DELI BUSINESS
MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

AUG./SEPT. 2010

The Sustainable DELI

Growing concerns about the environment are raising awareness of sustainable practices

ALSO INSIDE

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MEXICAN FOOD
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HUMMUS
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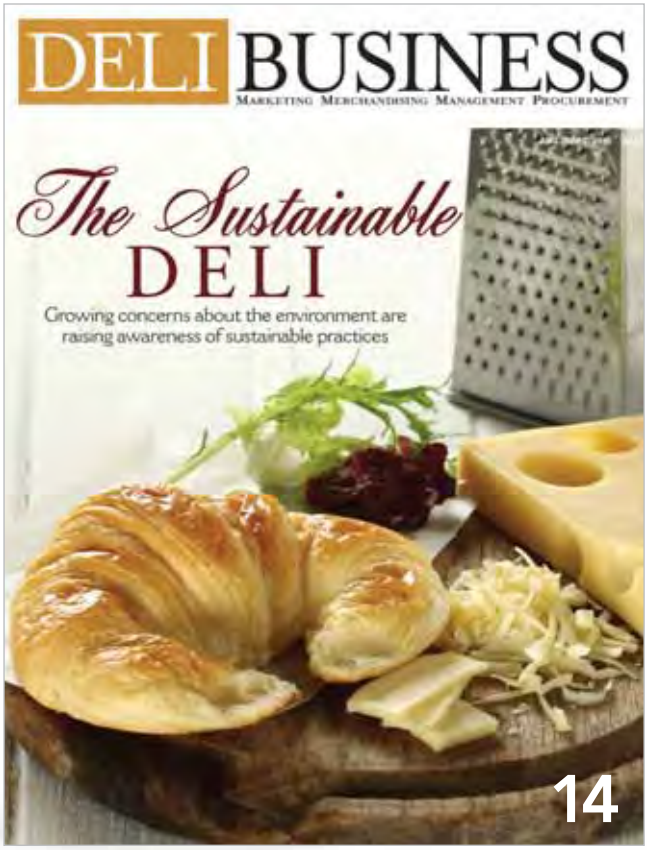

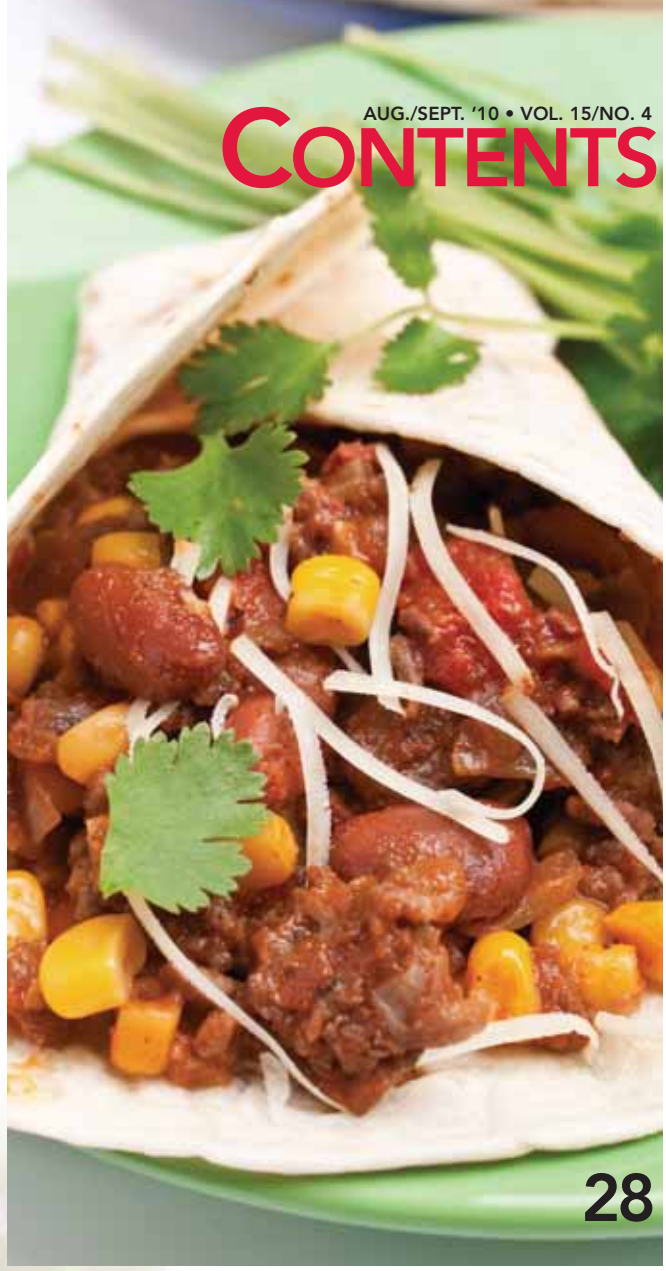

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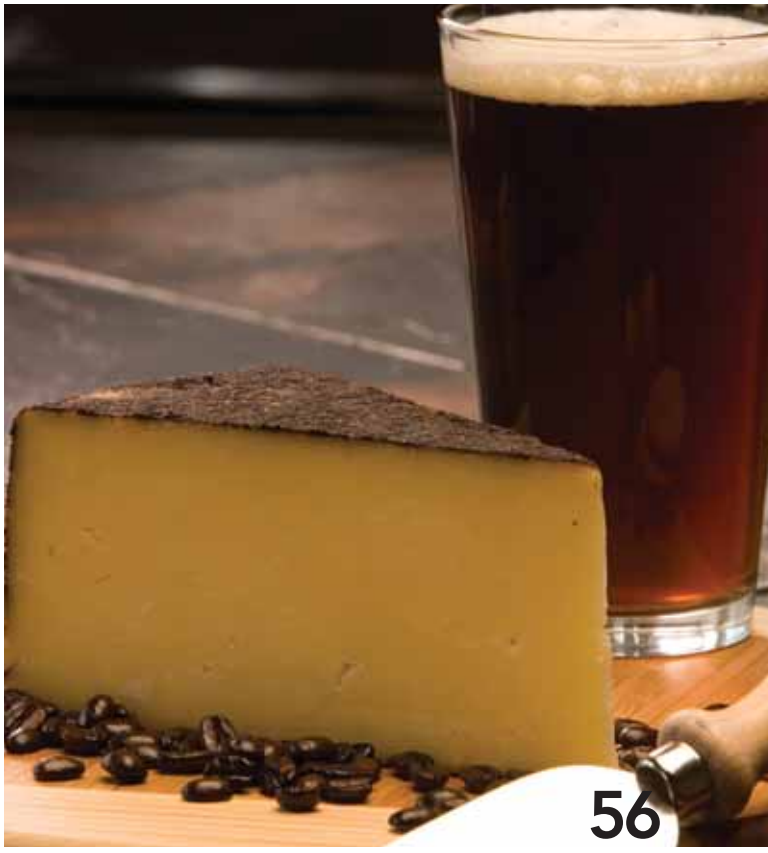

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BEEMSTER CHEESE 'GOES PINK' IN SUPPORT OF SUSAN G. KOMEN FOR THE CURE

Beemster, the Netherlands' premium gourmet Dutch cheese company, has joined in the fight against breast cancer with the launch of a limited-edition Pink Ribbon Vlaskaas cheese, available now through the end of October.

Fifty cents from every pound of Pink Ribbon cheese purchased will benefit Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the world's largest breast cancer organization funding life-saving breast cancer research and community health programs. Beemster has pledged to donate a minimum of $10,000 to help find a cure for breast cancer.

"We're proud to contribute to such an inspirational organization and strive to help find a cure for this prevalent disease," says Michael Blum, sales and marketing manager at Beemster. "The Pink Ribbon cheese promotion provides an opportunity for our customers to get involved in this important cause."

Beemster Vlaskaas is one of the newer additions to the company's line of Premium Gourmet Dutch Cheeses. When translated, Vlaskaas means flax cheese, originally made for workers to enjoy during the Dutch harvest festival.

The cheese can be purchased for between $10.99 and 16.99 a pound at participating specialty stores as well as major U.S. food chains including H-E-B, Central Market, Safeway, Lunds/Byerlys, Schnucks, Bristol Farms, Fairway, A&P, Fred Meyer's, QFC and Smiths.

COMING NEXT ISSUE IN OCT./NOV. 2010

COMING NEXT

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Food Safety

FEATURE STORIES
Packaging
Mediterranean Foods

PREPARED FOODS
Pizza

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Private Label
Bacon

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Vegetarian Meals
Fried Chicken
Hot Foods

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES
Mozzarella

CHEESES
American Cheeses
Spreads

COMING IN DEC. 2010/JAN. 2011
DELI BUSINESS will present its annual look at retail trends so retailers can know what to expect in the year ahead.

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Boston, MA (978) 664-1100

www.atlantafoods.com

Transition

David Wojdyla has joined The Perishables Group, Chicago, IL, as retail program director to the company's Chicago staff. He will manage all aspects of retail data services and supplier category management programs, including critical sales activities and projects with upper-level retail directors, category managers and vendors. He has extensive experience in defining market challenges, developing solutions, leading strategic programs and leveraging data to identify opportunities and creating actionable solutions.

www.perishablesgroup.com

Announcements

Three First-Place Awards

Klondike Cheese Company, Monroe, WI, was awarded three First Places by judges for the 2010 Wisconsin State Fair Cheese and Butter Contest. Odyssey Feta won First Place in the Feta Category for Traditional flavored Feta in Brine. Klondike Brick Cheese won in the Brick/Muenster category, and Klondike Havarti won in the Open Class for Semi-Soft Cheeses. Klondike Odyssey Reduced Fat Feta in Brine received Second Place honors in the Reduced Fat/Lite Cheese category.

www.klondikecheese.com

New Look & Brand

Sandridge Food Corporation, Medina, OH, has rebranded its retail deli salads as 1st & Main Deli, featuring an updated look and improved packaging. The products feature brightly colored in-mold labels for high visual impact, vibrant product photography, and square containers to help delis maximize shelf space. The line includes: Traditional Potato Salad, Mustard Potato Salad, Macaroni Salad, Chopped Cole Slaw, Deluxe Cole Slaw, Chicken Salad, Tuna Salad, Ham Salad and Egg Salad.

www.sandridge.com

Prestigious Food-Safety Award

DCI Cheese Company (DCI), Richfield, WI, announces its Green Bay facility has been recognized for meeting or exceeding the standards of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) as defined by GFSI's official benchmarking procedure. GFSI is widely considered to be the "gold standard" for international food safety. DCI's Santa Rosa, Calif., facility was GFSI certified in March of this year as well. With the Green Bay facility's certification, DCI has achieved its goal of company-wide GFSI certification at all production facilities.

www.dcicheeseco.com

Transition

Warren Reid has joined Best Cheese Corporation, Mount Kisco, NY, as west regional sales manager. He has over 20 years in the cheese industry, most recently holding the position of East and West Coast sales representative for Beemster Cheese where he helped to expand the brand significantly. Prior to his experience as a sales representative, Reid owned and operated cheese shops in the suburbs of New York City and Philadelphia where his shops received multiple "Best of" awards.

www.bestcheeseusa.com

New Products

All-Natural Hummus Line

Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Taunton, MA, has unveiled Tribe Origins, a new line of all-natural smooth and creamy-style hummus. Three of the new Tribe Origins flavors feature a generous serving of handcrafted toppings made from original recipes and using the finest possible ingredients found in nature. The all-natural hummus includes only a few simple all-natural ingredients and is offered in four flavors: Classic, Spicy Red Pepper, Tomato & Veggie and Zesty Spice & Garlic.

www.tribehummus.com

New Specialty Breads

Kangaroo Brands, Milwaukee, WI, has introduced Itsy-Bitsy Pockets, Hot Dog Pockets and Fiber 5 Pockets. Itsy Bitsy Pockets offer a smaller edible food holder for consumers with small appetites or wanting to limit their food consumption, Hot Dog Pockets enable the deli to piggyback on the huge seasonal demand for grilling sausages and related bread products. Each of the new Fiber 5 pockets, in pre-opened and sliced halves, provides 20 percent of the average RDA of fiber.

www.kangaroobrands.com

Cheese Party Tortas

Rising Sun Farms, Phoenix, OR, has introduced Pesto Dried Tomato Cheese Party Torta and Gorgonzola Cheese Party Torta in a holiday inspired 20-ounce wreath shape to address the market need for high-quality, foodservice specialty items. The long shelf life of Party Tortas make them ideal for storage by the customer — 18 months frozen, six weeks refrigerated. The product can be conveniently refrozen.

www.risingsunfarms.com

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

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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Valuable Information From A Deli Consumer

A consumer sent us a thoughtful letter about her impressions with her local supermarket. I've edited out personal details and company names and posted the letter at *DeliBusiness.com* for you to read the whole text. I didn't include any store names mostly because it was an anecdotal complaint, not a study, and it would be unfair to assume it to be representative of any one chain. Yet the letter dealt with common complaints and frustrations and is broadly relevant. Our consumer, who is married with a young daughter and works part-time, identified many areas worth focusing on.

Location: One lesson is the degree to which success depends on things out of the reach of the deli director. This shopper is unhappy with the store, unhappy with the deli, willing and able to buy at specialty shops, warehouse clubs, etc., and still shopping at a supermarket she dislikes. Why? Location. Convenience counts for so much. Of course, if she is giving even 20 percent of her business to other venues, that is a big price for a supermarket to pay because it can't satisfy its shoppers.

Effort: Treating consumer complaints with high priority takes a lot of effort, but even this jaded consumer was wowed that this chain is willing to spend time looking at security tapes to figure out what happens when a consumer complains of bad service. That is pretty impressive. Do you take consumer complaints this seriously or do you ignore them or send an apology letter without really trying to solve the problem?

Delicate Matters: We are dealing with food, which means we would like everything to be appetizing. This consumer questions the employment of an extremely obese woman at the service deli counter — a tricky matter. For the most part, employers are prohibited from placing physical requirements on jobs unless necessary to do the job. There is some discretion in hiring and stores can transfer people to other departments; still, this is an important area, right at the intersection of the store and the customer and yet also an area in which stores must tread carefully.

Company Policies: Another issue our consumer raised is a direct outgrowth of company policy. She points out this woman's hairnet is always ripped — which we take to mean she always wears the same ripped hairnet. Issues such as this are a direct outgrowth of company policy. Hairnets are a symbol to the consumer of concern for food safety and quality, so company policy has to be set up to prevent ripped hairnets from ever being more than a short-term fluke.

Labor Schedule, Technology and Priority: The crux of this consumer's frustration relates to labor: not enough people in the deli at what she identifies as "crunch" times, such as after 5 PM on a weekday, and employees being too slow and often off doing other tasks — cleaning, etc. — and not helping shoppers. This raises four issues: First, is the store doing appropriate studies of labor hours and productivity? Maybe the store is understaffed at these times. Second, does the store have tested productivity standards for service employees? Although you can't fire people for seemingly being slow, you can have a standardized test of how long it takes a counter clerk to slice a pound of roast beef, a half-pound of ham, etc.; you can also test whether company policies, such as offering a sample slice or asking how the customer would like it sliced, are followed. Third, is technology being used to lesson the consumer frustration and maintain labor productivity? Can a consumer drop off an order at the service deli and then go grocery shopping? Can customers text in an order? Can they order via a computer screen? Fourth, does your store make customer service a priority? In many stores, the cleaner doesn't stop cleaning because the deli has to close in an hour and no overtime is authorized.

Marketing: The deli is often under-marketed, and our consumer complains about daily specials not looking appetizing. The number of stores where a special is announced by a magic marker on a paper plate taped to the deli case still astonishes. It is important to remember marketing basics such as the difference between a feature and a benefit. Selling ham at half price is selling an ingredient. What you want to sell is the conviviality of friends enjoying ham and cheese roll-ups and a beer, or children who love Mom's special turkey sandwich.

Décor: With the growth of national brands and national retail chains, there is a danger of homogenization. Yet the most successful food operations present a pleasant sense of place. Is your deli a nice place to be? Would you want to hang out there and grab a sandwich?

Magic Words: We teach our children that "magic words," such as please and thank you, make things happen. You can sense this consumer exhaling when a clerk apologized. Mary Tyler Moore famously got her job working for Lou Grant because when she came for an interview and accidentally bumped into a desk, she apologized to it. One wonders how many people in charge of hiring would recognize an apology is the best qualification you could possibly get for a customer-service job. **DB**

James E. Prevor

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by Lee Smith, Publisher

Private Label Treachery

The chain's stores are well run, clean and customer service is excellent. Tipping is not allowed and carry-out service is always available. It has strong community ties and is known as a great place to work.

It carries brand-name products and its price image is high compared to many of its competitors, but much lower than the specialty chains it also competes with. Sale items are good deals, especially its frequent buy-one-get-one-free offers. Most people enjoy shopping in its stores unless low price is very important. If low price is important, any of the discounters is considerably less.

In general, the stores carry good-quality products but not high-end specialties. The delis are ordinary and the product quality varies from acceptable to very good. Nothing is awful. There isn't a wide selection of specialty cheeses, but there's enough to satisfy most customers. Hot prepared foods are limited to rotisserie and fried chicken, wings, potatoes and occasionally one or two more items. Most of the time the prepared food is fresh and delicious, but not always. Salads are commercially prepared staples. Nothing is ever new or adventurous.

Virtually all the bakery products are fresh and quality control is excellent but the product line is typical of any in-store bakery. It seems partially hydrogenated oils are slowly being removed, but a significant number of products are still made using trans fats. The product line is mixed and no publicity or signage lets customers know what products do or do not have trans fats.

The meat department is varied. Its pork is known to be the poorest quality of any competitor and it isn't uncommon to hear regulars say they buy pork elsewhere. Beef varies considerably, especially when on sale when the quality can drop dramatically; however, there is always the option of buying Black Angus. Until recently, chicken was a nationally branded product line.

The higher price points for a clean store with great customer service is a problematic image during a recession when the former is assumed and the latter treasured. Unfortunately, the quality and variety of this chain can't compete with higher-priced competitors offering superior quality in stores that are just as spotless but more innovative and offering first-class service departments. When it comes to price, the chain probably will not be competitive with mass marketers and club stores in the area.

With such a mixed product-quality image, what's the role of private label? This is not a chain that offers the-best-of-anything when it comes to products. Merchandising is limited to floor displays, sale items, but pretty much everything stays the same day-in and day-out.

I saw a specific example of the treachery of private label when I went to the store last weekend. I needed to buy chicken tenders. I usually buy Perdue; the display had been moved to the end of the case next to the refrigerated prepared foods and was limited to about six items with one facing each. In its place was a large display of store-branded poultry. There weren't any chicken tenders but thin-cut chicken breasts were on sale for about $2 less per pound than the tenders I normally buy.

I was suspicious. They didn't have Perdue chicken tenders either. I remembered a great sale the chain had on sirloin steaks about a year ago; they ended up being so awful no one would eat them. Still, I was cautiously optimistic about this sale and bought one package.

Later that afternoon, I went to the club store where I also shop and looked at the fresh chicken. Brand name tenders were available in packages of six at $1.20 per pound less than the sale price of thin-cut chicken breast. The regular skinless chicken breasts were $3.50 a pound less than the chain's store brand. By the way the club store chicken was superb. Private label, in this case, not only lost a sale, it lost a customer.

