

The background of the cover is a photograph of a classroom. A hand is raised in the foreground on the left side. In the background, a green chalkboard is visible with white chalk text. The magazine title 'DELI BUSINESS' is at the top left, with 'DELI' in a red box. Below the title are the words 'MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT'. At the top right is the date and price 'AUG/SEPT 2015 \$14.95'. The main headline is written on the chalkboard. In the bottom right corner, there is a section titled 'ALSO INSIDE' followed by a list of topics.

DELI

BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

AUG/SEPT 2015 \$14.95

DELIS CAN SCORE
AN A-PLUS IN
BACK-TO-SCHOOL SALES

ALSO INSIDE

TAILGATING
PACKAGING
HOLIDAY BUYING
GRAB 'N' GO
SOUP
AMERICAN SHEEP CHEESES

Merci Chef!
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FRESH MEALS

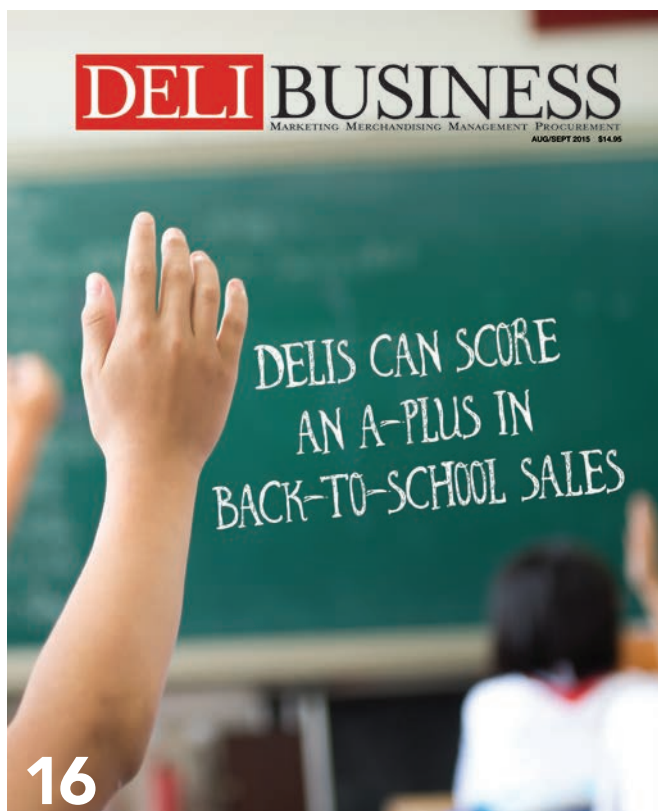


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16



22



35

FEATURES

- Tailgating Offers Opportunity to Score Big22**
Marketing easy-to-eat comfort foods drive sales

- Cutting-Edge Packaging Options32**
Innovations and updated technologies have resulted in more sustainable packaging options

PROCUREMENT

- Holiday Buying: Make It Festive But Simple 35**
Consumers want premium quality with the least time and trouble

MERCHANDISING REVIEW

- Capitalizing On Grab-And-Go38**
Millenials' penchant for mini meals drives trend
- Soup Is Good Food..... 42**
The latest trends center around healthy eating and real food ingredients

CHEESE CORNER

America's Sheep Milk Cheeses..... 46

The United States is leading the way
with new varieties

COMMENTARIES

EDITOR'S NOTES

The 'Aldi Effect' On Supermarket Delis..... 12

PUBLISHER'S INSIGHTS

Radical Changes in Thinking..... 14

IN EVERY ISSUE

DELI WATCH.....8

INFORMATION SHOWCASE 50

BLAST FROM THE PAST 50



42



46

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DELI BUSINESS IS PUBLISHED BY
PHOENIX MEDIA NETWORK, INC.

P.O. BOX 810425,

BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0425

PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610
www.delibusiness.com

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

PUBLICATION AGREEMENT NO. 40047928

**american
business
media**

The Association of Business Information Companies

U.S. INFORMATION OFFICE FOR PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO CHANGES HANDS AFTER 25 YEARS

After 25 years as the director of the U.S. Information Office for the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano, the official entity for the "King of Cheeses" in Italy, Nancy Radke is retiring.

The new representatives for Parmigiano-Reggiano will be Danielle Caponi Bolla and Federico Bolla, the husband and wife team that runs Ponte PR & Marketing.

Radke's agency, Good Food Creative, took on the task of representing Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese throughout the U.S. in 1990. During her tenure, she developed an information office that connected retail, trade and consumers throughout the U.S. and focused on education as well as building brand awareness.

During her time as the official spokesperson for Parmigiano-Reggiano in the U.S., Radke was responsible for developing programs for everything from public relations and advertising to website development and educational trainings.

COMING NEXT IN OCT/NOV ISSUE

COVER STORY

Going Green

FEATURE STORIES

Hummus
Charcuterie

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Fried Chicken
Potatoes

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Cooking Oils

COMING IN DEC/JAN

DELI BUSINESS will be taking a look at Retail Trends.

PREPARED FOODS

Pizza

DELI MEATS

Holiday Meat Guide

CHEESES

Gruyère, Crackers

SUPPLEMENT

Top Twenty Products

COMING NEXT

SUBSCRIPTION & READER SERVICE INFO

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Meet the new packaging for our great-tasting, **ALL-NATURAL** original cheese Fondü.
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there. Check out our wild new fun-loving fondue fanatic: the Emmi Fondü FunDude.



Announcement



STRATEGIC ALLIANCE ANNOUNCED

Caves of Faribault, Faribault, MN, and Norseland Inc., Darien, CT, have entered into a partnership to collaborate and expand sales outreach in the specialty food segment. The goal is realizing accelerated growth and domain authority within the artisan category. The alliance will further enhance the sales support, customer service, product distribution and marketing coverage for both companies.

www.fairbaultdairy.com

Transitions



VENUS WAFERS APPOINTS WESTERN SALES MANAGER

Venus Wafers, Hingham, MA, has appointed Scott Zeiher as regional sales manager, West USA. Prior to joining the company, Zeiher was business manager for Co-Sales and served in sales positions at Snyder's-Lance and Good Earth Tea and in category management at Albertsons. He brings more than 20 years of experience to his post.

www.venuswafers.com



MCDONALD PROMOTED TO STANDEX MARKETING VP

Standex Refrigerated Solutions Group, Salem, NH, has promoted Jack McDonald to vice president of marketing and business development. Formerly director of marketing and business development, McDonald will now be responsible for driving marketing and business development initiatives for Nor-Lake and Master-Bilt. Prior to joining Standex in 2009, he served as senior vice president of sales and marketing for Beverage Air.

www.standex.com

New Products



REINVENTING HUMMUS

Tribe Hummus, Taunton, MA, has introduced Tribe Swirl, which takes toppings traditionally placed atop hummus and layers these through the product. This ensures the topping isn't gone before the hummus is finished. It also eliminates the need of mixing the hummus before eating. Four flavors are available, including Sweet Red Pepper, Garlic & Herb, Fiery Sriracha and Salsa Hummus.

www.tribehummus.com



EXPANDING SNACKING OPTIONS

Johnsonville Sausage LLC, Sheboygan Falls, WI, has introduced Sausage & Gravy Stuffed Biscuits for retail foodservice programs. The hand-held sandwiches are geared for breakfast and snacking, expanding dayparts for supermarkets. The line features a buttermilk crust with sausage and gravy inside. The biscuits are ready to heat from the refrigerator or cold display case in 50 seconds.

www.johnsonville.com



NEW PACKAGING UNVEILED

Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ, has unveiled a new design in its product packaging for Celebrity Canadian goat's milk. The sunglass-wearing spokes-goat will be incorporated on the Canadian Goat Brie and Goat Butters. The introduction will coincide with a website launch and advertising campaign in trade and consumer publications.

www.atalantacorp.com



A SINGLE SOLUTION

Sabra Dipping Co., White Plains, NY, has debuted Pizza Hummus Singles. This line combines smooth Classic hummus blended with fresh pizza-inspired flavors, including herbs and spices like fresh basil and oregano. The single-serving 2-ounce containers pair with pita chips and vegetables and are easily transported.

www.sabra.com



FUTURISTIC PACKAGING

Anchor Packaging, St. Louis, MO, has launched a new line with an ergonomic design, reduction of petroleum-based materials and an upscale presentation that features smooth, clean lines and wide viewing panels. The WAVE series is available in 16-, 24- and 32-ounce sizes. The containers are designed with smooth sides for ease of use. A spoonable inside surface and shiny black exterior are modern and contemporary. Three leak-resistant lids fit each of the polypropylene bases.

www.anchorpackaging.com

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



REAL MEAT IN THE DELI

The Deli Patrol, has introduced single-cut roasts that are not macerated or cooked in a bag. The all-natural product is an alternative to highly-processed meats. It is made with fresh whole and ground spices, gently cured and delicately smoked. The product is slow cooked and has no added water, resulting in high-quality flavor.

www.moreflavorperpound.com



A PERFECT PAIR

Hummus Plus, LLC | A Pure Mediterranean Foods Company, Elk Grove Village, IL, offers a line that pairs seasoned chicken breast with hummus for a healthy, high-protein meal on the go. The product delivers up to 28 g of protein and 12 g of fiber with no artificial flavors or colors. The package has separate containers for the hummus and chicken, is microwavable and includes a utensil and napkin.

www.hummus-plus.com



SALAMI AMERICANO

La Quercia, Norwalk, IA, has introduced a new retail pack of Salami Americano to its pre-sliced line. The salami in the Italian-American tradition has a hint of garlic and black peppercorn. It has a tender texture with a larger diameter of 2½ inches. The meat can be used on a sandwich or layered on pizza. The line is sold in 3-ounce pre-sliced retail packs or 1-pound chubs.

www.laquercia.us



CRACKERS HAVE NO GMO

Venus Wafers, Hingham, MA, has launched Mariner Non-GMO verified Sprouted Grains Baked Snack crackers under The Original Mariner Biscuit Co. brand. The crackers are available in 6.5-ounce sizes in Sesame/Flaxseed and Multigrain flavors. The line also has been verified vegan by the Vegan Action/Vegan Awareness Foundation and certified Kosher by the Orthodox Union.

www.venuswafers.com



DELI SALADS ARE SEASONAL

Freshway Foods, Sidney, OH, has introduced new seasonal deli salads with plant-based protein, spicy flavors and unique fruits and vegetables. The Superfood Protein Salad and Tangy Orange Cucumber Quinoa Salad features unique ingredients, such as rainbow carrots, turnips, rutabaga and watermelon radish. Tangy Sriracha Dressing adds spice to sweet and savory ingredients.

www.freshwayfoods.com



TURKEY LINE UPGRADES

Butterball, Garner, NC, has introduced 12 upgraded flavors of its turkey line. This includes a new signature Naturally Roasted Thanksgiving Turkey Breast Flavor. Redesigned packaging features benefits and product certifications. All flavors are naturally roasted, made with natural sea salt and free of nitrates, nitrites and gluten.

www.butterball.com



SALADS & SIDES UNVEILED

Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, has unveiled a new line of refrigerated products. This includes a diverse array of salad, sides and desserts to provide options for increasing both bulk and branded pre-pack sales. A variety of flavors are available, including Beet & Red Cabbage Slaw; Beet & Kale Salad Kits; Queso Mac and Cheese; Gourmet Macaroni Salad; Cookies & Cream; and Organic Tortilla.

www.resers.com



NEW HUMMUS FLAVORS

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Ward Hill, MA, introduces two new flavors to its all-natural hummus line. Homemade sriracha is blended into Cedar's original hummus base for the spicy Sriracha flavor, while savory bits of caramelized onions and balsamic vinegar combine to create the tasty Balsamic Caramelized Onion. Each product introduces new taste profiles as consumers are now using hummus as an ingredient in recipes, in addition to a traditional dip.

www.cedarsfoods.com



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questioning, evaluating, exploring,
inventing, and innovating, too. Start here,
with us, and walk through the changes.

