

# DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

JUNE/JULY 2010 \$14.95


## 6th Annual PEOPLE'S AWARDS *Saluting Industry Leaders*



### ALSO INSIDE

CROSS-MERCHANDISING  
ITALIAN FOODS  
ETHNIC FOODS  
OLIVES  
BREADS  
PARTY PLATTERS  
SALADS & SIDES  
FRENCH CHEESE  
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**DELI MEAT GUIDE**



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

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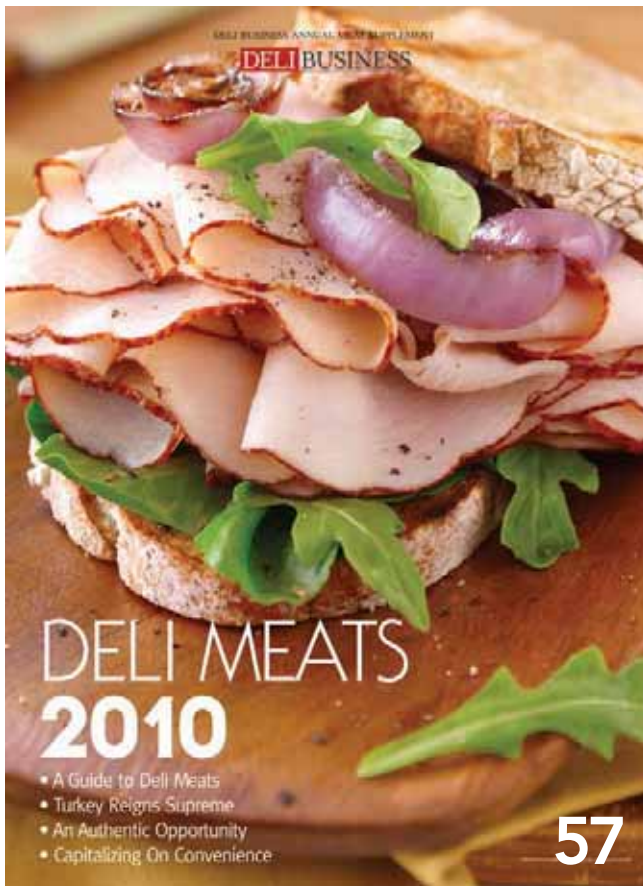
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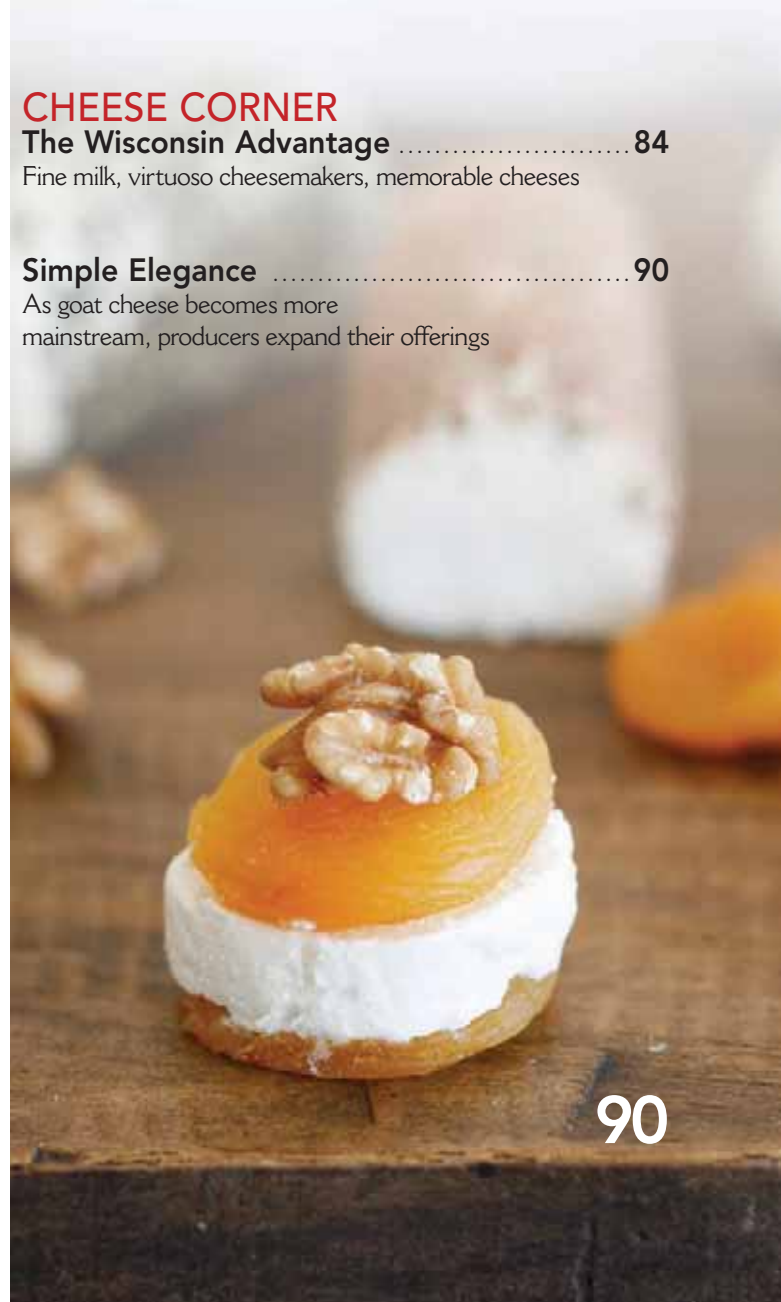
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*Bringing Pizzeria Quality  
to the Supermarket Deli*



**NEW!**  
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Size**



*Our authentic pizzas are available in 3 sizes: 16" Extra Large, 12" Regular Size and our new 14" Family Size!*

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DELI BUSINESS IS PUBLISHED BY  
PHOENIX MEDIA NETWORK, INC.  
P.O. BOX 810425,  
BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0425  
PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610  
www.delibusiness.com  
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PUBLICATION AGREEMENT NO. 40047928



## KRAFT FOODSERVICE AWARDS \$30,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS IN THE CHEFS OF GREY POUPOON STUDENT CULINARY COMPETITION



Sonali Ruder, an Institute of Culinary Education (ICE) student, was awarded a \$20,000 culinary scholarship by Kraft Foodservice for winning the 2010 Chefs of Grey Poupon Student Culinary Competition, held on May 6, 2010, at Viking Cooking School and Culinary Shop in Glenview, IL. Ruder won the grand prize with her original recipe, Pan-Roasted Lamb Loin with Celery Root, Apple and Dijon Puree, Mustard Greens, Grey Poupon Glazed Carrots, Pomegranate Jus and Truffle Mustard.

Mushroom Crisp, and a Mystery Basket Challenge dish she created, Crab Cake Sandwich with Black Garlic Aioli and Avocado Radish Salsa.

Joshua Ogradowski from Johnson & Wales University received a \$5,000 scholarship for second place with his recipe, Honey Dijon Pistachio-Encrusted Lamb Rack with Dijon Succotash, Whole Grain Dijon Lamb Glace and Fire-Roasted Tomatoes. Sarah Roberts from Kendall College took third place and a \$3,000 scholarship for her recipe, Crispy Braised Pork Belly with Chinese Black Rice Rolls. The Culinary Institute of America student Brooke Maynard took fourth place and a \$2,000 scholarship for her recipe, Pear & Dijon-Glazed Pork Loin.

Live updates, pictures and videos of the event were posted on the Kraft Foodservice Facebook page throughout the event.

## COMING NEXT ISSUE IN AUG./SEPT. 2010

**COVER STORY**  
Economic Update

**FEATURE STORIES**  
Back-To-School  
Mexican Foods  
Sustainability

**PREPARED FOODS**  
Soups

**DELI MEAT**  
Specialty Meats  
Hams

**MERCHANDISING REVIEWS**  
Entrées  
Hummus  
Coffee & Tea

**PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES**  
Holiday

**CHEESES**  
American Cheeses  
Flavored Cheeses

### COMING IN OCT./NOV. 2010

Food safety continues to demand the highest scrutiny and most advanced technology. DELI BUSINESS will look at the state of this critical area of concern.

### SUBSCRIPTION & READER SERVICE INFO

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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 the exceptional Gouda called Reypenaer takes place in a century-old warehouse, still without refrigeration. Inside, cheeses are turned and wiped down everyday by hand as 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 2005, 2007 & again 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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Gourmet Foods International  
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Boston, MA (978) 664-1100

*"Le Guillot"*

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



by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# The Deli's Inferiority Complex

**T**he supermarket deli department has an inferiority complex. If we don't act to change that way of thinking, the deli department won't be able to fully capitalize on the next upswing in the economy.

Take sandwiches: To get from my office to the supermarket, I drive past three sub chains. Want a good reason to pass them by? Quality is reason one.

If you want a roast beef sub at my local supermarket, you can pay a little extra and get a premium brand of roast beef. That is just not available at any of the three shops I passed to get to the supermarket.

I can't say the supermarket takes much advantage of this quality option. You might think the chain would trumpet this quality edge. But you would be wrong. The in-store marketing for its sandwiches is always based on price — no marketing or promotion at all besides a weekly special.

To know what's wrong with private-label programs, just look at how most stores promote store-name sandwich programs. Though there's often a line at the deli's sandwich counter, it's certainly not due to any efforts to build the sandwich category.

In fact, the executives at supermarket deli operations dependent on strong sandwich sales should probably say a little prayer every night thanking Subway. Its decade-long relationship with Jared has established it as a reasonably priced, reasonably healthy venue. Surely half the people in the lunchtime line are there because the marketing of Jared and his story made them realize they can get a tasty meal — and do something good for their waistlines and their health at the same time.

Such marketing is virtually absent from most deli sandwich operations. All they offer is a discounted sub of the week or an ongoing "value meal" discount promotion where you get a bag of chips and a soda.

Supermarkets could do so much that could be effectively marketed right now; just a little integration with other departments and the deli could both blow away its foodservice competitors and encourage trial throughout the store.

The rule at most supermarket sandwich programs is complete flexibility for any product sold at the service deli counter and none at all for anything else in the store. Although most programs have pre-sliced, pre-portioned meats and cheeses to make the sandwiches, most will gladly cut to order anything in the deli a customer wants.

This under-marketed option means a customer can get a unique flavor, such as horseradish cheddar with that roast beef sub — and that is simply not available at the stand-alone sandwich shops. Yet we've never seen a supermarket chain sandwich operation actually do a

study, and promote the results, as to how many more options it offers than 'ye olde sub shop' down the street. Don't they remember how successful one hamburger chain's "Have it your way" slogan was?

Of course, the options the deli sandwich counter presents are a small fraction of what it could offer.

The weekly special based on price and usually co-marketed with a branded meat or cheese really should be used to introduce consumers to other great products sold in the store. How about a sub made with delicious heirloom tomatoes being sold in the produce department? That's a two-fer: A reason to buy the sandwich — since chain sandwich shops don't offer that option — and a sampling program for those heirloom tomatoes.

Yes, it would complicate operations some. It's nice to be able to order trays of pre-sliced standardized gas green tomatoes grown to work perfectly on a slicing machine from a vendor, but you don't win customers by doing what's easy. You win customers by doing what the "other guy" finds impossible to do.

Is a bag of chips and a soda the limit of our creativity? Our deli departments are in the middle of a modern supermarket, a triumph of western technology gathering every delicacy from the four corners of the earth at a reasonable price, and all we can do is offer the same bag of chips and soda that every sandwich chain offers?

How much of a stretch would it be to offer a bag of baby carrots or little container of grapes as they do at Disney World? Can't we figure out how to offer a pickle? A little packet of cole slaw? A cookie from the bakery for dessert? How about one of the hundreds of juices, teas and specialty beverages we're already selling?

It's all part of the inferiority complex. We market on price because we imagine it's the only reason people will buy our products. We don't actually market much at all, because we don't believe in what we're doing. We sell value meals with a bag of chips and a soda — completely out of sync with the healthy marketing that drives the sandwich category — because sandwich chains do and we benchmark ourselves against their offer.

With indications that the economy is getting better, we're at risk of losing those customers who traded down from restaurants and are in our stores now. If we lose them, it won't be because we can't compete; it will be because we don't compete. Forewarned is forearmed.

DB



*James J. Prevor*

# BELGIOIOSO®

## FRESH MOZZARELLA

*Flavor, Freshness and Variety*



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.

Discover the mouth-watering goodness of Fresh Mozzarella. Discover BelGioioso.



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

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 FONTINA FRESH MOZZARELLA & CURD ITALICO® KASSERI MASCARPONE PARMESAN PEPATO PEPPERONCINO®  
 PROVOLONE RICOTTA CON LATTE® ROMANO TIRAMISU MASCARPONE UNWRAP & ROLL® VEGETARIAN PARMESAN



by Lee Smith, Publisher

# Skepticism Is Growing

There's growing skepticism about whether commercially prepared foods purchased off grocery shelves are good for you. In the last 18 months new studies have suggested serious problems with ingredients and products used in all stages of food preparation that are enough to scare the crap out of most people.

Industry players often debate what constitutes good science, with all parties pointing to studies supporting their own self-interests. Groups with economic power are able to persuade more people to their side than fringe groups — and none are guaranteed to represent good science, good conscience or even truth.

On May 17, 2010, *The Boston Globe* ran a story entitled *Research Links Pesticides with ADHD in Children* by Carla K. Johnson, an AP medical writer. According to a new study published by *The Journal of Pediatrics*, she writes, the higher the level of pesticides in children's urine, the greater their chances of having ADHD — and 94 percent of the kids tested positive for pesticides. The study didn't measure where the pesticides came from and recognized the source could include the food they ate, the air they breathed or pesticides used around the home. However, the article also quoted a 2008 Emory University study that found in children who switched to organically grown fruits and vegetables, urine levels of pesticide compounds dropped to undetectable or close to undetectable levels.

More research is needed, but who can fault a family switching to organic foods, especially since the price gap between conventional and organic is closing?

The rush to skepticism may have started on Jan. 26, 2009, when *The Washington Post* ran an article that stated a study found almost half of tested samples of commercial high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) contained mercury. Another independent study found mercury contamination in nearly a third of 55 popular brand-name food and beverage products where HFCS is the first- or second-highest labeled ingredient.

The results were immediately challenged by Audra Erickson, president of the Corn Refiners Association, who said, "Our industry has used mercury-free versions of the two re-agents [used in the manufacture of HFCS] mentioned in the study, hydrochloric acid and caustic soda, for several years."

Yet the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy told *The Minneapolis Star Tribune* that four plants in Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio and West Virginia still use "mercury-cell" technology that can lead to contamination.

Manufacturers quickly and quietly switched to sugar as their sweetener, especially in products geared to kids. Was this a reaction to consumer concerns?

Concerns of liability? A little of both?

On April 16, 2010, UPI published an article that stated U.S. researchers suggest the banning of trans fats in Britain could prevent thousands of heart attacks. "Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston wrote in the *British Medical Journal* reducing consumption of trans fats by just 1 percent of total calories would prevent 11,000 heart attacks and 7,000 deaths annually in England."

So how come I couldn't find one bread, pastry or cake that didn't contain hydrogenated oils in the bakery department in my local supermarket? And the sandwich breads, pizzas and fried foods found in their deli contained no information about the use of trans fats.

On May 21, 2010, *Times Argus Online* reported, "This week, Vermont Governor James Douglas signed into law what is considered to be among the country's most stringent bans of food containers manufactured with bisphenol A (BPA)."

"BPA was banned in baby bottles and formula in Canada, Australia and New Zealand last year. Canada was the first country to issue a BPA ban, Denmark recently followed, four U.S. states have issued bans, and France is considering a ban." Japan hasn't allowed BPA to touch a food contact surface since 1999, states the article.

Concerns about BPA's long-term effects include significant disruptions to the body's endocrine system and it's been linked to cardiovascular disease, intestinal problems, brain-cell connections, problems with liver function testing, interruptions in chemotherapy treatment, etc. BPA also affects sexual development and processes, especially in fetuses, infants and children. Laura Birnbaum, director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, stated additional concerns because BPA's effects may pass from one generation to the next.

FDA reversed its April 2008 finding that BPA was safe and is suggesting more research. Before 2008, was the science good or optimistic? Has Japan been overly cautious? Can you blame a parent who wants BPA-free baby bottles or adult who avoids canned goods and plastic containers?

If deli departments are going to be considered venues for families interested in healthy foods, alternative products need to be introduced and concerns not lightly dismissed. **DB**



A stylized handwritten signature in black ink.



**Making More Than Donuts.**

Look for the Oil Experts at IDDBA Booth 1104.  
Find out more about Bunge M.O.E. by visiting  
[www.BungeMOE.com](http://www.BungeMOE.com) • 800-828-0800





## Announcements



### ANCHOR CRISP RECEIVES 2010 AMERISTAR AWARD

Anchor Packaging, St. Louis, MO, has received the Ameristar Award from the IoPP (Institute of Packaging Professionals). Judging criteria consisted of innovation, food protection, performance, and environmental impact. Crisp Food Containers use an exclusive, patent-pending, convection cross-flow ventilation design to relieve moisture and condensation, while ensuring fried foods remain crispy. Made of re-usable polypropylene, the Crisp Food Container consists of a black base and clear lid, formed as a single hinged container.

[www.anchorpac.com](http://www.anchorpac.com)  
IDDBA Booth #3437



### RODGERS CHOSEN SAFETY COUNCIL CHAIR

Butterball, LLC, Garner, NC, announces its director of safety and risk management, Brian Rodgers, has been appointed committee chairman on the Joint Poultry Industry Safety and Health Council. As committee chairman, Rodgers will work with the council to continue the development and enforcement of stringent industry safety and health initiatives. He will promote the importance of providing a safe environment for workers and the importance of incorporating leading safety protocols.

[www.butterballcorp.com](http://www.butterballcorp.com)  
IDDBA Booth #2515



### NEW LABELS FOR EMMI IMPORTED CHEESES

Emmi-Roth Käse USA, Monroe, WI, announces its imported Emmi cheeses will feature new labels that will feature consistent, easy-to-spot branding along with usage and wine and beer recommendations. Emmi Emmentaler, Gruyere Traditional, Gruyere Reserve, Appenzeller Classic, Appenzeller Extra and Raclette all feature new labels. The labels identify the cheeses as all-natural, gluten-free and lactose-free and provide details about how each cheese is made, its history, flavor notes, usage tips for snacks and cooking, and suggestions for beer and wine pairings.

[www.emmi-rothkase.com](http://www.emmi-rothkase.com)  
IDDBA Booth #3605



### FCSI EDUCATION PROVIDER OF THE YEAR

Champion Industries, Winston-Salem, NC, is proud to announce its standing as Food Service Consultants Society (FCSI) recipient of the Americas Education Provider of the Year award for 2009. Champion was one of 37 FCSI Education Providers under consideration. Each year, consultant members of FCSI attend educational sessions offered by Approved Education Providers and complete an evaluation of the program. The FCSI Council for Professional Standards then uses the results of those surveys in determining the Education Provider of the Year.

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

## New Products



### DCI CHEESE INTRODUCES PARTY EXPRESS TRAYS

DCI Cheese Co., Richfield, WI, has introduced Party Express, a new line of 27-ounce party trays featuring upscale cheeses, meats and crackers conveniently packaged for effortless entertaining. The Gourmet Party Tray features Medium Cheddar, Havarti, Black Diamond Sharp Cheddar Cold Pack Spread, hard salami and Ritz crackers. The Great Midwest Tray incorporates Pepperoni, Sharp Cheddar cheese spread, sliced Mild Cheddar and Colby Jack, as well as Ritz crackers. Private label opportunities are available.

[www.dcicheese.com](http://www.dcicheese.com)  
IDDBA Booth #3403



### A PERFECT CUP OF COFFEE EVERY TIME

Wilbur Curtis Co., Inc., Montebello, CA, introduces the IntelliFresh brewing system. Once the brew button is pushed, IntelliFresh maintains pre-programmed freshness requirements and desired serving temperature. Its insulated satellite servers feature a unique server connection that "remembers" settings at the brewer and on the remote serving stand. The exclusive design envelops the satellite with gentle, digitally controlled bursts of warmth to bathe the coffee with heat and precisely maintain optimum temperature without "cooking" and destroying its flavor. Easy maintenance and cleaning.

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



### FLAVORSEAL TRANSFER SHEETS & CASINGS

CMS, Avon, OH, introduces Flavorseal Flavor Wraps Spice Transfer Sheets and Spice Transfer Casings. Seasonings can be applied faster and more uniformly with less waste. Uniform spice coverage reduces leaks, enhances eye appeal, and helps maintain a consistent taste with every bite. Spice Transfer Sheets for bacon, portion cuts, and deli meats are easy to apply and require less labor than traditional methods of seasoning application. Spice Transfer Casings for sliced meats are high-quality casings with spices pre-applied to the inside. No more wasting spices compared to traditional coating or rubbing methods.

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



### IV-7 ULTIMATE GERM DEFENSE

PURE Bioscience, El Cajon, CA, has received EPA registration for its SDC-based disinfectant and food contact surface sanitizer, IV-7 Ultimate Germ Defense for Food Contact Surfaces. It harnesses the broad-spectrum power of SDC for use on surfaces and equipment, helps prevent cross-contamination in food contact environments and eliminates odors. Creates no irritating fumes, requires no hazard or warning statements and has bacterial kill times as quick as 30 seconds. Protects against a broad range of microbes, including E. coli, Salmonella, Listeria and Campylobacter jejuni. Continues to kill bacteria for up to 24 hours.

[www.purebio.com](http://www.purebio.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](mailto:DeliBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com)**

# Sara Lee

## Lower Sodium

### DELI MEATS

**Drive more  
deli sales!**  
(but with less sodium)

**NEW!**

Now available in  
pre-sliced!



A complete lower sodium  
deli meat solution for both the  
service deli AND the pre-sliced section



Captures growing consumer interest for  
lower sodium foods  
• Lower Sodium foods +11% over the past 4 years<sup>1</sup>



American Heart Association certification

<sup>1</sup> Source: ACNielsen, Total US Grocery (excl. Walmart) 52 wks ending 4/19/08

## Less Sodium... 100% Sara Lee

For more information about Sara Lee Lower Sodium Deli Meats,  
contact your Sara Lee representative or call Michelle Malkin at (630) 598-7962.





