manager for Bardes Plastics Inc., Milwaukee, WI, has seen first-hand retail buyers' reactions to the company's novelty packaging when he goes on sales calls. "The first thing they do is smile when they see packaging," he says. "It tears down a lot of objections." About 11 years ago, Bardes started manufacturing deli packaging in colorful novelty shapes such as a daisy, butterfly, pumpkin, Christmas tree and football to name a few.

With their whimsical shapes and colorful designs, Bardes' containers are popular with shoppers buying prepared deli items for home entertaining. "Packaging is what sells the product," he adds. "People are buying a container for what's inside of it. It dresses up an event." One Bardes customer used a football-shaped container to sell 50,000 containers of chicken wings. Because of the

container, the retailer made an additional \$5 profit on each sale, Byrne notes.

Many containers used in the deli, including novelty shapes, are topped with clear lids or have clear windows through which the contents can be viewed. "Consumers tell us they want to see the product they're buying, so clear packaging has an advantage for driving impulse sales," explains Herb Knutson, director of marketing for Inline Plastics Corp., Shelton, CT.

Still, he admonishes, "Great packaging may be able to sell a product, but just once. The product itself must satisfy the consumer's perception of value."

When selecting a new tray, Philadelphia, PA-based Genji Sushi, which operates sushi counters in 97 of the Whole Foods Markets in the eastern United States, kept the clear plastic lid so the quality of the sushi would be

clearly visible. For the tray, it switched to eco-friendly packaging from Be Green Packaging LLC, Santa Barbara, CA. "Over 50 percent of sushi is an impulse buy," says Ken Blakeman, marketing director for Genji Sushi. "We needed packaging that would showcase the product in the best way possible. The more we hide the product, the less impulse buys we have. If you're hiding the product from them, they [consumers] assume the worse, that you're hiding the quality of the product."

Labels

Even with a suitable container, eye-catching graphics grab shoppers' attention. Since Charley & Sons Inc. in Lake City, GA, introduced its Gordo's Cheese Dip line in 2003, it has been packaged in 16-ounce square container from IPL Inc., Saint-Damien, QC. According to Ward Sweat, vice president of Charley & Sons, the company selected the square container because of its large "billboard effect" — 25 percent of the packaging's surface is facing the shopper vs. 15 percent of a round container in a comparable size.

Even with a square container, with color-coded lids for its different products — green for mild, red for hot, orange for chipotle and orange for original — the packaging looked

flat on the shelf because of its lackluster graphics. "The process print label looked horrible but that was all that was offered at the time," explains Sweat. "There was a feathered look to all the sharp lines."

In 2004, Gordo's switched to in-mold labeling, a print process that molds the label into the container. "With in-mold labeling, it [the graphic] comes out like a photograph would. The bottom line is the eye appeal and what is achieved," he adds. "You can't get graphics and sharpness of line with process printing as you can with in-mold labeling."

With bright colors and sharp graphics, the in-mold label increased Gordo's visibility — and that, in turn, increased sales. "Not only did it increase sales at current retail locations, it opened many new doors for us," Sweat continues. "I cannot begin to tell you how many trade shows I worked and the amount of people who would pick up the package and just analyze it top to bottom."

Good Things In Small Packages

Fueled by changing demographics — an aging population and fewer people per household — smaller-sized packaging is in demand.

Mike Rosinski, director of marketing of smoked and processed meats for Cryovac,

sees small packaging as a long-term trend, but over the past two years the recession has sparked increased demand for larger product sizes. While larger sizes may be a good deal for some, "If you throw half away, you aren't saving any money," he notes.

Once the economy recovers, smaller packaging is here to stay because of the changing demographics, relates Hanna Sjolund, marketing manager for InnoWare Inc., Alpharetta, GA. She sees an increased demand for smaller containers — for single-person households and baby boomers.

And with convenience on the front of today's busy shopper's minds, "There's a greater need for microwavable takeout containers. That's been a huge push on our end," Sjolund continues. "A huge percentage of consumers — 40 to 50 percent — do not transfer contents to a plate when they get home."

InnoWare hopes its new Advanta line translates into increased sales for its customers. When one of its retail customers switched to the OctoView — InnoWare's 8-sided container with a black base and a clear PET lid — from a clear clamshell container, take-out sales increased 20 percent.

In February the OctoView container will be introduced in the Advanta microwavable material blend in three sizes — 6-, 7.5- and 9-inch, described by Sjolund as the "most common entrée meal sizes."

Penny-pinching consumers have adopted brown-bagging habits — which has boosted deli items sales. Presliced meats hanging on deli pegboards in particular have seen a boost, says Rosinski, adding, "Before the recession, people might have stepped out for lunch and grabbed a sandwich."

According to research firm ACNielsen, dollar sales of prepackaged lunchmeat in pouches nearly doubled between 2004 and 2008. And for the 52 weeks ended April 18, 2009, prepackaged deli meat sales increased 1.5 percent.

Even in this hot segment, to grab shoppers' attention, "You have to keep brand looking fresh, so to speak. Packaging plays a huge role in that. Our customers are always trying to differentiate themselves from others on the peg board," notes Rosinski.

Previously available only behind the service deli counter, Dietz & Watson sourced Cryovac's Multi-Seal packaging — which is easy to open and reclosable, for its new peggable, presliced line of deli meats.

Having a pre-sliced, prepackaged deli meats can increase brand loyalty while enhancing the sales of the service deli. "In many cases Dietz & Watson is displayed in front of the full-service deli case. Customers can come up to the deli and grab a package. Having those products adds a lot of visibility

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The advertisement displays a variety of food packaging products. In the foreground, there are several clear plastic containers filled with different types of food: one with sliced carrots, one with a fruit salad (apple, orange, kiwi), and one with green beans. To the left, there is a black tray with a red and white checkered pattern, containing a white plastic fork, knife, and spoon. In the background, there are more containers, including one with a salad and another with a sandwich. The bottom of the advertisement features three logos: "dispoz-o PRODUCTS" with the website "www.dispoz-o.com" and phone number "800-849-0225"; "C&M FINE PACK, INC." with the website "www.cmfinepack.com" and phone number "800-346-6422"; and "WILKINSON WILKINSON INDUSTRIES, INC." with the website "www.wilkinsonindustries.com" and phone number "800-456-4519".

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to their brand and adds a convenience purchase. When the deli is busy, they can pick up package and keep shopping,” Rosinski explains. Cyrovac’s new zipper-less packaging hits on another trend — easy-to-open packaging that appeals to aging Baby Boomers.

“As the population continues to age, addressing concerns such as easy-open-and-close pouches with handles and large readable text allows for easy consumer identification from across the aisle,” says Robbie’s Sweeney. The company recently introduced its own solution — a Hot N Handy Pouch line called Deli Fresh. Each pouch has colorful graphics to help differentiate one product from another and large block letters identifying the food inside. For hungry shoppers on the go, the line includes a single-serve size designed to fit in a car’s cup holder.

Using packaging to have grab-and-go foods ready for the taking can boost impulse purchases. “Depending on the store, there may not be enough time to prepare everything fresh as the customer requests it, such as during the morning and noontime peak periods,” notes Inline’s Knutson. “Having prepackaged products available can satisfy the grab-and-go customer.”

Judeane Tusa, marketing communica-



PHOTO COURTESY OF INLINE PLASTICS CORP.

tions manager at Wilkinson Industries Inc., a packaging manufacturer in Ft. Calhoun, NE, also sees pre-packaging as a boon to sales. “Pre-packaging is a big convenience. It’s easier for consumers to pick up a pre-packaged item than to go to all parts of the store to pick out the ingredients.

Food safety is a growing concern that packaging can address.

Inline’s Safe-T-Fresh line of tamper-evident, tamper-resistant clamshells is available in a variety of sizes to satisfy the grab-and-go market. Once the container has been closed the consumer must remove the built-in tear-

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strip to access the food. This assures the product has not been tampered with from the time it was made until the consumer eats it.

Tamper-resistant packaging is increasing in popularity when cost effective — adding safety, freshness and carryout convenience, adds Tusa.

Green Considerations

InnoWare's Sjolund notes the trend toward more environmentally friendly packaging, but "In this current market conditions,

not a lot of retailers are willing to pay for completely recyclable or compostable packaging." Prices can range from 10 to 20 percent more than less green alternatives, she says.

When green packaging is the same price as conventional packaging and recyclable packaging is in demand, food manufacturers are more likely to use eco-friendly packaging.

InnoWare offers a completely biodegradable and completely commercially compostable line and has a line made from post-industrial recycled PETE. Its Advanta mate-



PHOTO COURTESY OF BE GREEN PACKAGING LLC

rial blend reduces the amount of polypropylene plastic used by 15 to 30 percent. "In terms of reduce, reuse, recycle, that's another aspect," says Sjolund. "It depends on what deli managers want and how they want to convey their earth-friendly message."

What constitutes green packaging is up for debate — and definition. Among the manufacturers working to reduce the amount of plastic used is Bardes Plastics. And because of its novelty shape, the packaging often times gets reused by the consumer. "Our containers don't get thrown out — they get reused. They can be recycled. If they're not being thrown out or wasted, we deem it in that regard as being very green," explains Byrne.

There's an opportunity for retailers and packaging manufacturers to use reusable containers for their deli items, adds Sjolund. Pointing to the GladWare container used for the Hillshire Select Deli line, she notes many consumers are buying the line because of the reusable packaging.

According to IDDBA's *What's In Store 2010* trend report, about half of consumers want environmentally friendly packaging.

"Everyone has a varying commitment to green or sustainability, but customers are demanding it more and more," states Megan Havrda, senior vice president of Be Green Packaging, which is known for its packaging made from a proprietary blend of bulrush and bamboo. The company designs, manufactures and distributes Cradle-to-Cradle certified, tree-free, compostable packaging for food and industrial packaging industries.

After two weeks of using the Be Green sushi trays, says Genji's Blakeman, customer feedback had been "overwhelmingly positive and supportive." The Whole Foods vendor was "noticing a slight uptick in sales, and we expect the trend to increase as more customers acclimate to the new packaging and learn about its benefits."

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Affordable Asian

Deli operators strive to provide a taste of the Orient at a value price

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

Each week, the lovable geeks of the ABC sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* indulge in Chinese takeout. It's become a running gag, as whoever picks up the food must contend with ultra-geek Sheldon's obsession for the right configuration of food paired with one specific brand of Chinese mustard. Get it slightly wrong and become the target of his soft-spoken ire.

It's no surprise that Chinese takeout plays such a prominent role in a popular TV show. By all accounts, Asian food is all the rage. "It's no secret that Asian flavors are hot and getting hotter, with no cool-down in sight," says Debbie Carpenter, senior marketing manager, foodservice and industrial, Kikkoman Sales USA Inc., San Francisco, CA. "America's expanding appetite for Asian flavors is being driven by both ethnic and mainstream consumers."

According to Chicago, IL-based Technomic Inc., a food industry research firm, Asian food places second — just behind pizza — as America's favorite takeout. With no less than 60,000 Asian-type restaurants in the United States today, the deli operator has a tremendous opportunity to embrace the Asian food craze.

"If you look at the history of delis, what they've done is benchmark the successful restaurants and then offer a similar product at a better price-value relationship," says Mark Phelps, president, COO, Innov-Asian Cuisine Enterprises LLC, Kent, WA. "Right now, there's a pretty big opportunity out there for delis to get into this category and have some success doing it."

For many consumers, the convenience factor is huge. While nearly every strip mall boasts a Chinese carryout or Asian buffet, securing food from such an establishment requires an investment in time. The food must be ordered and picked up, necessitating an extra stop. But bringing home delicious Asian fare along with their weekly groceries is worth its weight in won tons for today's time-pressed consumers. At the same time, it may be available at a lower price point than the carry-out or buffet, which goes a long way in these tough economic times.

"Affordable is definitely the way to go in terms of expanding the Asian selection," says John McCarthy, category manager, Reser's Fine Foods Inc., Beaverton, OR. "You can offer a great tasting product, but if the price isn't right, the sales aren't going to be there. The critical

theme of the equation is finding the right product mix and the right flavors at the right price point."

However, advises Aaron Petrosky, director, Hissho Sushi, Charlotte, NC, deli operators shouldn't focus too much on the affordability factor. Delis will never be able to compete with the price of a Chinese buffet, he says. What's more, the frozen case offers an increasingly impressive array of Asian offerings at a better price point than delis. Instead, he urges delis to focus on providing convenience. "It's more about convenience than beating the local Chinese restaurant on variety and price, which is very hard to do," he explains. "It's tough to compete with a 20-well, all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet where the consumer is all-in at \$8, which includes a beverage and no gratuity is needed."

