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PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

JAMES E. PREVOR
jprevor@phoenixmedianet.com

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

KENNETH L. WHITACRE
kwhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com

PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

LEE SMITH
lsmith@phoenixmedianet.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

ELLEN KOTEFF
ekoteff@phoenixmedianet.com

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

MARK GOLD
mgold@phoenixmedianet.com

SALES MANAGER

JANE JOHNSON
jjohnson@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

DIANA LEVINE
dlevine@phoenixmedianet.com

ART DIRECTOR

SUNSHINE GORMAN
sgorman@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

FREDDY PULIDO
JACKIE TUCKER

RESEARCH DIRECTOR

SHARON OLSON

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

BOB JOHNSON KEITH LORIA SAMANTHA LYSER
BARRY SPARKS LISA WHITE

SEND INSERTION ORDERS, PAYMENTS, PRESS RELEASES,
PHOTOS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, ETC., TO:

DELI BUSINESS
P.O. BOX 810217, BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0217
PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610
EMAIL: DELIBUSINESS@PHOENIXMEDIANET.COM

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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
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GENERAL COUNSEL
DEBRA PREVOR

TRADE SHOW COORDINATOR
JACKIE LOMONTE

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The Association of Business Information Companies

NEW CLASS OF ACS CERTIFIED CHEESE PROFESSIONALS ANNOUNCED



One hundred fifty-five individuals passed the American Cheese Society's sixth Certified Cheese Professional Exam, held July 27, 2016 in Des Moines, IA. This class of ACS Certified Cheese Professionals (ACS CCPs) includes individuals from 51 different companies in the United States and Canada. ACS CCPs now total 740 individuals in the United States, Canada and Europe.

The ACS CCP Exam is the first and only exam of its kind. It was launched by the American Cheese Society in 2012 to encourage high standards of comprehensive cheese knowledge and service for professionals in all areas of the industry. The exam is based on the knowledge and skills required to successfully perform cheese-related tasks in jobs across the industry. Testing encompasses a broad range of topics, including raw ingredients; the cheesemaking process; storing and handling cheese; selecting distributors; marketing and communicating about cheese; nutrition; regulations; and sanitation.

"We congratulate these individuals on this tremendous professional accomplishment. We are incredibly proud of the cheese professionals who have earned the designation of American Cheese Society Certified Cheese Professional since the program was established," said Nora Weiser, executive director of the American Cheese Society. "The level of understanding and professionalism that ACS CCPs bring to the industry benefits everyone from the cheesemaker to the consumer, and elevates an already thriving artisan cheese industry to an entirely new level."

Each ACS CCP receives an official lapel pin, embroidered patch and a certificate, along with the right to call them an ACS Certified Cheese Professional or ACS CCP. ACS CCPs are required to demonstrate continued active participation and professional development within the cheese industry to maintain their credentials, and they must recertify every three years.

The next seating of the exam will be held on July 26, 2017 in Denver. Cheese professionals who meet the eligibility requirements outlined on the ACS website are encouraged to apply early, as space is limited. Applications will be accepted from January 4 to March 31, 2017. To learn more about the ACS CCP Exam, visit www.certifiedcheeseprofessional.org.

COMING NEXT IN DEC/JAN ISSUE

COVER STORY

Retail Trends

FEATURE STORIES

Cross Merchandising
Flatbread
Crackers

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Fried Chicken
Potatoes
Olives
Dips & Spreads

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

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PREPARED FOODS

Take-Out Foods
Pasta

DELI MEATS

Natural Meats

CHEESES

Parmigiano Reggiano
Blue Cheese

COMING IN FEB/MARCH

DELI BUSINESS will be taking a look at Italian Foods.

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COMING NEXT



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To learn more about our organic soups call 800.274.2526 or visit blountfinefoods.com.

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genetically
engineered
ingredients.



Crafted by Blount Fine Foods

Announcements



CHEESE EXCHANGE SET

FirstSource Events, Moody, ME, will hold Deli & Cheese 1 on 1, an exclusive Buyer-Supplier Exchange for high-volume specialty cheese, charcuterie, deli and prepared food buyers, on Feb. 8-9, 2017 in St. Augustine, FL. The gathering includes chef-prepared product samples from suppliers, networking opportunities, one-on-one meetings with seafood companies, sessions with industry experts and complimentary accommodations and meals. Interested parties are encouraged to apply early for a spot.

firstsourceevents.com



A SWEET DEPARTURE

Delighted by Hummus, Sedona, AZ, offers The Original Dessert Hummus, a dip made from chickpeas in sweet flavors. This high-fiber, high-protein line is an alternative to sugar-laden, processed desserts. The cookie-dough consistency can be eaten with cinnamon pita chips, graham crackers, pretzels, fruit or by the spoonful. Flavors include Brownie Batter, Snickerdoodle, Orange-Dreamside and Vanilla Bean.

delightedbyhummus.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.