DELIBYDESIGN.COM

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

The 'Aldi Effect' On Supermarket Delis

For decades the growth of the service deli has served as a signpost marking the growth of a sophisticated food retailing sector. Supermarkets saw the move to service departments as both a move into a higher margin enterprise and as a differentiating factor from the growing warehouse club and supercenter sector. Firms, such as Wegmans, were on the cutting edge of retailing and were the type of company every foreign retailer wanted to see when they visited America, precisely because they had made a large and varied service deli the centerpiece of their offer to consumers.

Indeed back in 1996 DELI BUSINESS magazine itself was established partially because service delis had spread across America, and what was once a coastal institution had gone decidedly mainstream. In fact, a service deli was so associated with a proper supermarket that some retailers may have made incorrect decisions in choosing to include service delis. Wal-Mart, for example, after great internal debate, decided to implement and maintain service delis with the thought that this was one of the few points of human interactions between customers and Wal-Mart staff. Still, this leaves open the question of whether investing in service wasn't a distraction from Wal-Mart's key task of offering low prices.

This epoch went beyond deli. It also included incredible scratch bakeries, a cornucopia of specialty produce items, fresh meat and seafood and, of course, the big move beyond slicing meats and cheese into a variety of foodservice options, such as sushi, wing bars, pasta stations, wok stations, taco bars, pizza programs, rotisserie chicken and more.

Yet now the industry is on the verge of changing, and this service culture may yet be transformed. If you look at the United Kingdom, you see a market where deep discount concepts — notably Aldi and Lidl — have exceeded 10 percent of market share. Perhaps more important is that the rapid growth of these concepts has led the conventional chains to place a new priority on being price-competitive.

In the U.S., the fastest growing supermarket chain is Aldi. Lidl is about to enter the market, and Supervalu has announced its interest in spinning off its deep discount Save-A-Lot concept so it can compete more effectively. This all suggests the rapid growth among the deep discounters will lead conventional chains in America to become deeply concerned about being price-competitive to avoid marketshare loss to the discounters.

In the UK, the mainstream retailers have not found a very effective way to compete with the discounters. As the discounters' market share rose and as the discounters adjusted their product lines and shop presentation, a sort of psychological tipping point was reached where it suddenly became acceptable for consumers of all income classifications to shop at Aldi.

The mainstream retailers have tried to compete with the discounters by offering bottom ranges in their private label lines. The problem is that they offer these ranges in a way that makes clear there are better product choices available and, in fact, they work hard to not allow the packaging to be attractive because they don't want consumers to trade down from higher margin lines.

The shopping experience is very different at an Aldi. Most items are private-labelled specifically for Aldi and are branded as if they were produced by a distinctive, upscale manufacturer. There is no social stigma of a cart filled with Aldi's generic products, as everyone in the store buys the same product.

But the "secret sauce" of offering quality products at low prices in acceptable surroundings is difficult to decipher. That is why in the UK Tesco and Sainsbury's have not created chains of Aldi killers. The secret sauce involves flexible procurement — if the apple harvest is running toward larger apples, Aldi can flex toward selling that size when most retailers won't. The secret sauce also involves supply chain discipline and, among many other things, avoiding the expense of service in the stores.

One can imagine a bifurcation in the market. Those retailers intent on competing on price — including Wal-Mart — can decide to eliminate service delis to cut out whatever expenses they can, while other retailers can decide to no longer compete on price but, instead, to hitch their wagons to service and forget about competing on price.

Yet this seems an increasingly untenable position. Much as Costco has become the largest retailer of many specialty cheeses, and Whole Foods has been scrambling to deal with the appearance of organic goods in mainstream and discount retailers, it seems unlikely that service alone will be enough to protect a large mainstream business, especially in an age when manufacturing techniques provide many high quality offerings in packaged foods.

This columnist was brought up going to the deli counter with his parents and directing the thickness of the slice and sampling each item, asking if they had any lox wings — fleagles we called them — and watching as they scooped salads into containers before our eyes. The deli man — back then it was always a man — cut the nova nice and thin and told us what was good and what was not and how the lady down the street was doing.

The deep discounter influence may nudge the industry toward cheaper options. That is a gain for the consumer, but a loss as well.

DB



James J. Prevor



www.labonneviecheese.com

by Lee Smith, Publisher

Radical Changes in Thinking

Yogurt was only the beginning. What started as adding some *Lactobacillus* bacteria to our diet is now on the verge of changing not only our food, but our medicines as well. Antibiotics may well be on the way out and bacteria on the way in.

We are a vast, complex, symbiotic organism of human cells and microbes. There are trillions of microbes living on and in the human body. Only one in ten cells that make up what we call humans are, well, human in origin.

These foreign cells are not the invaders we once thought they were. Instead, they are such an integral part of life that we would die without them. Our gut bacteria encode enzymes and digest foods, releasing vital nutrients. We have unique microbial communities on our skin, lungs, etc.

Clostridium difficile infection causes severe problems, often ongoing even when aggressively treated with antibiotics. New medicine is treating this debilitating disease with transfusing gut bacteria from a healthy person's fecal matter to restore the intestinal tract. So, instead of being the enemy, most microbes are normal, healthy and acting to keep our immune systems in check.

Where do our little friends come from? Science now shows us that babies first dose of microbes comes directly from mom, although not in the way we thought. When birth is imminent, the bacteria in the birth canal start to explode in number while the number of species diminishes.

The mucus the newborn is coated in is a bacterial wash that imparts a baby's first dose of beneficial bacteria. Mothers become microbial powerhouses, building the microbial community in their babies.

Contrary to recent beliefs, when all mothers ran around trying to sterilize the environment with anti-microbial wipes, sprays and disinfectants, kids need exposure to germs and children raised in sterile homes are more likely to be unhealthy. They need to play in the dirt and maybe eat the occasional worm and mud pie to grow up healthy with thriving immune systems.

One solution is to eat foods that are high in probiotics — live microorganisms that, when

administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host. The first food many people think of is yogurt with living cultures. However, there are many other foods that add probiotics to our diet and our gut.

How does this relate to the deli department?

The first issue to keep in mind is consumers are becoming more aware of the benefits of probiotics — there is a tremendous amount of research being done that is producing dynamic findings and doctors are jumping on the bandwagon.

At the recent American Cheese Society Conference, Dr. Mark Windt announced his new company, The Probiotic Cheese Company, is ready to begin selling a line of probiotic cheese curds.

There was also a two-part seminar about the use of wooden shelves for aging cheese as well as the general use of wood for cutting boards and counters. Wood, which will develop its own bacterial colony, helps keep pathogens under control solving the conundrum of why wood seems to harbor fewer pathogens than plastic.

There are other foods that also are known for their beneficial microbes — fermented foods, such as cheese, pickles, yogurts, salami and cured meats, common deli items that are growing in popularity.

While the growth of probiotic dense products is rapidly growing, very shortly there will be other issues on the table to discuss. How to encourage good bacteria and also be ever vigilant about keeping pathogens at bay is going to pose both scientific and philosophical debates.

As with all new research, there will be skepticism by many professionals. And, of course, the understanding of how the human body is a conglomeration of human and non-human organisms will not eliminate the need for great sanitation and HACCP programs, much less the need to control pathogens.

Stay tuned — this is just the beginning of a new age of science.

DB



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DELIS CAN SCORE AN A-PLUS IN BACK-TO-SCHOOL SALES

Consumers go all in, to the tune of \$72 B when it comes to shopping for kids

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

The back-to-school (BTS) shopping season ranks second only to the winter holidays in the amount of money spent on primary school through college-age students.

That figure totaled \$72 billion in 2014, according to the National Retail Federation, a Washington, DC-based organization whose June 2015 report, "Spending Plans for Back-to-School Shopping Season," also found more than 80 percent of consumers plan to spend the same or more this year.

Clothes, electronics and backpacks all vie for shopper's dollars. But lunchboxes and the foods they contain are important too for the 43.5 percent of U.S. 5- to 18-year olds who don't participate in the National School Lunch Program. During the back-to-school season, retail delis have the opportunity to be more than just a place that sells products — they also can be a solution provider for mothers.

"The deli should position itself as a destination for BTS and draw mom's attention here first rather than center store," says

Greg Greene, marketing director for the Sabra Dipping Co., LLC, in Colonial Heights, VA. "This offers benefits for moms of not having to cherry pick products aisle by aisle for their children's lunches, but instead find everything they need in one department. Use circular ads to catch parents' attention before shopping and signage to show them all the solutions in the deli."

Quality food that they can trust, convenience and the knowledge that kids will actually eat what's packed are key points parents voiced in the 2012-released "What's In Your Kid's Lunch" survey, sponsored by Applegate, the Bridgewater, NJ-headquartered provider of natural and organic meats. As of July, all of Applegate products, which encompass deli meats to chicken nuggets, will be free of genetically modified ingredients. In addition, the brand's animals will be raised humanely, antibiotic-free and vegetarian-fed.

"What we're seeing is that nutrition concerns are encompassing broader issues, like how food is made and produced, so things like preservatives, use of antibiotics and clean ingredient statements are of concern," says Michael Krishnan, Applegate's director of innovation. "Value is important, but in context of other key factors like quality and whether the product is something that will actually be eaten. It's not a value if the lunchbox comes home everyday with the food still inside."

Gaining Loyal Shoppers

Here are ways delis can maximize sales and gain loyal shoppers at BTS time and throughout the school year:

Build a BTS Destination. The big BTS push should start in mid-August, open strong and be ongoing, recommends Deborah Seife, general manager for marketing at Norseland, Inc., in Darien, CT. "Showing a display of assorted lunchboxes, open and packed with sandwiches or wraps, including bottles of water and fruit, would be perfect as a way to promote specific brands and sandwiches as well as help to take the guess work out of mom's busy day."

"Use colorful graphics to offer specific ideas on how to build a sandwich or entire lunchbox meal. Or run a contest asking moms to share their favorite lunchbox meals and reward the winner with food prizes and share their winning recipe on social media. Jarlsberg brand cheese also offers BTS promotions, including a weekly



PHOTO COURTESY OF GIORDANO

point-of-sale promotion to win a free mini tablet. The point-of-sale materials from Jarlsberg are a great tool for all delis to utilize to drive more BTS business in the deli section," says Seife.