The Right Choices

Reser's McCarthy recommends keeping an eye on the casual-dining segment. Once a particular dish hits TGIFriday's, for example, it could be branded mainstream — and the kind of thing deli shoppers might like.

Eating on the run has boosted interest in appetizers, says InnovAsian's Phelps. As a result, items such as potstickers, shrimp purses, shu mai (Chinese dumplings), and

spring rolls have grown in popularity, as have hum bow (Chinese barbecue-filled buns) and yaki onigiri, a rice cake sprayed with soy sauce or miso flavor, then baked.

Traditional Asian entrées have also proven popular in the deli. These include General Tso's chicken, sesame orange chicken, beef and broccoli, mu shu pork, chow mein, sweet and sour pork, chicken lo mein, and vegetable fried rice.

Deli operators are too often hesitant to commit to an Asian program and instead offer just one or two products, Phelps adds. He believes that's simply not enough to build an effective Asian business in the deli. "To convince the shopper they are committed to Asian, delis need to put a minimum of three, and preferably six, different items in the case," he says. "Having a nice-sized, dedicated section every day really helps build the business for the retailer."

Phelps advises deli operators to give their customers options — spicy or not spicy; breaded or not breaded; noodles or rice. He also suggests looking behind traditional Chinese or Japanese fare to other Asian cuisines, such as Thai and Vietnamese.

David Tsang, president, Starport Foods LLC, San Francisco, CA, has been focusing on Korean fare, predicting, "It's going to be really on trend." He thinks Korean food is on the verge on taking off because the Baby Boomers, "the ones who really like Asian cuisine," are encountering aging taste buds and seeking out spicier offerings. Since Korean food tends to be heavy on garlic, chili peppers, and other aromatic spices, Tsang thinks it could be the next big trend in Asian cuisine.

Tsang has been keeping his eye on Filipino food, although he admits the cuisine is not currently very popular outside of Filipino communities. Still, he thinks it has potential, particularly if chefs and deli operators replace traditional Filipino proteins, such as ox tail and fish tongue, with "friendlier" meats such as short ribs or chicken.

The Intimidation Factor

Unfortunately, many deli operators find Asian food intimidating, says Tsang. They believe setting up a wok kitchen and hiring and training staff to prepare fresh Asian cuisine is too difficult. "The biggest problem I see from supermarket delis is the fear. It's just too intimidating. [They say] 'I can put a chicken on a rotisserie, I can re-heat some ham or a taco or pizza,' but when it comes to Asian, they worry they can't do it."

A deli need not have a wok to prepare Asian-style food, says Tsang, citing his work with a school district that doesn't have any woks, so everything is prepared on the grill. A deli can get by with a griddle or large sauté

pan on a stove top. As he explains, supermarket delis are in an enviable position to initiate an Asian program because of the constant influx of pre-cut vegetables and fresh meat. "All you have to do is put those things together, heat up your griddle or wok at a relatively high temperature, and put the right flavor in it. The ingredients are colorful and aromatic and will draw people into the deli department. That's how you win this game."

According to Petrosky, the prevailing trend in delis is to offer Asian cuisine that sells by the pound from a hot-bar buffet. However, an increasing number of deli operators are incorporating Asian offerings in their cold case. Noodle dishes and seaweed salad are two examples of Asian grab-and-go cold-case offerings that are proving popular among deli operators.

"Because of the growing interest in different regional Asian cuisines, it's a great idea for delis to meet that demand by offering Asian noodle dishes," advises Kikkoman's Carpenter. "Hot and cold Asian noodle dishes and hearty, satisfying noodle soups meet several demands — they're inexpensive, they satisfy a 'comfort food' craving, and they're perceived as healthy and trendy."

The cold case may even offer more opportunities for deli operators to experiment with different kinds of Asian cuisine, as it's easier to "switch up the mix" and bring new products in and out, explains McCarthy.

In addition, most Asian food stays fresh for only three to four hours in the hot case, notes Phelps, whereas cold-case offerings can last for three days or more.

Whether delis decide to focus on the hot case, cold case, or both, they should select products that will give them the optimum holding time, thus reducing shrink and boosting profits. Egg rolls, for example, cannot be left in the hot case for more than an hour without turning into "a limp, soft little thing," according to Tsang. Likewise, bean sprouts "turn to water" if left in a hot case for more than an hour, so he doesn't recommend bean sprouts to any of the delis he works with.

Such concerns are top of mind as "potential pitfalls" of a deli Asian program for Petrosky. "These offerings in some stores may be nothing more than loss leaders to display to the customer that world cuisine is there."

Tsang feels the opportunities are good for deli operators to offer a nice selection of Asian fare, if they're careful in their selection. He recommends they set aside their fears and take the plunge. "Everybody is looking for something new and exciting to differentiate themselves from the competition. This is one way to do it. It's the fear of 'I don't know if I can do this well.' The reward is high and the risk is small, so it should be taken."

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It's Greek To Me

Greek foods offer consumers a healthy and delicious dining choice

BY BOB JOHNSON

Greek foods have defied the general economic trend and continued to grow because health-conscious customers have discovered them. Hummus, pita, Greek olives and Feta cheese have all gone mainstream. Tabbouleh salads are quickly attracting their own following, and other Greek and Mediterranean dishes and ingredients are poised to attract the growing number of consumers looking for fresh and nutritious alternatives.

Authentic Greek foods are finding increasing importance in the deli, usually as versatile ingredients in mainstream or hybrid dishes. "If the consumer buys ingredients such as olives, Feta or pita chips, they're authentic — but they're turning those ingredients into mainstream dishes or combinations, such as pita chips with artichoke or spinach dip, which you wouldn't see in Greece," says Valerie Lester, vice president for marketing at Kronos Central Products Inc, Glendale Heights, IL.

Many Mediterranean dishes in the deli have been tweaked to suit the tastes of mainstream consumers. According to Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales at Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Bradford, MA, "Most Mediterranean-style products available in retail stores today are adaptations of authentic recipes from Greece and the rest of the Mediterranean. While we strive to stay true to our Mediterranean roots, we look to combine all the best aspects of a product to fit what mainstream, non-ethnic consumers will enjoy. Each part of the Mediterranean may have a version of a particular salad and we look to combine those versions to find what's most appealing to our customers."

Some ingredients, such as Greek olives, can be found in both mainstream and authentic Greek dishes side by side at the same service counter. "There are olives mixed with vegetables and roasted peppers, and butter beans are starting to make inroads," says Eric Moscahlaidis, president of



Krinos Foods Inc., Long Island City, NY. "Butter beans is a classical Greek dish, while roasted peppers are a modification."

According to Demetrios Haralambatos, corporate chef at Kontos Foods, Inc., Paterson, NJ, delis can now offer traditional Greek comfort foods that satisfy both the stomach and the pocketbook — they're made from wholesome ingredients that allow the retailer to offer competitive price points. "We've come out with moussaka [a Greek casserole of eggplant, meat and béchamel] and pastitsio [a Greek casserole of pasta, meat, tomatoes and béchamel] in a deep-dish foodservice product that can be baked at the store. They come in half hotel-pan size — in an aluminum pan that can be heated and put in the display case. Delis can cut it to the size pieces they want — usually nine to 16 pieces, depending on whether they want to sell them as appetizers or entrées. They're fully cooked so they can be sold in the hot case or in the cold case for consumers to reheat at home."

A Unique Dairy Experience

Many of the most popular traditional Greek foods are used in the deli as exciting ingredients that can add a new twist to familiar mainstream dishes. Greek dairy products add a unique flavor to many foods, and Greek yogurt is poised to be the next authentic ingredient that can be adapted to mainstream palates.

"One of our fastest growing and most exciting lines that is Greek in origin is tzatziki made with authentic Greek strained yogurt," Cedar's Frocione says. Greek yogurt has been strained through cloth or paper to remove the whey. The high-protein result has a consistency between that of yogurt and cheese but with the familiar sour yogurt taste. It can be used as a dip, salad dressing or side dish.

Tzatziki has the earmarks of Mediterranean foods that have come to the forefront. It's healthier than sour cream-based dips or dressings, it's versatile, and it's a relatively inexpensive way to add a delicious new flavor to a meal or snack. Cedar's offers tzatziki in cucumber garlic, sun-dried tomato, roasted red pepper and Mediterranean dip flavors.

Strained yogurt as a healthy alternative to sour cream is gaining traction. Greek yogurt has as much as twice the protein as traditional yogurt, as well as active cultures that promote digestive health.

"Greek yogurt-based dips are a new item for us. Greek yogurt is trending well. It appeals to the health-conscious consumer,

which is a growing population. It's a huge growing trend," notes Emily Alfano, senior marketing manager at Santa Barbara Bay Foods, Santa Barbara, CA. The company offers its Greek yogurt based dips in five flavors — cucumber dill, Thai three pepper, roasted red pepper & asiago cheese, zesty ranch and spinach. "Greek-style yogurt is all the rage lately among consumers because of its unique health benefits and its rich, creamy texture," she adds.

Feta cheese is another versatile Greek food finding its way into a wide range of dishes. "The consistency of Greek Feta is different — it's thicker and has higher protein. The taste is more tangy," says Rostom Baghdassian, CEO of Karoun Dairies, Sun Valley, CA. Feta can readily be paired with a number of familiar healthy foods including fresh fruit and granola.

Uses for this versatile cheese are expanding as consumers discover that even small



amounts of Feta can economically provide an entirely different flavor to familiar foods. "More people know what Feta is. There are more recipes available and people are more willing to try new things. A little bit adds a lot of flavor, which makes it a low cost ingredient," says Ron Buhholzer, president of Klondike Cheese Company, Monroe, WI.

Finding the right amount of salt to produce Feta with the best flavor and texture is key. "With Feta, you need to get the salt right in order to have the best body and flavor. It needs to not be excessively salty, but it needs to be saltier than most cheeses because without enough salt, it becomes bitter. And Feta should not be bitter," Buhholzer explains.

The flavor of Greek cheeses can vary significantly depending on who made them. "You get different flavor profiles from different manufacturers," notes Mark Mazzella, product

manager at Atalanta Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ. Atalanta recently began importing cheese from Mevgal, the largest dairy in northern Greece. Mevgal has a fleet of 38 trucks that travel daily to pick up milk for its cheeses from 1,350 farms in the area. "Their milk is unique. They send their own trucks around to pick up the milk from the farmers."

In addition to Feta, Mevgal is also shipping Manouri and Kasseri to the United States. Manouri is a creamy, granular cheese made from a combination of sheep and goat milk, sheep whey and cream. It is used on salads, sandwiches and desserts or paired with wines. Kasseri, which is made from sheep and goat milk, complements Middle Eastern pastries, spinach and tomatoes. It can be served with fresh fruit, on sandwiches or paired with wine.

There's Green In The Salads

Within the Mediterranean and Greek food category, salads are particularly strong, because health-conscious consumers who drive this category eat a lot of salads. "We see growth in a couple of categories going to delis, including deserts, flat breads and salads," Kronos' Lester says.

Salads that contain chickpeas, beans or edamame are both affordable and profitable, according to Frocione. Cedar's is doing well with its line of salads. "Mediterranean continues to be a hot category and salads are going to be one of the next waves that should bring more new consumers into the category and drive more sales in 2010. Salads such as chickpea, tabbouleh, lentil, bruschetta, edamame, couscous, and orzo Feta, are all very healthy and great tasting. Demand is holding up, absolutely."

In order to maximize their appeal, the salads must be fresh. "We do a lot of tabbouleh salads. The key is the appearance. You've got to have fresh parsley to make it look good, so you've got to have fast turnaround," Frocione adds. The lemon juice in the dressing for tabbouleh salads makes the leafy greens wilt fairly quickly.

One way to optimize placement is to create a section for Mediterranean salads and related popular Mediterranean ingredients. "Locate Greek salads in the prepackaged Mediterranean sections along with hummus and olives," he suggests. "Promote them as a group of products. Design point-of-sale material that will educate the consumer about the benefits of Mediterranean salads."

Cedar's started a Mediterranean salad section at Publix Super Markets, Inc., the 1000-plus-store chain based in Lakeland, FL,

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that has performed well. The firm hopes to expand that salad section with a wider variety of salads.