# 6th Annual PEOPLE'S AWARDS

*Saluting Industry Leaders*

Greg Frampton

Barry Holinski

Jewel Hunt

Fred Ruehl

John Stueland

Pete Tortorich

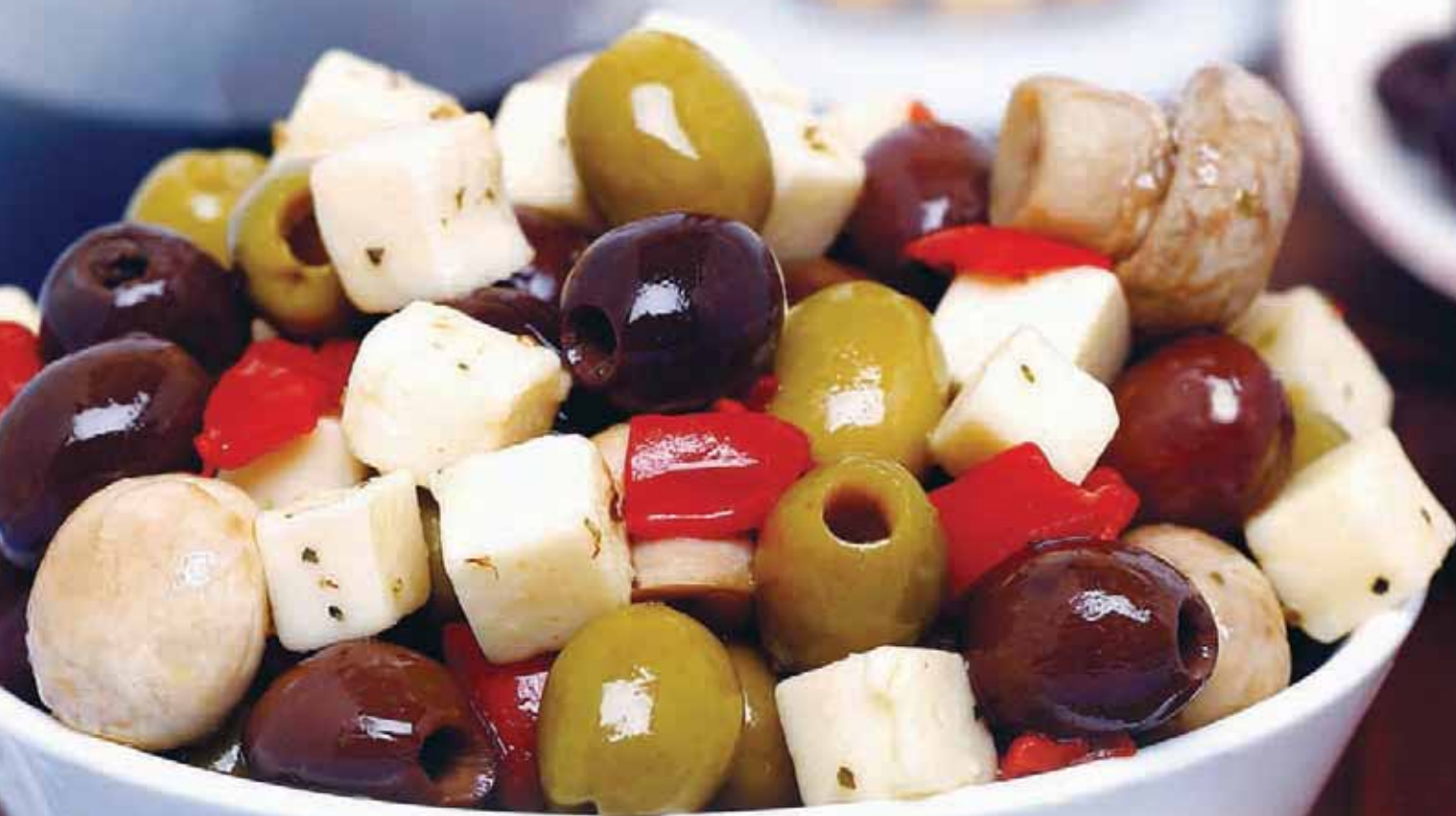
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Al Reser — In Memoriam

SINCE 1950

# DELALLO®

*Hand Selected*  
OLIVES & ANTIPASTI



## *Provolini Antipasti*

Our newest antipasto item is a celebration of tart green and black Manzanilla olives, earthy button mushrooms, sweet bites of red pepper and bite size cubes of sharp aged Provolone cheese. Provolini Antipasti is the ideal appetizer to serve with crusty bread and air cured Salami.

*At DeLallo olives and antipasti are our passion.*



## Greg Frampton

*Assistant Vice President,  
Foodservice  
Hy-Vee Inc.  
West Des Moines, IA*

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

I started working at a small, independent grocery store while in school. In 1978, I joined Hy-Vee in the meat department. We pushed the envelope on specialty meats, offering cordon bleus, Kievs and kabobs, and had great success. Fifteen years ago, we were looking to compete with Boston Market, Kenny Rogers, etc. The company was looking for direction on the foodservice side, so they plucked me from the other side of the fence.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

I started out cutting meat, then managed departments, working my way through the management ranks. In 1988, I moved to the role of meat department supervisor, a corporate position at Hy-Vee. Our company was growing rapidly and a couple areas of growth were in the specialty meats and deli areas, all of which fall under our umbrella of meat operations. In 1997, I was promoted to director of foodservice. Back then, we had 220 foodservice offerings and now we have 440. In 1999, I had a title change to the position I currently hold, assistant vice president, foodservice.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

None really, because I'm pretty busy and involved in our company. I sit on the board of one of our subsidiaries.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

Quality first, cost second. Keep the communication lines open and give all it takes.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Spending time at the lake is relaxing, but being with the grandkids is best!

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you Tweet? Have a Facebook page, etc.?

I am on Facebook, but I don't Tweet yet and use these sites with caution. We're using social media more all the time, and I try to stay



*Greg Frampton*

at least familiar with it. My grown children are most easily reached with a text versus a call, so I find myself texting more.

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

The world is a big order, so I would answer more about what inspires me to make a difference in our company.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

You should have a passion for what you do, no matter what it is. If you don't like what you

do, find something else and you'll be happier. If you love change, retail, and specifically the fresh food business, will keep you on your toes. There's never a boring moment. People who are willing to learn and grow will do great in this area.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Natural and organics will be a part of whatever happens. I'm betting great tasting quality foods will always prevail, and simplified menus for customers will be popular.

### What's your favorite read?

I read many of the trade publications, but catch the news online more than anywhere else these days.

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## Barry Holinski

*Director of Service  
Deli/Bakery  
Associated Food Stores  
Hewlett, NY*

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

I started in the meat side of the business when I was in my early teens, because that's what my father did. In 1993, I oversaw all of the perishable departments for a major chain's California division. After three years, I was appointed perishables director for the same chain's price impact stores. That's how I learned this side of the business.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

My career has been truly exciting. I was a part of entering new major markets, opening about 50 new stores as a supervisor. I now have knowledge of all the perishable departments — and center store, as well. I have hands-on experience in the marketing side of the business and spent more than eight years heading up procurement teams. I also spent a year in Hawaii as Associated Food Stores' meat and seafood director as well as headed perishable procurement.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

Family health issues have prevented me from participating over the past three years, but I regularly go on store tours and keep in close contact with Carol Christison at the IDDBA.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

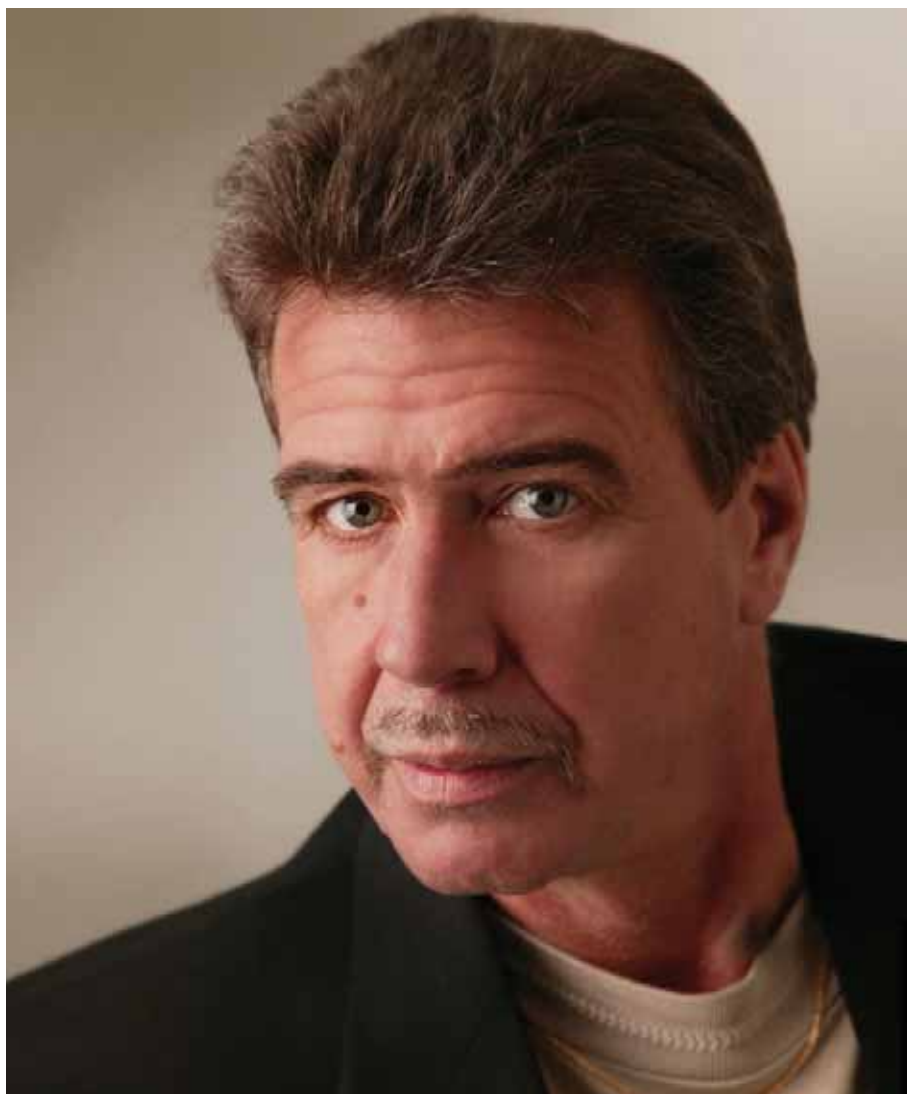
It's pretty simple. Be open and aboveboard on every transaction you do and also in how you treat people. Never put anything off; do it now so it's taken care of.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I enjoy golf and cooking.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you Tweet? Have a Facebook page?

I haven't entered this arena yet, but maybe someday I will. It does have some redeeming qualities.



# Barry Holinski

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

This business is what I've done my whole life, and I've seen it change drastically over the years. Keeping the public informed of these changes is an everyday battle.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

St. Jude Hospital in Virginia and Homeless Pets.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

This business is some of the hardest work you will ever do, physically and mentally. It

will test your every fiber. But it also is one of the most rewarding careers you could ever have.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

It actually is the elusive home meal solutions, and what to do with what you have to work with.

### What's your favorite read?

I like to read anything about sports or the retail industry. I also really enjoy reading success stories and how small independents have made it in this industry.



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## Jewel Hunt

*Vice President,  
Deli Food Service  
Safeway  
Pleasanton, CA*

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

I began working part-time at my local Safeway in Caldwell, ID. I began my freshman year of college at the College of Idaho and was able to work at Safeway right across the street. I applied for a job in the morning and went to work that evening as a bakery clerk.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

I began as a bakery sales clerk then became a cake decorator and baker. When I married and moved to Salt Lake City, I continued as a baker, then progressed to bakery manager. I eventually moved to California and continued as a bakery manager. I advanced to bakery field merchandiser in Northern California with Safeway and eventually bakery director of our Northern California Division. Our company centralized operations, and I became group director of bakery in our corporate headquarters. I was promoted to vice president of bakery. Just over three years ago, I moved to a new area of responsibility as vice president of deli food service.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I'm a past co-chair of Safeway's Women's Network Group (WNG) and currently on the advisory board. I'm also a current committee member of Safeway Foundation. I'm a past retail advisory board member and currently serve as board of director member with the IDDBA. I'm a Safeway member representative of the Network of Executive Women (NEW), a VIP member of the National Association of Professional Women (NAPW) and a member of the Women's Food Service Forum (WFF).

### What's your leadership philosophy?

Be positive, be yourself and be genuine. Continually learn and expand your knowledge. Build relationships while you build your networks. Get to know others and what they value. Always do the right thing.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Spending quality time with my family, traveling, gardening and cooking. I'm in the early stages of writing a book on self-belief and how to make a difference and a second book that's an adventure story. Last year, I



## Jewel Hunt

completed a half-marathon in San Francisco and the New York Marathon. This year, I participated in the half-marathon in Dallas and have plans for another marathon this fall.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you Tweet? Have a Facebook page?

I don't currently Tweet. I do have a Facebook page for keeping in touch with family and friends.

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

Those whom I admire and the feelings I have for helping others in need. Giving back is truly a gift. A good deed spreads quickly — the more we do, the better our world becomes.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

Our Safeway Foundation. I've served as a committee member for several years. We help

others in need in the communities we live in. Every dollar we raise goes directly back to those in need.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Have passion every day, do your personal best, emulate those you admire most, be true to yourself and bring a positive attitude with you. Be a good listener, speak up and share your talents.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

Fresh, quality, nutritionally balanced entrées in convenient grab-and-go formats.

### What's your favorite read?

*Born to Run* by Christopher McDougall. If you haven't read this book, pick it up and be inspired.



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**Fred Ruehl**  
*General Manager,  
 Service Bakery/Deli  
 Unified Grocers Inc.  
 Commerce, CA*

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

I started early in my teens working in the family grocery and restaurant businesses. When I started college, I went to work for Kroger in Nashville, TN. Because of my restaurant experience, I landed in the deli department, eventually becoming a department head.

**How has your career evolved over the years?**

After becoming a department head, I had the opportunity to join a national grocery wholesaler as a deli field specialist. From there, my career took off and took me across the country. I had multiple opportunities to develop my technical skills as well as earn various management and purchasing positions. This first led me to serving as director and now to my current position as a general manager at Unified. Although a majority of my career has been at wholesale, I have had the opportunity to work in retail, manufacturing, sales and the brokerage side of this industry.

**What positions have you held in industry organizations?**

I've had the opportunity to serve in various roles as a part of several committees, including IDDBA, the Minnesota Retail Bakers Association and the Retail Bakers Association.

**What's your leadership philosophy?**

I've always tried to use a servant leadership approach, guiding and coaching the team members that work with me. I believe in setting high expectations and working together to accomplish them.

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

I'm an avid foodie, so I enjoy cooking for others. Other hobbies include model building, martial arts and spending time with my wife, children and grandchildren.

**What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you Tweet? Have a Facebook page?**

I think these tools are a great way to network and stay in touch with others. I like Linked In the best, but I do have a Facebook



*Fred Ruehl*

page. I only wish I had a bit more time to utilize them.

**What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?**

Over the past 30-plus years, I've had the honor and opportunity to work with many great leaders, pioneers and peers of the grocery and deli/bakery industry. It's my goal to continue to pass on their ideals, ethics and foresight so that this industry can continue to thrive and prosper.

**What charity is your personal favorite?**

I've always supported the United Way organization, which is a good way to support multiple causes.

**What's your advice to people starting out in**

**this industry?**

This phrase may be a little worn out, but I feel it's very appropriate. Be a student of the business, observe, listen, learn and apply. Most importantly, don't be afraid to fail.

**What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?**

We're so close to providing sustainable meal solutions that offer consistent quality at a true value. Also, in-store produced fresh pizza is a hot trend. The good stuff is making a return!

**What's your favorite read?**

On the professional level, DELI BUSINESS of course, along with *In-store Baking*. When I read for pleasure, I enjoy John Grisham, Dean Koontz and John Steinbeck.



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## John Stueland

*Category Manager,  
Deli  
Lund's & Byerly's  
Edina, MN*

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

I started in the kitchen and didn't transition to retail until halfway through my career. I grew up growing and producing food. I worked in kitchens in high school and college. After graduating, I worked as a volunteer in museums, while working for the Radisson Hotel chain as a cook. After a year, they asked me to train and transition into a chef's position.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

The non-profit job market wasn't good in the early '90s, so I stayed with Radisson for nine years. I learned how to prepare all types of cuisines, from quick service and breakfast to fine dining and banquets. I wanted to find a position with more family-friendly hours and a number of chefs I knew had transitioned to Lund's & Byerly's. In 2001, I joined the chain, working as a store chef. I then moved into deli management and followed that passion into my current position as deli category manager.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I haven't been active in industry organizations, since running 21 stores is more than a full-time job right now.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

Everything we do is for the end customer. We serve great food with great service in order to meet our customers' high expectations.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Food is my biggest hobby. I love to cook and entertain. I'm active in food and wine tastings. I also enjoy running half marathons. Photography ties into my love of travel.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you Tweet? Have a Facebook page?

I'm not involved in social networking sites much. I still do all my networking face to face. I see everyone in the industry on a regular basis at trade shows and conventions. I've found telephone and face-to-face contact are the best ways to meet and keep in touch with people in the industry.



## John Stueland

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

Our customers inspire us to source the best products. Having a direct relationship with producers allows me to make a difference in how people vote with their dollars. Whether it's buying local, natural or organic foods or supporting heritage through quality imports, we make sure our products are true to the origin of production, nationally and internationally.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

I've seen a lot of good with our local and regional Slow Food chapters. Locally, I support our animal rescue shelters. As an Eagle Scout, I also support scouting.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

It's important to like what you do, because we do it a lot. I've given this advice to people

who have grown up in the kitchen. Many kitchen workers transition into retail, food-service or sales. All my mentors have been involved with food because they're passionate about it. This is true for me, too.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

I've noticed increasing popularity for artisan production, small batch, seasonal and locally available foods. I think the continued interest in artisan cheese — national and international — is not over yet. There's still a lot of customer knowledge and development in that area. I also see more interest in artisan meat, which will be the next trend.

### What's your favorite read?

I enjoy, and look forward to, my paper edition of *The New York Times* and read that throughout the week.



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## Pete Tortorich

*Senior Director of Perishables  
Associated Grocers  
Baton Rouge, LA*

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

I started working part time at a bakery plant during holidays and on weekends, and ended up working my way around the plant over the next six years learning to turn dust into a finished product.

### How has your career evolved over the years?

After six years at the bakery plant, I worked on the retail side as a bakery manager for National Supermarkets in New Orleans. Six years after that, I was promoted to supervisor, then to group manager of several locations. When the company was sold in 1995, I was offered the opportunity to join Associated Grocers. It was a good, smooth transition, I started the same day I left National. I started in bakery/deli procurement, and after a year was promoted to director of bakery/deli. I was elevated to my current position four years ago.

### What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I'm currently on the bakery advisory committee of Topco, as well as an IDDBA committee member.

### What's your leadership philosophy?

The key to leadership is selecting the right team members to lead and giving them the guidance to succeed. It's important to earn the trust and respect of the people you work with. I'm fortunate to have a team that has a passion for the success of our independent retailers. It's important to allow my team to be creative and explore opportunities that afford our retailers the opportunity to keep pace with the products and programs.

### What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I enjoy sports, such as Saints football, as well as classic cars and NASCAR. I also enjoy cooking.

### What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you Tweet? Have a Facebook page?

I don't Tweet or have a Facebook page.



*Pete Tortorich*

Social networking can eat up a lot of time, if you allow it to.

### What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?

Family inspires me to make a difference, especially my grandchildren — Zac is 12 and Drew is three months old.

### What charity is your personal favorite?

I don't have a personal favorite charity. Associated Grocers supports several charitable organizations.

### What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?

My advice is to be patient and spend more

than six months learning and understanding a business. If you can survive the entry level, you should invest the time it takes to evaluate the business to determine if it's right for you. This industry can lead you to many opportunities that will allow you to be creative in your position.

### What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?

I've been waiting for a hot deli trend and haven't seen one in a while. However, the convenience segment will continue to thrive.

### What's your favorite read?

I don't know if I have a favorite. I do like to keep up with industry information.



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**Nancy C. Wangles**

*Director of Deli/Seafood,  
Dierbergs Markets  
Hy-Vee Inc.  
Chesterfield, MO*

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

I started in food product development for Jewel Foods. I have a B.S. degree in food technology, an M.S. in foods and nutrition and an MBA.

**How has your career evolved over the years?**

I started in product development and then moved into plant management while working on my MBA. I've worked primarily in the management of fresh deli prepared-food production facilities for grocery chains. I moved into the deli merchandising side of the grocery business about six years ago.

**What positions have you held in industry organizations?**

I was involved in the Institute of Food Technologists and was a committee member of the IDDBA.

**What's your leadership philosophy?**

Lead by example.

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

My hobbies include reading, biking, family activities, racquetball and theater. I also enjoy playing cards and having potlucks with friends.

**What's your opinion of social networking sites? Do you Tweet? Have a Facebook page?**

I spend so much time on a computer every day at work, I can't face more keyboard time socializing online. I prefer face-to-face time and work to promote this with friends and family for myself.

**What inspires you to make a difference in today's world?**

Providing customers with an educational and sensory experience in foods when they



*Nancy C. Wangles*

shop our stores inspires me. Food is so basic in our lives that enriching the experience should be a plus for everyone. Nurturing a rich and fulfilling family circle is important. Families are the rock solid basis for any successful society.

**What charity is your personal favorite?**

Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure.

**What's your advice to people starting out in this industry?**

My advice is to stay on top of food trends. It's important to savor the many faces

and flavors of foods by traveling, reading and experimenting at home. Join companies that endorse your own values and goals. Help all of your team members grow and be successful.

**What do you predict will be the next hottest deli trend?**

Delis will be introducing more fusion of flavors and ethnic cultural foods, including South American and Middle Eastern items, to our palates.

**What's your favorite read?**

I read *The Wall Street Journal* every day.



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# In Memoriam

**Alvin L. Reser**

May 27, 1935 - April 13, 2010

Alvin "Al" Reser quietly passed away in his sleep on April 13, 2010, while vacationing in Sarasota, FL, and the world lost a great man.

Here was a gentleman who came from humble beginnings, having attended eight elementary schools before moving to Oregon in 1949. His home was a one-room structure in the county labor camp, where his parents worked in the fields. He graduated from Hillsboro High School, after which the family moved to California.

Al was always the entrepreneur. The story is often told how Al made money as a young boy by cooking hot dogs at home, wrapping them in foil, and dashing off on his bicycle to the ballpark before they got cold in order to make his spending money.

This was a family man who never forgot his humble beginnings and carried with him a belief in people, a love of family, a willingness to share his knowledge with anyone — including competitors — and a belief that giving back to the community was one of the pillar stones in life.

Al was an active member of the Refrigerated Foods Association and supported the cause of promoting refrigerated foods. Through his many contributions of personal time, money and the use of his company's resources, Al was instrumental in making the refrigerated food industry what it is today — safe, affordable and delicious.

He was always ready to take a phone call to help someone with a problem. He opened his



## Alvin L. Reser Reser's Fine Foods

plants to industry tours, and his employees and company resources were instrumental in developing good manufacturing processes for the entire industry.

Through all of his success, he was always good humored and soft-spoken. This was a gentle man and a gentleman, always ready with an infectious smile, a little joke and a desire to talk to anyone. He was a listener and a coach, a determined businessman who believed in hard work.

His charity and goodwill extended beyond the food industry; his awards include: 1994

Oregon Food Industry Hall of Fame; 1996 Community Hero Torch Bearer for the Summer Olympics; 2000 Oregon Entrepreneur of the Year; 2006 Governor's Gold Award in Support of Special Olympics; 2006 OSU College Business Hall of Fame; 2008 Vollum Award for Life Time Philanthropic Achievement; 2008 The Martin Chaves Lifetime Achievement Award for OSU Athletics; 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Pacific Northwest Food Industries Circle in support of the City of Hope; and in 2010 E.B. Lemmon Distinguished Alumni Award.



*We will miss him, the industry will miss him, his family will miss him. Let him be remembered as a wise, kind man — the kind of person we should all strive to emulate.*





PHOTO COURTESY OF GOURMET KITCHENS, INC.

# CONVENIENCE THRIVES IN A TIGHT ECONOMY

Cross-merchandising fills a need for time-strapped consumers

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

**F**ast. Portability. High quality. Good value. Quick clean up. These characteristics all add up to convenience. And convenience, reports John McCarthy, Jr., retail trade manager for Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, "is top of mind for consumers today in spite of the economic downturn."

Indeed, convenience will become an even more important influence on American's food consumption habits over the next decade, according to the Chicago, IL-based NPD Group's July 7, 2009-released report, *A Look into the Future of Eating*. Deli opera-

tors can capitalize on this trend by offering a variety of cross-merchandised grab-and-go options to time-starved consumers seeking everything from a quick snack to a full meal.

