DELI BUSINESS

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IT'S OFFICIAL

ONLY LE GRUYÈRE AOP SWITZERLAND CAN BE CALLED LE GRUYÈRE AOP SWITZERLAND

The only cheese that's 100% Natural, 100% from Switzerland and 100% Le Gruyère AOP

What we've known for 900 years is official – Le Gruyère Switzerland, having successfully registered a trademark in the U.S., is now legally, as well as logically, the only cheese that can call itself Gruyère AOP. We're officially the only cheese with the smooth, savory flavor that Le Gruyère AOP has been known for since 1115 AD: officially made in the same place **(in the villages of Western Switzerland)**, in the same way **(with raw milk from cows fed from the same grass and hay)**, with the same care **(hand-made, in small batches)**, and from the same recipe **(slow-aged in the same cheese cellars and caves)**, for centuries. Le Gruyère AOP is officially 100% natural, 100% additive free, and naturally free of lactose and gluten.

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www.gruyere.com

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BOOTH #175

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CHEESEMONGER INVITATIONAL

Described as the WrestleMania for cheese by its creator, Adam Moskowitz, the sixth Cheesemonger Invitational is taking place June 28th to 29th, at Larkin Cold Storage in Long Island City, NY.

What happens when you take the best cheesemongers from around the country and put them in a warehouse in Long Island City with literally tons of the world's best cheese? The battle begins.

Watch monger against monger in a grueling cheese battle extravaganza. If you love cheese, REALLY love cheese, then this is your favorite new sporting event. And if you are lactose intolerant, you are not allowed in.

A ticket gets you into the event where it's all you can eat creations from the best cheese people in the world. There will be fondue, Raclette and grilled cheese sandwiches, incredible salumi and insane pickles. And, all you the beer and wine you can drink.

Go to www.cheesemongerinvitational.com to purchase tickets.

MUST BE 21 TO ENTER.

COMING NEXT ISSUE IN AUG/SEPT

COVER STORY
Back to School

FEATURE STORIES
Tailgating Profits
Packaging for Profit

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS
Grab' n Go
Soups

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Holiday Buying

PREPARED FOODS
Party Platters

DELI MEATS
Charcuterie

CHEESES
English Cheddars
California Cheeses

COMING NEXT

COMING IN OCT/NOV
Going Green — Addressing consumers' environmental concerns

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www.gfifoods.com

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Lakeland, FL (863) 984-5656

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West Caldwell, NJ (973) 487-3980

Announcements

NEW SWISS AND GOUDA LAUNCH

Swiss Valley Farms, Davenport, IA, has announced the launch of sliced Swiss, Baby Swiss and Gouda to its product line-up. Available in 8/1.5-pound packages, these slices offer even more variety for foodservice customers. The company also offers Blue-veined cheese, Chunk cheese, Amablu and Butter. Swiss Valley Farms is a farmer-owned cooperative that has been producing quality dairy products, including award-winning cheeses, since 1958.

www.swissvalley.com
IDDBA Booth #2345

PLACON ACQUIRES PLASTIC PACKAGING

Placon, Madison, WI, has announced that it is has completed the acquisition of rigid plastic container manufacturer Plastic Packaging Corp. (PPC) of West Springfield, MA. Founded in 1954 by Fred Weiss, PPC is a family owned injection molded polyethylene and polypropylene container, cup, tub, pail and lid manufacturer. The company also provides advanced decorating services for hot to frozen foods in the foodservice and food processing industries. Placon offers both custom and stock lines of thermoformed food containers in pdeolypropylene and recycled PET (RPET) materials. Terms and conditions of the agreement were not disclosed.

www.placon.com
IDDBA Booth #2349

SANDRA ACOSTA AWARDED CHEESEMAKER SCHOLARSHIP

Wisconsin Cheese Originals, Madison, WI, awarded Wisconsin dairy goat farmer Sandra Acosta of Port Washington with the 2014 Beginning Cheesemaker Scholarship. She was selected by a committee of industry leaders to receive the $2,500 annual award for aiming to develop a farmstead creamery. An accomplished cheesemaker, veterinarian and instructor in her native Mexico, Acosta aims to become a licensed cheesemaker in her new home country. This marks the fifth year Wisconsin Cheese Originals has offered the $2,500 scholarship to a new cheesemaker.

www.wisconsincheeseoriginals.com

A BRAND REFRESH

FoodMatch Inc., New York City, NY, has announced a brand refresh of its Olivista Extra Virgin Olive Oil from California. The line includes three distinct varieties, each named for unique flavor and usage characteristics. Olivista Delicate is balanced and buttery with harmonious flavor for everyday dipping, dressing and marinating. Olivista Bold is aromatic and peppery, with subtle notes of arugula that complement savory cooking and grilling. Olivista Arbequina is a single varietal that is fresh and fruity to enhance full-flavored cooking.

www.foodmatch.com

New Products

COOMBE CASTLE AWARDED QUEEN AWARD

Coombe Castle, Wiltshire, UK, was recently awarded its third Queen Award for International Trade in conjunction with opening an expanded cream production and storage facility. The award was presented to the company by Princess Anne. Coombe Castle previously won this award in both 2001 and 2007. Founded in 1980 in Corsham, the company exports its own cream as well as butter and cheese products from a range of farms, creameries and dairies. Exported brands include Applewood Smoked Cheddar, Stinking Bishop and Colliers Welsh Cheddar; and a range of clotted and double creams, as well as butter from Devon, Wales and goats' milk butter.

www.coombecastle.com

UPLANDS CHEESE SOLD

Uplands Cheese, Dodgeville, WI, is under new ownership. Cheesemaker Andy Hatch and herdsman Scott Mericka, both of whom began as apprentices at Uplands, announced they have purchased the dairy farm and cheese company from its founders, Mike Gingrich and Dan Patenaude. Hatch and Mericka have been managing the farm since 2010, resulting in a gradual transition. Uplands Cheese was founded in 2000, when Gingrich and Patenaude began crafting Pleasant Ridge Reserve with the grass-fed milk of their cows.

www.uplandscheese.com

LE GRUYÈRE® SWITZERLAND AOP

Born in Switzerland in 1115.
www.gruyere.com

TRADEMARK PROTECTION FOR GRUYERE

Le Gruyère Switzerland has announced that, after legal disputes which took many years to resolve, the Interprofession du Gruyère has succeeded in registering a trademark in the USA for "LE GRUYÈRE SWITZERLAND" and accompanying design. Under U.S. law, each verbal element in a combined trademark enjoys protection in its own right, unless a disclaimer is made — and no such disclaimer was made for the word "Gruyère." It has therefore now been clearly established that in the USA, the name "Gruyère" can only be used for the Swiss product (though Interprofession du Gruyère has agreed to allow the use in the phrase "French Gruyère Français IGP").

www.gruyere.com

NEW CHEESE FLAVORS

Emmi Roth USA, Monroe, WI, offers three new cheese flavors: Roth Mediterranean Raclette, Roasted Garlic Raclette and 5 Peppercorn Raclette. A renowned melting cheese complemented by garlic, black olives and sundried tomatoes, Mediterranean Raclette is ideal for pasta, melting into hot dips, omelets and pizza. The award-winning 5 Peppercorn Raclette includes distinct peppercorns from around the world that add a pleasantly sharp taste. It is best on flatbread, burgers or in casseroles. Roasted Garlic Raclette has a robust taste of delicately smoked garlic, which adds depth and zest. It can be baked into pasta and casseroles, stuffed into mushrooms or used to top garlic bread.

www.rothcheese.com
IDDBA Booth #2041

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PLACON®
WHEN PACKAGING MATTERS

Placon's **NEW Crystal Seal® reFresh** tamper-evident packages combine maximum versatility, clarity and on-the-go convenience with sustainable **EcoStar®** recycled PET material for a truly refreshing packaging look.

REFRESH™

Earth-loving packaging
for food-loving people.

- Ultra-clear Recycled PET Plastic
- 100% Recyclable Packaging
- Up to 100% Post-consumer Content from Recycled Bottles and Thermoforms
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Get your FREE SAMPLES.
Call 800.541.1535, or email info@placon.com.
To see our complete sustainable food packaging line, visit us at IDDBA booth #2349.

New Products

NATURAL, ANTIBIOTIC-FREE DELI MEATS

Coleman Natural premium deli meats are available in turkey, beef and pork. Fed an all-vegetarian diet, the meats are antibiotic-free, have no artificial ingredients or MSG and are gluten-free. Available in pre-sliced, pre-packaged for grab-and-go sales and whole lobe styles for full-service deli needs. Whole lobe flavors include Oven Roasted; Applewood Smoked Turkey Breast; Off the Bone Uncured Ham; and Oven Roasted Chicken Breast. Pre-sliced flavors include Oven Roasted and Smoked Turkey Breast, Black Forest Ham and Oven Roasted Chicken Breast.

www.colemannatural.com
IDDBA Booth #5633

FRESHLY PREPARED ENTREES AND SIDES

Layered Selections from Sandridge Food Corp., Medina, OH, are freshly prepared entrees and side dishes for the consumer who demands fresh, minimally processed, hand-made quality food, but lacks time to shop for individual ingredients and prepare them. Packaged in a BPA-free pouch, each recipe is produced in small batches using a strategic and proprietary layering technique that preserves the integrity of the individual ingredients. The meals contain well-sourced ingredients, with an increasing use of local producers and suppliers when possible.

www.sandridge.com
IDDBA Booth #5034

HONEY BREADED CHICKEN TENDERLOINS

Perdue Farms, Salisbury, MD, offers sweet and savory Honey Breaded Chicken Breast Tenderloins that are marinated and breaded with a unique crispy batter then deep-seasoned with real clove honey and seasonings. Par fried and individually quick frozen, it's easy to prepare only the amount needed so they're always hot and delicious during peak shopping periods. Feature these crispy favorites as a quick and convenient meal or the star of deli party trays.

www.perdue.com
IDDBA Booth #5633

TAMPER-PROOF PACKAGING

Placon's Crystal Seal reFresh tamper-evident packaging features clear, clean lines and secure seals — exceptional clarity for the grab-and-go market. Made from eco-friendly, recycled PET bottles and thermoforms, the 100 percent recyclable packaging is amazingly versatile. The product line features angled sandwich, hoagie, multi-compartment and single slice pie wedge options. The Milwaukee, WI–based company also offers high-quality injection molded food packaging for fresh, frozen, hot or cold products.

www.placon.com.
IDDBA Booth #2349

SPECIALTY CRACKERS

Venus Wafers, Hingham, MA, has redesigned its CäPeachio's specialty crackers. The all-natural crackers are non-GMO, vegan verified and OU kosher certified. Flavors include Original Water, Peppercorn Poppy, Natural Butter Flavor, Wheat Multi-grain and Vegetable Medley. The manufacturer's suggested retail price for the 4.4-oz box is $3.99. The company's traditional flatbreads, Nejaime's Lavasch, are baked with all-natural ingredients from an authentic family recipe. The flatbreads are non-GMO, vegan verified and OU kosher certified. Flavors are sesame and multiseed and are available in 13.25 oz. deli tray. The manufacturer's suggested retail price is $4.99

www.venuswafers.com
IDDBA Booth #5016

COMTÉ CHEESE ASSOCIATION UPDATES WHEEL OF AROMAS

Comté Cheese Association, New York, NY, has introduced an updated Comté Wheel of Aromas. The wheel illustrates the 83 terms or descriptors that correspond to the most frequently found natural aromas in Comté, grouped within six families, including Lactic, Fruity, Roasted, Vegetal, Animal and Spicy. Each wheel of Comté has slightly different flavors and aromas according to the area where it was produced, the season of production, the age of the cheese and the particular style of the cheesemaker and cellar master. Wheel of Aromas helps guide tasters in picking out and describing the flavors they perceive.

www.comte-usa.com

CHICKPEAS IN A CHIP

Maya Kaimal Fine Indian Foods, Rhinebeck, NY, has introduced a new line of Chickpea Chips available nationally in three different flavors. Varieties include Lightly Salted, Seeded Multigrain and Sweet Chili. Maya Kaimal Chickpea Chips are made with carefully sourced ingredients, including a blend of chickpeas and rice. The chips contain no GMO's, have no trans fats and are gluten-free, kosher and vegan. Inspired by a traditional South Indian snack, murukku, the chips take their unique and savory flavor profile from the Indian spice asafetida. Maya Kaimal Chickpea Chips retail for $3.49 per 4.5-ounce bag.

www.mayakaimal.com

DIPPIN' LINE EXPANDS

Reichel Foods, Rochester, MN, has expanded its Dippin' Stix line with new flavors. New varieties include Apples & Caramel with Greek Yogurt Chips; Apples & Caramel with Peanuts & Chocolate; Sweet Gala Apples & Caramel with Peanuts; and Celery Stix & Ranch Dip. The Dippin' Stix line features Apples & Caramel; Apples & Caramel with Peanuts; Apples & Yogurt Fruit Dip; Apples & Peanut Butter; Apples & Peanut Butter with Chocolate; Gala Apples & Caramel; Carrots & Ranch Dip; Carrots & Hummus; and Pickles & Bacon Ranch Dip. Many of the products are gluten-free and less than 100 calories.

www.reichelfoods.com

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#5633

Your customers are changing

FEED THEIR HUNGER

THE WALKING UNFED

PERDUE

COLEMAN NATURAL

Consumers are on the move with a hunger you can satisfy!

Come by and see Perdue Foods and our family of brands. We'll help you feed your shoppers and deli profits with innovative, antibiotic-free and clean label products your consumers are craving.

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✔ All Vegetarian-fed ✔ USDA Process Verified ✔ All Natural
✔ Organic ✔ Antibiotic-Free ✔ Local ✔ Non GMO

Perdue.com • ColemanNatural.com

New Products

DIVERSE CHEESE SAUCE

Kent Precision Foods Group Inc., St. Louis, MO, offers Foothill Farms cheese sauce products geared for foodservice operations. These dry-mix products combine instantly with hot water to create a variety of cheese sauces, including Cheddar, Parmesan, Monterey Jack, Pepper Jack and nacho. Shelf-stable Foothill Farms cheese sauce products are packed in a variety of options to allow operators to mix as much or as little as needed to reduce waste.

www.foothillfarms.com

NEW, BOLD FLAVORS DEBUT

Alouette Cheese, New Holland, PA, has introduced four flavors to its soft spreadable cheese product line: Smoky Jalapeño, Flame-Roasted Red Peppers, Buffalo Cheddar and Wasabi Cheddar. These products also feature new packaging designs to reflect each of the flavors. The Smoky Jalapeño Soft Spreadable Cheese features a unique blend of jalapeños, cilantro, onion and grilled charcoal notes, while the Flame-Roasted Red Peppers Soft Spreadable Cheese offers a combination of savory roasted red peppers, garlic and spices with grilled charcoal notes. Buffalo Cheddar and Wasabi Cheddar Soft Spreadable Cheeses both feature vibrant flavors of 12-month aged Cheddar with a punch of heat.

www.alouettecheese.com
IDDBA Booth #3666

NEW SALAD OPTIONS

Don's Food Products, Schwenksville, PA, offers a number of new salad options. The unique offerings include Ancient Grain Pilaf; Curry Grain Salad; Edamame Corn Salad with Sun Dried Tomatoes; Farro with Peperonata; Island Grain with Beans Salad; Sriracha Pasta with Grilled White Chicken and Spinach; and Wild Rice Medley. The salads include a variety of healthful ingredients, including grains, raisins, brown rice, peppers, tomatoes, lentils, beans and spinach.

www.donssalads.com
IDDBA Booth #3555

TAMPER-PROOF CONTAINERS

WNA, Covington, KY, has introduced BreakAway Tamper-Visible Containers with a unique closure designed to prevent tampering. The custom-designed tamper visible hinge eliminates the need for shrink bands. The Tamper-Visible seal breaks upon the container being opened, providing a large visual indicator that the package has been opened or tampered with. These leak-resistant containers are made from PETE, providing clarity for optimum food presentation. Additional features include superb stacking for improved merchandising. BreakAway Tamper-Visible containers are available in a variety of sizes in both round and rectangle shapes.

www.wna.biz
IDDBA Booth #1458

OIL DISPENSING SYSTEM

Frontline International, Cuyahoga Falls, OH, offers a box system that simplifies dispensing standard packaged oil in fryers. EZ Oil includes an integral pump to draw the fresh cooking oil from the storage rack to the fryer. The system is automatic, hands-free and easy to set up. Frontline's EZ Oil dispensing system allows foodservice operators to stack fresh oil boxes on a space-saving storage rack, which is plumbed to the fryers. With the new integral pump, this oil management solution can be installed in as little as 30 minutes. Frontline's EZ Oil dispensing system is designed to accommodate the boxed oil purchased from any vendor.

www.frontlineii.com

RESER'S FINE FOODS DEBUTS NEW PRODUCTS

Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, has debuted a number of new value-added salads and kits for grab-and-go purchases and behind the deli case glass merchandising. The new products include Loaded Potato Salad; BBQ Smokehouse Beans; Curry Ginger Couscous; Low-Fat Greek Yogurt Potato Salad; Loaded Mashed Potato Kit; Sensational Sides Buttermilk & Chives Mashed Potatoes; Fresh Creative Baked Brie En Croutes; and Fresh Creative Torta Cheese Balls.

www.resers.com
IDDBA Booth #1627

THREE NEW POTATO PRODUCTS

Idahoan, Idaho Falls, ID, has launched three new 100 percent Idaho dehydrated potato products. A new addition to Idahoan's Lumps and Peels product line, Idahoan Scratch Mashed Potato Extender is a dehydrated potato product that doubles the yield of any varietal of from-scratch mashed potatoes while maintaining a from-scratch flavor and texture. Idahoan Hearty Cut Hash Brown Potatoes with Sea Salt feature a thicker straight cut with field-fresh flavor and whole-cut appearance and texture. They are seasoned with a blend of sea salt and cracked black pepper. Extending the Idahoan REAL product line, Idahoan REAL Mixer Mashed is a from-scratch tasting, mixer-friendly product.

www.idahoanfoodservice.com

UNIQUE PITA CHIPS

Toufayan Bakeries Inc., Ridgefield, NJ, has created a new crunchy, all-natural line of Toufayan Pita Chips. Available in five varieties, including Sea Salt, Za'atar, Feta & Olive, Sugar & Cinnamon and Multi-Grain CHITA, the chips feature a unique shape made specifically for dipping. The chips can be eaten by themselves, as well. The third generation of Toufayans oversees the manufacturing process, from ingredient sourcing, production and baking to packaging and distribution. Its product lines include pita bread, flatbread, wraps, gluten-free products, snacks and breakfast items.

www.toufayan.com
IDDBA Booth #3160

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PRESENTS THE

FONDUE HUDDLE

2014

Increase sales and get your customers to huddle up around Emmi Fondue!

Be the one-stop shop for all their tailgate party essentials including Emmi Ready-made Cheese Fondue and other creative dipping options from your deli sections.

Contact your Emmi Roth salesperson!

