



# DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

AUG/SEPT 2016 \$14.95

## CREATING HOLIDAY BUYING OPPORTUNITIES

### ALSO INSIDE

TAILGATING  
BACK TO SCHOOL  
PACKAGING  
GRAB AND GO  
SOUPS  
ASIAGO  
PROSCIUTTO  
PARTY PLATTERS





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Introducing our famous goat cheese logs  
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# ARTHUR SCHUMAN DEBUTS NEW NAME



Left to Right: Ian Schuman; Elizabeth Schuman; Keith Schuman; Neal Schuman, Allison Schuman.

**A**rthur Schuman, Inc., Fairfield, NJ, is celebrating its 70th anniversary by changing its name to Schuman Cheese.

Arthur Schuman started the business, which was incorporated in 1946. Today Schuman Cheese offers expanded services to complement its original import business, serving as a cheesemaker, processor and product innovator.

As part of its anniversary celebration, Schuman Cheese is introducing Yellow Door Creamery, a new brand that complements Schuman's flagship brand, Cello, by offering a platform for experimentation.

A series of hand rubbed Fontinas are among the first Yellow Door Creamery products; the Habanero & Lime has already earned acclaim from judges in competition. Also part of the rollout: a pair of blue cheese products under Yellow Door Creamery's Brilliant Blue brand, including crumbles and sliceable individual servings.

With the opening of its first overseas offices in 2015, the Schuman Cheese business is primed for growth. Several new products are in the pipeline for 2016, and strategic hires mean new talent is helping shape the future of the business.

Members of the fourth Schuman generation are actively engaged in these developments, providing insight into younger generations through work on innovation strategies and developing relationships with import partners.

Under its new brand, Schuman Cheese will continue its initiatives, such as the True Cheese truth in labeling, which emphasizes the importance of quality and integrity in Parmesan cheese production.

## COMING NEXT IN OCT/NOV ISSUE

### COVER STORY

Going Green

### FEATURE STORIES

Hummus  
Charcuterie

### MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Fried Chicken  
Potatoes  
Pickles

### PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Cooking Oils

### PREPARED FOODS

Pizza

### DELI MEATS

Holiday Meat Guide

### CHEESES

Parmigiano Reggiano  
Gruyere

## COMING IN DEC/JAN

DELI BUSINESS will be taking a look at Retail Trends.

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COMING NEXT



# National Deli Salad Month



[www.refrigeratedfoods.org](http://www.refrigeratedfoods.org)



**The Refrigerated Foods Association  
Announces**

## National Deli Salad Month in July!

- Fork New this year: Partner with food banks throughout US
- Fork Promote deli salads
- Fork Strengthen customer relationships
- Fork Encourage consumers to enjoy deli salads



### *How to make National Deli Salad Month Work for You ~*



- Fork **FIGHT HUNGER** in your community with monetary and in-kind donations
- Fork **PLAN** how to use the National Deli Salad Month logo and materials.
- Fork **PARTNER** with your customers to create attention-grabbing promotions.
- Fork **PROMOTE** deli salads to consumers to encourage more purchases.

*For more details and to download the free Deli Salad Month Logo,  
visit [www.refrigeratedfoods.org](http://www.refrigeratedfoods.org)*



## Announcements



### POINT REYES HONORED

Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co., Point Reyes, CA, was recently awarded the 2016 California State Fair's top award, Best in Show Cows' Milk Cheese, for its Bay Blue line. Additionally, the company's Original Blue won Gold in the Semi-Soft Cheese category. Toma also won Gold in the California Originals Category, while Fresh Mozzarella won Bronze for Soft Cheese. Best of Show is awarded in a finals round of judging where the Gold ribbon winners are re-evaluated out of 169 total entries from 34 separate companies.

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



### ANTIBIOTIC-FREE TURKEY

Perdue Foodservice, Salisbury, MD, has announced that its turkey line is now part of the No Antibiotics Ever portfolio. This includes a wide range of products, such as premium pan roasts, raw roasts, oven-roasted turkey breasts, sliced meats, burgers, franks, sausages and breakfast meats.

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



### ACCREDITED NON GMO

Somerdale International, based in London, England, has launched the first fully accredited, non-GMO British cheese. Cromwell Double Gloucester with Chives & Onions combines the creamy texture and rounded taste of a quintessentially British Double Gloucester with the tang of chives and onions. The cheese has been fully accredited as non-GMO by NSF International under the testing regime and standards of the Non-GMO Project.

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



### HANSON AWARDED MASTER CHEESE MAKER

Arena Cheese, Arena, WI, has announced that Bill Hanson was awarded certification as a Master Cheese Maker for Colby cheese and Gouda cheese at the Wisconsin Cheese Maker Association banquet recently. Originally from Monroe, WI, and learning to make Cheddar, Colby, Swiss and Mozzarella, Hanson has been making cheese for more than 30 years. He purchased Arena Cheese in 1999 and uses traditional open vats to make authentic Wisconsin Colby and Colby/Jack.

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



### MOZZARELLA RECREATED

Lioni Latticini Inc., Union, NJ, has partnered with I.L.C. La Mediterranea S.P.A. to recreate Italy's original Bufala Mozzarella in the U.S. The all-natural Bufala Fresca unveils a distinctive flavor with a creamy texture. The century-old Italian delicacy is made from the milk of grass-fed domestic Italian water buffalo. It has a shelf life of 21 days from the date of manufacture and is available in 4- and 8-ounce sizes.

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



### FLATBREAD PACKAGING DEBUTS

Kontos Foods, Paterson, NJ, has launched a redesign of its retail flatbread packaging. The new look is contemporary with a nod to cultural traditions. With each product, including the pita, flatbread and naan, a distinctive color has been assigned for easier shopper identification. Type faces and graphic devices were chosen to provide clarity and convenient location of information. Also, a QR symbol has been added to each bag that links to recipes on the company's website.

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

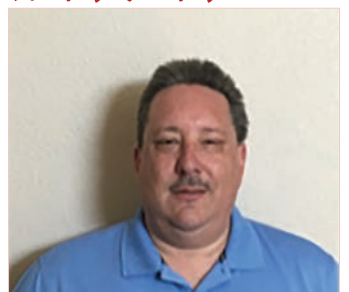


### A FIRST IN GOAT CHEESE

Montchevre, Los Angeles, offers non-GMO 4-ounce Fresh Goat Cheese Logs. The only non-GMO goat cheese certified by the National Science Foundation, the cheese is available nationwide. Varieties include Natural; Garlic & Herbs; Four Pepper; Honey; Cranberry & Cinnamon; Blueberry & Vanilla; Jalapeño; Lemon Zest; Fig & Olive; Peppadew; Pumpkin; Truffle; and Sundried Tomato & Basil.

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

## Transitions



### VENUS WAFERS HIRES SALES MANAGER

Venus Wafers, Hingham, MA, has hired David DiMarino as regional sales manager, West USA. He formerly served as regional manager for PEZ Candy. He also has worked with Fuji Foods, DPI Specialty Foods and Tree of Life.

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

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## New Products



### DIPPING SAUCE UPGRADE

Broaster Co., Beloit, WI, has rolled out new flavor profiles in the Broaster Express food program. Updated sauces pair with the line's seasoned and ready-to-cook chicken fillets, wings, potato wedges, Mozzarella sticks, popcorn chicken and other items. Sauce flavors include Honey Mustard, BBQ, Chipotle, Wing and Ranch. These are offered in easy-to-open 1.25-ounce portion packs to complement the menu's grab-and-go nature.

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



### A VERSATILE FOCACCIA

Boulart, Quebec City, Canada, has launched a new olive oil and herb focaccia with a soft crumb and crisp crust. The versatile flatbread can be used to make pizzas, crostini or to share with some dips. It is made with unbleached, untreated, enriched wheat flour, water, olive oil, sea salt, fine herbs, yeast and malted barley. The line is Non-GMO Project Verified, vegan and has no preservatives, additives or sugar.

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



### ORGANIC SOUPS ARE CERTIFIED

Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA, has launched a line of premium organic soups in seven varieties. These include Organic Vegetarian Chili; Organic Tomato Bisque; Organic Coconut Lentil; Organic Ancient Grain Minestrone Soup; Organic Savory Harvest Bisque; Organic Chicken Tortilla Soup; and Organic Broccoli Cheddar. All come in 16-ounce microwavable cups with a cool rim.

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



### AN ORGANIC ADDITION

Pomi USA Inc., Matawan, NJ, has introduced two new product lines. Organic Chopped Tomatoes is a new, natural tomato product that features Italian organic tomatoes. It is naturally grown and chopped for convenient use. Organic Strained Tomatoes offers smoothness and the flavor of fresh, natural Italian tomatoes.

[www.pomi.us.com](http://www.pomi.us.com)



### CHEESY HOT DIPS

Gourmet du Village, Morin Heights, Canada, has introduced new flavors to its dip line. The full blend of Mexican spices offers recipes for a Classic Baked Mexican dip, Cheesy 'Con Queso' dip, Refried Bean dip or a Layered Mexican dip. The product is served fresh from the oven and includes a rich taste and golden crisp layer of cheese on top.

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



### A CRYSTAL CLEAR DESIGN

Tray-Pak Corp., Houston, now offers several new packaging designs using a glass-like, heat-resistant polymer. The containers enable supermarkets to enhance the appeal and convenience of fresh-to-go foods with value-added packaging. The 8- and 16-ounce containers are suitable for hot and cold foods. This simplifies ordering, streamlines logistics and improves space management in the back of the store. The packaging also is easy to seal and doesn't require an additional adhesion layer.

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



### BOWLS FOR BOTTOM LINE

Anchor Packaging Inc., St. Louis, has unveiled the latest addition to its Incredi-Bowls line of microwavable bowls and lids. The new round 7.25-inch polypropylene bowls are designed to enhance the operator's bottom line for large individual servings or family-size portions. Available in 20, 24, 32 and 40-ounce depths, the bowls share a polypropylene vented lid. The line also includes 5-, 6- and 8.5-inch sizes.

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



### MEAL KITS LAUNCH

Nestlé Professional, Solon, OH, has developed Home Meal Solution Kits for the growing number of consumers seeking convenience. Varieties include Chipotle Macaroni and Cheese, Stroganoff, and Tuscan Style Cavatappi. The company also has introduced Minor's Ready to Flavor bases and sauce concentrates, which are ready to eat without needing additional preparation.

[www.nestleprofessional.us](http://www.nestleprofessional.us)

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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

# How Delis Can Deal With The Aldi And Lidl Threat

The fastest growing food retailer in America is Aldi. Very soon, though, the fastest growing retailer in America will be Lidl. Both are deep-discount concepts, heavy to private label and lesser service.

How will traditional supermarkets respond?

If the experience of retailers in the U.K., where the market share of these deep-discounters now exceeds 10 percent, is any guide, the answer is: Not very effectively.

At first U.K. retailers ignored the threat, thinking these options were downscale and not likely to appeal to most shoppers. But Aldi and Lidl evolved and made their concepts acceptable to the vast majority for at least some of their purchases.

Then U.K. retailers responded by developing tiered offerings of their own private label lines. The bottom tier was made to be price-competitive with Aldi and Lidl. The programs did not have great success for two reasons:

First, top management did not reduce the margin requirements that store management was expected to deliver. So many stores stopped carrying these lower-margin lines or displayed them in such a way that they were guaranteed not to sell very much.

Second, in designing these products, the effort made was to offer something that was low priced enough to woo those shoppers tempted to stray and shop at a deep-discounter while simultaneously making the offer sufficiently unappealing so that the supermarket's standard shopper would find the low-margin offer unacceptable.

It turned out that in the early years there was some stigma to shopping at the deep-discounters in the U.K., but, in time, the perception changed, the number of outlets changed and the economy changed – and some confluence of this made it socially acceptable to shop at these deep-discounters. In fact, since these stores offered a uniform experience for all shoppers, it turned into an advantage as everyone was shopping on an equal playing field as opposed to supermarkets where the ugly packaging of the low tier offer often made shoppers feel as if they were getting the fish eye from other shoppers or cashiers.

One interesting question is what role service delis will play in the supermarket response to deep-discounters that do not offer service.

It would make a lot of sense for supermarkets to seize on their service offerings as unique points of differentiation with the deep-discounters. Focusing on service and assortment certainly is an emphasis that will be difficult, if not impossible for the deep-discounters to compete against.

Yet that seems unlikely to be the response by most retailers. The response is likely to reflect “price investments” to make supermarkets more competitive on price with the deep-discounters. If the supermarkets cannot be competitive on every single item, these discounts will allow supermarkets to be price competitive at least on many key items.

It all sounds fine, but the cost structure of an Aldi or Lidl allows these stores to operate less expensively than a traditional supermarket. So to be price-competitive, retailers will look to do things to reduce costs, say, cut labor hours in every department.

Now consumers will be confronted not with a higher service, higher assortment option that costs more but offers value for money. Instead, consumers will be confronted with long lines, out-of-stocks, stressed employees and, in general, an unsatisfactory experience. And, guess what? It still won't be as low cost as Aldi or Lidl.

Basically it will not be a sufficiently low cost option to dissuade those customers focused on price from going to the deep-discounters. The current supermarket shopper base will grow disenchanted because the shopping experience will have declined sufficiently due to labor cutbacks and efforts to reduce assortment to focus buying power and reduce operational costs.