Pasta and soup are just two examples of products that can make the deli department a destination for consumers looking to build a quick meal solution.

According to Tom Quinn, vice president of sales for Nuovo Pasta Products, Ltd., Stratford, CT, "People today are working more hours and either can't afford to eat out or can't eat out with the same frequency they used to. At the same time, they've

become accustomed over the past several years to eating out, are more knowledgeable about food and have higher expectations when it comes to dinnertime at home. For example, we find people have a lot more awareness of different kinds of cheeses. This is one reason we renamed our forest mushroom ravioli to Portabella and Fontina."

Play up the restaurant theme by offering pasta as a full meal in a bundled deal. Quinn suggests. "Cross-merchandise pasta with a sauce, salad and perhaps a wine and sign it, for example, 'Dinner for Two — \$16.'"

Go one step further and create a meal

deal of the week. Weeknights are best, advises Quinn. "For example, advertise a Tuesday Meal Deal of the Week in the ad circular to pull customers into the store. You can also print a reminder at the bottom of their grocery receipt or put a photocopied flyer in their grocery bag. Make sure to change the items in the meal deal each week to keep the promotion fresh."

As with pasta, consumers are looking for something more than plain Jane soups.

"Comfort food is making a resurgence and so are ethnic flavors," explains Levon Kurkjian, vice president of marketing for Kettle Cuisine, Chelsea, MA. "Some of our best selling slow-cooked soups are loaded potato, Buffalo chicken and Reuben, as well as coconut curry chicken and Mediterranean grilled eggplant and zucchini."

Some delis merchandise a package of crackers with single-serve soups and sell additional cracker packs for 25¢, he adds and then suggests retailers "go one step beyond and bring in products from the bakery such as bread, rolls and breadsticks, and merchandise these items together with the soup for a complete meal-to-go. We also offer stickers for deli-made sandwiches that read 'Don't Forget the Soup.'"

Making soup an ingredient of an at-home meal saves harried consumers time. "People today enjoy the satisfaction of preparing a meal, but don't have the time to cook from scratch," Kurkjian continues. "This is where soup comes in. It's an ideal starter for making sauces, marinades and casseroles. A few delis tie into this theme and put our recipe cards next to the refrigerated soup display.

Recipes, for example, include a gluten-free green bean casserole with our organic cream of mushroom and potato soup as well as a carrot coriander tomatillo sauce as a marinade for pork or chicken using our organic carrot and coriander soup as a base. We conducted a demo for one chain where our executive chef made one of the recipes in-store. It was a hit with consumers."

Deli operators looking for an out-of-the-box way to gain customers and sales can partner with a local restaurant, advises Quinn. "Invite the chef to come into the deli as a guest and demo a main course recipe. Maybe it's fettucini Alfredo and that restaurant is known for this dish. Of course, the chef needs to come up with a user-friendly recipe that customers can easily make at home. The deli can then have all the ingredients in one place with a copy of the recipe. Trends tend to start in foodservice and travel to retail, and this is one way to facilitate it. Many restaurateurs would welcome the publicity in this economy. It's a win-win and I think the paranoia from deli operators that customers will trade to another format if they do something like this has finally gone away."

### A Restaurant at Home

Families used to dining out often run into roadblocks when eating at home because each person is used to eating something different. The deli can help alleviate this problem by merchandising single-serve as well as family-size salads, side dishes, sauces and meal starters in a variety of flavors in both the hot and cold cases. With these options, the consumer can recreate the restaurant

experience at home.

"According to a survey we conducted recently," says Reser's McCarthy, "consumers value choice and they value a variety of sizes. This means the opportunity to move beyond the traditional mashed potatoes or macaroni and cheese to sell with rotisserie chicken, for example, to a wider assortment of offerings. For example, some of our sides include scalloped potatoes and broccoli cheese rice. Or you can merchandise add-ins so each family member can customize and the deli can add another ring. For example, consumers can buy a family size of mashed potatoes and 10-ounce container of artichoke and jalapeño dip. The adults can stir some of the dip into the potatoes for a more sophisticated flavor.

"You want to communicate meal ideas quickly and easily in a way that makes sense," he adds. One way delis have done this is to offer pamphlets or flyers with meal ideas for a day or week. Another opportunity "is to offer in-and-out promotions in a 'side of the week or month' fashion. It keeps the deli case interesting and draws customers in who want to see what's new."

Another route delis can take is to position that deli staple, rotisserie chicken, as the starting point for a whole new dish. Stouffer's Menu Starters, introduced by Glendale, CA-based Nestle Professional last year, is a 6-item line of seasoning mixes that can be mixed with deli rotisserie chicken to make entrées such as pot pie, cacciatore, Mexican-style rice and beans, jambalaya, vodka cream and pasta primavera.

According to Kathy Lenkov, Nestle communications manager, "The deli can suggest to consumers through banners or advertised specials in the chain's circular to enjoy an ethnic meal at home. For example, offer a Mexican Night around the Mexican-style rice and beans or Italian Friday with the cacciatore. Include a desert and create a full meal, just like a restaurant."

Delis are in a unique position because they have the ability to allow consumers to see what food looks like before they purchase. In a restaurant this is possible only by watching what's being served to nearby tables. To capitalize on this advantage, recommends Ari Goldsmith, director of marketing, KeHE Distributors, Romeoville, IL, "Retail delis can use creative merchandising and attractive product presentations to lure customers into new taste experiences and product offerings. Theme events are another way to draw consumer attention to uncharted consumer cuisines. And finally, nothing beats the old standby of product sampling. Product sampling single-handedly draws consumers in and drives sales."





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## Quick Nibbles

Dips, dippers and quick sandwich fixings merchandised in the self-serve case lets customers enjoy a light snack or mini-meal with no lines, no waiting and little or no prep time.

"The overall trends for health and wellness as well as convenience bode well for sales of hummus," notes Mina Penna, brand manager for Sabra Dipping Company LLC, Queens, NY. "Consumers see it as a versatile product that pairs well with crackers for a snack or as a sandwich spread."

"Hummus is used widely in sandwiches, wraps and to dip luncheon meats," notes Judy Lederman, public relations specialist for Sonny & Joe's, Brooklyn, NY. "One soup-and-sandwich company we sell to buys 400-pounds per week to use in deli-paired sandwiches and wraps."

On the sandwich front, says Mike DiCristo, national sales manager for Chicago, IL-based Rubschrager Baking Corporation, "Our pre-sliced cocktail bread's size and varieties — rye, pumpernickel, whole grain and sourdough — offer up an easy and convenient mini meal solution. This is especially true when paired with deli cheeses and meats. Tie in a condiment like hummus or mustard as that fourth ingredient and add another ring."

"Customers who shop the deli are adventurous and explorers," adds Penna. "Therefore, merchandise hummus in a high visibility location in the refrigerated display case that holds more everyday items such as pre-made sandwiches, yogurts and salads."

Some delis merchandise pita bread, crackers and chips nearby. Sabra also offers to-go single-serve packs that feature three varieties of hummus and two salsas packaged with Pretzel Crisps for dipping.

Pretzel Crisps, says Perry Abbenante, vice president of marketing for their manufacturer, The Snack Factory in Princeton, NJ, "turn into a quick snack when cross-merchandised and topped with, for example, salami and jalapeño Cheddar cheese; pepperoni, cheddar cheese and green olives; cream cheese, dill and smoked salmon; your favorite cheese or your favorite spread like hummus."

## Ethnic Options

Hand-held burritos and ready-to-heat entrées are among the ultimate in grab-and-go foods. Delis, especially those with limited service hours, can merchandise these items in the cold case for the ultimate in customer convenience.

Early in the day, says Karl Eisleben, vice president of retail sales for Don Miguel Mexi-

can Foods, Inc., Anaheim, CA, "There's an opportunity to merchandise breakfast sandwiches such as burritos in the hot case. This is normally a missed meal occasion. However, the deli hot cases are on and heating up for the day and it's an ideal time to capture impulse sales from early customers, drivers and store employees. Pair the breakfast burritos with a high-end coffee for a complete meal and a double ring."

There's a definite desire for ethnic fare. According to *Americans Dish On Ethnic Fare*, a report released on Oct. 15, 2009, by Mintel Group, Chicago, IL, sales of ethnic foods reached a record high of \$2.2 billion in 2009 with growth forecast at nearly 20 percent from 2010 through 2014. Mexican/Hispanic foods represent nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of this market. However, the Indian food segment has shown a 35 percent growth from 2006-08.

"One trend we've found popular is Indian cuisine, especially tandooris and curries," notes Lisa Johnson, president and CEO of Chicago, IL-based Gourmet Kitchens, Inc., which markets tandoori chicken under its microwave-ready Just Wave It line. Other ethnic entrées in the line include Thai noodles with shrimp, chicken carbonara and Cajun tilapia with red beans and rice.



**“RETAILERS THAT ARE DOING IT RIGHT HAVE EVOLVED A WHOLE NEW DEPARTMENT IN THE STORE. IT’S A GRAB-AND-GO MEAL CENTER WITH EVERYTHING FROM APPETIZERS TO ENTRÉES, SIDES AND DESSERTS.”**

— LISA JOHNSON  
GOURMET KITCHENS, INC.

“Retailers that are doing it right have evolved a whole new department in the store,” Johnson adds. “It’s a grab-and-go meal center with everything from appetizers to entrées, sides and desserts. Some retailers will group products by course in an upright multideck case. For example, appetizers will be on the first shelf, soups and salads on the second, then entrées and finally desserts. Other retailers use a walk-around island case and use signage to segment the courses. We’ve also color-coded products for retailers. For example, all protein dishes with a red sticker, yellow for sides, blue for soups.”

### Single-Serve Merchandising

Sandwiches are quick to eat and perfect for school, work or on-the-go dining. They can also incorporate a portion-control element via the condiments, breads and fillings. This creates the opportunity to merchandise a healthful single-serve meal that won’t tempt customers to overindulge.


According to Weyd Harris, national sales manager for Conroy Foods, the Pittsburgh, PA-based maker and marketer of deli condiments such as submarine dressing, honey mustard and sandwich spread, “We have recently seen a dramatic increase in our customers’ grab-and-go sandwich programs. Our Beano brand portion packs should be placed in a viewable position inside clamshells and within shrink-wrapped sandwiches so consumers can see the added value. Also, they should be merchandised as close to the service deli as possible to capture the most incremental impulse sales.”

Kangaroo Breads, Inc., is the Milwaukee, WI-based baker of single-serve pre-sliced pita breads marketed as Salad Pockets and Sandwich Pockets. Salem Kashou, marketing manager, explains, “Each 6-inch pre-

opened pocket holds three to four ounces of fillings. We worked with a registered dietitian in 2006 to develop a diet — the Pocket Diet — based on portion control using the pita pocket. Delis can capitalize on this by cross-promoting our pita pockets with salads such as chicken or tuna as well as meats and cheeses.”

The goal is always to increase the ring and KeHE’s Goldsmith offers this advice. “Almost 90 percent of the time, deli snack

and single-serve options are totally based on consumer impulse. A consumer may be in the process of purchasing a Cuban sandwich and the display of salt & vinegar chips nearby catches his or her eye and appeals as a great combination. How about a display and sampling of falafel chips next to the hummus? Falafel chips are probably not on anyone’s shopping list, but hummus probably is. Having samples of the chips paired with hummus closes the deal and doubles the sale.” **DB**



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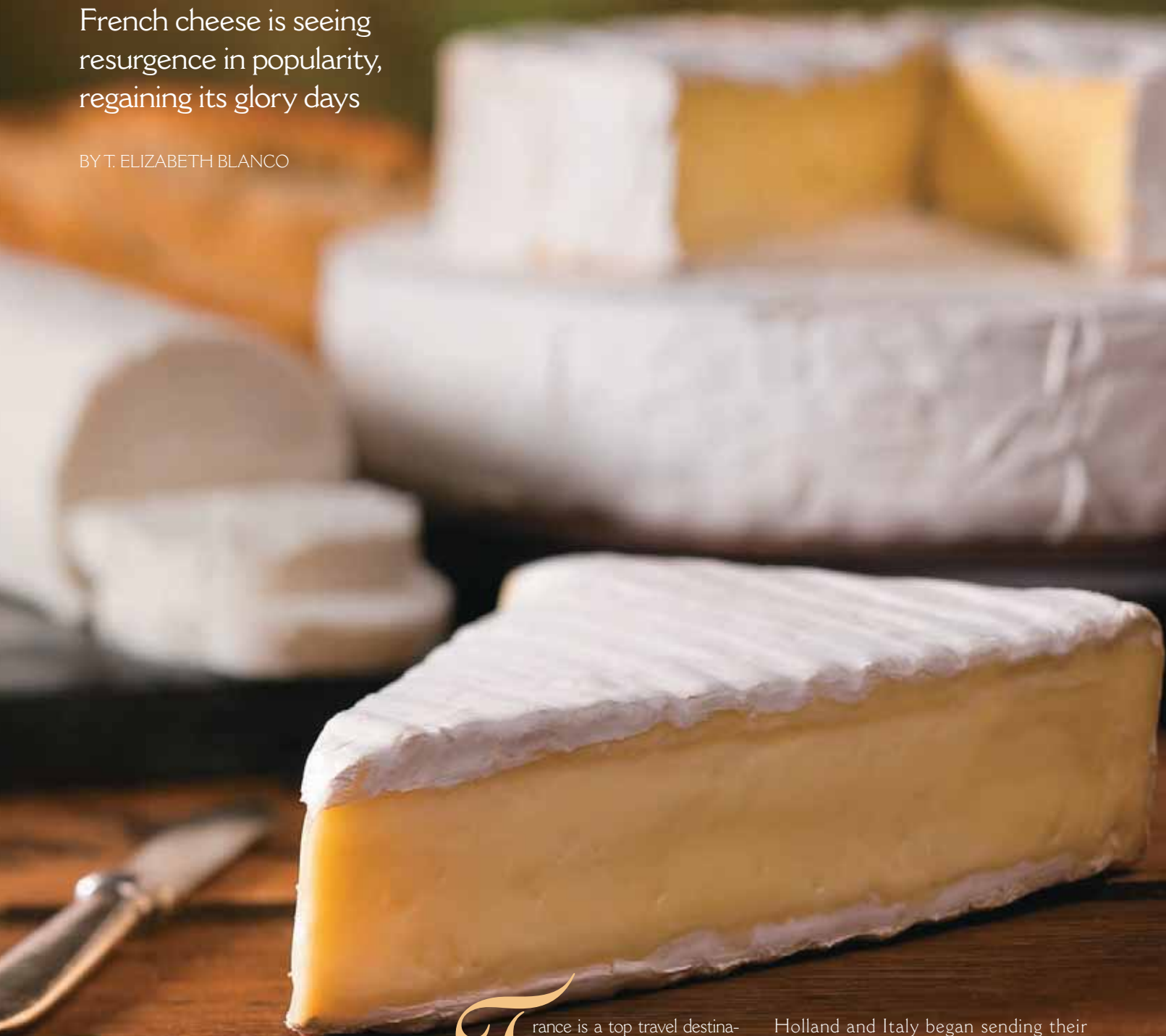
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# French Connections

French cheese is seeing resurgence in popularity, regaining its glory days

BY T. ELIZABETH BLANCO



France is a top travel destination for Americans who then search out French cheeses when they return stateside. And, like wine, these products offer a wide range of flavors, profiles and origins. For years, specialty cheese and, most certainly, imported cheese, were synonymous with France. However, as years passed, England, Ireland, Spain,

Holland and Italy began sending their cheeses to the United States, while France stopped promoting theirs. However, all that is changing — and in a big way.

According to The French Cheese Club, an association of five family-owned French fromageries specializing in the production of traditional French cheeses, French cheese imports are up 12 percent for the first four months of 2010 as compared to 2009.





Increased at-home consumption and consumer interest for healthy and less processed food has had a positive impact on the French cheese segment.

The renewed interest in French cheeses is no surprise considering the overall growth of specialty cheese in the United States. In addition to literally hundreds of new cheeses being imported from Europe, American has its own burgeoning cheese industry. From coast to coast, small artisanal cheesemakers are producing high-quality cheeses, which end up in local stores, restaurants and farmers markets. Put it all together and the classic and not-so-classic French cheeses are poised to regain their once dominant position.

New technologies are allowing pasteurized milk cheeses like Brie and Camembert to more closely resemble their classic raw-milk counterparts. Better transportation methods and packaging have extended self

life, giving retailers extra days to get imports into the mouths of their consumers while the cheese is still in peak condition.

However, there are still challenges. "We've been suffering due to the recession," says Pascal Vaydie, import sales director at Lactalis USA, New York, NY. "The price of domestic milk was low last year and the euro was high. We've also seen some volume transfers from import to domestic products but the situation seems to be turning around this year."

Still, this category provides many options for retailers. France has a wider variety and range of cheeses than any other country, The French Cheese Club reports, including unique cheeses that can't be duplicated elsewhere. "French-style American-made cheeses are very good, but French originals have to be part of a well-rounded deli program," says Cecile Delannes, spokesperson for The French Cheese Club.

"The two French cheese types with the largest volume in deli are Brie and fresh goat cheese," Vaydie says.

"Brie is a standard, but many stores carry more than one type of Brie, such as triple and double crème varieties," says Larry Lukas, agent for France-based Dexpa, a French cheese manufacturer.

Camembert, a logical next step for Brie lovers, is catching on. Triple crème cheeses, such as Délice de Bourgogne, also sell well as does Comté, a mountain cheese adaptable to cooking as well as eating.

More sophisticated American palates are demanding stronger cheeses, such as washed-rinds. "People are looking for strong, traditional French cheeses, such as Époisses, Affidélité and Trou Du Cru," adds Delannes.

Along with bolder flavors, U.S. consumers are seeking cheese with more character. "Trends we're seeing include mountain cheese made from sheep's milk or a mixture of cow's and sheep's milk," says Dominique Delugeau, senior vice president of sales and marketing at DCI Cheese Company, Richfield, WI. "More people also are exposed to cheese from the Alps."

Upscale chains have been instrumental in exposing consumers to French cheeses. According to Todd Druhot, dairy and cheese

specialty at Atlanta Foods International, Atlanta, GA, Whole Foods has done well with French cheeses, as has King Soopers in Colorado and Harmons in Utah.

## Retail Challenges

Retailers selling cheese that originates in France face a number of obstacles. In addition to marketing a relatively high-priced product, retailers have difficulty coming to terms with the longer procurement time. "It can take between five and six weeks for the cheese to be shipped by boat, so spur-of-the-moment purchasing requests are difficult," Druhot says. "And, we still need to give stores at least a couple of weeks to sell the cheese."

Limited shelf life after procurement can hinder a deli department looking to carry a large selection of French cheeses. "Shelf life is short once the product comes in from France," according to Delannes. "It's best to carry a smaller selection of 10 to 20 top-quality cheeses."

Proper handling is another difficult issue for many retailers. There are plenty of very stable French cheeses, but many cheeses require careful handling in order to please customers.

"French cheese is the hardest to handle, due to its instability and short shelf life," Lukas says. "Those delis that handle it successfully are ahead of the game."

Along with shelf life, pricing has been an issue in the current economy. Whether shipped by water or flown into the U.S., the cost of freight can be a significant factor. Of

## French Cheese Types

### SOFT

Brie  
Brillat-Savarin  
Camembert  
Chaurice  
Époisses  
Langres  
Livarot  
Mont d'Or  
Munster  
Neufchâtel  
Pont l'Évêque  
Saint-Félicien  
Saint-Marcellin

### SEMI-SOFT

Morbier  
Raclette  
Saint-Nectaire

### HARD

Beaufort  
Cantal  
Comté  
Emmental  
Mimolette  
Tomme de Savoie

### BLUE

Bleu d'Auvergne  
Fourme d'Ambert

Source: *Cheeses of France*

course, the value of the euro has not helped, but its recent plunge against the dollar should make all E.U. cheeses more affordable, at least in the near term.

"Delis should not switch to domestic just because it is cheaper," stresses Ingrid Prinz, export director for France's Fromagerie Henri Hutin. "Even during economic hard times, people will still spend money on the good imported cheese."

### Added Visibility

Because many American consumers have limited knowledge of French cheese, proper marketing and merchandising is imperative to selling these products. "Staff training is very important and demos are key. Marketing kits with flyers and recipes should be utilized," says Delannes of The French Cheese Club. At Wegmans, she notes, ready-to-serve cheese platters with signs draw in new French cheese consumers.

Some chains have brought in a cheese expert to educate consumers. Besides from the obvious need for knowledge, the expert should be passionate about the cheeses. And since the more obscure varieties can be intimidating, retailers can use demos to relieve consumer anxiety about trying something new.

Retailers can draw on organizations for marketing assistance. The Cheeses of France is currently running a promotional campaign for the fourth consecutive year, offering point-of-sale materials and demos to retailers



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHEESES OF FRANCE

and suppliers. Its website will announce the demos, and each will have a weekly prize for consumers participating in the "Win a Dinner for 2" sweepstakes. An online advertising spot will be featured throughout the year.

Cross-merchandising is also effective when promoting French cheese in the deli. The most obvious complement is French wine, but the cheeses can also be paired with crackers, fruit and a variety of items.

"The best way I've seen it merchandised is in portable refrigerators. Delis can include one or two French cheese varieties, along with imported butter, and place it next to the fresh bread display," Dexpa's Lukas says. "Also, stores merchandise crème cheeses next to strawberries."

Physical positioning within the store is crucial. "Location also is important," Atlanta's Druhot adds. "Having the cheese in two locations increases the sales potential."

The layout of the French cheese display also impacts sales. "Every retailer has different philosophy on how to retail specialty cheese," says Chris Huey, vice president retail sales, Atlanta Foods. Some arrange cheese by country of origin, while others categorize products by texture, such as soft to hard. "Another school of thought is to merchandise cheese by usage, such as snacking, entertaining, ingredients for cooking, etc."

Whatever the display order, the case must be kept clean and product regularly rotated. Signage also is important.

"Using these cheeses in deli recipes is the ultimate merchandising technique," according to Fromagerie Henri Hutin's Prinz. "It's a great way to win new customers and keep the old ones."

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FRENCH CHEESE CLUB



# HIGH-END ITALIAN FOODS:

## *A Treat In Recovery Mode*

The market for high-end imported and domestic Italian products is rebounding from the economic doldrums

BY BOB JOHNSON

PHOTO COURTESY OF CREMINELLI FINE MEATS

Economic recovery has reached the highest quality Italian foodstuffs. Granted, some agricultural sectors in Italy remain under intense economic pressures, but the Italian government is keeping watch to make sure time-honored producers survive. And although competition from Italian foods produced in the U.S. is growing, the fate of these more economical products will depend largely on the ability of domestic producers to earn reputations for meeting the highest quality standards.

Cheese and meat products crafted to the highest standards remain discretionary items in many consumer budgets, so their sales depend on vigorous and effective promotion. "The economy hasn't been easy for high-end specialty food importers. I find the savvy buyers are still interested in the 'made in Italy' products, but they're cautious," says Pierre Zreik, president of Eatalia Imports, Clifton, NJ.

In the darkest days of late 2008/early 2009, sales of imported Italian deli foods plummeted; the demand began to rebound last summer and sales could reach record levels this year.

"Our shipments were down in 2009 by 4 percent, which was not as bad as we thought. They were down 25 percent at the beginning of the year, but they came back," says David Biltchik, advisor to the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma.

"When budgets get tight, it's the special treats that take a hit. Imports bottomed out during the first half of 2009 then began to recover," says Ruth Lowenburg, senior vice president at Lewis & Neale Strategic Food Communications, New York, NY, which has worked for the Consorzio for 14 years. "We're holding our own. We're gradually coming back to the level we were at. January and February were looking good, but March was down a little."