VISIT US AT THE FANCY FOOD SHOW
BOOTH #466

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DELI WATCH

New Products

NEW SMOKED CHICKEN BREAST

Alexian, Neptune, NJ, has added a new all-natural, preservative-free smoked chicken breast to its gourmet line-up. Applewood smoked chicken breast is a perfect complement to the company's award-winning pates and single-muscle smoked meats. Both boneless and skinless, it is tender and flavorful, and represents the perfect balance of smoke and sweet. A serving of the smoked chicken breast has 40 calories and .5 grams of fat. And, as a natural preservative, the smoking process ensures that it will remain fresh in refrigeration for more than 90 days. Applewood smoked chicken breast is individually vacuum packaged and shipped six per case.

www.alexianpate.com
IDDBA Booth #2160

WINGING IT

Tyson Deli, a division of Tyson Foods, Springdale, AR, offers Tyson Crispy Glazed Wings, which remain moist and crisp through extended hold times in the hot case. This provides convenient grab-and-go snacking options in the deli. The wing lines come with improved sauce adhesion that stays on the wings and not in the pan. The sauce varieties include Buffalo, Caliente, Hot Pepper, BBQ and Teriyaki. Crispy Glazed Wings also are available with a dry rub seasoning in a variety of flavors, including Salt-n-Vinegar, Ranch, BBQ, Sweet Chili and Buffalo Ranch.

www.tysondeli.com

Transitions

NEW DEVELOPMENT CHIEF NAMED

Laura Carbery has been appointed the new development chef of Freshways, Dublin, Ireland. Her primary role will be the management and development of existing and future recipes based on food trends for the fresh food-to-go market. In addition, Carbery will be responsible for the continuous evaluation of the quality of existing and future Freshways products and working with foodservice customers, major multiples, convenience stores and forecourt retailers on product application. Carbery is currently studying for an MSc Culinary Innovation & Food Product Development degree with the Dublin Institute of Technology; she holds a Bachelor of Arts in architectural studies.

www.freshways.ie
IDDBA Booth #1649

APPOINTMENTS AT HENRI HUTIN

Fromagerie Henri Hutin, Lorraine, France, has announced that **Christel Vibrac** has taken over the sales duties of Ingrid Prinz, who retired after 32 years of service. Vibrac's assistant, **Annette Devresse**, now oversees customer service. **Catherine Triadou**, who formerly managed the Henri Hutin sales for the French market, now heads the company's wholesale division. This new organization is designed to ensure the continuity of current and future business.

www.henri-hutin.com
IDDBA Booth # 1649

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- Spectrum of Products at Every Price Point
- World Class Processing & Distribution Facilities

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www.arthurschuman.com

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www.cellocheese.com

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ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Inspired By Carol Christison

It was the ability of Carol to inspire her industry, her staff and everyone she met that was the crucial transformational variable of the association and the industry.

Carol Christison had a Twitter account, but she didn't tweet much. In fact, she tweeted exactly four times. Once was promotional: "To rob banks, you go to where the money is. To sell food, you go to where the buyers are — IDDBA."

Two times Carol tweeted in an instructional vein. First she wrote about word-of-mouth marketing: "People will not buy if not educated. Teach them your business, and they'll do the marketing for you (WOM works)." Then she wrote about what motivates purchase: "What you do is important; why you do it is killer! It's the 'why' that gets people to believe and to buy."

My favorite tweet of Carol's, though, speaks even stronger to me now, after Carol's untimely passing, than it did when she wrote it: "Without inspiration, we are all leaders without followers. Christison"

It is the only tweet she signed, and I will take that as a sign that she felt most personally connected to it. That is encapsulated, in a few words, her own leadership style.

IDDBA is a strong organization, and it will doubtless survive and thrive under different leadership. But it will be different than it would have been. Much the same with Apple, after the death of Steve Jobs. The company may do fine, but it won't be the company it could have been had Steve Jobs lived. The Walt Disney Company has survived and, after some missteps, thrived, but it is not what it would have been had Walt Disney not died at 65.

We are all taught that nobody is indispensable. To Americans, such a thought is soothing, nicely democratic. It fits in with academic theories that also serve to reinforce the view that people are interchangeable.

It used to be that history was taught with a focus on individuals. Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Hamilton told the story of the American Founding. Lincoln and Lee and Grant told the story of the Civil War. Edison and Ford told the commercial story of an age. Churchill and Hitler, FDR and Hirohito told the story of the Second World War.

In time, though, this approach came to be rejected indeed it was ridiculed as the "great man" theory of history. Instead, we were instructed, the supposedly "great" men were mere functionaries. According to this new way of thinking, history is controlled by great and impersonal forces that lead history down certain paths, and the individuals that seem to drive things are actually merely driven by these forces.

In other words, if George Washington hadn't existed, a replacement George Washington would have arisen, pushed out of the populace by great economic and cultural forces, and history would have continued pretty much as it did.

This mode of thought is also comforting to many. After all, if nobody is great, it means nobody is inadequate. If history is driven by forces impossible to thwart, what does it matter if one man is virtuous or courageous?

Such ideas, that nobody is indispensable, that history goes on impervious to the character and leadership of individuals is indeed comforting to those who don't want the burdens of greatness. These ideas, also, just happen to be wrong.

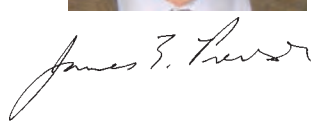
When he heard that George Washington, who could have been crowned King or served as President the rest of his life, planned to return to his farm, no less an adversary of Washington than King George III said, "If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world!"

Exhibiting a measure of individual character that few could match, Washington did voluntarily give up power and returned to his farm.

Nelson Mandela is known as the George Washington of South Africa, in no small part because he too, declined to aggrandize himself and retired after one presidential term.

We may like to delude ourselves that somehow, someway, it was inevitable that the tiny Cheese & Deli Association that Carol joined in 1982 would blossom into the IDDBA of today. But, in fact, it was the ability of Carol to inspire her industry, her staff and everyone she met that was the crucial transformational variable of the association and the industry.

I was preparing to launch DELI BUSINESS magazine, and I knew what I needed to do. I made a pilgrimage to Madison, WI, to lay out my dream and to get Carol's input, advice and, especially, her blessing. She gave all three, and for the rest of her life, she was never anything but kind and generous and, yes, inspirational. I consider myself fortunate to have had the benefit of her counsel and her kindness. She was a unique mix of a leader and a friend. We shall not see her kind again. **DB**



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by Lee Smith, Publisher

The Food Evolution

There are no certainties in life, and global agriculture is no different. There are many theories, debates and predictions, both long- and short-term, that seem inevitable and very disruptive to people's lives. In a nutshell, most scientists believe the earth is getting warmer and we are in for dramatic climate changes.

Whether the changes in weather patterns and the increased severity and frequency of weather events is due to the natural ebb and flow of nature or the result of man-made intrusions, in many cases the cause is less important than the result. Regardless of whether one believes this is a cyclic natural phenomena or mankind is a demonic plague on the planet, we are going to face some tough times in the future.

In the near future, food prices are going to soar. Mega storms, weather changes, droughts, floods and emerging diseases are all contributing factors. While the disappearance of coastal cities like Miami and New York City, species depletion, tropical diseases moving north are all very dramatic concerns and commonly used to raise awareness of the impending dangers of global warming, climate changes are only partially responsible for the rising cost of food, especially beef, chicken, pork and dairy.

The effects of global warming are serious concerns, but there is another threat that is just as important — a growing global population and the rapid rise of the middle class. Third World countries like China are growing rapidly and its population is getting wealthier. They want and can afford beef, pork, chicken and seafood on a regular basis. They want to buy baby formula and milk. They like prepared foods. Of course, China is not the only country with a growing middle class, but the result is stress to the world's food supply.

The global demand for milk has pushed prices to all-time highs, and it will affect all dairy products — from fresh milk to ice cream, yogurt and cheese. There is no indication that beef prices will level off in the near future and higher prices will undoubtedly put pressure on chicken and pork.

Today's question is how can we control the cost of food? The question has three basic components: How can families keep food affordable; how can retailers keep prices low without putting their own companies in jeopardy; and how can manufacturers deliver better, more natural processed foods without putting it out of the reach of anyone but the wealthy?

These are not easy questions to answer. There are strategic options that, unfortunately, involve significant personal lifestyle and strategic business changes.

One change that can be implemented is to promote local companies and locally grown products. Is local always a mark of better quality? No. It often is, but it's not a guarantee. However, local keeps agricultural land, regardless of how small, in good condition. It keeps farmers farming. And, in the long run, the more land that is available for sound, sustainable agricultural practices, the better protected we will be from extreme weather changes.

In a stable environment, large corporate farming results in lower prices. However, during times of climatic change, those same growing areas can have the opposite affect if there are weather shifts resulting in droughts or flooding, tornados or forest fires.

To help lower a family's food cost, another change is to embrace healthy eating. Simply eating home-cooked food can save significant dollars. Fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables save money. While Italian prosciutto di Parma may seem like an expensive splurge, eating it the European way isn't. Use a little and treasure the great flavor instead of piling it high.

By preserving local farms, it's often a short way to a local cheesemaker or a farmer who will take orders for apple cider to be picked up the next day.

Delis can also help lead the charge. Support local cheesemakers and dairy companies. Prepared foods should be seasonal, fresh and made without manufacturing aids, extenders and artificial ingredients. Sweet potatoes in the fall and winter, fresh berry salads in the spring, cooked Brussels sprouts in the winter. Don't worry about being the cheapest store in town — worry about being the best.

All supermarkets can encourage more frequent shopping. Buying once a week saves time but encourages waste. Shopping frequently means buying smaller portions at one time, wasting less and eating fresher foods.

While retailers cannot change the cost of goods, they can change how food is consumed. Go to a typical bakery in France and you will find large displays of freshly made sandwiches and lines of people around the corner to purchase them. They are made on insanely good fresh baguettes with a layer of Brie, a single thin slice of ham and a few sliced tomatoes. Maybe 5 euros. **DB**

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"The cheese community involves a lot of work and needs soldiers to fight for it. I want to be one of those soldiers."

How did you get started in the industry?

I've been in the hospitality industry since before finishing college. I discovered that I was having fun and enjoyed it, even though I wasn't taking it very seriously. After a couple of years, a colleague suggested I contact Trust House Forte, a British-owned hotel chain. I joined the staff and was promoted to maître d'.

How has your career evolved over the years?

I joined Sheraton Corp. as assistant to the food and beverage director and then Hilton in the same capacity. Two years later, I joined Terrance Brennan at Picholine, a New York restaurant, as maître d' and fromager. After the cheese program took off, I couldn't manage both jobs, so I stuck with the lower paying cheese job, which was more interesting and challenging. Less than a year later, we installed North America's first cheese cave. A literary agent approached the restaurant's owner asking if he'd be interested in writing a book on cheese, and he deferred to me to do this. My first book, "The Cheese Plate," was published in 2002, and was followed by two more, "Cheese: A Connoisseur's Guide to the World's Best" and "Mastering Cheese: Lessons for Connoisseurship from a Maître Fromager." During this time, I also helped design the cheese program at the Artisanal Bistro, which opened in 2001. I opened Artisanal Premium Cheese (APC) Center in 2003 to manage the wholesale part of the business. I'm currently working on a new book that will discuss nutrition and safety in regards to cheese. I also have been a regular guest speaker at conferences, festivals and other events.

What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I am chairman of the American Cheese Society's Committee for Certified Cheese Professionals.

What is your leadership philosophy?

Observe, ask questions and then direct. I spend more time on planning than on the present moment. This could be a fault, but it's the way I function because I like to prepare for challenges.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I like to do research on food, cheese especially, and on wine. I also like history and foreign languages.

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

I do have both. I don't spend a lot of time on Facebook. I mainly use it to find people and as a communication tool, rather than for business.

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

The best contribution I can make is to the cheese industry. It's not a perfect food and has had a bad rap. This gives me the opportunity to be a troubadour, since cheese is my platform. The cheese community involves a lot of work and needs soldiers to fight for it. I want to be one of those soldiers.

What charity is your personal favorite?

I'm involved with the Donaldson Adoption Institute, which seeks to better the lives of everyone touched by adoption through research, education and advocacy, and Mickey's Camp, an annual fundraiser for charities in central Indiana that supports many state charity organizations, including the Boys & Girls Clubs.

What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Go into it with an open mind, know your sources for information and actual products, listen and read a lot. Internships and apprenticeships are good if you can find them, but there's not a lot out there. I recommend people try to develop what is required for the ACS certified cheese professional exam eligibility and attend the association's conference.

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

I hope we'll see less xantham gum and sugar and more protein and animal fat in the form of dairy. Some people don't recognize the fact that the meat and dairy businesses go hand-in-hand.

What's your favorite read?

I enjoy non-fiction books on history and science. I also read "Cheese Connoisseur Magazine," "The New Yorker," "The New York Times," "The Atlantic," "Harper's Bazaar" and "The Wall Street Journal."

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"Most important of all, appreciate and love what you do, this way you can't go wrong."

How did you get started in the industry?

In the early 1980s I was still living in Italy and Switzerland with my family. One day, I received a call from a cousin in Italy who asked me if I would present specialty cheeses from the Piedmont and Val d'Aosta regions in the United States. I told him I knew nothing about cheese. I finally gave into the pressure and agreed to give it a try. My cheese life started at a dairy farm. At the time, I didn't understand why I was with all these cows, but of course soon realized that is where it all starts. My venture into the business surprised even myself by the interest and success I had with these cheeses.

How has your career evolved over the years?

After a successful start, I was soon asked by other producers from other regions in Italy to present their products. I learned about so many traditional Italian cheeses. The more I learned, the more I was fascinated. Originally, I brought in the cheeses myself. I had a company, some import licenses, which helped with certain cheeses, and stored them in a public warehouse, then sold them all myself. In other words, I was the importer, distributor, sales person, promoter, etc. Certainly, I learned a great deal about the marketplace during that time, but it was not easy. In the late '80s, I joined Atalanta Corp. as a consultant for these Italian cheeses.

What positions have you held in industry organizations?

For several years I also represented the official Consorzio per la Tutela del formaggio Gorgonzola. This is the federal body that oversees, regulates and confirms the production of this cheese, plus aids in the marketing of it. I also did some work for the Consorzio for Provolone based out of Cremona and for the Grana Padano Consorzio, when it still had its headquarters in Milan.

What is your leadership philosophy?

Always tell things just as they are. If I didn't know something, or was not 100 percent sure, I would say it and then look into whatever was requested to then be able to give the right answers. I have done many seminars throughout the years, and I always try my best to give the true picture about the cheeses, the production, the area of production, the history and the development of each product.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

My hobbies revolve around my grandchildren. I also like to travel to Italy, Switzerland and France. Dogs are very special to me. When I lived in France, I had a kennel of English cocker spaniels.

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

I do a little bit with Facebook, but I do not tweet.

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

The suffering in certain parts of the world, especially where children are affected.

What charity is your personal favorite?

St. Coletta of Wisconsin is a wonderful institution that cares for special needs children and adults. The second is ASPCA, in particular the local shelters — they need all the help they can get.

What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Learn as much as you possibly can about your product, including its production and origin. And, believe in your product! Most important of all, appreciate and love what you do, this way you can't go wrong.

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

Salumi are growing in popularity, including the Finocchione with fennel, the Fellino from Reggio Emilia and in particular, mortadella. Sheep milk cheeses are also becoming popular.

What's your favorite read?

I enjoy history books and reviews, including American, Italian and French history.

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JOHN ANTONELLI

PRESIDENT
ANTONELLI'S CHEESE SHOP
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"It was while traveling through France and Italy, my wife and I realized we should open a retail shop for cheese."

How did you get started in the industry?

After graduating from Georgetown University with degrees in finance and accounting, I passed my CPA and worked as an auditor. I left my job in Washington, D.C. and moved to Austin in 2005 with my girlfriend. After marrying in 2007, I had an existential moment on the beach and thinking about my future. I had the perfect wife, dogs and home, but the only thing missing was a career I loved. I quit my job and spent two years pursuing my passion. I interned at a local restaurant. I worked in the corporate office doing anything and everything, from bussing tables, cooking, serving, human resources, developing menu items, working in the commissary and accounting. I realized I didn't want to operate a 24-hour restaurant.

How has your career evolved over the years?

I attended Murray Cheese's first-ever boot camp, learned about cheese and fell in love with the industry, people and products. I soon noticed my life was built around cheese. In 2008, I started a grilled cheese club out of our house. I then started to notice more of my evenings were built around talking about cheese and nothing else. I interned with Herve Mons in France in his caves to see the wide variety of French products and how they're handled. It was a great opportunity for someone who was just a cheese enthusiast at the time. It was while traveling through France and Italy, my wife and I realized we should open a retail shop for cheese. We opened it two years and five days after the deadline I gave myself to find my passion.

What is your leadership philosophy?

I always try to lead by example because I can't expect others to do things before I try them. Also, education, training and becoming a resource for my staff are important. I try to be a servant leader and take care of my people so they can take care of themselves and the people who work with them.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I consider work to be a hobby because I love what I do. I also enjoy being with my family. My wife and I work together every day. Our first baby came in May 2012 and our second child arrived in January of this year.

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

We have Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and a website. We want to be an active part of the community and using social media appropriately is a good communication tool that helps us strengthen and build relationships.

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

When I set out on my quest to find my passion, there wasn't a great avenue for that in Austin. I didn't have a chance to learn like I wanted to in my neighborhood. We want to create an environment where learning is the norm, even when the wrapper is empty, there is something that remains.

What charity is your personal favorite?

We contribute to Pop-Up Picnic, which partners with a location and charity to provide meals for suggested donations.

What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

People should intern and find their passion. I was able to stand behind a cheese counter coming from a whole different industry. I hadn't experienced retail in its true form, so this allowed me to understand it. Also, try to find people who can provide answers to questions that could trip you up along the way. We've had between three and five individuals come to our shop for a few days to see how it is to operate our business. They showed us a lot.

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

We will continue seeing an explosion of growth and demand for high-quality products here in Austin. The path we're starting to see is the connection with people and food, so we're focusing on that.

What's your favorite read?

The two books that probably impacted me the most are "Setting the Table" by Danny Meyers, an incredible book about service and how that's a differentiator, and "Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping," by Paco Underhill and Rick Adamson.

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"Things aren't always going to be easy. Perseverance will pay off. Allow common sense to reign."

How did you get started in the industry?

I'm from Seattle and started working at Larry's Markets. For eight years, I worked my way up through the company, which had a huge fresh foods presence prior to Whole Foods and Wild Oats markets. Acclaimed chefs regularly visited, and I even met Martha Stewart. It was a great way to start my career.

How has your career evolved over the years?

After leaving Larry's Markets, I worked for Meijer for six-and-a-half years, starting as a foodservice buyer. In addition to handling the prepared foods, buying and category management, I helped establish the chain's private label espresso bars and a fountain program with Coca-Cola. From there, I joined Gourmet Kitchens, a fresh food manufacturer that is now Taylor Farms Deli, out of Chicago. I worked in business development and sales, but still felt I was a retailer at heart. I was then recruited at Ahold in Pennsylvania as senior director in charge of prepared foods and commissary development for Stop & Shop and Ukrops stores. After two years, I joined Price Chopper in my current role. Since I've joined just over a year ago, we've opened Market Bistro, the Disneyland of food that includes more than a dozen restaurant-quality food offerings. We had our grand reveal in March, and it's been very successful.

What is your leadership philosophy?

Leading by example and surrounding myself with great performing people has always been helpful. When you surround yourself with high performers, this only makes you perform better.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I enjoy hanging out with my family and quiet time. This is how I treasure my downtime, which there's not a lot of.

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

I have Facebook, but don't use it a lot. I have LinkedIn, but I don't tweet. For business, social media is huge. We want to appeal to the Millennial generation. Price Chopper is now going full-force into the Digital Age. People don't read the ads, they look at their phones and Google to find information.

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

It's important to lead the charge and make a difference. Positive change inspires people in their livelihood.

What charity is your personal favorite?

My favorite is the Muscular Dystrophy Association due to the family support and the high goals of the corporation, which is inspiring.

What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Stick to it, don't give up. Things aren't always going to be easy. Perseverance will pay off. Allow common sense to reign.

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

The next hot deli trend will be coming out of upstate New York. The emphasis will be delis incorporating more of a restaurant and foodservice mentality, with the service level equal to white table cloth restaurants. It's not enough to have a deli with just cold cuts behind the glass. Consumers are looking for the experience and want to be wowed. Retailers need to incorporate a foodservice mentality into the department.

What's your favorite read?

"Deli Business," "Supermarket News" and "Progressive Grocer."

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"I grew up on a small farm surrounded by dairy farmers; their kids were my classmates and their families were members of our church".

How did you get started in the industry?

My start in the industry began when my wife and I moved to New York City shortly after we were married and I was hired by Tim Simmons at "Supermarket News" as a reporter covering the perishables categories. I had been working as a daily journalist for newspapers in Wisconsin and Montana, so I was completely new to the deli industry. I was fortunate to be surrounded by a number of very good reporters and editors who were passionate about the retail supermarket business and just as passionate about reporting in what was then an extremely competitive business. I quickly found that the retail food industry — particularly the fresh food categories that were exploding at the time — was fascinating.