The move to private label is fraught with long-term consequences that are difficult to evaluate by corporate management. This chain holds itself in very high regard as well it should, but it fails to see the problem with quality since its mission statement and goals are still followed and operational execution is excellent.

What's the benefit of expanding private label if the products offer mediocre quality at lower prices that are still significantly higher than the low-price leader?

This is the dilemma many chains face — overestimating the value of a name or misunderstanding the value proposition associated with the name. If the only reasons private label is being pursued are to lower prices and increase gross profit margins, private label is a very dangerous strategy.

Trader Joe's private label has a clear message and customers flock to their stores and bemoan the lack of a store if one is not nearby. Wal-Mart stores under the direction of Sam Walton had a clear marketing proposition — brand name products at the lowest prices. Private-label Wal-Mart may just mean cheap.

Private label requires a retailer to market its own brand or run the risk of diluting its image to the customer's lowest expectations. **DB**

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The Sustainable DELI

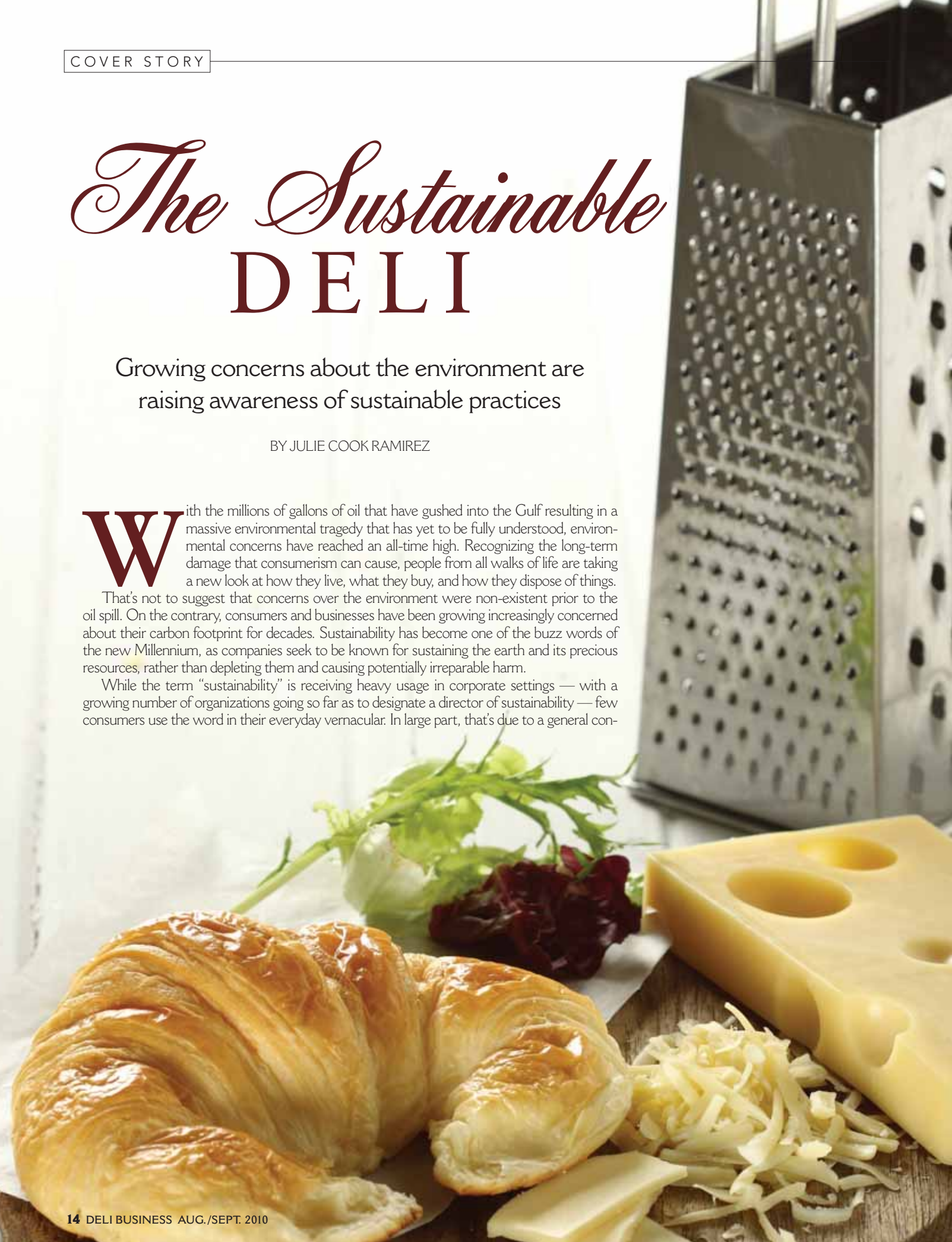
Growing concerns about the environment are raising awareness of sustainable practices

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

With the millions of gallons of oil that have gushed into the Gulf resulting in a massive environmental tragedy that has yet to be fully understood, environmental concerns have reached an all-time high. Recognizing the long-term damage that consumerism can cause, people from all walks of life are taking a new look at how they live, what they buy, and how they dispose of things.

That's not to suggest that concerns over the environment were non-existent prior to the oil spill. On the contrary, consumers and businesses have been growing increasingly concerned about their carbon footprint for decades. Sustainability has become one of the buzz words of the new Millennium, as companies seek to be known for sustaining the earth and its precious resources, rather than depleting them and causing potentially irreparable harm.

While the term "sustainability" is receiving heavy usage in corporate settings — with a growing number of organizations going so far as to designate a director of sustainability — few consumers use the word in their everyday vernacular. In large part, that's due to a general con-



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fusion about just what sustainability means. Does it merely mean recycling? Does it refer to biodegradable packaging? Is it a veiled reference to buying organic? Or is sustainability a broader term that encompasses everything related to living in harmony with nature and making sure we don't deplete resources at a rate faster than the earth is able to renew them? All this and more, say experts, yet the vast majority of the general public lack a firm grasp of the vastness of the term. Still, businesses can tap into that growing awareness and deliver their goods and services on a foundation of sustainability.

"Most of the time, businesses think it [sustainability] might be associated with green and eco-friendliness, but beyond that, they're not quite sure," says Tamara Barnett, senior analyst, The Hartman Group Inc., Bellevue, WA. "What really matters most is alluding to some terms that allow them to talk about all the ways of doing good, of being responsible."

Needless to say, deli operators are becoming just as concerned about sustainability as their customers and suppliers. Much of deli fare is grab-and-go, so it tends to create a great deal of waste. As consumers become increasingly concerned about their carbon footprint, there is concern they may eschew the deli altogether, in search of more sustainable sustenance.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPOONLIDZ

The EcoTaster Mini

Not Just A Pretty Package

Not surprisingly, chief among consumer concerns is packaging. Even if they don't fully comprehend the meaning of sustainability, most consumers understand that the type of packaging used to house the products they buy directly impacts their carbon footprint.

"Packaging is the first sustainability cue that people notice," says Barnett. "When they have that product in their hand, it's their first cue that 'perhaps this company cares a little bit more about the environment.' It's an evaluation they can make immediately upon interacting with a product."

For many consumers, the first step is getting past the misconception that packaging is waste. "People are always asking, 'Why do I need all this packaging? At the end of the day, I just have to throw it away,'" says Ron Cotterman, executive director of sustainability, Cryovac Food Packaging/Sealed Air Corp., Duncan, SC. "They have the perception that packaging is waste, but in reality, packaging prevents waste. Without that packaging, your spoilage rates increase dramatically."

Increasingly, consumers are looking for eco-friendly packaging produced with recycled materials, natural fibers, or paper instead of plastic. According to Jeff Cole, marketing manager, GenPak LLC, Glens Falls, NY, consumers view sustainable packaging in terms of the source of the materials, specifically

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whether it consists of renewable natural resources or post-consumer recycled content.

"If it isn't made of a natural source and it has to be plastic, they want that plastic to be made using post-consumer recycled content, so they know the stuff they put out on the curb to be recycled is actually being used again," says Cole.

Deli buyers are responding to their concerns, seeking out more sustainable packaging, such as flexible pouches for wet salads and dressings, according to Cotterman.

Increasingly, delis are also moving toward recyclable or compostable rotisserie chicken containers or bags, notes Joe DePippo, president, Hain Pure Protein Corp., Fredericksburg, PA.

Indeed, plastic often "cues toxic" for some consumers, leading a growing number of delis to look for ways to reduce the amount of plastic in their packaging, using an alternative material, or demonstrating they're using a safer plastic that's less likely to leech dangerous chemicals into the food.

"Sustainability has so many elements to it — from materials that can be replaced by nature to recycled materials to starch-based products from plants versus petroleum-based materials," says Marilyn Stapleton, product manager — take out, InnoWare Plastic, a division of Solo Cup Co. Alpharetta, GA. "It's a pretty broad umbrella and depending on how you drill down under that umbrella, there are a lot of things you can do that support extending our resources."

For its part, InnoWare has dedicated its efforts to creating packaging that either is made of recycled materials or has a lower material content. Its "eco-compostable" packaging boasts an earth-tone base and a clear lid. InnoWare has also embossed or imprinted its products with the word "compostable" so there is no question in the end user's mind that the product is compostable.

"The deli folks are definitely looking for any green message they can send to their customers," says GenPak's Cole. "They're certainly asking for sustainable options and they're also asking for new designs, something that's going to set their product apart from somebody else's."

Of course, it's not enough for deli packaging to be attractive or even eco-sustainable, says Stapleton. It must be functional and economical as well. "We can't get away from the real issue here and that is to help the retailer sell more food. In order to do that, you have to have functional requirements and aesthetics and clarity, so that the food shines through the package and gives them the ability to continue increasing their sales."

Dishing Up Awareness

A growing number of deli operators are extending their commitment to sustainability beyond packaging to any disposable product associated with the deli's operations. To that end, Larkspur, CA-based SpoonLidz LLC has invented the EcoTaster Mini, a 3-inch-long tasting spoon made entirely of 100 percent recyclable, repulpable, and compostable content. Because of their unique composition, they almost completely biodegrade in just two weeks.

"Consumers instantly recognize something that has less material and moves away from plastic as a sustainable material," says Peggy Cross, principal. "And the deli people see this as an obvious way to communicate to consumers in a real visceral way that they're interested in using sustainable disposable materials."

Not only do EcoTasters feel much less wasteful to consumers, they also take up 1/5 of the space of traditional tasting spoons, which means they take up far less space during shipping and storage.

SpoonLidz also makes EcoTensil, a full-sized 4-inch-long scoop that retains its structural strength through a full cup of yogurt and beyond. Composed of sustainable, biodegradable paperboard, it has a moisture barrier coating like a milk carton. Thus, it is accepted in any recycling or composting stream that accepts milk cartons.

Closing The Loop

While it's good common sense for a business to embrace sustainability and take steps to reduce its carbon footprint, equally important is a corresponding communication effort. After all, such an endeavor won't mean anything to the consumer — and will do little to help position a particular deli as the go-to place for people concerned about sustainability — if nothing is done to explain why certain changes were undertaken in the first place.

"If you're going to spend the time or the energy to make a change to your packaging, you need, first of all, to make sure you're explaining to your customer what you're doing and why you're doing it," says Dave Fosse, director of marketing, Lindar Corp., Baxter, MN. "If you aren't educating anybody about what you're doing, there's no benefit in doing it."

Not only do such initiatives effectively position the deli and answer consumer demands for more sustainable products, but they also build awareness and understanding

among consumers so the process continues.

"The consumer is ultimately the person responsible for closing the loop," says Lindar's Fosse. "If you don't get their buy-in, the store can make all these changes but have very limited control over what the consumer is going to do with the packaging once they leave the premises."

Consider The Source

Sustainability doesn't begin and end with packaging, of course. Long before packaging even comes into play, there is the product itself. Increasingly, consumers are paying closer attention to where and how the food they eat is grown or raised. And deli operators are responding in kind, asking key questions with regard to humane practices.

According to Linda Boardman, president, Applegate Farms, Bridgewater, NJ, this includes matters such as providing more space to the animals, along with a healthy diet free of animal byproducts and cheapening ingredients that could put the animals at risk for illness, thus necessitating the use of antibiotics — which Applegate avoids at all costs.

When an animal ingests antibiotics, it sets the stage for a broader environmental impact in the form of run-off from the manure on the farm, she explains. What's more, the overuse of antibiotics promotes the growth of super bugs and antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which in turn, poses a risk to human health. "Sustainability really cascades to a number of levels and hits beyond just environmental into animal welfare, human welfare, and societal welfare," says Boardman.

Increasingly, the general public is interested in learning where their meat comes from, she adds. This desire for "transparency" transfers over to the deli manager whose No. 1 goal is giving customers what they want. "The spotlight on raising practices and particularly the use of antibiotics has never been brighter than in the last 12 months," says Boardman. "We are definitely seeing an increased interest from deli buyers in understanding the various raising practices and how that relates to their deli meat."

According to John Fiscalini, owner/president, Fiscalini Cheese Co., Modesto, CA, "So many people define sustainability differently. Everybody has his or her own opinions on what constitutes sustainability." That being said, Fiscalini points out his company has Validus Certified Responsible Producer Certification, independent certification that verifies a farmer's animal welfare practices. His cheeses carry the certification seal, which, he acknowledges, not enough people recognize. Retailers could help educate consumers — and in so doing strengthen their own bona fides — by highlighting and explaining this type of certification in store.

PHOTO COURTESY OF INNOWARE

Fiscalini also points to the necessity for good stewardship of the land, avoiding any kind of run-off into local waterways and energy conservation. A methane digester on the farm converts animal waste to energy that powers the farm and the cheesemaking operation without enough excess to sell back to the local electrical grid. "In theory," he says, "this is all part of sustainability." Although he recognizes retailers have a daunting ask promoting these ideas, he believes everyone will benefit if they do.

This burgeoning interest creates an opportunity for delis to "leverage that farm-to-table story," advises Hain's DePippo, providing consumers with information on sustainable farming practices and the shared commitment to sustainability. While senior and middle level managers typically possess a good understanding of sustainability, DePippo says the same often cannot be said of store-level workers. Therefore, an educational effort must be undertaken to ensure front-line workers are up to speed and conveying the right messages.

"You need to ensure that everybody's educated and can speak intelligently, not just to the company mission and what we're trying to achieve from a sustainability perspective, but the definitions, the meanings, and the true value in terms of why it's the right thing to do," he adds.

Naturally, the move to sustainability cannot be accomplished overnight. However, retailers can make significant progress merely by requesting current providers adopt more sustainable methods or develop more sustainable products, or if that is not forthcoming, by shifting suppliers. The important thing is to begin taking steps in that direction now. Even if consumers are largely unaware of what it is they're looking for — or just exactly why it should matter to them — getting onboard early will help create a better value proposition and better position the deli for future success.

"This isn't a trend that's going to come and go," says Cross of SpoonLidz. "The more consumers see it, the more awareness there is, the more the movement is going to grow. And the people who are at the forefront, the ones who are ahead of the curve now, are going to be the winners in the end." **DB**

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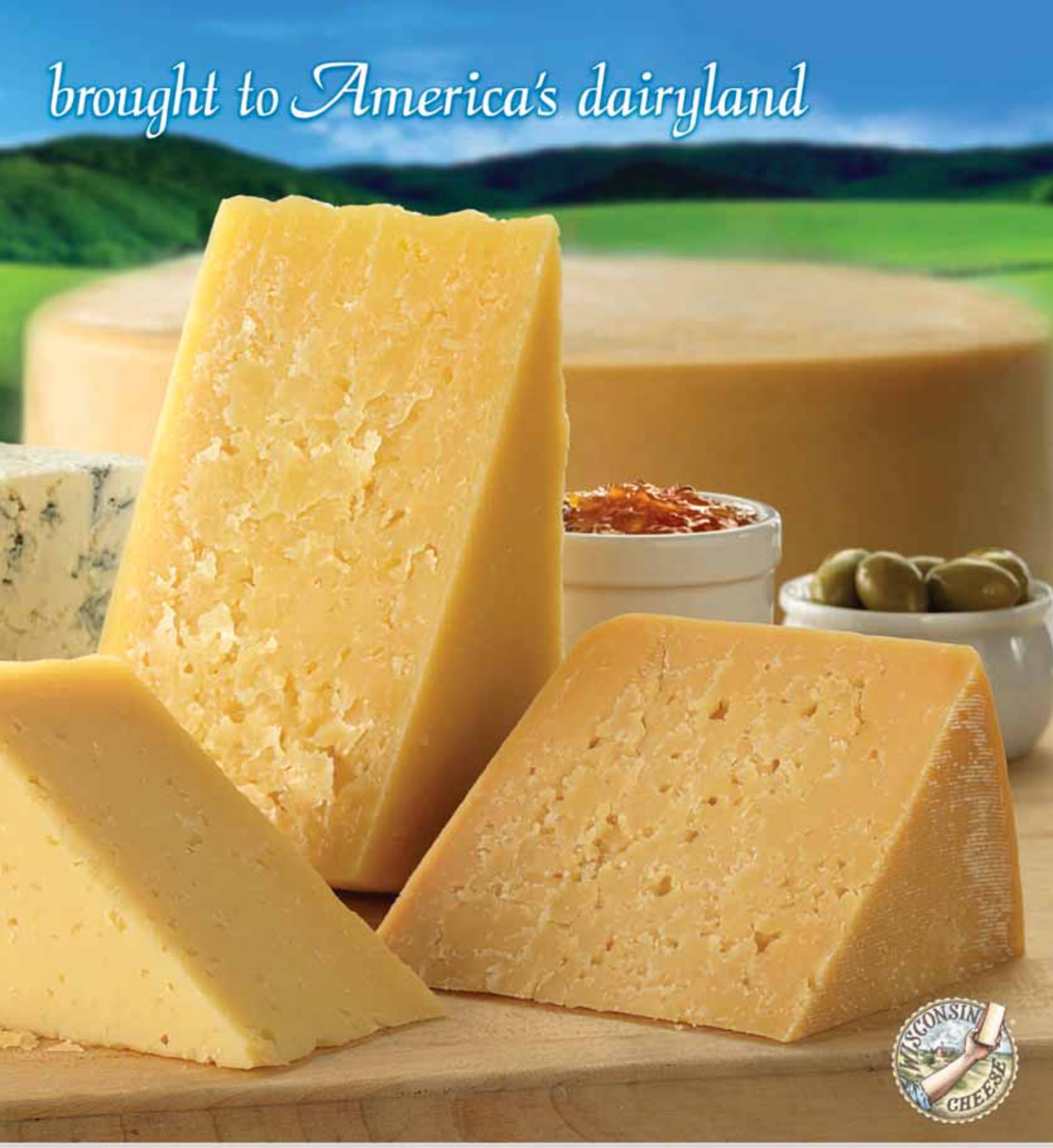