Eighty percent of parents responding to Applegate's "What's In Your Kid's Lunch" survey said sandwiches or wraps were the top item they packed in their children's lunches.

"Our deli meats are perfect for operators to use to make premade sandwiches," says Jay Holt, senior vice president of sales at Columbus Foods, Inc., in Hayward, CA. "Our whole-cut slices aren't combined with water and gelatin that can make bread soggy. Reduced Sodium Honey Ham and Mild Cheddar between honey wheat bread slices make a healthy sandwich that satisfies kids' desire for sweetness."

Kid-Favorite Sandwich Fillings

"Millennials are driving demand for new flavor profiles," says Justine Giordano, director of marketing and regional sales manager for the Vincent Giordano Corp., in Philadelphia, PA. "For example, Italian Roast Beef has expanded in popularity beyond the city limits of Chicago, and Cajun Roast Beef is popular throughout the southern United States."

Oven roasted, honey and smoked are the top-selling deli meat turkey flavors, says Chris Dixon, marketing manager for Foster Farms, in Livingston, CA. "We introduced an all-natural line of turkey breast products in Raley's, Safeway and Albertsons on the West Coast this summer. This line contains no preservatives or hormones, is 35 percent lower in sodium, and is single-packed in 8-ounce semi-rigid black trays for a nice presentation. These are the meats moms can feel good about serving to their kids."

Make Sandwiches More Attractive

"Deli sandwiches premade on our soft Bavarian-style pretzel twists and sticks are a cool, fun, nontraditional way to appeal to kids. These products are also ideal for small hands," says Sandra Zanette, director of marketing and business development for Bäckerhaus Veit Ltd., in Mississauga, ON.

Pick-and-choose is a great way to merchandise BTS sandwiches.

"For example, the deli could take wraps with different fillings and cut them into pinwheels. Then, offer a choice of four assorted pinwheels for \$3 and allow kids to choose what they like from a variety of fillings showcased behind the glass," says Laura Fuentes, a New Orleans,



cooler similar to a store's pre-made sushi coolers or on the lowest level of the cooler case, says Columbus Foods' Holt. "If your display is at the same eye level as children walking with their parents, kids will help make their parents' decision easy for them by grabbing the item first and asking the parents if they can have it or sneaking it in the cart themselves."

Mix & Match Fixings

Everyone knows that kids love to play with their food. "Kraft Food's Lunchables broke the barrier for this," says Warren Stoll, global marketing and business development manager for Paterson, NJ-based Kontos Foods, Inc., manufacturer and distribution of traditional Greek and Mediterranean foods. "Today, moms want to create their own snack-style lunches that are healthy and great-tasting. One ingredient perfect for this is our 2-inch diameter cocktail flatbreads. They can be merchandised in a shipper in front of the service deli or next to the cold case with pre-sliced meats, cheeses, dips, fruits and vegetables."

LA-based recipe developer for companies such as Sabra. Fuentes also is the author of "The Best Homemade Kids Lunches on the Planet," and founder of MOMables,

a website that helps parents make fresh school lunches for their kids.

The most effective way to merchandise BTS meals is to put them in a display

cocktail flatbreads. They can be merchandised in a shipper in front of the service deli or next to the cold case with pre-sliced meats, cheeses, dips, fruits and vegetables."



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TOP TIPS TO ATTRACT MOMS TO THE DELI



Kids like fresh foods made to order for them. Parents consider these items more healthful than packaged snacks. It's no wonder the deli has a real opportunity to market to families at back-to-school time.

"Concepts that score the best with kids in testing we've done are bite size, customizable and can be eaten throughout the day," says Sharon Olson, president of Chicago, IL-based Olson Communications and executive director of Y-Pulse LLC, a youth trend tracking organization that provides insights on tomorrow's tastemakers.

Here are additional tips based on a variety of Y-Pulse studies to attract moms to the deli for their lunchbox fixings:

1. Healthy and customizable deli items are key to success for a back-to-school deli program.
2. Provide freshness cues with merchandising. Examples include signage that entices with words like fresh, seasonal, local, housemade and chef inspired.
3. Make lunch choices interactive. Dipping concepts are popular because they give kids an opportunity to enjoy the playfulness of healthful foods.
4. Kids like ethnic foods, especially Mexican and Italian. Chicken and pizza are kids' favorite meals at restaurants. Keep this in mind when creating out-of-the-box lunchbox suggestions.
5. Offer fun, kid-friendly packaging. This doesn't mean cute and adorable for young kids; the majority of kids like to eat more like grown-ups.

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Single-serve packaging makes it easy for moms to pick up several items for snack-style lunches and for the deli to reap multiple rings.

"Put one or two bite-sized Jarlsberg Minis or Jarlsberg Lite Minis into a compartmental box and pair with green grapes, carrots, salami and some crackers for a child. Visually, it is colorful and fun for children to pick and choose what to eat first," says Norseland's Seife.

Another idea for moms is to create mini skewers with grape tomatoes, prosciutto and individually wrapped, easy-open 1-ounce packages of Fresh Mozzarella Snacking Cheese, manufactured by BelGioioso Cheese Inc., in Green Bay, WI.

"Or include a few packs in a lunchbox with cut melon, cured meats, grapes and crackers," recommends Jamie Wichlacz, BelGioioso's marketing manager.

In August the Sabra Dipping Co. launches its Pizza Hummus Singles, 2-ounce containers that sell in a 6-pack and pair well with pita chips and vegetables for a mini meal or snack.

"We have also added Classic Guacamole Singles in 2-ounce 4-count packs to our line," says Sabra's Greene.

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, based in Ward Hill, MA, offers a variety of single-serve snacks. These include 3-ounce packs of Tzatziki Yogurt Dip with Pretzels, Mild Salsa with Tortilla Chips and Classic Hummus with Hummus Chips.

"Ways to draw moms to the deli for these products include coupons, advertisements in a chain's BTS guide or ad circular, in-store displays and demos, and loyalty programs in which shoppers receive notifications in vehicles like monthly newsletters and mailings of new products. The power of social media is endless today with mom bloggers, Facebook giveaways, and Instagram shots of lunchbox pairings with the appropriate hashtags," says Aimee Tsakirellis, Cedar's director of marketing.

Make It Easy For Moms

"Cross-merchandise bread, meats, cheeses, pickles, lettuce and other foods in one section to help moms put all the pieces of the lunch puzzle together. You can even advertise, for example, a mix-and-match pick five items for one price promotion," says Bäckerhaus Veit's Zanette.

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crackers were among the deli items vendors offered as samples to families attending Back-to-School Fairs held at select locations of Jewel-Osco, a 185-store chain headquartered in the Chicago suburb of Itasca, IL. These fairs, held annually in August in celebration of Back-to-School and National Kids Eat Right Month, are three-hours long, held on Thursday evenings or during the day on Saturdays and Sundays. Eight to 10 vendors typically attend, the chain's supermarket dietitian hosts store tours, and community organizations, such as the local YMCA, participate by hosting fun interactive hula hoop and jump rope games. Coupons, raffle prizes and giveaways add to the fun.

"I create a handout for parents on how to pack a healthful lunch. This we give out during the fairs as well as post on our social media sites like Facebook and Twitter," says Molly Bray, Jewel-Osco's community registered dietitian.

Don't forget college students, says Cedar's Mediterranean Foods' Tsakirellis. "We participate in College Night promotions with retailers. After all, these are the next wave of household purchasers." **DB**



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TAILGATING OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO SCORE BIG

Marketing easy-to-eat comfort foods drive sales

BY MARK HAMSTRA

Retail delis can score a touch-down with tailgaters by making it easy for party-throwers to field a winning line-up of comfort foods.

"Appetizers and party favorites are most popular at tailgates," says Robert "Bobby" Yarborough, chief executive of Manda Fine Meats, Baton Rouge, LA, which offers a variety of sausages, deli meats and specialty Cajun meats. "Tailgaters enjoy showcasing a few different recipes and like to entertain by having a variety of foods to choose from. It also allows them to invite friends or even strangers over to their tailgate to share their food."

Yarborough is a member of the third generation at his family-owned company. He says smaller, individual-sized appetizers make great fare for football parties, whether they are pre-game warm-up gatherings in stadium parking lots or festive, at-home celebrations in front of the television.

"You can substitute sliders for hamburgers, or as we like to do in south Louisiana, make mini muffulettas instead of full-sized muffulettas," says Yarborough. "Finger-sized sandwiches and appetizer-sized meals are popular. Promote these ideas, and let the customers see that they can replace their normal hamburgers with sliders."

Flavorful meats can easily become the centerpiece of a winning fall football gathering, says Dan Estridge, founder and chief flavor officer at NYDP, a Westford, MA-based purveyor of artisan meats for both high-end foodservice and retail in the Northeast.

"When the weather turns cold, I've always thought a whole, richly-marbled navel pastrami or corned beef brisket steamed, or slow-smoked and hand-carved makes for the ultimate tailgate party," he says. "Really great pastrami has everything football needs — beef, spice, smoke, fat, testosterone — what could be more football?"

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NYDP counts among its customers some upscale specialty retailers, in addition to supplying the high-volume Demoula's Market Basket supermarket chain in New England.

Estridge says NYDP has done some Super Bowl-related promotions featuring navel pastramis and high-quality corned-beef briskets, but — given the high cost of beef and the trend toward leaner meats — fewer and fewer mainstream retailers

seem to be carrying those items. This presents an opportunity for retailers seeking to distinguish themselves in the market with a high-quality offering, he notes.

Of course, no tailgating menu is complete without chili, and delis can make it easy for tailgaters to grab this all-American favorite by offering party-sized options and promoting them for football parties.

"For some reason, chili has become synonymous with tailgating," says Bob



Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA. "Even in New England, where chowder is king, chili seems to be the product people associate with football and tailgating."

Blount specializes in high-quality refrigerated and frozen soups, sauces, side dishes and entrées, and in fact claims to be the largest producer of clam chowder in New England, and the largest maker of lobster bisque in the country. "But this does not stop us from making awesome beef chili, and chicken tortilla or organic tomato soup," the company says on its website.

Chili remains a popular option for tailgaters in part because of its versatility as a main dish, side dish or topping, says Sewall.

"Chili can go on hot dogs and all kinds of things, and it can be served with cheese on it to make it a meal," he says.

Another popular option for tailgaters is macaroni and cheese, says Sewall.

"Football is the all-American sport, and I don't think anything is more American than mac and cheese," he says. "It goes with hamburgers, hot dogs, steak — it is the all-American comfort food."

For serious New England-style tailgaters, Blount even offers a lobster mac and cheese, made with North Atlantic lobster meat and Vermont Cheddar cheese.

"In New England, we are lobster crazy," says Sewall. "A lot of our retailers have it. You see it at a lot of the upscale tailgate parties. It's one of those special occasion items."

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Promoting Tailgate Parties

One way retail delis can promote their tailgating solutions is to partner with their suppliers to develop merchandising ideas.

"Many times, you will see big brands partner with the retailer to provide consumers with ideas for creating the ultimate spread, special contests, or sales," says Sarah Babb, senior brand manager, foodservice, at Johnsonville Sausage in Sheboygan Falls, WI.