A special Mediterranean section within the deli must have enough variety to be effective. "A deli should carry a minimum of three SKUs but preferably five — single SKUs get lost on the shelf. If retailers can look at Mediterranean salads the same way they now look at hummus — by giving us enough space to build a category — they'll see substantial growth and profitability. Some retailers are trying to build sales by featuring our salads both in pre-pack, in the olive bars, and behind the glass in the service counter," Cedar's Frocione explains.

A Growing Category

Mediterranean and Greek foods began to go mainstream in a big way around a decade ago. "Mediterranean foods have been a powerful category for the last 10 years. Greek foods have been growing; they're doing very well. Olive bars and stuffed grape leaves have become very widespread," Krinos' Moscahlaidis says.

These popular Greek and Mediterranean ingredients are best merchandised close to the service deli rather than close to the par-

lel mainstream ingredients. Kronos' Lester believes, "You should merchandise them in the service area, close to the service deli. Consumers are a little less price sensitive when products are merchandised in the service area." Flat breads, for example, are best merchandised with companion products rather than with the other breads. Falafel and spanakopita should be paired with meats as side dishes.

Haralambatos says Kontos offers a cocktail flatbread that would traditionally be topped with taramasalata or Feta. The breads — available 20 to a blister pack — can be topped in the deli or sold in a knee-knocker to consumers to top at home. The flatbreads are available in chipotle, pico de gallo, sweet onion and jalapeno flavors.

Greek food is healthy, a trend that will do nothing but expand. "Greek food is still very strong — it's a growing category. The main reason it's growing is that people want healthy food," says Karoun's Baghdassian.

During these hard times, some manufacturers are seeing the demand for Greek foods shifting from restaurants to the deli. "The Mediterranean diet is a very healthy diet. The demand has been good. Our restaurant business has taken a huge, huge hit this year,

but our deli business has been good. Our Feta sales are up," Klondike's Buhholzer says.

On the flip side, other manufacturers are finding the entire Mediterranean food category expanding in the foodservice sector. "Mediterranean foods are even increasing in foodservice as a whole, and deli follows foodservice. People are eating home more, and they want meal replacements," Lester says.

Total demand for Greek food has definitely remained strong even during the depths of the recession. "The last report we did on Greek foods, the trend was up," notes Virginia Theofanides, representative of the Greek Trade Commission, New York, NY.

A few premium items within the category have slumped, however. "Very high-end specialty items have been hurt because of their price points," notes Moscahlaidis, "but the more economically priced items have actually been helped because more people are eating at home. The foods are healthy, relatively inexpensive and delicious."

Within the Greek food category the strong items are the relatively inexpensive, healthy appetizer or snack alternatives. "The increase is greatest in shareables for grazing or appetizers. It's in things like pita chips or Feta cheese," adds Lester. **DB**

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Profiting from Pizza Programs

Delis that don't carry pizza are missing a large and growing sales opportunity

BY LISA WHITE

Offering a deli pizza program makes sense on many levels. It's a natural tie-in with supermarket prepared-food programs. Both traditional and innovative toppings and ingredients are readily available in the store, and the potential margin and negligible labor provide a revenue-generating opportunity.

Over the last year, the deli pizza segment has grown close to 10 percent, according to Hoffman Estates, IL-based FreshLook Marketing Group, a research firm that tracks perishable products. In the 52 weeks ending Oct. 25, 2009, U.S. supermarket deli pizza sales totaled more than \$100 million, an increase of more than \$9 million from the previous year.

When compared to restaurant takeout pies, deli pizza provides value, and in the current struggling economy, the majority of consumers are looking for value, reports the Madison, WI-based International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA) in its *2010 What's in Store* report.

Deli shoppers may want a better deal and more bang for the buck, but they're still seeking traditional comfort foods, and "Pizza is the ultimate comfort food," says Liz Hertz, marketing director at Nevada, IA-based Burke Corp., a pizza topping provider.

Consumers are eating out less, but some foods don't easily lend themselves to scratch-cooking at home. Fresh deli pizza provides an easy alternative to a home-cooked meal and a less costly option than eating out or home delivery. "Families make up most of the take-and-bake pizza segment in supermarket delis," says Peter Smith, marketing manager, at New Boston, MI-based Champion Foods, a take-and-bake pizza supplier.

Although deli pizza competes with its frozen counterpart in some cases, the fresh version is geared for same-day consumption, which helps differentiate the segment. "Deli pizza programs are definitely on the rise," says Alan Hamer, vice president of sales and



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marketing at Charlotte, NC-based Stefano Foods, which offers pre-packaged pizza and its components.

Differentiation Opportunities

When implementing a take-and-bake pizza program, delis can choose from two crust types — live dough and par-baked. Live — or raw — dough, which comes in a frozen state, requires more labor to prepare. It must be rolled out manually with a rolling pin or automatically using a sheeter. This dough lasts five days in a refrigerated case and, like a pizzeria pizza, rises in the oven when baked. Par-baked dough needs only to be topped and wrapped. When baked, these pizzas brown but don't rise.

Live dough presents more variables. For example, if raw crust thaws out and is refrozen, it won't rise. By comparison, par-baked crust can be thawed and refrozen with no quality issues.

Flatbread is becoming more popular as a pizza crust. Because it's thin, flatbread pizza cooks more quickly than product made with traditional crust. These pizzas are generally positioned as a gourmet alternative and topped with non-traditional ingredients, for example chicken, Feta and fresh tomatoes.

Although flatbread, gourmet and signature pies are becoming more popular, Champion's Smith notes pepperoni, sausage and cheese varieties still sell best.

Burke's best-selling toppings include pepperoni, sausage and traditional vegetable but, Hertz says, "There's always continued interest in new toppings. We've seen chicken increase in popularity due to the trend in healthier eating. Chorizo also is more common, as ethnic pizzas and Hispanic foods are on the rise."

In addition to traditional toppings, Pocino Foods, based in Industry, CA, provides non-traditional toppings including pre-cooked chorizo, quartered pork roll, shaved roast beef and pastrami for deli pizza programs.

Take-and-bake consumers can be divided into two primary categories. "Families with children will seek out the more traditional builds, such as pepperoni and sausage toppings," says Johanna Hulme, who handles marketing at Pocino. "The secondary consumer category is looking for specialty and healthy pizza options, such as chicken and veggies. We're seeing a significant increase in demand for healthier options, such as uncured pepperoni and natural Genoa salami."

Flatbread pizza also can be positioned as a healthier option. These crusts are generally produced with stone-ground wheat rather than semolina flour. "Flatbreads are made with whole grains, which are healthy and offer a different taste profile," explains Bob Pallotta,



PHOTO COURTESY OF VIOLET PACKING

director of marketing for Flatout Flatbreads, Saline, MI. The company provides 11-by-11-inch and 5-by-15-inch lavosh flatbread for take-and-bake pizza programs. "Delis can use our crust and pull from their stock of ingredients to create a custom pizza."

Taking its cue from restaurants, the retail pizza segment has seen a number of innovative product introductions. Utica, NY-based Violet Packing, producer of Delorio's Frozen Dough Products, recently introduced a half-sheet pizza in response to retailer demand.

A number of other pizza suppliers are providing delis signature varieties that include a wide range of sizes such as personal pizzas and rectangular crusts.

Along with its traditional line of 14-inch take-and-bake pizza, Champion offers a thin-crust flatbread line with upscale toppings, including barbecue chicken, Buffalo chicken and spinach with Feta. "Our newest product for delis is a take-and-bake pizza pack of four individual-sized pizzas. This is a different twist on the traditional pizza kit because it includes four 6-inch crusts, cheese, sauce and pepperoni," Smith says.

In July, Spartan Foods of America, the Spartanburg, SC-based producer of Mama Mary's and Mystic Pizza brands, will introduce its Myrna Rae Tailgate Pizza Party take-and-bake product. "The cheese pizza is in the shape of a football helmet and can be decorated with team colors," says Tom Baliker, president and founder. Geared to supermarket delis, the 12- and 14-in. pizzas will be priced at \$6.99 and \$9.99.

"We're seeing an increase in private-label pizzas in this retail channel, because stores want their own labels to help develop brand loyalty," says Jim "Dr. Pizza" Storer, national sales manager for Schaumburg, IL-based Nation Pizza, makers of Connie's Pizza. "Jewel and Dominick's stores in the Chicago area offer signature items that help make the stores a pizza destination."

Providing More Exposure

Despite its potential, a successful deli pizza program presents a number of challenges. "Delis require a much larger markup than other supermarket departments," Baliker says. "Retailers need to invest in a high-

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quality pizza program to make it successful.”

Space is another issue, considering pizza's large footprint. For smaller delis, this challenge can be overcome with the more compact flatbread varieties that can be merchandised in tight spaces.

Trends in thriving delis include meal deals and cross-merchandising, according to IDDBA's *What's in Store* report. Both marketing methods are necessary to bring attention to deli pizzas, which are typically an impulse purchase.

“Most consumers are unaware of these programs and their value they provide [compared with restaurant and home-delivery pizza],” according to Chad Hartwig, who serves as a regional sales and marketing consultant for Delorio's. “Retailers can increase the exposure of these products with promotions and proper merchandising.”

Meal merchandising, in particular, can bring attention to take-and-bake pizza, and there are many options. Some stores are promoting free soft drinks, salads or dessert with

pizza purchases.

“More delis also are looking at bake-in-store pizza programs,” says Champion's Smith. “Customers can order their pizza, which is baked while they shop. This is a great way for delis to charge a premium to customers who are looking for a quick hot meal.”

Because creativity can differentiate a retailer's pizza offering, delis should incorporate unique toppings, flavor profiles and ingredients to bring more attention to these products. Pocino's Hulme believes, “Flatbread crusts, white sauces and non-traditional toppings can attract new customers and help stimulate sales.”

Once they commit to offering pizza, retailers must carve out space in the deli and pay close attention to quality. “Delis can differentiate their pizza programs by allocating the space and focusing on quality,” Spartan's Baliker adds. “Having a separate cooler designated for these products will help retailers see a quicker return on their investment.”

To help extend the shelf life of fresh pizzas two-fold, retailers can utilize gas-flushed packaging. Although this option is pricier than shrink wrap, it can be less costly in the long run for stores with lower turnover.

Retailers also can look at successful private label programs for ideas on ramping up a pizza program. “Price Chopper does a phenomenal job with their deli pizza, offering both round and rectangular take-and-bake varieties,” Hartwig notes. “This complements the store's prepared-food section. At these stores, pizza fits in perfectly by the grab-and-go case.”

With more consumers looking for value, proper pricing is key. “Take-and-bake pizza needs to be priced competitively with frozen and home-delivery pies,” Stefano's Hamer advises. Stores generally can offer take-and-bake or hot pizza for \$5.99 to \$6.99, or a slice with a beverage for \$2.99.

“We're seeing delis do a lot of in-and-outs or limited-time-offer [LTO] pizza varieties, which helps attract attention,” Nation's Storer states. With this program, retailers offer a different pizza variety each quarter, gauging the interest of consumers. When sales go up, the LTO pizza may be added on a permanent basis. If the reception is not good, the pizza will be discontinued and another one will take its place.

“A lot of delis are realizing the potential of deli pizza programs,” adds Smith. “This is because consumers are still looking to this department for a meal replacement option.”

And because pizza has universal appeal, the options for these programs are practically endless. Consequently, delis can't afford not to take advantage of the opportunities pizza offers.

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Food Bars Attract Restaurant Patrons

Hot and cold food bars are a win for the consumer and retailer alike

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

It has been said again and again that in today's economy, more consumers are "trading down" from restaurant dining, choosing instead to purchase restaurant-quality food at lower prices from super-market delis and either dining in-store or bringing those items home. For many reasons, food bars are the perfect way to attract these consumers.

"Shoppers are cutting luxuries out of their lives," relates Mary Caldwell, marketing director, FoodMatch Inc., an importer of Mediterranean foods specializing in bulk and retail olives and antipasti headquartered in New York, NY. "They want to be able to replace or recreate some of those cutbacks in their own home. Food bars are an ideal way for them to do so. Retailers that are creative and fun with their selections can grow customer loyalty by being an innovative leader in the community."

"Food bars have evolved from a 'specialty area' destination to a major component of a 'meals-to-go' solution," according to Jim Christman, foodservice sales manager, Lexington, NC-based Arneg LLC, manufacturers of commercial refrigeration, including food bars. "Food bars certainly offer the retailer a chance to participate in the grab-and-go concept that enables busy households to take home and enjoy prepared meals and fresh foods."

