

DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

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A Meaty Proposition

Millennials, health conscious consumers demand natural products

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COVER STORY



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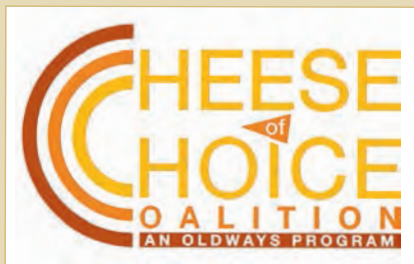
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CHEESE OF CHOICE COALITION RE-EMERGES



Originally established in 2000 to combat the FDA's proposed change of the raw milk cheese aging rule, the Cheese of Choice Coalition (CCC) has been relaunched by Oldways Preservation and Trust to address the industry's current issues, including cheese aging requirements, raw milk cheese regulations and the FDA's revised allowances for non-toxicogenic E. coli.

"We've relaunched the coalition as a membership and consumer advocacy organization," says Sara Baer-Sinnott, Oldways' president.

A number of industry experts are part of the CCC's advisory committee, including Cathy Strange, global cheese buyer, Whole Foods Market; Ruth Flore, cheese marketer and past president of the American Cheese Society; David Lockwood, managing director and partner of Neal's Yard Dairy; Will Studd, author and cheese retailer; Sue Conley, co-founder, Cowgirl Creamery; Dominique Delugeau, senior vice president, specialty cheese, Saputo Cheese USA and president of the Cheese Importers Association of America; and Ari Weinzwieg, co-founder of Zingermans.

"Most people don't realize that traditional cheese is being challenged right now and that we're finding it difficult to import some of these cheeses," says Brad Jones, CCC program manager. "We think consumers would be irate in knowing this, and our goal is to provide information so people can enjoy these cheeses in the future."

The new website includes scientific and regulatory information regarding safety and policy, nutrition and traditional cheese. The CCC is also creating The Cheese Resource, a library with information on domestic and imported cheese.

The CCC also is preparing and publishing Hot Topic articles for its website, which will address key subjects, such as wood board aging, non-toxicogenic E. coli and raw milk.

"As issues arise, we will be involved in lobbying, petitions and building awareness in cheese stores across the country about traditional artisan raw milk cheese," says Jones.

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Grab 'N Go

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English Cheddar

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

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COMING IN APR/MAY

DELI BUSINESS will feature the IDDBA Pre-Show Guide

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Announcements



BOULDER SOUP WORKS ANNOUNCES CHANGES

Boulder Soup Works, Boulder, CO, has changed its name to Boulder Organic!, and relocated to a new 23,500 square-foot manufacturing facility in Boulder County. The manufacturer of certified organic, gluten-free and non-GMO verified soups is preparing for growth in existing markets and increasing national distribution. The brand change includes new packaging and a new logo. Boulder Organic! soups are available nationally in select natural foods and grocery stores.

www.boulderorganicfoods.com



DIETZ & WATSON SPEEDS FOOD SAFETY TESTING

Dietz & Watson, Philadelphia, PA, has announced the expansion of its food safety and quality control initiative in its Philadelphia meatpacking facility. The company now uses Sample6 technology to test, find and remediate the Listeria pathogen before any products leave the plant. This has modernized the pathogen detection process, reducing testing time to a single shift. With this technology, the company now has better control of its food-manufacturing environment at the plant level.

www.dietzandwatson.com



OPA NAMED DRESSING OF THE YEAR

Litehouse Foods, Sandpoint, ID, has announced its Opa Feta Dill Greek Yogurt Dressing was named The Association for Dressings & Sauces (ADS) Dressing of the Year at the ADS Annual Meeting recently. The Dressing of the Year Award is presented by ADS to recognize innovative and delicious dressing products. Nominations for the award were received from ADS members and were voted on by members via a blind taste test at the ADS 2014 Technical Meeting.

www.lighthousefoods.com



ANCHOR WINS AWARD

Anchor Packaging, Inc., St. Louis, MO was presented with CS News' 2014 Best New Product Award at the NACS (National Association of Convenience Stores) show in Las Vegas recently. The company's product, the Embraceable platter and dome lid, was deemed the winner in the Foodservice - Display & Packaging category. This award is based on points awarded by consumers in the areas of value, convenience and appearance, then overall evaluation by Past Times Marketing, a consumer research and product testing firm.

www.anchorpackaging.com

Transitions



BEAVERTON FOODS HIRES REGIONAL SALES MANAGER

Beaverton Foods, Inc., Beaverton, OR, has hired 20-year industry veteran Michael V. Di Cristo as its central regional manager. He previously served as national sales manager at Rubschrager Baking Corp. in Chicago, IL. Di Cristo will be responsible for market growth in the central U.S. extending from the Great Lakes to Texas. He reports to Tom Murphy, national sales manager at Beaverton Foods.

www.beavertonfoods.com

New Products



NATURAL GREEK YOGURT DIP

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Inc., Ward Hill, MA, has launched a line of new Greek Yogurt Dips. A healthier substitute to mayonnaise, salad dressing and conventional dips, the line is made with All Natural Greek Yogurt that is naturally higher in protein and lower in fat and calories. The refrigerated dips come in three flavors, including Ultimate Spinach Dip with 3 Cheeses, Jalapeño Artichoke Cheese Dip, and Buffalo Bleu Cheese Dip. Suggested retail price is \$3.99-\$4.99 per 11-ounce container.

www.cedarsfoods.com



HEALTHY CHEESE FROM HEALTHY COWS

Trugman-Nash, LLC, Millburn, NJ, offers Old Croc Sharp Cheddar and Old Croc Extra Sharp Cheddar, all natural and crafted from pure Australian milk from grass-fed cows. The Old Croc cows graze from rich pasture grass, which improves the nutritional quality of the cheese and makes the cheese richer in omega-3 fats, vitamin E and CLA, conjugated linoleic acid, a beneficial fatty acid. The cheeses are carefully aged a minimum of nine and 18 months respectively.

www.oldcroccheese.com



AN ECO SOLUTION

Planglow USA, Minneapolis, MN, offers the Natural Lunch Box, which is designed to comfortably fit a sandwich, drink, snacks and other accompaniments. This line includes a window to view and select lunch offerings. It also is fully lined to prevent leaking. This environmentally-friendly solution is made from compostable materials. The Lunch Box can be personalized with the company's labels and software.

www.planglow-usa.com

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blountfinefoods.com/buildsales.

New Products



NEW GUAC FLAVORS UNVEILED

Fresherized Foods, Saginaw, TX, has introduced two new Wholly Guacamole lines. Wholly Guacamole Hatch Chile dip includes roasted hatch and jalapeno chiles blended with cilantro, garlic and Hass Avocados. Wholly Guacamole Three Chile dip has fresh pablano peppers and roasted hatch and jalapeno peppers, along with ripe Hass Avocados, creamy tomatillo and a few other spices. In addition, Wholly Guacamole Spicy Homestyle is now available in 2-ounce 100 calorie mini cups. www.eatwholly.com



A FARMER'S BLEND

Tribe Hummus, Taunton, MA, offers its Tribe Farmers Market hummus line, inspired by farmers market produce. Three flavors are available. Harvest Carrot & Ginger combines crisp carrots and zesty ginger topped with cilantro, coriander and parsley. Cucumber Tzatziki combines the taste of cucumber and dill for a light, mildly tangy flavor. Vine Ripened Tomato & Basil offers a blend of more tomatoes and basil. The company also has added limited batch flavor, Herb Infused Olive Oil hummus to its lineup. www.tribehummus.com



VERSATILE FOR RECIPES

Delorio's, Utica, NY, offers a flatbread line that is versatile and a perfect foundation for creative recipes. This line can be used to assemble fast and easy sandwiches or personal specialty pizzas. White, Wheat or Herb varieties are available for distinguishing creations. The flatbread is made with the finest ingredients using the company's unique manufacturing process. This product can be simply thawed and served. www.delorios.com



CRAFTED IN SMALL BATCHES

Fortun Foods Inc., Kirkland, WA, offers Finishing Touch Soups, which are crafted in small batches using fresh ingredients to maintain top quality. The refrigerated soups are available in 28-ounce party packs and 10-ounce single servings. Flavors include Lobster Bisque, Seafood Gumbo, New England Clam Chowder and Smoked Salmon Chowder. A portion of the proceeds go to universities for scholarships. www.fortunfoods.com



HOMMUS IS ORGANIC

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Ward Hill, MA, has launched a line of new and improved Organic Hommus. A healthier alternative to dip products, the line is USDA Certified Organic, Non-GMO Project Verified and Gluten Free Certified. The trans-fat and gluten-free refrigerated dips come in three flavors, including Original, Roasted Red Pepper and Garlic Lovers. This line is ideal for a dip along with chopped vegetables or a spread for sandwiches and wraps. Suggested retail price is between \$2.99 and \$3.50 per 8-ounce container. www.cedarsfoods.com



RETAIL LINE EXTENDS

Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA, has unveiled its newest line, 10-ounce grab-and-go Beef Chili with Beans. The classic chili contains ground beef, red and green bell peppers and kidney beans simmered in a rich, chunky tomato sauce with traditional spices and is gluten-free. Packaged for the grab-and-go section, the line is shipped and sold fresh. It is available for retail in cases of eight 10-ounce cups. www.blountfinefoods.com



NATURAL DELI LINES LAUNCHED

Pocino Foods Co.'s new line of natural deli meats contains no nitrites or added nitrates, MSG or artificial ingredients. The line includes Extra Lean Natural Seasoned Roast Beef, Natural Uncured Pastrami, Natural Italian Dry Salami, Natural Uncured Pepperoni and Soppressata, Natural Oven Roasted Turkey and Natural Uncured Smoked Ham. www.pocinofoods.com



TURKEY INCLUDES NATURAL SKIN

Norbest Inc., Moroni, UT, offers Sweetheart Turkey Roasts in single or double breast lobes that are still attached to the natural skin. The line has no wing meat, trim, emulsion, fillers or extenders and is free of extra fats, oils, sugars and MSG. Natural style with no baste or salt added, or deep-basted with natural turkey broth and delicate seasonings are available. The line is certified USDA Grade A and offers cook-in-bag convenience. www.norbest.com

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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Marketing The Halo Of 'Natural'

The question of how retailers ought to approach consumer demand for natural products is an intriguing one. There is no question that organic, GMO-free, antibiotic-free, free-range and panoply of other terms have, in fact, won the culture war.