Babb notes bundling strategies are often popular and effective. Sautéed onions are consumers' most popular sausage topping, followed by mustard and cheese, according to Johnsonville research.

"We share these findings with our customers, and suggest pairing our protein offering with produce, which can be great for boosting sales of both items," says Babb, noting "sweet onions make the perfect pairing for sausage on the grill."

Creating displays featuring sports themes, team colors and/or logos also can help attract attention and boost sales, she says.

"Successful tailgating promotions require thinking outside the box," says Babb. "These events are no longer limited to stadium parking lots, but also include home parties and viewing events."

"Bundling sausages, buns, condiments and themed desserts, for example, prompts shoppers to consider celebrating a big game in the comfort of their own home with family and friends."

Overall, tailgating promotions should be "simple, turnkey and of value for the consumer," says Babb.

Attention-grabbing merchandising also is important to driving sales of tailgating supplies in the deli.

"Consumers often purchase deli items with their eyes," says Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development at Don's Food Products, the Schwenksville, PA-based maker of salads, spreads, dips and other products.

Don's grain salads, for example, provide "eye-popping" color and variety, he says,

and can be promoted in the deli case leading up to the game.

Healthful Options

While tailgate feasts often feature indulgent fare, party hosts increasingly are taking into account the health and nutrition concerns of their guests.

"Healthier options are clearly on people's minds, and some retailers are paying attention," says Estridge of NYDP.

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"Platters featuring all-natural meats raised without antibiotics together with appealing vegetable sides are moving. And if you have meats tasty enough to eat without fattening and high-sodium condiments and tender enough to slice thick or julienne, then that's a huge step up from the usual."

NYDP is seeing increased demand for more healthful all-natural and lower-sodium meat offerings, he says. He

suggests delis build "chef's-salad" platters, or cross-merchandise with other healthful vegetable-based items such as hummus, guacamole, bean salads, potatoes, and baked beans.

Patrick Ford, international marketing director at Ford's Gourmet Foods, in Raleigh, NC, which makes sauces, seasonings and other products — including the Bone Suckin' line — says he's noticed

tailgaters are ever more concerned about dietary restrictions and other factors when selecting ingredients for their parties.

"We are seeing a lot of all-natural offerings as well as allergen considerations in tailgating sales," he says. "Healthful options are skyrocketing as consumers become more aware of the benefits of eating all-natural foods."

Media coverage of these topics has been helping to educate consumers, as is marketing by the brands themselves, says Ford.

"There are a couple of different ways to go with a healthier option," notes Sewall of Blount Fine Foods, who says he has "absolutely" seen increasing demand for more healthful options for tailgating. "You can go with a turkey chili, that has 50 percent of the fat and calories of the beef chili, and we also have an organic vegetable chili that is really driven toward that healthy eater for tailgating. It's full of great vegetables, so it's filling as well."

Don's Food Products touts an array of products that are all-natural and have a healthful bent, including all-natural pico de gallo and all-natural bruschetta, plus an assortment of grain-based salads that include Mediterranean Quinoa Salad, Wheatberry Salad and Seven Grain Salad.

"They are bursting with bold flavors and good for you," says Cappelli.

Babb of Johnsonville points out that while tailgate events generally call for more indulgent "party" fare, some offerings can combine the best of both worlds, with indulgent items mixed in with more healthful foods.

"By providing a balance of healthful and indulgent items, delis can maintain

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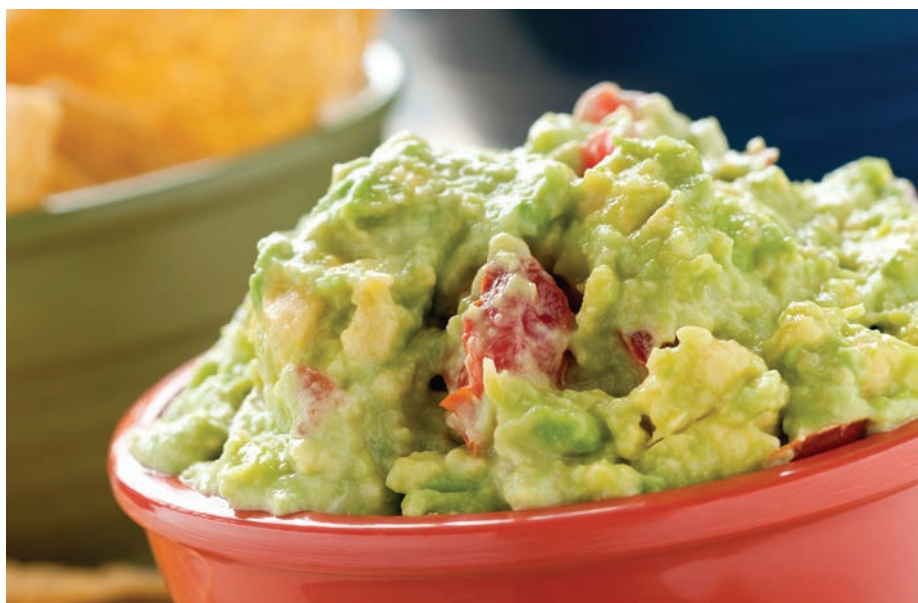
that level of great party food, and not let guests feel like they are missing out," she says. "For example, topping a pizza with Johnsonville Brat slices and loads of veggies is a great way to provide the balance consumers are looking for. Sausage is a great way to add flavor; a little can have significant impact on a dish."

Likewise, Yarborough of Manda Fine Meats says he's seen more healthful options mixed in at tailgating events.

"We are seeing a lot more fruit, cheese and vegetable options on the tailgating tab under categories like "entertaining," "tailgating" or "Super Bowl parties" for example, to see what consumers are interested in.

"There might be some inspiration there to bring into the retail setting," she says. "It's key to building up momentum days prior to a big game, as this can prompt consumers to consider tailgating and the appropriate menu items to serve."

Sewall of Blount Fine Foods notes tailgating and football-themed parties represent an important, recurring weekly opportunity for deli operators.



"The great thing about football is it starts in August and runs through the Super Bowl, so it's a great, long-term opportunity," he says. "And it's not just tailgating — it's people sitting around that TV watching America's sport.

"If you are not specifically marketing

products for tailgating, you are missing a great opportunity," says Sewall. "Thanksgiving and Christmas are one weekend a year each, but when you think about tailgating, it is literally six months of the year, and you have to take advantage of that."

DB

▶ PLATTERS CALL FOR EXTRA EFFORTS

BY MARK HAMSTRA

Party platters can provide an exceptional opportunity for deli operators during football season, but retailers need to make it as easy as possible for their customers to incorporate these offerings into their spreads for the big game.

This is especially true when retailers are seeking to attract new customers, says Bobby Yarborough, chief executive of Manda Fine Meats in Baton Rouge, LA.

"Most customers purchasing party platters go to the same deli and order the same platters. They know what to do. New customers do not," he says. "Promote your party platters not only by the

product, but also by how to order — how much time notice, what are the options, what are the costs, and who to speak to at the deli to order."

In addition, he suggests that retailers "get creative" with their party platters, and give customers a range of ideas.

"Replace your sandwich with a wrap, replace your potato chips with a cheese and cracker assortment," says Yarborough. "Let the customer try different breads, meats, cheeses and condiments."

Demonstrations are also an effective tool to promote platters, says Dan Estridge, founder and chief flavor officer of NYDP, Westford, MA.

"We do a lot of demonstrations in our retailer's stores, and we often combine our all-natural meats with other healthy offerings to show platters," he says. "It's a great way to introduce new items, and a great way to help customers see new ways to use familiar items. Creative deli managers and vendors who provide strong demo programs can produce great lift."

Estridge suggests deli managers focus on "themes" to promote platters.

"Whether it's all-natural, or Italian, New Orleans, Mexican, or whatever, if your assortment and accessories convey a clear idea deliciously, customers get excited," he says.

Bob Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA, notes retailers also need to think about merchandising side dishes to go with their platters.

"Retailers can package mac and cheese and chilis to go with those types of platters," he says. "

(Continues on page 30)



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▶ PLATTERS CALL FOR EXTRA EFFORTS *continued*

Especially when it is colder, these hot dishes are comfort foods, and they will do better than the meat platters."

Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development at Don's Food Products, the Schwenksville, PA-based maker of salads, spreads, dips and other products, suggests sandwiches for tailgate parties can include salads and dips as either an accompaniment or an ingredient. "For example, Don's Grains on a wrap, or Don's Buffalo Chicken Dip as a dip or on a Buffalo chicken wrap," he says.

The ubiquity of large-screen televisions and the widespread availability of broadcast games also have made watching from home more popular than ever, says Yarborough of Manda Fine Meats.

"And don't forget first-class outdoor kitchens are very popular," he says. "So fans can now stay home and entertain a few friends and enjoy the game in comfort, and enjoy cooking their favorite party meals with a lot less work."

Sarah Babb, senior brand manager, foodservice, at Johnsonville Sausage, Sheboygan Falls, WI, notes with the price of tickets skyrocketing, fans increasingly are likely to organize parties at home surrounding the game.

"This is an opportunity for delis to expand tailgating displays to include not only protein items such as sausages, but also various items to create a toppings bar, as these home-based parties may feature a burger bar, a taco bar, pizza buffet, etc.," she says. "Consumers like to create, mix-and-match. This was the inspira-

tion behind our toppings display that we now offer. Along with the requisite grilled onions and pickles to accompany a grilled sausage item, the display can include different types of cheese from the deli, fresh vegetables, a variety of mustard and other spreads, maximizing the department's incremental sales for home-viewing parties around a sporting event."

And retailers should not forget to merchandise utensils with their platters and other offerings, says Peggy Cross, founder of EcoTensil in Corte Madera, CA.

"For tailgating or picnic-style platters, a little Ziploc bag of sturdy paperboard EcoSpoons or EcoTasters — similar material to a coffee cup — can be easily included for spreads and scoop-able deli salads," she says. "These can be pre-packed in different volumes, and take up almost no space in the back of store. They can also be pre-stuffed with napkins, then quickly, slipped into any to-go container."

In addition, Cross says EcoTasters can be branded with a retailer or manufacturer's logo, "so the retailer or manufacturer can be merchandising their brand or message miles from the store."

Cappelli of Don's Food Products adds that when merchandising for tailgate parties, retailers would do well not to forget dessert.

"Don's offer several flavors of dessert mousse," including Chocolate Cookie, Peanut Butter, and Pumpkin, he says. "Fill a cannoli shell for a unique crunch/sweet dessert on game day. Or let your fans dip into Don's dessert mousse with cookies." **DB**



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CUTTING-EDGE PACKAGING OPTIONS

Innovations and updated technologies have resulted in more sustainable options

BY LISA WHITE

In retail, a first impression can mean the difference between a sale or a walk-by. With manufacturing innovations, packaging for supermarket deli products has come a long way in recent years, which could help prompt a sale.

As many more municipalities are striving for zero waste, packaging manufacturers are raising the bar in terms of sustainable packaging offerings.

With environmentally friendly materials, more sustainable options and components that enhance merchandising and eye appeal, retailers can mix and match for prepared foods, grab-and-go items and food bars.