The big development in retailing is the growth of national chains unconstrained by geographic limitations: Aldi, Lidl, Trader Joe's, Costco, Whole Foods, Amazon Fresh, Wal-Mart and more. What both unites and differentiates these concepts is specialization. Whether it is the epicurean flair of Trader Joe's or the discounting model of Aldi or the healthy luxury of Whole Foods, each concept is able to focus on particular strengths.

Generalists – like most supermarkets – simply won't be as good on any one point as dedicated specialists. Consumers are less loyal today, more prone to go to specialists for special things. When it comes to the deli, supermarkets have an enterprise that, done right, can be an attraction unto itself.

Delis can also be starved of resources and forced to go into battle with undo restrictions on labor and assortment — sending the deli into battle without these two powerful weapons guarantees failure. So the challenge is to position the deli internally as the crucial tool to fight the discounters — a tool worthy of investment. **DB**



*James F. Prevor*





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



by Lee Smith, Publisher

# Controlling Our Food Resources

My mother used to admonish my siblings and I to finish our dinner because children were starving in the world. As we got older, we realized two tablespoons of lima beans were not going to help solve the global food crisis. When I didn't clean my plate my father would eat my slice of pie.

Feeding the world is still nagging at our souls as we realize the extent of food waste. Today, however, it is not parents chiding their children to eat unwelcome meal choices. Rather, it's the reality that resources are limited, the global population is growing and hunger is becoming more of a reality.

Global food shortages often are the result of war, a lack of infrastructure, water shortages or economics. Food is often used as a way to control and punish, subdue or weaken enemies — or to award the victors. Technology can offer miracles, but only to the advantaged who can afford the cost of innovation. The problem is not what we can produce, but what we can deliver.

The supermarket industry and manufacturers often seem to take the brunt of criticism and individuals that waste food get the rest of the negative feedback. We are pilloried because we buy too much and waste too much. Value and family-size packaging encourage consumers to buy more than they need. Out of caution, sell-by dates are often up long before the product is spoiled and stale out-of-code products are thrown out when they still have nutritional value.

Our culture is to buy today for tomorrow. Weekly shopping is the norm and marketing encourages full refrigerators and freezers. Advertising campaigns promise great taste and often don't deliver. Pretty is more cherished than substance and convenience equals a longer shelf life. We want products to last 90 days, travel for hundreds of miles without damage and be safe with unlimited abuse.

Unfortunately, that also means about 30 to 40 percent of food produced and sold in the United States ends up in a landfill while statistics show about 48 percent of households are food insecure at some point during the year. Up to 20 percent

of landfills consist of uneaten food, a significant contributor to methane production, maybe more so than gassy cows. Last, but not least, growing food takes water — lots of water — and water is becoming scarcer every year. Excess production and waste equals the squandering of our resources and the pollution of our land.

Retailers and manufacturers are not the cause of global food shortages and consumers are not their agents. There are two problems — food shortages that are a result of inadequate distribution and food waste. Food waste is something we can, and should, do something about.

There are ways to begin to stem the tide. Encouraging customers to shop more frequently could result in smaller quantities. Smaller packaging sizes will encourage customers to buy appropriate amounts and to throw away less, especially if they don't like what they bought because a retailer encouraged a trial purchase. Buying less does not mean spending less, but it does mean the average household will be able to afford better quality and fresher foods.

A tremendous amount of food is thrown away because it just doesn't taste good. Beautiful peaches that are hard as rocks and sour as lemons, flavorless melons and bitter cucumbers are common. How many times does a consumer buy fruit salad at the deli only to discover the fruit is sour and tasteless?

Prepared food quality is completely within our control. Rotisserie chickens that are overcooked end up in the trash. Salads that spoil in 24 hours or are starting to turn are sold to reduce shrink. Products that just don't taste good are sold because of slotting allowances or deep discounts. Bread and baked goods are given an "extra" day.

Food needs to be special again. It is in everyone's best interest today — and for generations to come.

DB





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CHEESE WORLD SHAKERS!**



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# CREATING HOLIDAY BUYING OPPORTUNITIES

**Display space, integrating items for the season are key**

BY LISA WHITE

**T**he deli department is now holiday central in many stores, as retailers become more creative with not only the selections offered, but also eye-catching merchandising and displays.

There is much opportunity to be had in the fall and winter months, particularly for incremental and impulse sales during Thanksgiving and Christmas.

According to the National Retail Federation's Holiday Consumer Spending Survey, conducted by Prosper Insights and Analytics, consumers celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah and/or Kwanzaa

spent an average of \$805.65 on food items, decorations, gifts and more over the 2015 holiday season, the highest amount in the survey's 14-year history. In addition, holiday sales in 2015 increased 3 percent to more than \$626 billion.

There is a certain window of time where most of these sales take place.

In 2015, Americans spent about \$13 billion on holiday food and beverage items in the four weeks after Thanksgiving that include Hanukkah and Christmas, with meat and seafood accounting for nearly one quarter of CPG (Consumer Packaged Goods) sales, according to IRI, a Chicago-

based market research firm.

The earlier retailers can begin holiday planning, the better. Manufacturers recommend strategic sourcing starting with promotions and planning that is put in place in May, with a big marketing push starting in late September or early October. The process should be completed prior to November and the Thanksgiving push.

This is an opportunity to think outside the box and bring in unique and new items for entertaining and gifting.

"Consumers want to see different items during the holidays, including more pairings, expanded varieties and a larger selec-





forefront than perhaps in times past, the holidays are still a time for indulging in life's pleasures, especially the guilty ones," says Alexandra Tierney, director of marketing at Neptune, NJ-based Alexian Patés.

During Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanza in particular, meals are the centerpiece and the time when shoppers are seeking the highest quality products. For this reason, price is typically not an obstacle for many.

"The most popular holiday foods are the beloved traditional fare, like stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, scalloped potatoes and green bean casserole, however, in addition to these staples, we've seen a growing trend in consumers serving lots of appetizers and a longer time spent snacking before the main feast," says Brenda Killingsworth, trade marketing manager at Reser's Fine Foods, headquartered in Beaverton, OR.

"Shareable appetizers like pull-apart bread rings are growing in popularity and classic savory cheeseballs and baked Brie wheels continue to be best sellers. Warm, melted dips, like spinach artichoke Parmesan served with dipping breads or veggies also are crowd-pleasers, especially for winter holiday meals."

This is the time of year where supermarket delis up the ante with party trays, gift baskets and items that can be either served, brought as a hostess present or gifted.

"Normally, during summer, an appetizer tray may include one thing in the selection that is a splurge item, but during the holidays it's okay to have many decadent items," says Schwartz. "It's not overkill to mix things that typically wouldn't be combined during non-holiday months."

Delis can position items that make the department more of a destination, such as foie gras and wine, during November and December.

"The biggest trend right now is charcuterie," says Maha Freij, president of Les Trois Petite Cochons, located in Brooklyn, NY. "People are really going toward these products during the holidays, since the category covers a wide range of diverse items like meat, pâté, sausage and ham."

Trends and merchandising have a direct impact on one another. From a merchandising standpoint, the big volume mover this holiday is going to be offering the consumer expertly curated pairings of items

that elevate entertaining at home, manufacturers predict.

"Shoppers want to be able to trust the retailer is as much, if not more, of an expert about their product lines, and they are," says Brandon Gross, vice president of marketing at FoodMatch, based in New York City. "When a retailer can thoughtfully pair together products, especially in grab-and-go packaging, they're going to see the impact at the register."

Similarly, giving consumers the option to customize and craft their own holiday pairings can be very effective.

"This is where destinations like the olive and antipasti bar become so valuable over the holidays," says Gross. "A shopper



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN WM. MACY'S



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXIAN PATÉ



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXIAN PATÉ

tion of gourmet cheeses," says Elizabeth Schwartz, director of sales at John Wm. Macy's CheeseSticks, based in Elmwood Park, NJ. "For this reason, delis may want to double the size of the typical floor space during this time period, especially where people enter the department."

### Buying Trends

The holidays are a revenue-boosting opportunity, since consumers are more likely to splurge on decadent, gourmet, high-end food for parties and family gatherings.

"While healthier foods are more at the





can select their favorites and use them for entertaining at home, hostess gifts, healthy appetizers and more.”

### Ramping Up Merchandising

Most consumers enter full holiday mode at the start of November, as the last two months of the year are busy with holiday parties, family events, vacation days and shopping.

“I think it’s important for retailers to

be mindful with their marketing and not overwhelm the shopper,” says Gross. “Impactful holiday marketing should be celebratory and spirited, not forceful and heavy-handed.”

Still, some retailers are missing the boat on maximizing retail space. There are certain parts of the store where everyone expects to be communicated to over the holidays.

“Throwing a curveball into the mix can

be effective,” says Gross. “For example, maybe a packout display of olives by the fresh herbs like rosemary and thyme with a takeaway recipe card for herb roasted olives or perhaps a holiday schematic for a multideck that pairs combinations of olives, antipasti, cheese, charcuterie, nuts, hummus and tapenades by a shipper or display of fresh-baked baguettes.”

It pays to make it convenient, maximize potential impulse shopping and cross merchandise while providing entertaining ideas.

Experts agree that, although there is less of a focus on healthier eating during this time, mixing in more nutritious or lower fat options in holiday displays is a good idea.

“Offering shoppers high-quality, responsibly-produced ingredients for snacking, cooking and entertaining immediately makes what they’re putting into their bodies healthier,” says Gross.

Specialties like olives, artichokes, roasted peppers, marinated mushrooms, cheese, charcuterie, nuts, hummus and red wine are on the Mediterranean Diet Food Pyramid and can be positioned as healthful holiday alternatives.



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**“I ENVISION A SHOPPER PICKING AND CHOOSING FROM A SELECTION OF PRE-CUT MEATS AND CHEESES AND A VARIETY OF ACCOMPANIMENTS TO CREATE THEIR OWN BOARDS AT HOME WITH LITTLE EFFORT AND TIME.”**

— ALEXANDRA TIERNEY, ALEXIAN PATÉS

These items also offer alternatives to fried and processed foods that some consumers seek to avoid.

Also, because the holidays are a time when shoppers are more apt to splurge on a specialty ingredient, retailers have the opportunity to offer up special, and often times healthier, products.

Sampling is recommended for cross-promoting holiday items, along with providing serving suggestions and recipes adjacent to displays.

“This is a great way to introduce consumers to a pairing they may not have tried before,” says Tierney. “Retailers can create a combined display in close proximity to the sampling station, and also offer coupons for those seeking value.”

In addition, throughout the holidays,

deli departments are creating fresh grab-and-go, pre-made cheese and meat boards that are best merchandised in the specialty cases.

This provides a quick and easy solution for those hosting a dinner party, and makes the deli look more festive, as well.

“What I’d love to see is a Make Your Own Meat & Cheese Board feature,” says Tierney. “I envision a shopper picking and choosing from a selection of pre-cut meats and cheeses and a variety of accompaniments to create their own boards at home with little effort and time.”

Delis that provide pairing trays and quick appetizer options geared for the holidays can create a party display. These are best positioned in the center of the floor in shippers or with passive demos that offer

sampling displays and pairing suggestions.

“Any time consumers can taste products or have a visual cue that highlights something unique that can be served at a celebration or gathering, it propels incremental sales,” says Schwartz. “Including limited-time cheeses in a basket or gift baskets with wine and meat pairings also is effective.”

Stores that carry John Wm. Macy’s CheeseSticks’ lines make use of creative marketing displays and presentations. Rather than just sampling from a bowl or plate, product will be served with fruit or placed in a decorative container.

“Our large selection of products need to be sampled, either passively or with full-service demos, so people can try before they buy,” says Schwartz.

Les Trois Petite Cochon starts selling its holiday items in mid-October for sales two to three weeks prior to Thanksgiving, but will be available to order in late summer.

“The best display is when items are merchandised with compatible foods like cheese with pâté,” says Freij. “Our pâté products do well in cheese and wine sections or with Cornish hens, which makes it easy to create a meal.”

DB



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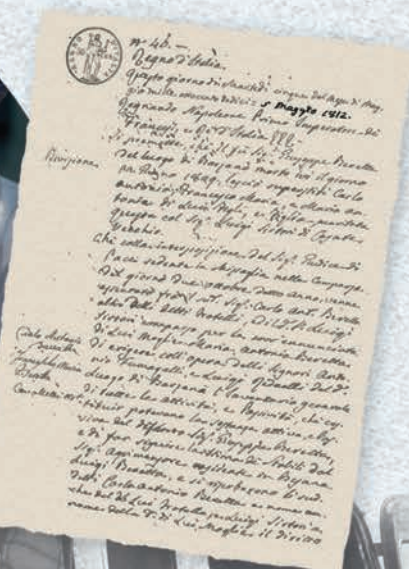
The Beretta family started the business on 5 May 1812 "during the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte", and have since remained in the meat processing branch, handing down the craft and the industry from father to son.

Today the Group is headed by the family's seventh generation. The company's development is due to brothers Mario and Felice Beretta who, after having fought in the Great War, began their adventure in 1920 by opening a butcher shop with a delicatessen in their native Barzanò.