How has your career evolved over the years?

From "Supermarket News" I had an opportunity to work with an advertising and public relations agency working closely with the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB). I joined WMMB 11 years later and have held my current position for 13 years.

What positions have you held in industry organizations?

I have had a number of industry organization memberships over the years, including the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association, the International Foodservice Editorial Council, the American Cheese Society, the International Association of Culinary Professionals and others. For nine years I served on the board of directors of the Dairy Business Innovation Center, a virtual organization aimed at building the specialty and artisan dairy business in Wisconsin.

What is your leadership philosophy?

Hire the best people, give them appropriate training and direction, and then get out of their way.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

I have a variety of hobbies, including golf, skiing and photography.

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

Yes, I have a Facebook page, Pinterest account and am on LinkedIn, as well as Instagram. Participation in social networking sites and on social media is no longer optional in today's world.

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

The opportunity to work with and support Wisconsin dairy farmers and the Wisconsin dairy industry is why I moved back to Wisconsin more than 20 years ago. I grew up on a small farm surrounded by dairy farmers; their kids were my classmates and their families were members of our church. Their profound contributions toward community building, through their hard work, for the nutritious product they produce and how they constantly give back to their communities has been an inspiration for me.

What charity is your personal favorite?

My wife and I support Easter Seals of Wisconsin.

What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

There are so many opportunities in the deli business today — whether it's within the store environment, at the manufacturing level or any number of jobs in between. There will always be opportunities for smart, hard-working people who have a passion for the business, but I think that's the key for any line of work — work hard and work smart.

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

The hottest deli trend will be an expansion and refinement of the one we've been seeing for the past generation — the growth of specialty cheese, particularly domestically produced cheeses that tell a story through its production process. The demand for and definition of convenience will continue as consumers spend less time in their kitchens actually cooking. So, today's delis can be integral to consumer lifestyles as long as they stay in touch with how consumers live and their evolving motivations. Quick and simple meal solutions that provide big flavors sourced from sustainable production models will likely be an expanding demand. And the need for consumer education will never go away.

What's your favorite read?

I enjoy American history and am currently reading a biography of former Wisconsin Sen. Philetus Sawyer.

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JOHN PEARSON

CATEGORY MANAGER SPECIALTY CHEESE
GIANT EAGLE, INC.
PITTSBURGH, PA

"Be passionate, be honest, stay positive and teach others, and in so doing you will learn, too. Seek out a mentor and listen."

How did you get started in the industry?

I started my career as a part-time deli/bakery clerk while attending college in upstate New York. I had an opportunity to enroll in a meat apprentice program for the same retailer, which eventually led to a full-time meat cutter position. At the time, the meat department worked together with the deli department, and my love for the deli evolved.

How has your career evolved over the years?

I have held many positions, including apprentice meat cutter, meat cutter, deli manager, meat supervisor, deli/bakery supervisor, director of deli/bakery, deli category manager, director of procurement, vice president of procurement imported cheese, and my current position at Giant Eagle as the category manager for specialty cheese.

What is your leadership philosophy?

My philosophy is to learn all you can, be fair, be honest, be yourself, work hard every day and always be positive. Get to know people within your company and in the industry, and build relationships as you can learn from others each day.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside work?

Woodworking, making furniture and flying. I have my private pilot's license. I enjoy traveling with my family, exploring and trying new activities.

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

I use Facebook and LinkedIn. Social networking sites are great venues to keep in touch with people and learn more about the ever-changing world around us.

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

People inspire me to make a difference in the world and within our industry. I have been mentored through the years, and I enjoy mentoring other people and watching them grow. I have been fortunate to be able to help people within the food industry grow and progress through various positions within companies. Caring and helping others in today's world provides benefits that cannot be measured. Providing feedback and positive reinforcement helps the people you are working with prosper and rewards them with the knowledge and tools they need for success.

What charity is your personal favorite?

My favorite charities are the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society. I also support the work of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which works on finding cures for diseases that affect children. I have participated in several endurance runs and marathons for the Jimmy Fund and the American Heart Association.

What is your advice to people starting out in this industry?

Work hard every day and learn all that you can. Be passionate, be honest, stay positive and teach others, and in so doing you will learn, too. Seek out a mentor and listen.

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

I have had the pleasure of interacting with vendor partners considering the development of biodegradable product packaging. Whether made of grain or other materials, advancements in this area could have notable environmental benefits.

What's your favorite read?

I enjoy anything by John Grisham or James Patterson.

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A Taste of the Mediterranean

Deli retailers gear up for the next big trend

BY KEITH LORIA

The focus of the Mediterranean diet is expanding beyond just southern Europe, which is traditionally associated with ingredients like olive oil, tomatoes and fish. Cuisines from northern Africa and the Middle East are also Mediterranean and contribute interesting spice blends. The wonderful thing about Mediterranean foods and the area's diet is there is a distinct difference between a buzz and a fad.

Sara Baer-Sinnott, president of Oldways, based in Boston, says spices and the cuisines of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean are generating the most buzz in the Mediterranean segment in early 2014.

"I think people love flavor, and spices really add so much," says Baer-Sinnott. "When we updated the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid in 2008, we added herbs and spices because not only are they healthy, but they add regional identity to different foods. People are always looking for something new, which is great."

Brandon Gross, marketing director at FoodMatch, Inc., a food supplier headquartered in New York City, NY, says all things Mediterranean have proved to be timeless and healthy, so the category is not only here to stay, but it is constantly growing and evolving.

"The Mediterranean category continues to explore exciting flavors, spices, grains and twists on classic recipes," says Gross. "Mediterranean foods have become a huge part of the prepared and frozen-food world. Elevating comfort foods with Mediterranean ingredients is something we've seen a large evolution in over the past year."

For example, restaurant menus all over the country include items like roasted peppers, artichokes, olives, beets, extra-

virgin olive oil and nontraditional condiments and spreads like hummus, bean spread and olive spread.

"These items are seen as value-added premium ingredients that don't compromise flavor for nutrition," says Gross. "Why put mayonnaise or mustard on a turkey sandwich when you can put kalamata olive tapenade and roasted peppers?"

In Vogue

Stephanie Mathis, brand manager for Tribe Hummus, based in Taunton, MA, says hummus is becoming an even larger part of the Mediterranean category and continues to grow rapidly.

"At the end of 2013, the category had grown more than twenty percent versus the prior year and was one of the top five categories in the grocery store in terms of growth," says Mathis. "We expect to see this trend continue as household penetration is still low. We foresee hummus becoming a staple like salsa."

Steve Kontos, owner of Kontos Foods, Paterson, NJ, says Mediterranean food, specifically Greek food, is all the rage today due to perceived health benefits attributed to the Mediterranean diet and the longevity that comes with it.

"The latest trend is anything with the word 'Greek' on it," says Kontos. "Our most recent introduction is Greek Lifestyle Flatbread. It has all the properties of the average flatbread, but offers two times the protein, half the carbohydrates, with less sugar and calories than the average flatbread. Since its introduction, this SKU has better than doubled sales versus the item it replaced."

Kontos specializes in manufacturing more than 50 varieties of flatbreads and pita breads and resells everything needed to oper-

ate a Greek and Mediterranean restaurant, from bread to meats to sauces to premade dishes and appetizers. It also makes phyllo dough and baklava, spanakopita and tiropita made from phyllo.

"Mediterranean and Greek food in general is growing every year," says Kontos. "Think where Mexican food was 25-30 years ago — most people were aware and select restaurants were available, but it was still very niche. Today Mexican food is widely available from a wide variety of restaurants and franchise outlets. This is where we see Greek food going in the future, and it's already started."

FoodMatch continues to be an innovator in the Mediterranean marketplace, consistently launching new products that support healthy diets.

"We continue to see a renewed focus on alternative forms of protein," says Gross. "Some of our core items like Divina brand giant white beans along with our chickpeas in Mediterranean marinade are becoming food service go-to items and of interest for consumers who are trying to cut down on their meat intake."

Tribe continues developing new flavors based on consumer trends and needs.

"Right now we just launched a limited-batch rosemary focaccia hummus, a zesty, tasty and fragrant spread that captures the essence of the herb-infused Italian bread," says Mathis. "Inspired by the popular Italian staple, it is a unique blend of chickpeas, rosemary, spices, extra-virgin olive oil and lemon. We saw rosemary trending in a few other categories like crackers and found it was a delightful combination with our chickpeas."

Marketing Message

In 2014, FoodMatch is inviting the consumer to "Savor Every Moment," a campaign that communicates recipes and lifestyle ideas to allow busy shoppers to get back to basics in the kitchen and create quick, healthy meals for their families.

"We've launched a set of recipe cards that can be found in-store at many olive bars," says Gross. "Each recipe takes less than 30 minutes to prepare and features no more than eight ingredients. In addition, we are launching a complete Mediterranean lifestyle website, savoreverymoment.com, which features recipes, news, diet education, a blog, product information and interesting articles about travel and culture."

Baer-Sinnott believes deli operators should think beyond just classic locales.

"Deli operators should embrace these wonderful, traditional recipes and link to the countries, so it feels Mediterranean," says Baer-Sinnott. "Retailers should also plan each year to do special promotions during Mediterranean Diet Month in May."

According to Mathis, the on-the-go segment is on fire across the store as well as in Mediterranean foods like hummus and olives as shoppers look for healthier snacking options.

"Tribe is capitalizing on this trend by launching a to-go pack with hummus and pita chips this July," says Mathis. "Given the segment's growth potential, more space should be dedicated to on-the-go in both the hummus and convenience sections."

Additionally, merchandising and promotional tactics to help consumers see hummus as more than a dip will help drive consumption. For example, cross-merchandising hummus with deli meat or the salad bar can help prompt consumers to use hummus in new ways.

Helping the Operator

There are many ways manufacturers are doing their part to help retailer partners succeed in merchandising Mediterranean food.

Oldways offers a four-week Mediterranean diet handbook that offers 28 days of recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It also has brochures that it supplies retailers with co-branding opportunities.

Tribe provides danglers and shelf strips that call attention to its new and innovative flavors to keep shoppers excited about the category. To drive cross-merchandising, Tribe has offered deli cards, easel-back signs displayed at the deli counter with coupons

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for hummus, and instant-redeemable-coupon programs with other sandwich partners like wraps.

Kontos offers a wide range of marketing point-of-sale materials such as table tents designed to get customers hungry and thinking about ordering something different.

FoodMatch provides retailers with extensive training information about how to set up a program, the benefits of the Mediterranean category, product information, nutritional information and selling tips.

"Our team is in stores across the country every day having direct conversations with deli operators, and getting them comfortable and excited about selling our product," says Gross. "Support starts on the ground level, and that's where you will find us." He also says the most vital purchasing influencer for deli operators to increase sales boils down to one word — cleanliness.

"Shoppers are immediately influenced by what a department or merchandised area of products looks like," he says. "Product should constantly be monitored and refreshed. Countertops and shelves should consistently be wiped down and cleaned. It's essential that all deli departments designate someone to maintain all displays throughout the day." **DB**

Beyond the Olive Bar

Known for being a gourmet super snack food and a savory entertaining staple, olives have made their way from orchards all over the world into our hearts. Though olives were once thought of as garnishes and antipasti, their uses in the kitchen are numerous.

"Consumers are recognizing olives as ready-to-use gourmet ingredients — starring in everything from salads and sandwiches to pizzas and pasta," says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director for The George DeLallo Co. Inc., based in Jeannette, PA. "Olives bring their favorite dishes a bold and exciting bite, so why not get creative in the kitchen?"

Al Sozer, owner of Valesco Foods, headquartered in Lyndhurst, NJ, says olives play a much more vital role today as more and more fans are looking for a vast variety of olives not only a limited few.

"Olives come mainly from the Mediterranean region with many different colors, shapes, tastes and sizes," says Sozer. "So, they are on platters at tapas bars, Greek taverns, French bistros and, of course, Italian tables. They are on salads and crostini; in sandwiches such as panini; lunch boxes; and they are a healthy snack. More and more they are claiming a bigger role and a well-deserved place in the everyday life of a healthy and delicious diet."

The olive market continues to grow and thrive as more consumers are introduced to different varietals, mixes, marinades and flavors, says FoodMatch's Gross.

"Consumers continue to seek out variety and a range of flavor in their olives. The old days of 'green and black' do not exist any longer," adds Gross. "Additionally, shoppers are growing increasingly concerned about where their olives come from, and how they're cured."

Merchandising Matters

Millennials are snack happy and there is no better solution than the convenient olive and antipasti offerings at the olive bar. To fully meet the needs of this trend, DeLallo offers snack-tray containers at the olive bar to entice people looking for high-end snacks and trying new items.

Pozzuto believes it's important to expand olives' appeal beyond the bar by directly tying olives with deli items and inspiring customers to partner up their favorites — ready-to-serve and ready-to-snack — for every occasion.

"Ranging from sweet and tart to briny and pleasantly bitter, olives pair perfectly with some of the deli's best-loved items, such as cured meats and specialty cheeses," says Pozzuto. "Our prepackaged DeLallo Ready Pack Olives & Antipasti are made to merchandise directly, showcasing complementary flavor pairings and entertaining ideas."

In addition to olive bars, Gross says retailers are starting to see the benefits and opportunities in repack and cross-merchandising programs.

"Providing shoppers with easily accessible pairing ideas is always a great way to educate and upsell," says Gross. "For example, merchandise a container of Castelvetrano olives with marinated artichokes, sliced prosciutto and either Fontina or Taleggio cheese. This provides the shopper with an instant Italian-inspired antipasti platter for entertaining."

Sozer also notes it is becoming more customary to offer many olive varieties with some related items such as sundried tomatoes, artichokes and mushrooms where customers can scoop out as desired.

"Another hot trend is to carry olives in freshly packed deli cups," says Sozer. "This option is helpful where space is limited, but the idea is still the same. With this new trend, everything is freshly packed and ready to grab and go."

Providing repacked containers or access to olives and antipasti behind the deli case is also essential for maximum consumer coverage.

Flavor Favorites

The demand for convenience is only increasing, and so is the consumer's taste for decadent Mediterranean flavors. When it comes to olives, consumers have shown they're ready to kick up the heat, as the combination of spicy and sweet is the latest trend. According to Pozzuto, this flavor profile can be found in the company's zesty Pepperazzi Pepper.

"In red, roasted and tricolor varieties, the spicy-sweet Peruvian pepper has gained popularity in snacking and kitchen usages," says Pozzuto. With a hollow center that is perfect for filling with creamy cheeses, sausage or crabmeat and a "crisp texture, the Pepperazzi Pepper brings some spice to your colorful grab-and-go offerings."

Valesco currently has 57 different varieties of olives in its line, but Sozer says it places an emphasis on introducing new olives every year.

"Our R&D focuses on spotting remote villages where rare olives grow in limited quantities for boutique manufacturing," says Sozer. "We offer these special olives for our customers' enjoyment and appreciation. We add on one or two new varieties every year, which we introduce at the Summer Fancy Food Show in NYC." **DB**

Small Plates Make Great Meals

Appetizers the new snack and meal go-to

BY ZAK WOJNAR

Appetizers used to be looked at as the savory prelude to a grand dinner. But in the past several years, appetizers have changed the way consumers dine. Increasingly, people are opting to purchase a greater number of appetizers for a variety-packed meal. And, they are also looking at appetizers for more snacking options during the day.

In today's hectic world, three square meals a day is not always a feasible option. Millenials, in particular, have tight schedules and simply can't spare the time to sit down and eat a meal, much less cook one.

Over the past year consumers have been shifting their priorities when it comes to what they want to eat. They want meal options that are not only good for them, but are less processed, satisfying and fit their busy lifestyles. In large families, this can mean that a single meal has to cater to a variety of lifestyles. Picture this: Mom is vegan, son is gluten-free, daughter is counting calories and dad wants everything deep-fried and smothered in sauce. It would be nigh impossible to find a single dish to satisfy the whole family.

A smart deli should be able to capitalize on this dilemma by offering its customers a wide selection of appetizers with enough substance to satisfy as a meal. Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian Pate & Terrines, Neptune, NJ, recommends that delis take a page from the popular Spanish tapas restaurants, which offer a variety of cold and hot "small plates" in which patrons combine and build a meal around.

Foods like fresh pasta; artisan and housemade breads and crackers; specialty cheeses; olives, spring rolls; and spreads like pate and guacamole can satisfy a wide variety of tastes.

"These foods should be offered as single servings with easy preparation and a broad representation of variety," Cummins suggests. "Place them in self-service cases or sell fresh at the deli counter.

"Any meal planner knows what a horrendous and thankless job it is to schedule a meal that will please everyone at a time when all can be present. This speaks volumes for what might be offered in prepared foods and prepackaged prepared food."

A deli manager would be smart to offer catering and hands-on classes on how to serve such disparate dishes to a large family, as well as to include ethnic foods they might not otherwise be interested in or know about. For every ham sandwich there should be a row of spring rolls; for every hunk of roast beef, there might be a plate of nachos and exotic salsa. After all, variety is the spice of life, right?

Snack Away

Snacks are the latest category reaping rewards from the trend toward healthier eating. That's good news for deli executives, as they strive to offer nutritious between-meal options.

According to The Institute of Food Technologists, snacking now accounts for just over half of all eating occasions. One in five people eats one snack per day; 41 percent have two, 24 percent have three, 13 have four and 4 percent have five or more.

A snack can be anything from a bar of chocolate to an ice cream cone to a handful of lightly salted toasted almonds. However, half of all instances of snacking are adults seeking a boost in energy. Potato chips and gummy bears simply aren't going to pass muster, so it is up to businesses to offer snacks that can be enjoyed at work, on the go or at home in front of the television or computer.

Power bars and almonds are considered by some to be bland and boring; healthy choices are often regarded as such, but most fruits are a sweet and healthy treat. The avocado, in particular, is seen as something of a miracle food — tasty, savory and full of healthy fats. It has been proven to raise levels of good cholesterol while simultaneously

lowering levels of bad cholesterol, and its cancer-fighting properties are currently being researched. The jury's still out on that one, but the fact remains that avocados are awesome — especially as the all-purpose dip/sauce we call guacamole.

The leading name in pre-made guacamole is Wholly Guacamole, a product of Fresherized Foods, Saginaw, TX. Employing a technique called "pascalization," or high-pressure processing combined with small serving sizes, Fresherized has extended the shelf life of its all-natural and preservative-free guacamole, and has made it more portable than ever before.

"We want Wholly Guacamole products to be enjoyed in the car, at work, at any play date and basically, anytime with adults and children," says Tara Murray, Wholly Guacamole's marketing manager. "While our larger sizes are perfect for family meals and parties, the minis are designed for those looking for smaller portions or grab-and-go snacks. The consumer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and this year we're looking to increase the flavors available in the mini cups."

Jennifer Sawyer, the company's marketing manager, adds, "Understanding that snacking trends are on the rise with Millenials and that moms are reading labels looking for nutritious snacks to serve their families, the marketing team at Wholly conducted a survey with over one thousand refrigerated dip consumers and refrigerated guacamole consumers. The overall view of guacamole is no longer just a party dip or a Mexican side dish, but a true versatile dip, condiment and ingredient in their kitchen.

"In fact, the avocado category is up 14 percent over last year. We can attribute this growth explosion to consumer education on the nutritious benefits of the avocado, popularity of avocados on restaurant menus and adventurous foodies."

With snacking on the rise, particularly on healthier and heartier foods, it's up to delis to meet demand and offer healthy and filling snacks that can satiate the appetites of consumers enough to prevent them from stopping at 7-11 or McDonald's to pick up food that they will inevitably regret eating.