"The pendulum keeps going back and forth, and people try different things like



containers, bags for merchandising and stacking,” says Dave Fosse, director of marketing, key accounts, at Lindar Corp., based in Baxter, MN. “Today’s containers are easier to eat out of and transport, since the focus is on convenience.”

New Versus Traditional

Despite new technologies, however, traditional packaging materials are still mainstays in the deli, with many providing desirable attributes offered by newer versions.

For example, glass is sustainable, provides product visibility and can be easily reused for later use.

Farmingdale, NY-based L&S Packing Co. manufactures glass jars used for sauces, pickles, olives, mushrooms and condiments. Vacuum-sealed for added freshness, they are available in a variety of size options.

“In terms of packaging for resale, people are looking for more environmentally friendly options,” says Bob Bova, vice president, business development, at Paper Pak Industries, based in La Verne, CA. “This not only comes with downsides and cost, but certain markets are regulating it, and there are performance issues.”

Paper Pak Industries supplies delis with absorbent pads that help filter air in deli cases. These products are made from recycled fibers utilizing a sustainable method.

The company also provides compostable pads for markets that have the ability to compost.

“Until consumers push for more benefits or until volume is at the point where costs can come down, it’s hard to justify the price for some types of sustainable packaging,” says Bova. “It’s also important to look

at the entire cycle, not just the cycle of the product, as we push for packaging changes and environmentally safe issues.”

It is an environmental conundrum. Approximately 32 million tons of plastic is discarded in landfills every year, which takes about 1,000 years to decompose.

Bioplastic Innovations

The bioplastics industry has made inroads to reduce dependence on non-renewable resources. Still, there are many issues that have come to light about these materials. First, pesticides and high-energy use is needed in growing and converting the plant matter feedstock to polymer. Also, because a utensil is made from plant matter, or claims to be biodegradable, does not mean it is compostable. Finally, compost facilities cannot tell the difference between plastics and bioplastic utensils, so the vast majority of bioplastics end up in land-fill alongside the plastic utensils these were intended to replace.

Bioplastics end up in landfills, which is proof that there is no one-size-fits-all answer in terms of the best packaging material.

“While bioplastics are compostable in industrial facilities, 90 percent of the dense bioplastic utensils do not break down in the requisite 180 days and, therefore, this becomes landfill,” says Peggy Cross, founder and chief executive of San Francisco, CA-based Ecotensil. “Although there has been a big push

towards bioplastics, right now this material is better but not that much better, because it starts from a better place, but doesn’t end in a good place.”

Another option is bio-based material made from plant matter, which is a non-sustainable resource that is sturdy but not recyclable.

Clear Lam Packaging in Elk Grove Village, IL, is a manufacturer of bio-based resins made from sustainable resources. Its bio-based rigid rollstock in a PET offering is made from sugarcane and a Polylactic acid (PLA) product produced from corn, both sustainable resources. These lines reduce dependency on traditional petroleum-based plastics, while delivering clarity, durability and formability.

The rigid rollstock is used in the deli department as a rigid container, while the company’s thermoformed trays can incorporate Clear Lam’s Peel and ReSeal lidding film system. This replaces rigid lids and reduces the amount of plastic used, making it more sustainable.

“The Peel and ReSeal is delivered on rolls, which takes up less space on a truck and in a warehouse than rigid lids,” says James Foster, senior marketing manager for Clear Lam. “This means fewer trucks can be used to deliver the materials, [which lowers the carbon footprint].”

Anchor Packaging, based in Ballwin, MO, also has focused on the sustainability of its plastic packaging.

Its PETE containers and lids contain a minimum of 10 percent FDA-approved, post-consumer recycled content. Many of its polypropylene products and all of those developed in recent years contain 40 percent less petroleum-based resin.

Its PETE and polypropylene take-out packaging can be recycled curbside, and the company recycles almost 100 percent of its raw materials.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATURE'S BEST

"The crystal clear PETE lids provide maximum food visibility to drive impulse sales from grab-and-go displays," says Marilyn Stapleton, Anchor Packaging's director of marketing. "Chilled, ready to reheat prepared meals can be packaged in microwavable containers with the clear PETE lids." Most packages also offer polypropylene lids with integral anti-fog coating.

Unlike flexible bags and pouches, rigid packaging protects the food presentation and allows products to be stacked on display and in the bag. This packaging includes leak-resistant closures, high temperature performance and food visibility in one-piece hinged and two-piece bases and lids.

Responding to the sustained high protein prices experienced by supermarket operators, Anchor created a roaster with a shallow base. This raises the bird higher in the dome, eliminating the empty space when high protein prices force a reduction in the size of bird being merchandised. Bases are made with 40-percent natural mineral additives in place of oil-based resin, thereby reducing the carbon footprint. The lid and base are both reusable and recyclable.

The company's WAVE series 9-inch-by-6-inch containers have new PP and RPET dome lids. Containers are made

with a natural mineral additive, reducing the use of petroleum-based resin by 40 percent. RPET flat and dome lids are made with FDA-approved post-consumer recycled content. All bases and lids can be recycled curbside.

Forest Stewardship Council-certified paper stock products — which ensure products come from responsibly managed forests that provide environmental, social and economic benefits — are the gold standard in terms of sustainability, but not all paper products are created equal. And paper that is food contaminated, although unrecyclable, can be composted.

When looking at packaging sustainability, it's important to consider how the manufacturing process starts and also the options for used material. Another factor is whether the packaging type impacts carbon emissions in terms of shipping.

"Plastic minimizes food waste in the middle of life, but at end of life, a closed loop circle, or recycling, is most preferable," says Cross. "Composting also is a good end life, but it's important to make the process easy to close the loop or do the right thing."

Looking To The Future

Ecotensil's goal is to find recyclable, compostable material for its utensil line.

"Right now, it's very expensive,

although we use much less material, so these products are more sustainable in that regard," says Cross.

Compostable is a legal term referring to products that have been tested and proven to break down in a compost facility within 180 days.

"Compost facilities aren't accepting plastic or bioplastic because they can't distinguish what's compostable," says Cross. "It costs a lot of money to have material certified compostable, so this packaging is typically labeled as such."

Fitchburg, WI-based Placon's thermoformed packaging lines consist of PP deli containers and chicken roasters, while its PET lines contain up to 100 percent post-consumer recycled PET from bottles and thermoforms.

"Injection molded containers are great for cold deli foods like pasta salads as well as for hot foods like soup, and are reusable, microwave-reheatable and dishwasher-safe," says Laura Stewart, Placon's vice president of sales and marketing.

Placon's EcoStar post-consumer recycled PET are recyclable and made from consumer-discarded and then recycled PET bottles and thermoforms.

"We're vertically integrated, so we actually purchase bales of thermoforms, wash, recycle, extrude and thermoform the packaging in-house," says Stewart. "We're currently using 10 to 15 percent thermoforms in our recycled PET rollstock blend."

Despite the number of alternative packaging materials available, plastic still dominates due to properties that make it preferable for food container use.

"We know that PET plastic packaging may not get the best rap or be the most ideal material, but plastics are, and will be utilized for a variety of packaging applications into the future because of its valuable properties," says Melissa Jacobson, Placon's marketing manager. "So what we strive to do is recycle the plastic that already exists and reuse it, turning it back into plastic packaging and diverting it from landfills."

Although deli packaging has come a long way, there is still room for advancement in terms of sustainability from material sourcing to its end life. As technologies continue to improve, there will be more options for retailers in the years ahead.

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF PLACON



HOLIDAY BUYING: MAKE IT FESTIVE BUT SIMPLE

Consumers want premium quality, with the least time and trouble

BY BOB JOHNSON

The holidays are the time many consumers are willing to open their wallets a little wider for something special. This holiday mood can help to boost sales of large Bella di Cerignola olives, sinfully rich Delice de Bourgogne cheese, and mac and cheese enhanced with a generous portion of lobster.

But the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day also can be frantic for shoppers, and the deli has a role to play in helping them relax and enjoy what makes the season special. Consumers don't want to spend all of their time shopping; they want to spend it with friends and family. The deli has an opportunity to offer foods that are unique and special, while at the same time saving customers' precious time.

"Retailers should be giving their customers all the tools necessary to create easy and beautiful antipasti platters," says Brandon Gross, director of marketing at FoodMatch, in New York, NY. Cheese should be cross-merchandised with olives and antipasti like roasted tomatoes, artichokes, and mushrooms; spreads such as fig and sour cherry; and fresh bread or crackers. Charcuterie, nuts and dips like hummus or salsa are also great. The key is giving consumers a roadmap to what pairs well from a taste and visual perspective, he says.

Festive Solutions

The deli does well to display eye-catching special but easy solutions to the questions of how to entertain, or how to host a family dinner.

"Everyone knows the deli department is the first stop for holiday entertainment, so make it count," says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at George DeLallo Co., which sells Italian specialty foods, in Mt. Pleasant, PA. "No matter how amazing your products are, innovative and efficient cross-merchandising is key to a successful holiday season in the deli. While olives and antipasti are popular year-round, the holiday season is an opportunity to inspire the consumer with new ideas for their favorite flavors."

An important aspect of the appeal of special cheese companions is visual — they look festive.

"Customers are after unique, eye-catching antipasti," says Pozzuto. "We see a large spike in Bella di Cerignola sales during the holidays. These enormous

Italian olives are mild, buttery and available in fun, festive colors, like our signature Red & Green Bella di Cerignola mix. Olive medleys and salads are also a hit with their colorful, eye-catching ingredients.”

Even simple but premium spreads can add to the festive feel of a cheese or appetizer platter.

“We find the holidays are a particularly strong time for our cheese condiments, spreads and bruschetta,” says Gross. “Items like Dalmatia Fig Spread and Divina Olive Bruschetta fly off the shelves during the holidays as shoppers want simple but elevated dips and appetizers. They’re almost like ‘little luxuries’ — high-end ingredients that won’t break the bank but are sure to impress.”

An elegant platter solution can be as simple as a good pairing of fine cheese and olives.

“From Gouda and Cheddar to Parmigiano-Reggiano, cheeses are a natural complement to the bold, briny, tart, bitter, tangy, sweet and smoky flavors

found at the olive bar,” says Pozzuto. “It’s all about the harmony of flavors and textures. For instance, the irresistible tang and crunch of our new cornichon medleys are an amazing accent to creamy, earthy Camembert. Likewise, bold and tart Greek olives, like the Calamata or the Halkidiki, perfectly pair up with Feta or Ricotta Salata.”

The presentation of cheese and companion foods can offer consumers a quick and elegant solution to their shopping problems.

“The holiday season is a busy time for us all, this includes the consumer. That’s why convenient, grab-and-go entertaining items are at the peak of popularity during this time,” says Pozzuto. “Olives and antipasti offer both convenience and gourmet appeal — a win-win for customers. The holidays are a great time to expand your olive bar’s line up of marinated Mediterranean goodies and also to offer larger party-sized trays for filling up with their favorites.”

For many consumers the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day are also the time of year to add a taste of the best the deli has to offer to festive dinners.