montchevre.com



FAIR TRADE FOOD

Sindyanna of Galilee, Tel Aviv, Israel, has expanded its line of socially responsible product in North America. Extra virgin olive oils are certified organic and kosher. It is produced with olives cultivated in groves nestled amid the hills and valleys of the Galilee region. Hours after harvesting, the olives are cold pressed and stored in air-tight churns. The Fair Trade products include spice mixes, carob syrup, almonds, honey, soaps and traditional foods.

sindyanna.com



SOMERDALE HONORED

Somerdale International, Wellington, Somerset, United Kingdom, has been presented with the Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset Anne Maw at a ceremony held at the company's Wellington headquarters recently. The winning of the award recognizes Somerdale's sustained track record in becoming a leading exporter of British cheeses and dairy products to more than 50 countries around the world.

somerdale.com



SWISS VALLEY HONORED

Swiss Valley Farms, Davenport, IA, has received the 2016 Tom Camerle Exporter of the Year Award. Sponsored by the U.S. Dairy Export Council and presented by Dairy Foods magazine, the award is given annually to U.S. dairy suppliers that exemplify leadership in advancing U.S. dairy exports, demonstrate commitment to export market development and make exports an integral part of its overall growth strategy. In 2015, exports accounted for nearly 10 percent of the company's sales.

swissvalley.com



VAN HOLTEN'S NEW PARTNERSHIP

Van Holten's, Waterloo, WI, has announced a long-term partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of America. All of Van Holten's Pickle-In-A-Pouch and new Pickle-Ice products will feature Boys & Girls Clubs of America's logo to further increase awareness and recognition of clubs nationwide. The partnership was officially announced at the 2016 Gilbert Brown Football Camp, a free, three-day program hosted by the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County, WI.

vanholtensfoods.com



NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH

Venus Wafers Inc., Hingham, MA, has announced it is launching a new website featuring the Venus Brands Original Mariner Biscuit Co., Nejaime's Lavasch, and CaPeachio's Artisan Crackers as well as Venus Wafers Story and private label packaging. The family-owned and operated company has offered healthful crackers and flatbreads since 1931.

venuswafers.com

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Transitions



GRAFTON VILLAGE APPOINTMENTS

Grafton Village Cheese, Grafton, VT, has announced the appointments of Elena Santogade (above) and Vince Razionale to its professional team. Santogade takes over as Tri-State Sales Manager, based in New York. Rationale joins as Director of Cave Program and Sensory Analysis, focusing on grading, affnage, sensory evaluation, and development. Amy Sisti-Baum will be the first Mid-Atlantic sales manager for Grafton Village Cheese.

graftonvillagecheese.com

New Products



EXTENDING SHELF LIFE

Aran U.S.A., part of the Aran Group International, Greer, SC, has introduced precision engineered bags and fitments to extend the shelf life of organic and natural food and beverage products packed in bag-in-box and intermediate bulk containers. Liquid packaging technologies allow for nearly 100 percent extraction of contents so food waste is virtually eliminated. Solutions range from advanced barrier film structures, special filling and dispensing fitments and high performance aseptic bag technologies.

www.aran-us.com



NEW SIDE DISHES

Blount Fine Foods has introduced a line of organic side dishes for foodservice. The Blount Organic Foodservice Side Dishes come in several varieties, including Organic Barbecue Beans, Organic Black Beans, Organic Butternut Squash, Organic Creamed Corn, Organic Creamed Kale & Spinach, Organic Creamed Spinach with Mushrooms, Organic Lentils & Chickpeas, Organic Mac & Cheese and Organic Mashed Sweet Potatoes.

BlountFineFoods.com



SCHOOLED IN CHEESE

Clemson University, Clemson, SC, offers a blue cheese that has a classic taste of the South. Produced on the university's campus, this artisanal cheese is made the old fashioned way with milk from its dairy, then salted, waxed and aged for six months. When ready, every hoop is scraped and the cheese is packaged by hand. It is available for purchase on campus and online in hoops, wedges, crumbles and dressing.

clemson.edu/bluecheese



CHEESE SNACKS DEBUT

To celebrate its 60th anniversary, Jarlsberg Cheese, Darien, CT, is debuting Jarlsberg Cheese Snacks, which are naturally gluten and lactose free. Fans can now savor the classic taste of Jarlsberg Cheese, with a mild, mellow and nutty flavor, in this portable snack. The snacks are ¾ oz in the stick format and portion controlled with only 70 calories and 5 grams of protein. Jarlsberg Cheese Snacks come in 6 oz packages of individually wrapped cheese sticks for a suggested retail price of \$5.99 - \$6.99.

jarlsberg.com



WRAP IT UP

Kontos Foods Inc., Paterson, NJ, has launched a 12-inch Gluten-Free Pre-Grilled Wrap targeted to foodservice customers. The wraps have been developed to fit the unique needs of individuals looking for wheat- and gluten-free options. The line contains grill marks on one side to create more interesting cafe-style meals. Food purveyors also can flip the wrap to hide the marks when needed.

kontos.com



READY FOR FLAVORS

Minor's, Société des Produits Nestlé S.A., Vevey, Switzerland, offers Ready to Flavor products. Tested Ready-To-Eat, Ready to Flavor products are edible without the added step of cooking to achieve food safety. Chefs have the culinary freedom to instantly add distinct flavors for a premium price point.

flavorsmeanbusiness.com



EXTENDING SHELF LIFE

Schuman Cheese, Fairfield, NJ, has unveiled a new flavor in its Cello Whisps line, Cello Cheddar Whisps. The company also offers a Parmesan variety. The bite-sized snack is crafted by artisan cheesemakers in Wisconsin. Whisps are all natural, with no artificial colors or flavors. The product is made with 100 percent pure cheese. A good source of protein and calcium, Whisps can be used as a topping for salads, pasta, soups, sandwiches and pizza.

schumancheese.com

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by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Paying Respect To Carnegie Deli

The New York Times laid out the situation:

Live in New York long enough and you will lose somewhere you love. Good things die here. It's what keeps the place alive.