Simply put, good food is good for you, end of story. Still, junk food, despite the long-term consequences, can be very appealing for delivering that instant gratification, as a great many "billions and billions served" can attest. A good deli has to show that their alternatives to fast junk food are tastier, healthier and as convenient as the foods they are competing with. The onus is on the deli to keep its customers happy, healthy and full. **DB**

Let's Make a Meal

A look at the rise of chicken offerings in the deli

BY KEITH LORIA

The National Chicken Council is reporting a healthy and favorable chicken market for 2014, even though chicken production is not increasing as rapidly and readily as many in the industry would like.

Bill Roenigk, senior vice president and chief economist for the National Chicken Council, says the beef industry is projecting rising prices in the next two years due to supply demands and the pork industry will show similar price adjustments due to a virus in young pigs, so chicken offerings are a great substitute for deli operators.

"As people look at options, from a price standpoint and value standpoint, they view chicken deli products to have attributes they are seeking," he says. "USDA sees the chicken hatchery supply flock being repopulated to a fairly adequate level by mid-2014. If this outlook proves correct, chicken production during the second half of 2014 could begin to approach its long-run annual rate increase of four percent."

Gerry Hays, president and chief executive officer of Charley Biggs Food Co., Noblesville, IN, notes chicken has overtaken

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beef as the meat of choice in the United States, and consumers are looking for new ways to enjoy it.

"For chicken in 2014, retailers really need to create an experience for the customer while making the product matter," he says.

Brad Dunn, director of retail deli at Koch Foods, Stony Point, NY, says there has been tremendous growth within the deli segment for chicken, especially in some new areas.

"Wings continue to be a big item, but there has been some change to boneless wings, different things with different forms of tenders, fresh hand-breaded and continued growth within the pre-breaded segment," he says. "Baked chicken has seen some increase as well. I think the cold category is something under-utilized in retail and you're starting to see more cooked products being offered cold."

Scott Moses, senior marketing manager of Tyson Foods, Inc., in Springdale, AR, says prepared chicken demand remains strong and is driving the growth of total prepared foods in the deli.

"Shoppers continue to look to chicken as the center of their meal solutions," he says. "Wings, in particular, are hot. They make a good snack, but are also perfect at mealtime or for summer get-togethers."

More Than Rotisserie

For years, delis have seen profit in their rotisserie offerings, but a savvy retailer can no longer rely strictly on the segment for success. There are plenty of great options for increasing sales. Roenigk notes historically people have looked to the rotisserie chicken or breast meat product at the deli counter, but the world is slowly changing.

Fried chicken is a classic, considered a comfort food that people crave and love.

"The numbers show that fried chicken consumption has steadily increased throughout the country — proving that it is a consumer favorite," says Hays.

Chicken tenders and wing programs also continue to be popular with consumers, as both can be easily customized to fit individual flavor profiles through sauces, dips and seasonings, giving retailers the ability to offer customers a wider range of experiences.

There are some in the deli business who subscribe to the notion of not launching a quality fried chicken program because they don't want to hurt rotisserie sales, but many believe this is a foolish decision.

Tim Oliphant, director of sales at BD&K Foods, Columbus, GA, says a lot of customers are seeing huge numbers with fried chicken because they are putting more focus and attention on it.

"Realistically, consumers don't want to have rotisserie chicken every night — or even more than once a week. However, retailers want to become a nightly dinner destination," he says. "Studies show that most consumers are eating chicken more than twice a week. By giving them variety and allowing them to buy all of their prepared chicken — including rotisserie and fried chicken — from the store, retailers can start to build that destination reputation."

In a recent consumer market research study, Charley Biggs Food Co. found that consumers are predisposed to buy their fried chicken from their local retailer because they trust their local grocer and would rather buy from a knowledgeable, quality source than another typical restaurant. To keep them coming back, Hays says, it's important to give them exciting options at a great price.

With wings, Moses says there is more demand for variety. While BBQ and some form of buffalo wing remain the most popular flavors, consumers are looking for new and interesting flavors to try. He is also seeing an increased interest in boneless wings among deli consumers, especially among Millennials.

Additionally, consumers are looking for exotic and ethnic flavors as an alternative for traditional offerings to make food-and-flavor experiences more exciting, unique and unexpected.

"In fact, more than 42 percent of consumers indicated more interest in new flavors versus a year ago. Not only that, consumers are also looking to put something different on the table each night — the typical five to seven family dishes just aren't satisfying them anymore," Hays says. "Because of that, ethnic varieties and flavors — and consumers' increasing familiarity with them — will play a huge role going forward. As the population continues to become more diverse, customers' tastes and preferences will evolve as well."

Today's ethnic choices are more far-reaching than Mexican and Chinese dishes. Consumers are gravitating toward Cajun, Spanish, Greek, Indian, Middle Eastern, Korean and Vietnamese fares, to name a few. By mixing these flavors with common deli items, consumers will feel as though they're experiencing a unique, authentic dish that they can't get anywhere else.

The Dark Side

Prices on chicken breast have increased in the last two years, but wings and other popular segments remain stable.

Roenigk says a viable option to cost concerns of chicken breast is to have consumers gravitate toward the other half of the bird and purchase dark meat options. The secret is in creating options, with more enterprising delis featuring smoked chicken legs or boneless, skinless, thigh meat, either stuffed or flavored.

"We need to educate consumers that dark meat is flavorful and although there is a slight difference from a calorie standpoint, it is not so significant that it should keep people away," he says. "I would also suggest that dark meat is milder than it was five to ten years ago; if a deli operator can convince a consumer to try some dark meat products, I think there is the possibility of winning over the consumer."

According to Hays, dark meat promotions continue to do well, particularly for consumers on tighter budgets. This is where variety in flavor profiles can really boost sales. The promotional aspect is vast and really allows retailers to have creativity and cater to their local population.

"We do a lot of fried business, and drum and thigh combos have done very well for us as pre-breaded, fresh marinated and baked at the store," says Dunn. "The dark meat has gained in popularity and we expect it to continue in 2014 and the years ahead."

Evolution of the Product

During the past five years, industry insiders remark probably the biggest evolution the category has seen is going from using fresh chicken to frozen pre-breaded products and back to fresh.

"Consumers can tell the difference between frozen and fresh products, not only in taste but appearance," says Hays. "Authenticity has always been important, but we've seen a recent emphasis around things like knowing where your food comes from. In today's connected world, consumers' expectation for fresh, quality food is only going to increase."

Hays comments that if a retailer is not using fresh chicken, it is leaving a lot of money on the table.

"We've seen it time and time again when helping retailers switch from a frozen, pre-breaded product to a freshly prepared product. Their sales are materially impacted almost immediately and sustain a certain level of sales over the long-term," he says. "What's more, localized, fresh flavors are absolutely critical. Not only do different parts of the country have different taste preferences, but consumers want to feel like they know where their food is coming from."

Retailer Tips

Almost everyone agrees chicken warmers in retail environments are some of the worst-looking displays in a store.

"Retailers should be thinking of ways to reinvent that space," says Oliphant. "They can add some signage and some color to make it stand out and grab the consumer's attention."

One way Dunn feels retailers could improve on sales is to get off the per-pound pricing.

"You see rotisserie chicken offered as an eight-piece, drum-and-thigh package and other segments like tenders and boneless wings offered by the pound, which can hurt sales," says Dunn. "Supermarket delis need to act like a restaurant and not like a retailer. Delis need to look at the segment and see what they can do with single offerings — put them out into containers and offer things that way. Going forward, that will help a lot."

Moses says retailers need to remind shoppers of the convenience and quality of their offerings as a large percentage of shoppers do not know what's for dinner that night.

With the price of beef and pork increasing, chicken will continue to gain share with the consumer, who will be looking for ways to offer variety to their families. **DB**

ON THE SIDE

Bill Roenigk, senior vice president and chief economist for the National Chicken Council, estimates retailers sell nearly 800 million rotisserie chickens each year. While these grab-and-go items are great main dishes, they alone do not offer a nutritional meal.

"Whether it's chicken for a sandwich, something for the grill or something for the oven, retailers need to try to push the envelope a little in making consumers think about putting a side with it," he says. "Deli folks are good with suggestive selling and most consumers are looking to enhance the flavor anyway."

BD&K Foods, Columbus, GA, introduced a Fixin's line of hot, healthy, ready-to-eat packaged vegetables and side dishes to help retailers offer customers a complete, convenient and wholesome meal alongside their rotisserie chickens.

"A chicken by itself isn't a meal, there is work to be done, and I think people want hot side dishes to go with it," says Tim Oliphant, director of sales at BD&K Foods. "A consumer is forced to wait in line at a deli counter to get something hot and ready to go, or they have to go to canned, fresh or frozen and take it home and prepare it. We have our Fixin's hot, right next to the chicken to complete the meal. We are seeing an overall lift in chicken sales thanks to this."

The Fixin's line includes field peas and collard greens; butter beans and sweet kernel corn; green beans; macaroni and cheese; okra and tomatoes; and smashed potatoes.

In order for a retailer to become a meal-time destination, it has to offer simple solutions to customers. Let's face it, any time you can make it easier for families to get a delicious, balanced meal on the table it's a win-win, because by making the choice easy for consumers, they will be more likely to make the deli their default destination for chicken meals.

According to Gerry Hays, president and chief executive officer of Charley Biggs Food Co., Noblesville, IN, this means thinking about marketing "turnkey" grab-and-go meals that include the protein and vegetables, maybe even drinks and/or a dessert.

"What's interesting is that fried chicken is actually a sales-driver for the prepared foods category and can help to elicit sales of sides and other deli items," says Hays. "If the fried chicken sales are poor, the rest of the prepared foods programs — like sides, hot and cold bars, etc.— are going to suffer. Because of that, it's important for a retailer to get the chicken part right."

Traditional sides are perennial favorites, but healthy side alternatives continue to gain steam. Retailers should think about pairing fried chicken with a salad and vegetable side.

Oliphant feels bringing the items together and making it a destination at the grocery store is a great way for deli retailers to increase sales.

"If you can pick up a chicken and have everything in one place and quickly walk out the door, that's going to help sales," he says. "Consumers will come back over and over if they find a place that's reliable and convenient."

Brad Dunn, director of retail deli at Koch Foods in Stony Point, NY, believes a store offering a warmer and chiller on the side is a great way to move product.

"Safeway does a really good job with that. They have a hot section for fried chicken and rotisserie chicken and on the side they have a cold case that allows people to grab the cold items, so they package the meals together in one section," he says. "By making it as easy as possible for the customers to bundle the meal, it increases sales." **DB**

Breads Rise to the Occasion

Consumer demand for healthy specialty breads is an opportunity not to be missed

BY BECKY BILLINGSLEY

Health, taste, convenience and restaurant dining trends are influencing supermarket deli specialty bread sales, and the segment is experiencing double-digit growth.

While sliced breads and hamburger and hotdog buns still dominate the market, specialty breads now command a solid 10 to 15 percent of supermarket bread sales, according to product manufacturers, and deli departments are helping to influence that surge. Increasingly, consumers who try specialty breads at restaurants then look for them at supermarket delis.

Grecian Delight Foods, headquartered in Elk Grove Village, IL, offers food service packaging for those retailers.

"You go into a grocery store, and there is a service deli making sandwiches, roll-ups and wraps for people to grab and go, or for catering orders," says Will Nagle, vice president of retail sales at Grecian Delight Foods. "It's a growing market, and we're doing quite well with it. Almost 20 percent of our flatbread sales go into that kind of operation."

Warren Stoll, marketing director at Kontos Foods in Paterson, NJ, says health and nutrition are top U.S. dining trends that supermarket deli executives should heed. The National Restaurant Association's "2014 Food Facts" state that 72 percent of consumers say they are "more likely to visit a restaurant that offers healthful options," and 44 percent "would use a smartphone to look up nutrition information for restaurant food if available." That's news deli executives could use to their advantage by putting their healthy sandwiches' nutrition information on their company's websites, or on location with signage.

Bob Pallotta, senior vice president at Flatout, Inc. in Saline, MI, says the quick-service restaurant segment also influences the company's Flatout Flatbread sales, because after people taste them in restaurants, many look for the breads at supermarkets.

"Also from the fast-casual restaurant segment," he says, "thin crust applications have been extremely successful over the last two years. That application has been a significant part of the segment in our growth."

Thin crusts appeal to health- and diet-conscious consumers. In addition to the portion control that thin breads provide, many varieties are developed with nutritional requirements in mind. One example is Toufayan Bakeries' Low Carb and Oat Bran Pita Breads, Low Carb-Low Sodium Wraps and Gluten-Free Wraps.

Among the "Top Ten Functional Food Trends for 2014," according to the Institute of Food Technologists, are foods providing nutritional supplements, natural ingredients, plenty of protein, disease-fighting properties, enhancement of physical performance.

Also in the Top 10 is the assertion that consumers "between the ages of 14 and 33 view their food choices as healthier, more expensive, more natural/organic, less processed, better tasting and fresh." Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton, authors of the book, "Marketing to Millennials," say that age group is the "largest and most influential generation of consumers ever."

Flatout Inc. has responded to trends with choices such as Foldit Artisan Flatbread, designed to conveniently fold over sandwich fillings and stand up to the bulk of burgers; a line of "Light" and "Healthy Grain" flatbreads; and Artisan Pizza Thin Crust Flatbreads, which were launched in 2012 to much success.

Among its many healthy products, Kontos Foods has Greek Lifestyle Flatbread that capitalizes on its nutrition by focusing on the appeal of the Mediterranean lifestyle and lifespan longevity. The company describes the bread as having "more protein and less carbohydrates, sugar and calories than most traditional pocketless pita and other flatbreads," with 15 grams of protein, 21 grams of carbs, 2 grams of sugar and 190 calories per serving. This year Kontos plans on expanding its Greek Lifestyle product line.

Toufayan Bakeries, in the Greater New York area, is also focusing on health, "especially for our newer products," Karen Toufayan says. As the vice president of marketing and sales, she gets the word out about the dense nutrition in the company's dozens of healthy bread choices, including

100-calorie Smart Bagels, SmartPockets and Lavash Plus with Omega 3.

"We've also introduced new packaging, which highlights all the key nutritional information on the front," Toufayan says. "This allows consumers to better understand the nutritional value of our breads. The growth we've seen in this category comes from products with a sensitivity to good nutrition."

Toufayan Bakeries is so dedicated to providing wholesome foods, it sponsors the Dr. Mehmet Oz (of "The Dr. Oz Show") family's HealthCorps program, which teaches schoolchildren the value of healthy eating. Flatout Flatbread teamed up with "The Hungry Girl Diet" author, Lisa Lillien, to showcase its healthy choices, while Grecian Delight has a line of natural products branded by celebrity chef Cat Cora.

Since expanding their health-focused products, both Grecian Delight Foods and Flatout Flatbreads have experienced annual sales growth by 20 percent or more. Other ethnic specialties, such as Indian naan and Middle Eastern lavash, are growing even faster.

"Hummus is up twenty percent or more every year, and flatbread is with it," says Nagle. "Private label bread, which is in the Top 10 nationally for dollar and unit sales, according to Information Resources, Inc., is in double digits as well, with naan and lavash the highest growing. When I meet with retailers nationally, I hear the same thing — regional bread brands are growing. Our flatbread sales are mirroring that. Sliced bread is No. 1 and probably will be for years to come, but it has dropped a little bit over the past few years. Flatbread is eating into that, and retailers are noticing."

While Nagle says he doesn't see specialty breads becoming a dominant category in the overall segment in the near future, its growth is exponential.

"Between ten and fifteen percent of what's out there is specialty breads," he says. "Five years ago it was less than five percent, and it's projected to continue to grow."

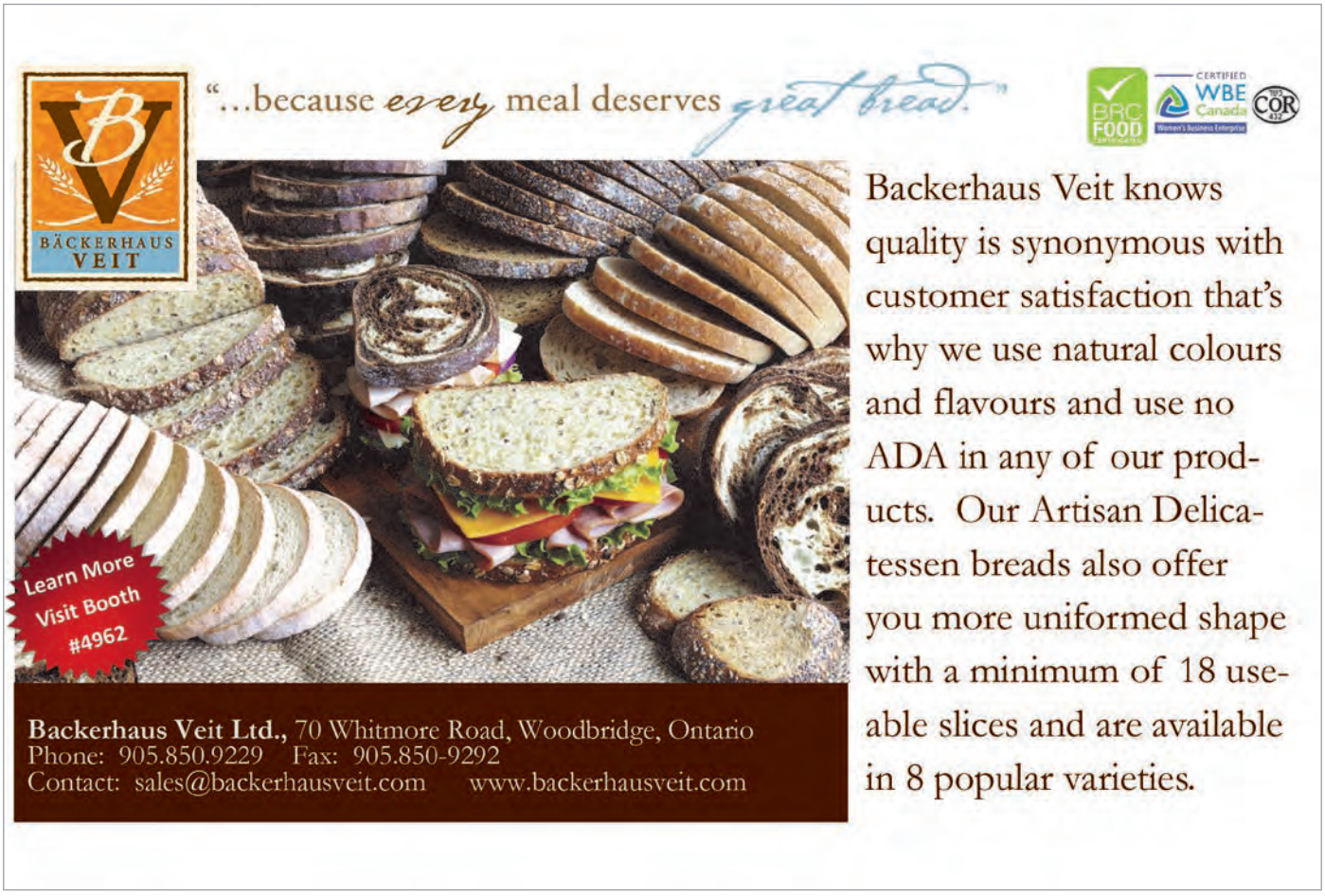
Specialty bread manufacturers are helping spur those sales by providing product recipes on their packages and on company websites. Food blogger websites, Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook further expand the recipes' reach.

Amy Fattori, marketing director at Grecian Delight, says there is a misconception that healthy foods are tasteless. Providing recipes has proved to be successful for showing consumers how to use the products.

"That's our No. 1 visited section of our website," Fattori says. "Whether the products are foodservice or retail, no other section gets more hits; so I've got to believe it's really important."

Grecian Delight is also implementing QR codes on its packages, which will point consumers to online recipes. Kontos Foods is launching a new recipe series following strong success with Mother's Day recipes designed so fathers could easily prepare them. Flatout Flatbread recently had a 30-day recipe run on Pinterest featuring grilled pizzas. And, according to Toufayan, Toufayan Bakeries uses social media "aggressively." She says it's a key part of delivering what people want.