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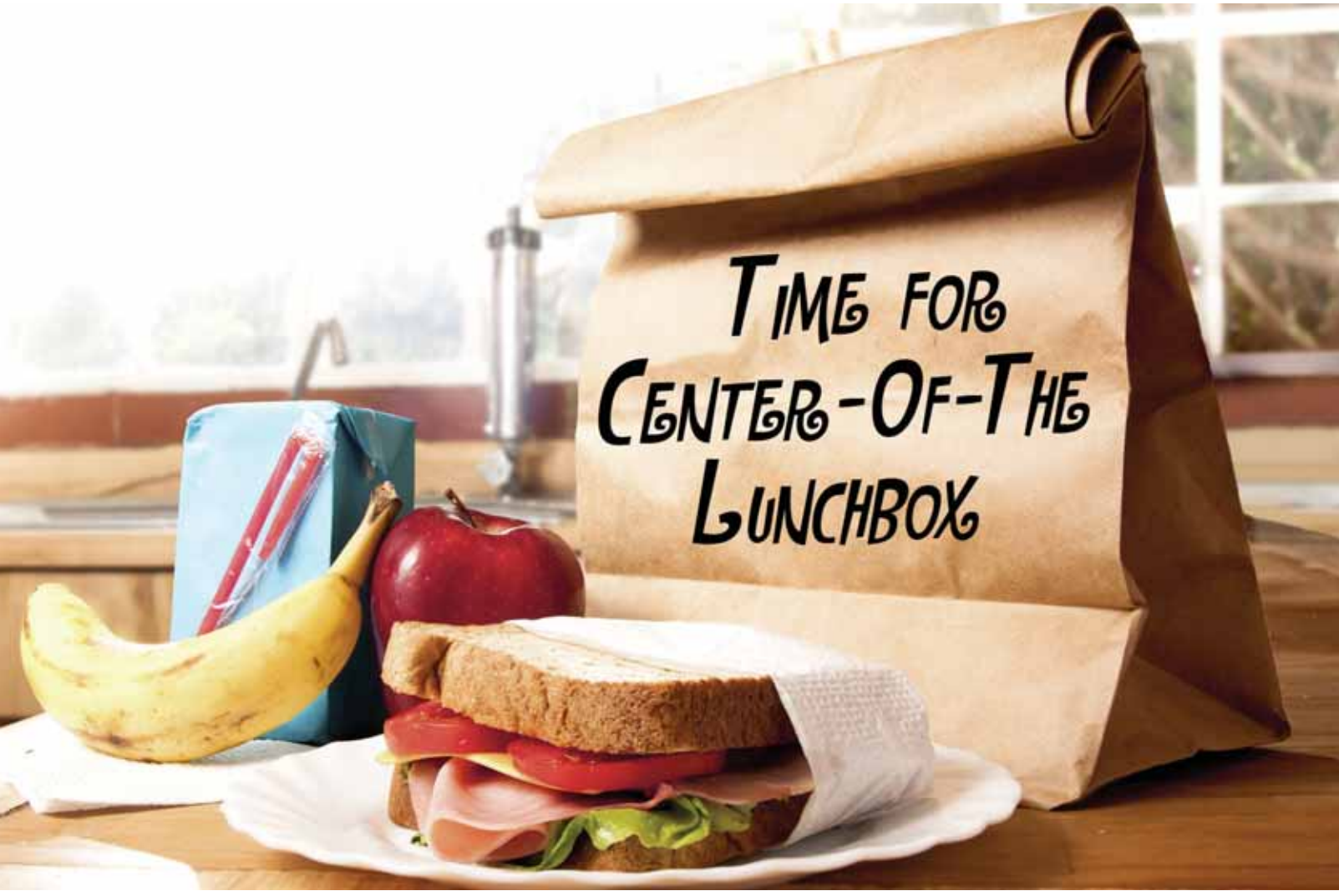

The deli can be a mom's best friend when planning kids' lunches

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

This year, parents of some 24 million — or 44 percent of — students enrolled in K-12 in the U.S. who don't partake of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program (NSLP) will be on the lookout for fast-fixing foods for their children's lunch box. What's more, in the wake of British chef Jamie Oliver's *Food Revolution*, which seeks to improve the eating habits of school children on both sides of the Atlantic, and First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* child obesity campaign, parents may be especially attuned to looking for healthful food choices for their children.

This offers a great opportunity for the deli to be a solution provider. According to Paula Shikany, director, Sara Lee Deli, Downers Grove, IL, "The deli offers a wide range of healthy options for kids' lunches. By ensuring consumers are aware of the variety of product offerings, while promoting the ability to customize ordering to meet a family's individual needs, deli operators can better position the deli as a destination for healthful back-to-school lunchbox options."

No standardized or legal definitions of healthy have been adopted as have been for terms such as low fat, low sodium and low calorie. However, delis that want to offer consumers products that can be used to pack healthful lunch for kids can take a cue from the NSLP. Federal law requires every school lunch to include milk, fruits and/or vegetables, grains and protein foods. This law, based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, also requires that no more 30 percent of calories in the meal come from fat and less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat.

This translates into the deli's opportunity to merchandise center-of-the-lunchbox foods — lean

Continued on page 26

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Sandridge Food Corporation's Investment in High-Pressure Processing Eliminates Listeria and Preservatives

Defend the taste. Extend the life. Lose the risk. Today's foodservice and retail industry professionals are in search of superior tasting products customers will ask for by name, longer shelf life for shrink recovery and food safety. They are seeking innovation — a process to increase food safety and quality without compromising taste. That's what Sandridge Food Corporation is offering with the introduction of its state-of-the-art, high-pressure processing (HPP) system at its facility in Medina, Ohio.

DEFEND THE TASTE FOR SUPERIOR TASTING PRODUCTS

Most processed foods today are heat treated to kill bacteria and have preservatives added to extend shelf life, which often diminishes product quality and taste. HPP provides an alternative means of killing bacteria that can cause spoilage or foodborne illness without a loss of sensory quality or nutrients.

"With HPP, we are able to deliver culinary products with recognized and trusted ingredients that the consumer can feel good about, while still maintaining the highest degree of food safety, taste and nutrition," says Mark D. Sandridge, Chief Executive Officer of Sandridge Food Corporation.

HPP is a unique food-processing method that uses cold water under high pressure rather than the traditional thermal process and preservatives to provide safe, minimally processed foods with the highest quality appearance, taste, texture and nutritional value.

In addition to the new method of processing food, HPP has evolved the way products can be created. The longer shelf life gained from HPP enables the culinary experts of Sandridge to utilize a greater variety of fresh ingredients, including fresh green beans, spinach, grapes, grape tomatoes and shrimp. And since robust flavors are achieved through HPP, there has been a significant reduction in the sodium content, preservatives are eliminated and less dressing is used. The result is an all-natural, better tasting product with layers of flavors, just like you would taste from a home-prepared meal.

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EXTEND THE LIFE FOR SHRINK RECOVERY

In the HPP process, the product is packaged in a flexible container and loaded into a high pressure chamber filled with cold water and then pressurized with a pump. An equal amount of pressure is transmitted through the package into the food itself.

Pressure is applied for a specific time, usually three to five minutes. Because the pressure is transmitted uniformly (in all directions simultaneously), food retains its shape, even at extreme pressures. Since no heat is needed, the sensory characteristics of the food are retained while still destroying the harmful bacteria. Bacteria are inactivated at levels of 58,000 - 87,000 psi and water temperatures of less than 45° Fahrenheit.

Because HPP kills harmful bacteria, the need for chemicals such as benzoates and sorbates to preserve food and extend shelf life are no longer needed, resulting in a more natural product that tastes better and is better for the consumer. HPP also delivers foods that stay fresher longer with an extended shelf life — three to four times the product's typical shelf life — which can have major financial benefits to retail and foodservice customers by substantially decreasing shrink.

LOSE THE RISK FOR SAFE FOOD EVERY TIME

This revolutionary process moves Sandridge closer to the goal of "bacteria-free" foods, virtually eliminating the chance of damaging product recalls and the spread of food-borne illness. HPP technology has been recognized by the USDA and Health Canada as a valid in-package kill-step to combat the potential of contamination from harmful pathogens such as Salmonella, E. coli and Listeria monocytogenes.

"We have committed to this technology, not only because food safety is our highest priority, but because we firmly believe that foods with fewer preservatives and clean labels are the right thing to provide to the customers of today," says Sandridge.

For more than 50 years, Sandridge Food Corporation, a family-owned refrigerated foods manufacturer located in Medina, Ohio, has produced fresh deli salads, soups, entrées, desserts, sauces and dips for the foodservice and retail sectors. A leader in the refrigerated foods industry in North America, Sandridge has built its rich heritage by having an unparalleled commitment to food safety, culinary excellence and world-class customer service. The company consistently upholds its Brand Promise: To always provide unrivaled fresh foods with consistent handmade quality that enhances the reputation of its customers.

Sandridge is a USDA-inspected production facility, a 2009 *Refrigerated and Frozen Foods Magazine* Manufacturing Plant of the Year and a certified Safe Quality Food (SQF) 2000 Level 2 Food Manufacturer. Along with an extensive line of proven and successful fresh, refrigerated salads, soups and entrées, Sandridge has the flexibility and unique ability to customize signature fresh dishes and develop proprietary recipes for customers, via its research and development department — staffed with a very experienced team of accredited chefs and food scientists.

For more information on Sandridge and HPP, please visit www.sandridge.com or contact Frank Sidari at 330-764-6178 or frank.sidari@sandridge.com.

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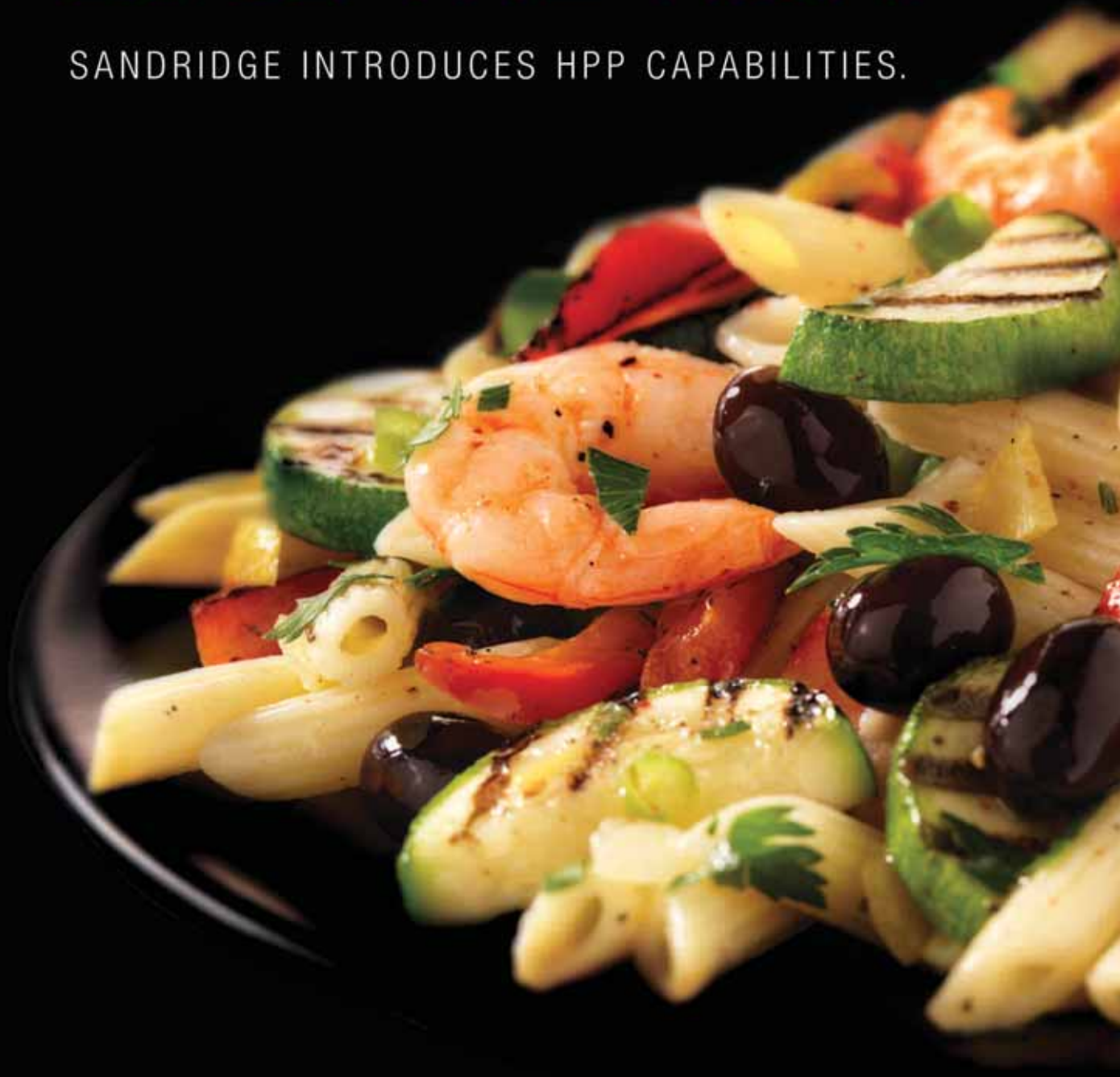

Sandridge's new High Pressure Processing system can reduce shrink and eliminate the risk of harmful bacteria without any effect on taste, texture or flavor. For more information, contact:

Sandridge Food Corporation | Frank J. Sidari | 330.764.6178 | frank.sidari@sandridge.com

SANDRIDGE *Food Corporation*

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Merchandising Suggestions

1. **Call out with signage.** Shelf talkers, ceiling hangers and other POS materials "are a great way to call out attributes of a product – like nitrite free, antibiotic free, gluten free – to Mom at the point she's making her purchasing decision," says Eva Safar, director of marketing, Coleman Natural Foods, Golden, CO.

Buzz words on signage "such as 'all natural', 'high fiber', and 'the taste you've been waiting for' are all effective in appealing to moms," says Patty Phillips, president, Patty's Presto Pizza, Inc., Marina del Rey, CA.

2. **Run clever promotions.** Jay Allison, VP of sales and marketing, Tillamook Cheese, Portland, OR, reports, "One great promotion we participated in was a contest in a local supermarket's deli. Deli staff had printed an outline of a black and white lunchbox. The box had sections for drinks, fruits, veggies, snacks, and main courses. Kids were asked to fill in the foods they would like in their lunch box, color in the sheet and return it to the deli for a prize. The kids received a free cookie as a prize, and the deli and mom got feedback about what the kids wanted in their lunchbox."

3. **Offer a bundled lunch program.** In July, Publix Super Markets, Lakeland, FL, rolled out its ready-made kid-friendly meals-to-go. "Each meal comes complete with an entrée, two sides and a drink and sells for just $3.99," explains Maria Brous, director of media and community relations

Publix deli worked with the chain's registered dietitian to assure each of the meals meets or exceeds specific nutrition guidelines such as for fat, sugar and sodium content. The meals cannot be customized because this would alter those guidelines.

The five meal selections include:

Chicken tenders – deli chicken tenders on a honey wheat roll, mini carrots, kid's yogurt and fruit drink

Ham sandwich thins – tavern ham on a wheat sandwich thin, mini carrots, kid's yogurt and apple juice

Peanut butter apple wrap – creamy peanut butter with apples in a multigrain wrap, string cheese, mini carrots, kid's yogurt and fruit drink

Peanut butter rolls – creamy peanut butter on a honey wheat roll, string cheese, apple sauce, mini carrots and fruit drink

Turkey rolls – Publix oven roasted turkey breast on a honey wheat roll, apple and grape packet, mini raisins and organic white milks **DB**

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Continued from page 22

protein such as meat, poultry and cheese, and go-withs such as fruits and vegetables — to offer convenient and nutritious lunchbox meal solutions.

Center-Of-The-Lunchbox Selections

The deli, says Scott Zoeller, director of deli merchandising at Kings Super Markets Inc., based in Parsippany, NJ, "is where consumers come to look for high-quality whole-muscle meats that are minimally processed, antibiotic- and hormone-free. This is the type of product that appeals to moms who are fixing lunch for their kids."

"Just about every retailer nationally has a variety of tiers of meats from premium to value-added in the service deli case," explains Bruce Belack, executive vice president of sales and marketing, Vincent Giordano Corp., Philadelphia, PA. "The premium tier, which costs more, typically has a 95 to 97 percent fat-free claim, is gluten-free and has very low sodium levels. Many middle-tier levels of deli meats will also have favorable nutrient numbers. Therefore, the customer not shopping price first will most likely be purchasing a healthy deli meat from the service deli."

Sodium is currently a hot nutrition topic. The American Heart Association (AHA) has suggested the 2010 update of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans reduce the recommended sodium intake from 2300 to 1500 milligrams.

In response to this trend, King's has rolled out a new sandwich program this year that includes a lower-sodium wrap made from sodium-reduced Boars Head deli meats.

In July, following on the success of sodium reduction in its sliced-to-order line, Sara Lee introduced its Fresh Ideas lower-sodium pre-sliced deli meats in four varieties, oven-roasted turkey breast, honey-roasted turkey breast, honey ham and Virginia brand ham; each has at least 25 percent less sodium than the traditional lines. "This product offers expanded variety and customization opportunities with added convenience — keeping moms' healthful, back-to-school needs top-of-mind," Shikany adds. Both the Sara Lee Fresh Ideas lower-sodium pre-sliced and sliced-to-order deli meats carry the AHA's check-mark endorsement.

According to Zoller, "We've seen a huge upswing in demand for pre-sliced natural meats and cheeses. I think moms are buying the sliced-to-order products for use that day or the next, and then want the same quality but to use later in the week."

Mindful of consumer demand for less fat, "We offer a 33 percent reduced-fat Cheddar made with pasteurized, part-skim milk," says Jay Allison, vice president of sales and marketing, Tillamook Cheese, Portland, OR. It's

available in a 5-pound loaf and "an 8-ounce shingle pack designed for easy use on sandwiches and snacks."

Delis can reduce fat and calories in salads, such as classic kid-friendly tuna, chicken and turkey, by making them with reduced-fat mayonnaise, advises Steve Jilleba, corporate executive chef for North America, Lyle, IL-based Unilever Foodsolutions. "Hellmann's Light Mayonnaise has half the calories of regular mayonnaise. In addition, some of the fat is replaced by modified cornstarch, which helps the product bind together with other ingredients. This prevents unsightly weeping and the deli staff from having to repeatedly re-mix the product."

To up the nutritional profile, delis can incorporate fruits and vegetables into these protein-based salads, he adds. "For example, you can bump up the celery in a chicken salad. This also improves food costs because there will be less protein per serving. However, don't make this type of addition too dramatic or it will affect the flavor and kids' acceptance."

Adults may be willing to sacrifice flavor for health but not kids, says Patty Phillips, president of Patty's Presto Pizza, Inc., Marina del Rey, CA. She has developed a healthful personal pizza that delis can merchandise in a refrigerated grab-and-go case. "I put together a group of 30 7- to 11-year-old kids, along with my son, and taste-tested the development of a personal-sized pizza. The final product has a whole-wheat crust that provides 7 grams of dietary fiber, half the fat of a same sized regular frozen pizza, no trans fats and less than half the sodium. There topping is a 5-cheese blend and nitrate-free pepperoni." The 5-inch diameter pizzas are sold frozen individually wrapped or bulk packed.