Conversely, a tight economy can work to the advantage of the premium foods as people look to the deli as a more affordable option for culinary indulgence. "We haven't seen that much of an impact from the economy. We think we're an option; instead of going out to a restaurant, people are indulging a little at the deli," says Michael Grazier, president of Bussetto Foods, Fresno, CA.

A parallel recovery has occurred for authentic Italian cheeses. "If anything demand has increased in 2010. It's not any particular cheese, it's all the cheeses," says Sarah Zaborowski, sales and marketing director, Ciresa brand, Columbia Cheese, Long Island, NY. Ciresa is a third-generation Italian cheesemaking firm specializing in Gorgonzola, Taleggio and other washed rind cheeses.

"For us demand has been pretty steady. If anything, there are more customers looking for Ciresa cheese," Zaborowski says. After a slump

early in 2009 the turning point came mid-year in plenty of time for the peak seasons during the third and fourth quarters.

The Italian cheese industry seems to be recovering in most major markets, not just in the U.S. Italy traditionally imports substantial quantities of dairy products, according to Margaret Cicogna, consultant on Italian cheeses, Atalanta Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ.

According to Alberto Minardi, general manager of Principe Foods, Los Angeles, CA, "Consumers have much more awareness now of Italian-produced and Italian-style cheeses and meats, and that's causing growth in the category. Foodservice is one of the drivers."

### Italian-Made In The U.S.

The Italian food category clearly looks poised to make a steady comeback. But less obvious is how much of the food will come from Italy, from the U.S. facilities of Italian firms or from U.S. makers of high-end Italian cheese and meat products.

The weakness of the U.S. dollar, which is just beginning to recover, offers one more incentive for Italian companies to reduce their shipping costs and open facilities in the U.S. to meet the local demand.

One Italian producer that already sells both imported and domestic meat specialties in the U.S. is Fratelli Beretta. In 1997, the company opened a plant in South Hackensack, NJ, to manufacture Italian meat specialties. The firm expanded its U.S. production with the 2007 acquisition of Bussetto Foods of Fresno, CA.

"The movement of domestic product has increased the last two or three years," says Simone Bocchini, vice president for sales, Fratelli Beretta USA. Bocchini noticed a shift back toward imported product beginning last September. "The exchange rate has shifted back and that has helped. But there are also more consumers with knowledge of and appreciation for the imports."

Citterio also markets both prosciutto made in the U.S. and imported from Italy. "Some Italian companies are already making a fine product in the U.S. Citterio produces an excellent domestic product that is sold side by side with its prosciutto di Parma at Costco," Bilchik says.

A few Italian companies have moved to the U.S. and are enjoying markets for both their U.S.-made products and their imports. But don't look for a wave of Italian companies to set up shop here. This is not a decision just about production economics; it's also a decision about the land that has produced their ingredients for centuries.

"The Italian producers we import from will not open their facilities here," says Anna



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEWIS & NEALE

Gallo, marketing coordinator at Savello USA Inc., Wilkes-Barre, PA. "They rely on the farmlands in Italy to graze their animals. They have their own orchards and production facilities. Consumers interested in authentic Italian products will not sacrifice quality and buy Italian-style products."

Economic reasons also influence whether Italian companies will open new facilities in the U.S. "You would think, given the currency exchange rate, that more Italian companies would come to the states and invest! That is not the fact. Italian companies are also going through their own economic conditions in their own backyard," reports Eatalia's Zreik.

In addition to start-up costs, companies looking to move here would also have to feel comfortable with the relatively high cost of building and maintaining U.S. markets. "I don't think any Italian companies will locate here. The investment to do that is very large. To be successful in this market, you have to keep pouring money into it," says Cicogna.

There may be increased opportunities for Italian companies that have already invested in U.S. production facilities. "We may not see new Italian companies producing in the U.S. because the credit crisis has had a significant impact in Europe where credit markets were already tighter than in the U.S. However, Italian companies that already have a presence in the U.S. market are very well-positioned to expand," notes Chris Bowler, president, Creminelli Fine Meats, Springville, UT.

Significant cost advantages for making Italian products in the U.S. exist. "The raw materials often cost less in the U.S., making the U.S. version of those products more cost-competitive. Second, the growing availability of all-natural raw materials including antibiotic-free and organic meats in the U.S. means U.S. producers are in a unique posi-

tion to keep up with the rising meat standards of American consumers. Third, small producers in the U.S. making traditional Italian specialty meat products are getting more skilled and are able to produce higher quality products than what the large Italian companies are exporting to the U.S.," Bowler adds.

### The Domestic Challengers

The increased interest in authentic Italian foods has inspired some U.S. producers, most of them started by Italian immigrants, to strive for the highest levels of quality. Although these producers have significant cost advantages, the key to the competition is quality—and the reputation for quality.

"We compete on quality; we make relatively high-priced salami. This has more to do with elevating the quality of the domestic product," says Michael Cruz, marketing director of Columbus Foods, Hayward, CA. Columbus has been producing salami in the U.S. since Italian immigrants started the company more than 90 years ago.

"We believe retailers are in for a treat, a resurgence of American innovation," says Adisa Kalkan, marketing, Volpi foods, St. Louis, MO. "There will always be those who want the products made in Italy, but if we, as manufacturers, do our jobs well, we will provide the highest quality products available anywhere, at the greatest value."

The cost of shipping and increased public concern about fossil fuels could also determine how much Italian food is imported and how much is made here. "I think we all have to look at the fuel cost associated with providing our foods. Some of the policies put into place 20 years ago, when fuel costs were low, do not make sense in today's economy. An example is the sliced Parma prosciutto package. Because the Parma consortium dictates that the slicing must occur in Parma, they ship around the world 3-ounce packages filled with air. We can't slice this product in the U.S.," Kalkan notes.

The main edge for U.S. producers is, and will remain, price. But the importers are confident their products will continue to find loyal American customers. "America has a lot of fine cheeses, but it's different. If people have quality American cheeses, people will buy them, but the high-end chains will buy both. We still have a lot of requests for fine Italian cheeses," Cicogna says.

To a certain extent some consumers are not even looking for more affordable alternatives because the traditional imported Italian products are their own category. "I don't think people look for American-made alternatives. It's either prosciutto di Parma or they do without. I think that's true for a lot of specialty items," says Lewis & Neale's Lowenburg.





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Some importers are confident the market for authentic Italian foods will increase and are expanding their offerings. "We created a line of retail packs called Autentico Italiano two years ago, specifically manufactured and packed in Italy," notes Anthony Zarek, vice president, Negroni Corp., Little Falls, NJ. "Of course, the exchange rate hasn't helped, but we believe in the long-term commitment both to our partners and final consumers, always looking for high quality products."

### Promotion Is Essential

The Italian government is actively involved in preserving and promoting the country's historic food producers. "Italy has realized that promotion is essential. The Italian government spends a lot on that. People like the cheeses, and there are consumers out there who will always buy them. The Italians are very good about promoting," Atlanta's Cicogna says.

Parmigiano-Reggiano and Grana Padano,

for example, are doing a co-promotional campaign sponsored by the governmental agency Buonitalia, says Nancy Radke who promotes Parmigiano-Reggiano as Ciao LTD., Syracuse, NY. The goal of the campaign is to increase market penetration of both cheeses. The campaign is being conducted under the aegis of an agency of the Italian government, which intervened late in 2008 to help bail out troubled producers of these two historic cheeses.

"There was some worry producers would go out of business, but the Italian government removed 100,000 wheels each of Parmigiano-Reggiano and Grana Padano in Italy. Their problems had more to do with large European buying groups beating the price down. They have a lot more power. We have large buying groups here, too," Radke says.

This market pressure caused by consolidation of the buying groups has been felt for several years, she continues. Producers can find it difficult to receive fair value for hand-crafted foods. "This is a premium product. It's aged for two years — sometimes it costs less than Mozzarella di Bufala, which isn't aged," she continues.

Pressure to drop the price also exists. "Prosciutto costs \$20 to \$22 a pound in the delis. At Costco it costs \$14 for a 12-ounce package," Biltchik says.

The answer here, too, is ongoing promotion. "We have to spend more promotional money to remind the consumer that we're here. Prosciutto is an optional item on most people's shopping list," he stresses.

To be effective, promotions must include demos, notes Principe's Minardi. They should tell consumers "how to use the products at home. Cross-merchandising meats and cheeses with wines, pastas and other products will spur sales. The manufacturers need to help, but the retailers need to know what they want to achieve. It has to be more than cutting the price or offering coupons."

The recession led some consumers to scale back on discretionary purchases of premium foods, and competition may continue to put pressure on profit margins. But despite the economic challenges, the long-range trend should be an increased market for both imported and U.S. premium Italian foods as the number of educated consumers increases.

"Our No. 1 customer is the specialty food consumer who's food savvy, well-traveled, appreciates the specialties that are manufactured in their respective country of origin and will pay for them," explains Eatalia's Zreik. "Retailers will adjust their strategy short term but will resume building their shelves with imported goods as soon as they see they can make their margins and create movement on these products."

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# Brave New World



Consumers have embraced authentic ethnic foods — and the category growth reflects it

BY BOB JOHNSON

**Y**our customers have tried and loved blue-cheese stuffed olives, the No. 1 cheese-stuffed olive in the U.S. But are they ready for the stronger, more pungent flavor of Gorgonzola-stuffed olives, the favorite in Italy and select New York City delis, asks Matt Nolan, vice president for sales at Norpaco Gourmet Foods, New Britain, CT.

Curry dishes have done well, but can your customer base support the variety of choices that must be included in an authentic Indian meal, which means both vegetarian and non-vegetarian? "If you're serving an authentic Indian lunch, it must include three entrées — one vegetable entrée with gravy, one non-vegetable entrée with gravy, one vegetable with no gravy and a starch such as rice, naan or roti," explains Sanjog Sikand, sales and marketing director at Sukhi's, Hay-

ward, CA. "This way, a non-vegetarian and a vegetarian can take two entrées with rice or naan/roti. Having just one Indian entrée will not be sufficient for the customer — it's neither here nor there."

You can move numerous flavors of hummus, but can you realistically offer a wider variety of authentic Mediterranean foods? According to Dominick Frocione, vice president for sales at Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Ward Hill, MA, this includes stuffed grape leaves, Greek yogurt-based dips such as tzatziki and salads such as tabouleh, chickpea, edamame, couscous and orzo.

The demand for authentic ethnic foods is undeniably growing. The U.S. population continues to become more diverse, absorbing immigrants from all corners of the globe. Many consumers have become more familiar with the foods of the world through travel and/or the

growing number of cooking shows on cable television. Producers and distributors of authentic ethnic foods report increased sales in the midst of the economic slump.

"We secure buy-in from major supermarket chains that rely on us to help them design and implement the total Asian food program. If the program stays around for one year or more, we feel it's been a success," reports Mark Phelps, president of InnovAsian, Tukwila, WA.

### Refine The Category

It's important to commit to the ethnic program while remaining flexible about which items to include. "Establish an Asian category within the mix everyday, utilize Asian merchandising props and promote the value and variety regularly. Stay committed to the category even though items may come and go," Phelps suggests.

According to Cedar's Frocione, retailers should "give the category visibility and space. Weed out slow moving items and categories and expand the Mediterranean."

Flexibility may be important but retailers shouldn't overlook the basics when putting together ethnic food programs. "Indian food in the U.S. is settling with some clear leaders.

The one dish that is the most popular today is chicken tikka masala. This dish was actually concocted in England — taking tandoori chicken, a spiced chicken cooked in a clay oven from the North, and adding a tomato-cream gravy to it," Sikand says.

Other popular Indian dishes include classic chicken curry and chicken vindaloo, a curry with a Portuguese influence from western India. Biryani, which reflects the Persian/Arabic influence on Indian cuisine, is a one-pot dish increasing in popularity. It's made by layering aromatic rice with chicken, fish or vegetables in thick gravy, topped with sliced fried potatoes and red onions.

An Indian program should also include a selection of vegetarian dishes. "On the vegetarian side, palak paneer [spinach and cheese], dal makhani [creamed black lentils, often smoked] and channa masala [sweet and sour garbanzo beans] are quite popular," Sikand advises.

The way to find out what's new and exciting in Middle Eastern foods is to look at restaurant menus. "The important items are the ingredients being used in the restaurants and the products being made from these ingredients," says Isaac Rabian, assistant to the owner of Glendale, CA-based Kradjian



PHOTO COURTESY OF HISHO SUSHI

Importing Company. Kradjian specializes in foods of the Middle East from Greece, Turkey, Iran and areas of India and Pakistan to the Maghreb countries of North Africa — Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

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"Feta opened the door, followed by hummus and baba ganoush," Rabian says. Spiced Feta is now available, and a range of ingredients is coming to the forefront. Floral waters such as rose water and orange blossom water have become more prevalent, as have grain dishes such as bulgur and couscous. Tahini, which originated as a way to preserve leftover chicken, is now used in hummus, baba ganoush and dips. And a common Middle Eastern tree fruit is showing its versatility. "The pomegranate is being used everywhere. The juices and the paste are in many items," he adds.

Another ethnic category that could benefit from the new spirit of culinary adventure is Cajun, the centuries-old cuisine of Louisiana. Gumbo and jambalaya are popular Cajun dishes served over rice. Although Cajun dishes tend to be heavily spiced, that spice doesn't have to translate into heat. "Cajun food isn't just about heat, it's about flavor. Seasonings are important to provide a depth of flavor. Louisiana food is famous for the 'I want the next bite' kind of feeling," says John McBride, vice president for sales at Chef Paul Prudhomme's, New Orleans, LA. "It's a seasoning blend — you want something with a depth of flavors."

Ethnic Italian sections include a wide variety of authentic meats, cheeses and antipasti. "If you start with Mozzarella di Bufala, true Asiago, Gorgonzola Dolce and Gorgonzola Picante, you're providing a basis to expand from there on the cheeses," suggests Anthony DiPietro, vice president at George DeLallo

Co. Inc., Jeanette, PA.

Green, black or red Bella Di Cerignola olives, bright green Castelvetro olives and black or brown San Remo olives are a good start on an antipasti table, according to DiPietro. Roman-style artichokes and sweet and sour onions are also important.

"Trays with olives and pepper delights, with prosciutto and Provolone, are a product line where we see a lot of growth in the deli over the next five years," adds Norpaco's Nolan. "Packaged sun-dried tomatoes in olive or canola oil with basil are Italian based and also moving into the mainstream." These sell best in the case alongside Italian cheeses and salamis.

### Know Your Customers

An important early step in planning an ethnic food section in the deli is to decide whether the demographics make that section a likely candidate to succeed. And the most important demographic may not be who you think.

When Sukhi's evaluates markets for its Indian food, it looks, of course, at the number of Indian-Americans in an area. This makes metropolitan areas such as New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area prime territories. But a large majority of its customers aren't Indian-Americans. Authentic ethnic foods are reaching another larger and growing group of consumers — mainstream consumers who have been educated by travel, television, reading — or previous adventurous culinary choices.

This group, Sikand says, includes "Generation Y — the college and university segment desires global flavors and they consume large amounts. They're also a snack generation, which translates to a great market of handheld ethnic foods. College-town stores are high volume for us."

The group of consumers who have developed new tastes through travel is a significant driver. "I think a lot of our customers are people linked to the French or European culture somehow," says Elodie Jouannel, marketing director at Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY. They "can be immigrants but also simply open-minded people who traveled and are interested in fine foods. In large cities such as New York, people are used to trying foods, so, yes, it includes a bunch of adventurous consumers who fall in love with the products once they try them."

Cable television shows have brought authentic foods from around the world to a wide audience that doesn't even have to leave the living room. "The Food Network is using more authentic ingredients," notes Mayumi Burnham, vice president for marketing at TonTon Sauce, Charlotte, NC. "When I did demonstrations 10 years ago, people hadn't heard of miso or other authentic ingredients. Now I don't have to explain. Television, magazines and Japanese restaurants are letting more people know what the ingredients are."

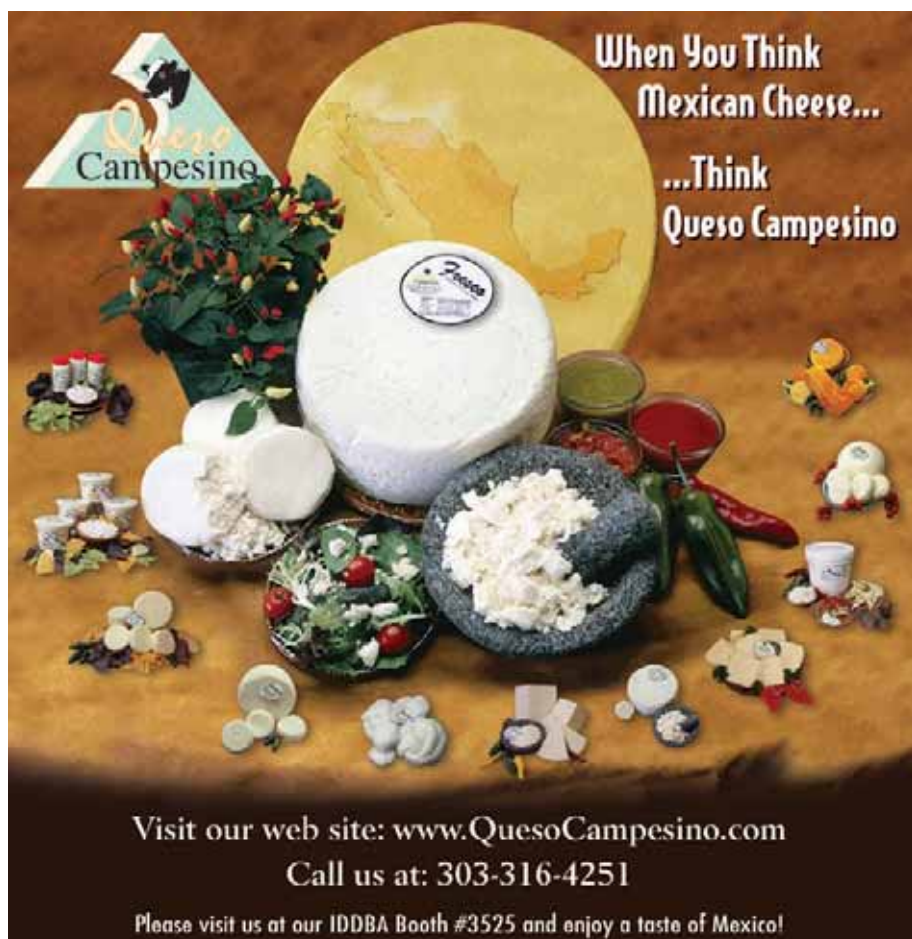
Educated consumers are the key to authentic ethnic food programs in mainstream delis because most recent immigrants living in urban communities are buying their food in specialty stores. "Immigrants go to specialty stores, and they make everything from scratch. People who take out authentic Japanese items don't make their sauces from scratch. For the mainstream consumers, include a condiments section with salad dressings and sauces next to the sushi, pot stickers and foods to eat with rice," says Burnham.

Middle Eastern ingredients and items intrigue many consumers, but they may need more information to take the leap. "If it is an ethnic environment, people know these ingredients. If not, it takes education," Kradjian's Rabian says.

Even relatively mainstream foods are dependent on a consumer base that's been educated. "For sushi, you need an upscale clientele that understands the product and isn't afraid to experiment. Most sushi contains just vegetables and rice, with or without cooked fish. Less sophisticated palates think of sushi as raw fish and many mass-market shoppers won't eat raw fish or even try it," says Aaron Petrovsky, managing director of Hissho Sushi, Charlotte, NC.

The deli retailer plays an important role in





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building on this education, adding to it and refining it. "As long as you have educated customers, you can succeed with an authentic Italian section — and you can help with the education," says DeLallo's DiPietro. One example of this ongoing education is using traditional Parmesan knives to crack the Parmigiano Reggiano, which lets customers taste it in the right manner. The knife chips chunks of the cheese off the wheel.

Education has to include education of the deli staff. "It's important to stay true to authenticity of the cuisine when presenting traditional dishes. It's also important to have the person behind the counter familiar and educated on the cuisine. The staff should be given opportunities to taste the cuisine, learn about it and get confident selling it," Sukhi's Sikand says.

### Defying The Bad Economy

If authentic ethnic foods represent an uncertain plunge into unfamiliar territory, take comfort in the knowledge that this category has defied the bad economy.

"I that we've been going through the crisis pretty well so far. We make and sell affordable high-quality products. Everybody cut their expenses but they still want to enjoy some delicious treats! Many people stopped eating out as often as they used to and instead prepare better meals at home," says Jouannel of Les Trois Petits Cochons.

Mediterranean foods, in particular, are on an upswing that began around a decade ago and show no signs of slowing down. "Demand is strong — Mediterranean products are still a great value for the dollar" according to Cedar's Frocione. "Mediterranean appeals to everyone. Customers looking for healthy products already know about us, and customers looking for value priced protein are learning about us."

Other authentic ethnic foods that are newer to the market are enjoying even steeper increases in sales as they find a following. "Because the Indian food market is in its infancy and is experiencing quite a steep growth curve, we didn't experience any stagnation in the growth," Sikand says. "I'm sure if consumer spending hadn't swayed downward, we might have seen even more growth across our product line."

Even specialty items within the more familiar Italian food category are reaching an increasing market and achieving dazzling growth despite the dismal times. "When we look at our sales from a national standpoint, we're selling to mainstream customers. We're finding ways to transition to a broader market," according to Norpaco's Nolan. "Even though there is a recession, our sales are up 34 percent."

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# A Fruitful Opportunity

Unique and innovative olive varieties have expanded the potential of deli department olive bars

BY LISA WHITE

When the Spanish and Portuguese introduced olives to the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries, no one imagined how popular they would become. Today olives are a significant profit center in supermarket delis, thanks to the popularity of the olive bar.

"The olive bar center is still growing, notes Anthony DiPietro, vice president of George DeLallo & Co., Jeannette, PA. "Retailers who already have olive bars are committing to more items due to customer demands, and retailers who have experience with olives are cutting out more space when they're remodeling."

Olive bars are a consumer destination and retailers know that destinations are premium locations. Anyplace where customer interest and traffic flow can be predicted are great spots for cross-merchandising. In the case of olives, items such as cheese, premium olive oils and products from the Mediterranean are natural tie-ins and very profitable.

"We see the olive market maturing and consumers getting interested in specific varieties beyond Kalamata and the staples. The Arbequina olive from Andalusia, Spain, is gaining in popularity. It's a small olive like a Niçoise, but its flavor is very nutty and not at all bitter. Since Arbequina olive oil is getting better known as a high-quality premium oil, consumers are also interested in the olive," says DiPietro. "We're also seeing growth in other varieties, such as the Castelvetro olive, but the real exponential growth is in olive salads and antipastos because of their popularity when it comes to entertaining."

Characterized by a large seed surrounded by fleshy meat, unprocessed olives are bitter right off the tree. All olives start small and green. In different stages of growth, they're soaked or cured in oil, water, salt or lye. The olive's age when harvested, as well as the curing process, changes the flavor. The size of olives is significant, since the larger the product, the more expensive it is. Olives are



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE DELALLO & CO

classified as colossal, jumbo, extra large, large and bambino.

"Olives get their distinctive qualities based on their genetics, the conditions of their origin and how they are cured, resulting in hundreds of varieties," says Chris Valsamos, vice president of Castella Imports, Hauppauge, NY.

Most olive bars consist of between 10 and 12 olive types, in addition to antipasti and other vegetables. The staple olive varieties and products for supermarket delis are Kalamata, olive medley, Manzanilla, Greek black, Moroccan cured, Feta salad, green stuffed, French medley, Alfonso and Cerniola.