These are the kinds of aspirational values that journalists, chefs and food critics, etc., are celebrating and consumers strive for — at least theoretically. But when one gets down to actual purchasing behavior, the situation is not as clear. Obviously there is an elite group — in this case not only demographically but psychographically — that would rather starve than eat at McDonald's or buy at Wal-Mart, and if a retailer or manufacturer can serve this group, well, more power to them.

But that's almost a separate interest group; lately there has been a lot of press attention to healthier fast food options. Mike Roberts was McDonald's global president and chief operating officer, and after he left the company, he founded a new chain called Lyfe Kitchen. The focus is healthy, sustainable, local, minimally processed, transparent — all the hot buttons. With 13 outlets open and one about to open in New York City and West Hollywood, the chain seems to be thriving. Here is the catch though... at the original Palo Alto location, the burger — albeit 100% grass-fed beef — costs \$8.99. For a side, the baked garlic Parmesan sweet potato fries cost \$3.99, and an iced tea is \$2.49. So that is \$15.47 for lunch. That is more than double the price of a McDonald's Quarter Pounder burger meal.

Maybe it is "worth it," but for many consumers, whatever their abstract answers to the question of buying better quality food, they either don't have the money or would rather save it for doctor's appointments, Christmas presents, car repairs, whatever it may be. It is highly impressive that a chain such as Five Guys has 1,000 locations open and 1,500 under development, but it pays to remember McDonald's has more than 35,000 outlets.

When one really digs deep into consumer attitudes toward many hot food trends, say locally grown, one can see there is trouble ahead for those who anticipate big growth in these categories. DELI BUSINESS's sister publication PRODUCE BUSINESS has done research and found consumers often have reasons for preferring local. For example, many consumers assume it will be cheaper because of savings in transportation. They assume it will taste better because it can be picked riper, and they assume it will be better for the environment because the trans-

portation carbon footprint is less.

But all these assumptions are questionable. Many times local costs more, not less, because the most efficient growing area may be far away. Some products may be tastier if harvested later, but many items, especially common vegetables, are not impacted this way.

And transportation is just one element of carbon output. A study of lamb consumed in the UK contrasted British lamb with New Zealand lamb — the assumption was the long journey from New Zealand to Britain would make British-grown lamb seem environmentally friendly. In reality, the massive ships filled to the brim with cargo are very efficient, and the big issue is that Britain is space-constrained and sheep are raised on feed, which means trucks and tractors to get the feed to the animals, and what not. In contrast, New Zealand lambs graze on open pasture and so it turns out to be the lower carbon option.

The anti-GMO movement is real and, once again, the anti-GMO argument has won the battle for elite opinion. But that world may be changing. Up to now, most GMO products offered only indirect benefits as the modifications were really designed to boost yields for farmers.

Now a new generation of GMO products will start to offer direct benefits. These range from so-called "Golden Rice," which promises to stave off blindness caused by chronic Vitamin A deficiencies in much of Asia, to a new potato that is designed to produce less acrylamide, which some suspect is a human carcinogen. As more products offer specific benefits, opinion may well shift.

So what is the smart way to look at the natural category? Mostly as a marketing tool designed to produce a halo effect on the rest of the department. Just as projects to build rooftop farms on supermarkets are not really serious efforts to sell more local produce, but rather promotions to make consumers think everything is home-grown, so promoting the artisanal, the local, the organic, the natural and so on may be less important for the actual sales than they are for the message to consumers who aren't willing or able to pay but aspire to be the kind of person who can and does. **DB**



James P. Prevor

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by Lee Smith, Publisher

What the Future Holds

It's that time of year when we are all looking to finalize our budgets and plans for the New Year. Part of the process is to evaluate what worked, what didn't and where consumer trends are taking us. Evaluating the past is relatively easy, but the future? It's much more difficult to get past our own hot buttons and step away for a few minutes to think about what's to come.

This issue contains much forward thinking from industry leaders, including where natural products are going, trends in the snack and cheese categories as well as how Millennials are going to shape the future of retailing.

Transparency is going to become more important as people continue to be concerned about the food supply, whether their concerns center on GMOs, antibiotics, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, animal welfare or just poor manufacturing practices.

Consumers are aware of food borne illness outbreaks and recalls within 24 hours thanks to social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter. Local and regional concerns become national issues just as fast and, consequently, relatively minor problems turn into situations requiring disaster control. Unfortunately, not all of the details are true. At the very least, the reports often are biased or truncated to the point where false information is as easily spread as good intel. Social media is going to be a more important part of our businesses in 2015 and every company should be developing a communication department to be part of the new era.

Local is going to be a more important consumer trend. Driven by a desire to know where your food is coming from, it is assumed buying local mitigates risks, but everyone involved in the industry knows that local is not a guarantee of either quality or wholesomeness. However, consumer concerns often go much deeper than quality. Artisan foods often are better and sometimes more expensive, but also support local agriculture and help to keep small farmers profitable. These foods provide local jobs in

rural areas and develop a sense of pride in the community.

On the flip side, local is often less expensive. Large cabbage can sell for \$1 a head, eggs for 99 cents and a small 4-ounce piece of goat cheese for less than \$5. While roadside stands have always been summer competition, farmers markets are now gaining in popularity. Depending on the area a store serves, this is a growing source of rivalry.

Specialty cheese has now evolved to the point where some retailers are looking at it as a separate department. Given the success of Murray's Cheese programs in Kroger, expect to see more partnerships.

Imported cheeses will increase in number, especially PDOs. European Protected Designation of Origin products have a clear, easy story to tell. But, domestic cheeses are looking better and better all the time. Small cheese shops, retailers and farmers markets that specialize in domestic cheese are starting to look just like the little cheese shops throughout Europe. Very local, very special with cheeses not found elsewhere.

While much of the marketing emphasis has been on better quality (in whatever way someone wants to define it), the majority of consumers still are looking for bargains and low cost. So, the part of the market that wants to spend the least or can't afford upscale still needs to be served — and served well. It would be easy to ignore the low-cost market and leave it to discounters, but it is a market to be respected and pursued.

Many excellent deli products are perfect for the average consumer in Middle America. Rotisserie and fried chicken, sliced meats and cheeses, sandwiches and pizza, salads, dips and spreads — are all used by every family some of the time and, for now, these products represent the bulk of deli sales and strong deli departments.

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A Meaty Proposition

Millennials, health conscious consumers demand natural products

BY KEITH LORIA

Millennials are a health-conscious bunch, and the growing importance of this generation to the deli industry has prompted retail operators to stock up on meats that not only promise new flavor sensations but also provide transparency concerning how the meats are produced.

In addition to catering to Millennials' quest for more adventurous food experiences, the deli industry is responding to a growing demand for sustainably produced meats that are GAP Certified, Certified Organic and contain no genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

Meanwhile, the industry is addressing increased consumer interest in less-processed deli meats, including those that are

lower in sodium and free of nitrates and nitrites. A growing number of deli operators also are featuring meats sourced from pasture-raised animals and those that contain no artificial colors, growth hormones, and added salts and flavorings — in other words, meats cooked in their natural states.

"Demand for poultry that does not use antibiotics has risen this year, and we expect demand to continue as major retailers and foodservice operators increase their focus in this area," says Ellen Deutsch, senior vice president, marketing for Hain Pure Protein Corp., headquartered in New Oxford, PA.

"We expect that as consumers continue to seek to purchase poultry as a preferred protein in their diets, they will seek out more innovation and meal-solutions that meet their time and health demands."

Camille Collins, marketing director for Les Trois Petits Cochons in Brooklyn, NY, says artisanal and handcrafted products are in high demand, as long as they are locally sourced, which is why the company focuses on artisanal and handcrafted meats in small batches.

"We currently have an extensive line of hormone- and antibiotic-free products and are getting ready to launch an organic line at the winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco," she says. "The demand for this sort of product is growing and will continue to do so in 2015 and beyond."