Many retailers have expanded food bars into an entire section. "A strong trend by supermarkets is to use multiple food bars in each store," explains Nancy Green, national account manager, Amtekco Industries, Inc., a Columbus, OH-based designer and manufacturer of food bars. "Self-service is a great way to reduce store labor costs and increase accessibility and convenience for the consumer. Food bars have grown in popularity in today's economic environment; consumers look for value and convenience and food bars are a key component of the supermarket prepared foods presentation mix. Customers love the food bars with hot entrées and sides,



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a great alternative to restaurant dining at a great value. Our customers drive the trends and really, there are as many possibilities for food bars as there are prepared foods — grain bars, olive bars, seafood bars, antipasto bars, chicken holding bars, fruit and dessert bars, to name a few.”

According to Anthony DiPietro, vice president, George DeLallo Co., Jeannette, PA, producers of olives and antipasti, “Food bars allow retailers to offer a wide selection of foods, most often at one retail price that entices the consumer to shop in a very visual and interactive destination. By merchandising in this fashion, consumers are not driven solely on price and the food is allowed to entice sales. It is also a no-pressure sale where consumers buy at their leisure.”

For many people, food bars are fun. “Food bars offer a lot of opportunity for retailers to create excitement for their shoppers,” says FoodMatch’s Caldwell. “Through strategic rotation, retailers can create an experience that gives the shoppers reasons to keep coming back to the bars to see what’s new and different.”

Retailers reluctant to build business by adding or expanding food bars should think again, according to Carl Feldman, president, Atlantic Food Bars, Owings Mills, MD, food merchandising equipment designers and manufacturers. “Certain parts of the country are historically married to full-service prepared food,” he says. “But the truth is that

customers prefer self service.”

Improved equipment makes food bars easier for retailers to use than in the past. “From insulated ice-cold pans to mechanically cooled pans to forced air, the evolution of cooling technology has influenced the growth of food bars over the past 40 years,” says Green. “Amtekco’s Flowover refrigerated cold pan maintains safe holding temperatures by introducing cold air over and under the product,” which is important “in areas where ambient air temperatures and humidity level fluctuate. Amtekco also makes “green” food bars, with such innovations as energy-efficient fan motors and LED lights.

More Impulse And Repeat Purchases

Food bars create impulse buys, Feldman notes. “From a convenience standpoint for the shopper, they mean being able to buy what you want, how much you want, being able to mix it up,” he says.

David Federico, marketing manager, Naturally Fresh, Inc. based in Atlanta, GA, which manufactures and distributes dressings, sauces and dips, explains, “Food bars give retailers the opportunity to offer their customers the flexibility to build their own meal rather than choose from a pre-packaged, pre-portioned meal. Often with prepackaged meals, there are some elements the consumers don’t want and therefore either don’t purchase or purchase and don’t consume the entire meal.”

Many appreciate that there’s no wait for service. “It creates an impulse purchase that may not happen when there’s a line at the deli counter,” says Feldman. Once that initial purchase is made, consumers often come back for more. “If you put good quality food in your food bar, that leads to repeat purchases.”

Pre-made, high-quality items are easier for retailers to come by than ever before. For example, “Many of the products FoodMatch offers could be called value-added,” notes Caldwell. “Our roasted peppers and roasted tomatoes are picked in season and then roasted. We end up saving the retailer both energy and labor costs while providing a flavor profile that delivers. By sourcing value-added products like this, retailers can save as well as ensure consistency.”

In addition to ingredients, many prepared dishes are available from manufacturers. “A lot of foods that are very good are prepared by food processors,” says Feldman, who adds that some of these same prepared products are served in restaurants. But for retailers with the space and resources to make items in-store, “That’s absolutely a win in terms of quality.”

“Consumers are looking for prepared foods that are similar to home-cooked food or restaurant food,” adds Caldwell. “They’re more likely to purchase food that looks like it’s restaurant quality and made by the store chef. There’s also greater flexibility in what the store can offer and create.”

"Making food in-store allows the retailer to offer foods that do not contain additives or preservatives and that should provide both a healthier and tastier selection of foods to the consumer," adds DiPietro of George DeLallo.

Costs

Food bars naturally cost less to run than service counters. "Labor costs should be far less than what is currently figured for deli sales," says DiPietro. "Beginning of day set-up, periodical filling and cleaning throughout the day and end of day closing are the only really intensive labor hours spent at food bars."

Still, there is some labor involved. "Retailers must maintain freshness in everything offered in the food bar," says Federico of Naturally Fresh. "This will require additional labor and will also increase waste, as products that are not being utilized need to be replaced to maintain freshness."

Labor costs can be offset if the food bar is successful. Patty Echeverria, marketing manager for Castella Imports, Inc., Hauppauge, NY, notes, "The labor component for the supermarket deli can be justified by launching a successful food bar program. A successful food bar requires the commitment to offering quality food with more than the traditional offerings. New varieties, coupled



with quality, play the pivotal role for successful food bars."

Shrink can vary greatly. "It depends upon how much of the food is a byproduct of food that you sell in the store," explains Atlantic's Feldman. For example, a bruised cantaloupe can be cut up and placed on a salad bar and ends of deli meat can be used in prepared

dishes. Feldman calls this "reverse shrink."

Other ways to stave off shrink include packing unsold food to be refrigerated and offered as grab-and-go, extending its shelf life and giving that item another chance at a sale.

"It's important for retailers and department managers to proactively plan to avoid shrink so it can truly be minimized before it

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“SHRINK IS ONLY A MATTER OF HOW WELL THE RETAILER KNOWS ITS CUSTOMERS AND HOW THE BAR OR BARS ARE MAINTAINED. ... IF A BAR IS WELL MAINTAINED AND THE SELECTION IS SUCH AS TO APPEAL TO MOST ALL CUSTOMERS IN A PARTICULAR STORE, THEN SHRINK IS NOT A FACTOR.”

— ANTHONY DiPIETRO
GEORGE DeLALLO Co.

becomes a loss of revenue,” according to Caldwell of FoodMatch. “Some tactics include proper flipping of pans, using smaller pans for products that have shorter shelf life, and asking the chef for recipe ideas to dovetail the ingredients.”

“Shrink is only a matter of how well the retailer knows its customers and how the bar or bars are maintained,” says DeLallo’s DiPietro. “Since this is a visual purchase, the appearance is first and foremost the most important selling tool for the bar. If a bar is well maintained and the selection is such as to appeal to most all customers in a particular store, then shrink is not a factor.”

Getting Started

When a retailer decides to add one or more food bars, “The only significant drawback is space, as most food bars are additions to a store that did not initially allocate space towards this merchandising,” notes DiPietro.

Says Atlantic’s Feldman, “If you have a successful prepared food program, it’s not so much a challenge as an opportunity.” However, he warns, “If you’re not in the prepared food business, there are training costs, management costs, equipment costs.”

For the sake of food safety, training is

imperative. Employees must understand food bars cannot be used to heat or cool foods — they simply maintain critical temperatures. Food must be rotated properly so that not only does it appear fresh and plentiful but also nothing is displayed longer than safety allows.

Employees must also understand how to properly care for the equipment. “Maintaining equipment is probably the largest hurdle,” says Caldwell. “Poorly maintained equipment has a domino effect on the whole department. If a compressor goes out, then the bar is probably not going to temp properly. Then there’s risk of spoilage, and it just continues downhill from there. The best thing retailers can do is properly train and retrain associates on caring for the equipment in order to ensure it runs efficiently for a long time.”

For those just beginning to offer prepared foods, building a customer base is another hurdle. “I recommend you start slowly and small,” says Feldman, which will give consumers time to learn a retailer offers good prepared foods. Retailers can use that time to discover which items sell best in each store before expanding further.

When it comes to choosing equipment, choices abound. Feldman notes combination

hot-and-cold food bars are increasingly popular. These save floor space and allow for cross-merchandising opportunities, such as cold sandwiches and hot soups.

Certain items are also seeing growth in sales. “Sushi and prepared meals are probably among the fastest growing items in food bars,” reveals Christman of Arneg.

DiPietro notes olive and antipasti sales in food bars have grown incrementally since DeLallo began offering these for food bars over 30 years ago.

And natural foods are growing in popularity. Consumers are looking for “dishes that have fewer ingredient,” explains Caldwell. “Shoppers are reading ingredients much more regularly and they don’t want to see a paragraph-long ingredient list. They want simple and natural.”

In today’s economy, health sells. “As take-out takes off, consumers are looking for a sophisticated meal that is healthy,” according to Echeverria. “Changing lifestyles are triggering the demand for healthier choices. The Mediterranean Diet has become a trend, not a fad. Olives are an essential part of a well balanced Mediterranean Diet. Olives are a very healthy fruit and have superb nutrition. Olives, paired with cheese, olive oil and bread, make a delicious first course.”

Retailers should also keep in mind that some shoppers will want hot foods to be consumed immediately while others will want those same foods cold so they can heat them later.

DB

Building The Barbecue Category

Take your barbecue offerings to the next level

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

For retailers carrying just a few barbecued meat items, now is a great time to expand those offerings into a category. “The consumer is looking for comfort food — something that is very Americana. And what is more American than barbecue?” asks Terry Hyer, COO, Kansas City-MO-based Zarda B-B-Q, makers of baked beans, ribs, burnt ends (also called chopped brisket), pulled pork and pulled chicken in the style served at its two Kansas City area restaurants. “Barbecue is becoming more and more a staple meal in the rotation of meals that people get.”

Barbecue is both familiar and exciting for consumers. “For grocery retailers, the thing you have to realize is you have to be relevant to your customers,” says Hyer. “Barbecue continues to be relevant and strike a chord with consumers. Even during this recession, we still are experiencing growth. The grocery store deli has an opportunity to meet the consumer where they’re at with this very culturally relevant food.”

Traditionally, barbecue is consumed at restaurants where highly skilled pit-masters cook the meat for long periods of time or at home during the summer, if at all. “You have some cooking aficionados at home, and you have some people who can’t boil water,” notes Steven Burger, president, Burgers’ Smokehouse, California, MO, makers of fully cooked, heat-and-serve Kansas City-style barbecued ribs, pulled pork and sliced beef brisket. “There are few people who have smokers and, if so, know how to use them.”

Even those who enjoy barbecuing at home rarely do so when the weather turns cold. “When the snow is up to my knees, I can just drive to my supermarket deli and get some great ribs and some coleslaw and some baked beans and I’ve got a great meal for about \$20,” claims Tom Blumhardt, vice president of value-added sales and marketing, Shawnee Mission, KS-based Seaboard Foods, which makes shredded pork, ribs, barbecue meatballs, sliced beef brisket and



PHOTO COURTESY OF ZARDA B-B-Q

sliced pork brisket. The company also licenses the Sweet Baby Ray's brand, currently the No. 1 barbecue sauce in dollar sales in the United States.

Eat-in and take-home restaurant-style barbecue meals from the deli offer consumers a higher level of value and convenience than restaurant dining. "Even before the downturn of the economy, we recognized there were consumers who wanted casual-dining food without paying casual-dining prices," notes Burger. With the economy as it is, Burgers' Smokehouse has seen increasing growth as diners "trade down" from eating at restaurants.

Burger believes barbecue is poised to take delis around the country by storm. "We feel there's wonderful potential for growth in this area," he says. "We barely existed in this category two years ago. Now it's a multimillion dollar category for us."

According to Seaboard's Blumhardt, "Delis have worked hard in the last 15 to 20 years in the area of whole-meal replacement. Barbecue is perfect for it."

Less Labor, More Flavor

Retailers have more choices than ever before when it comes to the level of labor, space and equipment they wish to dedicate

to the preparation of barbecued meats. Many high-quality pre-cooked barbecue products allow delis to easily offer restaurant-style foods.

"What makes it great for delis is all they have to do is display them out in deli sections," explains Rodney Anderson, Burgers' Smokehouse vice president of sales and marketing. These items can be warmed in ovens, and some retailers warm and display in rotisseries to create an appetizing ambiance. "They're restaurant style," he says. "Our ribs would probably exceed most restaurants'. We produce an artisan-quality rib."

"The key to convenience is producing products that are fully cooked but without tasting like leftovers," adds Burger. "People are still demanding a great level of convenience without sacrificing quality."