Great Go-Withs

The NSLP calls for school lunches to supply one-third of the recommended dietary allowances of calcium and vitamin A, as well as protein, vitamin C and iron. The first two of these nutrients are found in cheese and fresh produce, respectively. Cheese and fresh produce products can be merchandised as additional deli rings to sandwiches and healthful go-withs in place of chips and cookies.

Tillamook's Allison says, "Our snack-size portions of cheese, called Tilla-moos, come in natural Medium Cheddar, Colby Jack and Pepper Jack flavors. Each ¾-ounce, pre-wrapped individual portion is easy for a parent to include in a lunch box." The Medium Cheddar and Colby Jack are available in Pack-It-Pals, a resealable bag containing 10 pre-wrapped individual portions.

Kitchen Table Bakers, Syosset, NY, sells its Aged Parmesan Gourmet Wafer Crisps in 2-ounce stand-up packs that can be merchandised above, alongside or below the deli's self-serve cheese case. According to Barry Weis Novick, president, "Moms like our product because its 100 percent cheese, there's no white flour or gluten." The two most kid-friendly flavors in the 8-item line are the sesame and the 'everything', which has onions, poppy seeds, garlic and sesame seeds.

Fresh produce "has found its way into the deli over the last few years," notes Greg Wilson, vice president of sales and marketing, Reichel Foods, Inc., Rochester, MN. Earlier this year, Reichel introduced three new single-serve deli products as part of its Dippin Stix line — Sea Salt Pita Chips with Roasted Red Pepper Hummus, Garden Herb Pita Chips with Original Hummus and Baby Carrots with Original Hummus.

In addition to these products, Wilson says, "Some delis have started to carry our sliced apple products. These come in low-fat caramel dip, caramel dip and peanut, and a yogurt fruit dip flavors." **DB**

Enhancing The Mexican Experience

With the growing Hispanic population, supermarket delis are seeing the potential of Mexican food

BY LISA WHITE

Supermarket delis that haven't incorporated Mexican food in the department lineup are missing a profitable opportunity. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently revealed that Mexican food has increased in popularity and Americans now are eating four times more of it than they did 20 years ago. Mexican food is now a $1 billion business in food, drug and mass outlets combined, according to Chicago, IL-based research firm Information Resources.

According to the U.S. Census, as of July 1, 2008, there were 46.9 million Hispanics in the United States, making it the nation's largest ethnic or race minority. By 2050, it's projected there will be 132.8 million Hispanics in America, constituting 30 percent of the country's population.

"In the last few years, retailers have realized the spending power of this demographic and are seeking to attract more of the Hispanic population to their stores," says Joe Ketchum, vice president of sales and marketing, Olé Mexican Foods, Norcross, GA.

Supermarket delis are well positioned to take advantage of the focus on fresh Mexican fare. They should include a number of staple items, such as salsa, tortillas, queso blanco and guacamole, in their lineup.

"Hispanic and non-Hispanic consumers are looking for fresh, quality items," says Tania Haladner, marketing director, Circle Food/La Terra Fina, San Diego, CA. "There's a trend toward convenience that we've seen for years." The company manufactures uncooked tortillas that replicate homemade. Its Tortillaland brand is available in flour and multi-grain varieties, and a corn line will be launched in the coming months.

"Mexican items are catching on with everyone, not just the Hispanic community," claims Gabriel Robles, general manager, Queso Campesino, Denver, CO. "Some retailers are more aggressive in this segment than others." Delis are addressing price issues, since specialty Hispanic cheeses command higher costs than commodity varieties. "Those shopping for Hispanic items like the personalized attention at the service case. Product that is sliced to order is fresher and customers can buy the quantities they want."

"Hispanic consumers are looking for cheeses such as queso fresco, queso blanco and Central American cheeses in the dairy case, but there remains a big opportunity to carry these products in the deli," says Ketchum. "The Mexican and Central American populations are demanding these items."

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- 8 oz can tomato sauce
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 medium potato, diced
- 1 medium zucchini, sliced
- 3 medium carrots, sliced
- Garnish with fresh cilantro

Place ingredients in a large (5 quart) sauce pan. Bring to boil, then simmer for 30 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste.

(makes about 6 servings)

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Part of the appeal of Mexican food is that it represents festive eating and can feed large groups for a reasonable cost. This may be why ethnic dips are the fastest-growing category in the refrigerated dips segment. "Mexican and Hispanic dips represent over 60 percent of ethnic dip sales," according to Kristyn Lawson, vice president of sales, Yucatan Foods/Cabo Fresh, headquartered in Los Angeles, CA. "We're finding consumers are connecting with feel-good foods, which include eye-appealing items with lots of flavor and spice."

Recognizing the increasing sales potential, retailers are carrying more Mexican dips, such as guacamole, pico de Gallo and salsa, both at the service counter and in the prepackaged sections. "A growing segment of our product line is 'guacamole as a condiment' to traditional sandwiches bars and service delis," Lawson adds. "Guacamole dip sales are up over 11 percent nationally."

One of the biggest opportunities for Mexican food is in the grab-and-go section. Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, offers refrigerated burritos in 6- and 10-ounce sizes that can be quickly heated in the microwave for immediate consumption. "Refrigerated meals are more challenging to sell in the deli, due to a limited shelf life as compared with frozen products," says John McCarthy, category manager.

These products offer a lunch alternative to sandwiches and salad. "Grab-and-go consumers are who we go after," McCarthy continues. "The trend is in portability, and our products apply well to that. People can easily eat burritos on the run." Reser's is looking to add more burrito sizes to its lineup, which includes bean and cheese; beef and bean; beef; chicken; green chile; and breakfast varieties.

Price and quality are important factors when catering to the Mexican demographic. "These are very savvy shoppers," notes Johanna Hulme, marketing manager, City of Industry, CA-based Pocino Foods Co., which offers headcheese, roast beef and pastrami under its Que Rico brand. "Mexican shoppers understand meat, know how much it costs, but appreciate value and value-added items. These consumers will pay more if the quality is there.

"Mexican consumers like ham and turkey, because they're value-priced items. Ham will always be No. 1 due to the flavor profile, but we're noticing an increased interest in roast beef and pastrami with Hispanic shoppers," Hulme adds. Headcheese, a more traditional Mexican meat, is geared toward older generations.

Wheat tortillas, a staple Mexican item in delis, typically appeal to a wider demographic than corn tortillas. Olé's Ketchum believes tortillas associated with delis tend to be flavored wraps used in preparing sandwiches that are prepared and sold in the deli. "These items are geared for the general marketplace, not Mexican consumers."

Marketing Mexican

The marketing and merchandising Mexican foods can take many shapes. "Hispanics are receptive shoppers and loyal to the products they purchase," Pocino's Hulme says. "But they also are savvy, well-informed and like to learn about what's available in the market. In addition, these consumers are open to new products and will switch brands if they come across something else that appeals to them more."

"The Hispanic population is growing at a rate three times faster than the general population, and they represent $60 billion in spending. This can offer a tremendous growth opportunity for deli sales," Circle's Haladner notes.

Because Hispanic households are more likely to cook on a daily basis than Anglo households, they're looking for fresh products and ingredients to include in their meals. "Unlike most Americans, Mexican shoppers are in stores several times a week. They will visit supermarket delis frequently to purchase products that are as fresh as possible," she adds. Hispanic mothers are proud of their homemade meals and strive to keep the family well nourished. "She is buying for her family, not for herself."

This can be a tough demographic to market prepared food to because these consumers are resistant to pre-cooked food. The presentation and marketing strategy must emphasize freshness and authenticity.

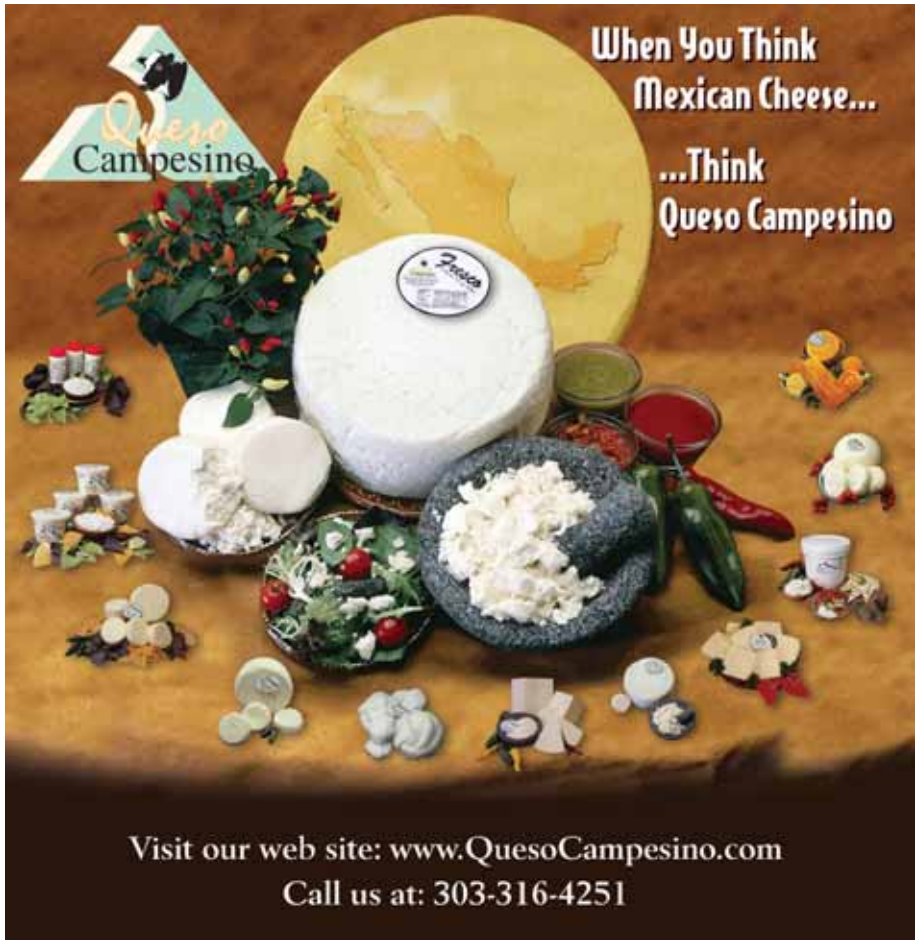
It's important to identify products that lend themselves well to the deli and to recognize the differences across product lines. "Non-Hispanic consumers are looking for tortillas and basic items, while Hispanic consumers are seeking more sophisticated offerings, such as tamales," Haladner says.

Cross-merchandising with beverage or grocery products brings more consumers to the deli for Hispanic items. Yucatan Foods recently partnered with a beverage company to run a program called Extreme Nachos that offered coupons for customers to make nachos at home using fresh ingredients. "The program included grated cheese, salsa and our guacamole," Lawson explains.

Retailers are also bundling Hispanic items, such as fajitas and tacos, for easy meals for the service deli and package wall deli.

Lawson recommends merchandising Mexican dips in a variety of places, including next to other ethnic items as well as by sour cream and cream cheese-based dips. "With the continued popularity of Hispanic foods, Mexican influenced dips and products will continue to perform above average in supermarket delis nationally," she predicts. "We have great retail partners that continue to support our mutual category growth."

Because the Mexican demographic is one of largest-growing segments, its buying power is increasing exponentially. "This category continues to grow, and we are very focused on it," Reser's McCarthy says. "There's a lot of opportunity in all dayparts with Mexican food." **DB**



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

The rich, blue sea clay of this land gives the milk its sweet, soft consistency. The rare composition of this milk allows aged Beemster cheeses to remain creamy throughout their maturation processes.

NEW BRAND IMAGE AND 100% PURE TASTE GUARANTEE

Beemster is excited to launch "generations of great taste," its news brand image, this summer. Generations of great taste emphasizes the care and attention each wheel of Beemster cheese receives. Beemster is the only Dutch cheese that is still handmade by master cheesemakers and aged in historic warehouses. After extensive market research, Beemster discovered consumers were most drawn to the tradition, expertise, and artisan values of Beemster cheese. This story is now related to consumers on new repack labels depicting three generations of cheesemakers.

Beemster's new repack labels also offer a 100% taste guarantee. Since consumers are often hesitant to try a new brand of premium cheese, Beemster has pledged to fully refund consumers' money if they are not 100% satisfied with the cheese they just purchased. This guarantee is done directly through Beemster, at no cost to the retailer.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Beemster can help you create an attractive display in your gourmet cheese section. Cut-and-wrap pieces of Beemster feature attractive labels with plenty of clear wrapping so the consumer can easily see the cheese. Whole wheels make for an appealing display in the deli counter, and Beemster also has fake wheels of cheese that can be displayed under smaller pieces of cheese. Beemster has inflatable blue Beemster cows and blue Beemster mice that make an attention-grabbing display for cheese buyers of all ages! Beemster also offers free educational materials for your store. The Beemster cheese pairing guide is an attractive laminated wheel that helps consumers create a cheese plate using recommended fruit and wine pairings for their Beemster cheeses. The Beemster cheese guide illustrates the cheesemaking process and gives a brief flavor profile for each variety of Beemster cheese.

VARIETY

One of the main advantages of merchandising Beemster cheese is the depth of variety available to consumers. Beemster cheese is available in seven varieties:

- X-O-: The cheese for connoisseurs, matured for a minimum of 26 months with flavors of whiskey, pecan, and butterscotch.
- Classic: Matured for a minimum of 18 months, characteristically caramel colored, culminating in a rich and complex flavor
- Farmers' Choice: Matured for a minimum of six months, smooth taste with a rich and creamy texture
- Vlaskaas: Matured for five months, gold medal winning cheese with a uniquely sweet taste and creamy texture
- Lite: Matured for five months, cheese connoisseurs won't believe it contains 50% less fat than other aged Dutch cheeses
- Goat: Matured for five months, Beemster's goat cheese is handmade from select milk of 11 farms and offers a smooth, clean taste
- Royal Garden Selection: Combines the famous Beemster cheese with the finest flavors of mustard seed, garlic, and wasabi

The wide spectrum of the Beemster cheese collection provides consumers with a variety of flavor profiles to choose from.

PROMOTIONS

Every year Beemster conducts special promotions, boosting retailers' sales. Beemster provides special promotional and marketing material to participating retailers. Special promotions include:

- Graskaas: Literally meaning "grass cheese," this spring cheese is made from the Beemster cows' first milk of the season after they have been in barns during the winter. Aged for one month, creamy, and floral, graskaas is a limited-edition cheese that perfectly welcomes the arrival of spring.
- Vlaskaas-Susan G. Komen Pink Ribbon Edition: Beemster is proud to be entering its second year supporting Susan G. Komen for The Cure. Beemster will donate 50¢ per pound of Vlaskaas sold from September 15-October 31, with a minimum donation of $25,000, to help find the cure for breast cancer. Participating retailers will receive Vlaskaas wheels with the pink ribbon logo and have the opportunity to create eye-catching displays that support this great cause.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Wine and beer are both natural pairs for gourmet cheese, and perhaps one of the best and simplest ways to enjoy Beemster is with a glass of wine or bottle of beer. The Beemster cheese pairing guide provides wine and beer pairing suggestions, and this free guide provides a great chance to cross-merchandise with your premium wine and beer departments. Including fruit and nuts near Beemster displays will reinvigorate your produce department.

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To increase your sales, Beemster will be providing new repack labels that open to tell about our 100% money back guarantee. Also in every case of cheese will be sales leaflets for consumers and the deli/cheese personnel. Additional point-of-sale material such as life-size displays of our cheesemakers, wine and cheese pairing guides and other fun free give-a-ways are available upon request.

Lifesize display

Sales leaflets

Repack labels

Money back guarantee – in every repack label

Entrée Vous

Positioning the deli as the go-to option for at-home dining

BY BOB JOHNSON

With restaurant dining suffering as a result of the economy and home cooking as a result of the consumer time crunch, the deli is poised to take center stage as the source of a wide variety of delicious and nutritious entrée choices.

Many consumers come to the deli looking for rotisserie chicken and pizza, the two top deli entrée choices, but the deli has an opportunity to expand with a broad range of entrées that offer a different delicious choice for every member of the family without the expense of a restaurant or time-consuming work in the kitchen.

Vegetable lasagna, shrimp penne pasta, pit-smoked beef brisket, chicken Marsala, beef, chicken or lamb kebobs. The possible entrée offerings are enough to make the mouth water — and the head spin trying to decide where to begin. Retailers can help consumers with the decision-making process; the first and most obvious place to start is with appearance; no matter what entrées are presented, they must look appealing to entice consumers who did not come to the deli with a specific purchase in mind.

According to Kathy Lenkov, manager of corporate communications and public relations for Glendale, CA-based Nestlé Professional, which numbers Stouffer's among its many brands, "I think it's very important that it be visually appealing. If you want to compete with restaurants, the food has to look as good as restaurant food."

Packaging is an important part of visual appeal, and a familiar look remains an appealing look. "If the product is offered prepackaged for merchandising in a self-serve location, the packaging is going to be very important," suggests Eric Le Blanc, director of marketing foodservice retail division at Tyson Foods, Inc., Springdale, AR. "Preferred packaging is the black bottom, clear top with which we're all familiar. Even though many consumers prefer an appearance that the product was assembled out of store, they want to be able to see

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the product and they want a label that doesn't look like processed food — communicate the brand, communicate the quality, and deliver important information like ingredients and nutrition, but keep it simple."

Tyson is best known for its chicken, but it also produces a range of beef and pork entrées. An important challenge is keeping the entrées looking good hours after preparation. "The food itself, whether in a service case or self-serve case needs to appear appetizing, and this usually means the product has been specifically formulated for this environment. A product that looks great freshly plated may look horrible after hours or days in display," LeBlanc explains.

AccuTemp, Fort Wayne, IN, offers a low-temperature steamer designed to keep a variety of entrées fresh, and looking fresh, for hours. "The product cooks in 100 percent humidity and retains its moisture. It allows for a higher yield. Because we don't cook with a fan, there's no chance for it to dry out," says Jim Gallagher, director of retail. "The product comes out moist and holds up well in hot cases when it starts out moist versus dry from other cooking methods. The colors are retained, and most of us eat with our eyes before our mouths."

The best place to keep most entrées is in the hot case, looking as if they are ready for dinner when the consumer is ready to eat. "Merchandising is best in the hot case where consumers can have the convenience of ordering a hot barbeque sandwich or hot sliced brisket to take home for dinner," notes Greg Klein, executive vice president for marketing at Sadler's Smokehouse, Ltd., Henderson, TX. Sadler's produces pit-smoked beef brisket, whole or sliced.

Eye appeal should go beyond the entrée and the packaging to include bold signage that draws the customer to entrée options. "If you can show the customers large pictures of delicious sandwiches, they will sell themselves," says Brandi Danziger, assistant brand manager at Milton's Fine Foods Inc., Carlsbad, CA. Milton's bakes a variety of full and multi-grain breads and crackers, but also produces a line of entrées including vegetable lasagna, shrimp and penne pasta and chicken with wild rice.

However it is accomplished, capture the eyes and the purchase will follow. "The No. 1 purchase driver for any of these products is going to be perceived quality, and we all are familiar with the old saw 'Customers eat with their eyes first,'" LeBlanc says.