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## FOURTH-GENERATION OWNED AND OPERATED COMPANY REMAINS AT THE FOREFRONT OF DELI TRENDS

In a competitive retail landscape where businesses come and go daily, it's rare for a company to withstand the test of time. And rarer still to do so under the same family's ownership. But Philadelphia, PA-based Dietz & Watson, a leading preparer of premium meats and artisan cheeses, has done exactly that.

"My father's mantra was 'quality above all else,'" said Ruth "Momma" Dietz Eni, chairman of Dietz & Watson and daughter of founder Gottlieb Dietz, who at 91 years old remains heavily involved in the day-to-day operations. "The company was founded in 1939 on the principle that you never skimp or sacrifice when it comes to our products, and it's remained that way ever since."

Gottlieb Dietz trained as a butcher and sausage maker in his native Germany before arriving in Philadelphia. A chance meeting with another local meat smoker led to a partnership, and in 1939 Dietz & Watson was born. Upon Gottlieb's passing, Ruth and her husband lead the company and transformed it from a small producer of sausage and pork to the largest deli meat purveyor in the region.

Today, with the support of Ruth's three children and two of her grandchildren, Dietz & Watson is now the second largest preparer of premium meats and artisan cheeses in the country, with distribution in all 50 states.

Ruth's son, Louis Eni, who serves as CEO of the company, saw tremendous potential when he came into the business.

"We've grown from a small local company to a national brand

and deli powerhouse, and much of that success can be attributed to the fact that everything we produce is handcrafted," said Eni. "Our recipes are developed and perfected through tasting, and many are sourced from our employees. Each and every product is inspected by human eyes and human hands, which isn't easy at our size, but it's crucial. It's all about quality, just as my grandfather said."

Today, Dietz & Watson produces more than 520 items including the varieties of whole muscle turkey breast, all of which are 98% or 99% fat free, including the Gourmet Lite® line that offers 30 percent less sodium than similar items from other brands; roast beef prepared using the highest quality, hand-trimmed, USDA inspected and certified beef; European-style ham and roast pork, naturally low in fat and sodium and gluten-free; naturally seasoned beef franks and sausages; homestyle dinner hams, perfect for the holidays or other special occasions; All-Natural Chicken Sausages in numerous flavors with gluten- and nitrate-free options; and classic artisan cheeses ranging from Aalsbruk Smoked Gouda to Double Cream NY State Cheddar to Swedish Fontina and more.

Dietz & Watson has not only thrived by resting on its laurels, but also has stayed at the forefront of the hottest category trends. The company recently introduced Originals Traditional Family Recipes. A collection of flavorful No Antibiotics Ever, Organic deli meats and franks and rBGH-free cheeses. The Dietz & Watson Originals line reflects the company's 75 plus year philosophy, "Quality Above All Else."

Lauren Eni, vice president of Brand Strategy and great-granddaughter of the company's founder explains, "Being a family business, we've always been motivated by two basic principles: providing consumers quality and

choice. We strive to prepare the highest quality deli products, while also providing consumers with a vast assortment of options. We're the leader in deli, offering unique flavors as well as healthier options. Now we're preparing to be the leader in the ABF and Organic deli market."

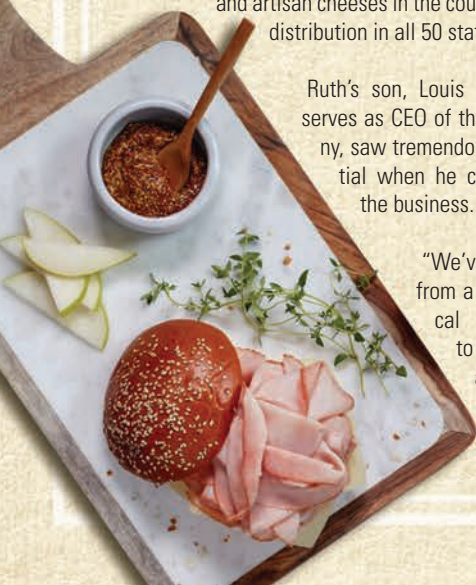
Recognizing the changing consumer definition for 'better-for-you' foods, Originals features antibiotic-free ham, turkey breast, roast beef, all beef hot dogs; organic chicken, turkey and hot dogs; and rBGH-free Swiss, Cheddar and Provolone cheeses.

Dietz & Watson only works with responsible supply partners. Their supply is humanely raised on farms without the use of hormones and from partners who limit their use of anti-biotics to only at the time of illness. The new Originals line is unique from Dietz & Watson legacy products in that they have partnered with farms that provide raw material that never receive antibiotics—ever.

"When my great grandfather talked about quality, he believed the most important aspect of superior taste was in the raw materials and ingredients. We are proud that the Originals line continues this tradition," says Lauren Eni.



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# TARGETING TAILGATING

## Deli offerings becoming must-have items for the big game

BY KEITH LORIA

**T**ailgating at football games, soccer matches or even professional tennis seems to gain momentum every year and the foods that fans bring to spectator sports have gotten fancier and more complicated with many items coming from the deli.

Chad Vendette, director of marketing for Broaster Company, Beloit, WI, notes the company has found quite a bit of planning goes into the tailgating process and the takeout ease of deli offerings helps reduce the activity surrounding the event.

Vendette also says it's convenient for tailgaters to obtain good food at the same

place they might buy cups, plates, beer and other items that support the fun atmosphere at the venue. "After all, what is a tailgate party without the food?"

That's why it's vital for retailers to market their deli products to fans who will be attending professional, college or even high school events, as sports enthusiasts enjoy a big pre-game spread sometimes as much as the game itself.

"Deli items are important for tailgating because, for the most part, they are ready to eat — no prep needed. For convenience, people can forget the barbeque and pick up all their needs for the gathering from the

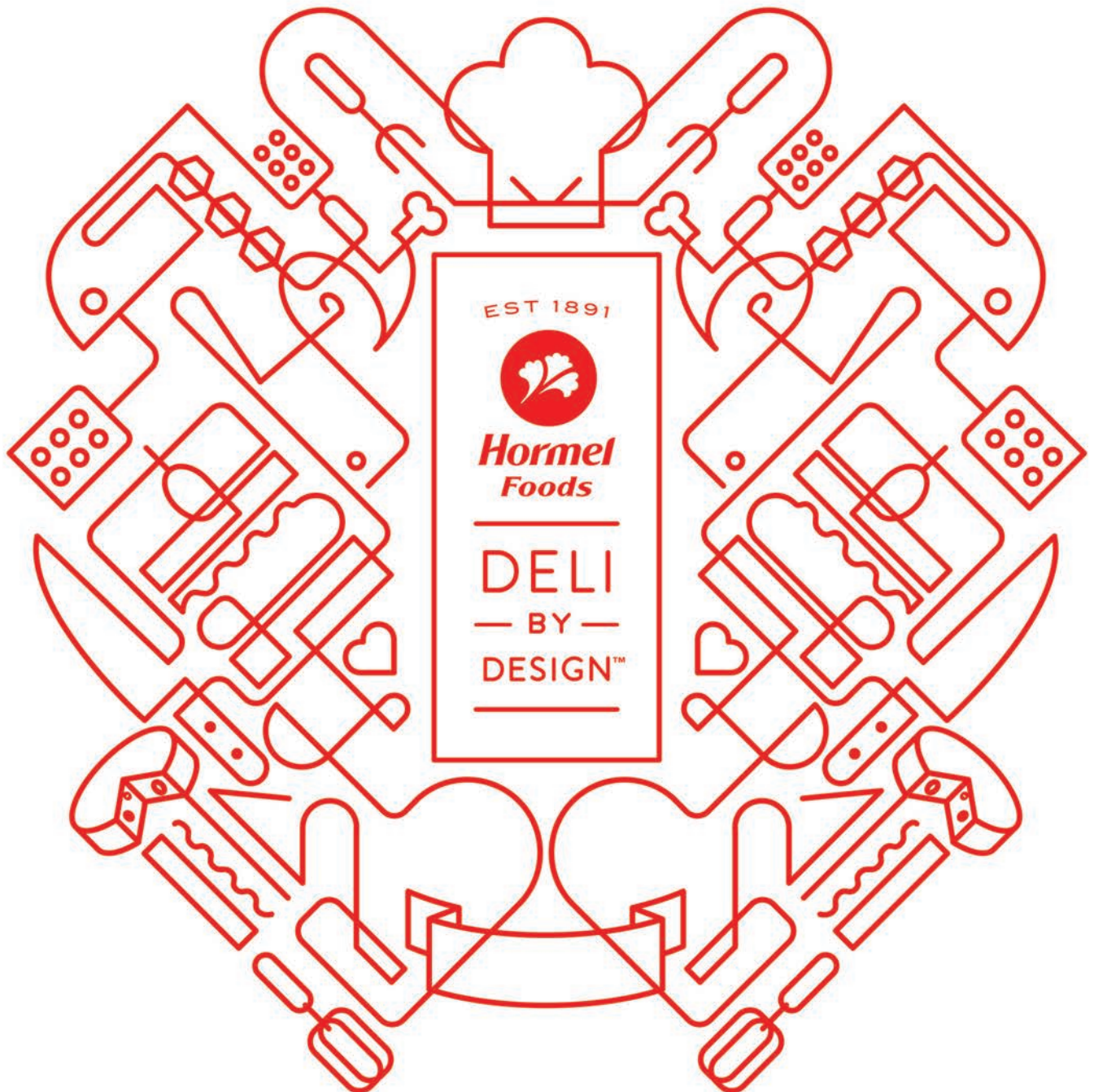
deli," says Mark Miller, vice president of marketing at Simply Fresh Foods, located in Buena Park, CA.

"The factors affecting food and beverage choices are driven by size, scope and past experiences. Some tailgates go elaborate and some go bare bones. I think ease of assembly and convenience are high in importance with price falling to second in priority."

Jessica Brown, director of marketing at Yucatan Foods, based in Los Angeles, says growing trends amongst those celebrating at tailgating events are more unique items that are convenient but do not appear to



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be pre-made.

"Consumers are drawn to items that give off a fresh, homemade feel without the hassle. Delis can capitalize on these trends by providing shoppers ideas on how to add unique twists to pre-made deli items," she says. "Simple additions can elevate a pre-made item and make it a hit at any tailgate."

Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development for Don's Salads, headquartered in Schwenksville, PA, says tailgating trends are most driven by healthy, prepared and convenient foods.

"Fresh is important to some, healthy is important to others, and Millennials want both," he says. "In that respect, local is important to a degree, although exotic has its place as well."

For example, grains such as quinoa are popular but are mostly sourced from outside the United States.

### In Vogue

Deli items that are the most popular are those that don't require much, if any, preparation. Vendette says ready-to-eat items such as popcorn chicken, wings and other items that can be served immediately are the most popular.

"With the lack of any sort of 'kitchen' space, and some venues now banning charcoal grills, the food has to be ready to eat when it arrives," he says. "We are seeing a big trend in grab-and-go food that is also delicious. Gone are the days where any food will do. Tailgaters now seek out tasty options they want and will also be able to offer to their companions at the event."

"They are choosy in the brands they purchase and enjoy the positive experiences that go along with that choice. If

it's done right, tailgaters will return for that product each time they prepare for an event," says Vendette.

The deli items most likely to be taken to a tailgating event include cold side dishes like potato salad, macaroni salad or cole slaw, chip dips, and sides that can be heated quickly on the grill, like roasted potatoes.

"Tailgaters want to focus on the protein sizzling on the grill, not on making side dishes to serve with the main course," says Nathan Roe, category manager of Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR. "Items from the deli, like Reser's American Classics trio of potato salad, macaroni salad and cole slaw provide the perfect complement to

any brat, burger or hot dog. Throw these salads in a cooler with ice and you're ready to go."

Additionally, with tailgating seemingly starting earlier and earlier in the day, Roe has seen hot artichoke dips and sliced baguettes kick off a tailgate party with a little more sophistication and flavor than regular chip dips.

Factors that play into choices for tailgating are price, convenience, ease of pairing and innovation. Brown says by offering deals in the deli that cross promote unique items that pair well together and save consumers money, it makes the purchasing decisions easier.





"The majority of people tailgate simply, however, elaborate setups are growing and influencing other tailgaters," says Brown. "Our guacamole reaches both groups. It is delicious right after it is opened and can also be used as a base for a unique creation like, our bacon guacamole recipe."

According to Cappelli, tailgating consumers seek three things from deli sides and salads: convenience, flavor and the health and wellness factor. One popular item he has seen for tailgating events are grain salads, which are non-mayo based, a high source of fiber and meet vegetarian criteria.

When it comes to flavor, he shares that Asian is growing in popularity, as are Southwestern and Mediterranean dishes.

### Merchandizing Matters

Most tailgaters fall in the middle of the simple to elaborate range. Early in the season tailgating is robust but as the season progresses and there are more critical games and emotional rivalry games, people step up their tailgating efforts. Miller notes retailers need to step up their merchandising as the season progresses, as well.

"Retailers need to cluster popular tailgate products in display," he says. "Suggestive selling through tags and signs like, 'Great for Tailgating and A Tailgate Favorite,' boost sales, too."

When tailgaters are in the store shopping for supplies, their purchase decisions are quick.

"They don't have a lot of time to analyze their choices. They want to make decisions quickly," says Vendette. "Proper displays, correct and easy to absorb branding and good positioning of the products helps a lot."

Cappelli notes consumers often purchase deli items with their eyes, so delis need to do a good job making displays that pop with color and variety.