Pre-made barbecue can be amazingly consistent, according to Zarda's Hyer. "There's no other equipment involved. There is virtually no labor to this product. It's going to be tender, it's going to be juicy, it's going to be smoky. The romance of this is that you can have a Kansas City barbecue restaurant dinner in your house anywhere in the country."

Another option for delis that want to offer great barbecue without the added labor, special equipment or shrink associated with store-made barbecue are Seaboard's Cook-In Bag barbecue ribs. "With the cook-in bag application, all the operator has to do is put a small vent hole in the package and put it in the oven for an hour," according to Blumhardt. "They're restaurant quality. We've tested all these products for texture, flavor and tenderness in trained panels and untrained panels."

For stores that wish to make barbecued foods themselves, new equipment is making that easier. "Over the years our equipment has steadily improved. We've taken a lot of our customers' feedback and used it to make our smokers easier to use, easier for routine maintenance and safer," reports Leon Kaufmann, marketing/graphic design, Southern Pride, Marion, IL, makers of gas-fired, wood-burning rotisserie smokers.

"Retailers should know our smokers are extremely easy to operate and require very little attention while they're cooking," he continues. They won't need a specialized operator to run them — anyone working the deli can use the smoker. Simply load the food in the oven, set the time and temperature controls, then carry on with your other duties while it cooks. There's no need to check it or turn it until the cooking cycle is done."

In-store barbecuing has its advantages, says Kaufmann. "Probably the biggest advantage of making the barbecue in your store is the smell. It's hard for any customer

to resist the smell of fresh smoked food, even if they didn't come to the store to get meat. Another advantage is that you can run specials based on what you have a lot of — for instance smoking turkeys for Thanksgiving or hams for Christmas."

Barbecue Meals

How a store should promote barbecue depends much upon its demographics. "Barbecue is traditionally a family-style take-home application but with the changing demographics, it's important to consider smaller portion sizes that cater toward single-person households and seniors," explains Hanna sizzled, marketing manager, InnoWare Plastic, Inc., Alpharetta, GA, makers of foodservice packaging.

Offering a barbecue-specific section can help customers put meals together for themselves. "You can even offer a catering menu," says Hyer. When retailers expand barbecue from a few offerings to an entire category, "You've got this barbecue section that's always waiting for the consumer and it will become a high-traffic area."

Dinner specials often do well, especially when retailers have a dine-in area, according to Anderson — "like three ribs, salad, baked beans and a roll for a price," he says.

"You put these meals together and they're real nice for not a lot of money," notes Blumhardt, which translates to good margins for retailers and perceived bargains for consumers.

Zarda has seen success with its ribs-and-chicken basket, which is based on a similar item that it offers in its restaurants. The item includes a single serving of chicken strips and ribs, and retailers have the option of adding side dishes to make it a complete meal. "It's a proven winner," says Hyer. "It's like magic at the cash register."

Retailers need not look far for accompaniments — many are staple deli items. "All kinds of things go great with barbecue," notes Blumhardt. Side dishes may include potato salad, mashed potatoes, French fries, baked beans, coleslaw, macaroni salad, corn, rolls and cornbread.

According to Burger, the popularity of sides is affected by region. He goes on to say that complete meals can be offered warm or cold. "Many of our grocery customers in the Midwest offer Burgers' products as part of whole meals to grab and go, letting customers choose to take them warm for immediate consumption or cold to be heated and eaten later."

When promoting barbecue, don't forget holidays and events. "One of the biggest sales days for these pre-cooked barbecued meats is the Super Bowl," notes Blumhardt.

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Beef It Up

Roast beef lovers want their red-meat fix, regardless of economic vagaries

BY LAUREN KATIMS

In a market where consumers are trying to get the biggest bang for their buck, choose the most healthful options and avoid sacrificing quality, roast beef has taken a backseat. In past years, turkey has claimed the spot as king of the deli meats nationwide, with ham holding a close second.

But meat lovers are unwilling to give up the taste of roast beef. After all, "A good, seasoned, quality roast beef has a great flavor compared to turkey," says Jim Mosle, chief executive officer of Saag's Specialty Meats, San Francisco, CA. "Roast beef just makes a great sandwich."

Those meat lovers still want their roast beef; they're just buying it less often and with more care. Quality roast beef is one of the most expensive deli meats, making it a diffi-

cult choice in this fragile economy. Although, roast beef sales have fallen, the meat is holding its own.

To roast beef enthusiasts, it's still the most appreciated meat in the deli, outselling specialty items such as corned beef and pastrami, notes Bruce Belack, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Philadelphia, PA-based Vincent Giordano Corporation. Although sales have fluctuated over the past few years, for many consumers, the quality and taste of roast beef override any other factors, and they're willing to pay a premium for it.

Quality

To make the expenditure worthwhile for consumers, roast beef quality is crucial.

According to Patrick Sugrue, vice president of deli sales at Cargill Meat Solutions Corp., based in Wichita, KS, "Even though roast beef is not the most popular deli meat, there is much more of a tendency for consumers to buy more expensive, quality roast beef." He attributes that to a noticeable difference between the best premium product and a value product, which may contain water and preservatives. "With turkey and ham, there's less of a discrepancy in quality between cheaper and more expensive kinds."

Mosle believes low-grade water-added roast beef loses its essence and taste, and because roast beef is typically less processed than other meats, the consumer is aware of the addition. In response, the majority of manufacturers use either choice or select top



round cap-off cuts of meat that are minimally processed — and it's paid off. For years, across all retail locations, sales of premium roast beef have been higher than those of value-tier roast beef.

However, notes Cargill's Sugrue, consumers understand there's a difference in quality at mainstream grocery stores and specialty delis. Those who want the highest quality meat tend to buy it at specialty stores.

Saag's Mosle believes this discrepancy may be partly due to a lack of experienced deli employees. Larger supermarket chains don't have the resources to hire and train experienced employees who know how to handle the products correctly.

Private Label

"The deli is only as good as the consumer thinks it is," says Mosle, and that may be some of the reason why the popularity of private label has taken off. Most retailers are offering their own brand, which usually is promoted as a top-notch quality meat.

By offering a high-quality product under their own brand, delis are trying to establish brand loyalty for their store, notes Belack of Vincent Giordano, which is active in the private-label business. "You can go back 20, 30, 40 years — delis used to cook their own roast beef on site." This is no longer the case, he says, primarily because of stringent state laws on proper handling during the cooking and chilling processes. For this reason, many delis have turned to manufacturers to create private label products that reflect the chain's requirements. "They're trying to get brand loyalty by offering a really good product."

Most of Cargill's roast beef sales also come from private label; the company's customers include Kroger, Walmart, Costco and Sam's Club. Like most suppliers, Cargill works with customers to develop a flavor profile and cook temperature — which varies based on region — that fits their deli.

Still, some specialty retailers roast and flavor their beef in their own stores. "[Consumers] have to believe they're coming to that store because they can't get this product anywhere else," explains Ray Venezia, vice president of meat for Fairway Market, a 5-store chain based in New York, NY. Roast beef is one of the most expensive deli meats at Fairway, but people are willing to buy it, he says, because it's so fresh and flavorful, and customers have become loyal to his Fairway roast beef. "Loyalty to a brand [rather than a deli] comes from a deli that does not have quality meats," he believes, which is why many delis promote their private label



meats as the highest quality in the store.

Regional Preferences

Consumers have strong regional preferences about roast beef — more so than any other deli meat. In general, roast beef sales in the Northeast and Southwest are highest, most likely because those consumers grew up eating traditional roast beef at home. Roast beef is Fairway's top-selling item each week, but Venezia admits that may have something to do with being in New York, one of the most prominent deli roast beef markets in the country.

According to Belack, "What makes roast beef a unique item in the deli case is the regional differences with cook temperature. New England likes it rare, while the East and West Coasts prefer medium rare — they want to see pink," he explains. "The center of country doesn't want to see pink in the beef."

Flavor profiles are also regional. "The South likes a Cajun and mesquite flavor, while Italian roast beef is popular in the Northeast. These preferences have been going on for a long time — they're a permanent thing," Belack adds.

Perhaps more than any other deli meat, roast beef captures the market for small regional manufacturers that create distinct flavor profiles germane to their locale. However, roast beef traditionally seasoned with salt and pepper remains the No. 1 seller for all major suppliers.

Manda Fine Meats Inc., Baton Rouge, LA, was aware of the large roast beef market in New Orleans, says Bobby Yarborough, one of three owners of the family-run com-

pany. In 1987, Manda worked closely with a family-owned chain of supermarkets in New Orleans to come up with a New Orleans/Creole/Cajun flavor profile. The resulting flavor is a "gumbo" of Creole and Cajun seasonings, he says, that immediately became a hit not only in the New Orleans market but in markets in 15 other states. The core markets for this seasoned product are the Gulf Coast states, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Northern Florida.

Promotional Opportunities

One effective way to promote roast beef sales is through the deli sandwich business, which is growing tremendously, says Belack. "There's evidence that there's still an affordable price point in this economy. The advertising has become more aggressive. If you look at some of the major chains around the country — such as Subway with their \$5 foot long — you can see how strong the advertising is."

Delis that promote in-store sandwiches — either custom-made or prepacked — stand to increase roast beef sales. Once consumers taste the roast beef in a ready-made sandwich, there's a good chance they'll also buy sliced roast beef from the deli case.

Vincent Giordano offers sandwich recipes such as the San Francisco — sour dough bread, sharp Provolone cheese, lettuce, tomato, sliced onions and wasabi mayonnaise — on its website. "We like to help the consumer buy the product by being creative and offering new sandwich ideas and flavor combinations," says Belack.

A great deal of store-level focus has been on promotion, including featuring roast beef in weekly specials or with unique flavors, says RuthAnn LaMore, director of communications for Boar's Head Provisions Co. Inc., based in Sarasota, FL. Boar's Head's Londonport Roast Beef was developed when the company's corporate chef was asked to create a deli roast beef with flavors similar to those of a fine-dining steak with sauce, which usually starts with veal stock, wine and some sort of berries, says LaMore. The result was a combination of ingredients, including port wine, herbs, spices and a touch of honey. It's made from a cap-off top round and warming enhances its flavor.

At Fairway, Venezia is always trying to create new recipes for roast beef, using different condiments or various toppings as a way to offer a variety of alternatives to his customers. "After a while, everyone needs something different," he says. "That's what helps your sales — how creative you get." **DB**



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Sensational Salami

As consumers continue embracing upscale deli offerings, artisan salami grows in popularity

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

Call it the Foodie Phenomenon, but a growing number of Americans have embraced decidedly upscale offerings, particularly in the deli. No longer merely a place to pick up some “cold cuts” for a picnic or graduation party, the deli has morphed into an international marketplace, a wholly sensory experience for the eyes, nose, and mouth. Consumers rely on their deli operator to suggest product, recommend pairings, and advise them on how best to incorporate their new discoveries into their dining or entertaining occasions.

Nowhere is this truer than with salami. A taste of the old world, salami is defined as salted, cured cuts of meat or sausages made primarily from pork. In Italy, sausage masters produce more than 250 types of salami, while in America, only a few dozen are widely available. Best known varieties include mortadella, Calabrese, Genoa, Abruzzese, Milano, and sopressata. Many varieties are named after the region or country of their origin. When faced with a wealth of different salamis to choose from, the ability to identify their favorites by region has proven quite helpful for many American consumers.

“To help educate the American consumer, we separated out the salami by the region where the original recipe comes from and we color-coded the regions on the labels,” says Lorenza Passetti, president, Volpi Foods, St. Louis, MO.

Traditionally considered an Italian product, salami is made all over the world, including France, Hungary, Germany, Spain, and the United States. In addition to pork, salami makers frequently utilize chopped beef (primarily veal), venison and poultry (especially turkey).

Salami hasn't always been looked upon as an upscale delicacy. In fact, it's long been popular among peasants because of its ability to be stored at room temperature for long periods of time. But thanks to five-star restaurants and creative chefs, what once was considered poor folks' food is now revered.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SANTA MARIA FOODS

"A lot of the better restaurateurs and chefs like to make their own salami and dry-cured meat products," says Volpi's Passetti. "Many restaurants are starting to offer charcuterie plates. People get exposed to them there and then they start looking for them in the retail stores."