Variety Is The Spice Of Dinner

A good place to start expanding the line of entrées is with familiar comfort foods and ethnic foods. "For a healthier twist on comfort foods, take a mac and cheese and mix in a few vegetables," Nestlé's Lenkov suggests. "The ethnic favorites and the comfort foods are always going to be popular. Lasagnas are always very popular, too; they're a bridge between comfort food and Italian."

The AccuTemp steamer makes it possible to cook a wide variety of entrées on site at very low temperatures. "Chicken breasts, meatloaf, steaming chicken for higher yield before frying, chili, cornbread, gumbo, scratch soup, the most moist pineapple upside down cake ever, cheesecake, hot dogs and brats with a vibrant color and not split or harped, prime rib, fish — all of this can be done in the same cabinet with no taste transfer since it doesn't cook above 235°, which is where you receive grease-laden vapors. The Steam 'n' Hold version steams product as low as 150°," Gallagher says.

This method of cooking keeps the food fresh and the flavor bold for longer. "The flavors are retained in a steamer versus ovens, stove top, and microwaves. Wild caught Alaskan seafood, poultry and veggie casseroles can all be steamed," he adds.

Delis should always position top-quality sandwiches to take their turn at the center of the plate. While the range of possible meats and vegetables make this a versatile option, the bread can make the sandwich a visually attractive choice. "We believe the bread can make the sandwich. I see opportunities for more varieties of bread for people to choose from," Danziger says. "I could see a lot of whole-grain and multi-grain breads. They bring a lot of flavors. Artisan breads or ciabatta bread can be attractive, too."

Another way to expand entrée sales is to offer consumers gourmet sauces that help turn pre-cooked deli department proteins into entrées. According to Mary Shepard, national sales manager, Fortun Foods, Inc., Kirkland, WA. "The Fortun's Finishing Touch Sauces turn any cooked protein — chicken, beef, pork — into restaurant-quality meals. For example, by adding just two ounces of sauce you can make the following dishes: Marsala & Mushroom Chicken, Santa Fe Verde Chicken, Spanish Romesco with Saffron over pork, Mediterranean sauce over any pasta or Mulligatawny curry over rice." Fortun's makes a very wide range of Finishing Touch Sauces including lemon dill caper, Mediterranean and Rajun Cajun.

"The key to providing quality is starting with fresh, quality ingredients. These sauces are hard to replicate at home. We do all the slicing, dicing, sautéing and simmering to provide customers a gourmet restaurant quality meal at home," she continues.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ASK FOODS, INC.

Does Health Matter?

Since consumers often say one thing but do another when it comes to healthy eating, this area will take some finesse and a detailed understanding of your customers.

"While there's a lot of media attention about Americans eating more healthy food, it's unclear to me that eating habits have changed dramatically," relates LeBlanc. "If you review the data from NPD Grou— *Eating Patterns in America* — concern over most health attributes in food was significantly higher in the 1990s than it is today and

there may be an impact on purchases of 'better for you' foods based on the economy with a slight decline from 2008 to 2009."

But even if their concern about good nutrition is uncertain, consumers remain interested in keeping a handle on salt and fat. "Fat and calories remain most important to consumers based on servings actually consumed, so formulating products for a reasonable fat content is probably a sound strategy. Sodium continues to gain in importance with consumers and is receiving a lot of media attention, so it probably pays to formulate with care when it comes to sodium," Le Blanc suggests.

Some producers walk both sides of the street, offering entrées that are appealing but also offer some health benefit. "The unique items we sell to delis include chopped beef barbeque for sandwiches and pit-smoked brisket (sliced and whole) for entrées and sandwiches. The key to Sadler's quality is our authentic pit-smoked meat, which is slow cooked over hardwood coals imparting great taste and tenderness," Klein says, pointing out that they can appeal to the audience seeking gluten-free foods.

"Fortun's Finishing Touch Sauces are all gluten free, low fat, saturated-fat free and low cholesterol. They're fresh with no preservatives and use sea salt, which has less sodium than regular salt. Any lean protein would go well with all our sauces for a healthy choice for dinner," Shepard explains.

The importance of offering healthier entrées may come down to the demographics of a particular store. "Operators need to consider their location and consumer-base, such as families versus singles, regional flavors, and local nutritional trends," Nestlé's Lenkov suggests.

While there is uncertainty and subtlety about the demand for healthy food, what is not uncertain, however, is the importance of making the entrées visually appealing and investing the time in merchandising.

"I've seen many retailers place quality products in their stores and devote little or no marketing communications support for the product," Le Blanc says. "The number one reason people purchase a prepared food product when they were not planning to shop the category is 'they saw it.' So obviously, merchandising the product in a highly visible location is key. Secondly, the most effective marketing tactic for driving incremental purchases is a combination of feature ad activity and in-store communication, like point of sale. There is no point in entering this category without a strategy to drive awareness and trial." **DB**

Flavor Explosion

Due to expanding flavors and a healthful profile, hummus has become a staple of the dip segment.

BY LISA WHITE

Fifteen years ago, hummus was a little-known ethnic item primarily associated with the Middle Eastern food segment. Today hummus dominates the refrigerated spread category. Its popularity now rivals that of other items — such as salsa — that crossed from ethnic to mainstream.

"We are definitely seeing an increase in the sale of hummus to Americans," says Demetrios Haralambatos, executive chef of Kontos Foods, Paterson, NJ. "Hummus sales have doubled in the last 10 years.

Made of chickpeas and tahini, authentic hummus is traditionally used as an appetizer spread on crackers or dip for vegetables. Recently, hummus has been utilized as a sandwich spread or condiment next to meat.

Manufacturers agree hummus is now mainstream. "This category has about 10 percent market penetration in the U.S.," says Pahzeet Liebermann, director of marketing at Sonny & Joe's, Brooklyn, NY. "We realize more people are eating it, and it is much less ethnic as a food choice as it is used more as a condiment." Sonny & Joe's offers nine hummus SKUs, with three spicy varieties, including Buffalo, the newest.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HAIG'S

Innovative Offerings

Hummus is growing in popularity, and its appeal is branching beyond the original Middle Eastern flavors to encompass products topped with flavorful, epicurean inclusions. Outside the U.S., hummus is not typically eaten flavored. "However, America is more flavor-oriented, and hummus is no exception," Liebermann says.

"Hummus is a regular in restaurants as an appetizer and its use as a dip has increased," Haralambatos says. "I've gone to a number of non-Mediterranean restaurants that have utilized hummus as a base to create a new flavor." Today's hummus incorporates jalapeño, chipotle, pepper, green chiles, garlic, Feta cheese, cilantro and even chocolate.

"It's typical for Eastern Mediterraneans to sprinkle za'atar, which is a blend of spices that includes roasted thyme, a form of paprika and oregano, on hummus," he adds. "I also have seen sun-dried tomatoes added to it. I believe delis can offer [plain] hummus as a base and offer or feature another flavored variety for that week. This will encourage people that purchase this product to come back and try different flavors."

Flavors enhance the taste of plain hummus. "Plain hummus has a flat flavor," Haralambatos explains. "By adding or changing its flavor profile, this food still provides the same high fiber and health benefits."

According to Nicole Hofmann, brand manager, Sabra Dipping Company LLC, Astoria, NY, "The explosion of flavors in hummus has helped consumers find what may have been considered an exotic food more approachable. The biggest barrier to people trying hummus is that they aren't sure what it will taste like — but the overwhelming majority of consumers love hummus once they actually try it. Having hummus with flavors that are more familiar helps people overcome the hesitation of trying something unknown.

Hummus especially appeals to educated, health-conscious consumers who read labels. It's high in protein, cholesterol-free, low in saturated fat and a good source of iron. "Consumers are increasingly seeking healthy, good-for-you options and hummus has increased in popularity as a result," says David Blair, general manager for Richfield, WI-based DCI Cheese Co.'s Santa Rosa, CA facility. "Young people are becoming one

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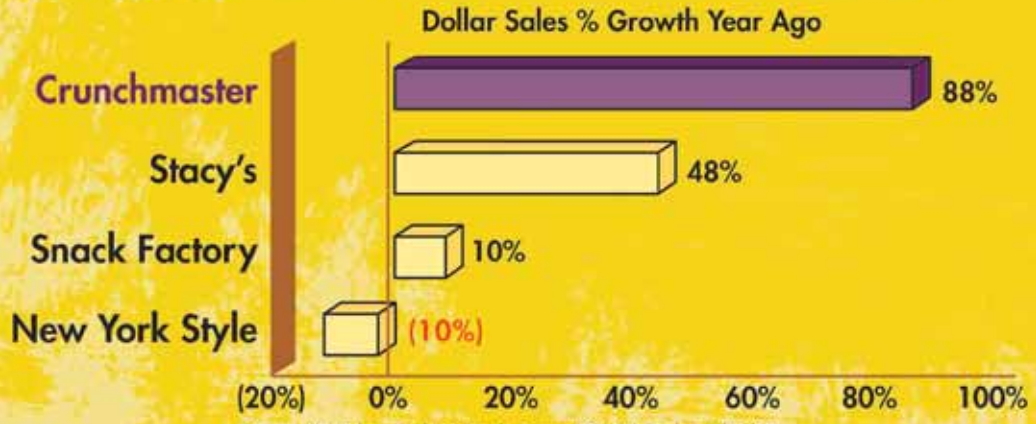

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of hummus' top consumers as a result of their market segment's growth in vegetarianism and increased focus on healthy eating."

"Our line of kosher artisan offerings leverages culinary trends with high-end toppings like roasted pine nuts, caramelized onions and smoked paprika," Blair adds. In March, DCI introduced new packaging for its Artisan Hummus line. The new 10-ounce packaging features a see-through lid that displays the line's artisan toppings. Additionally, the lids feature a "Made in Sonoma County" logo and a "⅓ less fat than leading national brand" banner. Meza Artisan Hummus is available in five flavors, including Hummus with Roasted Garlic, Hummus with Caramelized Onion, Hummus with Roasted Pine Nuts, Hummus with Roasted Red Peppers, and Hummus with Smoked Paprika.

"As the consumer realizes that hummus is a healthy food that is low in cholesterol and high in amino acids, the more this category continues to grow," says Jim Miracle, director of sales and marketing at Buddies Foods, Roseville, MI. The company offers a variety of hummus varieties, including roasted red pepper, sun-dried tomato basil, spicy jalapeño, roasted garlic and chive.

As in many segments during this recession, private label brands are growing in volume. "We also are seeing lots of SKU rationalization across the board from this category," says Jeff Derr, senior manager, retail sales and marketing, Grecian Delight Foods, Elk Grove Village, IL. "Retailers don't want to carry seven hummus brands."

Most are offering three varieties, the most popular being traditional, garlic and roasted pepper. "Still, the proliferation of flavors is phenomenal," Derr notes. The spiciest flavors are doing the best, including chipotle, cayenne and herbed spice." Grecian Delight is constantly innovating flavors in its hummus brands. "Much of this is consumer-driven, but we have retailers request flavors, too," Derr adds.

"Hummus is a strong seller for us," relates Rita Takvorian, owner of Haig's Delicacies, San Francisco, CA. "More of the public is accustomed to it and knows about the traditional value and ease of using it." Original hummus is the company's best-selling variety. Spicy and pepper flavors also sell well.

Although some manufacturers top their hummus with garnishes, such as peppers, sun-dried tomatoes or pine nuts, "We don't do that," she adds. "This is done more for eye-appeal but can get mixed up in the hummus and compromise the taste, And our products don't include preservatives, and they are geared for supermarket delis."

TH Foods in Loves Park, IL, provides products that complement hummus, including its Crunchmaster multiseed cracker line made with dried rice, flaxseed, sesame, and quinoa. "Hummus is made with tahini, which is derived from sesame," says Jim Garsow, director of marketing. "Because it already has a deep sesame flavor, it makes a good spread when combined with the sesame in our rice crackers."

"Hummus is such a versatile food, there are not only limitless flavors you can mix with it but also various ways to use it," adds Sabra's Hofmann. "From a dip to a replacement from mayo, the possibilities are endless. We even offer main dish recipes including hummus on our website to provide consumers with options. "

Successful Selling

There are as many ways to merchandise hummus as there are hummus flavors. "We recommend retailers merchandise hummus on the shelf by other healthful products," notes Miracle. "This helps bring added attention to the category." It's even more effective if the area borders the produce department. "With the deli typically the next section over, I think if stores can merchandise hummus by natural foods, it would garner the most success in terms of sales."

Displaying hummus with complementary items, such as crackers or pita chips, can provide consumers with serving ideas from the get-go. "The better retailers display, merchandise and demo product in conjunction with items that complement it. This creates a more effective display," Garsow says.

Today's packaging helps the eye appeal of an otherwise bland-looking product. "Our see-through lids have provided a winning solution for merchandising," says Blair. "People like to see what they're going to get, and the new lids readily show the various toppings and fresh ingredients included within."

The new packaging appeals to a new group of consumers. "For hummus, a lot of the marketing is done via product packaging," Blair adds. "Mothers are generally looking for healthy, quick and easy-to-serve foods for their children. Our new, see-through lids take the guesswork out of the equation for moms. Kids can see what the product looks like and moms know that it's a healthy dip option geared for snacking."

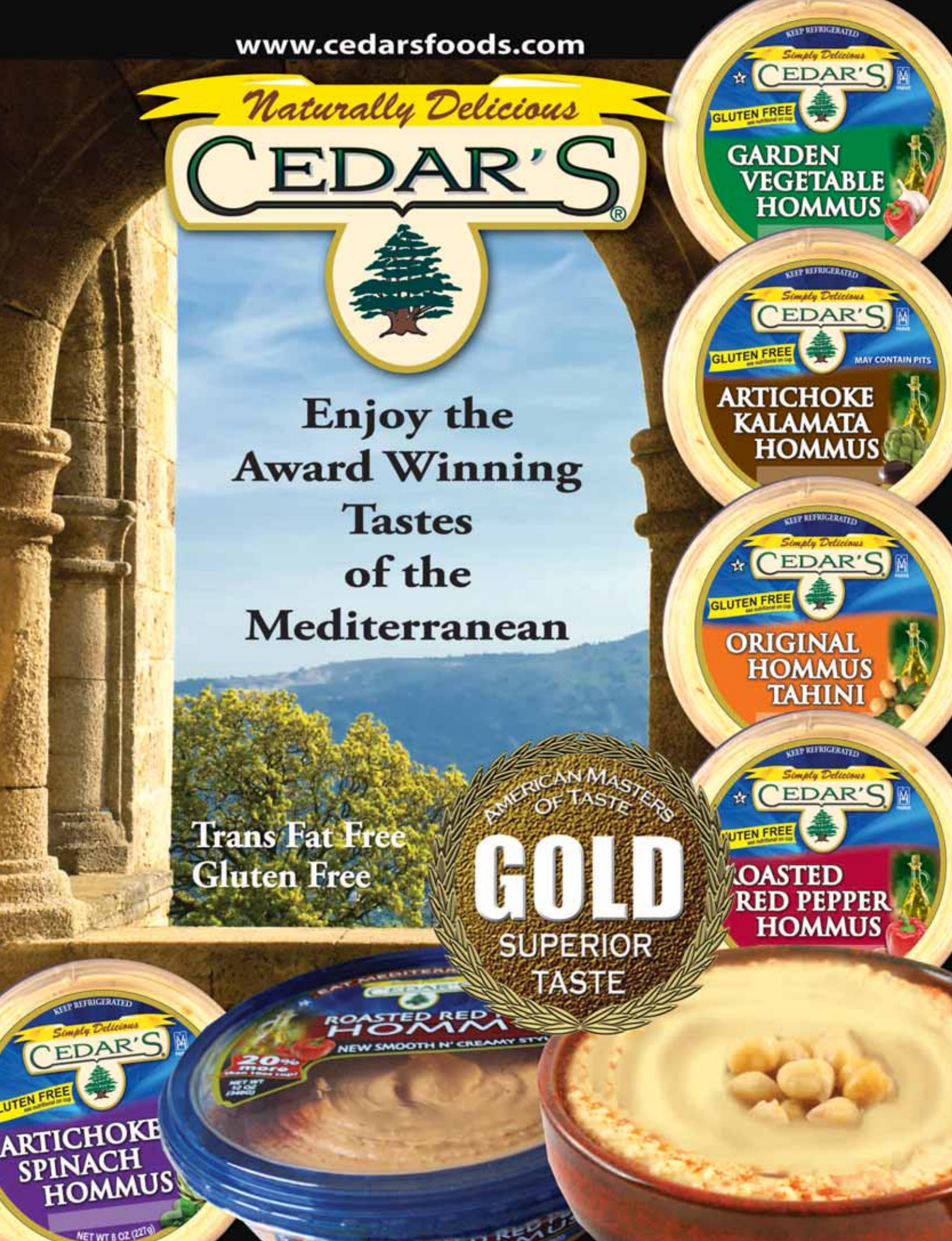
Hummus' health benefits provide opportunities to market to mothers concerned with their childrens' diet. Many stores are positioning this product as a healthier dip alternative to ranch dressing for the younger set.

Delis should take advantage of the interaction between their staff and consumers. "Deli employees have relationships with customers more so than anywhere else in the store, which is not true in the grocery aisle," Derr says. "Customers can interact with them and become educated by store employees, which is important."

Stores can capitalize on hummus' popularity by incorporating it into sandwich and salad programs. "Retailers see a demand for hummus as its uses increase. It's even a component to their foodservice program," notes Sonny & Joe's Liebermann. "Hummus is becoming a staple. We see what used to be exotic becoming mainstream and moving outside big cities.

Getting the word out about hummus's flexibility is key to increasing sales. "I'm curious to see how wide the flavor profile will expand and if this trend will continue," Liebermann says. "The more people eat hummus, the more we see creative uses of it. Social networking, such as Facebook and Twitter, can be vehicles to keep the public informed about how this product is evolving."

Hummus' healthful profile, versatility and flavor varieties will keep this category at the forefront for years to come. "When American consumers are introduced to more food products like hummus, particularly when they're healthful, this leads to growth of the category," Miracle concludes. "And it will continue to grow." **DB**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A Holiday Opportunity

Specialty meats can help differentiate delis during the holidays

BY T. ELIZABETH BLANCO

Although data is scarce, sales of specialty meats peak during the holidays. With consumers entertaining more often during this period, higher-quality, unique deli meats, such as pâtés, prosciutto and artisanal sausages that offer an attractive and festive presentation, are more prevalent. And because specialty meats such as Serrano ham and chorizo are easy to prepare, offer long shelf lives and provide many pairing and condiment possibilities, they're tailor-made for easy entertaining.

"The consumer is looking for different flavors of sausages, salamis and pâtés to make their seasonal entertaining stand out from that of the rest of the year," notes Gislinde Bronson, marketing generalist at Freybe Gourmet Foods, Langley, BC, Canada.

"There has been an overall flight to quality, especially in deli meats, when entertaining. People want the best quality for their guests," says Timothy Fallon, president and CEO of Hayward, CA-based Columbus Foods, Inc., which offers a wide range of cured meats. This fall, Columbus will once again be offerings its seasonal truffle and porcini mushroom cacciatore salame.

Even in a down economy, consumers are more likely to splurge on meat that can help set their gathering apart. Supermarket delis that recognize the potential of these products during the fourth quarter can set their departments apart from the competition.

Holiday Trends

As a result of added publicity in magazines and on food networks, prosciutto sales have soared, and it has become a staple holiday meat.