"We recommend they display the Don's grain salads in the deli case alongside Don's bruschetta and Pico De Gallo," he says. "Once people are drawn into the section, then they will be more prone to try things that are in front of them."

### Final Thoughts

The majority of sports enthusiasts tailgate from the back of a car, or off the tailgate of a pick-up truck. It's a casual process that takes on a life of its own once the party begins.

"However, we have also seen some tailgaters go to elaborate lengths including

tables with white tablecloths and even candles on the table," says Vendette. "We market more to the informal tailgater who is looking to get good food at a location they frequent. Our products fit in very well with this type of exciting event and it's why we say we offer 'food fun on the run.'"

Tailgating has universal appeal, because it is usually connected with something else the person loves doing, be it a concert, sports event or some other communal

activity.

"People don't usually tailgate for the sake of tailgating, they are doing it as a celebration with other like-minded people around an event they are all participating in," says Miller.

"It spans generations because we all enjoy doing something fun with others who feel the same way and have the same connection. Perhaps you might even say, tailgating is good for the soul." **DB**

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# SCHOOLING FOR THE LUNCH BOX

## Capitalize on back-to-school season with transportable, flavorful and nutritious items

BY LISA WHITE

**D**eli items are as ubiquitous for children going back to school as pencils, pens, notebooks and binders.

Yet, today's kids are seeking more than traditional sandwiches, chips and snack cakes, as their more sophisticated palates lean toward upscale fare, such as charcuterie, unique snack boxes, indulgent desserts and healthier ingredients.

"Younger consumers, like everyone, do not want to sacrifice when snacking, and this is especially important for food that's destined for the lunch box," says Kristine Ford, senior director of marketing at Deep River Snacks, located in Deep River, CT. "These foods must deliver on taste and have a clean ingredient deck, otherwise the kids will push back."

Quality also is a key factor. When

making sandwiches at home for their kids, 80 percent of parents say freshness is most important, according to Packaged Facts, a Rockville, MD-based market research firm.

### A Healthier Focus

School lunches have been impacted by the uptick in non-GMO, gluten-free, organic and vegetarian fare.

And there has definitely been an impact with increasing consumer interest in healthier snacks from the deli, but it has changed from years past.

"Where shoppers might have been looking for lower calorie, lower fat options before, now there is a much more holistic view of what is healthy," says Ford. "That is causing a shift in sales over to clean

ingredient labels, Non-GMO Project Verified items and Certified Gluten Free."

This is due to the increasing number of consumers looking to avoid overly processed, artificial ingredients, especially artificial dyes. The Center for Science in the Public Interest estimates more than half a million children in the United States suffer adverse behavioral reactions after ingesting food dyes.

Despite the focus on healthier foods, today's consumers also are more open to full fat products, understanding that certain types of fat aren't all bad and that fat is important for satiety.

Still, more retailers are making a move toward healthier products in the deli, especially with prepared foods and deli meat relegated for school lunches.





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In response to this trend, Hayward, CA-based Columbus Foods recently launched a clean label presliced deli line with no antibiotics or nitrites.

It may be easier said than done, as the industry has not yet caught up to the demand for these products.

"Our data says consumers are 72 percent more likely to buy antibiotic-free deli meats, but the supply chain isn't quite there yet," says Michael Fox, senior vice president at Columbus Foods. "We're working hard to change that and are committed to converting our products as quickly as possible to accommodate the trend in clean eating."

Along with improved ingredient profiles, manufacturers of deli products are unveiling lunch box- and snack-friendly packaging, with smaller sizes of popular lines.



For example, BelGioioso Cheese Inc., headquartered in Green Bay, WI, has introduced its snacking cheeses of fresh Mozzarella and Fontina as part of the company's back-to-school offerings. The line is individually packaged in 1-ounce portions for convenience in packing with school lunches.

"Cheese is a very healthy snack that is high in protein and calcium, tastes good and satisfies hunger with just a few bites," says Jamie Wichlacz, BelGioioso Cheese's marketing public relations manager.

In addition, more supermarket delis are adapting grab-and-go offerings to better cater to consumers looking for healthier options on the go.

"People want healthier grab-and-go options, and delis need to adjust their offerings to meet consumer needs," says Michel Saillant, president of Montreal, Canada-based Boulart Inc.

The company has seen growth in recent years in the supermarket's deli and prepared food sections, with Millennials making up the largest demographic for this department. However, many of these products are now positioned as back-to-school options for the younger set.

Along with cleaning up labels, an increasing number of manufacturers are adding and enhancing product lines with more nutritious ingredients. This has upped the ante for back-to-school lunches, as parents are seeking to provide supplementary nutritional benefits to their children's food whenever possible.

One example is Philadelphia-based Don's Food Products, which has focused on providing healthier options. Its 34 clean label items include five new grains launched in 2014.

"Our focus has been to provide more clean labels, or what many consider natural, items," says Carl H. Cappelli, Don's Food Products' senior vice president of sales and business development.

### Trend Drivers

Retailers can determine the hottest trends in numerous ways, including through manufacturers. Industry trade shows, publications and newsletters also are reliable platforms for manufacturers to highlight new products for retailers to consider.

Consumers also like to share their favorite new products via social media, so paying attention to these conversations will help retailers spot trends quickly and

more easily, say manufacturers.

There are a number of notable trends in back-to-school food items that can be carried over into the supermarket deli.

While the classic snacking flavors continue to dominate in overall volume, manufacturers are reporting strong growth in unique, globally inspired flavor combinations.

In terms of ethnic fair, Asian flavors, along with Southwestern and Mediterra-



nean, are growing in popularity.

Proof of this trend — Deep River Snacks' Ninja Ginger Kettle Chips continues to gain momentum in sales and consumer interest.

"Spicy flavor profiles, like our Peach Habanero HONCHOS, are also really popular with the older kids, and parents are accommodating [these preferences]," says Ford. "Of course, all categories are being impacted by consumer demand for convenience and on-the-go solutions, and that's driving a lot of innovation in pack size and format."

Increasing diversity in the U.S. also is exposing families to new flavors, while foodie culture induces an ever-growing appreciation of the food experience, and more interest in experimentation. This includes the back-to-school lunch set.

"And it's not just adults; food rates as one of Gen Z's top obsessions, ranking higher than music or sports," says Ford. "Consumers are striving to get closer to the origins of their food, and are placing value on authenticity, both in terms of brand and product."

For Deep River Snacks, along with transparency in ingredients, the emphasis has been on sharing the company's heritage, talking about its founder, and the commitment to 'give a chip' via its charity partners listed on the back of its bags.

Convenience, innovation and efficiency are some important drivers. However,





## “GRAINS CONTINUE TO GROW IN POPULARITY, ALONG WITH NON-MAYO BASED FOODS THAT ARE A HIGH SOURCE OF FIBER AND MEET VEGETARIAN CRITERIA.”

— Carl H. CAPPELLI, DON'S FOOD PRODUCTS

manufacturers agree that the most important thing driving back-to-school offerings in the deli is the healthy eating trend. People want to limit preservatives, additives and added sugar, and are looking for clean products more often.

Consumers increasingly want to know what's in their food, according to Chicago-based market research firm, Technomic.

Since 2009, the number of health-focused consumers has increased 38 percent; according to United Kingdom-based market research firm Dunnhumby's *Healthy, Wealthy & Wise* report. These consumers accounted for 25 percent of all global consumers in 2014.

As part of the healthier eating trend, more deli departments are increasing vegetarian options with foods such as veggie patties.

“People are becoming more aware of what they are eating and making more

effort to eat fresher and more natural products,” says Saillant. “This is why we are seeing a lot of healthier, unprocessed options.”

The Internet provides a wealth of information on trends and products that kids are looking for as back-to-school lunch options. Looking at blogs and social media sites like Instagram can be interesting sources of inspiration for retailers. It's also easy to see what is trending and what chefs and foodies are cooking with to better gauge the trends.

“Today's back-to-school trends are primarily driven by healthy, premium, prepared and convenient items,” says Cappelli. “Fresh is important as is healthy, but Millennials are looking for both attributes.”

Those seeking a cleaner label tend to prefer fresh or exotic foods, and healthy trumps local in many cases. Still, kids will not sacrifice flavor and taste for health and



wellness.

“Grains continue to grow in popularity, along with non-mayo based foods that are a high source of fiber and meet vegetarian criteria,” says Cappelli. “Much of this is driven by growth in vegetarian and vegan diets.”

Healthy, individual snacks that are easily added to a lunch box have been trending for a few years and continue to be popular. “The drivers continue to be the need for convenient, healthy options for on the go people, whether it's for snacking or pre and post workout sessions or children's lunches,” says Wichlacz.

In addition to healthier ingredient profiles with clean labels, kids today are seeking more snackable options. This is in line with the trend in mini meals as opposed to traditional lunches.

Packaging and pairings run the gamut in this category. For the back-to-school segment, it's not just the single-serving variety snack packs that are selling, but also creative pairings, such as tortilla chips bundled with single-serve salsa. This makes it easier for parents to choose unique options for their children as well as get lunch together more quickly in the morning for kids.

Snacking now represents approximately half of all U.S. eating occasions, according to the 2015 IDDBA *What's In Store* report.

In fact, snack food categories are growing faster than traditional meal products, with Mintel Group Ltd., a London-based market research firm, predicting snacking

## BACK TO SCHOOL LUNCH TRENDS

**S**upermarket deli back-to-school displays work best when comprehensive, colorful and healthy. Along with the ubiquitous deli meats and cheeses, here are suggestions for upscale, kid-friendly lunch box options that can create enticing displays to attract children of all ages and their parents:

- Healthier choices that are non-GMO and organic
- Clean ingredients, minimalistic label and fresh is best
- Sandwich toppings, including hummus, flavored spreads and tapenades
- High quality packaging to accommodate smaller, mini bites
- Sides, which may include chips, pre-cut vegetables or nuts and seeds
- Bread options, such as pitas, tortillas, bagels, rolls and flatbread
- Snacks of various types, such as crackers, popcorn, raisins, protein bars, pretzels and trail mix
- Single serve beverages, including bottled water and juices
- Bold flavors including Asian, Mediterranean and Southwest
- Vegetarian and vegan options that showcase bright colors and eye appeal





in the U.S. will grow 31 percent to \$28.6 billion by 2018.

Columbus Foods of Haward, CA has addressed this trend with its Paninos line, a bunless sandwich combination that is positioned for back to school merchandising and easy transport in lunch boxes. This includes prosciutto, salami or chili salami rolled with a slice of cheese that offers 26 g of protein.

"We are hearing how big salami is with kids," says Michael Fox, senior vice president, Marketing and Innovation of Columbus Foods. "The big thing for us and what retailers are looking for is cleaner, healthier products and items presented in clear snack boxes."

Some product lines are inspirations for lunch box themes. For example, Columbus Foods is launching a football shipper salami chub that ties into the football-entertaining occasion that could be a launching pad for something similar with a back-to-school theme.

When it comes to targeting the consumer, it's the parents that are making the lunch box purchases, but there is a strong influence from their children.

"Parents are the focus of back-to-school food shopping, but are inspired and buying based on kids' needs," says Fox.

There are challenges for supermarket delis targeting the back-to-school lunch consumers. Although the majority of retailers' efforts for this category have been offering convenient, quick and healthy bundles, it can be difficult managing shrink.

Still, being able to put fruit and snacks together and present these combinations in the deli, where there is labor for proper handling makes sense.

"For example, delis can take our charcuterie or Paninos, slice these and present the lines in a different format," says Fox. "It's more convenient when the work has been done, yet we don't see it in a lot of places other than at more upscale stores."

Presenting back-to-school items in a

convenient format, such as in a tray for foodservice, also makes it easier for time-strapped customers to grab what they need and go.

To that end, Columbus is currently working with retailers on a grab-and-go charcuterie line tailored toward kids.

"Smart retailers will talk to their customers to better understand what they are looking for as well as look at data and what's trending," says Fox. "It's also important to see what other retailers are doing as well as those in other store departments, which can provide innovative ideas."

### Marketing Techniques

Some retailers have registered dietitians on staff who are on point with current trends and may influence in-store marketing.

"BelGioioso Snacking Cheeses are marketed with our signature A Smile with Every Bite phrase on the packaging and an actual smile on each individual package," says Wichlacz. "Children do refer to it as the Smiling Cheese, so I could see where they may influence a purchase."

Parents are the ones with the buying power and they try to make healthy choices that will also please their kids. Kids are tough critics so they determine if parents will buy a certain product again. So in a sense, both consumer groups drive back-to-school purchases.

Retailers are using different marketing techniques, as they seek to attract the attention of parents as well as their kids.

"Fresh ingredients are getting much more prominent visibility, and better-for-you attributes are front and center on signage," says Ford. "Kids are buying in, but only when the product delivers on taste."

Deep River Snacks has been concentrating on sampling with high school students for its new line of organic flavored tortillas, HONCHOS.

"For Millennials and Gen Z, I think concerns about sustainability also play a big role in their food choices so products like HONCHOS, which is organic, and our kettle chips, which are Non-GMO Project Verified, have a strong appeal," says Ford.

It can be difficult for supermarket delis to adjust marketing tactics to target different consumers with broad age differences.