"We haven't seen a major change in staple olive bar products over the years," says Phillip Meldrum, president of New York, NY-based FoodMatch. "The hero varieties that are appreciated the world over continue to do well."

It's been approximately 10 years since olive bars became popular in supermarkets, although this format has been around since the early 1980s. "With olive bars, we feel the

biggest factor in repeat sales is quality," says Eric Lummis, vice president of sales and marketing at G.L. Mezzetta, American Canyon, CA.

The posted price per pound doesn't seem to be a significant factor in the success of the olive bar if the quality is there and the products are merchandised well with unique and high-quality offerings.

"In fact, we see olive bars out in the market that are underpriced, because the olive bar is loaded up with less costly antipasti and lower-quality olives," Lummis says. "Our retailers have been able to increase their price on their olive bar without any measurable impact on tonnage. We believe this is because they have their olive bars well stocked and well merchandised with the highest quality olives."

## Emerging Trends

A decade ago, stuffed Queen and Kalamata olives were the extent of deli offerings in the category. With new varieties and imports, the choices are practically endless.

"Olive bars are multifaceted. They don't have just olives anymore," notes Craig Makela, president of Santa Barbara Olive Co., Goleta, CA. These tables typically include four or five brined vegetables; asparagus, pickles, green beans, pickled corn and Peppadew (see *The Little Pepper That Could*) are regular olive bar mainstays.

This format is popular because it provides a feast for the eyes and the palate. "Consumers like to see variety and experience different flavor profiles that are exciting," says DeLallo's DiPietro.

Infused and stuffed olives have become more common, as suppliers get creative in their production techniques. For example, Castella produces wine-infused olives using Napa Valley Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon and Merlot.

The industry has become more experimental with stuffed olives. No longer is this category relegated to pimientos. Many types of cheese, along with garlic, almonds, jalapeño and sun-dried tomatoes, are used to stuff olives. They're used in martinis and salads or as an appetizer or entrée ingredient.

"Consumers have become more interested in stuffed olives that include Blue or Feta cheese, anchovies or onions," says Alice Too-

## The Little Pepper That Could

The first Peppadew plant discovered 15 years ago in Tzaneen, South Africa, started a culinary revolution. Introduced to the U.S. market about nine years ago, Peppadew is now a staple in olive bars across the country.

"Peppadew is both a product and a brand, which makes it interesting in the world of agricultural products," says Pierre Crawley, vice president of marketing for Peppadew USA and Basking Ridge, NJ-based Strohmeier & Arp, the agency that markets the product.

Its color and size has been described as a cross between a pepper and a tomato, yet the taste is like neither. Grown only in South Africa, Peppadew has a mild, sweet flavor. New varieties include Goldew, which features a tangy start with an apricot mango finish, and a hot version.

The versatility of the Peppadew is the main reason for its universal appeal. "Ten different chefs would have 10 different uses for this product," Crawley says.

They can be stuffed with various cheeses and served as an appetizer, tossed in a salad, grilled with other vegetables or served on a skewer with meat.

A variety of value-added Peppadew items are available as well, including cheese, sausage, mustard, hummus, breads and dips. In addition to bulk offerings in the olive bar, Peppadew is also sold in jars at the deli. **DB**

manian, executive vice president at Nicola International, Sun Valley, CA.

Originating in Europe, olive salads also have become a staple in delis. "The trends are to offer more authentic products in these salads," advises DiPietro. "Consumers are

more knowledgeable about the varieties, so creativity must be taken into account."

As a result, these salads have become more unique and diverse. "The newest trend is to mix Kalamata and green olives with diced pepper and marinate them with extra

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virgin olive oil, which produces a Mediterranean salad," Toomanian explains.

One of the most popular olive salads supplied by Mario Sardo Sales, Brampton, ON, Canada, is a Greek antipasto, which blends creamy and bitter olives with Feta, says Michael Leibold, director of QA and product development.

The prevalence of extra virgin olive oil has brought increased awareness of olives' health benefits. All olives are high in vitamin E, polyphenols and flavonoids, which act as antioxidants. Not surprisingly, olives with healthier nutrition profiles have become more sought out by consumers. "One of the newest and most popular healthier olives is the Castelvetro from Sicily" reports Castella's Valsamos. "With a distinct bright green color and a mild buttery flavor, this variety lacks bitterness."

When considering the nutritional aspects of olives, most consumers prefer black fruit that is cured. "This variety is much healthier and has a better flavor than green olives," according to Santa Barbara's Makela.

Consumers also are experimenting with olives from different regions that carry unique flavor profiles. "The good thing is people are trying different types of varieties. The Kalamatas are still going strong, but we're also seeing growth in dry-cured olives from Morocco, which have an intense, strong and pungent flavor profile," relates FoodMatch's Meldrum.

For this reason, delis should not shy away from offering unique olive varieties. "We ask that retailers be flexible in providing a diversified olive selection to allow for different ethnic requirements," says Angelo Palmieri, Sardo business development manager.

### Capitalizing On Olives

Successful olive-bar merchandising includes a clean atmosphere, effective signage, and variety. Labor is needed to keep the area neat, to mix the olives throughout the day and to make sure the containers are kept full.

"Olive bars must be properly maintained to stay fresh and appealing," advises Valsamos. Castella provides manned olive bars in its Costco locations.

"Dedicating resources to an olive bar pays off," DeLallo's DiPietro says. Retailers must first decide what type of setup works with the budget and space constraints. "Olive bars can help make delis a destination."

This is why the proper location is key to bringing attention to these items. Nicola's Toomanian believes olive bars should be located within or near the deli section.

The appealing appearance of olive and antipasto bars creates increased impulse purchasing opportunities. According to Palmieri,

"Delis need to situate these products in front of customers, so they can see the many options available."

Purchasing from olive bars is quicker and easier than at the full-service counter. "These sales tend to be 50 to 60 percent higher than at the counter because customers can buy exactly what they want in the quantity they need," Palmieri continues.

Olive bar pricing, weighing and purchasing must be simple so customers are not intimidated. The area should include different

size deli cup containers, such as 8- and 10-ounce, with generic or store labels. This packaging not only provides more options in terms of amounts but also keeps olives and antipasti fresh during transport and storage, Toomanian says.

"Supermarket delis need line pricing and standardized packaging to help take out the confusion in purchasing olives at the bar," notes Makela. "It's best to have pre-priced containers with lids and price all types of olives the same amount by the pound." **DB**



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# Breaking Bread

As the healthful bread category continues on an upswing, delis have numerous revenue-generating opportunities

BY T. ELIZABETH BLANCO

With an increasing number of consumers watching their diets, the healthful bread segment has been growing. The category provides not only added opportunities for deli sandwich programs but also more revenue-generating cross-merchandising options.

Last year, two-thirds of consumers said healthfulness has an impact on their food buying decisions, and the same portion made a strong effort to eat more fortified foods – up 17 percent from 2005, according to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA).

An IDDBA-commissioned national survey by Escondido, CA-based Sloan Trends found those who frequent the full-service deli at least three times monthly were more concerned than the average shopper about major health conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. People who shop the deli department at least five times a month are more likely to consider themselves extremely health conscious. About half of frequent deli and bakery shoppers say it's important for products in these departments to contain added nutrients, such as vitamins or fiber.

Products such as whole-grain bread are helping to draw in customers looking to improve their diets. The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) allows any product with more than 50 percent whole grain to carry consumer benefits and claims that say its consumption helps lower the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

"The low-carb diet craze has helped more people become aware of whole grain and, as a result, the demand for these products has continued to climb," says Tom McGlade, CEO of Rubschlager Baking Corp., Chicago, IL.

## The Market

Because a growing number of consumers



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consider whole grains and whole wheat essential to a healthy diet, many bread manufacturers are expanding their lines and espousing these declarations on their labels.

The whole-grain bread segment has benefited from technology that has made these flours more readily available. "As a company, we have a directive to make all of our products 100 percent whole grain," says Mike DiCristo, Rubschlager national sales manager. The company's seven sandwich bread varieties range from 17 g to 23 g of grains per serving. FDA recommends eating a minimum of 48 g of whole grains daily.

"We're seeing more whole-grain products than we did a decade ago," says Michael Girkout, president of Alvarado St. Bakery, Petaluma, CA. Consumers are seeking out varieties with omega oils and flax seeds that add nutrition, flavor and crunch. "Consumers have become well-versed about the benefits of fiber. They're making their buying decisions based on quality and nutritional values, paying attention to ingredient lists and looking at the nutritional facts panel whenever possible."

In the past, Alvarado St. Bakery's organic whole-grain breads were sold primarily in health food and natural food stores. Most of its current business is in mainstream supermarkets. Today, the popularity of whole-grain

bread spans all demographics and regions of the country. "There's not a deli anywhere that hasn't made healthy breads a part of its sandwich program," Girkout adds.

One challenge is the misperception that nutritious foods don't taste good. "We're seeing displays of wheat, whole-wheat and whole-grain bread products in delis, but it's small segment of bread sales because the image of healthful isn't flavorful," says Ken Burke, vice president of sales and marketing at Costanzo's Bakery, Cheektowaga, NY.

A product containing healthy ingredients won't sell if it doesn't taste good. "Strong wheat or whole-grain flavors are not suitable for all sandwiches, but there's no question these breads should be a part of a deli sandwich program," he adds.

Fortunately, new technology, new processing and new, more nutritious flours are adding to a more positive attitude toward taste. Along with the proliferation of whole-grain breads, bread alternatives that are lower in fat and calories have become more prevalent in delis.

Whittier, CA-based Gourmet India Food Co., a maker of the Indian bread naan, launched its first all-natural vegan line last year. "Delis need to focus on educating consumers about the healthy ingredients being

added to bread, make labels easier to read and explain why one ingredient is better than another," notes Sufiya Hai, vice president.

The bakery industry also has been championing the reduction of sodium in breads. However, the focus on certain ingredients, such as salt and whole grain, depends on the region. "Some parts of the country are more in tune with bread characteristics than others. For example, while one area is focused on wheat bread, another may be promoting lower-sodium products," reports Jesse Amoroso, business development manager at Amoroso's Baking Co., Philadelphia, PA. But no matter the region, a balance must be struck between unique, healthy offerings and traditional bread varieties.

Lahvosh is nutritious bread alternative used in the deli. This flatbread is low in fat and calories and free of animal and trans fats. "Healthier sandwich breads such as lahvosh reduce overall calorie counts, creating a better alternative to traditional products," notes Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager, Valley Lahvosh Baking Co.

Many delis are following the lead of restaurants and focusing on breakfast. As a result, deli breakfast sandwiches that feature healthier bread options is an emerging trend. Pita Break, Toronto, ON, began marketing its pre-sliced flatbread to U.S. consumers last year and is creating a breakfast pita specifically for delis. "We're looking to bring unique bread into the deli. This is what stores are looking for," says Alon Ozery, Pita Break owner/partner.

A number of traditional bread companies have developed sandwich thins, which are substituted for bread and buns. Typically round and flat, these products contain whole wheat or whole grain and have fewer calories than traditional bread.

"In addition, portion and serving sizes are important buying decisions for most families as well as short or clean ingredient lists," says Jenna Kashou, communications manager at Kangaroo Brands, Milwaukee, WI.

### Positioning Product

Marketing healthier breads can be challenging. Retailers need to properly position these products, while convincing consumers they taste good. "It can be difficult to achieve a balance of both and change customers' minds," Amoroso says.

Helping consumers understand why and how eating healthier breads is beneficial. "Better labeling and information is a way to bridge that," Hai believes.

Another way of accomplishing this is letting consumers know the types of healthy bread options available. The brand doesn't necessarily have to be a well known. "Sever-

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al chains use our breads in their sandwich programs. The delis have a sign on their board that says to also look for these breads in the bakery department. The cross-marketing technique helps increase sales in both departments," Alvarado's Girkout says.

It can be difficult for customers to navigate this segment, due to the amount of misinformation and misleading labeling. Still, more consumers are becoming more familiar with ingredient lists and more astute when

reading labels. In addition, the Boston, MA-based Whole Grain Council puts its stamp on products that meet FDA requirements. It will work with delis to help promote healthy breads and can provide point-of-purchase material to help take these programs to the next level.

Delis can interact with customers, which other supermarket departments can't easily do. "Retailers that educate deli staff to interact more with customers and educate them

on product features and benefits will stay a step ahead of competitors. In addition, delis have counter tops and walls for signage. Smart delis know the value of good in-store signs. Most important is active sampling and demos. Club stores have learned the secret that demos can triple sales in a day. Delis should demo products every single day. It gets shoppers into your department," Kangaroo's Kashou says.

"Suggestive menu ideas and information on how consumers can assemble these products can be effective marketing techniques," Rubschlager's McClade notes.

Many cross-merchandising opportunities and options, including condiments, cheese, meat and sides, are available. "To be effective in this category, deli operators need to focus on more than bread," according to Costanzo's Burke. "It's important to bring the statement home with healthier luncheon meat and cheeses. If a deli is dedicated to healthier product, it needs to dedicate the space and show it's a serious player in this segment. Offering a choice of flavors and types of bread gives consumers more alternatives and provides greater revenue generating opportunities. "The deli has a unique chance to encourage people to buy meat, cheese and bread together, so cross-merchandising is a no-brainer," Valley's Bonsignore says. "There are now more bread choices that are nutritious and can be added to the lineup."

The message should concentrate on both taste and health benefits. "People respond to the health benefits of products, but no matter how nutritious a product is or how it tastes, eye appeal is a must," Amoroso says. "Perception is the first and most important aspect of marketing. It's about disseminating a message people respond to."

Positioning depends on the store, its demographics and the product. "It's important to create functional merchandising," notes Pita Break's Ozery. This includes cross merchandising cracker-type breads with cheese and conducting demos with spreads.

### Looking Ahead

The healthy bread category should continue to grow, with more product launches and new innovations. "The segment will keep growing," Burke predicts. "As today's children gain purchasing power and focus on making healthy eating decisions, these breads will become even more popular."

Delis that properly position these products by cross-merchandising, incorporating healthier breads into sandwich programs and partnering with bakeries will see results. "The whole category is growing larger, as more companies focus on healthier breads," Ozery says.

DB

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# DELI MEATS 2010

- A Guide to Deli Meats
- Turkey Reigns Supreme
- An Authentic Opportunity
- Capitalizing On Convenience





Photo courtesy of Hormel

# A Guide To Deli Meat

With a focus on healthier products, innovative flavors and new lines, the deli meat segment continues to evolve

By Lisa White

**P**ropelled by unique flavors, healthful options and artisan creations, the deli meat category has recently been redefined. According to the Perishables Group, a Chicago-based market research firm that tracks and analyzes retail sales data of fresh foods, U.S. deli meat average dollar sales per store per week totaled \$4,958 during the 52 weeks ending Feb., 27, 2010. This was a 0.9 percent increase compared to the 52 weeks a year prior.

The staples, including turkey, ham, roast beef and chicken, continue to be the biggest movers. Yet, new varieties and low-sodium options are becoming a bigger draw

for consumers. "Turkey and ham cover about 70 percent of bulk meats sold in delis, with turkey more popular on the West Coast and ham selling stronger in the Midwest," says Mike Cruz, director of marketing at Columbus Foods, Hayward, CA.

A modest trend towards value-priced meats as a result of the current economic conditions continues. "Even though more consumers are looking to stretch their dollars, the category has not changed significantly," notes Dave Barocco, vice president of sales and marketing for value-added meats at Cargill Animal Proteins, California, MO. In addition to turkey and ham, he adds, roast beef and chicken round out the

list of popular deli meats.

Offering value to the consumer is a way to increase volume and establish customer loyalty. "There is a lot of talk about value in the deli segment, but what gets lost is the true meaning of this," says Michael Farland, vice president of deli development for Hormel, Austin, MN. "From a retailer point of view, value helps build business."

Delis must be able to offer a large variety and still maintain acceptable gross profit levels without incurring excessive shrinkage. According to Louis Eni, president of Dietz & Watson, Philadelphia, PA, "One of the things we're finding is that consumers are seeking to change their deli meat pur-



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chases from week to week. Retailers have to balance the desire to control shrink with the ability to offer consumers a variety of products in this category.”

#### **An Emphasis On Healthy**

One of the most evident trends in the deli meat segment is the increased popularity of products with healthy profiles.

Smoked meats, such as Black Forest ham, and single muscle meats, including cured eye round or turkey on the breast bone, are less processed and becoming more sought out by consumers. “These newer deli entries are only trimmed, cured and cooked, rather than being additionally chopped, emulsified and reformed for maximum yield,” relates Laurie Cummins, owner of Alexian Pates & Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ.

With more consumers analyzing labels and ingredients, less is more. This has resulted in the increased popularity of natural meats. “We’re introducing a natural line to address consumer health concerns,” says Johanna Hulme, marketing manager at Pociño Foods Co., City of Industry, CA. “Health concerns are the biggest focus in deli meats, including reducing salt and fat as

well as sustainable packaging.”

In response to the increased consumer interest in health, wellness and flavorful foods, manufacturers are developing new deli varieties and flavor extensions. “We’re targeting a 25 percent sodium reduction for our low-sodium meat line,” says Guy Giordano, CEO/president of Vincent Giordano Corp., Philadelphia, PA. He recognizes that maintaining flavor can be challenging when reducing salt. Taste continues to be the most important purchase driver in the deli category.

“There’s an emphasis on turkey as a healthy protein alternative to meats with higher fat, cholesterol and sodium, such as beef and pork,” reports Kari Lindell, retail marketing director at Butterball, based in Garner, NC. Still, she adds, “Deep fried is now a big trend in deli turkey.”

Even though some consumers are trending toward value, other shoppers are willing to pay more for higher quality. “These higher grade products have less filler,” Cargill’s Barocco says.

According to Columbus’ Cruz, “The economy has made people savvier and more educated, especially where higher end products are concerned.” This has led to

increased interest in artisan deli meats in many parts of the country. “These meats are of a high quality and better crafted. More people are seeking out these products and understand what authentic salami is, for example,” he continues.

So even in the current economy, delis with the appropriate demographics should be looking for increased opportunities to upscale their deli meat offerings. “In the past, supermarkets may not have considered carrying our artisan salami products,” explains Chris Bowler, president of Cremellini Fine Meats, Springville, UT. “Now, more retailers are figuring out how to merchandise prosciutto, pancetta and artisan salami alongside imported cheeses and specialty products.” Even with as much as a 50 percent markup for these products, consumers are seeking them out due to the quality of the meats’ ingredients.

#### **Packaging Innovations**

Today’s deli meat packaging innovations not only extend shelf life but also provide easier access to the product convenience. “In the past, most deli bags required opening with a knife or scissors, which can be time-consuming and lead to safety issues



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for the operator. [At Butterball], we developed the Easy Open Cryovac Grip & Tear packaging that includes pull-apart tabs on all our deli meats," notes Lindell.

Modified atmosphere packaging also has become more prevalent for deli meats. "This packaging allows us to merchandise our artisan salami with white mold and avoid the shrinking and drying [that occurs with traditional packaging]," according to Michael Grazier, president/CEO of Busseto Foods, headquartered in Fresno, CA. The packaging also extends the meat's shelf life to several months. Busseto also offers antipasto and salami variety packs featuring recloseable film.

"We will be one of the first deli meat companies using a high-pressure pasteurization process for our pre-sliced product," Giordano of Vincent Giordano says, explaining that this method extends product shelf life and helps eliminate pathogens while improving both texture and flavor.

Imported deli meats also have benefited from updated packaging. No longer novel, pre-sliced prosciutto di Parma continues to sell well in delis. "There is more

prepackaged prosciutto di Parma being sold now than in the past," according to Ruth Lowenberg, senior vice president of Lewis & Neale, a food marketing agency based in New York, NY. "This is a significant change from the way deli customers bought this product in the past."

### Overcoming Challenges

Despite the deli meat category's diversity and successes, challenges still exist. "The potential is strong, but retailers need to be dedicated to this segment," says Bobby Yarborough, CEO at Manda Fine Meat, Baton Rouge, LA. "A department can turn on a dime if it's not in touch with the trends."

Pricing issues continue to affect the segment. "The biggest challenge is raw ingredient costs," Grazier says. "This puts a lot of pressure on our margins. Also, there is more pressure to promote and more price-change resistance. It can be difficult to meet everyone's demands and increase the amount of raw material in the marketplace."

Of particular concern are beef prices, which are anticipated to hit record highs

this summer. "Feed costs are being driven up," Giordano says. "We've seen a 30 percent increase in just the last month."

Turkey also is being hit hard. "Corn is the No. 1 ingredient that affects the cost of turkey. With the continued increase in the corn supply being used to make ethanol, it puts more demand on corn production and increases the price. This trickles down to the cost of turkey. It's about finding better manufacturing methods," according to Cargill's Barocco.

In addition, labor concerns at the full-service meat counter continue. Considering this may be the only department where customers have interaction with staff members, delis are under a lot of pressure to get it right. Hormel's Farrand believes, "Service is the biggest challenge. The deli has to get back to standing for service to stay relevant with consumers."

With product innovations, healthier profiles and high-end offerings, the deli meat category will continue its evolution and satisfy consumer demand. "We will see the category continue to evolve with more flavorful yet healthy options for the deli," says Lindell. **DB**

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# Turkey Reigns Supreme

The best-selling meat in the deli still offers opportunity for growth

By Carol M. Bareuther, RD

Consumers love turkey because it's healthy, versatile, economic and delicious. They've made turkey the No.1 deli meat.

"Turkey is a healthy protein and that's why customers flock to it, no pun intended," quips Scott Zoeller, director of deli merchandising at Kings Super Markets Inc., Parsippany, NJ. "For us, turkey represents the largest part of our entire cold-cut category, which includes items such as ham, roast beef, cured meats like salami and sliced cheeses."

Consumers may be watching their pennies, but premium turkey products, whether purchased behind the glass, in sandwich programs or pre-packaged, have a place at the table in spite of tough economic times.

"Delis can capture 'dining in' customers and make a higher price point more palatable by letting them know the cost per serving," advises Ashley Timmer, product marketing manager, Michigan Turkey Producers, Grand Rapids, MI. "For example, if a pound of premium deli turkey costs \$7.99, let customers know through signage and

deli staff that this translates to less than \$2 per serving if they make four sandwiches.

Teaching consumers about quality is another way to make price points more attractive. It is imperative to "educate the consumer at the point of sale as to what makes premium deli products premium. For example, premium products contain no extenders, fillers, MSG, carrageenan or food starches," explains Louis Eni, president and CEO, Dietz & Watson, Philadelphia, PA.

"The trend in bulk meat is to move up to a single- or two-muscle quality with no binders," says Patrick Sugrue, vice president of deli sales, Cargill Meat Solutions Corp., Wichita, KS. "In pre-sliced too, the trend for higher quality continues with as close to a full-muscle product as possible. Customers shop the deli for quality, and this is what should differentiate the deli over sandwich meats sold in the meat department."

Randy Haap, vice president of sales, Creta Farms USA, LLC, Lansdale, PA, recommends merchandising product in the service case. "This allows you to get a message across about the quality you carry. If

you merchandise by protein, then you end up with a mishmash of labels."

To satisfy all customers, says Jim Mosle, CEO, Saag's Specialty Meats, San Leandro, CA, "A lower or higher tier should be available for customers to pick the price point they want to spend."

## Flavors Abound

Global influences have affected turkey flavors, notes Gina Asoudegan, communications manager, Applegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ, citing "Mediterranean flavors such as lemon rosemary." She says a good rule of thumb in determining the assortment to stock "is to know who is purchasing the items and for what purpose. For example, a mom purchasing turkey by the pound for her family may choose something she's sure everyone will eat, such as classic roasted turkey, while the person who comes to the deli case to pick up a sandwich for lunch may be more interested in a more boldly flavored turkey product that suits his or her personal taste."