Prosciutto di Parma exports grew 1.6 percent in 2009, according to the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, with 35,000 more pieces exported this year than last. In fact, exports accounted for 21 percent of production, although certainly not all of the exports were to the Unites States.

Los Angeles, CA-based Principe Foods experiences its highest prosciutto sales at the retail level during November and December. "Finally, awareness of prosciutto is growing," says Alberto Minardi, general manager. "This meat is more predominant in the U.S. and more accepted as an ingredient."

Much of the emphasis in the last three years has been on pre-sliced prosciutto. "This growth can be attributed to less shrink for retailers. Pre-sliced prosciutto still offers the high margin that the deli case provides but without the labor," he explains.

Although suppliers would like to ramp up sales throughout the year, the specialty meat segment has always seen its highest sales in the fourth quarter. "During the holidays, there is a significant volume bump in specialty meats. This has always been the case," says Michael Grazier, president of Busseto Foods, Fresno, CA. "Our challenge is to encourage usage throughout the year."

Busseto has introduced a salami variety pack and an antipasto that includes four different meats in a reclosable package. "These lines offer a specialty meat variety for platters, and we also offer other value-added products for entertaining," Grazier adds.

Along with prosciutto, traditional cured sausages, including Spanish salchichon or chorizo, French saucisson and Italian salumi, have become hot sellers.

"Artisanal brands like Fra' Mani, Creminelli, Molinari, Columbus, Fabrique Delices, and soon Redondo, are all really coming into their own this year," says Kate Whittum, sales and

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Going backward required some very modern scientific know how. The elimination and 'cleaning up" of the ingredient statements at Volpi required validations on the same processes used in dry-curing meat products for centuries. The removal of sodium nitrite and nitrates was the first step to a more natural end product.

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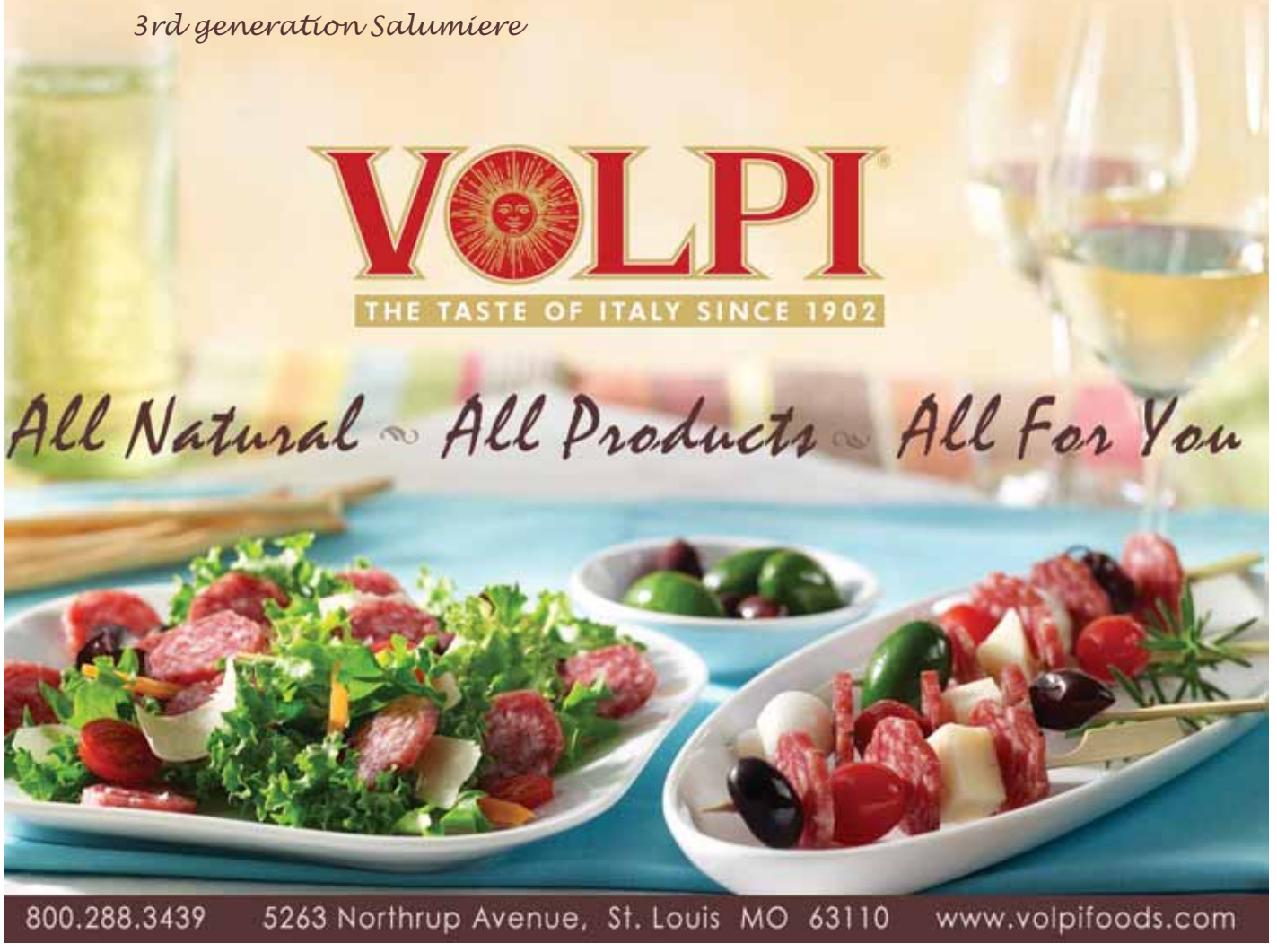

marketing director at Redondo Iglesias USA, Long Island City, NY. "Consumers are more educated and not so afraid of moldy, cured sausages because they know that the aging technique requires a more hands-on rather than industrial approach. It ties into the local/handmade trend of the last several years."

Redondo USA is expanding beyond its premium Serrano hams, developing a traditional cured chorizo with garlic and smoked paprika and a chorizo blanco cured pork sausage with garlic and spices. They will be available in retail sliced packages, foodservice sliced packs and whole forms.

Last year during the holidays, Creminelli Fine Meats, Springville, UT, introduced wild boar salami. This year, it has unveiled a purebred Berkshire salami for the fourth quarter. The meat is produced from Creminelli's own hogs that are fed red apples. "Retailers tend to expand their specialty meat selection and bring in higher-priced, exotic items during the holidays," says Chris Bowler, president.

Flavored specialty meats have become big holiday sellers. For this holiday season, Freybe has launched Naturally Freybe ham and beef products; salami in holiday packaging; and pâtés in holiday flavors such as cranberry, roasted garlic, jalapeño, apple and orange.

Marketing And Merchandising

Proper merchandising is key to selling specialty meats, especially during the holidays, when these products are competing with other entertainment fare. The prime marketing months for specialty meats are September through December. However, over the last three to four years, consumption has risen during January for Super Bowl festivities, extending the season.

It's important to create a pattern of awareness prior to the winter months. "The awareness of our products is increasing," Principe's Minardi says. "We recommend cross-merchandising these meats with imported cheese and positioning them as an easy, convenient and healthy snack or appetizer."

Creating eye-catching displays can help make the products more visible. According to Busseto's Grazier, "The way these products are merchandised is important. It's essential to provide consumers with consumption ideas. People are looking for specialty products during the holidays because they're entertaining more, so they need to be visible." He recommends pairing salami with cheese, olives, bread or antipasto components.

Supermarket delis can take advantage of the holiday season to boost their specialty meats sales by familiarizing consumers with the products earlier in the year. Retailers can partner with distributors and producers to put specialty meats on special in September and October, so they are more familiar when the holidays roll around. "Then it's just a simple matter of keeping the products well signed, and in the same part of the store they were introduced in," advises Redondo's Whittum. "Extra satellite installations are fine but don't confuse the consumer by moving things around too much."

Flyer specials, positioning products at the beginning of the shopping experience, sampling and cross-department merchandising bring added attention to specialty deli meats. "I've always liked the idea of throwing a customer party night, doing active sampling throughout the store for several hours," Whittum says. "The more high-end the product, the more active the merchandising needs to be. Education is the key to making customers comfortable with shelling out the big bucks for specialty products."

Holiday gift packs featuring specialty meats are another merchandising option. Fra'Mani Handcrafted Salumi, Berkeley, CA, offers a line of traditional Italian cured meats, including six types of dried salami. "These foods appeal to people during the holidays," says Paul Bertolli, founder and cure master. "A lot of the stores cross-market our products with cheese, olives and condiments that offer a counterpoint to salty meats. They also can be paired with pickled onions and fig jams."

To raise awareness of prosciutto di Parma, New York, NY-based Lewis & Neale is running the Crowning Touch Merchandising Contest. Retailers who enter receive a contest kit containing point-of-sale materials, contest details and tips for creating a winning promotional display. For a minimum of a week between October 4 and December 3, retailers conduct the promotion, photographing displays, activities, ads, etc. Entries and photos are submitted online, and a total of $8,000 in cash prizes is awarded to the winners.

"The contest is for any store that sells prosciutto di Parma, whether it's a corner deli or a Whole Foods location," explains Ruth Lowenberg, senior vice president, Lewis & Neale. "Individual stores enter, not entire chains." Entrees are judged and prizes are awarded in two categories — single/independent stores up to five stores and chains of more than five stores. "The contest will help start the holiday season early to stimulate sales."

The current economy has led to an emphasis on downselling and private label products, but the holidays give delis an opportunity to upsell. "There are retailers missing the opportunity to sell great meats," says Tim Dam, president, Saag's Specialty Meats & Sausages, San Leandro, CA. "If consumers discover that they like these high-end products, they'll come back for them more often. During the holidays, people spend more and loosen up on their budgets. What better time to introduce something new and higher end?"

Displaying decorative boxes provides people with gift-giving options. "We include point-of-sale pieces to call out the item in the deli. This highlights the overall quality of the products," he adds

Freybe offers wobblers, shelf talkers, posters, shelf strips and other POS material. "Retailers can highlight the event and excitement of the season with colorful point-of-sale material from suppliers or make up their own, as well as actively selling, consulting with the consumer and sampling the product," Bronson says.

By including specialty meat in the deli's holiday selection, retailers can increase register rings and create a destination for unique, upscale party fare. **DB**

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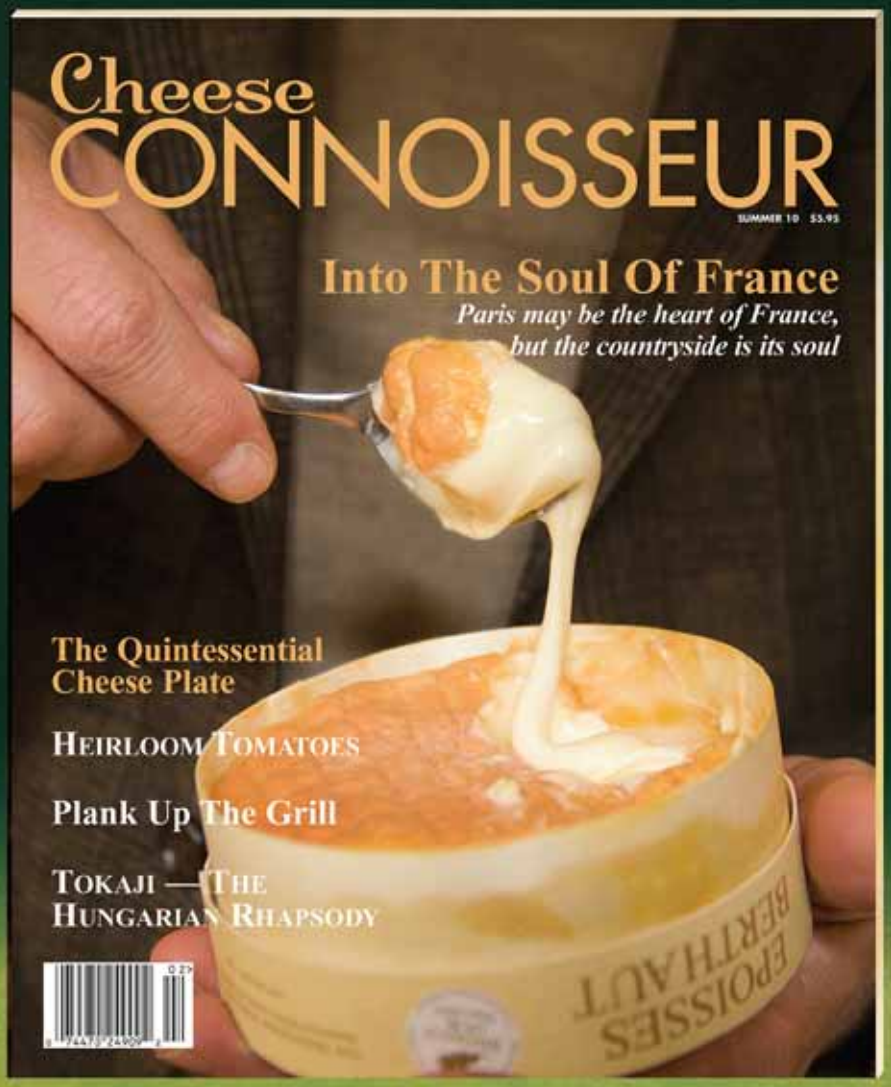

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Get Ready For The Festivities

Let the deli shine with holiday entertaining ideas

BY BOB JOHNSON

The fall and winter holidays can be the best of times at the deli. Consumers are looking for foods to make their get-togethers special and gifts that will surprise and delight their recipients. It's also a time when many consumers are open to trying new and interesting gourmet foods, so it just makes sense to get the deli spruced up and well stocked for the season.

"Merchandise, merchandise, merchandise," exclaims Phil Meldrum, president of FoodMatch Inc., New York, NY. "Give the department a thorough spring-cleaning even though it's fall, and build bountiful, beautiful displays with an eye toward color and texture. Then cap off with great, informative, educational signage and active sampling to create action, energy, and excitement in the department that rings true — or through — at the register.,"

To be brief — get ready for holiday party time at the deli. "Create eye-catching displays of these seasonal items and cross-promote them with regular items to increase their pickup and rejuvenate their sales as they will seem a little more special by association," suggests Dave Brandow, director of sales & marketing, corporate foodservice and export at Piller Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd., ON, Canada.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DELALLO

Let The Gourmet Times Roll

During the holiday season, most people expect to spend a little more money entertaining friends and family. "People like to entertain for the holidays and will spend more money than usual on specialty items such as pâté, cheeses, olives, meats, etc. A platter of thinly sliced Leoncini meats, imported cheese such as Crucolo, and olives are a great addition to any holiday gathering," says Anna Gallo, director of marketing at Savello USA, Inc., Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Gourmet olives help make holiday get-togethers memorable. "Olives are purchased on emotion, and it's even more so when people purchase for entertainment. People want variety, and they want a conversation

starter," says Anthony DiPietro, vice president at George DeLallo Co. Inc, Jeanette, PA. He suggests pre-packing fresh olives and cross-merchandising them with cheese or meat products, such selling pitted Kalamatas with Feta. "You're giving people recipe ideas."

Most people associate pâté with festivities so it often makes a premiere appearance during holiday party season. "Plentiful supplies of pâté, cheese, and specialty olives are essential to have because the holidays are the time of year when people actually plan, in advance, to enjoy themselves. Good food is always a part of the plan to enjoy oneself or to entertain with, or to give as a gift," notes Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian Pâtés & Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ. "Pâté in particular is wonderful for entertaining because it isn't typically enjoyed everyday and it's frequently perceived as an exotic treat."

If you're going to entice customers who aren't familiar with pâté to entertain with it, it makes sense to help them do it right. "People don't know what to serve with charcuterie or pâté. You can help them see what kind of cheese or wine to serve with it. Have them out together as you would for dinner or a party," suggests Elodie Jouannel, marketing director at New York, NY-based Les Trois Petits Cochons, which makes a line of pâté and charcuterie.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXIAN

Along with special offerings of pâté and cheese should go complementary crackers and breads that are also special. "Of course, the amount of pâté and specialty cheese should be increased! Our cocktail breads are the perfect carrier to these holiday gathering specialties," says Tom McGlade, president and CEO of Rubschlager Baking Corp., Chicago, IL. "We make cocktail rye bread and encourage retailers to make mini sandwiches with the breads, for example, mini ham and cheese on pumpernickel, mini corned beef and horseradish on rye, mini turkey and Swiss on sourdough and mini roast beef and Cheddar on whole wheat. It makes a unique and attractive mini sandwich platter."

Convenient party platters designed to be party conversation starters can help the many busy consumers who want to entertain in a special way. "Many of our retail partners have had tremendous success selling pre-made party platters or offering their customers the opportunity to quickly put together their own platter off an olive and antipasti bar, sold by the pound," reports FoodMatch's Meldrum. "Platters should include what we call the holy trinity of deli — specialty cheese, specialty meats and specialty olives/antipasti."

Olives and cheese are the traditional deli entertainment foods, and they're even more sought-after during the holidays. "Cheeses are especially great for the holidays. When

attending parties, cheese makes a great gift that the hosts can save for their own enjoyment or use right away to entertain. Cheese always attracts attention at a party — there's so much to learn about each variety and such a variety possible on each cheese plate," according to Michael Blum, sales and marketing director for Beemster USA, Jersey City, NJ. "The important thing to remember is that more the consumer knows about the cheese when buying it, the more positive their experience with that cheese will be and the more it will lead to their return to the cheese counter for more advice and more purchases."

"Specialty olives are great appetizers and easy entertaining. One great entertaining trend includes gourmet hors d'oeuvres, such as small kabobs consisting of a green pitted olive, a Kalamata pitted olive and a Mozzarella ball seasoned to taste," describes Patty Echevarria, marketing manager for Castella Imports, Hauppauge, NY.

Specialty olives can also serve as an ingredient in a gourmet-food gift basket. "Specialty olives are a must-have for holiday entertaining. In-style olives, such as almond, garlic, jalapeño and sun-dried tomatoes, are sure to deliver a memorable experience. Specialty food baskets that include pasta sauce, olive oil, cheese and olives are great gifts that are elegant and ready-to-give," she adds.

The Spirit Of Gifting

During the holiday season, the deli can become the most important gift shop in the supermarket. The possibilities for displaying unique, relatively inexpensive and always well-received gift items are virtually endless.

"Specialty foods and associated items are wonderful gift items since their appeal is universal! Everyone loves to eat well," Alexian's Cummins says.

According to Jouannel of Trois Petits Cochons. "You can display gift baskets with gourmet pâté, gourmet cheese and a variety of gourmet foods. You don't really need to know the person well to give this gift, but it is always appreciated."

A range of gourmet foods can be included as potential gift items. "Jams, wine, jellies, vincotto, panettone, torrone and gift baskets should all be considered," Savello's Gallo adds.

Some producers supply versions of their foods specifically designed to be merchandised as gifts. "We feature a popular gift item for the holiday season — a snowman-shaped dry cured salami," notes Piller's Brandow. "This is a great product that can be included in festive gift baskets or even as a Christmas tree ornament. It's a great accompaniment to wine and cheese baskets the receiver is sure to enjoy during this special time of the year or at any time. We all deserve a little pampering every now and then."