This is why these departments need to be clear on the merchandising message. The challenge is to bring in promotional vehicles. For this reason, it can be advantageous to bundle in chips, shelf-stable salami

and other items that can be merchandised in an ambient format.

Shippers and non-refrigerated displays also are effective.

"Stores need to offer more prepackaged kits to go after the back-to-school occasion," says Fox. "There is no need to change point of sale or be constrained by necessary refrigeration."

Smart retailers promote around the back-to-school occasion where they can, since there's not a lot of real innovation in marketing these products.

"Delis have taken traditional approaches, but the more creative stores that break through and do occasion-based displays are typically successful," says Fox. "We try to partner with stores to create merchandising solutions that communicate the products' benefits for back to school."

Retailers are offering and promoting more variety as a result and are including a lot of cross promotion in the deli section in order to stimulate sales.

"For example, they add a basket of fresh bread and some different options of spreads and sauces to make it easy for people to grab ingredients to make lunches for the next day," says Saillant. "With back-to-school offerings, it's all about convenience and efficiency."

Those retailers who pay attention to trends for the younger set, mix in unique and flavorful options for lunch boxes and create displays that are appealing and convenient can capitalize on this lucrative segment.

**DB**





# DELI PACKAGING



# TARGETS CONSUMER NEEDS

## Convenience and sustainability by design

BY CHRIS AUMAN

**A** number of consumer demands are driving trends in the deli department these days.

Environmental concerns intersect with the desire for convenience. Food safety needs merge with packaging that is heat resistant, easily microwavable and offers more choices in smaller-sized portions. Package transparency reveals the contents of food containers earning consumer trust as more premium ingredients enter the deli space.

For all of these reasons packaging innovation is necessary to appeal to every consumer segment.

### Sustainability

Consumers don't have to choose between convenience and sustainability, as Jeff Lucash, vice president sales at Placon in Madison, WI, notes. "This isn't really an either/or type of question," says Lucash. "You can easily have packaging that is 100-percent recyclable and made from recycled post-consumer material that is also convenient."

Placon designs packaging with several

criteria in mind — from convenience and aesthetics to leak resistant and ease of opening. This approach offers convenience and sustainability in a single container.

Sustainability and eco-friendly products are no longer the exception in retail packaging. It's the rule. As Jennifer Barnes, product manager for Robbie Manufacturing headquartered in Lenexa, KS, points out, "Consumers today expect that packaging is environmentally friendly and rely on their retailers to supply it. It's no longer a selling point. It's become an expectation."

Jason Horbac, assistant product manager for Sabert Corporation in Sayreville, NJ, reports that Sabert has addressed consumer demands for sustainability with its Green Collection, which features 100-percent compostable and biodegradable material in its containers. "There's been an uptick in the type of environmentally friendly packaging the consumer wants to see," says Horbac. "We have this type of packaging that really performs."

### Transparency

"Consumers have a bigger trust factor when they can see what they're buying,"

says Emily Blair, business development manager of Milliken & Company, based in Spartanburg, SC.

"The packaging you see within the store perimeter — a lot of that high-clarity packaging that allows retailers and food manufacturers to merchandise their food — typically is not heat resistant. What we've developed is high-clarity polypropylene that is heat-resistant plastic. Now we have achieved a level of clarity that allows you to showcase and merchandise your food, but also has the functionality of heat resistance for microwave applications or heated displays. It's also recyclable. It has a good story all around."

Transparency isn't just about the visibility of the product itself as Sean Norton, marketing communications manager for Milliken, points out. "What we're seeing is both transparency in packaging as well as with what is in the products — the labeling of the ingredients. Tamper evidence is also big — security of the product is critical to the consumer."

Lucash believes Placon's line of products used in the deli serve dual purposes in storage and transparency. "When retailers



are using our products, they're using them because of their ability to keep foods fresh longer while showcasing delicious foods in ultra-clear containers with clear 'windows' to the food." This is accomplished through a combination of minimal side ribbing, anti-fog lids and unique container shapes.

### Heat Resistance

Heat-resistant packaging is another innovation that opens up many possibilities for delis. "This is a really new technology we're starting to see in commercial applications," says Milliken & Company's Blair. "What we're talking about is the new innovation of being able to combine heat resistance at high levels of clarity. It gives retailers the ability to utilize it in the grab-and-go section, in the ready fresh prepared foods, so they can get the best of both

those demands. As Barnes explains, "More and more retailers are adding grab-and-go programs in the deli department and at the check-out area hoping to grow dollar share for both the prepared foods sector and other items the shopper may pick up while coming in to grab their lunch and/or dinner."

"Millennials are on the move," says Theresa Pope, director, marketing for Placon. "They don't have time to come home from work and prepare a meal from scratch, and sit down for three square meals a day. Instead, they want to go to a deli, grab some healthy snacks, cut fruits and veggies for convenience and purchase freshly prepared salads or ingredients that are packaged in a way that allows them to make a healthy meal at home when it's convenient for them."

**“WHEN A CONSUMER SEES A CRUSHED PACKAGE, THEY MAY WONDER IF IT DAMAGED THE FOOD, WAS DROPPED OR TAMPERED WITH. SO STRONG, HIGH-QUALITY CONTAINERS RESISTANT TO CRUSHING ARE IMPORTANT IN EASING FEARS.” — JEFF LUCASH, PLACON**

worlds. There's a handful of applications that have gone commercial late last year and early this year, and we're working on a bunch of other programs now."

Barnes at Robbie Manufacturing says retailers are making the switch from rigid dome containers to flexible packaging for many types of food — whether it be in the cold case, service counter or prepared foods counter. Robbie offers Hot N Handy, a flexible pouch line designed "to keep moist products like rotisserie chicken moist and juicy, and to keep products like fried chicken, potato wedges, popcorn chicken or tenders warm and crispy," says Barnes.

She says retailers who use flexible packaging in their deli departments offer their customers value-added benefits in functionality and product freshness. "One of the biggest advantages passed on to the consumer is that our flexible pouch is a one piece model and will not pop open creating leaks in their shopping bag or in the car," she says.

### Grab-And-Go Convenience

While consumers on the one hand may want convenience, they don't want to see excessive packaging. Manufacturers have tailored their product designs to meet

Millennials are active, for certain. But the need to accommodate busy lifestyles can be seen across all demographics. Working families are just as busy as 20-year-old college students. "It's across the board," says Horbac at Sabert. "It goes across all age ranges, not just Millennials. You have Baby Boomers who are global consumers, so you really have to cater to that whole type of consumer, not just a demographic."

### Don't Forget Utensils

Sometimes utensils are required to make that quick meal happen. The same concerns of sustainability and ease of use apply to cutlery. Peggy Cross, chief executive and founder of Ecotensil, based in Corte Madera, CA, found this out the hard way on a road trip with her two young children. She realized she had no utensils for her kids to eat the yogurt she had brought for them and used her skills as a package designer to devise a quick substitute out of cardboard.

Since she developed the company's all-purpose disposable spoon, the uses for it have expanded, and Cross hopes to see the EcoSpoon's usage grow in the deli. "As a mom I would love to see our EcoSpoons

on pre-packed fresh deli mini meals that are made with kids lunch boxes in mind," she says. "What a winning combination of fresh and healthy, yet easy for mom to toss right in the lunchbox without even having to think about the spoon."

The EcoSpoon is not only eco-friendly, it's also versatile, as Cross points out. "It doesn't take up any space; it's completely flat" she says. "You can put it on something and the product is still stackable. If you have a napkin packet you can stick it in there. You can put it on the deli counter and have people grab them. They're extremely space efficient and have a much greener footprint."

Sabert has explored this area as well as using compostable CPLA for its line of utensils. "This really helps complete an offering and allows customers to feel confident with their sustainable choices," says Horbac. "A lot of cold cases and delis are switching to compostable packaging, but they did not have a cutlery option and we added a complete offering of disposable choices for our customers."

### Food Safety

"Safety will always be a concern for consumers," says Placon's Lucash. "We design structurally sound packaging that's resistant to crushing as well as tamper-evident packaging. When a consumer sees a crushed package, they may wonder if it damaged the food, was dropped or tampered with. So strong, high-quality containers resistant to crushing are important in easing fears."

Anchor Packaging, based in Saint Louis, "regularly engages in consumer research to assure our products are ready to fill the needs of our customers," says Marilyn Stapleton, director of marketing. "Concern for food safety and quality along with tampering in the past would indicate the retailer needs to protect foods that are pre-packaged for grab and go. Most have been using large wrap-around labels and processors have been adding extra shrink bands to secure the packages."

Consequently, experts agree that packaging innovation is necessary for deli departments seeking to appeal to every consumer segment. And paying attention to eco-friendly packaging that is versatile, safe and geared toward convenience will position delis at the forefront of the continued trend toward merchandising fresh, ready-to-eat meals featuring premium ingredients.

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# Grab And Go — Fresher Is Better

## It pays to create a spot for healthy but quick food

BY BOB JOHNSON

**T**oday's consumers want to eat more nutritious food, but they appear to have less time for complicated meal preparations.

This dilemma, however, can translate into a tremendous opportunity for delis that merchandise fresh and healthful offerings with grab-and-go convenience.

Taking advantage of this potential market begins with establishing a distinct grab-and-go section that makes a statement to your customers. "More and more stores are putting grab and go in sections rather than scattering the products around," says Mark Miller, vice president for marketing at Simply Fresh Foods in Buena Park, CA.

Some stores find it worth the time to develop an eye-catching ambience for this special section. "We have been seeing investment in signage and a coordinated look for the deli," says Todd Muller, brand manager at Nestlé in Cleveland. "Make it look like a restaurant. We've seen a lot of retailers use signage and dedicated space

for grab and go. Some retailers are even putting deli items on fliers, which they didn't do before."

The look and feel of the section, some producers believe, can decide whether or not it will be a success. "Grab-and-go sections should be bright, engaging and informative," says Jessica Brown, director of marketing for Yucatan Foods in Los Angeles. "As grab and gos are emerging in stores, they are appearing to be an afterthought not a highlighted location. Invite shoppers to browse grab-and-go sections through shelf messaging. Educate shoppers on what the section has to offer, such as convenient lunches and health snacks."

During the busiest hours it may pay off to create an even more visible place where consumers can find all of the takeout options, and even enjoy the convenience of dedicated cashiers.

"The first thing is to have it located in a separate kiosk during peak hours, and have a separate check out for it," says Sharon Olson, principal at Olson Communications

in Chicago. "To have repeat business, give customers a great experience. Make it delicious and have a service staff that acts like they care."

### Deli Means Fresh

An essential part of the experience that brings customers back to the grab-and-go section in the deli is the special quality of food. "Customers are looking for fresh," says Olson. "The deli has the trump card because it is perceived as fresh. There's more of a connection to the people who are making it."

Suppliers, too, are competing to offer products that look and are more healthful and fresher.

"We're getting away from chicken fingers that have been under the heat lamp for four hours," says Muller. "There will still be comfort foods, but with a new contemporary twist. Ancient grains are making an impact, like quinoa. It gives it a healthy, fresher halo."

Salad products, vegetables and plant-





PHOTO COURTESY OF NESTLÉ

based proteins are finding their way into grab-and-go products. “Grab and go is trending healthier,” says Miller. “I see hummus, salsa and yogurt offerings. I also see veggie trays where it used to be Slim Jims and beef jerky.”

Producers sense the trend and are expanding their lines of healthful salads. “Consumers are seeking healthier fare when it comes to takeout in the deli,” says Nathan Roe, category manager for Reser’s Fine Foods in Beaverton, OR. “We’re listening, and in six months we’ll launch a reformulated line-up of our American Classics deli salads removing artificial colors and flavors. Consumers are seeking these healthier grab-and-go salads.”

Reser’s also is developing a line of deli salad kits featuring produce grown at least relatively locally. “We’re teaming up with regional produce suppliers to create super-fresh kits that can be mixed together and prepared on-site and re-packed for grab and go,” says Roe. “A few salad kits include the Watermelon Radish salad, Kale & Beet salad, Mango Tomato salad, and Brussels Sprout Apple Slaw.”

Dishes high in fiber, including vegetarian or vegan foods, also are gaining in popularity.

“The trends are mostly driven by healthy, premium, prepared and convenient,” says Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development at Don’s Food Products in Schwenksville, PA. “Fresh is important. Healthy is important. Healthy versus value varies by consumers, but Millennials want both. Grains continue to grow in popularity. Non-mayonnaise-based salads with

a high source of fiber that meet vegetarian criteria also are gaining in popularity. Much of this is driven by growth in vegetarian and vegan diets. Asian Flavors are growing too.”

Even high animal protein dishes do better if they spare the sodium and fat.

“There is definitely a trend toward healthier items,” says Emily Blair, business development manager at Milliken & Company in Spartanburg, SC. “People want more meals on the go or at home without sacrificing quality. They want foods with high protein, low sodium and lower fats.”

Fresh is the byword when it comes to both vegetables and meats. “People want lots of fresh vegetables and high protein from fresh meats,” says Sean Norton, marketing communications manager at Milliken

& Company.

For the carnivores among us there are even special ways of preparing fried chicken that leave it delicious but far healthier.

“People are looking more toward healthy food,” says Chad Vendette, director of marketing at Broaster in Beloit, WI. “Our products are pressure fried so they have less fats and calories. The product is fried in a sealed vessel. It raises the boiling point of the juices so they don’t boil out of the food. If they boil out, they are replaced by fatty oil.”