"As long as bread manufacturers listen to what consumers want and provide options that deliver against their needs, the category will experience growth. Among other things, our category provides many key consumer benefits that we believe will continue to grow in importance over the next five years — convenience, variety, flexibility and good value. With our ability to offer good taste and nutrition as well, we have what few food categories have to achieve continued growth," Toufayan says. **DB**



FIVE WAYS TO SELL MORE DELI SALADS & SIDES

Boost your bottom line while increasing customer satisfaction

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER

Salads and side dishes are staples on the American plate. After all, no backyard cookout would be complete, nor would rotisserie chicken make a meal without a couple of items to go with the main course. It's no wonder then that salads and sides are part of the highest household penetrating and number one dollar generating segment in the deli — prepared foods.

Salads and side dishes represented 10.4 percent of all deli department sales for the 52 weeks ending March 29, 2014. Salads represented 9.1 percent and side dishes accounted for 1.3 percent.

So what is the problem? Sales of these two subcategories are flat.

What to do? Draw on demand for freshness, flavor and variety and put creative merchandizing strategies to work to tap into consumers' craving for convenience.

Flaunt The Freshness Factor

A whooping 91 percent of consumers rated 'freshness' as an important or very important factor in their decision to purchase prepared food from the deli. This number is up from 85 percent in 2010, according to Technomic's Retailer Meal Solutions Consumer Trend Report, as published in the Madison, WI-based International Deli-Dairy-Bakery Association's (IDDBA), "What's In Store 2014."

"Consumers want that made-from-scratch taste and appearance," says John McCarthy, Jr., category manager for Reser's Fine Foods, in Beaverton, OR. "They want the next best thing to making it fresh themselves."

Great ways to communicate freshness include creating appealing in-store displays, personally delivering the message via demo and sig-

PHOTO COURTESY OF BLOUNT FINE FOODS

nage that calls out specific aspects of a dish. So is having a 'clean' label or list of ingredients that reads like a recipe rather than the inventory of a chemist's lab.

"Clean labels connote freshness," says Bob Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Blount Fine Foods, in Fall River, MA. "We provide cards that operators can place next to their hot-soup kettles that provide a dish description as well as ingredient and nutrition listing for each of our products."

However, there's nothing like selling fresh with the product itself. For example, the Medina, OH-headquartered Sandridge Food Corporation's new Layered Selections line communicates freshness through clear, pouch packaging and a proprietary ingredient layering technique. The recipe components are layered so that the consumer can visually see the colors and textures of the individual ingredients.

"Once blended, the flavors come to life as though they were just prepared from scratch," explains Sandridge's marketing coordinator, Erin Brown.

Salad and side dish kits assembled and sold in the service deli are another great way to communicate freshness. Some kits come with all ingredients. Others provide only the base.

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like our infused pasta and add tomatoes from the produce department. We keep the recipe simple: add 5 pounds of tomatoes, but let the operator decide what type of tomatoes in order to create their own distinctive offering," says Jim Daskaleas, vice president of product development for Walker's Food Products, in Kansas City, MO. "They can also use leftover trim from deli meats and cheeses and at the same time make signature full-meal salads."

Walker's will take another step forward in the freshness realm this season with its "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" program. The company sources ingredients from farms within a 200-mile radius of its plant and then develops recipes around these items. Supermarket deli operators in the area promote the freshness of these salads, side dishes and desserts in a variety of ways including using the faces and names of farmers.

Go For The Bold

There's a growing trend for more adventurous flavors driven by food TV and cooking websites, as well as consumers' experiences dining out and traveling abroad.

"Customers are willing to try spicier dishes with unique ingredients that they may not have experienced before. You're seeing this trend behind the glass and in clam shells and bowls in the deli," says Alison Kellogg, brand manager for Litehouse Foods, in Sandpoint, ID.

In response to this demand, Schwenksville, PA-headquartered Don's Food Products has developed a number of new internationally-inspired salad selections. These include: Sriracha Pasta with Grilled Chicken & Spinach, Curry Grain Salad and Edamame Corn Salad with Sun-Dried Tomatoes.

Some companies are creatively embracing this trend by putting a new twist on old favorites. Farm Ridge Foods, in Islandia, NY, for example, has debuted its spring and summer selections that include honey sesame, wasabi ginger and six vegetable coleslaws.

"Demos are the best way to introduce new flavors to customers," says Farm Ridge's chief executive officer, Jeffrey Siegel. Sampling programs are very beneficial for increasing sales of both grab-and-go and behind-the-service-counter dishes.

"Consumers are becoming more adventurous, but at the same time they want to have an idea of flavors prior to purchase," says Litehouse's Kellogg. "Allowing them to experience the flavors without having to make an investment is a great way to build trust and boost sales."

Variety Is The Spice Of Sales

Consumers today are shopping with both health and value in mind.

"We are seeing some willingness to pay a bit more for higher quality products. Providing their families with healthy meals is top of mind for consumers," says Kellogg.

However, healthy isn't the highest priority for most consumers shopping in the deli and prepared foods section.

"Value is still the top factor driving consumer purchases," says Sandridge's Brown. Therefore, deli operators should serve up a variety of choices. This includes traditional selections starting at $1.99 per pound, as well as trendier healthier ones retailing for $4.99 to $5.99, or more, per pound.

"Operators can appeal to the majority of customers by incorporating ethnic foods and premium comfort foods with traditional deli salads and sides to capture a broadened demographic," says Brown. Accomplish this in the bulk case by placing the best sellers in the middle of the display and the more inspired offerings on either side. This technique draws customers to the case and allows them to see what is new and different at the same time.

Today, many manufacturers and deli operators are working to incorporate healthy options — whether it's nutritional-and-functional options, better quality with minimally processed fresh ingredients, all natural with no chemically-altered ingredients and GMO's, or limiting ingredient quantities of sodium, fat and sugar — with value-added strategies, such as cross-promotional incentives and consistently rotated specials.

Build The Ring

Quick-serve restaurants made the "combo" famous. This merchandising tactic also works in the deli and can drive up the ring.

"Offer an 8-ounce cup of hot soup for an extra 99 cents when a customer purchases a salad or sandwich," says Blount's Sewall. "For example, a broth based soup with a sandwich or a heartier type to go with a salad. Soup-and-salad or sandwich combinations are big in the restaurant trade."

Another example of successful merchandising is the "meal deal," where consumers have the option to customize their meals with a choice of protein and two to three sides out of several selections. This is also a good way to get customers to stretch and try inventive flavor profiles.

"Consumers enjoy the personalization in a 'meal-deal' offer and tend to repeat their purchase weekly," says Sandridge's Brown.

Provide meal planning ideas by pre-pairing sides and salads with an entrée and dessert. Then, make sure these items are conveniently located near each other.

"Develop special mid-week meal deals or a different meal deal for each day of the week to help increase sales on slower days," suggests Reser's McCarthy.

The bundling of two or more items to make a meal is more advantageous to the deli's ring than buy-one-get-one promotions.

"We've found that with buy-one-get-one-free deals, consumers tend to not repeat their purchase, as they would have typically. In other words, consumers are not consuming more with this deal, they are simply purchasing more product, but less frequently," says Brown.

Upsell With Party Platters

Game days, holidays and weekends are get-together times where customers want something festive to share with friends. Beyond these purposes, party platters and deli trays serve as a good way to entice customers to try several new flavors.

"We've created colorful photos that show how to put platters together with six or seven seafood or grain salads or dips," explains Carl Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development at Don's Food Products.

Delis can use this eye-catching instructional piece in the backroom to create premade platters. Or, they can post on the glass in the service deli to give consumers eye-catching ways of how they can purchase a half dozen different salads, sides and make-their-own platters. Either way, this can be a register-ringing tactic to up-sell the quantity and quality of deli sides and salads. **DB**

A Tale of Two Artisans

A cheese and chocolate collaboration

BY MICHELE SOTALLARO

Snap! The dark chocolate square speckled with finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano releases a tantalizing scent of sweet and sour. The first bite breaks the square plate, and releases an explosion of the sharp cheese flavor, which is calmed by the 62 percent cacao, only to be followed with sparks of spicy Tellicherry peppercorn.

Cathy Strange, global cheese buyer of national procurement and distribution for Whole Foods Market, likens the experience of tasting Vosges' Super Dark Parmesan & Peppercorn chocolate bar to trying an artisan piece of cheese for the first time.

"Your pallet goes through all these levels of complexity… we taste chocolate similarly to how we taste cheese," says Strange.

She encourages examining the chocolate, smelling it, touching it — just as you would taste any cheese, do the same with this chocolate.

The exclusive artisan cheese and chocolate bar launched during the store's "Crack Heard Around the World" — an annual event that pays homage to Parmigiano Reggiano with samples, food pairings, entertainment and other activities — which was celebrated earlier this year in March.

The bar is part of the Super Dark chocolate collection, which incorporates dark chocolate with a range of superfoods, from Vosges Haut-Chocolat (vohj/o-shocolah). "Most people tend to associate cheese with fat — they never hear about the nutritional attributes or would consider it a superfood," says Strange.

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The concept was the brainchild of Strange's collaboration with Vosges' founder and owner, chocolatier Katrina Markoff.

"We are a mission-driven company, so we really like to align with producer-partners that have synergies with us. In terms of Katrina, she's very innovative," says Strange. "Her enthusiasm is really effervescent. She's super passionate. She's always thinking ahead of the curve. She's very confident and comfortable with who she is."

The Avant-Garde Chocolatier

The 41-year-old Markoff graduated Vanderbilt University with degrees in chemistry and psychology. Three days following her graduation, she moved to Paris to pursue her dream of studying the culinary arts at Le Cordon Bleu.

She graduated Le Cordon Bleu with Le Grand Diplôme in cuisine and pastry, in addition to degrees in basic and advanced oenology. She mentored under renowned and prestigious Chef Ferran Adrià — most famous for his innovation with molecular gastronomy — and took his advice to travel the world to experience different cuisines instead of settling for a restaurant job in Paris. It was those experiences throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and Hawaii that inspired her creativity with eclectic and exotic ingredients immersed in chocolate.

"I push the limits of story telling through chocolate," explains Markoff. "Everything I do has a meaning to it. I don't do cheese and chocolate for the sake of just doing it. There's a story that I want to tell."

In the case of the Super Dark line, she wanted to combine healthier dark chocolate with superfoods and foods with nutraceutical-like qualities because they offer value to health in a unique way.

"Savory sweet things have been in the market for a while," says Markoff. "I think people are very open to the landscape of cheese and chocolate flavor combinations. I like to explore the limits to see how far I can go on this adventurous experience with food and new tastes."

Markoff's mission is to "bring peace to the world through chocolate." She tackles this grand philosophy by "fusing indigenous spices, flowers, roots, herbs and liqueurs with premium chocolate to create a sensory experience that nurtures awareness of and appreciation for the world's diverse cultures."

So far, Markoff and her passionate creations with truffles and bars have captured the hearts of foodies all over the world; she has grown her business from her per-

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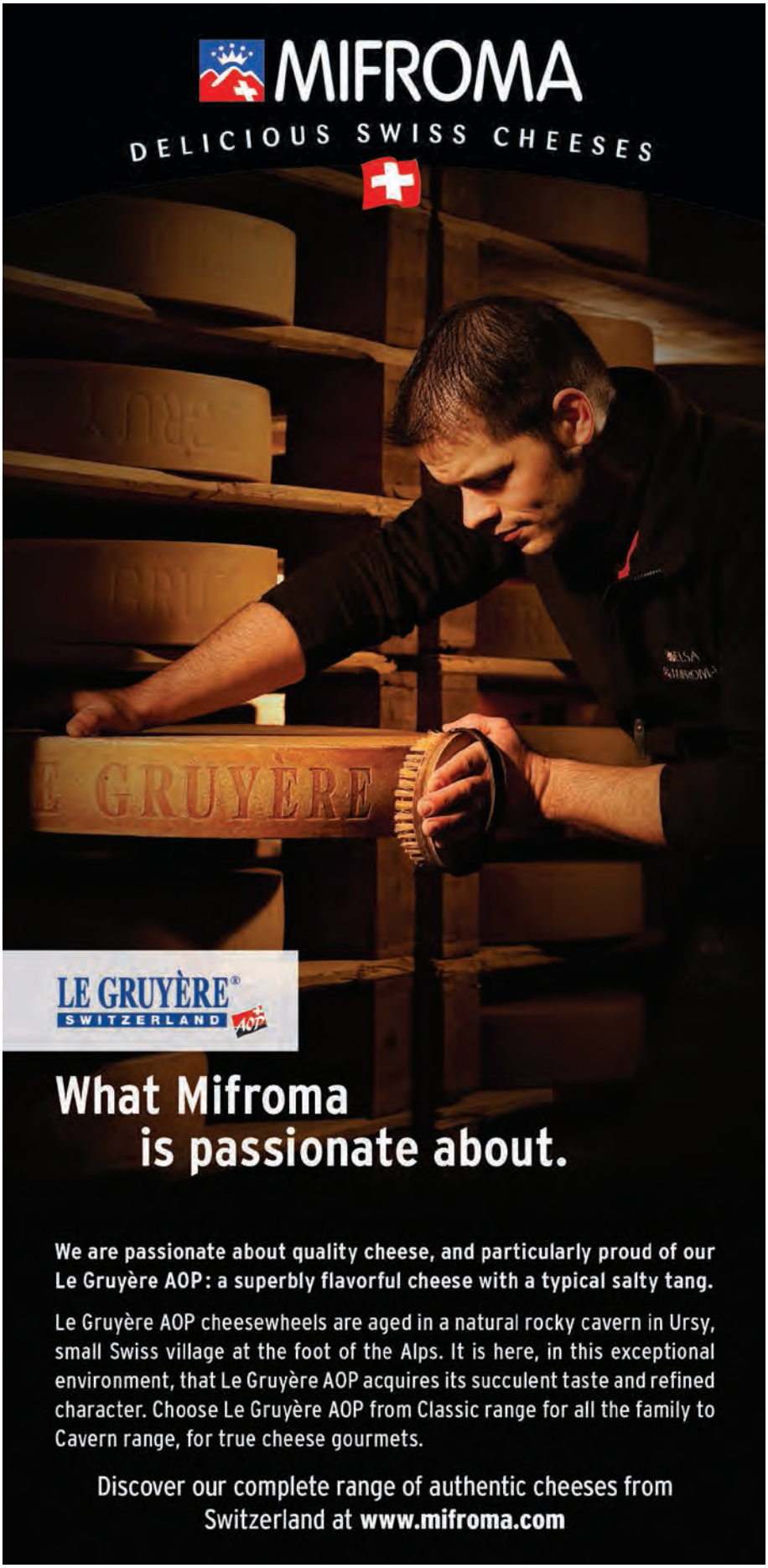


sonal kitchen to a company with around 200 employees.

"In essence, her passion was in discovering how to be present when tasting food and how to highlight all the attributes of food," says Strange. "These kinds of bars, and the artisan bar movement, hasn't been around the United States for that long, but Katrina and her innovation have captured that bar segment.

"During the big bacon craze, she was one of the first chocolatiers to put bacon with chocolate. I think that's what she became known for."

A Match Made in Heaven

The Mo's Cinnamon Sugar Bacon Bar was the first entrée for partnership between Vosges and Whole Foods. The bar is comprised of sulfate-free hickory-smoked bacon, Ceylon cinnamon sugar and 62 percent dark chocolate.

Markoff explains her inspiration for the bar stemmed from childhood memories when her mom would serve chocolate chip pancakes with bacon. "The maple syrup would run onto the bacon, and I would dip the bacon into the syrup."

This ethereal reminiscence that Markoff harnesses with her chocolates is what creates a connection between her artistry and Vosges fans.

"I had been after her for a number of years to see if we could develop some type of exclusive partnership," says Strange. "Her products are inventive and unique. When new products come to market, you either hear about the product first or the person first; with me, I heard about them simultaneously."

After Whole Foods picked up the Mo's Cinnamon Sugar Bacon Bar, the two ladies looked to partner again. Strange mentioned the next big event the company had was "The Crack," which celebrates all things Parmigiano Reggiano. At the time, Markoff had already dabbled with Parmigiano Reggiano Stravecchio and peppercorn in caramel form. "I told Cathy, it might be fun to try it with chocolate."

They discussed nutritional components of the Parmesan being an aged cheese, traditionally produced, the level of calcium and how it breaks down in your body. They also reviewed flavor pairings and experimented with three ingredients.

They were careful to find the perfect balance — since dark chocolate, Parmigiano Reggiano and peppercorn are all strong flavors on their own. Markoff figured the best way to start was to work with cheese that was carried in Whole Foods stores.

The Key Ingredient

"I was really excited to work on the project, and I didn't want the cheese to be preground, so we had the cheese imported from the distributor that works with Whole Foods," explains Markoff.

Whole Foods Market visits these producers to hand-select the best wheels. Those wheels are then carefully aged 24 months to achieve the toasted, salty and nutty flavor, as well as subtle crystal-like texture. The cheese is made of 100 percent raw cow's milk and contains 33 percent protein. The 24-month aging process breaks down the protein into peptones (a soluble protein), peptides (bonds two amino acids) and free amino acids (single amino acids), making it an ideal source of energy.

The wheels are given a location number (a four-digit number that traces the province origin); inspected and evaluated for color, texture, aroma and quality by the Consorzio; stamped with a date of birth; and certified DOP/Denominazione di Origine Protetta, also known as PDO/Protected Designation of Origin, affirming that the wheel was produced using the correct methods within the approved regions.

Markoff invested in an industrial cheese grater to prepare the cheese exactly how she wanted it for the chocolate. "We cracked this 80-pound wheel of cheese ourselves, we removed the rind and we ground the cheese," she says reflecting with amazement. "We didn't grind more than one day in advance, because I wanted the cheese to be

The Chocolate Temple

Katrina Markoff is not only the founder and chocolatier behind Vosges Haut-Chocolat (vohj/o-sho-colah), but she is a mother, a wife, a middle child, and in the midst of developing the ultimate chocolate experience with a gastropub/museum/cooking tour. The project has been dubbed, "The Chocolate Temple" and is projected to open in the Summer of 2015 in the heart of Chicago.

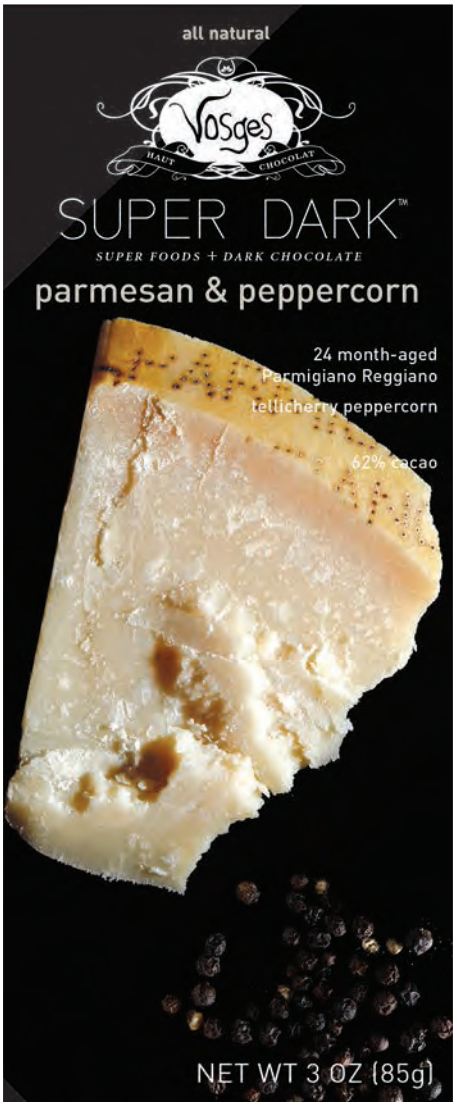
The tour will educate visitors on how Markoff makes her chocolate. The building will include a restaurant and event space, as well as an exhibition gallery. "I fall in love with something, get inspired, take action and then create experiences," says Markoff.

Markoff also takes action to support various causes and beliefs that she is passionate about. "We have a really strong value system about what resources we are using," she says.