The gift department in the deli can extend beyond gourmet foods to include carriers and utensils that go with these foods. "Consumers are always looking for unique gift ideas. If you stock these items, a consumer can purchase a nice wedge of cheese, place it on a cheese board, add a cheese knife and have a wonderful gift," Gallo advises.

In a deli that has warmed to its role as a specialty gift shop, the utensils themselves can be unique items. "In France, they have a lot of unique spreaders or cutting boards that you can display at the holidays," Jouannel says.

Some gift items can be displayed so as to suggest they can be used either for a party or as a gift. "We want delis to be able to offer a circular tray with multiple compartments. It's an easy and exciting way to serve antipasti," DeLallo's DiPietro says. The tray can be premade with antipasti for convenience, or it

can be left empty to be given as a gift or filled with antipasti by the customer for a party.

A Time For Introductions

During the holidays many consumers are ready to try new and exciting foods, making the holidays the single best time to introduce new foods or new varieties of existing lines. DiPietro suggests introducing new items "like fresh pepper and garlic antipasti."

New items can be new varieties of products already carried by the deli. "The holidays are the perfect time to merchandise condiments and accompaniments. Think of the importance of all the side dishes we put out on our holiday tables. Offer fig spread and other fruit spreads that complement cheeses. Offer great extra virgin olive oils to dip with bread and serve with cheese and antipasti," suggests FoodMatch's Meldrum. "Any beautiful serving board or platter that takes care of presentation — instead of worrying about preparation — is a plus. Time-crazed customers can simply buy an assortment of ready-to-go selections to put out on a great looking presentation piece and voilà, done."

The staple gourmet offerings are specialty cheeses and specialty fresh olives and antipasti. "The same consumer who appreciates and routinely buys specialty cheeses is the same consumer who loves to buy olives and antipasti items," Meldrum continues. "Retailers miss a huge opportunity by not offering specialty olives with cheeses. They miss half their sales. The quality of your olive selection should match the quality of your specialty cheese selection. Customers who expect great quality cheeses will want great quality olives."

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOODMATCH

A realm of foods available only during the holiday season offers an opportunity to both differentiate the department and build up the ring. "Do some research," Savello's Gallo suggests. "Look for artisanal products, something unique. Consumers are always looking for something new for the holidays."

Pâté is a mainstay for venturing into new territory for the holidays. "Delis should add

game pâtés, such as venison or wild boar, for the holidays. If you add items only for the holidays, people see they can get something special," Trois Petits Cochons' Jouannel says.

If you're introducing new foods for the holidays, their success could well hinge on a program of education and promotion. "Retailers that sell pâté only during the holiday season should be sure to employ bold signage to announce its arrival in the store and to promote it as an entertaining solution. Pâté has very high value as an entertaining 'solution': It's easy, it's unusual, it's special and its fun! Promote it as such," stresses Alexian's Cummins.

For many foods new to the consumer, the key to promoting is sampling. "Be prepared to sample! Many people aren't familiar with pâté. I recommend sampling a spreadable mousse with a toast or cracker that's also being sold. If it's an unattended sampling station, remember to have signage directing the customer to where it is displayed," Cummins advises.

The platters themselves can be dressed up to serve as part of the holiday party decoration. "Look for seasonal platter décor that can jazz up your platters and make them stand out more when consumers serve them. Make these occasions stand out and be more special," Brandow suggests.

This is the season to give the deli department a festive look and feel that invites the consumer to get in the mood. "Decorate with big displays and make the shopper feel like they want to be a part of the fun," relates Beemster's Blum. "Holidays are a great opportunity to educate consumers who want to learn how to make the specialty department part of their lives. By having all the proper accessories, stores will get repeat customers, not just holiday sales."

If you're turning your deli into holiday party central, make sure to put some food out. "A great way to promote a new food item in a deli is to allow consumers to taste test the products," according to Savello's Gallo.

Holiday consumers are a special breed, looking to get their festivity on and ready to spend a little more to do it right — if you show them the way. "Pâté, specialty cheese, olives, antipasti are the centerpiece of easy entertaining, and celebrating with friends and family. The holiday season is the best time to take advantage of customers' willingness to try and buy new treats to surprise and delight their guests. A host or hostess loves nothing more than to thrill his or her guests with some new wonderful food discovery," FoodMatch's Meldrum says. "Retailers should take advantage of their customers' willingness to make impulse purchases by putting out new selections and lots of passive samples." **DB**

A Dinner Destination

Today, holiday dinners in the deli are likely to offer unique twists on traditional favorites

BY T. ELIZABETH BLANCO

As consumers shift their spending dollars from restaurants to supermarkets during this down economy, they're looking to the deli for both unique and traditional holiday meal options. Since the fall and winter holidays are all about tradition, it's important for retailers to offer restaurant-quality meals that are reminiscent of homemade.

In a May 2010 study by research firm StrategyOne, which has offices around the world, 75 percent of respondents reported they are looking for homemade recipes. In the same study, however, 60 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 30 who were surveyed said they were interested in new, experimental recipes to make the holiday meal more contemporary.

"To address this dichotomy, we believe delis will be most successful in reaching all ages of consumers by offering the traditional pre-prepared holiday dinners with season or stir-in options so consumers can spice up traditional family recipes or add some ethnic flair to contemporize their meal," advises Kari Lindell, director of retail marketing at Garner, NC-based Butterball.

The centerpiece of most holiday dinners is the meat. Whether turkey or ham, this component is a must-have. Although traditional preparations are a necessity for many families, a growing number of consumers are looking for something unique, and a number of suppliers are expanding their offerings to provide them with more options.

Although Butterball's most popular offer-

PHOTO COURTESY OF BUTTERBALL

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOAR'S HEAD PROVISIONS CO., INC

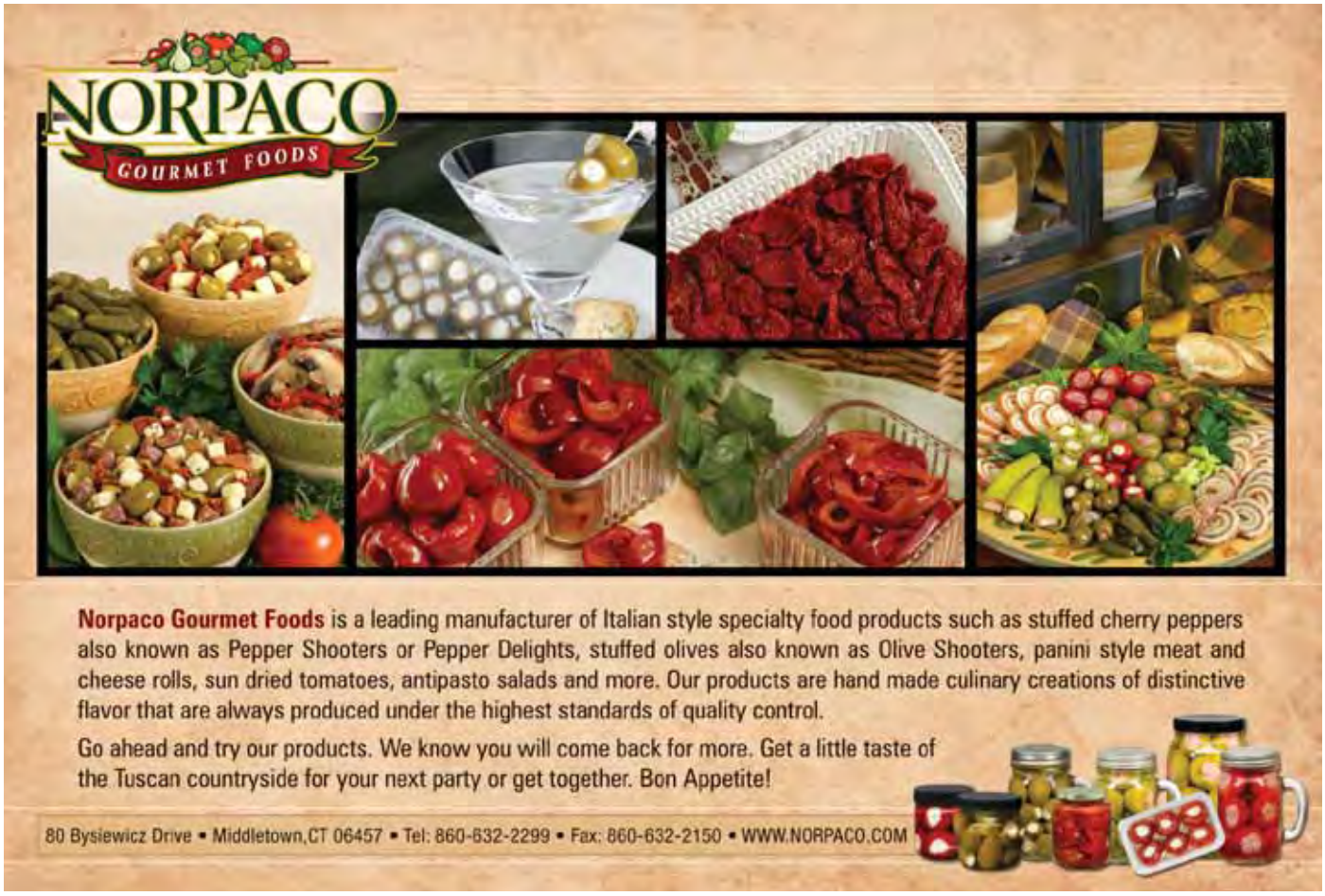
ing is its turkey with a traditional oven-roasted flavor, the company now offers a deep-fried bird. "Overall, the dinners themselves have not changed to a great extent; it's the way people celebrate that has changed," Lindell says. "Holiday gatherings are becoming larger, as more people are inviting friends and family for big events. Consequently, potluck dinners, where the host provides the turkey and the guests bring the sides, are becoming more common."

In the ham category, the trends are remaining consistent with what they have been in the past. "Boneless hams are growing faster than bone in," notes Louis Eni, president and CEO of Philadelphia, PA-based Dietz & Watson, which offers a number of meat items, including fully sliced, end-to-end dinner ham. Weighing approximately six pounds, the company's line of Chef Carved Hams is glazed and fruited. "It's a big seller for us."

The convenience factor is responsible for the rising popularity of spiral hams. "There has been more movement toward spiral hams over the last five to six years, as opposed to the old fashioned bone-in variety," Eni adds. "These items are more of a commodity. Many delis use holiday items as loss leaders to get consumers in the door."

Sarasota, FL-based Boar's Head Provisions Co., Inc. provides a number of fully cooked, ready-to-heat holiday entrées that can be center-of-the-plate offerings or a la carte purchases. Its Sweet Slice Boneless Smoked Ham is lightly smoked and features the flavor of a traditional bone-in ham. Its Oven-Roasted Turkey Breast is made of all-white meat, slowly oven-roasted and lightly seasoned with tomato and herbs.

"For years, we would offer cooked turkey that ranged in the 10- to 12-pound range, and



that seemed to be what consumers were looking for," relates Barb Quijano, vice president of marketing at Hain Pure Protein, Fredericksburg, PA. "Then they started looking for bigger products." In response, Hain expanded its size offerings. Up until last year, its 10- to 16-pound fully cooked turkeys were the most popular. However, "This year, we're seeing more requests for smaller meat sizes," she adds. "This leads me to believe that single homeowners and smaller families are looking for a cooked breast or boneless breast rather than whole cooked turkeys."

These consumers are not interested in leftovers but instead are seeking a quick, convenient way to celebrate the holidays with just enough food for a single meal. "We can see, based on the growth of cooked turkeys and cooked turkey dinners, there are a lot more consumers that are looking for convenience," Quijano says.

From an ingredient standpoint, consumers are looking to duplicate from-scratch holiday entrées. "During the holidays, replicating that fresh turkey experience as much as possible is more rewarding for retailers," she continues. Hain also offers gravy and dressing. "Stores decide what additional sides they want to offer their customers."

The company also offers smoked turkeys for those looking to add a unique center-of-the-plate item. "We continue to see the popularity of cooked turkeys, sold individually or as a complete dinner, continue to grow each year," Quijano says.

Side Dishes

Like turkey and ham, holiday side dishes have become more innovative, but with an eye on tradition. "Although we always see people wanting to add something traditional to their holiday dinner, more people want to distinguish their dishes," says Wendy DiMatteo, CEO of ASK Foods, headquartered in Palmyra, PA. The prepared food supplier offers 400 soup, salad, entrée and side-dish items.

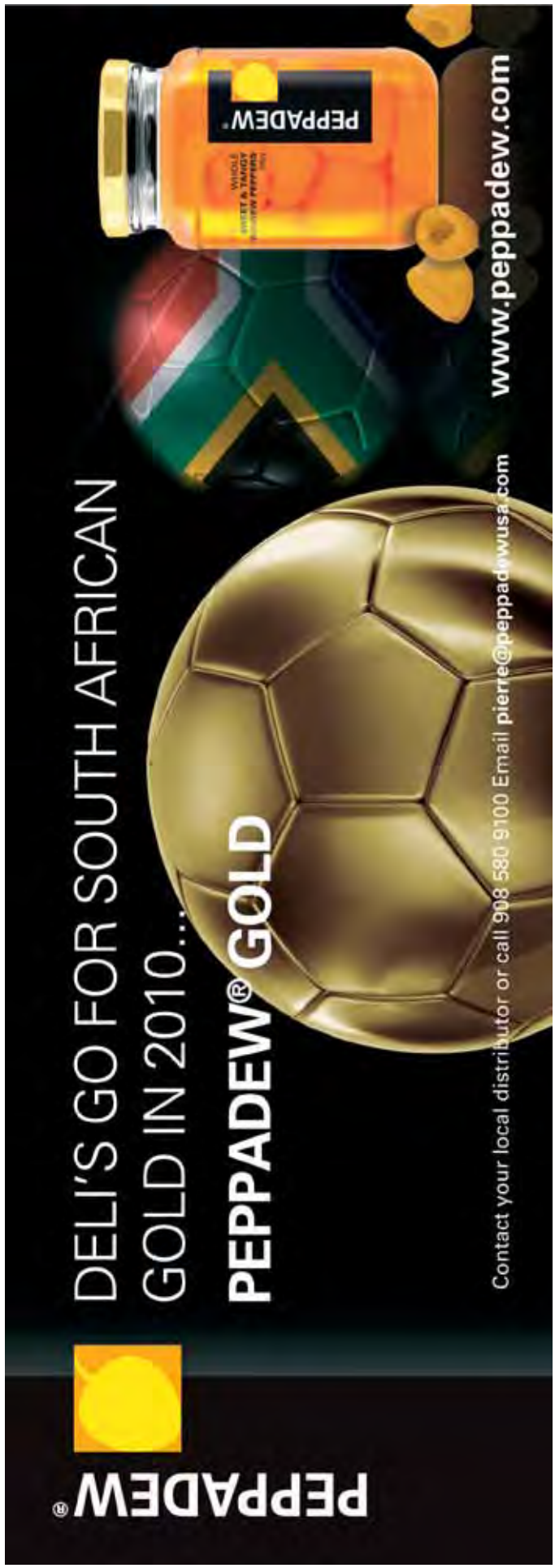
Instead of traditional mashed potatoes, today's holiday tables are more likely to contain loaded or garlic mashed potatoes. "It makes the holidays more compelling when side dishes are upscale but still reminiscent of traditional dishes," she explains.

The side dish components vary slightly depending on whether the centerpiece is ham or turkey. For example, sweet potatoes are more often served with ham and mashed potatoes are more often served with turkey.

"Dishes with a creative twist also seem more chef-driven and add value to a purchase," DiMatteo continues. ASK recently introduced a mashed cauliflower side dish as a healthier alternative to mashed potatoes and grilled Brussels sprouts as an alternative to green bean casserole. "People are watching their carb intake, so we're seeing more requests from retailers for green vegetable options during the holidays," DiMatteo says.

ASK Foods also offers a twist on apple cobbler desserts, such as cranberry apple and apple pomegranate.

Along with upscale sides, retailers can provide a more high-end meat option. "Some people are adding prime rib or pork loin dinners to their turkey and ham offerings," DiMatteo says. "We have upscale horseradish mashed potatoes for serving with prime rib, in addition to



specialty stuffing like apple pecan and pineapple."

Added Visibility

It's key for delis to emphasize their dinner offerings during the holidays by creating appealing displays that draw consumers to these items. Creating a visual of the table and then offering these items on platters and in attractive casserole dishes in deli cases or displays can be an effective merchandising tool.

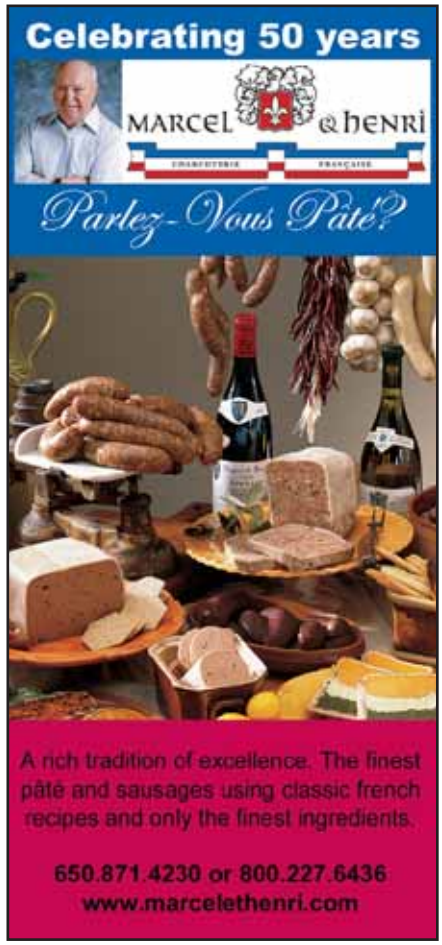
"Retailers can design adjacent areas in the deli case for meal bundles and a la carte offerings," DiMatteo says. This allows those who are cooking their own main dish to pick up a 2-pound side to serve with it.

According to Butterball's Lindell, "Long gone are the days where one person is responsible for cooking the entire holiday meal. Promoting the ala carte option will enable consumers to bring a side dish to parties without the time or trouble of preparing it themselves."

Retailers with limited space can utilize graphics, such as color photos on easels, to help consumers envision the food as part of their holiday meal. "Merchandising and preselling in advance also is important," ASK's DiMatteo adds.

The deli holiday dinner category has gone up and down over the last 10 years, but manufacturers say it has increased in popularity in the last couple of years. "Retailers know what sells and what doesn't," DiMatteo says. "Manufacturers have learned that there is still a price point stores need to be at."

Quality takes precedence, especially during the holidays. "The deli will continue to be a popular destination for consumers to purchase their pre-prepared holiday meals," Lindell concludes. **DB**



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Flavored Cheese Goes Upscale

No longer the outcasts of the specialty cheese segment, flavored cheeses are being produced by some of the world's best cheesemakers

BY LISA WHITE

Although industry insiders know the term "flavored cheese" refers to cheeses with a flavoring agent added to the paste, consumers have a much wider take on the term. For consumers the term also connotes cheeses whose rinds have been rubbed or soaked to add flavor. So when the deli is trying to increase its sale of flavored cheeses, it must consider the broader definition.