The look of the packaging on grab-and-go items can add to the feeling of quality and freshness. “You need a consistent brand look,” says Vendette. “Eye-catching graphics help. A brand is something people know and trust. We believe our Broaster name helps. It helps people make that quick decision. First and foremost is good food. Customers want a tasty experience and they’ll come back to you. The expectations are increasing. People are looking for a branded, tasty experience. They are looking for something beyond.”

The packaging not only promotes the brand, it can convey the message that the food inside is fresh. “Making the food look fresh and attractive is essential,” says Muller. “If delis want to compete with restaurants, spend a little time on premium packaging.”

An important part of making the food look fresh is to let customers clearly see what is inside the package. “It helps to have better visuals of what’s in the package,” says Miller. “The top is clear so you can see





what you are getting.”

For some demographics quality extends to the sustainability of the packaging and utensils. “Millennials and Xers are getting more aware of sustainability,” says Peggy Cross, chief executive of Ecotensil in Corte Madera, CA. “Our business is really starting to grow by word-of-mouth. It reflects on the store; it’s a cheap way for stores to make a statement to their customers.”

Ecotensil has a fully compostable utensil that fits snugly with a grab-and-go deli package. “We have a tasting or sampling utensil that’s used for sampling salads or demos,” says Cross. “Our Blue Dot products are longer lasting, and they are for fuller packages. EcoSpoon4 is particularly useful because it can so easily go with deli salads or parfaits. You can just put it under the label.”

### Meal Deals To Believe In

For many consumers, especially trend-setting younger ones, eating is no longer governed by defined meal periods. “People are buying meals all day long, whenever they get hungry,” says Miller. “People eat everywhere — in the car, at

lunch and at home for dinner. It’s at home and everywhere else.”

Even among the convenience eaters drawn to the grab-and-go section, however, an important question is what to eat at home after returning from the store with a week’s worth of food.

“When consumers are in the store already, the question is, ‘Can the deli offer them a value?’” says Muller. “You’re shopping for the rest of the week, but what are you eating tonight?”

This is where the deli has an opportunity to develop promotions that combine elements of the meal. “Stores can do a lot of interesting promotions,” says Olson. “Maybe offer some bundling, like pulling the whole meal together.”

Producers are developing combination products that lend themselves to bundling for a convenient meal.

“We’re recommending putting together home meal kits,” says Muller. “With beef Stroganoff, we supply noodles and sauce, the retailer adds meat and sour cream, and then presents it well.”

Some grab-and-go items already include all the essential ingredients of a compact

meal. “While there is no doubt that many consumers are motivated by healthfulness, there is a significant shopper base interested in grab-and-go foods that offer value, energy and a hearty eating experience,” says Alan Hamer vice president at Stefano Foods in Charlotte, NC. “Calzones, panini and stromboli fit the needs of consumers seeking a filling lunch, an after-school snack or dinner,” he says.

These foods can easily be put in the microwave for quick warming and then eaten on the go. “Once heated, these items check off a few important consumer asks: they deliver restaurant quality at home or on the road, are made with bread/meat/cheese components for a complex and interesting dining experience, and are hand held for eating on the go, all with easy clean up,” says Hamer.

Increasing the number of items can enhance the message that the deli grab-and-go section offers convenient quality.

“If you increase the variety of offerings and the quality, it will be successful,” says Blair. “People want a good culinary experience while maintaining the convenience of grab and go.”

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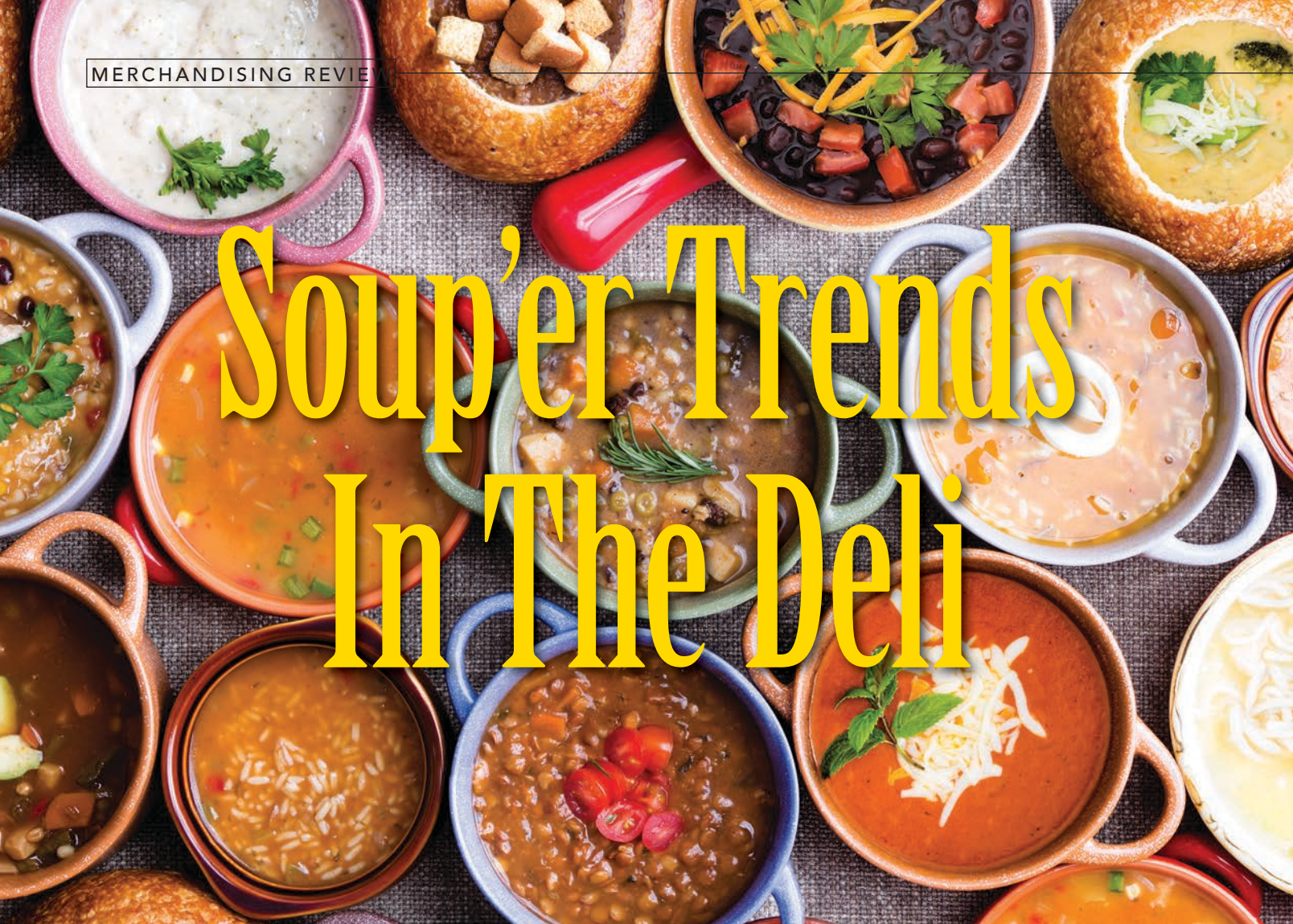
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What's on Trend  
Just Made Taste  
Sensible Choices  
Authentic Recipes







# Soup'er Trends In The Deli

## Increase soup sales with four hot tactics

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

**S**oup now stars on restaurant menus as starters, snacks and sides. Customers seeking a combination of freshness, foodservice-quality fare and fast-fixing convenience are shopping the deli for soups more than ever.

In fact, deli soups have grown 30 percent over the past five years to 1.3 percent of department sales, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data for the 52-weeks ending May 28, 2016. What's more, Nielsen numbers also show soup's slice of total deli prepared food sales reached 2.3 percent over the past year.

Deli operators can heat up sales even more by capitalizing on points such as shoppers' desires for trendier flavors, clean ingredients, restaurant-style variety and soup-plus meals.

### 1. Comfort Meets Cosmopolitan

Soup flavors such as chicken noodle, tomato bisque and broccoli Cheddar are all top sellers, according to Mary Shepard, national sales manager for Fortun's Finishing Touch Sauces, in Kirkland, WA. "Our sales are still with the comfort food-style soups. I don't think we'll see that go away anytime soon."

This fact plays out on the retail side at grocer's like Mariano's. The 37-store chain, which operates in the Chicago market and is owned by the Cincinnati-headquartered Kroger Co., does very well at lunch with its prepared foods – soups included, according to information shared by Technomic, a Winsight Co., which is a Chicago-based food and foodservice industry-focused research and consulting firm. Some of the retailer's rotating offerings include chicken

wild rice, chicken dumpling, chicken noodle, Santa Fe turkey, Santa Fe chicken, beef chili, lobster bisque, clam chowder, minestrone, vegetable and Tuscan white bean and kale.

"Taste and freshness are the attributes consumers won't back down on; they're the most important factors," says Deanna Jordan, manager of consumer insights at Technomic.

"I also find interesting the importance of the role of craveability. It's nearly on par with freshness and taste. In fact, our research shows 71 percent of consumers say it is important the soup they purchase satisfies a craving. We think of soup often as a comfort food, so this fits right in with that story."

Trendy veggies, boned-up broths, dairy-free creams and ethnic ingredients are





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ways manufacturers are taking traditional comfort-style soups and morphing them into more cosmopolitan fare.

"We like to tinker with exotic profiles, but rather than ethnic flavors for us it's more about trending ingredients," explains Greg Powers, chief executive of Boulder Organic Foods, LLC, in Niwot, CO. "For example, kale continues to be popular. We recently introduced a chicken quinoa and kale soup. Cauliflower is a trending ingredient. We'll introduce a creamy cauliflower soup later this year."

Manufacturers say both broth-based and cream soups remain popular.

"Broth bases are growing healthy for those seeking a lighter yet nutrient dense meal that is still satisfying to the soul," says Mike Seeger, vice president of retail sales for Kettle Cuisine Inc., in Lynn, MA.

"Bone broth is especially gaining traction as consumers focus on gut health as an alternative way to improve wellbeing through nourishing the body with functional foods rather than empty calories.

"We have recently introduced a ramen bone broth with chicken. Hot soup bars offering homemade bone broths with options to customize by adding in proteins, vegetables, noodles and spicy sauces, such as Sriracha, are a growing category," he says.

Thick creamy soups are still a main sales driver due to the comfort nature, according to Joe Jolly, chief executive of the Plenus Group, Inc., in Lowell, MA. "We do see a movement away from dairy in creamed soups and instead a greater use of nut-based milks like coconut and almond."

Use of ingredients such as coconut milk

is becoming more prevalent in Asian-inspired soups. For example, one variety manufactured by Blount Fine Foods, in Fall River, MA, is a Thai-style coconut broth.

"We're exploring the boundaries of Asian flavors such as Japanese, Vietnamese and Korean," says Jolly. "The challenge is that ingredients like rice noodles, for example, are delicate. However, we're working on finding a way to deliver these flavors and bring a whole new level of excitement to the deli. One aspect I see growing is the move of a miso base from ethnic to mainstream. Over the next four to five years, I foresee miso as a common background in everything from vegetable soups to chilies."

## 2. Healthy Choices 2.0

Move aside salt, sugar and fat, it's the concept of 'clean ingredients' or those with minimal processing that is driving the tastes and shopping habits of today's customers. In fact, 52 percent of Millennials, 51 percent of Generation X'ers and 45 percent of Boomers ranked 'is made with natural ingredients' as important food choice factors, according to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's December 2014-published report, *Tapping the Momentum of Millennials in Fresh Perimeter Categories*, by the Hartman Group. This same report also showed Millennials don't want GMO's (44 percent) or allergens (41 percent) and do look for organics (41 percent).

A good example of a retailer putting an emphasis on organics is Kings Food Markets, a 25-store chain headquartered in Parsippany, NJ. More than a third of the

17 soup offerings in the grocer's prepared foods department are organic. Flavor profiles include minestrone, cream of broccoli, tomato bisque, carrot ginger, lentil chickpea and black bean.

Organic soups accounted for 2.4 percent of total deli soup sales for the 52 weeks ending May 28, 2016, according to data supplied by the Nielsen Perishables Group.

"The biggest trend in the past one to two years is transparency or cleaner labels. Traditional soups can be full of artificial agents like thickeners. Consumers today don't want this. They want the ingredient list to read like a homemade soup recipe with real fresh, clean ingredients," says Bolder Organic Foods' Powers, whose company's products are organic, gluten-free and GMO-free.

Gluten-free and vegetarian are the fastest-growing call-outs for the top 200 soups and salads, according to Technomic's April 18, 2016-published study, *Soup and Salad will Face Heightened Competition as the Definition of Health Evolves*.

Kettle Cuisine will launch its new Farm and Kettle line in October to meet consumer demand for clean ingredient soups. The line's name comes via the company's partnership with farming companies like Bell & Evens, which raises chickens on a vegetarian antibiotic free diet; Cabot Creamery Cooperative, a cooperative of family farmers in New York and New England; and Meyer Natural Angus cattle, which are humanely raised on vegetarian diets that are antibiotic and growth hormone free. The five-item Farm and Kettle line features organic chicken and vegetable soup, organic chicken chili with beans, cauliflower Cheddar soup with broccoli, tomato Cheddar soup and organic beef and farro soup.