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incremental sales, don't forget to stock the bread-and-butter varieties. Core flavor profiles such as oven roasted, smoked and honey "remain the most frequently purchased," says Jen Ehresmann, director of deli marketing, Jennie-O.

#### Health Is Very Important

Salt is once again gaining prominence. One reason is the media attention given to the Jan. 11, 2010-launched National Salt Reduction Initiative, a New York City-led

partnership of health organizations calling for a voluntary reduction in salt levels in packaged and restaurant foods.

"Lower salt is the key request we hear out of our focus groups," says Cargill's Sugrue. "In the past year or two, more and more retailers have asked for lower-sodium deli meats."

This doesn't mean consumers have forgotten about fat. "We've seen continued and growing interest in turkey dark meat items such as turkey pastrami and turkey

ham for their combined health and value benefits. To meet that consumer demand, we recently launched a corned beef-style turkey that's a great alternative to traditional corned beef," says Jennie-O's Ehresmann.

Fat provides flavor, adds Creta's Haap. "When you take out the fat, salt is typically added to provide flavor. Instead, we swap the small amount of fat in turkey for extra virgin olive oil which provides both taste and a more healthful form of fat."

#### Promotional Opportunities

According to Applegate's Asoudegan, "One of the most successful promotions we did with a retailer was a Lunch Box Makeover for back to school. We sampled healthy versions of traditional lunch-box fare and showed moms and kids that they didn't have to sacrifice flavor — a turkey bologna sandwich was just as tasty as the traditional beef but much lower in fat."

Last year, Creta Farms created an exclusive program with a retail partner that featured Creta's olive-oil infused meats, including turkey, on Mediterranean-style party platters. The platters, which were priced at \$50 each, included olives, hummus, Feta cheese and roasted red peppers. During a 6-week period, customers could pick up \$5-off coupons and enter a drawing to win a free Mediterranean-style party platter awarded weekly during the promotion. It "pulls the shoppers who came to buy olive oil or Mediterranean foods or who are looking for something healthful into the deli," Haap says. "According to our research, 21 percent of consumers who bought Creta Farms products such as turkey had not visited the deli for six months or longer."

#### Increasing The Ring

Delis can spur impulse sales by cross-merchandising turkey with other products that offer consumers an instant meal solution. Not surprisingly, says Ehresmann, "Slice-to-order turkey consumers are also heavy deli cheese users."

"Mild white cheeses such as Havarti and Baby Swiss are ideal to cross-merchandise with turkey," relates Sugrue. "You can also offer a cents-off coupon for a bread product and pull consumers into the deli for a sandwich deal by advertising this in the weekly ad flyer or in in-store signage."

Kings Zoeller notes, "We slice deli turkey on the thick side, julienne it and add it to green salads."

Saag's Mosle suggests deli operators "use turkey as an ingredient for a pasta dish or as an adjunct to a vegetable dish. Flavored and smoked turkeys work best for this usage."

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Photo courtesy of Cacique USA

# An Authentic Opportunity

With the right assortment, traditional Hispanic meats can fill a profitable niche

By Lisa White

**B**oth Hispanic and non-Hispanic Americans have shown an increased interest in products used to create authentic Hispanic cuisines.

U.S. ethnic food sales, at both retail and foodservice, totaled a record high of approximately \$2.2 billion in 2009, according to Mintel, a London, England-based research firm. Mexican and Hispanic fare comprise the largest share of the ethnic-foods market, with 62 percent of sales. This category is expected to grow 20 percent from 2010 to 2014.

The Hispanic audience in totality is

highly segmented — each Latino community has its own cuisine — which can translate to a steep learning curve for retailers. “This can be a difficult segment, because there aren’t many retailers willing to bring in the types of meats Hispanic consumers are looking for,” says Gabriel Rables, president and CEO at Queso Campesino, Denver, CO. “Retailers are not willing to take a chance with unfamiliar brands behind the counter, but they should because it can help expand their customer base.”

Although authentic Hispanic meats can be more costly than traditional brands, the changing demographics in many areas have

created a need for them. And while large chains such as Kroger have dedicated considerable space to these items, Hispanic meats don’t require a big footprint.

According to Tirso Iglesias, director of sales and marketing at Cacique USA, based in City of Industry, CA, “As Mexican cooking becomes more common in U.S. homes, delis should carry a viable offering of beef and pork chorizo to meet the demand that is building.”

Like traditional meats, the Hispanic meat segment can be broken into two subsets — inexpensive cuts or varieties that offer value and leaner, higher quality meats

that carry a higher price point. For example, cooked ham rather than the more economical chopped ham may be a better fit for some delis, depending on demographics.

The segment also has different flavor profiles. Spicier blends are geared toward first-generation Hispanics, while the milder blends appeal to a wider demographic. "In particular, we're noticing higher demand for beef and pork chorizo [highly seasoned, coarsely ground sausage] and longaniza [Spanish sausage]," Iglesias says. "Chorizo has the lowest usage learning curve."

In line with general trends, the Hispanic population is becoming more health conscious, with an eye on fat and salt. As a result, Hispanic poultry and pork products have experienced increased sales. "This demographic wants access to their traditional meats but is looking for healthier alternatives," notes Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing, Bronx, NY-based Cibao Meat Products, which introduced a Hispanic meat line with reduced fat and salt. "Hispanic consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about nutrition and the importance of a healthy diet."

Prepared Hispanic meat products, such



Photo courtesy of Don Miguel Mexican Foods

as burritos, sell well in the hot case. "Although geared for the lunch day-part, meat burritos sell all day long out of deli hot cases," says Marilyn Vincent, director of marketing for Don Miguel Mexican Foods, Anaheim, CA. "In the right market, upscale burritos can carry a higher price point and easily deliver a 50 percent margin."

Prepared foods perceived as value items

also are selling well. "We're seeing more value-priced Hispanic prepared food items behind the counter, but much of the country is missing out on this opportunity," Vincent continues. "Our meat burritos are the second best-selling items by volume in the hot case."

Interest in regional Hispanic meat items, such as chorizo from Nicaragua, Salvador and Honduras, is increasing. "The specialty Hispanic sausage business has really taken off," according to Joe Ketchum, vice president of sales and marketing at Ole Mexican Foods, Norcross, GA. "More companies are developing meat items for consumers looking for product from a specific country."

Because many non-Hispanic consumers are unfamiliar with Hispanic meat varieties and their usage, proper marketing and merchandising is key. Cacique's Iglesias recommends "sampling product at the store level and educating consumers on the usage of these meats."

Delis may be missing the boat if they don't offer Hispanic meat items for takeout. "More delis need to get into Hispanic takeout food — as they do with American, Italian and Asian meals — to capture the home dollar and capitalize on convenience," recommends Soto.

Stores with Spanish-speaking associates who understand how to use these products can better cater to consumers. "The language behind the counter is very important," Queso Campesino Rables says. "Delis also need to include these products in store ads and properly promote new products."

With the country facing demographic changes and Americans becoming more open to ethnic foods, the Hispanic meat segment is expected to keep growing. "We have seen increasing space allocation and sales growth for these products," Iglesias adds. "It's a viable segment for delis." DB

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Photo courtesy of Burger Smokehouses

# Capitalizing On Convenience

Ribs and wings segments provide profit potential to deli departments

By Lisa White

Today's consumers have less time, less interest and fewer skills to cook a traditional family meal than previous generations. Even with the difficult economy, they place great value on prepared foods, which has proven a mixed blessing for the wings and ribs categories. Wings have benefitted significantly while rib sales have slumped.

"Most home grillers don't have the know-how to properly prepare these items," says Philip Burger, vice president,



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Burger's Smokehouse, California, MO. "Ribs and wings require more of a slow-cooking patience."

It's important to note barbecue sales are no longer seasonal. Grab-and-go cases are becoming a destination for a growing number of consumers looking for meal solutions year round.

"Consumers are looking for price-point items or different sizes at various prices," says Robert Mintz, CEO Rupari Food Services, Deerfield Beach, FL. "They're aware of pricing, so it's an important factor."

"Ribs are a great way to reinforce the real convenience and value of in-store delis," says Brian Booton, marketing manager, Farmland Foods, Kansas City, MO.

In the past these products were more prominent in barbecue-oriented regions, such as Texas or St. Louis, but the popularity has expanded across the country. "We aren't seeing dominant flavor trends as much as noticing more retailers carrying these products," according to Terry Brown, president/owner, Wing-Time Buffalo Wing Sauce, Steamboat Springs, CO.

Building a barbecue category can be as simple as pairing ribs and wings to create a finger-food meal. "Both the ribs and wings categories are hot in delis," notes Terry

Hyer, COO, Zarda Bar-B-Q & Sauce, Lenexa, KS. "We're seeing ribs and chicken baskets as the most successful entrée item that spans across a broad demographic. It's all about building a barbecue category."

#### A Well-Rounded Offering

Raw and cooked individually quick-frozen wings are deli department staples. "This is due to the bags having multiple servings and being frozen for on-hand convenience," says Debbie Zapzalka, marketing assistant, Gold'n Plump Poultry, St. Cloud, MN.

Deli wing bar programs, which have increased in popularity, rely on this option. "For a fixed cost per pound, consumers can purchase their favorite wing flavors for parties or meals," says Joe DePippo, president of sales, marketing and chicken operations, Hain Pure Protein Corp., Fredericksburg, PA.

Wing demand creates ongoing supply challenges. "Due to the growth in this segment, the cost of chicken wings at the wholesale level has surpassed boneless, skinless breasts on occasion," says Brown.

This has presented difficulties for retailers striving to offer value pricing to consumers. "It's a crowded wing market, so it can be a race to the bottom with price,"

Burger of Burger's Smokehouse adds. "Delis need to bring value to the market[.]"

Ribs, on the other hand, are in great supply. Deli staples include full- and half-rack baby back and St. Louis-style spare ribs. "Baby back ribs are small, have more bone and are pricier than the St. Louis rib," says Hyer. "St. Louis-style ribs are bigger, meatier and offer a good value. This is why they dominate the deli case."

Delis can sell pre-cooked ribs and wings or prepare product on site. Pre-cooked items sold hot can be heated in an oven or steamer. Product in vacuum bags can be boiled. Raw product requires more extensive preparation using an oven, rotisserie or smoker. "Some operations are smoking product either in a commissary or a barbecue smoker," says Booton.

The rib category has seen a proliferation of pre-cooked, pre-smoked, pre-portioned and even pre-sauced products. "These products offer great quality, consistency and eliminate labor previously required on site," Booton explains.

The heat-and-eat ribs market is becoming more prevalent, not only because consumers prefer to heat product themselves but also because delis have less shrinkage due to the longer shelf life of these items.

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Burger's offers both heat-and-serve products and vacuum packaged ribs for the cold case. Five ribs are sold in a single pack.

#### To Sauce Or Not To Sauce

Even with prepared product, retailers can provide a signature touch. Wing-Time provides retailers with sauce options, including mild, medium, hot and super hot. Bottles provide preparation information and suggested uses.

"Because of the significant regional differences in barbecue flavor preferences, many in-store operators find they really benefit from not buying a pre-sauced product. They can doctor the ribs and wings to their local taste," says Farmland's Booton.

Farmland has seen significant growth with its raw and pre-cooked 10-pound White Box program, which includes Ribbits, Riblets, Rib Strips and Back Rib and St. Louis Rib pieces. "These items are less expensive on a per-pound and total-ring basis. They're pre-portioned, so it's easier for the trade to sell from the hot bar or as part of a meal or combo deal," Booton explains.

Although its sauced products are bigger sellers, Burger's Smokehouse also offers unsaucesd product. "In tonnage, the St. Louis-style ribs have been a leader for us,

but the baby back still sells well, despite its higher price point," Burger says.

He describes the company's Kansas City-style sauce as sweet rather than vinegar-based. "In attempt to fill a hole in the market, we offered ribs with a hot and spicy sauce. However, we found more people prefer our sweet sauce," Burger says.

Although regional preferences are no longer a factor in the popularity of ribs and wings, this is not the case with sauces.

"In some areas, such as St. Louis and Texas, sauced ribs and wings don't sell as well," Mintz says. Like other suppliers, Rupari offers unsaucesd product.

#### Drawing Attention

With increased competition from ribs and wings foodservice operations, it's imperative for delis to differentiate their program. "KFC and Pizza Hut heavily promote their wings in circulars, and there are more wing joints popping up everywhere," Wing-Time's Brown notes.

Shelf talkers, inflatable point-of-purchase items and recipes can be effective tools in selling ribs and wings. According to Hair's DePippo, "New flavors and a rotating menu provide opportunities for consumers to bring home these products more than

once a week. Delis need to promote these items with signage and demos."

"More retailers are utilizing hot mobile cases in the deli or mobile warmers by the checkout stands to increase impulse sales," Zarda's Hyer says. "It isn't a hard sell if customers can see and smell the product."

Cross-merchandising provides additional opportunities. "Delis not doing this are missing the boat," Hyer warns. Potato salad, cole slaw, baked beans and other complementary sides can be sold in the cold case alongside ribs or next to the wing bar.

Creating promotions prior to holidays can help boost sales before, during and after the occasion. Delis can also create their own special occasions. "Delis need to make their program prolific," advises Hyer. "We sold 300 cases of ribs due to a retailer's Full Slab Friday program, which offered a \$2 discount. Sale pricing will drive customers to the department."

With consumers continuing to seek out convenient, high-quality meal solutions, deli ribs and wings programs will likely to be popular. "With the blurring of foodservice and away-from-home supermarket segments, consumers will look more to supermarkets as a viable option, rather than eat away from home," DePippo says. **DB**

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# Platters Take On A New Identity

They're not just for parties anymore

BY BOB JOHNSON

Party platters are approaching a rarefied position as they become essential to a steadily increasing range of occasions.

They've always been important for planned gatherings, but now they're becoming de rigueur for casual gatherings as well. And they're even becoming an important part of the family meal, as consumers look for more economical ways to enjoy restaurant convenience and quality at home.

"The party platter category has changed somewhat since more home entertaining is taking place recently. This is due to the economy, but also the focus on eating in has been growing throughout the United States," says Laura Boyer, who speaks for Arla Foods Inc, Basking Ridge, NJ, as senior account supervisor at the Nulman Group. Arla offers a wide variety of cheeses including flavored Havarti and Castello Soft Blue cheese.

As platters take on these expanded roles, retailers have new opportunities and challenges to offer them with a wider and more interesting range of foods and price points.

## The Life of the Party

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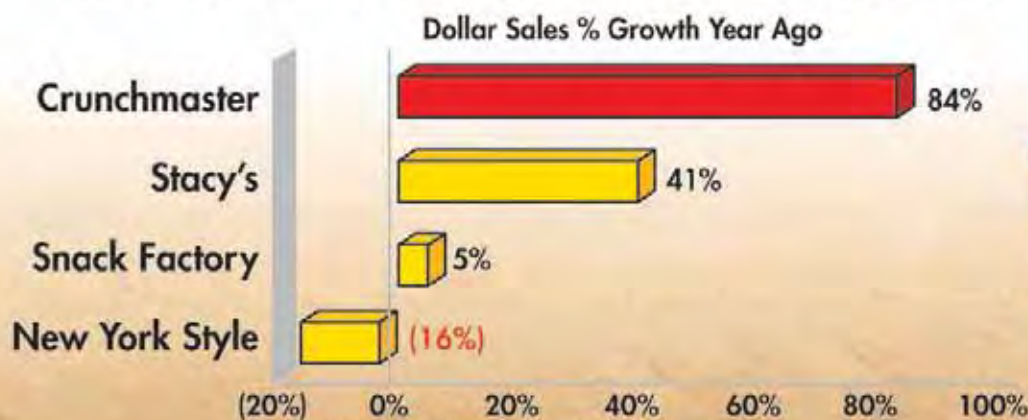


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to incorporate ingredients that the consumer may have never tasted before but that will not alienate them. This is the wow factor. They open the tray, and it smells good and looks good and contributes to the excitement of the party," says Matt Nolan, vice president for sales and marketing at Norpaco Gourmet Foods, West Grove, PA. Norpaco manufactures Italian-style specialty foods such as stuffed cherry peppers, stuffed olives, panini-style meat and cheese rolls, sun-dried tomatoes and antipasto salads.

"The standard in the industry is the Hormel trays that are marketed as inexpensive trays to the dollar-conscious consumer. What we're experiencing is an interest in trays that meet consumer demand for higher-grade ingredients that include gourmet cheeses, meats, and olives," he continues.

That industry standard from Hormel is still very popular and still increasing in volume. "We have a line of party trays that we introduced around 10 years ago with crackers, cheese and either pepperoni, turkey or ham that has been a huge hit for our company. The last couple of years it's really grown," says Josh Holck, product manager at Hormel Foods Corp., Hormel, MN. "We're meeting a consumer need, which is convenience. By opening a few packages, you have a party tray in a minute."

The interest in more exciting ingredients marks a departure from the previous standard, when economy and convenience were the important selling points. "Party platters have evolved from cold cuts for standard make you own sandwich fare to elegant hors d'oeuvres featuring aged cheeses coupled

with exotic dry-cured meats," according to Dave Brandow, director of sales & marketing at Piller's Sausages, Waterloo, ON, Canada. "They're now applicable for all entertaining times from casual friend get-togethers to fully catered events for hundreds of people — and the fare that complements the occasion."

If platters are truly exciting, they can add life to the party. "Finger foods can be a conversation piece to a party or event. International fare can be fresh and easy to eat. Introducing guests to new exotic cuisines and educating them is fun at events. Sushi is a great choice. Who doesn't eat vegetables and rice? That's the majority of sushi," enthuses Aaron Petrovsky, managing director of Charlotte, NC-based Hissho Sushi, which makes fresh, upscale sushi products.

The higher-end Italian foods that are becoming ever more popular in the deli offer another opportunity for interesting conversation starters. "Premium cured meats and cheeses have been more readily available and consumers have become much more knowledgeable. They know about aged Parmigiano-Reggiano. They've had Sopressata. They understand about using fig spread or honey as a condiment. The tastes have become more upscale," says Perry Abbenante, vice president of marketing at The Snack Factory, Skillman, NJ. The Snack Factory produces a line of baked pretzel crisps in a variety of flavors including Tuscan three cheese, cinnamon toast, garlic, dark chocolate and white chocolate and peppermint.

French food is another option that can bring new life to the party. "Charcuterie is



growing a lot. Great party platters [can include] pâtés, mousses, terrines and also dried meats like saucisson sec, jambon de Paris, garlic sausage, duck rillettes, smoked duck breast as well as cornichons and baby sour gherkins," says Elodie Jouannel marketing director at New York, NY-based Les Trois Petits Cochons, makers of a line of pâté and charcuterie. She suggests trays include dry sausages, smoked duck breast, specialty cheeses, grapes and figs.

And she believes a gourmet platter can still be simple — and simple to assemble. "People have been entertaining more and more at home. It's easy to put a platter with charcuterie and some cheese and fruit on the table," Jouannel says.

Unique cheese can be used to anchor an extraordinarily wide variety of platters. "Cheese is, perhaps, the most important component in a successful party platter. Its wide appeal, varied price points and long-standing reputation as a 'comfort' food make it an outstanding focus for the ultimate platter," claims Arla's Boyer.

Because platters are being used at a wider variety of events, it's important to offer a wider variety of platters suited to those occasions. "Chicken wings, chicken strips,



dry ribs with cut celery and carrot sticks are appropriate for the boys' get-togethers to watch the big game. But delicate dry-cured hams, full-flavored salamis coupled with Asi-

ago and Camembert cheeses make excellent accompaniments for wine tasting parties," Piller's Brandow says.

Hormel has begun tailoring trays to spe-













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cific occasions. The Stars and Stripes party tray has ingredients arranged like the flag, and the Texas tray is shaped like the state of Texas. According to Holck, the next in this series, planned for this fall, is the Tailgate tray shaped like a football.

### The Healthy Platter

The trend toward healthier diets extends to snacking, so it's important to include platter options that cater to specific desires for healthy foods.

"Merchandisers need to offer what's new, exciting and versatile to large groups. Many people are more health-conscious these days and pita chips fit in with the interest in the Mediterranean diet and also the need to be healthy and different," suggests Jenna Kashou, communications manager at Kangaroo Brands Inc., based in Milwaukee, WI. Kangaroo produces a line of pita pocket and pita chip products.

Mediterranean foods are worth considering in assembling the platter category." The Mediterranean diet is still really hot right now. Spreads of olives, cheese, pita chips, hummus and grilled veggies are a big hit," she continues.

Asian food can also provide platter

options for health-conscious consumers. "We deliver sushi party platters to doctors' lounges in hospitals — it's becoming very popular. Sushi platters work for family dinners, office lunches and even such uses as movie production foodservice," Hissho Sushi's Petrovsky says.

When Barry Novick went to parties a decade ago, he would look at the platters and see nothing that fit with his low-carb diet. The celery and carrot sticks were healthy enough, but they were boring and not substantial enough to absorb alcohol. That's when he invented the Parmesan Crisp, a crisp made entirely of cheese. After the idea caught on, Novick quit his day job as a hospital administrator and started Kitchen Table Bakers, Syosset, NY. Today Parmesan Crisps come in eight flavors, including garlic, rosemary, Italian and everything crisps.

"We've found interest from the beginning.



We started out as the 'No Carb Kitchen' and changed the name in 2005 after Atkins died. There are a lot of specialty platters that are gluten-free, sugar-free, low-carb and wheat-free. It works out beautifully," Novick adds.

An increasing number of gourmet delis include gluten-free platters, just one aspect of the trend to offer platters that suit people with a range of allergies. "Who wants to have a party where the guests can't eat the food?" asks Jim Garsow, director of market-

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ing at TH Foods, Inc., Loves Park, IL. "For example, simple gluten-free, dairy-free combinations such as Crunchmaster Original Multi-Grain Crackers paired with a premium hummus dip have become a party favorite. Incorporating non-allergenic foods are becoming a much more important feature of party planning for savvy consumers." TH Foods produces a variety of sesame and corn sticks, baked wheat crackers and rice-based snack items.

It's important to put together an interesting variety of platter options to meet a variety of consumer wants and needs. "In today's hectic, time-starved world, nearly every social event or get-together has multiple party trays brought by participants. Variety and convenience are the keys; hosts have to please various individual tastes without having to invest a lot of time in preparation," he continues.



### The Prices Are Right

As the platter category grows, producers have a few merchandising tips to help maximize the opportunity.

"Make sure the consumer can clearly see the product in the packaging," Norpaco's Nolan suggests. "Too often we see packaging that is double-wrapped with large labels that will prevent the customer from buying with their eyes."

Another important aspect is keying in on the many cross-merchandising opportunities that can be a natural for platters. "In my opinion, cross-merchandising can be the secret weapon, provided all of the other must-haves like signage and solid merchandising have been met," The Snack Factory's Abbenante says. "This means there must be cooperation between departments. Bringing in wine, chocolate and other complementary sales makes the display more enticing. It's important because it can mean additional sales for all if it's done well."

Modern communication technologies can also increase platter

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sales while conserving valuable shelf space. According to Hissho Sushi's Petrovsky, "Utilizing technology such as the Internet, e-mail and text messaging campaigns are important to a good party-platter merchandising program. Platters need to be top of mind with consumers and make it easy for them to purchase what they want, when they need it. Platters take up valuable shelf space so you want to make them to order as much as possible to manage shrink, while having a few on

display to further promote the offering. Retailers can experience a nice return for little investment by leveraging innovative communications techniques."

Offering platters at different price points is a must. "The platter is about convenience and it's a purchase occasion. There are different purchase occasions depending on how many people you want to serve. Because of this, it makes sense to hit known price points like \$6.99, \$9.99 and \$19.99," The Snack

Factory's Abbenante advises.