Inquiring Minds

Many of today's discerning consumers are familiar with the intricacies of salami-making — from the breed of animal used to the coarseness of the chopped meat to the type of casing employed. As a result, artisan salami makers, such as Springville, UT-based Creminelli Fine Meats, find themselves deluged with questions, as consumers come to recognize that not all salamis are alike.

"Historically, salami has been a product made from leftover meats. You throw a whole lot of spice in it, dry it up, and it's salami," says Chris Bowler, president of Creminelli. "That product has its place and fills a need, but increasingly, people are interested in what's on the ingredient label, what care went into making the product, what cuts of meat are in there, even where we are sourcing the meat and where our spices come from."

While mass-produced salami remains in high demand, the growing interest in upscale products has raised the stature of companies such as Creminelli, which makes a concerted effort to source meat from pasture-raised animals. It's also led to a return to artisan methods of production, including hand-tying, mold-ripening, extended aging periods, and the use of natural, rather than artificial, casings.

"There's a renaissance in the industry with regard to fermented sausages that are bringing old world flavors back to the deli case," claims Paul Bertolli, founder and curemaster, Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi, Berkeley, CA. "In keeping with the whole idea of eating more locally and knowing the source of your food and who produces it, this is influencing what we are finding in the case, especially with salami."

While Bertolli credits retailers on both coasts with fueling the trend, Jim Carfrae, vice president of marketing, Santa Maria Foods Inc., Toronto, ON, says his company sells "tons to Chicago." Any large city has "lots of sophisticated people," he adds. "You bring in enough for the sophisticated clientele and the rest of the people eventually catch on."

Variety Is The Spice

While major retail chains such as Whole Foods have certainly played a big role, Bertolli is quick to point out that small, independent retailers lie at the heart of the trend toward artisan salami. As consumers become more familiar with upscale salami,

they branch out and discover all the category has to offer. It becomes important, then, for deli operators to offer a wide array of salamis to choose from.

"As people get more comfortable with this whole artisan approach, they seem to be more open to trying interesting and unusual varieties," says Bertolli. "Among the devotees of this food category, there are some people with quite advanced tastes who are very interested in trying new things."

Among those new things available to

them to try is Wine Salami, produced by Volpi Foods. Available in three varieties — Chianti, Pinot Grigio, and Rosé — Wine Salami brings many non-salami eaters into the category, according to Passetti. Volpi is not alone in its endeavor to infuse fine salami with fine wine, however.

Creminelli produces Salami Barolo, which it romances by saying, "The richness of the Barolo lingers in this already robustly flavored artisan salami, creating a truly complex, bursting flavor that is difficult to replicate and

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impossible to forget.” But it doesn’t stop there. Creminelli also makes Salami Tartufo, incorporating black summer truffles into the meat.

While Bowler says consumers get excited about such taste combinations, he cautions salami makers not go too far in trying to combine different flavors. “People are not necessarily impressed with the idea of creating the Starburst effect — where you have a rainbow of fruit flavors — with a product like salami, but they are interested in experimenting with combining refined tastes and seeing how the salami maker can get them to complement [one another].”

Such combinations — and all artisan salamis, for that matter — boast intense flavor. That means a little goes a long way, something many consumers don’t yet understand. They’re accustomed to mass-produced salami, which is often sliced thick. By contrast, says Passetti, artisan salami is meant to be sliced very thin. “Smaller quantities of a tastier product go a lot further than large volumes of mass-produced product,” she explains. “You’ve got a lot of slices per pound.”

Very thin slices practically eliminates one of the concerns salami makers hear most often from consumers — that salami is too fatty and should be avoided. According to Bowler, that concern gets raised often but consumers are surprised when they learn Cremenelli’s salami actually has less fat than most ground beef, hot dogs or bologna. And when you consider that a half pound of artisan salami provides roughly 60 slices, the dynamic changes altogether.

If consumers remain concerned, says Dave Brandow, director, sales and marketing, corporate foodservice and export, Piller Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd., Waterloo, ON, Canada, they should be reminded that anything can be consumed as part of a healthy diet, as long as it’s eaten in moderation. He stresses that salami is a celebratory or indulgent product and not something to be eaten on a daily basis.

Despite concerns over fat content, Santa Maria’s Carfrae says consumers have answered the reduced-fat salami proposition with a resounding ‘no!’ “The few products we’ve seen in the marketplace haven’t done very well,” he says. “It’s part of the larger trend in which consumers are saying, ‘I’d love to have something healthier, but I’m not willing to sacrifice taste. I would rather eat less and enjoy it than have more of something that doesn’t taste as good.’”

Whether for portion control or grab-and-go, small packages of pre-sliced salami have been doing well. Piller, for example, produces Salami Tidbitz, pre-sliced product in 4-ounce bags. New York, NY-based Transatlantic Foods has rolled out Pig’Nics, a line of olive-

sized, flavor-rubbed, dry cured salami sold in resealable ounce bags. Not only do such products give consumers a convenient means of eating salami on the run, but they also make it easy to try out new flavors.

“All across the sausage category, there are a lot more consumer-oriented grab-and-go type packs,” says Amy Farge, Transatlantic director of marketing. “If there’s something consumers would like to try without having to buy an 8- to 12-inch log, they’re more likely to pick it up.” Three varieties of Pig’Nics are currently available: Classic Bistro, flavored with cracked peppercorn and garlic; Southwestern-Style Kick, boasting a “robust mixture” of chili, paprika and cayenne; and Herbes de Provence, featuring the “Provençal accents of aromatic thyme and rosemary.”

According to Farge, the idea for the product grew out of her family’s trips to France, where “the kids made a beeline for these little bite-sized sausages that came in a bag.” Working with a German meat company, Transatlantic developed Pig’Nics, which it actively promotes as the ideal grab-and-go snack. “You can take them so many different places because you don’t need a knife, and your hands don’t get greasy because of the herb coatings,” she explains. “We backpack with them, ski with them, tuck them inside our pockets. They’re great for picnics, gift baskets, airplane travel, train travel, or lunch boxes.”

Trial And Error

Salami makers would like to see deli operators do more sampling. Piller provides a sampling allowance, so consumers can taste

its product without any cost to the deli. Because of the high cost of artisan salami, however, many producers will not provide free product to their retailers.

If deli operators cannot afford to absorb the cost, Santa Maria’s Carfrae recommends they consider highlighting different types of salami as their featured product, much as a restaurant would have daily specials. “If they just take on the practice of saying, ‘We are featuring X salami this week,’ maybe the consumer will buy it, maybe they won’t — but they’re more likely to try it than if they hadn’t said anything,” he explains.

Any salami-related interactions are steps in the right direction, according to Volpi’s Passetti, since it provides a rare one-on-one opportunity to raise consumer awareness of the product and maybe engage in some suggestive selling.

At this point, such initiatives are necessary, relates Carfrae, because foodie favorites such as The Food Network have yet to heartily embrace salami. While Giada De Laurentiis, star of *Everyday Italian*, makes heavy use of prosciutto, the same can’t be said of salami. Without the Food Network influence, even the most devoted foodies often don’t know what to do with salami, other than putting it in a sandwich. Thus, it falls to salami makers and deli operators to give them ideas.

“Anyone can figure out this tastes great between a couple slices of bread or on a nice crusty roll, but when you start getting into appetizers, for which they fit the bill fantastically, people are lost,” he concludes. **DB**



A Treasured Taste Of Holland

Imported Gouda is poised to capture a larger share of the U.S. market

BY BOB JOHNSON

The story of authentic Gouda cheese began centuries ago with the breeding of the Holstein-Friesian cows. Dutch animal breeders of times past worked to develop a cow ideally suited to graze the grassy meadows of the Netherlands. The result of their work, the Holstein-Friesian, is an efficient, high-producing black-and-white dairy cow. These cows produce the milk that goes into authentic Gouda cheese.

Some fine Dutch cheesemakers say the best milk comes in the summer, when these cows are able to graze on the abundant grasses. "It all starts with the cows and the meadows. These Holstein-Friesian cows love to graze freely on the lush grasses in

Het Groene Hart [The Green Heart] of the Netherlands from spring through fall. These free-ranging cows have enhanced milk quality and guarantee a creamy and soft texture of the cheese," says Steve Margarites, president of Best Cheese Corp, based in Mount Kisco, NY.

Authentic aged Gouda from Holland is creating a place for itself among consumers who are embracing new flavor profiles provided by traditional foods from abroad. Young Gouda in red wax is a familiar cheese that can be sliced for sandwiches much like Cheddar — but traditional aged Gouda is gaining in popularity because it presents an entirely new and different texture, flavor and

eating experience.

"There is a tremendous amount of Gouda that comes into the market that is young and red waxed," explains Ruth Flore, marketing manager for Old Amsterdam at Norseland Inc. in Stamford, CT. "Aged Gouda has come onto the market the last few years. It has the flavor profile of butter-scotch or whiskey. It's crunchy from crystallization, and it has deeper color." Fine Gouda is the result of an aging process that gives the cheese a distinctive smoothness and crystallization, she adds.

Within the Gouda category, the aged cheese is steadily gaining ground. "Demand for mild Dutch Gouda is roughly even, but



demand for aged profiles is growing steadily," notes David Voremberg, president of Jana Foods LLC, Secaucus, NJ.

And within the aged Gouda category, older cheese is moving to the forefront. "Twenty years ago, it was mostly your 6-month Gouda, but you can age it anywhere from six months to eight or nine years," says Doug Jay, president of Atlanta Foods International based in Atlanta, GA. "As it ages, it becomes drier, crumblier and has a sharper taste. You can use it as a table cheese or shred it like Parmesan."

"Gouda began in the Netherlands and was already being exported to other countries as far back as the 13th century," relates Dominique Delugeau, senior vice president of sales for DCI Cheese Company, Richfield, WI. "Today, Gouda is the largest selling cheese in Holland and represents 60 percent of the country's cheese production. Centuries of cheesemaking tradition ensure a high-quality, time-tested, mild and buttery cheese enjoyed by many today."

Cheese With a Story

This is a cheese with a story to be told. The place and the traditional methods that make authentic Gouda special are essential to its merchandising.

According to Michael Evan Blum, USA sales and marketing manager for Beemster Cheese, Jersey City, NJ, "Demand for higher-end Dutch cheese continues to grow as U.S. consumers learn more and more about cheese. Red-wax cheese is a commodity and has remained about level. As people open their doors to cheese, they're interested in what makes the product unique and interested in the history of their cheese."

Telling those stories is an important part of merchandising authentic Gouda cheese. "Tell the story of the company! Entice the consumers with samples. And build eye-catching displays," he continues. "The stores that ask for promotional material are always the ones with the best sales. It's important for stores to have employees who are interested in telling the stories. Deli managers should be encouraged by buyers to read about cheese and visit factories whenever possible."

Specialty artisan cheese is connected to a sense of history and place much as fine wines are. "The concept of terroir is something a lot of people do not understand and do not appreciate as much as they should," Blum adds. "People are starting to understand it when it comes to wine but don't realize how important it is with cheese. I

would certainly talk about that. The Dutch have been making cheese and 'marketing' it for hundreds of years. When you say the word Holland, people think of windmills and cheese. Different parts of the country offer different qualities, and each company or farm produces a different level of quality based on their milk, recipe and passion. Overall, it's safe to say that the Dutch are very serious about their cheese."

The No. 1 brand of aged Gouda in Holland, Old Amsterdam is made from a starter culture that has remained in the family and the company for generations. "I can only speak for Old Amsterdam cheese, and what makes it better than generic is definitely the taste and craftsmanship," says Jasper Swart, president of Westland Cheese, Astoria, NY, the U.S. arm of Amsterdam, Holland-based Westland Kaas, the maker of Old Amsterdam. "At Old Amsterdam, we use a family-owned starter culture and a unique ripening process that consistently brings to life the exact characteristics of Old Amsterdam. Our master cheesemakers then carefully supervise every step of production and maturation to ensure each wheel hits this exceptional taste and quality mark consistently, resulting in an aged Gouda with a beautiful depth of sweet and savory flavors."

One company has made a name for itself among cheese connoisseurs by continuing to age its Gouda using methods that go back centuries. "The best Dutch cheese I know of is Reypenaer," comments Jay. "This cheese is made in the traditional way, aged in warehouses where they open the doors over the moist marshes at night and close them during the day. Reypenaer is more expensive because it's hand-turned in the warehouse."

The Reypenaer aging warehouse on the Old Rhine River is more than a century old. Rather than artificially maintain a constant environment of low temperature and high humidity, the Reypenaer cheesemakers adjust the microclimate inside the warehouse by opening and closing the many shutters to allow the mist from the Rhine to cure the cheese.