Ingredients are verified non-GMO, part of fair trade, and all chocolate boxes are made out of recycled material. She also developed the company's "Green Purchasing Oath," which is a commitment that 90 percent of what the company buys is post-consumer recycled material, biodegradable or organic.

"We just moved into a LEED-certified building, which is where we manufacture all of our chocolates. The building is on the Chicago River, and we're planting a beautiful garden off the river that will contain all American varietal edibles that we can use. We have a really strong mission to do things the best way for the Earth and the body."

That's just skimming the surface of Vosges' sustainability efforts. Visit vosgeschocolate.com to learn more about the company's 3,000-acre agricultural eco lodge in Belize and charity involvements with V-Day (an organization that aids anti-violence programs for women and girls around the world), Little Kids Rock (a charity that restores and revitalizes music education in under-served public schools in the United States) and L'Ecole de Choix (schools that provide access to quality education for children living in poverty in Haiti).



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super fresh. It was definitely a great learning experience and a lot of fun."

Experience the Journey for Yourself

Both Strange and Markoff have their own ways of indulging in the delicacy.

"Some people view chocolate as a dessert, a snack, a splurge… each of us have our own concepts of chocolate and how it lives in our lives," says Strange. "I really like dark chocolate bars like this with goat cheeses. For example, dark chocolate shaved on goat cheese as a highlight. I also like the bar with a rich ale, such as an IPA, which brings out the spiciness of the bar. IPA's typically have a fruity tone, so it balances out the flavors of the bar."

"I think it would be interesting to include it in a pressed Panini or as a passed hors d'oeuvre," says Markoff. "With the chocolate bar, you could add Mozzarella or a fresh cow's milk cheese from Italy, and press it with some olive oil — that would be good."

"Most people like these types of bars with red wines," says Strange. "I like this bar with a wine that has a little more body to texture, such as Barbera — so it has fruit but good body. I also like the bar with a Riesling. It brings out some of the floral aroma and highlights the balance within the bar."

"Anytime I make a red sauce, I always include chocolate, so it would be fun to melt it in a Bolognese or marinara," says Markoff. "Also, any type of low-sugar conserves or preserve. I'm obsessed with June Taylor, who does preserves and jams that are low in sugar. It's really more about the fruit. Frog Hollow Farm, a 133-acre organic farm located in Brentwood, CA, that sells its fruit through mail order, also has really great jams."

The Next Adventure

"I love working with Whole Foods because they are open to me playing around with new ideas. I have this insatiable need to constantly create," Markoff says with a childlike laugh. "I actually had a few ideas that I sent Cathy, so we'll have to see what comes next.

"I'm interested in expanding the Super Dark line and working with turmeric and ginger," says Markoff. "I'll probably launch some additional Super Dark flavors in the fall of this year. It's doing so well. People love dark chocolate and are aware of all the health benefits, so I want to keep playing in that space." **DB**

Getting Your Goat

Keeping up with the growing demand for goat cheeses

BY MAX MCCALMAN

In the past, goat cheeses were seen as "love-hate" cheeses. And, although there are more and more goat cheese lovers every year, the number one parameter cheesemongers often hear from their customers is "no goat." I used to think this was because there were so many inferior goat cheeses out there, the entire family suffered. But today, there is a grand variety of goat cheeses available, so a well-stocked cheese selection should include representatives of several styles.

Lynne Devereux, marketing and public relations associate for California's Laura Chenel's Chèvre and Marin Cheese Co. reports a strong market for goat milk cheeses. "The consumer has finally come around," she says.

As goat cheeses are experiencing robust demand, it also presents new challenges for the producers. Milk supply is the greatest problem at this time. According to Steve Margarites, president of Best Cheese Corp. and Coach Farm, the milk shortage is not limited to North America, or to goat milk alone. Fermented goat milk products are now more popular than ever — not just here in the United States. In fact, China is the fastest-growing market for dairy products, with a lot of milk headed there in powdered form, goat milk included. Coach Farm is a farmstead operation, so the milk supply is less of a challenge; however, it does not have to compete with producers for the increasingly limited supply of milk. The operation is growing at a double-digit rate, so there are other pressures on margins.

Surprisingly, one cause of the limited goat milk supply is the lack of shepherds — even in countries where the unemployment rate is a serious problem. Because of this, some regions where goats could thrive have been avoided. Michelle Buster, founder of Forever Cheese, points out that aged goat cheeses in Italy are few and far between. As in many other parts of the world, goat cheeses in Italy were once reserved for peasants, as goat has been called the "poor-man's cow." Today, Sardinia produces some goat cheese, while some younger styles are produced in the Piedmont region (often blended with other milks), but very little elsewhere. Buster believes this is changing, but gradually.

Despite consumer demand, retailers are also often hesitant to stock up on goat cheeses. As a group, goat cheese is younger than those crafted from other species' milks. And because younger cheeses have shorter peak stages of ripeness than older cheeses, the more delicate goat cheeses require a little TLC. This may dissuade retailers from including goat cheeses in their inventories. But goat cheeses do not necessarily require more time than other cheeses; they simply require more careful attention. If ever there was an example of "buy less, buy often," it would apply to goat cheeses. In many cases, this is not an option for cheese buyers, so this is a department where extra diligence is recommended. With their growing acceptance and popularity (the growth rate of fermented goat milk products has surpassed that of the other species), an ample selection of goat cheese is worth the investment.

Another impediment (for both the consumer and the producer) is the selling price. Goat cheeses usually cost more than cow cheeses; It is surprising that they are not even more expensive than they are. It takes about seven or eight does to produce the same amount of milk as one cow. This means seven to eight times the labor cost for goat dairies. Plus, yield per gallon of milk is lower for goat milk than it is for cow's milk and much lower than sheep milk.

Feeding goats is costlier, too. The notion that goats eat indiscriminately is a myth. Diversity, yes; tin cans, no. The browsing goat is actually a more wasteful eater than the grazing sheep or cow, as goats are typically a little more selective about their food choices. If a doe reaches up to eat bark from a tree, whatever falls to the earth will be left behind. If some of the TMR (total mixed ration) falls to the ground in the milking parlor, it will probably stay there. There is also less demand for kid meat than there is for lamb or calf meats — another factor adding to the cost. Ultimately, the rising cost of goat cheeses will be passed on to the consumer. If the customer is balking at paying $30 or more for a pound of goat cheese, the time may come when this will seem like a bargain.

Despite cost, some well-heeled customers today will only buy goat cheeses. People often assume goat cheeses are less

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fattening, lower in lactose or that they are simply healthier than cheeses crafted from other milks. While goat cheese does have many benefits that their equivalents lack, other cheeses may have other benefits. There are many variables to consider when comparing relative nutritional values. The percentage of lactose in the milk is about the same for the primary dairy species (goats, sheep, cows and water buffalo). When the milk is converted into cheese, the relative amounts of lactose can change significantly, but that does not mean that goat cheeses necessarily have less percentages of lactose than others. In fact, in come cases, goat cheeses may actually be a little higher in lactose content.

Now that we are beginning to suspect fat in our diet is not the bad boy we once thought, it may be less concerning to know that the average fat content in goat milk is a bit higher than that of cow's milk — though the light flavors in goat cheese may make them seem less fattening. Goat milk has about the same amount of fat as water buffalo milk and is lower in fat than sheep milk. Despite this, some nutritional theories suggest high-fat cheeses are actually less fattening than low-fat cheeses because fat consumption is only one component of weight gain. Higher fat foods are often more satisfying, so less feels like more.

There are many other variables that influence cheese quality, including the animal's diet. For example, seasonal influences can affect the taste of goat cheeses. Milk supply is based on natural lactation cycles, which are fundamentally based on vegetation. Because a goat's diet will differ based on the vegetation available throughout the year, relatively young goat cheeses will taste different in October than in May. The vegetation is different, thus the milk is different, and in effect, the cheese is different.

The seasonal nature of goat cheeses can present challenges to the cheesemonger — when to buy, when not to buy, how much to buy, how often, which styles, what storage conditions for the different styles and how to package them. Goat cheesemakers are working to level fluctuations across the seasons. Many creameries standardize their milk, smoothing out the peaks and valleys to deliver a consistent product. Producers often freeze goat curd so that it will be available to make cheese year-round. These practices help to satisfy customer demands for various styles throughout the year. Frozen curd works pretty well for fresh goat cheeses, but is less successful for the aged varieties. It can yield pleasant, mild flavors but the mouthfeel can suffer. Because of this, producers who use frozen curd often add fresh milk to balance it out.

The beautifully chalky clay texture in a well-aged goat cheese (which can be as little as a few weeks) made from non-frozen goat milk can deliver one of the most enjoyable sensations the human palate has ever known. As different cheesemakers are competing for the same customers, innovation is key (cheese lovers like to experience new cheeses). That innovation includes both crafting cheeses that set them apart and crafting those that are closer to older styles, but made with raw milk.

Goat cheeses ripen better when they get a little air exchange, as they seem to require more aeration than the others. This is one reason why goat milk fermented in plastic tubes can taste like nothing at all. Goat curd under plastic can proceed through stages of fermentation that yield unnatural flavors, or the fermentation is attenuated and few flavors develop. This can be a problem with bloomy rind goat cheeses, too. Many of them employ candidum, a mold better suited for cow or sheep milk cheeses (as used for Camembert, Brie and the like). Some goat cheeses are less troubled by a thick coating of penicillium candidum, but their peak stages of ripeness are fleeting.

Nonetheless, bloomy rinded goat cheeses have a huge following. Part of their popularity may be attributed to the familiarity of these styles of cheeses (their tidy appearance, their soft textures, and their mushroom flavors and aromas). These cheeses can be lovely when they reach their peaks, but they should move quickly. Once cut open, they should be consumed right away.

Overall, I hope that most cheese lovers ultimately buy their cheeses based on aesthetic quality, not on factors such as fat content, salt content, lactose content, etc.

Annabelle Lemaire, marketing manager of Couturier North America, believes the new goat cheese appreciation can be attributed to its versatility and its many culinary applications (beyond just crumbles on salads). Even the simplest recipe can be elevated with goat cheese. Some customers prefer goat cheeses on the younger side and include fresh chèvre as a kitchen staple. Some prefer goat cheeses dusted with black pepper, while others want them long in the tooth. Assuming the cheese is well-made to begin with, goat cheese should be enjoyable with any rind type and at any age (as with all cheeses). There is a point in development when aroma, flavor and texture come together into a harmonious balance that summons primordial experiences. The array of fermented goat milk products is dizzying. **DB**

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Growth of Spanish Cheeses

Increasing in sales and popularity, mainstream retailers need to go beyond Manchego

BY MAX MCCALMAN

Spain's cheeses are becoming increasingly popular in the United States. One might think they are more popular here than in Spain itself. I recall being in an old Madrid restaurant where the only customers eating cheese were the Americans — of all things! The Madrillenos were not eating cheese, which made me wonder where Spain's 1 billion pounds of queso goes each year.

The United States imports about 2 percent of the country's output — more than $5.5 billion dollars in 2012. Jeffrey Shaw of Foods from Spain reports that in the past few years there has been a double-digit growth rate in imports to the States, with nearly half of it being Manchego. That is the equivalent of 14 million wheels consumed each year.

Twenty years ago cheese importation was small. However, the growth rate for Spanish cheese now surpasses the import rates of other European cheeses. The value per pound of imported Spanish cheese is relatively high too, third only to the per-pound value of Italian and Swiss imports. It has taken awhile for Americans to recognize the quality and inimitable styles of Spanish cheeses, and it will probably take several more years before their importation reaches a plateau.

Despite its recent economic troubles, Spain has been at the forefront of the world's gastronomy for many years. A big part of the current culinary excitement can be attributed to its unique cheeses. This bodes well because there was a time when their survival was less certain. Cheeses that had always been stand-alone cheeses are now being added to recipes at many of Spain's finest restaurants. I was a guest of cheesemaker Rafael Baez of Avila a few years ago. My beef dinner featured an accompanying sauce made from his world-famous goat milk cheese, Monte Enebro. Spanish cheese is also finding its way into U.S. dishes. At New York's Artisanal Bistro, Chef Terrance Brennan's favorite topping for beef is a mixed milk blue, the leaf-wrapped Queso Valdeón from Castilla León.

Queso Valdeón's predecessor, Cabrales from Asturias, was also wrapped in leaves many years ago but producers were forced to switch to foil wrapping so that it could be exported to the rest of Europe. Until recently, many Americans identified Valdeón as Cabrales. These two famous blues are related, but quite different. Cabrales is made with raw cow's milk, usually with the addition of goat milk, and occasionally with the addition of sheep's milk. The blue mold is not added to the curd but enters the cheese naturally, right out of the cavas (cheese caves). Valdeón is crafted from pasteurized cow and goat milk and is still wrapped in sycamore or chestnut leaves — the traditional wrapping for many European cheeses before paper and foil were introduced. The leaf wrapping adds a visual appeal to a cheese board, helping set Valdeón apart from other blues, and contributing to its claim as Spain's most popular blue in the United States. Queso Valdeón is an assertive, well-balanced blue cheese while

Queso Cabrales can be far more powerful.

Another outstanding Asturian blue cheese is Gamonedo, a smoked raw milk blue, whose survival is questionable, as the wolves that share the land with grazing cows are a protected species. A few wheels of Queso Gamonedo make it into the United States each year. Whenever I find one I have a wedge, even if it is a little old and dry. Both the Cabrales and Gamonedo are best when still young.

Cheese has been a mainstay of the Spanish diet for many centuries. Before the Romans arrived on the peninsula around 300 B.C., cheesemaking had already been introduced by earlier Iberian inhabitants — many whose roots could be traced to the Middle East. Shepherds brought their sheep and goat herds across Northern Africa then crossed what is now known as the Strait of Gibraltar, while others brought their flocks over the northern coast of the Mediterranean, and others arrived by boat, always with their dairy animals by their sides.

One of the earliest recorded recipes for cheese is attributed to Columella, a writer born in Cádiz in 4 A.D. to Roman parents. His "De Re Rustica" included the basic steps of cheesemaking:

Heat cheese milk to a warm temperature
Add animal or plant rennet to the milk
Remove free whey and press with weights
Place fresh cheese in a cool area and salt surfaces
Periodically brush and work cheese surface
Allow cheese to ripen

Little else has changed in cheesemaking. It's this simplicity of the process that has allowed Spanish cheeses to become so popular. Today, cheese is an important export commodity for Spain, along with many other agricultural products.

With cheese all a buzz in the United States, you might think we import more; but the bulk of exported Spanish cheeses goes to other parts of Western Europe. The relatively low level of importation compared to other countries could be one reason we are missing some quesos here these days. The recent updated FDA regulations for imported cheese has made some Spanish producers question the benefits of the U.S. market. I hope that our growing appetite for all things Spanish will incentivize producers and distributors to expedite FDA processing so that more cheeses will be available in the United States.

One of the most admirable qualities of Spanish cheeses is their stable shelf life. The traditional styles were created long before commercial refrigeration, and in a peninsula where warm temperatures is the norm. I have often cited the shelf life of Spanish cheeses (virtually unmatched in any other

country) as an efficient food staple in the country's early maritime successes. Undoubtedly, cheese was at the top of the explorers' ration lists and then the conquistadores went on to introduce cheesemaking almost immediately everywhere they stopped (or the accompanying monks did). Those old cheeses were crafted to survive what today we would call "less than ideal" conditions. The pressed cheeses — Manchego and all its many cognates — are the greatest examples of those reliable types, along with the pressed goat cheeses like Murcia al Vino, Ibores, Garrotxa, and the Majorero and Palmero from the Canary Islands.

One of the most versatile cheeses of the Spanish gastronomy is the Mahón from Minorca. Mahón is a pressed cow cheese with its own propensity for keeping. There was a time in the late Middle Ages when Mahón was used as a form of currency, more highly prized than Parmigiano Reggiano. There are both raw and pasteurized versions of Queso Mahón available. As of this writing, a six-month-old raw milk version is a finalist in this year's sofi Awards. Generally, the more aged (añejo) cheeses of either raw or pasteurized examples are the more delectable.

The thistle rennet sheep milk cheeses from the Estremadura region comprise a distinct family of Spanish cheeses. Queso de la Serena and Torta del Casar were awarded Protected Designation of Origin (P.D.O.) status. They can be very soft and still have remarkable stability. These vegetarian cheeses can yield aroma and an unfamiliar bitter flavor to novices. The pH levels of these cheeses settle around 5.5 — a prime reason they are so stable. Their soft texture is derived more from the fats than from the water. Some people detect a maritime flavor in this group, maybe a bit surprising since the Estremadura is so far inland. The vegetable rennet cheeses were elevated by Sephardic Jews centuries ago, as dietary restrictions forbid the mixing of milk with meat (as in traditional rennet). The "Torta" family of cheeses has a devoted fan base and is the favorite of many cheese lovers. Infrequently seen, they are well worth seeking out.

Most of the Iberian peninsula is better suited for sheep and goats than it is for cows, which is why few of the imported Spanish cheeses are crafted from cow's milk. The northern part of Spain offers better cow terroir — the "green" part of Spain. South of Madrid there are close to 1 million Manchega ewes (the autochthonous breed of La Mancha) providing the milk for the production of Manchego. The breed does not provide much milk, which is why so many ewes are required. P.D.O. standards forbid cross-breeding with higher yielding breeds. It is important this rule is upheld, as the cheese would have different characteristics from what the world recognizes as those of Manchego.

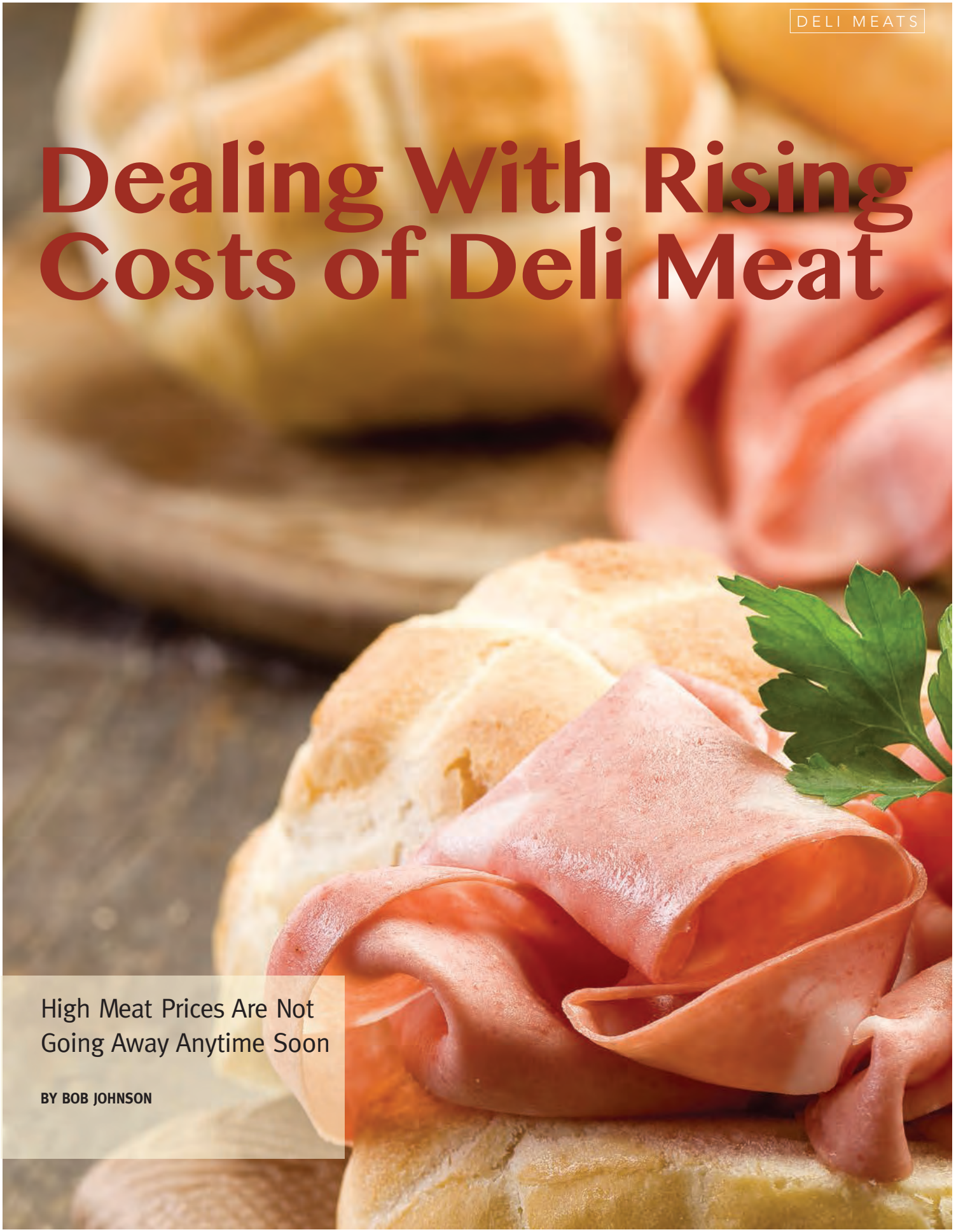
One reason why the Manchega is the only breed permitted in making Manchego is because it is one of the few that can tolerate the region's extreme temperature fluctuations and frequent near-drought conditions. This is definitely not cow country. Both raw and pasteurized versions are allowed, with some variations in quality.