Make sure to include modest-sized platters to accommodate the growing demand for platters for smaller get-togethers. "Small-

**"UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY SUCH AS THE INTERNET, E-MAIL AND TEXT MESSAGING CAMPAIGNS ARE IMPORTANT TO A GOOD PARTY-PLATTER MERCHANDISING PROGRAM."**

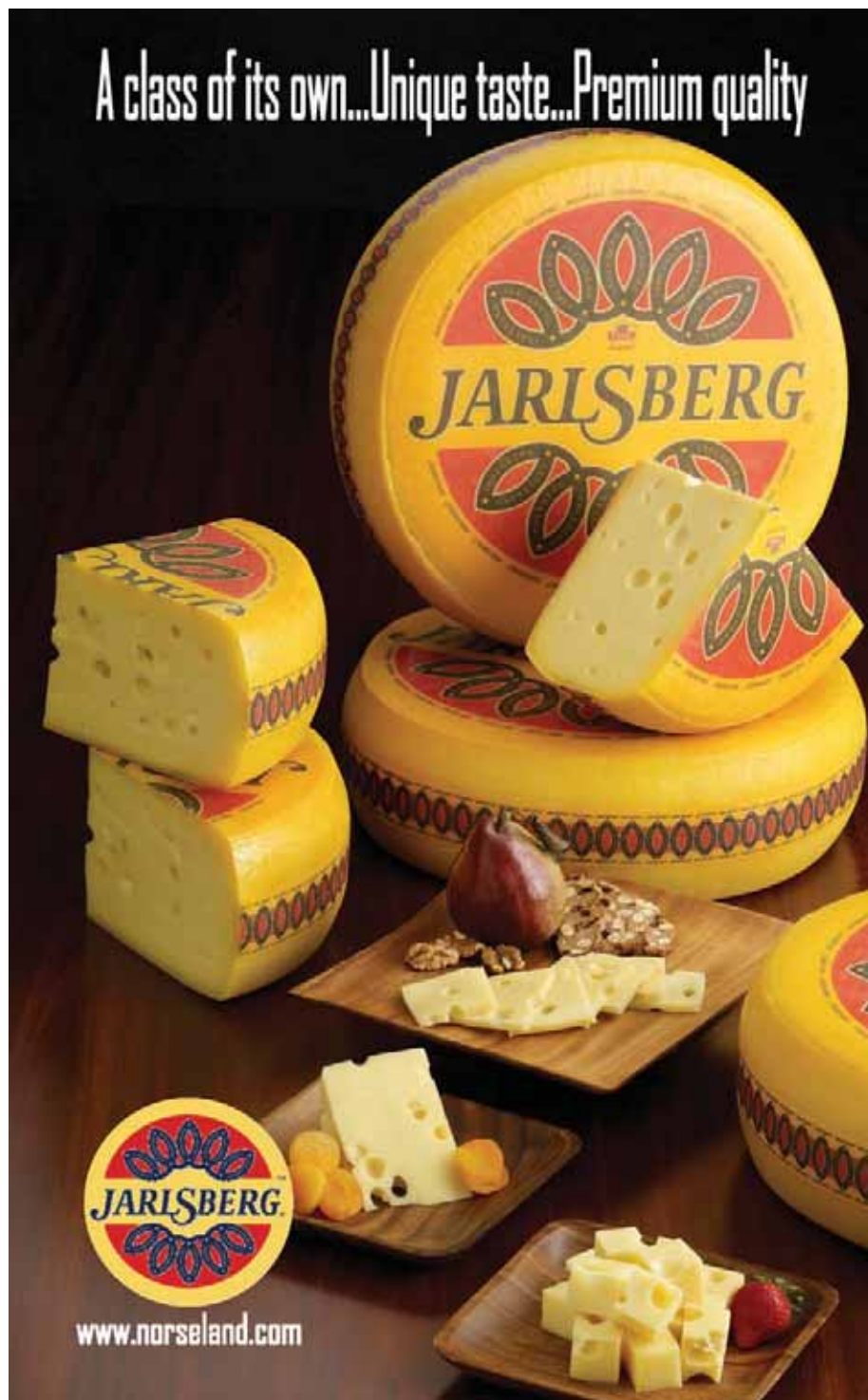
— AARON PETROVSKY  
HISSHO SUSHI

er options are gaining in popularity for appetizers or as cocktail options prior to dinner and for those more casual intimate times with a few family and/or friends," Piller's Brandow notes.

The upper end price can be a limiting factor. "The maximum price point is around \$19.99 retail price per tray. This limits the diversity of the product and will necessitate most manufacturers to use crackers as one of the ingredients in a tray. At Norpaco our expertise is in designing trays that meet consumer needs for the club store markets. There is still open discussion about what ingredients will work and regional flavor profiles that must be met along with managing the right price points," Nolan says.

But the platter can also provide an opportunity to encourage consumers to try gourmet foods at relatively affordable price points. "Since people are more interested in charcuterie and fine cheeses, you can go from a small selection at a lower price to a huge party platter if you are having a party," Les Trois' Jouamnel says. "More and more people entertain at home. Party platters with charcuterie, pâtés and terrines, cheeses and fruits are really easy to prepare and are always a great success. Also, more and more caterers create charcuterie party platters. Lots of exciting party platters for social events."

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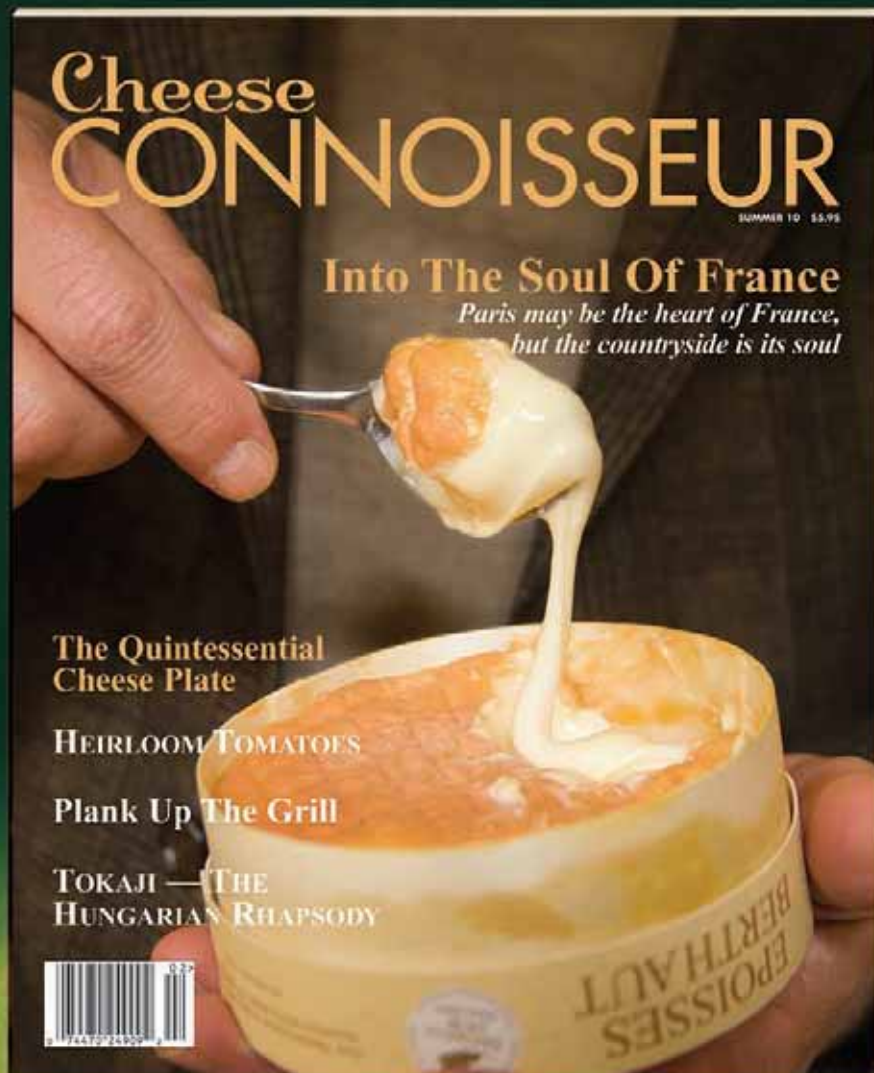




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# Second Thoughts No More

Sides and salads are becoming as important as center-of-the-plate offerings

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Salads and side dishes may not sizzle with center-of-the-plate status, but they generate sizable deli sales.

Familiar favorites remain the core sellers, so offering a wide selection of the tried-and-true will bring in a wide cross-section of consumers.

Mary Vaccaro, senior marketing manager, Sandridge Food Corp., Medina, OH, says, "Our best-selling salads typically are our traditional potato salads, macaroni salads and cole slaw varieties. These sell well because they're tried-and-true products that appeal to a great number of people and can be considered comfort food."

Southern-style potato salad, macaroni salad, shredded cole slaw, tuna salad, chicken tarragon salad, and ham salad are among the most popular salads sold in the deli at Publix Supermarkets, headquartered in Lakeland, FL. Dwaine Stevens, spokesperson notes, "We've added a variety of additional sides to our hot and cold selections. Most are typical accompaniments to standard entrées such as, for example, green bean casserole, mashed potatoes and corn casserole."

Mashed potatoes and macaroni and cheese continue to be the top-selling side dishes, says John McCarthy, Jr., category manager, Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR. "These family favorites are very versatile sides that can be paired with a wide variety of entrées."

While the familiar will drive most sales, new flavor trends will constantly have an important place in the deli, says Vaccaro. "Twists on the old familiar satisfy the back-to-the-basics cravings for the increasingly sophisticated consumer palate."

Although upscale, higher price point items simply won't sell as much as traditional core salads, "They play a substantial role in the assortment of the bulk and prepackaged deli salad case," according to Karmen Olsen-Stevens, category manager, Reser's.

Flavor development in the 'new and different' arena has gone global. Southeast



PHOTO COURTESY OF BELGIOSO CHEESE, INC.

Asian cuisines such as Vietnamese, Thai, Burmese and Malaysian ranked as the fifth hottest cuisine in the *What's Hot in 2010* chef survey from the Washington, DC-based National Restaurant Association (NRA).

Steve Jilleba, corporate executive chef for North America at Unilever Foodsolutions, Lyle, IL, notes, "There's a spicy boldness in Vietnamese cuisine that's catching consumers' attention. For example, this might be as a green papaya salad with lime, oil and fish sauce. Products like this offer a way to romance the menu."

Elaine Simon, business development manager for Litehouse Inc., Sandpoint, ID, explains, "Thai is another Asian cuisine that is hot now. For example, some delis offer a Thai peanut cole slaw."

Mediterranean, a perennial favorite, is ranked eighth by the NRA.

Dominick Frocione, vice president of sales for Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Haverhill, MA, says, "Tabbouleh salad and chickpea salad have been driving the growth

of our salads and, due to their success, they've generated interest in line extension for items such as edamame salad, Israeli couscous, lentil salad, orzo and Feta salad, and black-eyed pea salad."

Frocione recommends these salads be merchandised in both prepack and bulk as healthy, quick grab-and-go lunch or side dish alternatives to the standard potato salad and cole slaw.

Ingredients such as grains, fruits and vegetables are playing a bigger role in innovative salads and sides.

For example, Zingermen's, a single-store deli in Ann Arbor, MI, offers twigs and berries salad – organic wheat berries tossed with sunflower sprouts, dried cherries, apple cider vinegar, herbs, onions and olive oil. One of the signature salads at Pleasanton, CA-based Safeway is an 8-grain salad.

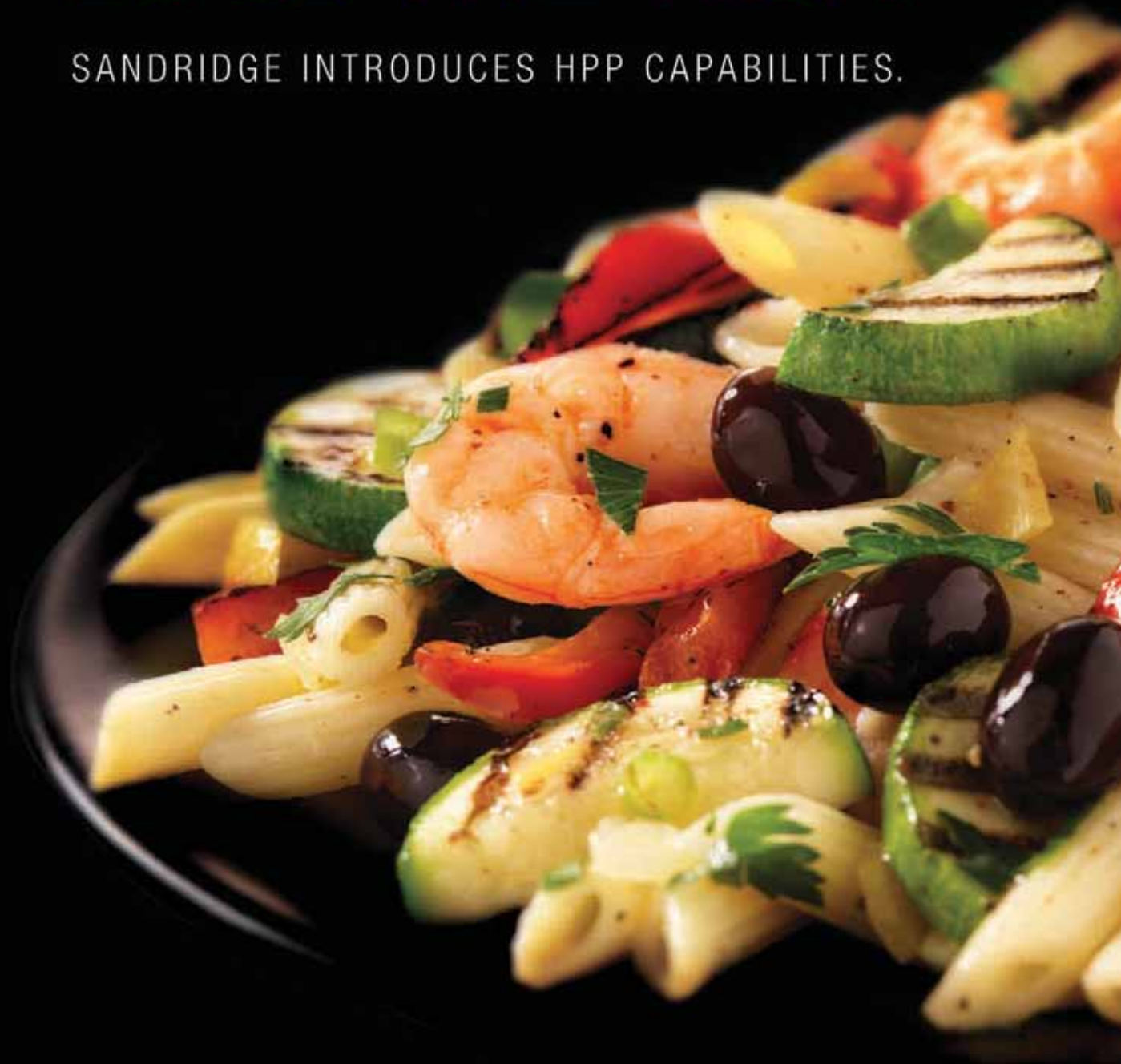
Reser's recently launched a line of sides featuring whole grains with high-antioxidant berries, according to Olson-Stevens.

Melon — watermelon, cantaloupe and



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honeydew — star in new tuna recipes for the deli created by Chicken of the Sea International, San Diego, CA. The new recipes combine sweet with savory, explains Tara Milligan, director of marketing for foodservice. “Another new recipe is tuna salad with dried cherries and a cayenne dressing.”

In the vegetable realm, “Leafy green salads are becoming more popular in the deli,” says Jere Dudley, vice president of sales and marketing, Gourmet Boutique, Jamaica, NY.

Following up on this trend, Publix offers “a selection of leafy salads. Trends indicate customers are choosing more of these type items as a convenient alternative to fast or fast-casual restaurant food,” says Stevens.”

Cooked vegetables that previously haven’t received play in the deli are now finding demand. For example, says Jeffrey Siegel, president, Farm Ridge Foods, LLC, Commack, NY, “Two of our new sides for the fall set feature Brussels sprouts. One is Brussels sprouts with caramelized onions and pine nuts and the other is a sweet potato hash with Brussels sprouts.”

### Health Sells — If It Tastes Good

Although many consumers are avoiding excessive amounts of salt, sugar and fat, these ingredients add flavor. And therein lies

the quandary.

“We’re looking at healthier alternatives, explains Stevens, “but we know from experience that although customers might say they want healthier options, the majority opts for full flavor.”

Some food manufacturers are offering lighter options by reformulating classic ingredients. Unilever “introduced a light mayonnaise under the Hellman’s brand that has fewer calories but still delivers on flavor,” Jilleba says

Others are lightening up their salads and sides by swapping out less healthy ingredients for those that offer the double bang of being more nutritious and flavorful at the same time. For example, says Litehouse’s Simon, “Five years ago you wouldn’t see balsamic vinegar on salads in the deli. Now you do. Now, some 90 percent of delis offer a Greek salad.”

Another trend, Simon adds, “is to use fewer preservatives. We’ve made an effort to leave out some ingredients and replace them with more natural ones. The goal is that the ingredient list shouldn’t be half the bottle long. While consumers don’t ask about ingredients as much in products behind the glass, they’ll pick up and read labels on products in the grab-and-go case.”

Embracing this trend, Sandridge is developing a line of ‘clean label’ products for the deli and prepared-food departments. To support this goal, the company recently unveiled its state-of-the art, high-pressure processing (HPP) system, which uses cold water under high pressure — rather than the traditional thermal process and preservatives — to provide safe, minimally processed foods with superior appearance, taste, texture and nutritional value. HPP also delivers foods that stay fresher longer with an extended shelf life, which can have major financial benefits by substantially decreasing shrink.”

### Upping The Appeal

How do you get consumers to buy something new? First, says Cedar’s Frocione, “Retailers need to carve out a section to display these products and second, they need to bring in enough SKUs to make the set a destination. Hiding a SKU here and there only encourages missed opportunities to make a sale and causes high rates of shrink.”

Call attention to new products, advises Mike Snell, vice president of sales for Blanc Industries, Dover, NJ, “with toppers. These, when attached to the side of a bowl holding a salad or side, can easily draw attention to an item whether it be because it’s new, healthy,

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## Dried Cranberries Add A Premium Touch

The bonus of stirring sweetened dried cranberries into deli salads and side dishes, says Steve Jilleba, corporate executive chef for North America at Unilever Foodsolutions, in Lyle, IL, "is that they hit two senses at once — color and flavor."

Sweetened dried cranberries took off in popularity as a snack food and ingredient barely two decades ago. Today, this sweet/tart berry is becoming such a popular ingredient in the deli meal solutions arena that in March, Ocean Spray Cranberries, Lakeville-Middleboro, MA, dedicated two full-time personnel to work on recipe development. Some of the recipes created include broccoli and cranberry salad and cranberry vegetable risotto.

According to Keith Benoit, senior director/general manager of special markets, Ocean Spray, "Sweetened dried cranberries are versatile, an alternative and similar in cost to other dried fruits such as raisins, and have been selling into and used by chefs in the foodservice channel for the last five years. Our goal is to now work with third-party vendors, commissaries and retail

delis to create customized recipes."

Whole Foods, based in Austin, TX, uses sweetened dried cranberries in two of its salads: a signature wild rice salad with toasted pecans, sun-dried cranberries, bell peppers, scallions and raspberry vinaigrette; and brasserie salad, made with panko-crusted goat cheese medallions, candied pecans and sun-dried cranberries, and served with raspberry vinaigrette.

Deli side and salad manufacturers are also creating products using these versatile berries. Jeffrey Siegel, president of Farm Ridge Foods, LLC, in Commack, NY, says, "We make a chicken salad with sliced almonds and dried cranberries and a pumpkin tortellini with dried cranberries."

According to Dan Zakri, manager of fresh initiative at the Sandridge Food Corporation, Medina, OH, merchandising products made with dried cranberries "together with grilled or roasted proteins in the deli service case would show the customer bold flavors, colors and textures." **DB**

or a certain price. The key is to not overuse toppers or the case starts to look cluttered. Ideally there are toppers on no more than 10 percent of items in the case at a time."

Reser's has developed a salad-of-the-month program to encourage delis to rotate in two new SKUs per month to stimulate

category sales. Retailers who participate in the program can order salad tags, case clings and in-store signage for support. "The featured salads can be specific to your store and shopper so it keeps things customized but manageable," notes Olson-Stevens.

Another good way to encourage trial,

says Chicken of the Sea's Milligan, "is sampling. Tasting is believing — and buying."

Finally, ever-changing offerings, says Gourmet Boutique's Dudley, "give consumers a reason to come back. A stale case, which doesn't change at minimum seasonally, won't do this." **DB**





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# The Wisconsin Advantage

Fine milk, virtuoso cheesemakers, memorable cheeses

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

Wisconsin's familiar favorites, one-of-a-kind cheeses and ethnic specialties — more than 600 cheeses in all — are recognized in competitions and produced according to stringent safety, grading and quality standards. Cheesemakers — many are multi-generational — benefit from their dairy farmers' unyielding focus on milk quality; Wisconsin boasts more organic and grass-based dairy farms than any other state.

"Specialty cheese is what we see as our future. It will continue to grow — not just in

terms of the volume, but in styles and different types," says Marilyn Wilkinson, director of national product communications, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI. "Our nation's population is more diverse than ever and more exposed to foods and traditions that didn't exist in the mainstream in the U.S. until recently. This bodes very well for many different cheeses."

## What's Hot

Farm-made and small production cheeses are driving specialty cheese growth. "Con-

sumers trust farmers. We appreciate and respect that trust. They know we use our own milk and make our own cheese from start to finish. As they're venturing beyond new, young, fresh cheese wanting the experience of great flavor, they realize they don't need to choose an imported cheese," explains Debbie Crave, vice president of Waterloo, WI-based Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, makers of fresh Mozzarella and washed-rind Les Frères.