A Versatile Treat

As Gouda ages, the texture becomes harder and the flavor more intense. It is especially delicious on a cheese plate paired with wines, beers or ales. Norseland's Flore suggests pairing aged Gouda with one of the finer Dutch beers made from barley grown on the same ground where the cows that produce the milk for Gouda graze.

"Aged Goudas can be served on panini or grilled sandwiches, shredded on baked potatoes, in gratins and omelets," she adds. "Aged Goudas contrast nicely with sweet summer

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Located in the Netherlands, in the city of Woerden, the van den Wijngaard family has been aging cheese for generations. The process for making an exceptional Gouda called Reypenaer takes place in a century-old warehouse, still without refrigeration. Inside, cheeses are turned and wiped down everyday by hand and the fluctuations in temperature and humidity assist in improving the aroma, taste, texture and complexity of flavors. In order for this cheese to be awarded the designation of "Reypenaer", it must be aged for at least 1 year. In 2009, Reypenaer was awarded with the Gold Medal for Best Dutch Cheese at the International Cheese Show held in Nantwich, England.



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fruits as well as sweet jams and fruit pastes or preserves. They pair well with big reds — Merlot, Cabernet, Zinfandel and Côtes du Rhône — and are great with beer and ale. Aged Gouda can be marketed with fresh produce, fresh fruit or with jams and chutneys. Raspberry or blackberry jams are very good with aged Gouda.”

Aged Gouda also has a versatility that opens up a wide range of cross-merchandising possibilities. “I think most would be surprised at its versatility. Not only is it a wonderful cheese to serve on a board with wine, beer and spirits along with all kinds of accompaniments, Dutch Gouda has fantastic melting properties and wonderful flavor that becomes more pronounced when used in baking and pasta dishes, for salads, grilled sandwiches and much more,” Westland’s Swart says.

A traditional pairing in Holland is Gouda with dark rye bread. “The common way in Holland to eat Old Amsterdam is to put it in between two slices of high-quality dark rye bread with some butter on it. Try it at home — it’s delicious,” Swart adds.

The many ales, fruits and breads that complement authentic Gouda can also be used in cross-promotional displays.

“Gouda’s mellow, mild and buttery flavor

goes well with crackers and can be included as part of fruit and snacking trays,” DCI’s Delugeau says. “Additionally, it is excellent on sandwiches. Gouda pairs well with lager beers and Beaujolais Villages.” The company’s web site includes information on cheese and wine pairings, and recipes including a salad recipe featuring Gouda cheese.

How many Goudas a well-stocked store must have is a matter of space and demographics. “Depending on shelf space, we would suggest stocking a mild, medium and aged Gouda,” according to Jana’s Voremberg.

Best’s Margarites recommends stocking a variety of ages to appeal to as wide a consumer base as possible. “There are opportunities to sell the matured [6-month aged], the Classic [12-month aged], the Reserve [18-month aged] and Vintage [3- and 5-year aged], because of the versatility in usage and flavor profile.”

Poised For Takeoff

The growing popularity of authentic Gouda is part of the trend toward specialty cheeses. They have held their own surprisingly well during the economic downturn and, as the economy recovers, they look to be poised for takeoff.

“Specialty cheese in general has seen a lot



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEENSTER-CHEESE

of growth the last few years. People’s palates have changed. They’ve been exposed to more flavor profiles, and they’ve become more sophisticated in their taste,” comments Frank Belfiore, marketing director at Finlandia Cheese Inc., Parsippany, NJ. He believes the growth of specialty has so far been concentrated East and West Coast cities.

Sampling should increase the consumer base. “Silent sampling is a good hook, especially for the aged 1,000-day Gouda and garlic, caraway and peppercorn flavored varieties that consumers may not know as well,” Delugeau adds.

Travel and television cooking shows have resulted in consumers with more cosmopolitan tastes — the types of consumers who are ready for authentic Gouda. “We travel more and when we’re exposed to authentic tastes and flavors, it’s nice to recreate that experience when we get home,” relates Swart. “Also, in these times, people tend to eat more at home and search for premium products to enjoy with family and friends. Because consumers are more sophisticated and curious, they’re looking for cheeses with bolder flavor. Another reason is the quality. And, of course, Holland is where Gouda was created, so many of the finest varieties are produced there.”

Authentic Gouda is poised to make great strides as the economy rebounds. “In 2008 and 2009 the imports were pretty much stable, predominantly influenced by the state of the economy,” Margarites notes. “In 2010 we’re expecting an increase.”

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A World Of Cheddars

Each region has its own unique characteristics

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

To draw consumers to the cheese department, retailers should offer at least one specialty Cheddar from each of the main Cheddar-producing areas: California and the West Coast, Wisconsin and the Midwest, Vermont and the East Coast, and England and other countries. After that, they should fill whatever niches appeal to a store's demographics, for example, cloth-bound or extremely aged Cheddar.

Retailers can tap into the buy-local ethos by offering several Cheddars from their own area. Once geographical considerations are made, let the store's demographics determine the color, price and taste of the Cheddars. Telling the story behind the cheese — is it raw milk, farmstead, handmade, sustainably produced? — can help set up the cheese department as a destination for cheese lovers.

"Consumers have a taste expectation based on the product they ate in the area where they grew up. It's not right or wrong — it's what their palate is telling them," says Jay Allison, vice president of sales and marketing, Tillamook County Creamery Association, Tillamook, OR.

For many, color is crucial. Jodi Stahl, marketing manager, Yancey's Fancy, Inc., Corfu, NY, notes, "The color of Cheddar has a bearing on the region you're purchasing for, and although some consumers think the white has to be sharper, annatto is, in essence, food coloring from a vegetable source. It doesn't affect flavor or texture."

Consumers eyeing displays of pre-packed and cut-and-wrapped Cheddar may not realize how they are distinguished beyond color. "The presentation of the cheese is less important than the flavor itself. The flavors from all the different regions would be vastly different, starting with the soil type and diet of cows," explains Richard Clothier, managing director, Wyke Farms, Somerset, England.

California And The West Coast

At Fiscalini Cheese Co., Modesto, CA, all Cheddar is handmade using the identical



PHOTO COURTESY OF FISCALINI CHEESE COMPANY

"make" — until the curds are ready to leave the vat. The curds are packed in round forms to become 60-pound traditional English-style bandage-wrapped wheels or rectangular forms to become 40-pound blocks. "The aging process is just as important, if not more, than the make process," says Heather Fiscalini, director of sales and marketing. Bandaged wheels breathe while aging for 18 months, developing desirable mold and forming a fine rind. Blocks mature vacuum-sealed in Cryovac. Although the block Cheddars are saleable at two months, Fiscalini prefers them from six to 12 months, depending on the depth of flavor the customer desires. Bandaged Cheddar has deep flavor, earthiness, and drier texture. "Blocks have higher moisture because they don't breathe during the aging period, thus they develop a moderately different texture and taste," she adds.

Beecher's Handmade Cheese, Seattle, WA, sources milk from two small-scale western Washington farms. Flagship Cheddar is handmade in 40-pound blocks. The cheesemakers reserve the last curds on the cheddaring table for Flagship Reserve, an 18-pound truckle rubbed with butter. "Aging 13 months in open air, truckles lose two pounds. Combined with starting out drier and higher in acidity, they become drier textured and

more concentrated in flavor, and a little saltier — but their higher acidity balances the salt," explains Kurt Beecher Dammeier, owner.

A history of making Cheddar is another selling tool for Cheddar. A hundred years ago Tillamook Cheddar was round, yellow and dipped in wax. The 110-farmer cooperative now produces 40-pound blocks with five distinct flavor profiles — yellow medium Cheddar is aged 60 days minimum, yellow sharp nine months minimum, yellow extra sharp special reserve 15 months minimum, white medium 100 days minimum, and vintage white extra sharp 3 years minimum. "We use the same recipes to make all our Cheddars — yellow and white. We market them at different natural ages — natural aging is key — but the flavor profile is what we look for. Each Cheddar-master has a flavor profile he wants to get based on the milk he's putting into it and what he wants to do," says Allison.

Wisconsin And The Midwest

According to Sid Cook, Wisconsin master cheesemaker and owner of Carr Valley Cheese Co., LaValle, WI, "Each [Cheddar] will age differently and taste different. A retailer should be able to say what style the Cheddar is — colored, aged, bandaged with native molds growing on the surface, or ban-

daged and then waxed, or made in a 40-pound block. It has to have the story and the flavor or it won't have the repeat sale."

Two Carr Valley Cheddars, each using the same make and aged equally long, exemplify different Cheddar styles. A rindless 12-pound goat Cheddar wheel has a fresh sweet aroma compared to the rounded, subtly earthy 38-pound Snow White Cloth-bound Goat Cheddar, which was chosen the Best of Show at the 2008 American Cheese Society (ACS) Competition. The rindless has higher moisture, a more pliable elastic body and texture and is whiter in color.

Wisconsin is unique in aging Cheddar five, 10, and now 15 years. Joe Widmer, Wisconsin master cheesemaker and owner of Widmer's Cheese Cellars, Theresa, WI, didn't plan to age his Cheddar 10 years, but "The older it was, the more people were interested in buying it in my retail store, so I started aging it for wholesale, too. Age amplifies the richness of the flavor. The texture becomes more crumbly and crystals start to form," he says.

According to Dave Leonhardi, director of foodservice and education, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI, "Longer aged cheeses are less plentiful, but Cheddar is aged up to two years almost anywhere. What temperature you age it at, what humidity, the conditions of the cellar or warehouse, the atmosphere and the time make a difference. Most retail delis will deal with some aged Cheddar in the 2- to 4-year range and upper scale retailers do offer five years and beyond — maybe not in every store."

Vermont And The Northeast

"People want to know where their food is coming from. In the Northeast, those farmers are neighbors, but people still want to support farmers even if they're not in their backyard," says Amy Levine, director of marketing/sales services, Montpelier, VT-based Cabot Creamery Cooperative, which has 1,200 farmers. Although best known for its dairy department Cheddars, the company also makes Cabot Clothbound Cheddar, named ACS Best of Show in 2006. A single Ver-

mont dairy supplies the milk for this handmade cheese. Approachable and balanced, it's aged at Cellars at Jasper Hill, Greensboro, VT, for 10 to 12 months.

Roughly 40 local farms supply Jersey cow milk to Grafton Village Cheese Co., Grafton, VT, for its handmade block Cheddar aged one to four years and up. "We select milk from the Jersey cow because it's a high butterfat milk. Because we don't standardize our milk, that butterfat is incorporated into the cheese. [Standardized milk has all the fat removed, then specific percentages of fat are added back to the milk so the resulting cheese is always consistent. This practice is common in dairy department cheese.] As cheese ages, moisture dissipates but butterfat does not, so that rich creaminess is present no matter how old the cheese becomes," explains Rick Woods, regional sales manager and products specialist. Grafton's traditional English-style aged, raw-milk Clothbound Cave-Aged Cheddar weighs 20 pounds and is earthy with sweet undertones.

Farmstead cheeses are made from the milk of herds that belong to the cheesemaker; it allows the cheesemaker to have complete control of the process from beginning to end. "Having a farmstead Cheddar adds a nice balance to a cheese case," says Alec Webb, president of Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, VT. Shelburne established its Brown Swiss cow herd in 1951 and began making cheese in 1980. Grass-based feeding gives rich color and flavor to the Cheddar made in 40-pound blocks aged up to three years and clothbound 35-pound wheels. "We wanted to make aged raw-milk cheese. We liked that Cheddar is a great, versatile Vermont cheese. We liked the connection with English farmhouse tradition and the fact that Cheddar gains value with aging," Shelburne Farms Sharp 1-year block Cheddar was ACS Best of Show in 1990.

All the milk for Adams Reserve New York Extra Sharp Cheddar is sourced in New York State. Naturally aged blocks develop a well-rounded flavor profile in about a year or more. "We feel the soil gives the cheese its own unique flavor," says Erin Shirkey, brand man-

ager for Adams Reserve, which is produced in Adams, NY, by Hiram, OH-based Great Lakes Cheese. "Just because cheese reaches a certain age doesn't mean it's great. The cheesemakers decide which will be ideal for aging. Whether consumers come to Cheddar on a daily basis or not, they have to know that every time they pick it up it is going to be as good as the last time they bought it."