Spanish cheeses have many outstanding food accompaniments, the most famous being dulce de membrillo (quince paste), often known as "membrillo" or "codonyat" in the Catalan dialect. Made of quince fruit, sugar and water, dulce de membrillo is sweet and mildly tart with a similar consistency and flavor to guava cheese or guava paste. Cooked over a slow fire and formed into a block, it is generally cut into thin slices and spread over toasted bread, often served with Manchego cheese.

Spain's cheeses also pair perfectly well with pressed fruit cake and wine. Try jerez, a sherry, along with reds, whites, rosés, sparkling wines and cider.

The cheeses of Spain have, as a group, a recognizable umami component. This is always a plus. The Spanish cheeses exhibit great synergy with many varietals produced within the same region — as well as outside the region — where the cheeses are crafted. Known for their quality, stability and versatility, cheese is one of Spain's many treasures. **DB**

Dealing With Rising Costs of Deli Meat



High Meat Prices Are Not Going Away Anytime Soon

BY BOB JOHNSON

High and rising costs for meat challenge retailers to serve two masters as many people scramble to find protein they can afford, while some consumers still view the deli as an oasis of fine food.

Delis figure to contend with steep costs for meat, particularly beef, well beyond the end of this year, agricultural economists warn.

"We expect to see record high prices at the headquarter, wholesale and retail levels through 2014 and again in 2015. Beyond that will depend heavily on whether Mother Nature cooperates," says Jim Robb, senior agricultural economist and director of the Livestock Marketing Information Center, Denver, CO.

The Livestock Marketing Information Center, a cooperative effort among state university extension specialists, USDA economists, industry cooperators and staff, is a leading source of information within the beef industry.

"This is a long-term phenomenon because of the very slow rate of change in the supply of beef. With chicken it takes months to increase supply; with pork it takes quarters and with beef, it takes years," says Robb.

Ranchers have not yet taken the first baby step on the long road toward increasing the supply of beef.

"The latest numbers show a decrease in calving. We have the same number of cattle we had in January of 1951, and the number of calves brought in is decreasing to the lowest level since 1948," says Ricky Volpe, economist in the food markets branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. "We need to increase our herd size; it's expensive and time-consuming. It's easier to slaughter a herd of cattle than to grow one. It would take at least a year from when we see an increase in calving until you see a decrease in the cost of a roast beef sandwich."

U.S. consumers will continue to demand protein, and the challenge for the deli will be sorting out what products to buy during this period of staggering prices. If purchasing habits already developed during the recession are a harbinger of days ahead, retailers would do well to prepare to serve both the value and premium markets.

"Since 2008, there's been a real bifurcation of the market," says Eric Le Blanc, vice president of marketing for deli and convenience stores at Tyson Foods, Springdale, AR. "There's still a market for the top-end products and for the value products. The people who get run over are selling in the middle of the market."

The Search For Value Proteins

There has already been a decline in total volume of deli sliced meat and customers still buying are flocking toward the more comfortably priced sliced chicken.

"If you look at the deli sliced meat area, volume is already down and you'll probably see acceleration of that. If the cost goes from $9.99 to $12.99 or $14.99, you'll price some people out," says LeBlanc. "You'll probably see more chicken sold in the deli instead of beef."

The move toward poultry continues a long-term trend. When John Kennedy was elected president, Americans were eating nearly four times as much beef as chicken but, according to USDA statistics, for the first time ever in 2010 we ate more chicken than beef.

"People have realized they can get their protein more economically with ground turkey or chicken breast, and there are arguments for why it's less detrimental to the heart than red meat," says Volpe.

The current meat cost crisis makes chicken and turkey even more appealing as alternatives to beef.

"The price ratio of poultry to beef has widened, making poultry much more economical than beef," says Michael Borland, professor of applied economics and director of the Food Industry Center at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN.

Poultry prices are lower than beef but some of them, too, are far higher than just a year ago.

"Raw, boneless, skinless turkey breast is currently selling for $3.50 per pound. It was at $1.55 per pound last year," says Kyle Maas, director of marketing at Michigan Turkey Producers, Grand Rapids, MI. "Processors who purchase meat on the commodity market are feeling the effects of very high prices right now. I expect that some processors will be looking for relief if markets continue along their current path."

The value market is so vital that some

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producers are already looking to craft more pocketbook-friendly versions of their most economical poultry products.

"Eight-piece fried chicken is attractive to low-income households. One of the things we're looking at is doing a 10-piece that is all dark meat," says LeBlanc.

There are also more economical alternatives to that mainstay of affordable deli meats — the rotisserie chicken.

"If you're losing sales in rotisserie chicken because of the cost, cook up leg quarters so customers can get two leg quarters for the fraction of the cost of a rotisserie chicken," says LeBlanc.

While poultry benefits at the expense of high-priced beef, pork is something of an anomaly because a devastating disease is driving up pork prices, at least for the relatively near future.

"Pork prices have gone up, and at least part of that is the porcein epidemic diarrhea virus," says Dave Warner, director of communications at the National Pork Producers Council, Washington, D.C. "Some economists have said that over the past year we've lost 7 million pigs. That would be about 5 to 6 percent of our supply. We're hoping that as we enter the summer months and it gets warmer that the disease will abate."

For pig farmers, the disease has been more of a challenge than the high cost of feed.

"Feed prices are an important factor, but they are a whole lot lower than they have been the last couple years. When you had the drought of 2012 and the federal bio fuels policy, corn was up near $8 a bushel, I think it's down to the $3 level," says Warner.

Warner expects the supply of pork to increase in coming months and balance more closely with the demand.

The challenge in holding on to value-conscious consumers will be even greater because, so far, supermarkets have largely shielded the public from sticker shock.

"The retailers have decided to absorb most of the increase," says Bill Roenigk, senior vice president and staff economist at the National Chicken Council, Washington, D.C.

Beef wholesale prices have gone up more than 23 percent over the last year, but retail prices have increased less than 9 percent, according to Roenigk, who cited the most recent USDA statistics.

"Lower-income people may shift out of meat entirely. In 2008, there was a significant increase in sales of macaroni and cheese in the grocery department," says Le Blanc. "The trade down phenomena is well established in recessions."

While many customers are looking to escape the fate of packaged mac and cheese, in this segmented market other consumers are searching for fine dining experiences.

"In our local supermarket, people we sell to like very value-oriented products and then they skip all the way up to the highest quality," says Dan Estridge, chief flavor officer at NYDP Deli Patrol, Westford, MA. "The deli should provide the option for products that are really special, and not just commodity, low-price options."

Beef – It's For Special Occasions

The high costs of feed and meat are already leading suppliers of deli products to consider raising their prices, if they have not already done so.

"Fresh meat, beef, pork and turkey – our principal raw material – is at historic highs and seems likely to remain high over the next six months and beyond. Wholesale prices will have to rise," says Estridge.

Even relatively high-priced protein products are finding customers at the deli and some of them are finding more customers than ever in these tough meat times.

"We're taking one muscle from one side of a turkey breast and cooking it, rather than processing the meat into a shape. We're a niche operation and there is a portion of the public that is looking for something better. Our demand is growing," says Estridge. "We're finding opportunities in large supermarket chains."

Other producers of high-end poultry and pork products also report strong demand.

"Our company produces a full line of deli meats produced from turkeys, chickens and pork that have never been administered antibiotics and are fed a vegetarian diet. All of our products are made with only all-natural ingredients," says Barb Quijano, vice president of marketing and key accounts at Hain Pure Protein, New Oxford, PA.

The higher price of these more natural meat products is not by any means driving customers away.

"Demand for this product, both in bulk and pre-sliced format, remains very strong as consumers are more and more concerned about the source of their food, as well as how the animals are treated," says Quijano.

Dan Estridge, chief flavor officer at NYDP Deli Patrol says, "If retails go up, sales will slow. Some retailers could choose to operate at lower gross margins to hold the line. Even prior to the current price crisis, we've all seen the impact of differing margins on volume between various retailers. Consumers will buy less, and as they do so, we believe they'll look for products they can enjoy for their quality and not just piled high. If the food is great, then even one bite on a plate by itself can be satisfying."

Some producers have found quality meats with a good story sustain strong consumer demand.

"All of the meat that goes into the processing of our deli products comes from turkeys and chickens that are humanely raised on our family owned farms. Our farm-to-table story resonates with the consumer and is what sets us apart from conventional products in the marketplace," says Quijano.

High prices may force the deli to redefine itself as the department for high quality, rather than budget-friendly products.

"American deli products in general have always been formulated with value in mind, which is to say they're mostly 'cheaper' to begin with. How else can you make sense of the industry having standardized on macerated, high-yield, cooked-in-bag production," says Estridge. "With prices rising sharply, more people, not just 'foodies,' are seeking quality in place of quantity. Food cost is just one more factor driving Americans to think about deli meats more like folks in Europe, where a great sandwich never meant 'mile-high,' but instead featured meats that were a treat — even one bite, all by itself."

A New World Meat Order

Meat producers are looking at daily weather and grains futures reports to learn how much it will cost to feed their animals.

"You don't know what's in store for us in terms of the price of grain. It could be below $3 or up to $7 or $8," says Tyson's Le Blanc.

But beyond temporary droughts and crop losses, high meat prices may be the

sign of a new age in which a growing middle class in developing countries and the use of grains for fuel strain the global supply of beef and feed.

"As diets and incomes improve around the world, the demand for certain types of beef cuts has increased. In addition, our currency value relative to other currencies worldwide has encouraged U.S. exports. Our geographic location to Asia helps," says the University of Minnesota's Borland.

Droughts will come and go, but agronomists can help farmers continue to produce good crops even in the face of a general trend toward warming.

"Whether we are having a drought because there is a general trend toward warming, or because we have always had periodic droughts is hard to say," says Georg Dubcovsky, University of California wheat breeder, and the individual chosen by the USDA to head up an ambitious national program to map the wheat genome. "There will be both winners and losers with warming. There will be instability, but we will plant different varieties in different areas."

Behind the relatively short-term affect of the weather, are long-term demands straining the world supply of grain.

The USDA measures global grain stores in days of consumption and that cupboard is not what it used to be: Worldwide supply has steadily declined nearly 50 percent from the 1986 peak of 130 days.

Policy decisions to feed corn to gasoline tanks rather than livestock will have an enduring impact on the cost of beef.

"Ethanol is a mature industry and it's not going away. It's a major user of corn and acreage," says Robb.

Ethanol was barely a blip on the feed radar 20 years ago but, according to USDA statistics, last year more than a third of all the grain produced in the United States was used for ethanol fuel.

"Worldwide demand and ethanol fuel have left stores of grain lower than they were historically," says Volpe.

Shifts in the global economy are also placing new demands on the grain that U.S. ranchers use to feed their animals.

China's grain imports doubled last year, according to USDA statistics, as that country sought to meet burgeoning need for livestock feed. Other Asian countries are also in hot pursuit of U.S. feed crops.

"Right now we are exporting about 12 percent of our alfalfa hay from the seven Western states, and about 30 percent of our grassy hay primarily to Japan and other areas in the Far East and the Middle East," says Dan Putnam, University of California Cooperative Extension alfalfa and forage crops specialist.

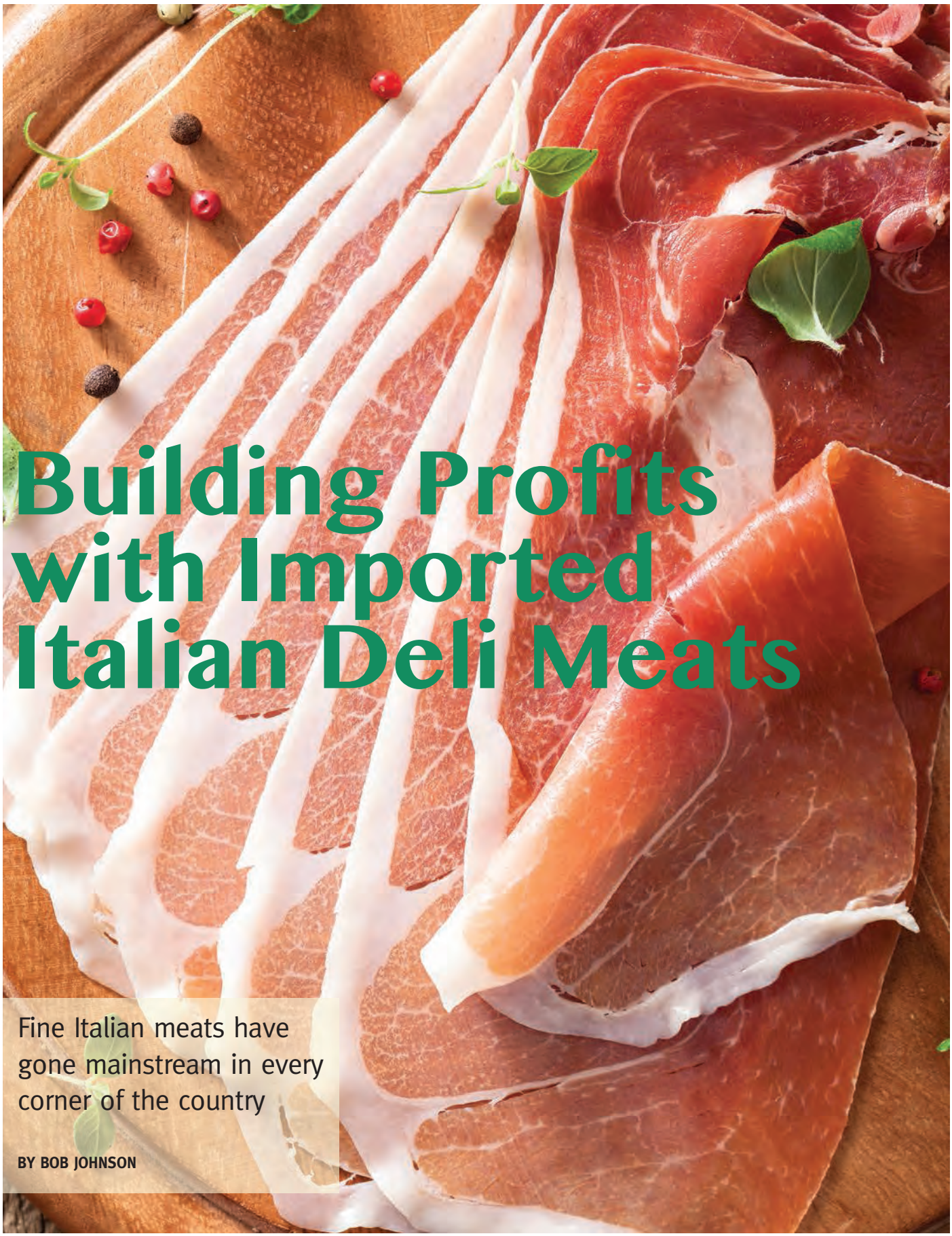
Even in times of shortages and high prices at home, U.S. meat producers benefit from the emergence in the global economy of an enormous number of people with the means and desire to eat higher quality protein.

In the first two months of this year beef exports were up 15 percent from the record setting pace of 2013, according to U.S. Meat Export Federation statistics.

"The export markets have remained robust. It's mostly a function of growing income around the world. As incomes have gone up we have seen increased demand for beef," says Robb.

Pork producers also report healthy export sales even as they struggle to meet domestic demand.

"We export a lot of pork to Asia," says Warner, "and that's a good thing for our producers. Demand for pork has been pretty steady for quite a few years." **DB**



Building Profits with Imported Italian Deli Meats

Fine Italian meats have gone mainstream in every corner of the country

BY BOB JOHNSON

When it comes to premium deli meats, everyone thinks of Italy. And, while there are many very high-quality domestic deli meat products that are made in the Italian style, the label, "Imported from Italy" still rules.

When the weather turns warm, Principe Foods of Long Beach, CA, seizes the opportunity to introduce consumers to fine Italian meat, while showing them how to serve it during the summer months.

"We do promotions with prosciutto di San Daniele and seasonal fruits in the summer," says Alberto Minardi, general manager at Principe Foods. "For example, if you buy prosciutto di San Daniele, you get some free watermelon. The best way to merchandise the products is to let consumers know how to use them."

The classic summer pairing is prosciutto with melon and a glass of sparkling Italian prosecco — the prefect cross-merchandising opportunity in supermarkets where alcohol is allowed to be bought.

Even with premium pricing, the public is eager to try fine Italian meats and if retailers take the extra step to show their customers how to use it, sales will increase. The first step is to teach counter staff a thing or two about these products.

"Retailers can educate their deli counter employees," says Arielle Scatarzi, North American marketing manager for Levoni in Castellucchio, Italy. "I'm not saying customers need to know ten ways to use prosciutto, but they need to know the basics and characteristics of each product, such as the difference between prosciutto and serrano."

Prosciutto Opens the Door

The most commonly found Italian salumi is prosciutto di Parma. Restaurants opened the door and now it is widely available in retail stores across the United States. Imported in smaller quantities, prosciutto di San Danielle was introduced a little later. Now, in addition to exporting prosciutto, Italy is exporting other classic deli meats, such as mortadella, prosciutto cotto (cooked ham), speck Alto Adige and, hopefully, salami in the near future.

"Prosciutto has become part of the English language," says Minardi. "It is a destination item. You can create signature sandwiches, salads and pizza around prosciutto. Not only has it gone mainstream, it has created opportunities for other Italian imports to do well."

The popularity, as well as the difficulty in slicing prosciutto at store level, has created opportunities for pre-sliced and packaged products. According to Italian regulations, any PDO deli meat, such as prosciutto di Parma and prosciutto di San Danielle must be sliced and packaged in Italy, where quality can be guaranteed and there is no mistake that the contents in the package are authentic.

"Costco is the largest seller of prosciutto di Parma in the United States. It's pre-sliced, and it's packaged," says David Biltchik, chairman of Consultants International Group in Washington, D.C. "You go into the refrigerated area of a Costco and you see Italian cheeses and meats, and they are not cheap."

"The market is mainly made of prosciutto, prosciutto di Parma and prosciutto di San Daniele," says Dr. Nicola Levoni, president of Levoni. "Considering the size of the potential market, it is indeed in its infancy. The other products are mortadella, Bologna PGI and prosciutto cotto, but here the sales are still very small."

A few of these products are already found in U.S. delis, albeit not as widely they as should be.

"Some cooked ham is coming in, both whole and sliced in the package, which is much less expensive than the air-dried prosciutto," says Biltchik. "Some mortadella is coming in. It's very good, but it's twice as expensive as American Bologna. Bresaola is a dry beef from Northern Italy. It is a wonderful product but it is also very expensive. I hope it comes in this

year, but I don't know if it will."