Feta is a fast-growing specialty cheese. "The deli, the salad case, and the prepared

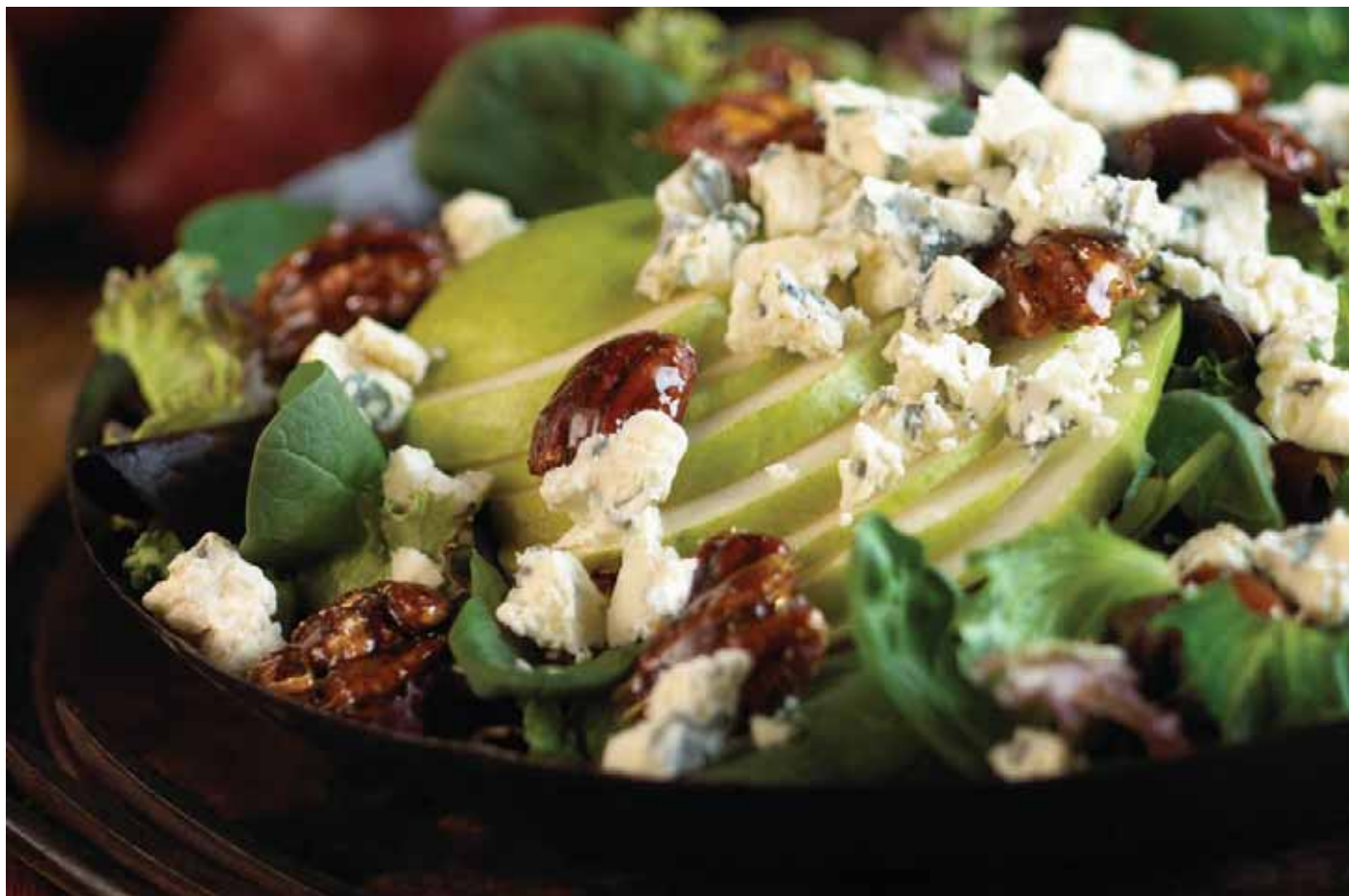


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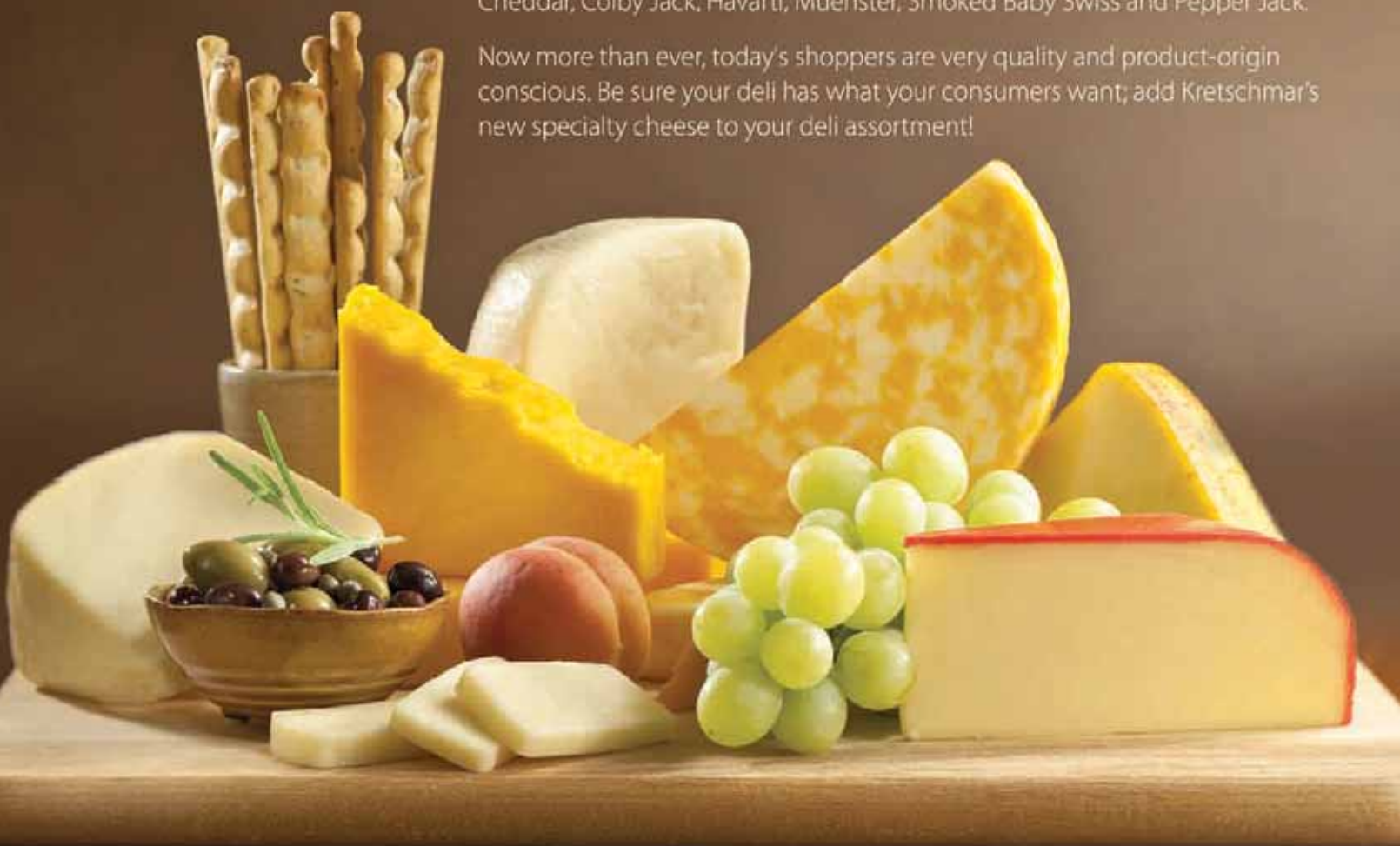


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— MARILYN WILKINSON  
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food case will expand to reflect the kind of advice we're getting for healthy eating. Whole-grain and high-fiber dishes — such as bulgur and quinoa — will include fresh or brined salty cheeses such as Feta, because cheese makes everything so much more appealing and satisfying,” notes WMMB's Wilkinson. Other ethnic cheeses, such as



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Hispanic cheeses are following Feta's growth path.

Consumers have recently discovered Burrata. "Due to its delicacy, one cannot mass-produce this cheese or let it sit until orders come in. It's freshly handmade and the customer receives it fresh," says Francis

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Wall, vice president of marketing for Bel-Gioioso Cheese, Denmark, WI. Both Burrata and Crescenza Stracchino, a subtle, slightly tart, tender-textured cheese, are made to order in small batches. "Consumers are aware of a broader range of flavor — from mild and creamy to something bold. Part of that is looking for more adventure and part is desire for a more focused taste. Cheese is a simple, inexpensive upgrade — you don't need seven ingredients, you just need one good one."

Aged handmade Cheddar sells in the blink of an eye. "People are doing double backflips over 2-, 4-, 6- and 8-year Cheddar," says Joe Widmer, Wisconsin Master



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Cheesemaker and owner of Widmer's Cheese Cellars, Theresa, WI. Widmer's started making stellar washed-rind Brick in 1922 and saw the rise of vacuum-pack Brick

in the 1950s for people who didn't like 'stinky.' "For a while, the washed-rind sales were flat, except locally, where it's always demanded. Now we're seeing the general public coming back to the real thing," he adds.

Even though they're more difficult to make, washed-rind cheeses are increasingly available and aged and 'stinky' cheeses are booming. "It's evidence not only of the increase in technological know-how but also of the maturing of the taste buds of the consumers," says Fermo Jaeckle, CEO of Monroe, WI-based Emmi-Roth Käse USA. Valfino — an original cheese that's softer than Fontina and, with an easier to handle rind, not as perishable as Taleggio — captivates everyone who tastes it.

### What's Popular

Italian heritage cheeses are perennially sought after. "Aged Provolone is the heart and soul of our company," says Eric Liebert, president of Park Cheese Company, Fond du Lac, WI. "Authentic Italian products have always been in demand, and it's always been about who's making the most authentic and best. We haven't changed our product, but these days there's a bigger checklist, such as how serious manufacturers are about environmental responsibility and humane treatment of animals."

The bacon and barbecue crazes are sparking interest in smoked cheeses. "Many of Wisconsin's smoked cheeses are infused with natural smoke from a wood fire pumped into a cold cheese storage area, rather than flavored with liquid smoke. As a result, smoked cheese is gaining respect. Wood can impart slightly different flavors — some use

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oak while Sid Cook [of Carr Valley Cheese] uses apple wood for his Apple Smoked Cheddar," says WMMB's Wilkinson.

Fruitwood — apple and pear — is used to smoke Emmi-Roth Käse's carefully developed Moody Blue. "Not all blue cheese works with smoke. For example, if we take our Buttermilk Blue and smoke it, the flavor profiles literally clash," says Jaeckle.

One of the most popular blue-veined profiles is Danish-style, and a textbook example is Mindoro Blue, produced and aged in Mindoro, WI, from Wisconsin milk. The Mindoro plant is one of several cheesemaking facilities, and the only blue facility, owned by the Dav- enport, IA-based Swiss Valley Farms cooperative. "We've been seeing increased demand for artisan cheese as well as cheeses with a stronger flavor — perceivably more so than the mild Cheddars and Mozzarella," says Lauren Albracht, marketing specialist, Swiss Valley Farms. Mindoro Gorgonzola, aged 90 days, is creamier and milder than the 60-day Mindoro Blue.

#### What's Coming Next

New cheeses are emerging from America's Dairyland. Emmi-Roth Käse is introducing a 9-pound wheel named Gorgonzilla,

which is tagged "a beast of a blue with a sweet, tame finish."

Fresh local sheep's milk blended with fresh local cow's milk in Sartori Reserve Pastoral Blend is the first foray into mixed milk cheese by Plymouth, WI-based Sartori Foods. "The sheep's milk — nearly twice as rich in both fat and protein as cow's milk — brings sweeter, nuttier, more intense flavors to this cheese," says cheesemaker Mike Matucheski. Accentuating the nod to Spain's tradition of mixing milks, wheels are dusted with Spanish smoked sweet paprika.

Sartori Reserve Balsamic BellaVitano extends the BellaVitano line. Immersing the wheels in Italian balsamic vinegar colors and flavors the edible rind, an integral part of the cheese.

An important name in deli is promoting the Master's Mark. Kretschmar Deli, Cincinnati, OH, is adding cuts of eight classic cheeses, each from a Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker, to its nationwide line of premium deli meats and cheeses for service delis and self-service deli areas. Labels on the 8-ounce packages of Butterkäse, Muenster, Smoked Baby Swiss, Sharp Cheddar, Havarti and more prominently display the Master's Mark logo.

"Using the Wisconsin Master's Mark helps to increase the perceived excellence, artisanship and over-all value," says Erik Waterkotte, Kretschmar director of marketing. As of April 2010, 49 masters are actively working in the state. After completing the University of Wisconsin 3-year formal advanced training program, veteran cheesemakers may then use the Master's Mark logo on only those cheeses in which they've attained Master status. Enrollment requires 10 years' active, licensed Wisconsin cheesemaking experience, including five years' making the master variety.

Retailers can avail themselves of WMMB's customized in-store promotions in a dozen new themes to be unveiled at the IDDBA Expo in Houston, collaterals, signage, recipe brochures, and cheesemaker visits. Education and recipes are online at WMMB's [EatWisconsinCheese.com](http://EatWisconsinCheese.com); recipes at [GrilledCheeseAcademy.com](http://GrilledCheeseAcademy.com) are indexed by cheese. Retailers can find specialty cheese resources from the Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute, Delavan, WI, at [WisSpecialCheese.org](http://WisSpecialCheese.org). The Wisconsin Original Cheese Festival will celebrate Wisconsin artisan, specialty and farmstead cheese Friday to Sunday, Nov. 5-7, 2010. **DB**



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# Simple Elegance

As goat cheese becomes more mainstream, producers expand their offerings

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

With specialty cheese sales showing a persistent growth pattern, the segment finds itself facing an enviable challenge. How do you continue growing a category that's immensely popular? How can you possibly get people to eat more specialty cheese?

In recent years, a great deal of growth has come from booming sales of goat cheese. With its pristine white color and distinct tangy flavor, goat cheese possesses the kind of earthy sophistication that foodies crave. Goat cheeses satisfy their culinary curiosity and answers their cravings for something trendy and tasty.

"People are pushing the boundaries and looking into new foods that are familiar but adventurous," says Rachel Oriana Schraeder, sales and marketing director, Sierra Nevada Cheese Company, Willows, CA. "They're finding that goat cheese definitely falls into that category. It encourages them to continue expanding their horizons."

As with so many food trends, the goat cheese phenomenon can be traced back to the foodservice realm, where it first began showing up in fine-dining establishments two decades ago. "The better chefs brought it to the forefront and then the specialty stores started carrying it because people were asking for it," says Allison Hooper, co-owner



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and CEO, Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery (VBCC), Websterville, VT. "It's not only in fine dining anymore. In family restaurants, you'll see salads and pizza with goat cheese on them. It's really getting down into the mass market in a much bigger way."

Because goat cheese is common in the Mediterranean, where hardy goats survive — and thrive — in areas where cows cannot, its prominence has increased as Mediterranean diets have gained in popularity. Even the recession couldn't slow down chèvre's momentum, with sales continually rising between 10 and 25 percent, depending on the individual company.

For one segment of the population, opting for goat cheese is more about health than trendiness. Many lactose-intolerant consumers are discovering they can digest goat cheese, thus giving them a way to enjoy one of their favorite foods without discomfort. But the health benefits of goat cheese don't end there. Not only does it contain less fat, calories, and cholesterol than cheese made from cow's milk, but it's also rich in calcium, protein, vitamin A, vitamin K, phosphorus, niacin, and thiamin.

"The nutritional aspects are significant, plus it's seen as exotic," says Mary Keehn,



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owner and founder, Cypress Grove Chevre, Arcata, CA. "It's become one of the hottest categories in the specialty-food business."

### Sweet Sophistication

Seeking to ensure that goat cheese fans, both old and new, have no shortage of reasons to indulge, chèvre producers have moved far beyond the standard "goat log" into a wide array of flavored, shaped, crumbled and aged products.

"As goat cheese becomes more mainstream, consumers are looking for new and exciting things they haven't seen before," explains Lindsay Gregory, marketing coordinator, Woolwich Dairy, Orangeville, ON, Canada. "Whereas most people are familiar with the soft, unripened basic log, now they're looking for more artisanal styles of goat cheese and exotic flavors, such as honey or lavender or jalapeño or exotic spices from various parts of the world."

In addition to standard soft, unripened goat cheeses, Woolwich makes an array of flavored chèvre logs, including cranberry cinnamon, herbes de Provence, bruschetta, fig, roasted garlic, fine herb, and peppercorn. The company also produces goat cheese versions of many popular cheeses, including Brie, Feta, Cheddar, and Mozzarella.

"People are starting to realize that Brie or Camembert doesn't have to be made with





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Cypress Grove makes a variety of goat's milk cheeses, including Purple Haze and Fromage Blanc fresh cheese; Humboldt Fog, Bermuda Triangle, Fog Lights, and Truffle Tremor soft-ripened cheeses; Midnight Moon firm cheese; and Lamb Chopper, a firm sheep-milk cheese.

According to Keehn, it's all about making sure there's something for everyone. "Entry-level people will typically want a fresh-flavored cheese, while the more sophisticated buyer is interested in washed-rind cheeses and the more flavorful products, like the soft-ripened," she says. "When we're creating product, we think about who our customer is and what their needs are — and we try to fulfill those."

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cow's milk," says Gregory. "When you add goat milk, you add that elegant, decadent appeal people are looking for."

Arnaud Solandt, president and co-owner, Montchèvre-Betin Inc., Rolling Hills Estates, CA, reports strong sales of his company's Goat Brie, Feta, and Camembert, as well as varieties that pair Chèvre with honey or Peppadew peppers.

Sierra Nevada has experienced hearty sales of its Caprae line of goat cheeses, including Feta and Monterrey Jacques. The company recently introduced its Bella Capra



produces Couple, Bijou, and Bonne Bouche, as well as cheeses with Geotrichum rinds — that is, goat cheese containing Geotrichum, a mold/yeast that produces a distinctive geo rind. As the cheese ages and ripens, the rind wrinkles and begins to look like coral. The more wrinkled the rind, the more complex and flavorful the cheese.

In Sonoma, CA, Laura Chenel's Chevre Inc., reports particularly strong sales of Melodie, a mild, creamy goat cheese with floral flavor notes "created to enchant goat cheese connoisseurs, as well as the non-initiated," says Marie Lesoudier, general manager. Also growing in popularity is Blossom, a fresh goat cheese featuring a medallion of flavor in the center. Varieties include basil olive oil, sun-dried tomato, and fig and olive.

"We're seeing more and more people interested in different tastes, meaning either flavored fresh goat cheese or aged goat cheese, which is very nice because it offers us the opportunity to play around and have fun developing more cheeses," she adds. Lesoudier predicts the next big trend in goat cheeses will be aged cheeses.

Response to Sierra Nevada's aged Goat Cheddar has been so positive, Schraeder says, the company has been receiving



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requests to airfreight large quantities of the cheese to consumers where retailer distribution is not yet available.

Despite the rising interest in goat cheese, some consumers cling to a preconceived notion that goat cheese won't taste good. In fact, it remains one of the few impediments to people trying the product. "As much as the term 'goat cheese' makes for a really elegant idea, there are still people who think that goat cheese is going to be very strong, very pungent, kind of barnyard-y," says Woolwich's Gregory. "The only way to get past that is to get them to actually try the product so they can see how clean and fresh and tangy it is."

Admittedly, the goat cheese of 20 years ago didn't taste as good as today's product, concedes VBCC's Hooper. However, modern goat's milk is such high quality, she says, most consumers would have difficulty telling it apart from cow's milk. To introduce hesitant consumers to goat cheese, VBCC has introduced Double-Cream Cremont, a mixed-milk cheese that blends goat's milk with cow's milk and a hint of Vermont cream.

"For every consumer who doesn't eat cow's milk cheese because they're lactose intolerant, there is a consumer who simply believes they don't like goat cheese," says Hooper. "Our job is to try to convert them. This is one way to do it."

**DB**



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# The Nutrition Integrity Challenge



By  
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**N**utrition integrity is not about turning your deli into a haven for health enthusiasts and alienating comfort food cravers. It's about offering the right selection and transparency of information to allow customers to choose what's right for them at the moment.

The deli is perfect for serving up delicious, healthful offerings — consumers often consider freshly prepared refrigerated foods from the deli case an excellent choice for freshness and value. In a recent study by Olson Communications, consumers said fresh, healthy and nutritious were the most important characteristics in purchasing food; 87 percent ranked freshness as an important factor in their deli purchase decision.

**Satisfying Health Enthusiasts And Comfort Cravers:** Research shows consumers may make different choices for Monday through Wednesday meals than they will for a special occasion or weekend meal. The secret is to make your deli the first choice stop on the journey to the perfect meal.

When consumers want indulgence, serve it up without abandon. Don't try to make healthy versions of classic indulgence foods with faux ingredients that can never deliver the taste memory customers anticipate. The indulgence has to be worth the splurge in taste that is rich and flavorful.

Taste always trumps nutrition. Consumers are more likely to sacrifice taste when they shop for packaged goods that meet specific nutritional profiles in a shelf-stable, convenient format. Foods that do not deliver on taste expectations often end up being one-time solutions for consumers.

**The Balancing Act:** Health and wellness have become top consumer priorities. Recent studies from the International Food Information Council say 56 percent of consumers are eating to manage health issues by changing the amount and type of foods they eat and adding exercise. Childhood obesity has focused attention on healthy lifestyle improvement, and diet is taking center stage. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware about nutrition and balancing health and indulgence to fit their lifestyles. Many talk about using portion size to balance nutritional needs and meal satisfaction. The deli is the perfect environment to put consumers in charge of the exact portions they choose.

**Full Disclosure:** Accessible but not intrusive nutrition information is key to success. Customers don't want to hunt through a website to find nutrition details. They want credible answers to their questions in person and on-line.

It is a challenge to have nutrition information on demand for frequently changing deli items prepared from fresh ingredients. Supermarket chains often initiate programs focused on nutrition with center-of-store packaged goods.

A recent study by Olson Communications showed consumers expressing frustration about getting nutrition information, especially for house-made deli foods. These products were often listed as favorites for taste, but there were equally as many negative comments related to product information such as, "Don't have any idea what's in it," and "Have you ever tried to get nutrition information from the person behind the counter?"

Rather than skirting the issue or ignoring detailed nutritional information for deli foods, some major retailers will simply state their food philosophy of fresh, seasonal offerings with ingredi-

ent integrity on their website. It shows a commitment, builds trust with consumers and encourages them to interact with store personnel when making choices.

Many stores have a registered dietitian on staff for customer programs and special events, yet relatively few use the RD to educate and empower service staff to provide credible, straightforward answers to customer questions.

**Whole Food Nutrition:** Interest in naturally functional foods, particularly fruits and vegetables, is growing. Animal proteins, such as omega fatty acids from seafood and probiotics from some dairy products, are also drawing consumers.

Creating a "health halo" equals competitive advantage; it can be as simple as rethinking ingredients to add whole grains and nutrient-dense ingredients. Vitamin D is predicted to be the new supernutrient for bone health, cancer prevention and boosting immunity. Mushrooms can be a vitamin D powerhouse. Exotic grains, such as quinoa, that consumers might not be comfortable preparing are an emerging favorite, and couscous is taking its place in the mainstream mix.

Whole-food nutrition extends beyond fruits and vegetables to a wide range of foods containing antioxidants. Red wine and cocoa are great examples of healthy indulgences consumers are enjoying with increasing frequency, so think about cross-merchandising opportunities to complete the meal for your customers.

**Be Top Of Mind And Easy To Find:** Even though many retailers are experimenting with social media promotion, there seems to be little consideration of the basics like search engine optimization. For example, an Internet search of "healthy deli foods" often turns up quick-service sandwich chains such as Panera, Cosi and Subway. Independent grocers might show up on page two of a search and major retailers known for healthful offerings often don't appear until page four. You have a real opportunity to bring your store-brand front and center when consumers search for "healthy deli foods." They already believe supermarkets offer more healthful foods than restaurants, so be there when they're searching for choices.

**DB**



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Nestle Professional North America, based in Glendale, CA, owns the Stouffer's brand, a brand with a long and illustrious history. In fact, when the Apollo 11 astronauts were in isolation after returning from the first moon landing in July 1969, Stouffer's was on their menu.

For more than 80 years — from its beginnings in Cleveland, OH, where Abraham and Mahala Stouffer opened a small coffee shop in 1922, to its pioneering role in frozen foods after World War II, all the way to the present — Stouffer's has been synonymous with consistent quality and customer-pleasing entrées and sides.

The picture on the top shows Stouffer's 227 Club located in the Shaker Square area of Cleveland. It was the first suburban restaurant/retail store where Stouffer started selling its frozen products following the end of World War II.

The picture on the bottom, taken around 1922, shows Abraham Stouffer in his first coffee/dairy shop in the Arcade area of Cleveland.

# Nestle Professional



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