## 3. The Right Stuff

Chefs satisfy diners with an ever-changing 'soup of the day' selection plus signature soups as menu staples. Also, in the deli, it's important to offer a balance of creative and customary selections. For example, Kettle Cuisine's Seeger recommends that in order to please all palates while still remaining innovative, deli operators should feature global soups alongside a good mix of vegetarian and vegan offerings as well as hearty and traditional soups.

"Essentially, you have to give shoppers a reason to buy the soup in the deli, rather than in the canned food aisle. This



is achieved through quality, uniqueness and freshness. Within this realm, you can and should experiment with new and unique flavors. Again, it's about turning them on to deli soup over the ease of buying canned soup.

"Entice them, which harkens back to the role craveability plays. And when I think craveable, I think signature soups. Ideally, shoppers are thinking 'I need this soup because I can't get it elsewhere'," says Technomic's Jordan.

More delis are adding kettles in-store to compete with restaurants, according to manufacturers.

"It depends on space constraints, but around 8 kettles is the sweet spot for a hot soup program. Aim for 4 to 5 of these to be the consistent sellers and rotate flavors among the other 3 to 4 kettles on a daily or weekly basis," suggests Kettle Cuisine's Seeger.

Deli operators average a dozen or more flavors of cup or reheat and eat soups merchandised in refrigerated displays, say manufacturers.

"It's important to not disappoint your fan base," says Fortun's Shepard. "For example, post a soup of the day menu so

loyal customers who come in specifically to buy a particular soup will find it available.

Also, pay attention to seasonality. For example, a fresh asparagus with garlic soup in the spring, seafood soup on Fridays during Lent, and hearty winter squash and potato soups in the fall and winter."

One good retail example of seasonal selections is the limited-time Thanksgiving Every Day soup sold at QuickChek, a 140-unit chain based in Whitehouse Station, NJ, according to information shared by Technomic. A second example is pumpkin bisque and stuffed pepper soups on the Autumn Harvest menu at Buehler's Food Markets, a 14-store chain headquartered in Wooster, OH.

#### 4. Soup Makes The Meal

Consumers like combos, according to Technomic's Jordan. "We're seeing pairing menus as a trend throughout foodservice, but perhaps the ultimate pair is soup and salad."

Soup and salad combinations are popular; especially in the rapidly growing fast casual segment of foodservice, and this is driving the combo meal to the deli, according to Robert Sewall, Blount Fine Foods'

executive vice president of sales and marketing. "We've seen an evolution in soups from appetizers and sides to the main part of a meal."

Beyond salads, soups are ideal for cross merchandising with other deli products to create meal combos.

"Since hot soups aren't normally set next to sandwiches, create an opportunity to sell both by placing small kettles with two to three soup varieties at the sandwich counter. Then, take it one step further with a made-to-order combo like tomato bisque and grilled cheese," recommends the Plenus Group's Jolly.

Crackers, croutons and artisan breads as well as soup toppings such as olives and olive tapenade, whole grain mustard, sundried tomatoes, pre-sliced pepperoni, bagel and pita chips, and cheeses such as Parmesan, blue, goat, Feta and Gruyere offered bar style are great additions.

"Creative cross merchandising can turn buying soup into a real culinary experience for the customer. It also enables deli operators to gain incremental rings as well as repeat visits by customers who come back for more soup," says Kettle Cuisine's Seeger.

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# The Delicious Identities Of Asiago

**Popular cheese can bring a little bit of Italy to the deli**

BY HANNAH HOWARD

**T**he time: a thousand years ago. The place: the ragged and stunning beauty of the isolated Asiago Plateau, which lies between the Po River and the Southern mountains of the Valsugana Valley. The region will later become part of the Province of Vicenza and a popular and picturesque skiing destination. In summer, modern hikers will delight in meadows of knee-high wildflowers and savor the scent of vanilla orchids and fragrant herbs perfuming the crisp mountain air. But on the dawn of the eleventh century, it lies in the defunct Republic of Venice's outskirts, remote and sparsely populated.

The bordering Astico and the Brenta mountain ranges shield the plateau against harsh winds and keep the air clear and clean. The land is isolated; shepherds are hard at work tending flocks of sheep and making cheese, a method of preserving their cattle's milk and providing the shepherds with quality protein and fat year-round. The first "Asiago" is sustenance during long, fierce winters.

As the Renaissance flourishes and the population grows during the 1500s, cows replace sheep as the predominant grazing animal in the region's mountain valleys. Cows produce more milk, and in turn,

more cheese. Beginning in the early 1600s and over the ensuing centuries, cheesemakers of the plateau perfect the recipe for aged Asiago — also called Asiago d'Allevo or Asiago Stagionato.

These wheels are much the same today. They are relatively small in size, weighing in at 17.5 to 26.5 pounds, crafted with partially skimmed milk from cows freely grazing on the lush grasses and wildflowers of the valley. The cheese is traditionally aged to three different maturities — Asiago Mezzano (4-6 months), Asiago Vecchio (more than 10 months) and Asiago Stravecchio (more than 15 months).

Here at the foot of the Dolomite Mountains, people have been making cheese for a millennium — maybe more — and passing their deep knowledge and passion down to sons and daughters, and in turn, their sons and daughters. The delicious tradition continues today.

When World War I erupted, everything changed. On May 15, 1916, 2,000 Austrian artillery guns opened fire against the Italian lines near Asiago, which sat on the Italian side of the border between the Kingdom of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Battle of Asiago (Battaglia degli Altipiani in Italian) was the start of a grueling three-year defense of Italy's borders, which

ravaged the Asiago Plateau. The region's gorgeous, mountainous countryside turned out to be a boon — the rough terrain helped diminish the Austrian enemy's supply lines, protecting Italy from its invaders.

Suddenly, the sleepy countryside was flooded with upwards of 400,000 Italian troops, fighting to secure their country from the Austro-Hungarian forces. How to feed everyone? Asiago cheesemakers rose to the occasion. They could produce large quantities of Asiago, but the traditional cheese took too long to age. They needed a lot more cheese in much less time.

So instead of making aged Asiago with part skim milk that matured for months, they created a fresh Asiago. Their new cheese was made with whole milk and pressed, aged and ready for consumption in about a month. "In spite of all the destruction and loss of life," says Nancy Radke, who runs Nancy Radke Culinary Consulting, "a new cheese, Asiago Fresco, was born."

Asiago is the story of terroir — environmental factors and character. And Asiago is the story of generations of tradition, expertise, innovation and love.

It's an understandable misconception that fresh and aged Asiago are different versions of the same cheeses. They are, in



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fact, different cheeses altogether.

What most of us picture when we think Asiago is aged Asiago, PDO (Protected designation of origin), also known as Asiago d'Alveo or Asiago Stagionato. This is the traditional hard, savory Asiago, made from partially skimmed cow's milk. Only about 20 percent of the production of Asiago cheese is this aged variety, and much of it is slated for export.

Asiago Mezzano, matured for four to six months, is a semi-firm cheese. Its curd is compact, its color a pale yellow. As Asiago ages, its texture becomes harder and its flavor becomes more intense, complex and expressive. Asiago Mezzano is redolent of toasted hazelnuts and yeasty dough, with a sweet, caramelized finish. As the cheese matures — Vecchio is aged for at least 10 months and Stravecchio for 15 months or more — hints of nutmeg, black pepper and salted caramel emerge. About 10,000 wheels of Stravecchio are crafted each year.

Fresh Asiago, PDO also known as Asiago Fresco or Asiago Pressato, is delicate, with a pliable, almost squeaky texture and a milky flavor. There are lovely notes

of tangy yogurt and rich cream — sweet, with balanced acidity. The cheese is made with fresh whole milk, placed into molds, pressed under pressure (hence the term *pressato*), and kept that way to accelerate its brief aging process — two months at most. The pressed curd “results in the proliferation of small apertures — not really ‘holes,’” says Steven Jenkins, author of the *The Cheese Primer* (Workman). Still, the curds pull apart easily, giving the pale, straw-colored cheese a holey, knobby appearance. While it is beloved in Italy, it is only now making its way to the U.S.

### Asiago On The Table

Both fresh and aged varieties of Asiago make wonderful snacks. With its firm texture and piquant flavor, aged Asiago, PDO is fun to pair with bubbly Prosecco or even sweet Moscato d'Asti. Soft and fruity reds like Barberas and Primitivos provide lovely balance, too. A plate of aged Asiago with candy-sweet melon and smoky cured Speck guarantees a happy crowd.

Soft, tangy and buttery enough to foil tannins, bold fruit and spice, Fresh Asiago, PDO pairs gorgeously with Chianti and

Cabernet Sauvignon. Suggest shoppers serve it with Sauvignon Blanc and a drizzle of honey for an elegant hors d'oeuvre.

Fresh Asiago, PDO is a perfect salad ingredient. It can be cubed and added to Mâche and steamed asparagus; or baby spinach and spring peas. Retailers can suggest it be dressed with a swig of good olive oil and seasoned with salt and pepper for the perfect side dish; or melted in breakfast eggs, scrambled in butter and sprinkled with fresh herbs.

### Pride Of Italy

Fresh Asiago, PDO and aged Asiago, PDO are true Italian originals. Domestic versions have become increasingly ubiquitous — but they are imitations and not the real deal. They often borrow the name without honoring the cheesemaking process, or even the distinctive flavor of real Italian Asiago.

The European Union awarded Asiago with PDO status in 1996. This name-protected designation ensures the product honors the environmental and cultural region in which it originated and is still made today. **DB**



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# INCREASE SALES AND CREATE HALO EFFECT WITH PROSCIUTTO

**More consumers than ever are familiar with, and searching for, Italian dry-cured ham**

BY BARRY SPARKS



**B**esides increasing sales, prosciutto, a dry-cured ham, can create a halo effect for a deli — that unambiguous overall feeling based on a positive perception of one single item.

“When retailers carry prosciutto, it delivers a strong message to consumers,” says Simon Bocchini, president and chief operating officer of Fratelli Beretta USA, a company based in South Hackensack, NJ. “It says they are paying attention to the market and they are listening to customers.”

David Biltchik, chairman of Consultants International Group, based in Washington, D.C., and advisor to Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, agrees with Bocchini,

“When customers find out that a deli carries prosciutto, a high-quality product, they often conclude ‘this must be a good deli,’” he says. “Although more supermarkets are adding prosciutto to their line, it’s an item you can’t find everywhere.”

“Retailers who don’t carry prosciutto need to get up to speed and add it to their selections,” says Sherrie Zebrasky, retail advisor for Principe Foods, a Long Beach, CA-based company. “Millennials and others are looking for it.”

Because of cooking shows, increased international travel and a plethora of infor-

mation online, more consumers than ever are familiar with prosciutto, according to Zebrasky.

## **Knowledge Underestimated**

Bocchini believes many retailers underestimate customers’ knowledge of prosciutto. “It’s a mistake to ignore prosciutto,” he says. “If you don’t carry prosciutto, customers are buying it elsewhere, and you are losing money.”

In the United States, prosciutto is generally prosciutto di Parma or prosciutto di San Daniele, both of which are made in central and northern Italy. Prosciutto di Parma, the most popular in Italy, is produced only in the hills around Parma in northern Italy, while prosciutto di San Daniele is produced in the hilly area around the town of San Daniele in the province of Udine in the northeastern part of Italy.

Newer to the market is prosciutto di Toscana from the area surrounding Tuscany. Its origin traces back to the house of Medici. It is aged with salt and a variety of local herbs.

Biltchik says the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, which consists of 150 producers, was created in the 1960s for marketing and regulatory purposes. Prosciutto di Parma was first exported to the United States in 1989.

Because its production is limited, prosciutto di Parma can be one of the more expensive items in the deli. One-quarter pound of thinly sliced prosciutto, however, can go a long way.

“Prosciutto di Parma is sold in more than 70 countries,” says Biltchik. “It’s one of the strongest brands in the world. It’s a powerful brand associated with good taste and quality. Customers like to buy brand name products they have confidence in.”

Customers can be assured that strict rules and regulations have been followed in the production of prosciutto di Parma, according to Biltchik.

Prosciutto sales have rebounded since the recession of 2008. According to its 2015 sales report, the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma saw healthy growth in the North American market, including a 3 percent increase of whole ham sales and an 8.3 percent increase of pre-sliced packaged sales in the United States.

Although Italy remains the largest market, the United States has been the principal foreign export market for prosciutto di Parma for the past five years. The United States, which accounts for more than half of all dry cured hams from Europe, consumes more prosciutto di Parma than any country outside Italy.

“The United States market, in par-



ticular, continues to grow especially for pre-sliced and longer aged prosciutto di Parma with 18- and 24-month hams more widely available,” says Jason Stemm, vice president of the food, beverage and nutrition practice at PadillaCRT, a national public relations agency headquartered in Minneapolis.

### Pre-Sliced Packaged Is Convenient

The convenience of pre-sliced, packaged prosciutto has been an instrumental factor in its rising popularity. Bocchini says sales are up 8 percent this year.

Initially sold in large hams, skilled people were needed to slice it properly in the deli. Zebrasky cautions prosciutto still needs to be trimmed appropriately and sliced very thin. If not, customers will be disappointed and may not return.