Sherrie Zebrasky retail advisor for Principe Foods, headquartered in Long Beach, CA, says this is a trend that's not a new phenomenon, but is one that's growing in strength.



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"The reason for this, I truly believe, is that early on the cost of these products was really high, and I think the mainstream retailers weren't looking closely enough at them," she says. "Once Whole Foods became stronger and stronger, some of the prices came down and companies like Kroger, Costco and Walmart have all started to look at organics also. So it has become more mainstream."

Being Selective

According to the National Turkey Federation, consumers in 2014 are looking for authenticity and integrity in labeling, and 59 percent state that they want to have more information about where their food comes from with particular focus on what is "local." Furthermore, 71 percent of consumers surveyed say they harbor concerns about conventional agricultural practices and trust brands that are transparent about their practices.

Deutsch says while turkey continues to grow in deli buys, an increasing number of today's consumers are more knowledgeable and selective about what they are purchasing.

"Consumers are concerned with their health, weight and longevity, and they believe natural and organic products, free of



PHOTO COURTESY OF OLLI SALUMERIA

genetically modified organisms, offer the benefits they seek for themselves and their families," she says.

"We know that consumers also are concerned about sourcing and sustainability because of environmental concerns. This combination has been a powerful driver of growing preference for poultry that meets these standards."

Hartman Research reports a 7-percent increase in the number of antibiotic-free claims in meat and dairy products this year, indicating that consumers are concerned about their use. There also has been a 27-percent increase in claims about animal welfare.

Deutsch says Hain Pure Protein is on-trend and committed to providing its cus-

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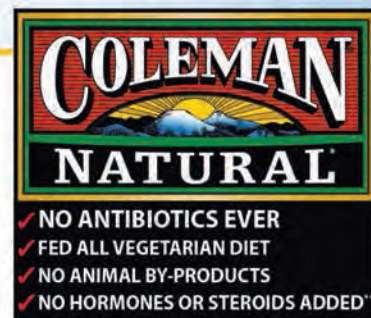
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"We adhere to the highest standards for quality and safety, and are innovative to attract new consumers to the category and our brands," she says. "Our products use only natural and organic ingredients, and we are focused on our deli products to ensure they exceed industry standards with strong consumer appeal and value."

For example, Hain's bulk deli products do

not contain binding agents and additives designed to retain water, and its bulk slicing deli lobes do not include commonly found additives. Therefore, she says, the company's Oven Roasted Turkey is not a formed product; it is whole-muscle turkey containing only turkey, water and sea salt.

What's New?

Heidi Diestel, turkey farmer with the Diestel Family Turkey Ranch, a family-run sustainable farm operating in Sonora, CA,

says the Diestel family has always placed priority on producing high-quality turkey rather than offering products at a cheaper price.

Along those lines, the company introduced a new lineup of pre-sliced deli turkey this past year, which are certified organic, antibiotic free and non-GMO-project verified.

"Diestel's new turkey breast slices are 100 percent vegetarian fed, thoughtfully raised without antibiotics or hormones, and GAP Step 3 rated," says Diestel. They are also free of artificial ingredients, added nitrates or nitrites, gluten, carrageenan and MSG. "These turkey slices are a far cry from the highly processed deli meat found in most sandwiches," she says.

Diestel's new deli lineup includes non-GMO Project Verified Naturally Oven Roasted, Naturally Smoked, Honey Roasted, Peppered Roasted, Herb Roasted, Pasterami Seasoned, Chipotle Seasoned, Certified Organic Oven Roasted, Organic Smoked, Organic Honey Roasted, and Organic Fresh Roasted.

"Deli buyers, retailers and consumers have been responding very positively to our new non-GMO-verified and antibiotic-free turkey slices. We expect Diestel's deli lineup to be well received into 2015. It meets consumers' needs for convenience as well as quality and sustainable nutrition," says Diestel. "Americans' on-the-go lifestyle is staying consistent, while their desire for sustainable choices seems to only be getting stronger.

"Going forward, we predict the deli aisle will shift toward having the majority of its offerings be all natural on some level," she says.

Principe Foods' signature item, an authentic San Daniele prosciutto, is antibiotic free and was originally developed in Italy for Whole Foods because of its strict standards for meat products.

"They are also looking to find suppliers to make their hams antibiotic free," says Zebrasky. "Organic is a little bit harder in Europe to find those raw materials."

Jennifer Johnson, director of marketing for OLLI Salumeria in Mechanicsville, VA, says she is seeing an increasing number of great chefs making their own cured meats, and that is leading to consumers seeking to purchase these sorts of products.

"People are getting interested in the whole process and appreciating the traditional approach," she says. "I was recently in Charleston, [SC] and many of the restaurants I ate in had housemade cured meats on the menu. Edmund's Oast had a huge selection, and I couldn't believe how many choices."

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made with certified USDA organic pork and created with the finest heritage breed pork from environmentally responsible farmers. According to Johnson, the company is working with its farmer partners to grow with them in this regard as consumers are starting to appreciate the taste and flavor of real cured meats.

The demand is not just coming from the high-end marketplace these days. "It's not just the Whole Foods customer anymore, but the customers in the more mainstream groceries are starting to ask for our products," she says. "Without the best quality pork, we couldn't make what we make. With growth, we are adding different formats. We have been known for high-quality, traditional salami and whole cured meats. Now we can bring that same great quality and taste to pre-sliced salami and different size offerings like the large format for the deli case."

A Sustainable Strategy

Today, more than ever, consumers are educating themselves about where their food comes from and how it is produced, which in turn makes them savvy shoppers. With more consumers demanding organic products and those without hormones and antibiotics, it has become necessary for every manufacturer to incorporate this into their strategy going forward.

"We live in a day and age when consumers put a lot of care into the food choices they make for themselves and their families," says Diestel. "Consumers value increased transparency from their food providers. They appreciate ready-to-eat deli meat as a means of providing convenient protein to their families, but they want high-quality, minimally processed and sustainable options."

Laura's Green Fed Organic Beef, based in Lexington, KY, collaborates with a network of like-minded family farmers to raise cattle according to the strict standards developed on owner Laura Freeman's own farm.

That means utilizing lean, premium breeds of cattle like Limousin and Charolais, and raising them without hormones or antibiotics. Freeman also believes that sustainable farming practices and humane treatment would produce happier animals and healthier food.

Products offered include deli meats without the use of nitrates or nitrites, including roast beef, roast turkey breast, uncured beef pastrami, uncured corned beef and uncured smoked ham.

The company also recently began selling Laura's Grass Fed Organic Beef, certified organic by the USDA. The cattle is raised on certified organic pastures free of pesticides

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"Our turkeys and chickens are only raised on family farms, using a corn- and soybean-vegetarian-feed formulation for their diet, and with room to roam," says Deutsch. "We are therefore increasing our offerings of organic products including deli to meet growing consumer demand for organic products."

Merchandising Matters

For delis looking to increase their sales in this category, Collins recommends educating consumers about the producers and their products, thereby helping them to feel connected and invested in what they are purchasing and ultimately putting in their bodies.

"Sampling is the best way to get consumers to purchase products," she says. "Also, offer recipes for the product or a list of food and wine pairings to purchase with



the product. This makes it easy for the consumer."

Johnson agrees that customers need to taste the product, but also need ideas in how to best use it. "We do a pairings card that we also post on our website," she says. "And we just finished shooting a video to educate consumers on the traditional process we take." In Zebrasky's opinion, the best way to merchandise the items in the deli is to have a

staff that can explain to customers why this particular product is different than the one that sits next to it.

"I think a large number of customers already understand organic and understand antibiotic free, but the meats have to be tagged and the claims have to be true," she says. "When someone can explain the pros and why it's healthier to eat, sales are bound to increase." **DB**



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Creating Sales Opportunities



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Savvy cross merchandising gives retailers a leg up

BY LISA WHITE

Deli departments that are not cross merchandising may be missing out on incremental sales. By pairing complementary products, retailers can promote multiple categories simultaneously, increase impulse sales and boost profits.

"Cross merchandising is the easiest way to demonstrate a meal solution to a customer and make it easy to immediately purchase without having to walk the store to pick up ingredients in different departments," says Sharon Olson, president at Olson Communications, based in Chicago, IL.

The supermarket deli offers many oppor-

tunities to accomplish this, as there are a wide range of items that can be effectively positioned together in a display to capture more shoppers' attention.

Advantages Of Cross Merchandising

Two main merchandising objectives in this retail channel are the basket build and acquiring new customers. Looking across different departments, including deli, meat, seafood and produce, is the key to building appealing displays as well as increasing sales of multiple items.

"Produce and deli have traditionally been perfect partners, and today even more so

because of consumers' interest in fresh produce and the healthfulness of protein from the deli," says Olson. "Delis can also partner with meat and seafood departments by pairing delicious and appropriate side dishes that make it easy for consumers to put together a special dining occasion at home without preparing everything from scratch. Side dishes can be particularly labor intensive to make at home, and it's an easy choice for consumers to pick up something irresistible when the suggestion is made at the point of purchase."