England And Beyond

Cheddar originated in Southwest England on farms where dairy animals have always thrived by grazing much of the year.

"The retail trade is changing. Pre-packaged is the majority of the business now so the producers are getting the product to the consumer the best way they can — such as flow-wrap that looks like parchment paper and zip-lock packaging, which is used in the United Kingdom," says Evanston, IL-based Adrian Hurrell, business development manager for North Downs Dairy Company Ltd., Somerset, England, owner of West Country Farmhouse PDO Cheddars. West Country Farmhouse Cheddar PDO rules allow block and cylinder cheeses. Milk comes from herds reared and milked in the counties of Somerset, Devon, Dorset or Cornwall. The cheese is cheddared by hand and milled, then aged at least nine months in the area. "There's a huge difference that is not just in aging. It's all to do with the grass, the climate, the traditional methods," he adds.

Most farmhouse cheeses were made to be eaten the following year. "Made properly, the cheese should be breaking down physically and developing all the flavors somewhere between one and two years," relates Wyke's Clothier. Founded in 1902 by Clothier's grandmother, Wyke Farms uses her Cheddar recipe. When a supermarket wanted Ivy's Vintage Reserve sliceable, he refused. "It wouldn't be true of that cheese. It's important we don't allow the integrity of the recipes to be diluted over time. A Vintage would be short textured, slightly crumbly when you dip the cheese iron into it. [A cheese iron is the tool used to extract a plug from a wheel or



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRAFTON VILLAGE CHEESE COMPANY



PHOTO COURTESY OF WEST COUNTRY FARMHOUSE



PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH DOWNS DAIRY COMPANY



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PHOTO COURTESY OF WYKE FARMS

block of cheese.] Cheddar made in this region would have been firm not rubbery, slightly brittle when you put the knife in. We keep it the same. It's something we're proud of."

Quicke's Traditional Mature Cheddar from Quicke's Traditional Ltd., Devon, England, is made by Mary Quicke. Her parents founded the dairy in 1973 to renew cheese-making on the farm that has belonged to the family since the 1540s. The cows graze rotationally 10 to 12 months a year. Handmade, muslin-wrapped Traditional Mature Cheddar ages for one year, becoming intense, complex and balanced. "The closer you can get to a whole cheese the better. Some stores can take a 60-pound wheel while others may

want to cut but aren't going to get through that amount. Some can't cut but still want their customers to have fabulous cheese. We want to have control so we pack it on the farm. We taste every cheese to make sure everything that leaves is our flavor and we're proud of what people are buying," she says.

Positioning Cheddar as an expression of its place of origin is compelling, especially when the milk is produced via pastoral-based, traditional farming methods. "What makes Cheddar good is what is fed to the cows. Cheddar made from milk from grass-fed cows, compared to grain-fed, has more robust flavor and a color difference that's not from added coloring — it's the beta carotene coming through

from the grass," says Tony Meredith, business manager of foodservice and retail for Fort Lauderdale, FL-based Fonterra (USA), importer of Mainland Cheddar and a wholly owned subsidiary of Fonterra Cooperative Group, Auckland, New Zealand. Milk for regular and organic Mainland Cheddar is sustainably produced in grass-based seasonal supply dairies in New Zealand's North Island. The temperate climate yields consistent, lush grass. Dairies close for repairs and maintenance in winter when cows are dried off and "on vacation" — preparing for spring calving. "Sustainability and clean label are key points of difference for us in the foodservice channel," he says.

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CSPI Finds A Troubling Decline In Foodborne Outbreak Investigations By State Health Officials

WASHINGTON — In a troubling trend, state health departments completed fewer foodborne outbreak investigations in 2007 than in the previous decade, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI).

"The decline in fully investigated outbreaks could reflect a serious gap in state public health spending," said CSPI food safety director Caroline Smith DeWaal. "Fewer outbreaks were fully investigated by state public health departments in 2007 than in any of the previous 10 years — and a smaller percentage of outbreaks were fully characterized than in any of the previous seven years."

The trend showed up in the latest report by CSPI. It found that states reported 33 percent fewer fully investigated outbreaks to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2007 than in 2002. This doesn't mean that outbreaks aren't occurring, DeWaal stressed. Nearly 1,100 outbreaks were reported in 2007 to CDC, but in only 378 cases did states identify both a food and the pathogen (the mark of a complete investigation).

Outbreaks are first investigated at the local and state level. To provide the most useful data for controlling food-safety problems, those investigators need to identify both the pathogen and the specific food responsible for the outbreak, and then state departments of health need to report the outbreaks to CDC. Fewer completed investigations mean that less information is available to CDC and other federal health agencies — affecting their ability to identify problems in the food-safety system or issue recalls to protect the public.

CSPI has been tracking foodborne outbreak reports for over 10 years and publishing the data in its *Outbreak Alert!* report and on its website. CSPI analyzes state reports compiled by CDC, sorts them by food category, and makes the aggregated data available to federal policymakers to guide

priority setting, to the industry to address production problems, and to the public.

CSPI says that a food-safety bill passed several months ago by the U.S. House of Representatives and another bill pending in the Senate would greatly enhance the government's surveillance systems and ensure better coordination between state officials and CDC. Most important, the legislation would create a food-safety system focused on preventing contamination in the first place, by requiring food processors to prepare food-safety plans and requiring FDA to inspect food-processing facilities more frequently.

"Congress should pass legislation to dramatically reduce the numbers of needless deaths and expensive hospitalizations caused by contaminated food," said CSPI senior staff attorney David Plunkett. "Americans deserve food-safety legislation early in the new year."

CSPI analyzed a total of 4,638 outbreaks of illness linked to specific foods, involving 117,136 individual illnesses that occurred between 1998 and 2007. An "outbreak" involves two or more people sickened by the same food. The food categories (other than "multi-ingredient") most commonly linked to outbreaks during this 10-year period were:

- Seafood: 838 outbreaks involving 7,298 cases of illness
- Produce: 684 outbreaks involving 26,735 cases of illness
- Poultry: 538 outbreaks involving 13,498 cases of illness
- Beef: 428 outbreaks involving 9,824 cases of illness
- Pork: 200 outbreaks involving 4,934 cases of illness

Spoilage Superhero?

Study shows corn nanoparticle lengthens shelf life of foods

A corn nanoparticle may lengthen the shelf life of many foods, a new study reports.

Yuan Yao, PhD, assistant professor of food science at Purdue University, modified the nanoparticle phytyloglycogen, a starch-like substance that makes up nearly 30 percent of the dry mass of some sweet corn, to create



Martin Mitchell, technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) and president 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.

phytyloglycogen octenyl succinate (PG-OS) (*J. Agric. Food Chem.* 2010;58(1):660-667). PG-OS has the ability to attach to and emulsify oils, while at the same time forming a barrier to oxidation. Oxidation shortens the shelf lives of many products by changing and destabilizing the chemical structure of oil in emulsified food.

PG-OS, Dr. Yao claims, is thicker and denser than commonly used emulsifiers — and thus more protective against lipid oxidation. A food-grade polypeptide called polysylline can also be added to the oil to strengthen its protection. In the study, Dr. Yao found that PG-OS nanoparticles combined with polysylline could as much as double the shelf life of test products.

Dr. Yao said PG-OS could be used in food, cosmetics, and nutritional supplements. "The shelf life of a product can be low and the quality of the food can become bad because of the oxidation of the lipids," he said.

With Deli Case Exclusives, Only The Manufacturer Wins



By
Louis Eni
President & CEO
Dietz & Watson

We ran a marketing campaign in Charlotte, NC, this past summer and asked consumers to imagine pushing their shopping carts down the aisles of their local grocery stores only to find one brand choice of breakfast cereal, one brand choice of candy bars, or one brand choice of yogurt. The fact is, that one-choice-only model is what Sarasota, FL-based deli meat supplier Boar's Head demands in service delis across the country.

For more than a decade, Boar's Head has kept silent, never discussing the exclusivity issue publicly. But virtually everyone in the industry knows about it. For example, during our Charlotte campaign, Meg Major of *Progressive Grocer* wrote: "Although Boar's Head's longstanding all-or-nothing game plan that is common knowledge in the trade and has arguably served as a key ingredient for helping it achieve its top-ranked premium deli supplier status, rival Dietz & Watson president Lou Eni is taking the former's 'anti-choice' practice public in the wake of being given the boot in recent weeks by Harris Teeter."

Well, something very interesting happened in early December. Our company was holding its national sales meeting in Fort Myers, FL, with more than 150 of our people and supporting a new distributor there. Part of our time during our week there was dedicated to a series of hot dog sales at several of our customers in the area to raise money for Susan G. Komen for the Cure (breast cancer research). After seeing our advertising and promotion of these events, Boar's Head distributors sent a fleet of nearly 40 large box trucks and vans to cause overall chaos and intimidate our employees, event staffers and store personnel. There was a huge media and public backlash against Boar's Head for their actions, but the really interesting thing was that Boar's Head issued a very rare statement to a processor trade publication.

RuthAnn LaMore, director of communications for Boar's Head, responded to the claims that they demand exclusivity agreements from customers. "Boar's Head does not have an exclusivity policy with our retailers. It's really the retailers who are making the choice in every single solitary situation. When they decide to do business with us, they choose to feature one premium brand. It is not because Boar's Head insists that's the only way we'll do business with them. We invite competition; it's healthy. We're not trying to inhibit it."

This is good news to Dietz & Watson and to all the

other premium deli meat and cheese companies around the country and especially to deli buyers everywhere. This means the door is officially now open to real competition and to consumer choice.

We don't fault retailers put in the position of making a choice to carry only one brand. ...But it is a decision that, frankly, grocers ... should never have to make.

But the real question when it comes to deli case exclusivity is, who is the winner and who is the loser? Certainly the consumer loses due to lack of product choice and no price competition. But data shows that service delis are often losing, too. The only winner is the manufacturer that sees sales growth through increased distribution.

We have syndicated category data that shows there is a huge opportunity in the premium deli category by increasing product variety and choice. The bottom line is there is more product to be sold in all deli categories if product choice is expanded. We see this as both a great opening for retailers and what would clearly be a better deal for consumers.

We don't fault retailers put in the position of making a choice to carry only one brand. Boar's Head is a huge marketing machine and some consumers do ask for their products. But it is a decision that, frankly, grocers such as Harris Teeter should never have to make. At this point, Harris Teeter has converted only a small percentage of its stores to Boar's Head. Harris Teeter is a terrific grocer and we have been proud to sell our products in their stores. But the fact is, we would be even prouder to sell some of our line right alongside Boar's Head in their cases and compete with them head-to-head. Let the consumer choose.

I made a public pledge this summer. I said that as Dietz & Watson continues to grow and to thrive, we're going to be entering new markets and reaching new customers. But as we grow, I pledged that our company would never ask for exclusivity in grocery stores. Customers deserve choices — and I'm confident, if offered a choice, they'll choose Dietz & Watson more often than not. But the bottom line is they will have had a choice — and that's what this is all about.

Dietz & Watson would rather share the deli case in every single grocery store than be excluded from one.

I also challenged Boar's Head to take the same pledge — to compete like everyone else.

So for the good of the consumer and for the good of service deli departments across the country, I am also asking retailers to make a stand and not bow to the pressures and demands of any supplier. They are your deli cases, so you decide what goes in them and how they are run.

DB

Blast From The Past

C

Chef Paul Prudhomme's Magic Seasoning Blends

Chef Paul Prudhomme's Magic Seasoning Blends, New Orleans, LA, were born in K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen, the chef's world-renowned restaurant. From 1979 to 1987, the 62-seat restaurant was known for its policies of no reservations, community seating and no credit cards. Diners waited in line, ate with strangers and paid cash, but that didn't stop the crowds from showing up a few hours before the doors opened so they could feast on Chef Paul's spectacular New Orleans specialties, including gumbo, etouffée and blackened redfish. Today K-Paul's has a new home on Chartres Street — it takes reservations, seats 200 and accepts credit cards. And diners who can't get to New Orleans can still enjoy the chef's famous seasonings by using his Magic Seasoning Blends at home.



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

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Amount per serving

Calories 150

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 9g 15%

Sat. Fat 3.5g 18%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholest. 35 mg 12%

Sodium 1250mg 54%

Total Carb. 0g 0%

Dietary Fiber 0g 0%

Sugars 0g

Protein 10g

Vitamin A 0%

Vitamin C 0%

Calcium 0% • Iron 2%

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