“Consumers are in a hurry, and they tend to appreciate the pre-sliced, packaged prosciutto,” says Zebrasky. “It’s a grab-and-go item.”

She recommends that even if retailers don’t offer sliced-to-order prosciutto in the deli, they should carry the pre-sliced packaged version.

Prosciutto’s appeal has increased in recent years, according to Bocchini. In the past, prosciutto’s demographics had a European influence. But now, it appeals to all demographics.

“Millennials are looking for healthy foods,” says Zebrasky. “And, prosciutto is low in fat and calories, and it has lots of protein. Plus, Millennials are willing to pay for quality.”

“Prosciutto di Parma is 100 percent Italian,” says Biltchik. “And, it’s all natural with no additives, no nitrates and no nitrites.”

Zebrasky says prosciutto is more popular on the East and West coasts, but is spreading into Chicago and other metropolitan areas in the Midwest. She attributes the availability of pre-sliced, packaged prosciutto as a major factor in its growing popularity.

### Year-Round Appeal

Prosciutto has long been associated with the holidays, but its appeal has significantly shifted to more year-round in the past several years, due, in part, to its pre-sliced, packaged availability, according to Bocchini. While peak sales for prosciutto occur from October through January, sales are steady the other eight months.

“People like to serve prosciutto when they’re entertaining,” says Zebrasky. “It’s

considered to be a special item. And although there’s a spike during the holidays, there are plenty of other occasions when prosciutto can be served.”

Zebrasky suggests serving prosciutto during Easter, at summer cookouts and barbecues, pizza parties and any time families get together.

Prosciutto can be used many different ways. One of the most interesting is as a pizza topping, in combination with other toppings.

A 2014 study by Affinnova, a global marketing company, concludes that bold flavor combinations of toppings will grab customers’ attention without decreasing sales of more classic toppings.

Affinnova surveyed customers’ preferences for dozens of cheeses, sauces, crusts and topping possibilities. A pizza featuring the unusual combination of lobster, hot Italian sausage and prosciutto rated among the top three-performing pizzas.

Interestingly, when customers ranked the toppings individually, lobster, prosciutto and Italian sausage finished in the middle of the pack. The combination of the three, however, piqued the customers’ interest, and the pizza surged to the top.

Delis that offer hand-made pizzas can incorporate the unusual combination of toppings into their selections. Making consumers aware of the appeal of unusual pizza toppings can increase individual sales of prosciutto.

### Classic Pairings Abound

Prosciutto also can be classically paired with items such as melons, figs, cheese, eggs, salad and more. It also goes well with wine. Many packages of prosciutto di Parma list different wines that pair well

with it. It is also commonly used as an appetizer, sandwich ingredient and part of cheese and antipasto plates.

“Any deli with a sandwich program should include prosciutto and Mozzarella on a baquette,” suggests Zebrasky. “It’s simple, healthy and great tasting.”

Prosciutto sales can be stimulated by cross marketing pre-sliced packages with cheeses, fruit, vegetables and wine.

“Prosciutto is an impulse sale,” says Bocchini. “You need to give customers some friendly guidance. Make it as easy as possible for them by creating a display with the different pairings. Have all the items together.”

He suggests letting customers sample prosciutto paired with the different items. It’s the best way to increase awareness, he maintains.

Other ways to increase awareness include promoting prosciutto on the store’s website, distributing recipe cards and use of in-store signage.

Bocchini also recommends training staff members to educate customers about prosciutto and to recommend it.

Zebrasky reminds retailers that education is a process. It can’t be accomplished overnight. She notes prosciutto sales have increased as customers have gained a better understanding of the dry-cured ham and its uses.

“A simple suggestion can significantly increase sales,” says Bocchini. “Up to 50 percent of prosciutto sales may be the result of a recommendation by a deli staff member. It requires little effort, probably less than one minute, and the potential payoff is huge. Engaging customers and convincing them to try a new product is important.”

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRATELLI BERETTA





# HOLIDAY PLATTERS: A CHANCE TO 'STRUT YOUR STUFF'

## A combination of the adventurous and the familiar stands out

BY BOB JOHNSON

**T**he holiday platter presents a unique opportunity for consumers to introduce themselves and their guests to a variety of interesting deli treats they have never before tried.

At the same time, it is reassuring to look at the food table and see products most guests recognize as being the best of the best among traditional deli fare.

"The variety of items should be a com-

bination of the familiar and the innovative," advises Simone Bocchini, president of Fratelli Beretta in Mt. Olive Township, NJ. "You can have Genoa salami, a hard salami that everyone knows, and coppa and prosciutto. Some people like a combination of salami, cheese and crackers."

Fratelli Beretta imports a full line of salami, prosciutto and other authentic meat products from an Italian parent com-

pany that is more than 200 years old.

For the more exotic food items to share space with these mostly familiar selections, Bocchini suggests a small salami product with a distinctive diminutive name.

"One innovation would be small, nugget-sized items like salamini," says Bocchini. "You don't make sandwiches out of salamini. You take a bite and you're done."

Merchandising the platters by giving



them their own eye-catching spot in the deli, and by using social media and other forms of publicity, can pay off — both during the holiday season and beyond as customers come back for more throughout the rest of the year.

### Familiar And Innovative

The holiday season presents an opportunity for customers to make an impression on their guests and, by helping them do this, for the deli to make an impression on consumers.

“Entertaining is all about ‘wowing’ your guests,” says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at DeLallo in Jeannette, PA. “Consumers are looking for unique, top-quality selections, but are starved for time. This is why the deli is so important.”

DeLallo began its rise as a leading supplier of authentic meat, antipasti, pasta, olives, specialty cheeses and other authentic foods when George DeLallo started selling Italian grocery items door to door in the immigrant neighborhoods of Western Pennsylvania in the 1940s.

“We offer a colorful selection of pre-packaged items in our two grab-and-go entertaining trays,” says Pozzuto. “One tray features a flavorful lineup of four best-loved olive items, while the other brings together a savory selection of antipasto salads. All items are individually packaged and ready to peel and party. These are a great and easy way to elevate ordinary offerings, giving the consumer that sought-after gourmet experience. Delis can merchandise these alongside specialty cheeses, cured Italian meats, gourmet crackers, spreads and all other classic antipasti.”

This is the season to introduce new lines of exciting combinations that make for quality entertainment food.

“We’re excited about our upcoming bruschetta collection,” says Pozzuto. “It’s not quite a platter, but a way to entertain that includes two bruschetta favorites and the crostini toasts for topping. Not only is it a convenient way for customers to entertain with big flavors, but it’s a super way to inspire a trendy build-your-own bruschetta bar at their next gathering.”

This is a time the deli can entice some consumers, especially relatively young people with bold unfamiliar flavors.

“People are more interested in ethnic foods; they have more adventurous palates,” says Sarah Beth Iglesias, marketing assistant at Campofrio Food Group America in South Chesterfield, VA. “Millennials,



in particular, are more adventurous. We are seeing more Spanish meats — meats like Jamon Serrano. Spanish cuisine is becoming more popular, but it takes some education.”

Campofrio Food Group specializes in bringing authentic Spanish and Italian meats to U.S. retailers and consumers.

“Some of our products that delis can easily use to make their own platters are the hard salamis,” says Iglesias. “Or you can use prosciutto wrapped around Mozzarella. Platters are a great way for consumers to try a bunch of different products in the deli.”

The deli does well to display its platter offerings in a visible spot that provides convenience on the order of grab and go.

“In order to be the go-to place for shoppers during the holidays, it is important to be a one-stop shop,” says Cara Figgins, owner of Partners in Seattle. “If the customer can get a meat/cheese platter and crackers without having to go to another place in the store, that is a win. Everyone is

busy, especially during the holidays. Make it easier for them.”

Partners offers a variety of cracker products under its Partners, Blue Star Farms, Harvest Fruit, Mia Dolce and Wisecrackers brands.

“There are so many amazing artisan meats and cheeses and special cheese accompaniment like fig spreads,” says Figgins. “People want what they are serving to stand out to their guests. Make it special, not just convenient.”

One mega trend worth remembering is that consumers — especially the all-important Millennials — want their deli food to be nutritious. “Everything in the deli is trending healthier,” says Iglesias.

There are many opportunities to stock the platters with fare that, while festive, also sets a high nutritional standard.

“Healthier, authentic ingredients and organic are growing,” says Figgins. “Artisan cheeses and meats and upscale crackers — anything that has a touch of home-made. We have a delicious line of ancient



grain artisan crackers that are also gluten free. Free For All Kitchen Ancient grain artisan hors d'oeuvre crackers in Olive Oil and Sea Salt [are] the perfect holiday platter cracker."

### Promote The Deli

This is the season when the deli is well positioned to attract customers by easing the stress and rush of entertaining guests.

"Platters can be the key to getting

**//**  
**TO AMP UP SALES, CONSIDER THE CONSUMER BY**  
**ADDING OPTIONS LIKE PREPACKAGED PLATTERS FOR**  
**GRAB-AND-GO SHOPPERS, BUT ALSO EMPTY TRAYS AT**  
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people to the deli," says Figgins. "It is an amazing opportunity to make holiday entertaining both easy and delicious with that little extra touch of care with the right selection of items on the platter. All products on the platter should work together to give an overall experience of quality."

Once way to optimize the opportunity is to give platters their own special, visible place during the holiday season.

"If we had one piece of advice for delis, it would be to create a destination just for platters," says Pozzuto. "Not just the basic pepperoni and cheese but salads, dips, crackers, crostini, spreads and, of course, olives and antipasti. Beefing up your deli and entertainment offerings is key for the holidays. But don't forget how important it is to spread the word online via social media, email blasts and ads. The visual marketing really goes a long way. Let the consumers know that you have them covered in a pinch for their parties."

This special destination can be stocked with a variety of platters ready for the taking.

"To amp up sales, consider the consumer by adding options like prepackaged platters for grab-and-go shoppers, but also empty trays at the olive and antipasti bar ready for filling," advises Pozzuto. "Having a few sizes really helps increase sales too. Olives and antipasti can be their own offering, but also the perfect accent in the center to meat and specialty cheese deli platters."

There may even be opportunities to take a well-executed holiday platter program into special events for the rest of the year.

"Platters are most popular in the fourth quarter," says Bocchini. "We highlight the occasions you can use them. But we notice there is an evolution to make them useful outside of the fourth quarter. You can use a smaller platter for the Super Bowl, Easter, the Fourth of July or even back to school."

**DB**



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# HUMMUS HAS A HISTORY

**F**irst introduced to the U.S. in the early 1900s, hummus found its way into American kitchens when immigrants from Spain and the Middle East migrated to this country with their cherished recipes.

Initially a favorite among those with ties to the Mediterranean, hummus could be found exclusively on the shelves of niche ethnic or specialty stores. It took decades for this product to go mainstream, but when it did, American-made Sabra led the category through tremendous growth, changing the way consumers thought of dips in this country.

In 1994, a New York-based food distributor with a passion for hummus invested in a recipe he thought would pave the way for his favorite chickpea dip in the United States. Yehuda Pearl believed so strongly that Americans would soon become fans of the versatile dip and spread that he bought the company and set about to bring his vision to life.

From a packaging redesign in 2003 to adorning the dip with colorful herbs and spices, Pearl's passion was contagious. In 2006, he captured the attention of food industry veterans by setting the record for creating the world's largest plate of hummus (pictured), which was 800 pounds.

As demand rose and it became clear this little company would have the opportunity to grow exponentially, Pearl welcomed first The Strauss Group then PepsiCo to help forge the path to the future. By 2008, the two international food giants entered a unique 50/50 joint venture to help Sabra produce more product and increase distribution.

Today, Sabra hummus is produced in a sustainable Silver LEED-certified facility in Chesterfield County, VA. The brand now produces lines of refrigerated dips and spreads, including guacamole and Greek yogurt-based dips. Sabra also was the Official Dip Sponsor of Super Bowl 50.

Its products can be found in supermarkets, airports, on trains and on college campuses nationwide.



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Blount Fine Foods .....	37 .....	Soups.....	800-274-2526
Couturier North-America, Inc.....	2 .....	French Cheese.....	518-851-2570
Dietz & Watson Inc. ....	20-21 .....	Deli Meats .....	800-333-1974
Fratelli Beretta USA.....	18-19 .....	Deli Meats .....	201-438-0723
George E. DeLallo Co. ....	52 .....	Cookies.....	800-433-9100
Hormel Foods Corporation .....	23 .....	Deli Meats .....	800-523-4635
IDDBA.....	5 .....	Trade Association.....	608-310-5000
John Wm Macy's Cheesesticks .....	16.....	Cheese Sticks.....	800-643-0573
Kettle Cuisine, Inc. ....	39 .....	Soups.....	800-969-SOUP
Klondike Cheese Co. ....	42 .....	Cheese.....	608-325-3021
Paris Gourmet.....	17.....	Gourmet Foods.....	201-939-5656
Piller Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd.....	48 .....	Deli Meats .....	800-265-2628
Pomi USA.....	27 .....	Tomatoes .....	732-541-4115
Refrigerated Foods Association.....	7 .....	Trade Association.....	770-303-9905
Sandridge Food Corporation.....	25 .....	Prepared Food.....	330-764-6178
Saputo Cheese USA, Inc.....	41.....	Italian Cheese .....	800-824-3373
SIAL Paris.....	25 .....	Trade Show.....	704-365-0041
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