In the past, cheese connoisseurs looked down upon flavored cheese. Why interfere with the artisan creations of some of the world's best craftsman, they asked. Today, however, many of the best cheesemakers have changed their tune. Even with the more than 300 cheese varieties available in the U.S., consumers are hungry for innovative flavored cheeses.

According to Packaged Facts, the research firm based in Rockville, MD, taste is the No. 1 reason for buying food, making adding flavorful ingredients, ranging from spicy to sweet, to cheese an ongoing trend.

"There is a variety of different foods competing for consumers' share of stomach," says Rafael Lampon, marketing director for Alouette Cheese USA, based in New Holland, PA. "To make it relevant and grow the category, we need to provide new flavors that expand the brand footprint and bring new consumers into the category."

By expanding their cheese flavor portfolios, retailers and manufacturers can more easily attract new consumers to the specialty cheese category.

Creative And Unique

There was a point in time when flavored cheeses meant incorporating mediocre flavorings into mediocre cheeses, but those days have largely passed; today's cheesemakers are adding innovative tastes to some of their best cheeses. As a result, this category is on the upswing.

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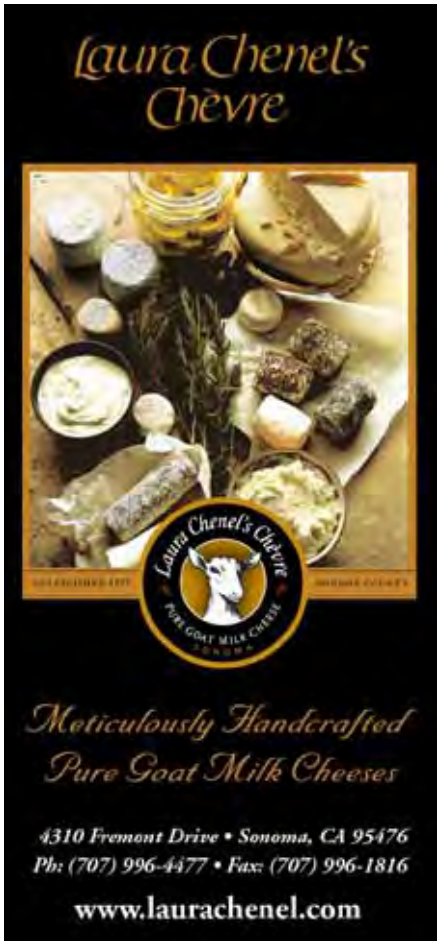
"We see sales of flavored cheeses increasing," says Pia Jakobsgaard, brand manager at Basking Ridge, NJ-based Arla Foods. "In particular, our smoked cheese sales are growing." The company offers flavored Gouda and Havarti cheeses, including Gouda in smoked cracked peppercorn, chili lime, pesto and chipotle flavors as well as dill and jalapeño pepper Havarti cheeses.

In Italy, flavored cheeses often refer to wine-cured varieties, in addition to cheeses aged under hay, ash, walnut or even chestnut leaves. Some of these cheeses are flavored with truffles as well as red and black pepper. "In certain areas where fresh cheeses are traditional, you will find them sprinkled with herbs, truffle shavings, sesame seeds and little pieces of locally grown grape leaves," relates Margaret Cicogna, consultant with Atalanta Corp., based in Elizabeth, NJ. "Besides being very aesthetic, these ingredients also influence the delicate flavor of the fresh cheeses."

The flavorings of cheeses also are particular to certain regions of Italy. For instance, in the Venetian region, there are a number of wine-cured cheeses. One of the very first to comprehend the exceptional aspects of this discovery was Antonio Carpeneda, who perfected this technique, Cicogna says.



Carpeneda is an affinatore, meaning one who cures and ages cheeses in different ways. "He produces other cheeses that are more apt to be found in deli cases, such as the Brillo di Treviso, a fresh cheese dipped and cured directly into the local wine," Cicogna says. Another wine cheese geared for delis is Briscole al Barbera. Another of Carpeneda's creations is Perla Grigia al Tartufo, a cow's milk cheese aged under ash and flavored with truffle and spices.

Mediterranean-flavored cheese is the focus at Karoun Dairies in Sun Valley, CA. "With flavored cheese, like sun-dried tomato, we use thyme as a spice. This is unique to our Feta," explains Vars Injijian, vice president of sales and marketing. The company also offers cheeses flavored with black Kalamata and green olives.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CYPRESS GROVE

Another Mediterranean-inspired cheese is Mediterranean Sunset Heritage Cheddar from Henning Wisconsin Cheese, Kiel, WI. The cheese is mixed with Kalamata olives and Mediterranean spices.

Because spicy cheese flavors also are popular, Karoun offers an habanera variety as well as string cheese marinated with red pepper flakes. "East Asian and spicy curry flavors are up and coming, although we don't offer these yet," Injijian says.

Burning Mélange from Holland Family Cheese, Thorp, WI, also targets spice lovers, although in this case heat is not part of the equation. Burning Mélange is flavored with stinging nettle, chives, celery, parsley, dried onion and garlic. Holland also offers the award-winning Marieke's Foenegreek Gouda, made with a seed native to Holland and featuring a nutty, maple flavor.

Flavored cheese spreads were arguably the impetus for the flavored cheese phenomenon. "Flavor is the foundation of what our cheese is about," notes Alouette's Lampon. "This became the core of who we were and what customers recognize and expect from us." Alouette's best-selling spreadable cheese is Garlic and Herb. The flavor aspect has played out in the rest of Alouette's cheese portfolio, which includes cheese crumbles, Crème de Brie and its Elegant line.

"Flavors have transcended throughout our portfolio," Lampon adds. "The biggest challenge is to provide a flavor experience that is unique and brings new consumers into the segment." The company recently introduced a pepper medley spread that is a sweet and spicy mix featuring the popular Peppadew pepper, as well as a cheesecake flavor. "Consumers are looking for variety and taste, as well as spicy and sweet products."

To address the growing smoked cheese segment, Alouette has launched a smoked Brie wedge. "Also, cheese crumbles are a big trend, with approximately 17 percent of households purchasing these cheeses," Lampon says. Alouette's flavored crumbles include Garlic and Herb Feta, Mediterranean Feta with Olives and Goat Cheese Provencal.

In addition to the Alouette cheese spread line, the South African Peppadew pepper has been added to a number of cheeses from major companies. "We are a new-fashioned cheese flavor," says Pierre Crawley, president

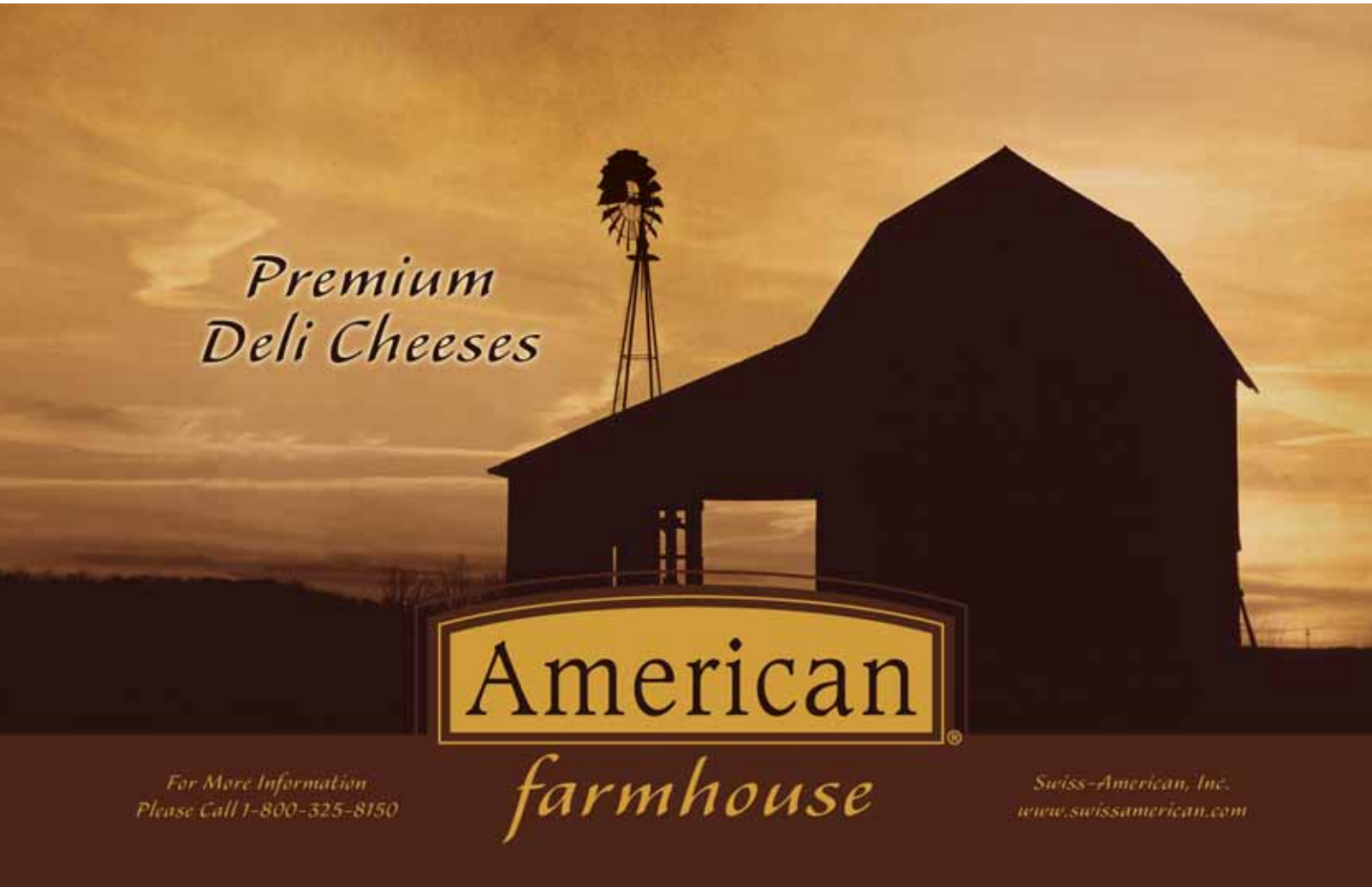
of Peppadew USA, located in Morganville, NJ. The pepper is available diced, in a sugar/vinegar brine or in a dry seasoning format to flavor cheeses.

"The principals of our cheeses is more about pairing than flavoring or changing the taste of the main cheese," says Marie Lesoudier, general manager of Sonoma, CA-based Laura Chenel's Chèvre. The company provides flavored Chèvres, which are plain goat cheese covered with herb, dill or pepper, and Blossom, which is fresh goat cheese with a flavor-filled center of basil olive oil or sun-dried tomato or fig and olive. "In the past, flavored cheeses were more simple," she adds. "Today, by pairing instead of mixing flavors, we create a more subtle result."

One of the most popular cheeses offered by Arcata, CA-based Cypress Grove Chevre is Truffle Tremor, flavored with Italian truffles. The company also offers Humboldt Fog, a soft, surface-ripened cheese featuring a ribbon of edible vegetable ash along its center and a coating of ash under its exterior to give it a distinctive, cake-like appearance. "Today's flavored cheese is very sophisticated," says Mary Keehn, founder and owner of the company. "People who think they won't like goat cheese will typically try a flavored variety first."

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROGUE CREAMERY

Rogue Creamery, Central Point, OR, is famous for its award-winning Blue cheeses, but it also produces several flavored Cheddars, the two newest being Lavender Cheddar and Rosemary Cheddar. "We offer many flavored Cheddars, and this seems to be what people are looking for," says Francis



Plowman, director of marketing. "Offering mild, medium, sharp and extra sharp Cheddar is not enough. Consumers want flavorful, spicy cheese." Rogue also offers Cheddars flavored with beer, garlic or habaneros.

"The Swiss [for example] have been making cheese for centuries and haven't changed anything. But Americans are not painted in a corner, so we can be more creative," says Pat Ford, one of the founders of Uintah, UT-based Beehive Cheese Co. The company offers a number of flavored cheeses, including Barely Buzzed, a full-bodied cheese with a nutty flavor and smooth texture. The cheese is hand rubbed with a Turkish grind of Colorado Legacy Coffee's Beehive Blend, which consists of a mix of South American, Central American, and Indonesian coffee beans roasted to different styles.

Getting The Word Out

A number of marketing and merchandising tactics can bring added attention to the flavored cheese category. According to Arla's Jakobsgaard says. "People will be hesitant to pick up a new flavor if they can't try it. If stores do on-site demos, where consumers can taste the cheeses, this will help increase sales."

Having a theme week, such as hot and spicy, can help incorporate these products into a display. "Mainstream retailers are struggling with innovative merchandising, although smaller independents are becoming more aggressive in selling these products," notes Karoun's Injijian.

Increasing usage succession is important with this category to keep consumer interest peaked. "It's about sampling as much as possible as well as educating consumers on how to use the cheese and what they can do with it," adds Laura Chenel's Lesoudier.

Emphasizing the convenience and ready-to-use factors of flavored cheese can be effective. "The fact that these cheeses are easy to use and convenient is why the category is increasing right now," Lesoudier says.

Another effective merchandising technique is to create a flavored cheese display that represents the store's region. For example, pairing flavored cheese with local beer from area brewpubs can increase sales of both categories.

Keehn recommends promoting the festive aspect of flavored cheeses. "People are looking for fun things to do, like party with fresh flavored goat cheese. Include items such as pine nuts, almonds or orange peels on the side of the cheese to create an attractive display. If retailers scatter these things in the cheese case, it will help merchandise these products."

Pairing wine with cheeses can help differentiate different flavors and varieties. "It's easier to cross-merchandise these cheeses with beer and wine if a store is selling pre-cut cheese," Plowman advises. "The key is to get these products in people's mouths, and they will buy them." The biggest challenge, he adds, is consumers' resistance to unusual flavors, such as lavender. "They're not sure what it will taste like and, even with spicy cheese flavors, they want to see how hot it is."

Retailers should always bear in mind that stories also sell cheese. "Cheese is mysterious and magical. People want to know all about the cheese and the story behind it," says Ford.

With flavored cheeses, the sky's the limit in terms of variety. Trends will continue to evolve and change, with consumer preferences setting the bar. "We can see from the varieties we had several years ago compared with those we offer today that there is a proliferation of flavors," continues Plowman. "Everyone is looking for more taste and flavor with cheese." **DB**

Sandwich Nation

By
Jan Fialkow
Managing Editor

DELI BUSINESS and CHEESE CONNOISSEUR

Americans love sandwiches. Toddlers eat grilled cheese made with processed American slices and white bread; school kids scarf down pb&j or ham & cheese; families flock to fast-food outlets and QSR chains; even high-end restaurants have gotten into the sandwich business.

The competition for the sandwich segment share-of-stomach is fierce and the publicity surrounding the battles is ratcheting up — in the press, on-line and in the blogosphere. And as each sandwich purveyor ups the ante, the publicity is getting increasingly negative.

Before the economy tanked, bad publicity for sandwiches centered on the atmospheric costs of elite gourmet burgers made with Kobe beef, foie gras and truffles. Even in high-flying times, $100 for a burger leaves a bad taste.

Now that penny-pinching is in, the negative publicity has centered on the nutritional value — or lack thereof — of the sandwiches vying for consumer dollars. The opening salvo was KFC's Double Down — no bread, just bacon and cheese between two fried chicken breasts. Regional chain Friendly's entered the fray with its Grilled Cheese Burger Melt — a cheeseburger sandwiched between two grilled cheese sandwiches. Across the pond, UK supermarket giant Tesco introduced a "lasagne" sandwich — pasta, meat, sauce, cheese and mayo dressing (!) between "two thick slices of bread."

When the publicity is positive, it often goes to the supermarket delis' newest competitor in the sandwich wars. In large cities from coast to coast, food trucks have been gaining momentum. Out-of-work chefs and entrepreneurs without the finances to open a traditional eatery have revamped the concept of meals on wheels. Spurred on by devotees who Tweet their favorite truck's location at any given time, the new businesses are making inroads. Whether they offer Vietnamese bahn mi, Korean barbecue on a bun, Middle Eastern falafel on pita or Tex-Mex burritos, they're siphoning off dollars that could be spent in the deli.

So what's the deli to do? How about tapping into its strengths while exploring some innovative paths? The deli has the ability to hit all the positive consumer buttons for great sandwiches: taste, which has to be the main focus; nutrition, which should be stressed as a differentiator; cost, which must be competitive; and convenience, which needs to be addressed.

Taste has to be the No. 1 factor. If the flavor isn't there, nothing else matters. This is an opportunity to create signature sandwiches that drive traffic. Take a cue from restaurants and augment your lineup with specials — a cheese or meat of the day or week (Aged Cheddar week, Cajun turkey Monday), a variety of artisan breads (sourdough, rustic whole-grain, French baguette), a grilled panini of the week (Genoa salami and Provolone, baked ham and Gruyere). Offer out-of-the-ordinary condiment options (chutney, horseradish sauce, raspberry chipotle sauce) and sides beyond the usual chips, slaw and potato salad. For the workhorse sandwiches, put together combos with one-from-column-A, one-from-column-B ordering. And make sure the pre-made sandwiches are just as appealing as the made-to-order.

> The deli has the ability to hit all the positive consumer buttons for great sandwiches: taste, nutrition, cost, and convenience.

Even though consumers often say one thing and do another when it comes to nutrition, delis should position their sandwiches as the healthy *and* delicious options to the heart-attack-on-a-plate concoctions that are making the news. This is an opportunity to put together sandwiches that fit within the confines of a healthy diet, a group of sandwiches that contain no more than ⅓ of a day's sodium, fat and calories for a healthy adult. You don't have to preach, but you can use comparisons and counts to set your deli apart. And don't underestimate the appeal of natural, organic and local ingredients. A sandwich of locally grown leaf lettuce, heirloom tomatoes and prosciutto with honey mustard on baked-in-store ciabatta can draw in a whole new lunch or dinner crowd.

Cost should take into account both demographics and competition. If there's a sub shop across the parking lot, pay attention to what it's charging. If you offer a tiered program of meats and cheeses in the service case, offer the same tiers in sandwiches. Your sandwich deal of the day or week should really be two deals — one for the value shopper and one for indulgence shopper.

Convenience may be the most difficult aspect to address. Short of putting in a drive-thru, the deli can't do much for consumers who refuse to leave their cars. But you can find ways to make it easier to pick up a sandwich at the deli. Let consumers call or fax in their order. Set up an ordering link on your website. Consider a phone app that takes orders — reaching a younger audience is in your long-term interest. When the consumer gets to the store, make the pick-up process more user friendly. Publix GreenWise stores have designated parking spots for customers picking up prepared food. They've not only positioned the sandwich-making operations at the front of the store with the prepared food stations, but they've also set up distinct checkout lines within the area. Yes, these customers are not walking through the store to get to the deli, but they are buying at the deli rather than some other sandwich maker. And that's the objective. **DB**

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The photo on the right, taken in 1943, shows founders Pietro Scavarda (far left) and Francesco Pocino (far right) behind the deli counter of the original store. The photo above, taken in 1953, depicts the original Frank Pocino & Sons deli and manufacturing facilities in Lincoln Heights,

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

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