The biggest benefit to suggestive pairings is convenience. Because today's con-



sumers are seeking timesaving alternatives to eating out and costly catering, this technique provides delis with an opportunity to step up to the plate. This type of merchandising works best when it's suggestive of a solution, whether it is tonight's dinner, a meal for entertaining or a special occasion, such as a holiday.

"Suggesting a few items to put together a spread for a small impromptu party for customers who didn't have time to order ahead or have a large enough party to make catering trays a realistic option is effective," says Olson. "Another option is to suggest more innovative sandwich ideas that are a simple twist on favorites that pair meat, cheese and a specialty bread all from the deli. Or it could be as simple as pairing condiments like specialty mustards with different deli items to add new appeal to everyday sandwiches."

Supermarkets have to get past the fact that departments are typically run independently, which helps discourage out of the box thinking and successful cross merchandising techniques. In fact, having secondary placement for different items is beneficial to all departments.

"Secondary placement gives customers the idea of trying two products together," says Valerie Trainor, vice president of marketing and innovation at The Snack Factory, based in Princeton, NJ. "It's also about basket build and stores providing a foodie perspective in terms of creatively pairing food."

Fresno, CA-based Valley Lahvosh Bak-

ing Co.'s line works with seafood, spreads and meat, lending to a number of cross merchandising possibilities. Another advantage of cross merchandising is the ability for a variety of manufacturers to share demo costs with sampling programs.

"It's really a win-win for everyone, since manufacturers can share costs for demos and stores have the ability to highlight multiple items and get them into other departments," says Jenni Bon-signore, Valley Lahvosh's marketing manager. "Our larger-sized crackers can be used as a pizza crust, but this is not something most consumers would consider without a cross merchandising display."

By locating not just complementary products but also recipe ideas with these items, consumers are given the tools and a blueprint to create new dishes. Cross merchandising from department to department also creates multiple touch points to serve as reminders that items can be purchased and consumed in more than one way.

"For example, hot-to-go soup in a deli serves as more than a prepared foods sales vehicle. It should also be used as a sampling platform to encourage trial of different varieties and flavors of soups that don't have to be eaten in the first 24 hours," says Bob Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, located in Fall River, MA. "When a consumer learns that a soup hot-to-go can also be purchased to heat up at home, that consumer has now been afforded a second

occasion to use a product."

In addition, cross merchandising within the deli department can drive larger purchase tickets in the prepared foods area when positioned as a combo deal. Stores also can incorporate these displays and purchases with reward programs.

"We have seen grocers find success with punch cards, where the tenth soup and sandwich combo is free, as well as bounce-back offers to lunch customers that encourage them to try a dinner or even a breakfast day part purchase," says Sewall.

These displays warrant additional attention and space during certain times of the year. For example, pairings should be emphasized during the holidays

and for other occasions.

"I think cross merchandising is more impactful during the busy fall and holiday seasons," says Mary Shepard, director of sales, retail and foodservice at Fortun Foods, Inc., headquartered in Kirkland, WA. "Usually it seems to be best utilized around a theme, either football, at home parties, holiday meals or everyday meal solutions."

Effective Selling Techniques

Although cross merchandising can be effective, there are ways to help increase its success rate even more.

"Selling more products through cross merchandising is about translating the trends in a context that is delicious and meaningful for an individual store's customers," says Olson. "Store managers on the front line will know if they have more requests for specialty products or healthful meal solutions, and cross merchandising that keys into trends customers want have the greatest chance for success."

The more unique and creative the display, the more attention it will typically garner. And, in many cases, the manufacturer will do much of the legwork. As a case in point, The Snack Factory recently co-promoted its Pretzel Crisps line with hummus and included a recipe booklet with pairing ideas in its displays. Recipes are often used as a starting point to merchandise ingredients together.

"We often have our lahvosh displayed on top of the cheese case or on a knee

knocker by the cheese," says Valley Lahvosh's Bonsignore. "It makes it easier for impulse purchases that otherwise would not occur as well as enhancing promotions and providing consumers with additional food education."

For its retail soups, Fortun Foods focused its cross merchandising efforts on the company's Seafood Chowder flavors. "We can be located in the deli as well as the seafood department," says Shepard. "Depending on the consumer's needs at the time, they may have a different mindset when purchasing soup in the seafood department."

Because shoppers generally are looking to fulfill different needs, depending on what department they are in, cross merchandising can help redirect their thinking. For example, in the seafood department, the goal may be to find an entrée, but a soup or appetizer item merchandised nearby can expand the sale.

"Retailers can effectively sell more products through cross merchandising by being creative, experimenting a little in an effort to learn more about the impact different offers have on both sales and margin, and by not being afraid that one offering might cannibalize another," says Sewall. "We rarely see that happen. It used to be retailers were hesitant

to bring on brand named refrigerated soups for fear they would steal share from the private label program. But four out of five times, the result would be that adding branded SKUs would end up lifting private label sales, as well."

Overcoming Challenges

As beneficial as cross merchandising can be, this method also has its share of challenges.

"The biggest challenges involve getting busy department managers to understand the increased sales opportunities that cross merchandising brings to the table for everyone," says Olson. "It is more than giving up some valuable department real estate for a marketing experiment, it's a proven customer satisfaction and profit building technique for everyone."

Dealing with unfamiliar food and its storage requirements also can present quality issues. The importance of keeping these displays stocked and fresh cannot be overstated. Another challenge is finding space for larger displays that may have refrigeration requirements.

"If a deli is focusing on main department items, making room for other foods can be difficult," says The Snack Factory's

Trainer. "When I worked at Whole Foods, we had planning sessions around it that involved brainstorming a list of ideas that could be easily executed."

Creating new and eye-catching displays when cross merchandising also presents difficulty over time. This is where manufacturers can provide further insight and ideas. Cross merchandising does not work when the message is unclear, the display is not well stocked and the appeal is not targeted to a wide demographic.

"Customers want other reasons to go to the grocery store than just to get groceries," says Bonsignore. "Providing a value-added display is something shoppers appreciate and that can make the store a destination."

The advantages of cross merchandising in the deli are numerous. Building basket rings, increasing the visibility of products from other departments, creating incremental sales opportunities and boosting impulse sales are just the beginning.

"It really is all about perception, but cross merchandising done right is extremely beneficial," asserts Shepard. "In this case, you captured the immediate meal solution customer and the customer who plans ahead."

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Making Dough With Flatbreads



Healthy options and robust flavors drive sales

BY ANTHONY STOECKERT

More than ever, variety is key to keeping the ever-popular flatbread category hot, as savvy consumers experience new and bolder taste sensations that they expect to find in such deli items as naan or panini breads.

Indeed, flatbreads have been popular for a number of years, due in part to associated health benefits, as well as its ubiquity across the food and foodservice landscapes. Visit a sandwich shop or casual restaurant for lunch, and it's very likely you'll find a menu section devoted to paninis — grilled sandwiches made with various toppings and types of flatbreads. The word panini, in fact, is Italian for “small bread.”

Meanwhile, traditional naan bread, in addition to being served at Indian restaurants, is now commonly used to make

homemade pizzas and sandwiches or to dip in soups and stews. It can even be cut up and baked for pita chips.

Many of the more familiar types of flatbreads being marketed in this country originated in and around the Mediterranean region, although most countries can lay claim to their own versions. Flatbreads, which often contain no yeast or leavening agent, traditionally are made by combining flour, water and salt — although they can be flavored with a wide variety of other ingredients.

“Flatbreads continue to grow in popularity, largely due to their ethnic background as consumers seek interesting, ethnic foods,” says Warren Stoll, marketing director for Kontos Foods, based in Paterson, NJ. “In particular, panini breads, which are often

described by the grill lines on the bread created from a panini press, are very popular for making sandwiches, especially at deli counters and sandwich shops.”

Growth For Flatbread Sales

Perry Abbenante, general manager of Stonefire, based in Concord, Ontario, says the flatbread segment is growing because the products stand out from typical bakery goods.

“Consumers are also seeing flatbreads on menus when they go to restaurants, and want to recreate those when they're cooking at home,” says Abbenante. “We see more flatbread offerings in unique and savory flavors, as well as healthier options boasting whole ingredients and lower calories.”

According to the Stonefire website, its

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"The extremely high heat produces the big bubbles, airy textures and delicious smoky flavor of an authentic Indian naan," says Abbenante.

Stoll says several flatbread flavors are growing in popularity, including spinach, tomato and onion. Also on the rise, he says, are spicy varieties such as jalapeño, cilantro and chipotle.

Kontos makes about 50 varieties of flatbreads. Those include its Pocket-Less Pita in white and whole wheat varieties; a Massala Nan with fresh, chopped hot chili, onions and oriental spices; a Southwestern Flatbread with a blend of jalapeño, cilantro, green chili and onions. Other varieties include Hummus Flatbread, Pizza Parlor Crust and Tandoori Nan. Stoll says all of those options have helped create a significant growth in sales. "Specifically in our flavor varieties, and different shape offerings," he says.

Karen Toufayan, of Toufayan Bakeries, based in Ridgefield, NJ, says the trend is for continued growth of flatbreads. "The overall category grew by 3 percent last year," she says. "We're seeing a rise in usage ideas. Consumers are finding that flatbreads are extremely versatile and delicious in their everyday meals."