“The holidays are time for good quality, higher priced items,” says Bob Sewall, executive vice president for sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA. “It’s a great time to put out nice stuff. People are a little freer with their pocketbooks at the holidays. They will spend more money and buy better quality.”

Blount finds consumers are willing to pay more during the holidays to add a delicious seafood touch to a cheesy side dish staple.

“We do a lobster macaroni and cheese with real New England lobster taking up 20 percent of it,” says Sewall. “It’s more expensive because of the lobster, but we sell a ton of it during the holidays. Our peak selling time for lobster bisque is also during the holiday season.”

There may be more than the usual extravagance if a few extra calories are the price of a mouthful of elegance.

“People really like to indulge at the holidays, so creamy rich cheeses are always a great sell,” says Rachel Perez, national business development manager at French Cheese Club, a U.S. marketing firm for six family-owned French dairies. “Triple creams like Delice de Bourgogne are real crowd pleasers and cheeses like Epoisses are great for the more adventurous cheese eaters.”

Simple dishes can be made more festive with a touch of a special cheese found only at the deli.

“Truffle cheeses are always a great sell during the holidays,” says Perez. “A little bit of truffle cheese can enhance many dishes, shaved on top of green beans or added to a potato gratin, for example.”

There are more options than ever for conveniently packaged and attractively displayed deli side dishes.

“One of the things we’re doing is packing sides in bowls with a 70-day shelf life,” says Sewall. “Macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, butternut squash and broccoli. It takes down the perishability having 70-day shelf life. Sides can be sold with rotisserie chicken every day.”

These sides are refrigerated, never frozen, and are available in sizes specifically suited for large family dinners.

“We small-batch cook and chill fast,”



says Sewall. "It's always refrigerated, never frozen. Before it would just be soups everyday; now you can have a number of side dishes everyday. We can do them in 16-ounce or 32-ounce containers for the holidays with a private label, like 'Raley's Thanksgiving.'"

The season kicks off with an opportunity to entice consumers with an elegant but convenient Thanksgiving dinner solution.

"You see more kits during the holidays — turkey kits and ham kits that have side dishes," says Tim Sousa, chief financial officer at Hans Kissle Salad Co., in Haverhill, MA. "In the summer it's more cold salads. We see more movement toward prepared foods. During the holidays we get a decided bump in prepared foods and kits, but salads level off."

From dinner kits to cheese and olives, these foods can be displayed in a way that features them as special entertainment solutions.

"I think it's nice to have a visual for customers to work from — display a gorgeous cheese board in your refrigerated case with signage of all the components," suggests Perez. "Holidays are a great time to upsell; help your customers create a full cheese board experience by including cheese boards, knives, olives and olive bowls, jams, dried fruits and nuts. Traditional holiday items like pan-forte or panettone are great cheese accompaniments, too. Proximity also is important, too. Customers don't want to hunt around the store looking for items."

It is also the season to go to the next level with signage and social media that feature the special foods.

"Inspire the consumer with engaging signage and POS materials, but don't forget the web. Holiday shoppers are always online looking for new ways to liven up their offerings," says Pozzuto. "Showcase new ideas like those on your store's website and social media platforms to really reach your customers."

The Time Is Now

The time has already come to start thinking about which enticing combinations to feature from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day.

"Items should be ordered by the end of August," advises Pozzuto. "Retailers should begin their holiday merchandising the second week of November, Thanksgiving at the latest."



Some delis even begin planning the presentations by the beginning of the summer.

"It seems like every year retailers start preparing earlier and earlier," says FoodMatch's Gross. "I think this is a very individual question based on the needs and capacity of a given retailer. As a general rule, though, your fourth quarter roadmap should be in place sometime around mid-year and your operations plan should start taking effect in early fall. The key is to have all departments and employees aligned so that you're well-stocked, well-prepared and on-trend."

It may be particularly important to start as early as possible to line up the center-of-the-plate.

"We try to be flexible in our lead time, but earlier is better," says Sousa. "What is of particular concern is your supply of various proteins, the turkeys and hams. The avian flu is going to affect the supply of turkeys."

This ordering rush tests and rewards the quality of the rapport with suppliers built over the years.

"It's important for a retailer to have a good relationship with their distributors when purchasing for the holidays," says

French Cheese Club's Perez. "Ask your sales reps/distributors what products they are anticipating having in limited supply. I suggest that on these items, retail buyers start looking at shelf life dates in October and anticipate how early they can buy while still having enough shelf life to make it through the holidays. Things like goat cheese logs and crème fraîche that are big sellers during the holidays are good items to stock up on."

Consumers, too, do better with a little extra time to ease into the idea of holiday buying at the deli.

"Because shopping around the holidays can be a stressful experience for customers — think the day before Thanksgiving — I suggest retailers start getting their customers thinking about items a few weeks ahead of time," says Perez. "If there is a cheese you want to push for Thanksgiving, start sampling it out to customers in early November, so that when the day before Thanksgiving rolls around your customers are already familiar with items and can purchase stress free. I suggest starting with smaller displays and gradually building them bigger as the holidays approach." **DB**

CAPITALIZING ON GRAB-AND-GO



Millennials' penchant for mini meals drives trend

BY LISA WHITE

Today's society is fast-paced, mobile and not as meal-centric as it used to be.

These lifestyle changes have created opportunities and challenges for deli department grab-and-go programs.

"Grab-and-go has become a significant portion of retailers' business and is growing substantially," says Eric Wangler, president of Jaccard Corp., based in Rochester, NY. "These foods are really accepted by consumers."

For further evidence of the grab-and-go trend, one only has to look at the overall space of today's supermarket, which shows the rapid expansion of the perimeter. This has been propelled by increased offerings of fresh food, including grab-and-go items.

"Food is being used as a welcome mat, with grab-and-go offerings encompassing premade sandwiches, meals and hot and cold bars," says David Gacom, vice pres-

ident, sales and marketing at Hummus Plus, LLC, whose parent company, Pure Mediterranean Foods, is located in Elk Grove Village, IL. "Still, about 15 percent of shoppers have never purchased grab-and-go from the deli."

Who's Buying

To better understand this segment, it helps to know the grab-and-go demographic. Although much depends on the type of food, regional market and an individual store's customer, Millennials are the driving force behind this segment's burgeoning growth.

According to a survey conducted by The Culinary Visions Panel and Y-Pulse, Millennials who purchased a snack from a supermarket deli reported higher mid-morning snack preferences for mini meals and combinations of foods, mini sandwiches and wraps, prepared salads, soups and chilis, vegetables, beef jerky, smoothies, bakery items and candy.

"Millennials are on food adventures," says Brenda Killingsworth, trade marketing manager at Reser's Fine Foods, located in Beaverton, OR. "This group of consumers is more experimental and will try diverse/ethnic foods."

This includes trendy ingredients/foods like sriracha and chipotle flavors. Unique or sustainable packaging also attracts this group.

Rather than target consumers by demographic, deli departments also are more apt to focus on different cuisine types.

"Retailers will want to balance out offerings by including comfort foods, mainstays like sandwiches and salads, and smaller portion sizes for other consumers," says Killingsworth.

With snacks now replacing meals more often, the grab-and-go segment has expanded to encompass more items to broaden consumer appeal.

"Everyone is snacking these days, and many consumers say they eat more



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often but choose smaller bites throughout the day,” says Killingsworth. “The grab-and-go area is perfect for displaying these snack-like items, which many consumers are eating immediately or shortly after purchase rather than taking home for another eating occasion.”

Grab-and-go trends tend to mirror that of the food industry overall. For example, there has been an influx of ethnic fare positioned for those looking to purchase something quick and on-the-run.

Although JFE Franchising Inc., a Houston, TX-based sushi provider, does not track its demographic, social media trends indicate many of its consumers are in high school and college.

Familiarizing shoppers with unfamiliar ethnic grab-and-go fare can be a challenge, but one that’s worthwhile. “Converting customers to sushi is a very gradual process, but our sales are growing steadily,” says Joel Stark, deputy general manager, marketing director at JFE Franchising. “The grab-and-go segment provides the opportunity to engage a variety of customers with sampling and target those who’ve never tried sushi.”

Stores with strong lunch traffic and those investing in in-store seating are prime examples of markets that can cap-

italize on grab-and-go with items that can be eaten on-site or off.

“I don’t have specific data on grab-and-go demographics, but it skews more heavily to families with young children,” says Jaccard Corp.’s Wangler. “This is because it makes the shopping experience quicker and easier to go grab something. It’s more of a time saver.”

What’s Trending

Grab-and-go food trends vary, depending on the market and store. There has been an increase, however, in more healthful fare and fresh products.

Consumers’ definition of healthful is not always directly related to calories and fat. A recent study by the Culinary Visions Panel revealed the top five most influential claims that influence purchase decisions are All Natural, Local, Whole Grain, No High Fructose Corn Syrup and Hormone Free. Descriptive words that entice deli consumers in particular are Fresh, Natural, Local, Homemade and Whole Grain.

“Fresh equates to high quality, which equates to healthier,” says Gacom of Hummus Plus. “Having store real estate and traffic flows directed in smart ways, we’re seeing wider aisles and brighter

lighting in retail that highlights the display and merchandising areas, [drawing consumers to these products].”

Grab-and-go sections have traffic patterns that keep customers shopping on the store perimeter as opposed to weaving through the grocery aisles.

Also with grab-and-go fare, ethnic flavors are added to recognized foods. In addition, smaller portions and breakfast items are offered more frequently.

“While some consumers are looking for healthier yet convenient grab-and-go items, other consumers still want comfort foods,” says Killingsworth.

Reser’s most popular grab-and-go deli offerings include its potato, macaroni, chicken, seafood, tuna and ham salads; cole slaw; and baked beans. Its bulk items, like hummus and mac and cheese, are often repacked by delis and sold in grab-and-go sections, along with the company’s new smaller-sized salads, which include Harissa Lentil, Quinoa Daybreak, Chimichurri Potato and Black Bean and Corn.

Charlotte, NC-based Stefano Foods specializes in the Heat and Eat portion of the grab-and-go section, and has seen a focus on grab-and-go items that microwave quickly.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JFE

"Consumers tend to seek a generous portion of protein, so that their hand-held choice is both time and cost effective," says Alan Hamer, Stefano's vice president.

While JFE Franchising's sales have experienced 200-percent growth in some locations, the same sushi lines have performed more consistently over the last three years. "I attribute gradual changes in the menu to the fact that, as more people see sushi as a great grab-and-go option, they're becoming more familiar with the many flavor profiles," says Stark.

All of JFE Franchising's fried shrimp varieties and spicy sauces are popular. The company continues to add products with heat, including a jalapeño roll with spicy mayo. Its wasabi roll also is a top seller.

"What's interesting about sushi trends is there's demand for complex flavor profiles," says Stark. "Also, our sales of marginally healthy rolls are strong."

From a production standpoint, part of the focus and challenge of delivering these programs is considering the ergonomic designs of machines that help reduce employee injuries and downtime. Jaccard's automatic stacking slicer is designed to keep up with the demands of grab-and-go programs by producing high volumes of sliced product.

"We've been looking at the grab-and-go market for about five years and discovered there really wasn't a slicing solution that considered employee well being and public safety and sanitation," says Wangler.