According to the Italian Trade Commission, sales of both mortadella and boneless prosciutto increased more than 10 percent in the United States last year.

"We've seen an increase in Italian meats," says Augusto Marchini, assistant trade commissioner at the Italian Trade Commission in New York City.

"Mortadella is well-known in the United States and it should also be promoted widely," says Levoni. "The Bologna Consortium for Mortadella is promoting the product in Italy and Europe, and I hope the promotion will soon be extended to the United States."

Everywhere from Texas to Minnesota

Fine Italian meats have traveled far in a short time to reach consumers almost everywhere. While restaurants deserve the initial thanks for introducing mainstream American consumers to prosciutto, high-volume retailers need to be credited with making Italian imports easily available to most people — even those living in rural areas of the country.

"They're growing, not just in our strongest markets like the New York and San Francisco metropolitan areas, but all over the country," says Biltchik. "One of my producers has a large business in Texas. There are markets in Denver and Minnesota.

"Italian imports are growing not just in the stand-alone delis, but in supermarket delis," Biltchik continues. "American consumers are more interested in quality food. This has developed over the last ten years. The consumer is interested in being smart. You'll find it in Wegmans and you'll find it in Publix. You will find prosciutto di Parma in 350 Trader Joe's stores. Quality retailers realize that authenticity, honesty and integrity are important considerations. The consumer wants it, and the stores make money on it."

Many young professionals looking for adventure and quality in their cuisine form a core group of potential customers.

"The key demographic is people who are between 25 and 40 years of age, are educated and upwardly mobile, and who live in urban areas because that is where the products are available," says Scatarzi. "People want to eat foods they grew up with and they are interested in trying foods from new regions.

"I've read some projections that meat sales will go down due to the predicted rising prices, but specialty meat products will be on the rise. For us, sales have increased," Scatarzi continues. "It's mar-

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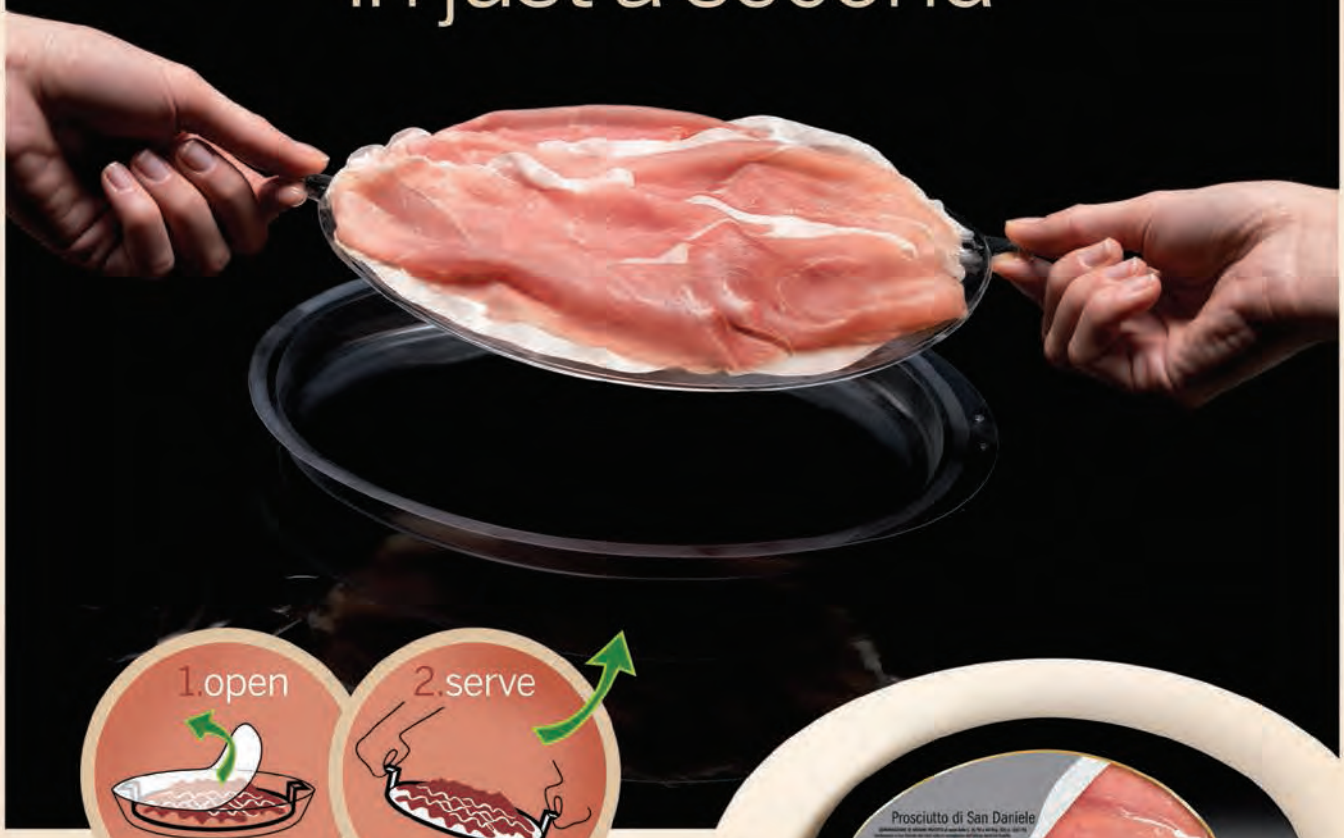

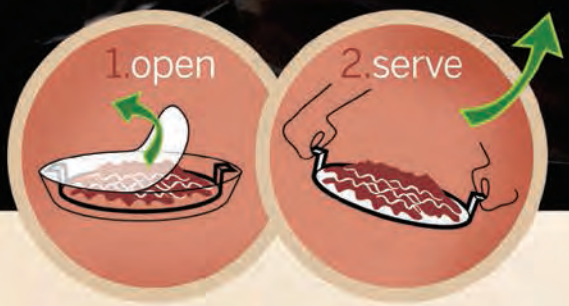

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keted as an experience — the experience of going to a specialty store and bringing something home for entertaining."

While it is difficult to predict changing consumer buying behavior, some experts are predicting that the American model will begin to mirror European buying habits, where consumers focus on better quality but less quantity.

Convincing customers that Italian imports are worth the extra money, especially to people who are not of Italian descent or who did not grow up in Italian neighborhoods, is a challenge. Merchandising rather than low prices has proven to be the better driver for first-time sales opportunities.

"The care the retailer takes in how its deli case looks is important," says Minardi. "At Whole Foods I can have imported meat, imported cheese, an artisan beer and have my lunch. The restaurants are one part of exposing consumers to the products, but the rest is the retailers."

"Sometimes stores aren't as careful as they should be with the signage. Sometimes they don't even spell the product name right; and point-of-sale materials are important," says Biltchik. "The smarter stores will give you a little taste."

Biltchik believes the entire authentic Italian food category could take a step forward in announcing itself to the public.

"It would be helpful to the consumers, the stores and the producers if every Italian meat product were labeled 'Product of Italy' in the same font under the product name in large enough print," says Biltchik. "Product of Italy is a selling point — make it bold and visible."

Domestic Salami Connection

While true Italian-made products produced in Italy are the gold standard, there are domestic producers that are making very high-quality products that are similar to those made in Italy. Many of these producers are of Italian descent and when their families came to the United States as immigrants, they brought their culture, skills and love of their heritage with them.

Most of the products Italians loved were not available in the United States. Today, virtually all of the Italian-style salami on the shelves is really Americanized versions of authentic Italian cuisine.

"People are talking about importing Italian salami, but the regulations are not letting it come in now, and I don't know when they will," says Biltchik. New regulations are in place to make it happen, but "the USDA has to approve the plant, and most of the producers are pretty small."

"We expect to soon see consumers in the United States being able to taste Italian salami that is made in Italy with Italian meat," says Levoni. "The same high-quality meat from the Italian heavy pigs used for the production of proscuitto di Parma and proscuitto di San Daniele are used for the production of salami and prosciutto cotto, cooked ham and, of course, mortadella and other specialties."

"The category of salami is definitely growing. The domestic items are not just entry level products; but they are not the same as the Italian," says Scatarzi.

"The USDA restrictions do not allow several imported Italian products to come to the United States, so you have many domestic producers," says Minardi. "In the salami category, there are five or six major producers, along with artisan producers of organic or all-natural products. Whether produced in the middle of Iowa or in Salt Lake City, all of this helps the awareness of the category." **DB**

Ethnic Meats: The Triumph of Diversity

Foods to Remember Our Varied Heritages

BY BOB JOHNSON

The deli meat section is a museum of foods that began as old-country favorites in urban immigrant neighborhoods, and moved on up to become signature favorites.

"I think certain meats are popular for all ethnicities where clusters of immigrants will open stores tailored to their particular taste preferences. Some meats, however, may have been established in ethnic communities, but over many years have migrated their way into mainstream retail because they have been so well liked," says Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian Pate and Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ. "Some of the Italian specialty meats and German Black Forest ham are a couple of examples that come immediately to mind."

Moving On

As city residents move to live in the suburbs, many of them still crave familiar flavors.

"Ethnic meats are certainly popular in ethnic neighborhoods as a taste of home and an integral part of food culture and tradition," says Kate Whittum, sales and marketing manager at Redondo Iglesias USA, Garden City, NY. "Interest in ethnic foods is high outside ethnic groups as part of a general interest in authentic foods of cultures. There is also an aspirational quality to this interest as second and third generations of these

groups want to reconnect with traditional foods of their heritage."

Hispanic meats are migrating beyond the urban areas as children of immigrants age and move out of the inner city.

"Many Hispanics are becoming more assimilated and more Americanized," says Edgar Soto, vice president for sales and marketing at Cibao Meat Products, Bronx, NY. "More Hispanics are getting better jobs and moving to the suburbs, and we find they still want our products."

Cibao launched Salami Campesino 45 years ago in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City, and has since developed a full line of Hispanic deli meat products.

For many consumers the appeal of Hispanic meat products is in their highly seasoned flavor profiles.

"People are looking for flavor," says Soto. "Our products are not all hot; they are more seasoned. The Caribbean and South American meats are seasoned. We're looking at advertising on more non-Hispanic media, like radio stations. We advertise in the Chinese and Asian communities, who especially like our turkey and chicken products."

Some European alternatives to Italian deli favorites are earning their own loyal consumers.

"Jamon Iberico de Bellota, which is a dry-cured ham from Spain, made from an heirloom breed of hogs native to the Iberian Peninsula, has created a lot of buzz in recent years," says Whittum. "It has displaced some of the sales of high-end prosciuttos, such as prosciutto di San Daniele and prosciutto di Parma."

Davide Dukcevich is striking a chord with a marriage of old-country meat traditions and New England suburban interest in buying from local farmers. Dukcevich's grandfather started Daniele Prosciutto, Pascoag, RI, in Italy, and his father brought it to America in 1976. Now Davide is offering Italian deli meats made from locally raised pigs.

"We've come out with a line of charcuterie made with local meat," says Dukcevich. "There's a breed we've been using, Berkshire hogs, and we've been buying them as fast as we can get them. We make sure the hogs are from local farms and have room to run around. Last year we partnered with a group of farmers in New England and had them raise hogs to our specifications. We make prosciutto, mortadella and other products and sell them at farmers' markets and specialty stores in the New England area. The reception for the products has been encouraging."

This locally based meat program is a small part of Daniele's business, but it is the part that brings the company in direct contact with a public that wants to know more about who makes their food. Demand for its local products is rising.

"Last summer we sold at two farmers' markets, and this year we're going to six, and also going to more restaurants and specialty stores," says Dukcevich. "The farmers' markets are a small part of our business, but it's a fun part and the most interesting. The interest in meeting the people who produce food is strong, and it's going to become a tidal wave."

"Sausages are becoming so much more in the forefront, they are huge," says Judy Preiss, CEO of Pulaski Meat Products, Linden, NJ. People are becoming more comfortable with sausage, "because they realize that you can make it with top premium meats."

Pulaski enjoys stronger demand for

artisan Eastern European sausage as well as ham, bacon and sandwich meats. "Such interest began about two years ago, and it's increasing," adds Pulaski. "You see it in stores and specialty shops. People want flavor that is authentic."

Is the Market Segmenting?

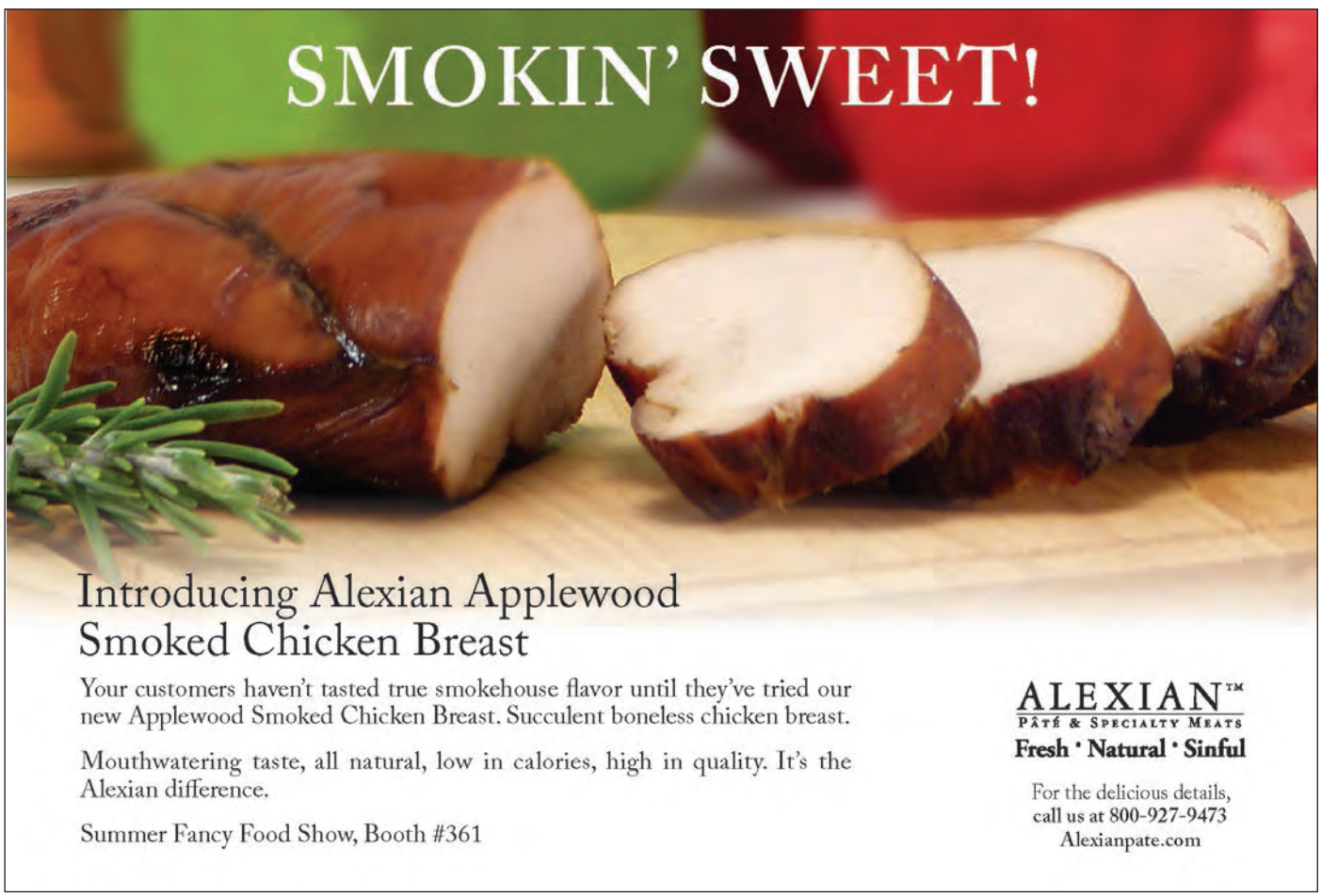
The question is worth asking because people are responding to the high cost of meat. But responses vary dramatically: some people are very cost conscious, while others see ethnic deli meats as one area where they can splurge during difficult times.

"You have to raise your prices. If you want a premium product you need to use premium cuts of meat. Anything that's going to be inexpensive will be made from cheap ingredients. The people trying to make cheaper products can't stay in business," says Preiss. "When prices rise, "customers go away for a while, but they come back."

While some consumers are looking for the highest quality in their ethnic meats, others are hoping to pay the same price, even if it is for smaller packages.

"The coffee and cereal producers downsized their packages, and we're looking to do the same thing," says Cibao's Soto. "We just implemented our first price increase in three years. Nobody is happy about it."

Although Cibao has a tradition of



offering more economical deli meats, Soto believes that strong flavor is at least as important as price in attracting new customers.

Dukcevich is finding that the allure of meats raised by farmers, who are also neighbors, is even stronger in troubled times. "One of the advantages we have in precarious times," he says, "is you're helping the local community, and the local economy."

Healthy Options

One constant across all segments is increasing consumer desire for healthier meat products.

"All natural meats, which are lean, are enjoying the growth spurt," says Alexian's Cummins. "We have just introduced an Applewood Smoked Chicken breast. Smoked products are very popular in the ethnic meat category and lean is popular everywhere."

Some producers are hoping to take advantage of the growing popularity of gluten-free foods. They may even have such foods already in their portfolio and now they are telling their gluten-sensitive customers what is available.

"We have POP materials, and we are changing labels," says Soto. "Most of our products are gluten-free. We're taking advantage of the gluten-free aspect of those products."

The competition for deli ethnic meats is the heavily processed meat products in the supermarket proper.

"You don't want anything that can last more than 30 days, because you don't want all those preservatives," says Preiss. "People who are in the know are realizing they don't want what the supermarkets are giving them." **DB**

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Soup's On

Entrepreneur Kevin Fortun started in the foodservice industry in 1978. It was in 1981, while working in the purchasing department of Schwartz Bros. Restaurants in Bellevue, WA, Fortun noticed something peculiar — an inconsistency of soup from restaurant to restaurant.

Soon, an idea emerged to develop a premium line of prepared soups for restaurants that not only delivered a "from scratch" taste using all-natural ingredients, but was convenient and consistent batch to batch.

In his home kitchen Fortun honed his culinary skills, creating made-to-order small batches of soup. He used an innovative quick-chill technology to preserve freshness. The end result was a fresh, homemade soup with no MSG, no preservatives and no artificial ingredients.

Fortun's first client was Schwartz Bros. Restaurants and Stockpot Soups was born. Business grew rapidly, and soon Stockpot began servicing other local restaurants and institutional customers. The company picked up a national customer base, including TGI Friday's, Claim Jumper Restaurants, Sysco, grocery chains and a small gathering of international clients.

In the early days, Fortun made his soup by day, delivered to his clients in the afternoon and invoiced at night in his garage. A few years later, he brought his two brothers into the company and the company continued to grow, eventually moving into a manufacturing site in Redmond, WA.

In 1996, Stockpot expanded into the retail market with the introduction of a line of premium-refrigerated soups that used a new stand-up pouch technology. Stockpot Soups grew into the largest fresh-refrigerated soup company in the world, with distribution in 23 countries.

After selling to Campbell in 1998, Fortun invested in other ventures, including land development; a winery in Napa, CA; his own restaurant, Desert Sage, in LaQuinta, CA; and an equestrian center in Kirkland, WA.

With an itch to get back into food development, in 2009 Fortun launched Fortun's Finishing Touch Sauces, a collection of 12 gourmet finishing sauces that can be found in grocery stores and foodservice nationwide. For this line, Fortun consulted with top chefs and perfected the formulas himself. The gourmet sauces are cooked in small kettles, sautéed, simmered and perfected with just the right amount of fresh ingredients and spices.

In addition to the finishing sauces, Fortun Foods has developed a line of gourmet ready-to-serve soups for both the foodservice industry and retail market. Made in small batches, one kettle at a time and using natural ingredients, the soups are vacuum-packed in plastic bags and sealed while they are still fresh, then refrigerated until they are ready for use.

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