One trend she's noticed is a growing popularity for more robust flavors of flatbreads. "Flavors like garlic and za'atar [made from Middle Eastern spices] are growing in popularity as consumers, in general, are seeking more exotic flavors and variety in their foods," says Toufayan. "We also find that new formats that are user friendly, like our Smart Pocket, have experienced broad receptivity and growth."

A Healthier Choice

Another selling point to flatbreads, suppliers say, is that they are a more healthful, lower-calorie option than typical breads. Stoll says Kontos has seen an improvement in sales recently and consumers' efforts to live healthier lifestyles are a big reason.

"Kontos manufactures and distributes Greek and Mediterranean foods," he says. "Mediterranean foods are synonymous with 'healthy' in the eyes of consumers — a Mediterranean diet equals longevity. To capitalize on this trend, Kontos recently introduced Greek Lifestyle Flatbread. It has twice the protein and half the carbohydrates with less sugar and calories compared with regular flatbread. Sales of this item continue to increase."

Toufayan says her company has seen

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growth by marketing varieties of flatbreads geared toward healthy eaters, such as whole wheat and multi-grain options, low-carb items and products made with flax and chia seeds.

"One big source for our growth has come from our new gluten-free wraps line," she says. "The four-flavored line has realized such robust growth, we have expanded our gluten-free line to include other breads and even a gluten-free pita chip and gluten-free cookies. We realize the perception of gluten-free items is superior health, and if the taste is delivered, consumers of all types will come."

Stonefire's Abbenante says flatbreads hold a lot of appeal because they're perceived as being more healthful compared with standard breads, and because they offer something different to bring to meals and snacks.

"We see consumers opting for nutritious and unique items to bring some new flavors and interest to their daily home menus as well as items with fewer artificial ingredients and preservatives," he says. "Consumers are more educated and are more conscious of ingredients and nutritional in their bread products. At Stonefire, we use authentic ingredients and traditional baking methods to make our flatbreads, none of which contain artificial preservatives, additives, artificial colors, trans fat or hydrogenated oils."

Consumers Cooking With Flatbreads

Most flatbreads Americans have become familiar with may have their origins in and around the Mediterranean or India, but their uses are global. Abbenante says they make for a versatile, healthier alternative to typical breads.

"Naan bread is an excellent accompaniment to traditional stews and curries, but it is also a fantastic base for flatbread pizzas, wraps and paninis," he says. "Our pita bread offers a way to bring more flavor and excitement to traditional sandwiches and can be cut up and toasted for homemade pita chips. The options are endless for creative meal ideas."

Toufayan says customers are using flatbreads in all sorts of creative ways.

"We are seeing greater use of flatbreads for flexible meals, like personal pizzas, for entertaining, and quick and easy meal preparation," she says. "Consumers are being more creative than ever with their flatbreads. We partner with bloggers to create recipes featuring our products to spark ideas, including appetizers, lunches and more."

Making pizza at home

The growing trend of making pizza at home is another reason for the increasing



popularity of flatbreads. This, according to Greg Caloia, marketing coordinator for Delorio Foods, based in Utica, NY, who says the popularity of homemade pizza stems from the demand for more types of "high-end" dining options. Those high-end pizzas use finer flours in the dough, are more artisan in their nature, and use flatbread crusts.

"Flatbread pizzas are usually thinner than most traditional pizzas, which gives the appeal of a slightly healthier pizza option," says Caloia. "Also, it's more common to see different types of flatbreads than just a white shell. For instance one of our three different flatbreads come in a wheat option which is about as healthy as a pizza can get."

Another growing segment is homemade pizzas for people with food allergies.

"As more people than ever are being diagnosed with Celiac's Disease and/or choosing to go gluten free for health benefits, gluten free pizza has been growing rapidly over the past few years," says Caloia. "It's what motivated us to create our Tasti Grain Gluten Free line of pizza shells."

Delorio's sells white, herb and wheat flatbreads, which can be used for sandwiches in addition to specialty pizzas.

Selling Themselves

Toufayan notes that the restaurant industry, as it often does, is helping direct customers to flatbreads as alternatives to typical breads.

"As people get exposed to flatbreads in the growing restaurant options, like Mediterranean cuisine, they want to experience these healthy, tasty options at home," she says. "Thus, plain white breads and rolls are

being replaced by flatbreads."

Stoll says flatbreads and panini breads often sell themselves, partly because they have natural visual appeal due to their enticing grill marks.

"They have a very appealing look when made into sandwiches and displayed behind the glass at the deli counter," he says. Plus, since the grill marks are already on the bread, you do not need a traditional panini press to heat the sandwich. Any flat, hot surface or pan will do."

Marketing Tips

Toufayan says one thing deli departments can do to sell more flatbreads is to make it easy for shoppers to learn about their uses and health benefits.

"[Delis] need to help educate consumers on the flexibility and variety of flatbreads," she says. "They need to better merchandise the flatbread department, to show one-stop shopping can answer all their bread requirements. That is why our Toufayan bread racks are so popular. They showcase the many type of fresh breads that are available to enjoy for everyday eating."

That everyday component is an important one, she says, because it's one area that can be focused on to create consistent sales, and it's appealing to busy mothers who want to provide tasty and healthy meals for the family.

"Both education and demonstrations of flatbread's versatility can definitely help," she says.

And everyday use means everyday sales at the deli department. **DB**



RETAIL TRENDS: THE SNACK IS THE NEW MEAL

Quick, convenient hits are what today's consumers want

BY BOB JOHNSON

Leading retail deli analysts agree Millennials are ready to take their place as the trendsetters whose choices will decide whether a retail deli rises, or heads in that other direction.

For the generation born the last two decades of the last century eating is about convenience more than about breakfast, lunch and dinner.

"Millennials do not define eating experiences as meals or snacks. They focus instead on eating when and where the urge strikes," says Alan Hiebert, senior education coordinator at International Dairy·Deli·Bakery

Association, Madison, WI. "While 85 percent of Millennials say they seek healthful eating options, 88 percent say they have purchased a snack at a fast-food restaurant in the last month."

Protein On The Go

The need to eat on the go has created a strong opening for deli snacks that are substantial, particularly for offerings that pack a protein punch.

"Protein will continue to be a huge part of what people are looking for; they're even looking at the number of grams," says Steve Dragoo, president of Solutions Consulting

Inc., Franklin, TN, and 2013 IDDBA President's Award Winner.

The Millennials, however, according to Dragoo, are most likely to look for this nutritional information on the front label, rather than the back.

Convenient animal protein, in particular, should be more popular in tomorrow's deli snacks.

"Protein is a buzzword right now – I've even seen some indications that the Atkins diet is making a comeback," says Hiebert. "Studies show most prefer muscle protein over plant and dairy protein. Deli meats are a ready-to-eat source of the protein people



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seek and deli departments might do well to leverage that a bit more than they do right now.”

The mega trend that should continue is the desire to eat relatively frequent snacks, rather than large meals.

“Snacking accounts for more than 50 percent of our eating occasions, and I don’t think it shows signs of slowing down,” says Dragoo. “Three main meals have been replaced by six or seven snacking occasions. Everything I see or hear from retailers or consumers is that people are so time starved they just want to grab some carbohydrate or protein.”

If the dollar and discount stores low cost makes them a threat to supermarkets and their delis, the delis’ reincarnation as a source of convenient and interesting protein makes them a threat to restaurants.

“Restaurants are concerned about supermarket prepared foods,” says Dragoo. “The restaurants are talking about the supermarket posing a threat to at least a part of the restaurant sector. Prepared foods account for more than 50 percent of deli sales; meat and cheese is around 40 percent.”

Natural, Fresh And Authentic

Consumers want foods that are convenient and prepared, but they also want them to be fresh.

“Fresh is the hottest trend in food and retailers who can deliver a fresh experience to their customers will find it gives their entire store a more positive perception in the consumer’s mind,” says Sharon Olson executive director, Culinary Visions Panel, Chicago, IL.

This takes us back generations, not one but two, to the days when home cooking still reigned supreme.

“Homemade has become the new word for quality. Consumers want food that tastes like grandma made it, not food made in a distant factory,” says Olson. “Consumers tell us they are planning to cook at home more often in the coming year. And that often means they are assembling meals with fresh ingredients that provide the satisfaction of a home cooked meal.”

Authentic foods should contain a minimum of ingredients that were not around in grandma’s time.

“When it comes to prepared foods sections, we’re seeing interest in clean labels,” says Hiebert. “IDDBA research shows that the top two attributes deli prepared foods shoppers are looking for are ‘100 percent natural’ and ‘no artificial ingredients.’ Low sodium ranks third.”

Natural will continue to be as important

as it is ill-defined.

“People are looking for the term ‘natural’ on the label,” says Dragoo. “A Consumer Reports survey found that 60 percent of respondents wanted ‘all natural’ on the label. Two-thirds of them thought that meant no artificial ingredients, pesticides or GMOs.”

That survey gives some indications of consumers’ minds as they increasingly take a closer look at the label.

“Retailers can also expect greater scrutiny of ingredients and allergens as consumers become more aware and more demanding,” says Olson.



One item more people are definitely looking for on the label is “gluten free.”