Effective Merchandising

Creative merchandising and marketing at the store level drive grab-and-go sales. This includes incorporating signage, promotions, unique packaging and serving items, along with innovative product offerings targeted to the store's customer base.

"Transparent packaging, minimal labels and products organized by category are key," says Reser's Fine Foods' Killingsworth. "Retailers should include packaging that conveys freshness, showcases the product, and is fun and easy to eat from."

Most grab-and-go packaging is single serve, as the vast majority of people purchasing these items are getting something to eat at home, work or on the road.

Lindar Corp., a packaging company based in Baxter, MN, offers single-serve

salad containers as well as wrap sandwich and sub sandwich containers with tamper obvious safety features.

"Across the board for all food packaging, food safety is the main focus," says Dave Fosse, Lindar's director of marketing, key accounts.

Another recent grab-and-go packaging trend is containers that better protect the product and are stackable for easier merchandising.

"We also continue to see more of these packages geared to fit into car cup holders for easier transport," says Fosse.

Large signs are effective to lead shoppers to grab-and-go items, which are best positioned close to the deli traffic pattern.

"Positioning additional meal components in proximity to the grab-and-go section optimizes convenience to the customer and enhances the total retail ring," says Hamer of Stefano Foods. **DB**

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Soup Is Good Food

The latest trends center around healthy eating and real food ingredients

BY KEITH LORIA

Fresh soup has always been considered a healthful food, which is why so many people offer chicken noodle soup when one is sick. But in reality many of the soups being offered in years past were filled with preservatives and artificial ingredients.

As a result, there has been a strong movement toward clean labels in the soup category, with many companies now offering soups with plenty of proteins, vitamins, minerals and hydration in a lower calorie format than in the past.

This ongoing emphasis on healthful eating has helped to keep soup offerings in the limelight and a big seller at the deli counter.

Marilee Fields, marketing manager for Harry's Fresh Foods, headquartered in Portland, OR, says that while gluten-free and vegan selections continue to be growth drivers, the company also is seeing a new movement toward "real" food. "Fresh perimeter shoppers want to know what is in their food and are expecting foods that are minimally processed," says Fields.

At the same time, she continues, "The majority of sales still come from your traditional flavors — Cheddar broccoli, creamy tomato, loaded baked potato. But shoppers are still expecting unique flavor options that they can find in restaurants, and maybe don't have the knowledge to make at home."

According to research firm Mintel, 89 percent of consumers are interested in soup containing a full serving of vegetables. However, Fields says whether it's a garden vegetable soup, gazpacho or artichoke bisque, it's really variety that shoppers want.

Jen-ai Stokesbary, director of marketing for Boulder Organic Foods, based in Longmont, CO, says fresh soup continues to be a dominant trend especially in the deli department.

"Transparency is growing in importance; people want to know what is in their food, and trends such as organically grown, gluten-free and non-GMO [genetically modified organisms] continue to attract new followers," she says.

Stokesbary also points out, "Prepared soup provides the same convenience as fast food, and consumers of these products also are starting to seek convenient food that is 'good for me,' healthy, and tastes good."



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Stokesbary notes that while Boulder Organic Foods' classic comfort soups like roasted tomato basil and garden minestrone remain the company's most popular flavors, more exotic selections like its red lentil dahl have become popular favorites in markets nationwide. In addition, new super-food-packed varieties such as golden quinoa and kale also have gained popularity.

Mary Shepard, director of sales for retail and foodservice, Fortun Foods, Inc., headquartered in Kirkland, WA, agrees the trend today is all about clean, real ingredients.

"Quality fresh ingredients is the key, and the health movement is changing that," she says. "Fresh vegetables, legumes, lean meat or vegetarian options all can pack a

powerful punch in one bowl."

Shepard notes comfort flavors remain staples but the trend toward seasonal soups, such as a butternut squash or upscale delicacies like lobster bisque, is growing as well.

Meanwhile, soup-making styles are changing as well. For many years soup was served chunky — and the chunkier the better. But that's a style of soup making that appears to be fading, according to the soup experts. Shepard says that trend is disappearing, as consumers increasingly demand that a good soup should be savored right to the bottom of the bowl.

"A real quality soup is an art in cooking, each flavor is layered — from a great stock to the fresh vegetables and spices,"

she says. "Our philosophy is a balanced approach with ingredients. A broccoli cheddar doesn't have to have huge chunks of broccoli, it should have the flavor of broccoli throughout the body."

Soup Sales

Not surprisingly, these changes are helping to drive sales of soups at the deli counter. According to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, soups represented 2.1 percent of sales at the deli counter last year, an increase of 6.3 percent over the previous 12 months.

The report also found 51 percent of Millennials — an important target market and a generation that is clearly interested in eating more healthfully — eat soup at least once a week at home. Meanwhile, the report says 59 percent of Millennial men purchase canned or packaged soup from a grocery store, leaving plenty of opportunity for delis to increase the sale of fresh soups.

Savvy suppliers are getting in on the action, too. Bob Sewall executive vice president of sales and marketing for Blount Fine Foods, based in Fall River, MA, says its organic line is launching several new clean and simple flavors in response to customer demand.

"Healthy eating is absolutely on the minds of people today, and Millennials are looking for cleaner-labeled soups," he says. "What delis need to do to increase sales is put the nutritional information on display and make customers aware of how good soups really are."

Research firm Technomic Inc. reports that more than half of all consumers say bundling soup with other items appeals to them, and could draw attention and help differentiate fresh offerings. When compared to buying soup as a single item, 58 percent of soup eaters say they would buy soup as a combo meal.

The soup and sandwich combination has traditionally been a consumer favorite and the pair's popularity shows no signs of fading out. "The soup and fresh prepared/build-your-own sandwich combo is the perfect option for lunchtime," says Fields. "Providing a grab-and-go cold case next to the hot bar also allows options for your shopper to pick up something quick for dinner or lunch tomorrow."

Shepard says she has seen delis find success offering a healthy rolled sandwich with vegetables and nuts to go with a fresh, comfort soup.



Restaurant Trends

Restaurants offering soup now face considerable competition from the retail segment. In fact, according to Technomic, 54 percent of consumers report they source soup from home at least once a week. That has led to restaurant operators emphasizing uniqueness in order to keep soup lovers coming through their doors.

"Consumers are looking for soup that they believe is made fresh daily — just like they would expect at their favorite local restaurant," says Fields of Harry's Fresh Foods.

Technomic's Left Side of the Menu: Soup & Salad Consumer Trend Report shows 46 percent of consumers strongly agree that they visit certain restaurants specifically because they enjoy the soup offered there.

Additionally, 58 percent of consumers even say they are more likely to order soup as a combo meal than as a single item, while 50 percent of consumers want to sample unique soups.

Consumers have predetermined expectations when dining at a restaurant, and they often expect fresh, homemade quality and taste. For many of these individuals, however, the experience of eating out is an infrequent indulgence. Therefore, when searching for soups at the deli, many consumers look for restaurant quality or restaurant-style foods that they can conveniently purchase and quickly prepare at home.

"And with people eating lighter, soup and salad as a dinner is not viewed as just diet food anymore," says Stokesbary of Boulder Organic Foods. "Someone who is eating out at a restaurant or picking up dinner at the deli may be looking for the same thing: an easy, great tasting and nutritious meal."

Therefore, she says, ethnic and innovative soups, such as Asian-style ramen and chilled varieties, are poised for growth, particularly among younger consumers.

The Final Say

Clearly consumers have become more savvy about the food they eat and what they put into their bodies. When it comes to the deli, consumers will no longer tolerate highly processed soups and artificial additives, colors or flavors, says Fortun Foods' Shepard.

The Millennials have influenced that behavior because they continue to be a driving force as they spend a large percent-



age of their income on not only flavorful, but healthier food.

Restaurant chains and large-scale food-service operations are also influencing consumer behavior because many have eliminated all artificial ingredients on their

menus — something consumers have come to expect.

In order to stay relevant delis must respond because the demand for quality, fresh ingredients is only going to grow stronger. **DB**

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America's Sheep Milk Cheeses

The United States is leading the way with new varieties

BY MAX MCCALMAN

It would be more accurate to call them “ewe’s milk cheeses,” but the phrase does not roll off the tongue because it sounds too similar to “you’s milk cheeses.” As a result it’s commonly accepted to refer to them as “sheep” or “sheep milk cheeses.”

Sheep milk is superior milk in many ways. Some of the world’s greatest cheeses are crafted from sheep milk. That’s not to take anything away from the cow and goat milk cheeses — when you think of all the magnificent cheeses crafted from the other milks — yet sheep milk has its advantages.

The Old World sheep cheeses are still far better known than our own and this can be attributed to their development over many centuries with the attendant wider distribution. When asked to name favorite sheeps milk cheeses, many cheese lovers will list Manchego, Ossau Iraty, Pecorino as tops. Some of the Old World cheeses are now being manufactured to taste the same, one wheel to the next.

Many European cheesemakers attend the same dairy schools and are taught the same recipes employing particular culture strains. This ends up yielding nearly identical cheeses. Variety in flavor is also being reduced through the growing use of pasteurized milk.

Sheep milk is a dense milk, with higher solids on average than that of cow or goat milk. This translates into greater yield, particularly because of sheep milk’s higher caseins. Pat Elliott, the late founder and owner of Virginia’s Everona sheep dairy, once said: “Sheep milk wants to be cheese.”

With short chain fatty acids in abundance and the higher protein values, the milk has the potential for plenty of flavor. Assuming a diversity of plant species, sheep milk offers higher CLA — the cancer-fighting and weight-reducing fatty acid — than other milks. The texture of sheep cheeses suffers less when the milk has been pasteurized than the other milks; the pasteurized sheep cheeses end up less pasty than those crafted from other dairy animals; the flavors are less compromised; and the sheep milk cheeses’ shelf lives can be greater.

Sheep were domesticated about ten thousand years ago, about the same time as goats with whom they share a familial relationship. Some of the similarities between the species are noted in the cheeses derived from the two species, yet

depending on breeds and cheesemaking recipes the similarities can be greater or virtually non-existent.

The Blending Of Milks

It may be surprising that the two milks are mixed infrequently for cheesemaking; cow milk is added to one or the other small ruminants’ milks far more often. The relative abundance and economics of cow milk determine this. Nonetheless the practice of blending sheep and goat milks for cheese production has been employed for many centuries, particularly in regions where raising cows is more difficult if not impossible. The blending of milks can smooth out dominant flavors associated with sheep or goat cheeses, flavors still unfamiliar and unusual to many American palates.

Both goat and sheep milks have a high relative distribution of short chain fatty acids; a major difference is that sheep milk has a higher amount of butyric acid — yielding a flavor sometimes associated with dirty socks or spoiled meat. This is only one component of what aromas may arise from sheep milk. In combination with other milk, the conjoined aromas can deliver some of the most pleasant aromas offered in a cheese. It could be said that the mixed milk cheeses, which include sheep milk, offer the best of both worlds.