“It looks like gluten free is becoming a permanent part of our food conversation. There were 7,000 gluten free introductions into supermarkets last year,” says Solutions Consulting’s Dragoo.

A new item for some labels will be a few words about the treatment of the workers who made the food, from the fields to the plants.

“Today’s food culture is allowing consumers to connect with farmers, growers and manufacturers in a much more intimate way and consumers want to be more in the know,” says Olson. “They are also interested in the ethical treatment of everyone in the food chain responsible for bringing them their meal. We will be releasing a new study later this year called Dining Ethics that explores those intangibles that impact consumer decisions.”

Artisan foods should continue to fit the profile of being as fresh as yesteryear, and even cost conscious consumers may be willing to pay a little more to experience this authenticity.

“We continue to see a lot of movement around hand-crafted foods, especially cheese. It’s not just imported cheese, it can come from nearby farms,” says Dragoo. “With the emerging consumers, especially the Millennials, price is a consideration but they are looking for food with a story. They want value, but they want it in food that is authentic, hand-made and local. They want to treat themselves.”

Ethnic Millennials are putting their own special stamp on the foods that will be popular in the deli tomorrow.

“The most frequent shoppers in the prepared food section are Hispanics and Asians under 35,” says Hiebert.

The rising importance of young ethnic consumers, and the successful crossover of their tastes, is making a traditional piece of round ware the vessel of the day.

“The bowl has become iconic of the new flavorful gourmet experience. Inspired largely by a wide range of Asian cuisines a savory satisfying bowl is becoming the new comfort food for Americans,” says Olson.

The ethnic influence is also showing itself in the emergence of zesty flavor profiles.

“Bold flavors and foods with more heat continue to gain in popularity,” she says. “A few years ago consumers were just getting used to chipotle pepper and today they want sriracha sauce on everything.”

Surviving Tougher Times To Come

Identifying and riding tomorrow’s trends is particularly important for the deli, because the entire supermarket could be headed for modest losses to the competition.

“Overall, I think the deli industry needs to be aware that traditional grocery retail is projected to lose more than 2.5 percent market share by 2018,” says Hiebert. “Wholesale clubs, super centers, and dollar stores are expected to pick up the slack. IDDBA research indicates that being an ‘enjoyable place to shop’ is one of the key ways to make a store a destination – more important to many shoppers than helping them get the most for their money. A key driver in the changing retail landscape is Millennials.”

Finding the formula that appeals to the Boomers’ kids will be the only way the deli can avoid stagnation, as the low cost dollar store and super center alternatives cut into supermarket sales.

“Millennials and Baby Boomers have

been driving the trends for decades and they still are, but we are taking a closer look at them and dissecting them a little more by age and life stage," says Olson. "The youngest of the Millennials may still be in college, middle Millennials are transitioning their lives to independence and older Millennials are likely to have families of their own."

This generation born the last two decades of the last century has already become the group most likely to visit the deli.

"The Millennial is likely to be the most frequent shopper in the deli," says Hiebert. "Millennials shop the prepared food section on a monthly basis at a rate of 56 percent, compared to 37 percent for Boomers, according to IDDBA's latest research."

The Boomers remain the second most important trendsetters and even as they approach Social Security, they will remain forever young.

"The youngest of the Boomers are in their early 50's and as always they are defining life on their own terms," says Olson. "Fifty is the new 40 at least. If you ask a Baby Boomer what age they consider to be old, they will often state a



PHOTO COURTESY OF OLSON COMMUNICATIONS

number in the high 80's or 90's which is past the life expectancy of most people – Baby Boomers will die before they admit to being old."

As for Generation X, attract the Mil-

lennials and they, too, will come.

"We don't study Gen X much," says Olson, "because our research shows their responses and those of older Millennials are often very similar." **DB**



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Five Ways To Sell More Olives

Start by embracing the next generation of consumers

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

Olives are one of the most ancient foods on our plates. Consider that it was 6,000 to 8,000 years ago when this flavorful fruit was first cultivated on the border between Syria and Turkey, according to definitive archaeological research published in 2013 by scientists at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris, France.

Since then, the olive has been revered in everything from Greek mythology to social media. Today, the trick for operators is to make

what's old new again by touting the latest trends in deli olive products to their customers.

"The olive customer is trending towards a younger demographic," explains Jennifer Hodges, deli category manager for Edina, MN-headquartered Lund Food Holdings, Inc., which operates 14 Lunds and 13 Byerly's supermarkets in metro Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN. "They are between the ages of 20 and 40 and are actively seeking out flavorful olives for uses beyond the traditional."

Raise The Bar With Mixes & Stuffings

Kalamata olives continue to be the best seller in the retail deli. However, says Ann Dressler, manager of the deli and foodservice divisions at G.L. Mezzetta, Inc., based in San Francisco, CA, “the Castelvetro is not too far behind.”

“We’ve recently introduced high-end flavors to the category like olives in truffle oil,” explains Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at the George DeLallo Co., in Mt. Pleasant, PA.

Beyond this, younger shoppers are looking for more than a plain olive in brine.

“We see demand for olive mixes and stuffed olives,” explains Dean Spilka, president of Norpaco Gourmet Foods, in Middletown, CT.

Lunds & Byerly’s have just added a new Kalamata olive salad mix with spices to their offerings.

One of the new products FoodMatch, an importer and distributor of authentic Mediterranean foods, has introduced in the last year is a French Cocktail Mix. The mix contains a blend of pitted green, pink and black olives with lupini beans in a marinade of French spices, peppers and white wine vinegar.

“On one hand there is this huge local food movement and at the same time the U.S. is not a major grower of olives,” explains Brandon Gross, director of marketing. “Our approach is to seek out small family-owned farms in areas where olives grow best and create products that also incorporate other ingredients native to those areas.”

“This holds true for stuffed olives as well. One of our recent product introductions is a green olive from Peru stuffed with Aji chili peppers, which are yellow to orange Peruvian hot peppers that are mildly hot, have a fruity flavor and crisp texture that matches well with these tender mild olives.”

“Olives stuffed with interesting ingredients like garlic, almonds and peppers are growing in popularity as are

organic olives,” says Tracey Schram, senior vice president of business development at Mario Camacho Foods, headquartered in Plant City, FL.

“Eye-catching point-of-sale signage with easy to understand visuals is the best way to call attention to new items,” says DeLallo’s Pozzuto.

It’s also important to introduce new products by providing customers with the opportunity to sample.

“Demos sell,” says Norpaco’s Spilka.

Ride The Healthy Snack Wave

Shoppers are searching out healthy snack foods. Industry professionals predict this will have an ever-increasing influence on sales at retail and olives can be part of the mix.

“Our olives are low in cholesterol, non-GMO, gluten free and Kosher,” says Mario Camacho’s Schram.

“Olives are a super snack food,” says DeLallo’s Pozzuto. “The health benefits of Mediterranean foods have been in the news a lot lately, and with so many colorful options, the consumer has been looking to olives and antipasti as healthful snack items. Smaller snack-sized containers with multiple compartments have allowed the consumer to branch out from their favorites and try new items.”

Education is a huge factor in olive sales and retailers should help spread the word.

“If the customer doesn’t know how olives are beneficial to their health, they could be reluctant to try them,” says G.L. Mezzetta’s Dressler.

Beyond Snacking: An Ingredient

“Many of our customers now shop the olive bar for ingredients rather than only buying olives to eat plain. To this end, we provide a recipe, usually an appetizer recipe, as part of our Olive of the Month program,”

explains Hodges of Lunds.

“We supply our partners with social media content: striking visuals, pairing ideas and entertaining solutions, all the ways to exemplify the olive and antipasti bar as a complete Mediterranean destination — as snacks, entertaining gems and inspiring gourmet ingredients,” says DeLallo’s Pozzuto.

Cross-merchandising is another way to put recipe ideas using olives in consumer’s minds. This applies to both drink and food.

“Spanish olives can be cross promoted with gin as a garnish for a martini. Spanish Manzanilla and Spanish Queen Olives are very popular as are Ripe Olives. The Ripes can be cross promoted with corn or flour tortillas as an addition to tacos or burritos or with cheese as an addition to nachos,” asserts Mario Camacho’s Schram.

The olive bar can be the ultimate time, labor and money saver for meal planning, says FoodMatch’s Gross. “As people dine out less they are looking for something more interesting and are willing to be more experimental at home. Plus, the olive bar offers premium high quality ingredients that could easily be triple the price if you ordered them in a restaurant. This is where cross merchandising comes in.

“Encourage shoppers to get their salad, pasta, chicken or fish and in place of heavy sauces, instead buy olives and other items from the olive bar. These can be tossed into a salad or pasta, baked on chicken or sautéed with fish to make a meal.”

A new twist on the old-fashioned is to encourage olives to be the end product of a recipe. In other words, offer fresh green olives along with ingredients for brining and flavoring, suggests Maurice Penna, owner of M&CP Farms, in Orland, CA.

“People today watch the cooking shows and travel more, both of these expose them to olives. Younger people, Millennials, like to be creative in their cooking. We





PHOTOS COURTESY OF DELALLO

suggested on Facebook that our customers share photos with us of how they cured our olives at home, what seasonings and other ingredient combinations they used. One photo of a big jar of olives curing with red peppers, whole garlic cloves and fresh herbs, almost went viral.

"Therefore, we suggest merchandising our fresh green olives along with seasonings like bay leaves, anise and red pepper flakes so people can cure their own. You could even



put together a base kit with the olives and herbs, spices or vegetables. It's too early to tell if this is a trend, but it does appeal to those in the slow food movement," says Penna.

Pickles Can Bring New Life

Olive bars have been fixtures in many deli departments for more than a decade. At the same time, olive bar sales were only 0.6 percent of deli dollars for the 52 weeks ending

August 30, 2014, flat from the previous year, according to data supplied by the Nielsen Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-headquartered market research firm.

"You need to bring different items to the olive bar in order to attract new customers," says Jeffrey Siegel, president of Farm Ridge Foods, LLC, based in Commack, NY. "This could be a new type of olive or antipasti item that makes a strong visual impact — such as beautiful long

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stem artichokes or pepper shooters.”

DeLallo's Pozzuto agrees. “For olives and antipasti, the biggest trends have been antipasti salads with bold and creative flavor profiles: smoky, sweet, spicy, etc. These flavors go beyond simple snacking and entertaining, but make for inspiring new kitchen ingredients. For example, think of all the unique and easy toppings you could create for a hummus dip from the olive and antipasti bar.”

“Anything pickled is a big trend now. We have added pickled okra and pickled snap peas to our olive bars,” says Hodges.

Pickles themselves can likewise be a potentially profitable addition to the salad bar.

“One retailer told us they were interested in selling pickles on their olive bars. So, we went to our R&D and created a Mediterranean Balsamic Pickle Spear and a Greek Lemon Pickle Chip. Instead of two of their olives that cost \$4 to \$5 per pound and weren't selling well, they replaced them with the pickles that cost \$2 per pound.

“This provided something new and an enhanced Mediterranean experience for their customers and better margins and increased sales for the retailer,” says Farm Ridge's Siegel.

Go Beyond The Bar

Olives are a staple in upscale stores. In fact, 52.5 percent of shoppers at specialty supermarkets either made a purchase or



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARIO CAMACHO

browsed but didn't buy from a self-service cold bar like an olive bar, according to ‘Filling the Gap in Deli and Bakery: White Space Opportunities to Yield Growth and Impact,’ published by the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association in 2013. Conversely, this same report shows only 29.6 percent of shoppers in a traditional supermarket buy or browse the cold bar.

“We're finding that consumers of many economic backgrounds enjoy olives. Therefore, we try to expose our customers to a varied mix of different olives behind the glass

displays and also pack out programs not limiting olive displays to an olive bar setting,” explains G.L. Mezzetta's Dressler.

The key to merchandizing beyond the olive bar to customers of all economic and ethnic backgrounds, are olive prepacks.

“Our pre-packaged olives and antipasti are a great complement to olive bars, as they are wonderfully convenient for cross-merchandizing throughout the store,” says DeLallo's Pozzuto.

Lunds and Byerly's sell pre-packed olives in the deli grab-and-go pizza and pasta cases.

“It's all add on sales,” says Hodges. **DB**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WHOLESUM CHOICE



Selling the Blues

Once relegated to the specialty section, blue cheese is becoming mainstream

BY MAX MCCALMAN AND LISA WHITE

Americans have always had a love/hate relationship with blue cheese, due to this product's stronger taste profile and more limited usage. But just as the selection and flavors of blue have evolved, so have consumers' opinion of this cheese.

"As little as three years ago, blue cheese sales were flat and now we're seeing an increase in purchases," says Jeff Jirik, vice president of product development for Davenport, IA-based Swiss Valley Farms. "This variety has earned its place in the retail deli

case as a specialty cheese."

Specialty cheeses are making more inroads into mainstream supermarket chains. Cincinnati, OH-based The Kroger Co., which is this country's largest supermarket chain with more than 2,600 stores in 38 states, has partnered with New York City, NY specialty retailer Murray's Cheese to set up mini-Murray specialty cheese sections in 12 of the chain's locations, including its King Soopers, QFC, City Market, Fred Meyer, Ralph's and Smith's stores.

Also, Wegman's, which has 84 stores located in New York, Pennsylvania, New

Jersey, Virginia, Maryland and Massachusetts, has recently implemented a cheese aging facility as part of its business. Its 12,000-plus-square-foot cheese cave building is not far from the company headquarters outside Rochester, NY. The chain aims to take the pressure off cheesemakers with this setup by partnering with local cheese producers who provide the fresh cheese for ripening.

David Grotenstein, member and former chairman of the American Cheese Society's Judging and Competition Committee, reports the blue category is the most

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radically changed among all entries in the organization's annual competition in terms of the increase in numbers, originality and overall quality.

A Category Snapshot

Despite this increasing popularity, there are a number of reasons for blue cheese

avoidance, including inferior quality, an aversion to mold, an unbalanced flavor profile or a too salty taste.

Blue cheeses can also pick up unusual discolorations, like pinking. The pink on or in a blue can be caused by mold, protein, yeasts, even a salt. None of these is harmful, but off colors can make the cheese

seemingly less desirable.

The bottomline is crafting quality blue cheese is challenging, and Americans have become more discerning when it comes to this product.

Fortunately, today there are a lot of different types of blue cheeses, ranging from commodity blue cheeses, premium domestics and imported brands.

"In the past, consumers of blue cheese have stuck with one label, but that is changing," says Margi Gunter, brand manager at Lighthouse Foods, based in Sandpoint, ID. "Millennials want to try new brands and will actually seek out different offerings in specialty stores."

Lighthouse Foods offers a hand-crafted blue that is aged 100 days in various packaging configurations. Its Center Cut Blue Cheese is the center of the blue cheese wheel, which is the most flavorful. The company also offers 6- and 8-ounce crumbled pouches.

"People are looking for more natural types of ingredients, rather than processed cheese, so soft cheeses are continuing to grow in this category," says Gunter. "Also, blue cheese is being used in more versatile ways than it has been in the past."

More innovative varieties also are being

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developed. For example, cheesemaker Ira Grable added a smoked version of his Berkshire Blue a few years ago, and the smoke is in balance with the blue flavor. Smokey Oregon Blue also has a balanced flavor profile.

Debra Dickerson of Cowgirl Creamery in Point Reyes Station, CA, looks for blue cheese that showcases the quality of the milk, rather than the blue as the dominant note. One example of this type is Central Point, OR-based Rogue Creamery's mixed milk Echo Mountain, says Dickerson, adding that the trend toward crafting more nuanced blues has opened up a wider appreciation of the category.

"People's palates still have not quite warmed up to blue cheese," says Molly Browne, monger liaison at Cellars at Jasper Hill, based in Greensboro, VT. "We consider our line a gateway blue." This is because Cellars at Jasper Hill creates its line to be balanced and not overly blue, with the flavors of sweet cream and hay.

The blue cheese segment has benefited from the focus on healthy eating. "It delivers a flavor package that's intense for the same amount of calories as a Cheddar," says Jirik. "Plus, blue can be used like a seasoning as a calorie-effective way of adding flavor."

Swiss Valley Farms has maintained its core of American blue cheese while expanding its line to include Blues and Brews, seasonal beer-soaked varieties.

Pairings And Combos

The subtler blues are easier for people to accept, but when it comes to the more extreme blue cheeses, pairings may be more palatable. This cheese is being paired with an increasing array of items, such as beer, wine, chocolate and even vodka. One way to get consumers to try and appreciate blue cheese is to include it in a salad dressing, dip or sauce.

"More companies are offering dressings and dips prepared with blues," says Tom Van Voorhees, manager at Rogue Creamery Cheese Shop.

Some people that shun blue cheeses as a standalone cheese will ask for additional blue cheese salad dressing on the side. "There also has been an influx of blue cheese spreads," says Swiss Valley Farms' Jirik. "Well-made blue is excellent for dipping or pairing with wings or celery sticks."

As with all other cheeses, the blue cheese should stand on its own, without the need for any other accompaniments. Yet, combining it with compatible foods can create a better appreciation for its flavors. "We're seeing blues being paired more with sweet foods, like chocolate and dessert wine," says Browne.

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There can be visual confusion in this cheese category. This is because some blue cheeses may not provide the cue of veining, while others have their blue mold on their exteriors.

Westfield Farm's Classic Blue from western Massachusetts is an exterior molded blue cheese. The *Penicillium Roqueforti* mold is present, the blue flavor easily detected, even within the pure white paste inside. It is a blue cheese with a different visual cue, the blue is on the rind. This application seems to work best for goat cheeses and few goat cheeses have the veining inside.

Rogue Creamery sells hand-wrapped quarter-pound blue cheese wedges geared for the specialty cheese section of supermarkets. The company offers Blue Heaven, a powdered blue cheese seasoning in a shaker that is shelf stable. It can be used on popcorn, French fries or worked into a dip or butter.

"The more innovative retailers have seen success cross merchandising this cheese alongside apples and in pouches by the salad section," says Swiss Valley Farms' Jirik.

Green Bay, WI-based BelGioioso Cheese Inc.'s CreamyGorg and Crumbly Gorgonzola are typically merchandised in the specialty cheese section of the deli department. While most blue cheese can be pungent and crumbly, BelGioioso makes a traditional Creamy Gorgonzola that has a

soft texture and a mild flavor.