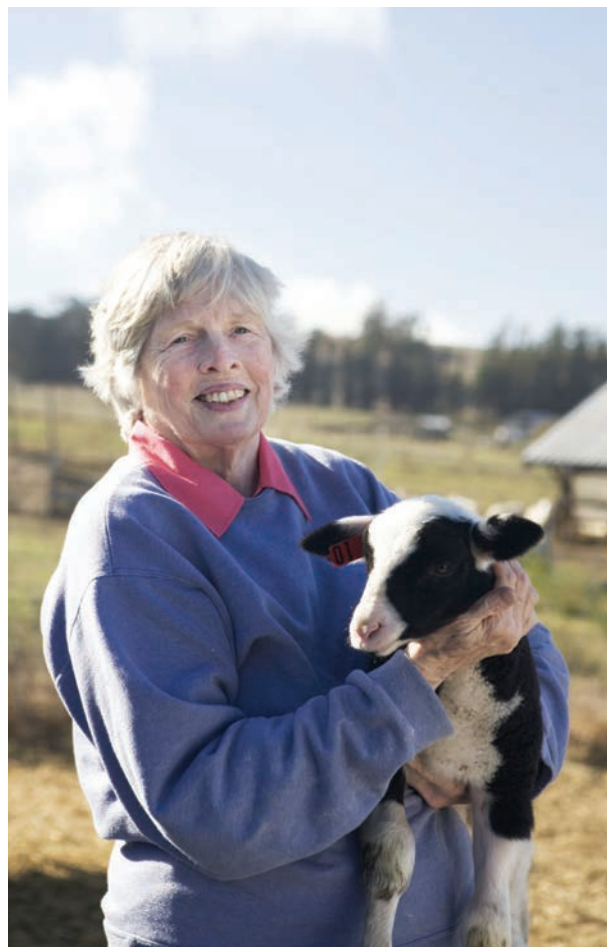
Sheep dairies in the United States have come up with creative ways to keep their operations in business. Old Chatham Sheepherding Company produces a full range of dairy products, including a raw sheep milk blue cheese, Shaker Blue. As lovely as the cheese is, owner Tom Clark reports the market still prefers their pasteurized blue, Ewe’s Blue — a multiple award-winner.

Cheeses crafted from sheep milk comprise a tiny fraction of total production in the United States, about 1 percent of volume in milk, yet for those few,

their high recognition and appreciation speaks to their quality and growing appeal.

It is widely believed that a sheep breed is suitable for either dairy or meat, not both. However, Liam Callahan of California’s Bellwether Farms believes the East Friesian sheep he works with produce excellent meat, especially when the lambs are left on grass and harvested at a younger age, as well as excellent milk for cheesemaking.

As with dairy goat and cow breeds, sheep breeds are most often chosen for the volume of production and less so for milk components. The East Friesian has been the breed of choice in the United States, largely because of the high volume of milk they produce. The milk fats are lower so the cheeses produced could almost be mistaken for cow milk cheeses. In Europe there are many dairy sheep breeds able to thrive in different environments and tolerate climactic extremes. There are weather extremes in America but not the various breeds that can tolerate those extremes.



Cindy Callahan of Bellwether Farms



Sheep cheeses cost more than others, more than goat cheeses and much more than cow cheeses. They are becoming more popular nonetheless and Americans will pay a little more for them, but only up to a point. The slightly higher price paid for sheep milk cheeses does not take into consideration their relatively higher costs of production. The economics of sheep cheeses could dissuade someone contemplating sheep cheesemaking, except perhaps a hobbyist. This is one reason why many sheep dairies, here and elsewhere, add other species' milks to their production, often in mixed milk varieties.

Another reason for the higher cost of sheep milk cheeses are the ewe's lactation cycles. Its cycle is shorter and the volume of milk per animal is smaller — a smaller amount than what the typical dairy goat yields, and far smaller than what a cow produces. The result is pound-for-pound, a ewe produces significantly less milk than other dairy animals.

On the other hand, the milk volume is smaller but its average casein and fat content is higher. The result is the cheesemaker will find the amount of cheese produced from a gallon of milk is greater, but it is still a small amount when compared to the volume of milk produced by cows and goats. This difference in the composition of the milk is what makes sheep milk cheeses so rich and creamy.

While American's love of sheep milk cheeses has been satisfied by European cheesemakers for years, sheep dairies in

the United States are turning out some outstanding products.

Sheana Doughty, owner and cheesemaker of Bleating Heart Cheese, located in Tomalas, CA, is a relative newcomer. Named for its shape, their flagship cheese, Fat Bottom Girl, has quickly become a winner. It is made from raw, 100 percent sheep milk, lightly washed in a salt brine and aged for three to four months. The washing results in a light orange rind with a mild but somewhat funky aroma. The inside color is ivory and the flavor is mild with a taste of salt. The subtle nutty cheese is rich, approachable and very delicious.

Another favorite from Bleating Heart Cheese is Ewelicious, which took a first place in its category at the American Cheese Society's 2014 Competition and Judging. It's another raw milk cheese with a natural rind and aged two to three months. This is a creamy, rich blue cheese mild enough for the novice but with enough depth of flavor for the experienced blue cheese lover. The blue does not overwhelm but enhances the sweet nutty notes of good sheep cheese.

Located in Long Valley, NJ, about an hour's drive from New York City is Valley Shepherd Creamery, a cheesemaking operation that is as much cheesemaking as family farm. Making 100 percent sheep milk cheese as well as cheeses from cow and goat milk, their cheeses are gaining recognition from chefs and consumers. This is also a great place for farm tours

that include lambing during the springtime as well as cheesemaking during the fall. Cheesemaking classes are available as well.

Kendall Russell of Idaho's Lark's Meadow won a Blue Ribbon for his Dulcinea the very first time he entered the cheese into competition. It's a Basque-style, raw milk cheese with long lasting flavor and tangy, fruity undertones, perfect for pairing with dark chocolate, black cherries or peaches.

Russell is developing a new cheese he is planning to call Fiona, using thistle as its coagulant. Typical of sheep milk cheeses produced in Portugal and western Spain for many centuries, it is not common in the United States.

Whether or not there will be wide market acceptance of the cheese is a question. The bitter flavor found in thistle sheep cheeses is an acquired taste. Those styles do have an audience, partly because they are definitively vegetarian. Since most of those Iberian cheeses are not coming into the United States anymore, Russell is stepping up to the plate and taking a chance.

Sheep milk cheeses are becoming more popular and cheese lovers who are not familiar with America's new additions will soon be taking note.

DB

Cheese expert Max McCalman is a maître fromager, author, speaker and educator.





CHEESEMAKING SHORT COURSES

FARMSTEAD AND ARTISAN CHEESES: FROM CONCEPT TO COMMERCE

OCTOBER 6, 2015 | 9 AM-4 PM

Randolph Center Campus/Enterprise Center | \$125

Artisan cheesemaking is a great fit for sustainable farming. As a value-added component of a sustainable farming plan, cheesemaking can be another step in the holistic cycle of land to food. Today, the United States has nearly 1,000 artisan cheesemakers, with more starting up each year. However, the path to success is not always easy, in part due to the multiple factors involved in making good quality cheeses as well as the current competitive market.

ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF CHEESEMAKING

OCTOBER 7-11, 2015 | 9 AM-4 PM

Randolph Center Campus/Enterprise Center | \$1,000

This five-day course is a practical and comprehensive technical guide to cheese technology and the principles governing the quality of cheese. During this intensive course, participants will learn the fundamentals of cheesemaking, quality control practices, and useful considerations in starting a small-scale cheesemaking business. The first section focuses on the chemistry of milk and the different aspects defining the quality of cheesemaking milk. The second part describes the principles of cheesemaking and the different families of cheese and also includes comprehensive hands-on demonstrations in making three different cheese styles: a fresh acid-coagulated soft cheese, a bloomy rind variety, and a semi-hard cheese. The last section of the program focuses on how to monitor and control the fundamental factors driving the quality of the product. This course is taught by Dr. Montserrat Almena-Aliste, Rick Woods of Farmstead Cheese, and Linda Dimmick of Neighborly Farms. All cheesemaking exercises will be completed at Neighborly Farms.

REGISTRATION

To register for the course please visit vtc.edu/shortcourses or contact Rachel Arsenault at arsenault@vtc.edu or 802.728.1677. For questions about the course material please contact Molly Willard, Agriculture & Market Garden Manager at mwillard2@vtc.edu or 802.535.5315.

SENSORY EVALUATION OF CHEESE

OCTOBER 12, 2015 | 9 AM-4 PM

Randolph Center Campus/Enterprise Center | \$125

One of the main factors driving consumer choice is the sensory quality of the final product. This one-day workshop will provide you with the fundamental tools to control and define the sensory quality of cheese, offering basic sensory training to describe and record the sensory characteristics of your cheese, as well as resourceful information and quality control systems to prevent defects in cheese. This intensive course, offered by cheese technologist and sensory scientist Dr. Montserrat Almena-Aliste (former VIAC instructor), combines practical hands-on exercises with technical lectures, making it very interesting and enjoyable but at the same time offering very valuable information to prevent making, selling or buying defective products. The course is also an unique opportunity to improve your food sensory skills and the understanding of cheese quality to everyone involved with cheese, from beginners and advanced cheesemakers, marketing and sales representatives to quality managers, technicians, cheese mongers, chefs, and everyone else that would like to explore the fascinating world of cheese. Cheesemakers are welcome to bring samples of their products for evaluation to get practical feedback from Dr. Almena-Aliste.



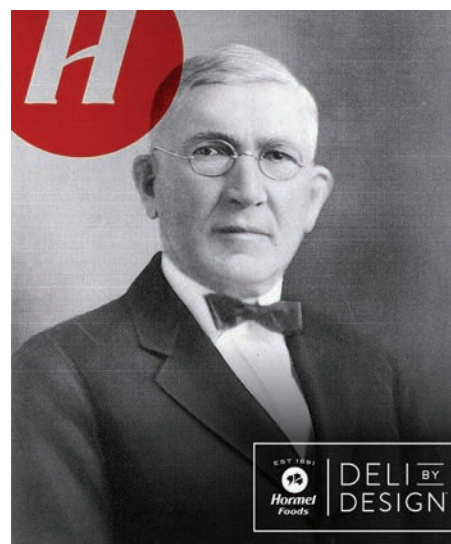
Vermont Tech's Institute for Applied Agriculture & Food Systems is an Equal Opportunity Employer. This program is funded by a grant from the US Department of Labor.

The “Meat” On Hormel’s Beginnings

It began in 1891, when George A. Hormel delivered meat from his horse-drawn cart in Austin, MN, eventually opening the company’s first sales office in Minneapolis just before the turn of the century. Today, Hormel Foods is a Fortune 500 company with more than 20,000 employees and revenues of \$9.3 billion.

By 1920, Hormel products were delivered by salesmen along specific routes in “sausage trucks.” Prior to this, the company relied solely on refrigerated rail cars to get meat to market. In the middle of the 1920s, Hormel introduced the first-ever canned ham. When George retired in 1927 at the age of 67, he named his son, Jay C. Hormel, as president.

The company still operates under George A. Hormel’s motto, “Originate, don’t imitate.” Hormel’s deli division, renamed Deli by Design, strives to grow with changing consumer demands in an increasingly competitive landscape.



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

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