"We recommend cross merchandising with produce like pears and salads or with prepared foods like stuffed chicken breasts or tenderloin, or with different breads, crackers, olives or honey," says Jamie Wichlacz, marketing manager at BelGioioso.

Merchandising Blue

One challenge blue cheeses face in addition to being a bit difficult to make is that it is not quite as stable as many other more familiar cheeses. Blues are better stored in colder storage than most other categories — not too dry, but colder storage is usually preferable, as low as 38 degrees F. At warmer temperatures the mold can flower rapidly and begin to dominate the other flavors in the cheese.

Also, as a group, the blue cheeses are not the best travelers. Most blues are open-textured by necessity. A closed-textured blue will be less successful, as the mold will have a harder time permeating the paste. An open texture allows for aeration so that the mold can flower. An open texture blue cheese is often crumbly.

One reason blue cheeses may have had a slower start in the United States is because of the propensity for the mold to 'infect' other cheeses. The blue molds can be aggressive. This has been a concern for most small creameries. Except for the dairies

focused on production of blues, most others avoided the risk of cross-contamination.

It is difficult to define the blue demographic, but these cheeses have a following among young people and also appeal to older turophiles.

"As veterans of blue, we were worried about generating interest in the under 30 demographic, and we've captured that primarily with hot wings blue cheese dip as an entry," says Jirik.

At the retail level, this cheese is typically merchandised in the island of deli departments, along with recipes on the top shelf. "We're also seeing more deli foodservice programs incorporating blue cheeses," says Rogue Creamery's Van Voorhees.

It's the appearance of this cheese that gives it a merchandising edge on deli shelves. "In terms of merchandising, blue cheese has great visual appeal," says Cellars at Jasper Hill's Browne. "It's eye-catching on the counter."

Looking ahead at the category, experts predict the popularity of blue cheese will continue to flourish, as its usage potential grows, the healthful aspects become more publicized and consumer palates adapt to the unique flavor profiles.

"Consumers looking for natural cheeses are causing this category to grow, even as milk prices have risen," says Litehouse Foods' Gunter. **DB**

Embracing New. Embracing Change.



By
Jeffrey Spear
President
Studio Spear
Jacksonville, FL

In case you weren't looking, supermarkets don't change much from year to year. Sure, they adjust their seasonal offerings every few weeks, never failing to let us know which holiday or major sporting event is just around the corner. Aside from these indicators of passing time, however, there's not much noticeable activity.

The sad news is that, at least in the deli department, the foods offered are rarely an accurate reflection of culinary trends or indication of foods gaining popularity. If you've ever attended any of the major food shows, however, where "new" is the name of the game, there are plenty of opportunities for deli managers to recognize and embrace what's new.

At the recently concluded Natural Products Expo East, catering primarily to healthy lifestyle retailers of all description, there was an impressive selection of new foods. Of note were the vegetable-based snacks that represented a simpler, healthier and more nutrient-rich choice over potato and corn chips made with industrial ingredients. Crafted from unusual and surprising ingredients including chickpeas, carrots, cauliflower, kale, seaweed, Brussels sprouts, and quinoa, these products would make a wonderful display adjacent to the deli counter — giving customers healthier options to consider, especially if they are planning brown bag lunches.

While some of these products may seem a bit exotic, they taste great, are fun to eat and can be extremely satisfying. Considering that consumers have become increasingly more health conscious, and reading labels is an integral part of the shopping process, having products like these makes sense. According to Sequoia Cheney, chief executive for Wonderfully Raw, makers of Brussel Bytes and Snip Chips, "When consumers buy our products, they are eating real food. They can spell and pronounce everything we use."

It goes without saying; these strange yet delightful new products are rich with storytelling opportunities. A well-versed merchandiser could easily introduce these appealing and healthful alternatives to the deli department, employing any number of creative strategies.

If your deli department includes prepared foods, there are a growing number of vegetarian and vegan protein substitutes that mimic beef, turkey, shrimp and tuna. Historically, many of these products have not been very well formulated in terms of texture and flavor. The good news is that, while some products still fall short, there are lots of newer offerings that are surprisingly good. Should you agree that featuring vegetarian foods in your display is a

good idea, these newer meat alternatives are worth looking into.

While demand for natural, healthier food options is on the rise, you don't have to attend the Natural Products Expo alone to find wonderfully new, compelling and flavorful products. Arguably one of the best venues for sourcing new food products is the Fancy Food Show — held annually in both San Francisco (Winter) and New York (Summer). When it comes to sourcing some of the most interesting, highest quality and best tasting foods available in the United States, this is the place to be.

While focused on foods that tend to be the mainstay for smaller, gourmet food stores, there is plenty to consider for mainstream supermarkets and their deli departments. Of note is the growing number of producers offering deliciousness in terms of small batch, dry cured meats,

sandwich spreads, condiments and prepared salads. Surprisingly, freshly made sauerkraut and kimchi are gaining popularity among younger consumers and would be timely additions to both the prepared foods section and sandwich bar.

Stocking artisanal, dry-cured deli meats provides

a wonderful alternative to the mass produced national brands. Typically produced by hand and in small batches, they are being well received by customers looking for higher nutrition from the meats they purchase. According to Vanessa Chang, marketing and education manager with Creminelli Fine Meats, "You get a truly European, flavor forward experience from our all-American, hand-crafted products. They're also better because of what they don't have. There's no MSG, industrial nitrates or fillers."

Considering that traceable, locally sourced foods are becoming more desirable, brands like Creminelli make sense. "For us, quality and accountability is huge. It's how we do business," says Chang.

Food producers understand consumers are enthusiastic, adventurous, seek new culinary experiences, enjoy exotic flavors, and are ready to try something different. If you can put your customers first, and have the capacity to embrace more than a few dominant brands, there is a remarkable diversity of foods to consider that will amaze and impress. When you consider the unique and engaging stories behind most of these new products, you have numerous opportunities to enhance the deli experience and, at the same time, build the overall impact of your brand.

The question is whether your deli department is ready to embrace these new products and consumer dynamics or prefers to sit tight, making the same mind-numbing offers, day after day, month after month, year after year. **DB**

If your deli department includes prepared foods, there are a growing number of vegetarian and vegan protein substitutes that mimic beef, turkey, shrimp and tuna.

Blast From The Past

Almost A Century Of Growth



There are not many companies around today that have been in existence for close to a century. One exception is Delorio Foods, Inc., which has been producing pizza, bread and rolls for 90 years.

Brothers Pasquale and Giovanni Delorio, who began their business delivering and selling hearth-baked Italian bread to a number of homes in Utica, NY, founded the company in 1924.

In 1948, the brothers moved their operation to a larger 10,000-square-foot facility on Elizabeth Street in Utica. Production was expanded through 1955, before the company was sold to Tracy Baking Co. that year.

Twenty years later, Giovanni's sons Ben and John Jr. purchased the company, bringing it back to its roots. Two years later, Delorio's expanded its facility to a total of 22,000 square feet.

Many changes occurred over the course of the next three plus decades. The biggest was in 1991, when the decision was made to stop production of fresh baked products in order to focus primarily on Delorio's frozen dough lines. This turned out to be a wise move, as the company soon experienced significant growth. As a result, in 2002, the business was moved to its current location in a 90,000-square-foot facility.

As Delorio's business continued to flourish, the company was acquired in 2007 by Violet Packing, a manufacturer of Don Pepino and Sclafani tomato products based in Williamstown, NJ. Four years later, Delorio's diverted from Violet Packing to focus its efforts exclusively on frozen dough products.

Today, Delorio's offers more than 200 frozen dough products that are distributed nationally and internationally.



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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BelGioioso Cheese, Inc.	39	Cheese	877-863-2123
Blount Fine Foods	9	Soups	800-274-2526
Castella Imports	33	Party Toppers	866-CASTELLA
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Couturier North-America, Inc.	2	French Cheese	518-851-2570
Delorio's Frozen Dough	28	Pizza Dough	800-649-7612
Emmi Roth USA, Inc.	11	Specialty Cheeses	608-845-5796
Farm Ridge Foods, LLC	25	Pickles	631-343-7070
FoodMatch, Inc.	36	Olive Oils	800-350-3411
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Grana Padano	5	Grana Padano Cheese	39-0309109811
Interprofession du Gruyere	13	Cheese	41-26-921-8410
Les Trois Petite Cochons	18	Appetizers	212-219-1230
Litehouse, Inc.	41	Artisan Cheese	800-669-3169
Mifroma	42	Swiss Cheese	239-498-0626
Nuova Pasta Productions, Ltd.	47	Pasta	800-803-0033
Perdue Farms, Incorporated	19	Deli Meats	800-992-7042
Piller Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd.	20	Deli Meats	800-265-2628
Pocino Foods Co.	21	Deli Meats	626-968-8000
Rubschlager Baking Corporation	28	Deli Breads	773-826-1245
Sartori Food Corporation	17	Cheese	800-558-5888
Sunsweet Ingredients	22	Ingredients	800-227-2658
Swiss Valley Farms	40	Cheese	563-468-6600
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