*But every now and then a big one goes, as it did on a recent morning, when the owner of **Carnegie Deli** suddenly announced that the Manhattan sandwich place would be shutting down at the end of the year.*

The famous Jewish restaurant on Seventh Avenue and 55th Street has been putting out cardio-logically perilous fare since 1937. When it closes its doors on Dec. 31, the city will lose not only an irreplaceably iconic four-inch-tall pastrami sandwich, but also a small piece of itself.

News of the restaurant's demise emerged at 7 a.m. on a Friday when, at a meeting in the dining room, the owner, Marian Harper, told about 25 early-shift employees that she could no longer bear the stressful challenges of restaurant life.

"The restaurant business is one of the hardest jobs in New York City," Harper later said in a formal statement issued by her publicist. "At this stage in my life, the early morning to late night days have taken a toll, along with my sleepless nights and grueling hours."

The shock waves quickly followed. Eater, the culinary website, reported on the closing with a mournful article with the headline: "Pastrami Bombshell." Twitter was full of photographs of deli meat and melancholy posts: "How's a Jew like me supposed to suffer a heart attack at age 37 in this city anymore?" And "It's pastrami on cry."

The Atlantic added color:

Like alligators in the subways, the Carnegie Deli is buried in the mythos of Manhattan, an idea of what New York City is. A dish of sour pickles. Brusque, harried servers ferrying plates of gargantuan corned beef sandwiches across linoleum floors. Autographed photos of out-of-time celebrities and the promise of Dr. Brown's Cream Soda.

Armed with a menu overstuffed with both cured meat and kitsch — "Tongues for the Memory" and "Fifty Ways to Love Your Liver" are staple sandwiches — Carnegie's fare still stands at the forefront of the outsized New York foodscape, a portrait in exaggeration. "The most identifiable thing [about the Carnegie Deli] is size," David Sax, author of "Save The Deli," explains. "The size of those ... sandwiches. Carnegie kicked off an arms race in sandwich sizes in the 1970s and 80s and initially it was a war between them and Stage [Deli]."...

Situated around the corner from the deli's namesake, Carnegie Hall, these skyscraper-shaped sandwiches were part of the gimmick. Like the interspersing of New York City iconography in the opening scene of Manhattan,

Woody Allen sets the telling of Broadway Danny Rose, a tale of showbiz redemption, at a table in the back of Carnegie Deli.

"Carnegie became well known because it was near Broadway, because it was near the great centers of screen-writing and comedy and production and late night," says Sax. "This was pre-Letterman. Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner and the Golden Age, that's when Carnegie really grew in prominence. And so, all the photos that line the walls, the connection with Woody Allen, that was the pin that set the genesis of modern American comedy. That restaurant and Stage [Deli] were tied to it. It associated the Jewish deli with that in the popular imagination."

Of course, just as the Borscht Belt fell out of favor, Carnegie Deli also lost its luster as its prices and novelty status made it more and more of a tourist trap than a New Yorker standby. It almost seems fitting that the deli will actually live on at outlets in Vegas casinos and Madison Square Garden. Almost.

Over the past quarter century, supermarket delis spread from ethnic enclaves in major cities across the nation to the point, today, where offering a full-service deli is a mark of what it means to be a supermarket.

Indeed, with the growth of competition in the center store, the deli department remains perhaps the most important way for a store to differentiate itself. As a result, the growth in prepared food offerings, hot food bars, in-store seating and more has made the deli a flagship of the modern supermarket.

Yet, for those who remember the old time deli, who remember a day when the most important differentiator was that a store cut its own lox — the growth of the deli concept, the exceptional pizza programs, wok stations and soup bars — well that's all bittersweet.

We suspect that the Carnegie Deli is really closing because it is worth more dead than alive. The building can be knocked down, redeveloped, rented out for a lot more than can be derived from working day and night selling expensive sandwiches. Not too many native New Yorkers went to the Carnegie Deli, but its flag was a reminder of a deli culture that has been declining for a long time.

Now, one wonders how many people know the word deli — emblazoned on supermarket signs across America — is actually shorthand for delicatessen? And how many know that the word was at the epicenter of a culture, once vibrant and rich, now no more?

DB



James F. Prevor

IT TAKES DEVOTION TO BE A LEGEND.



When you choose legendary Prosciutto di San Daniele*, Grana Padano*, Prosciutto di Parma* and Montasio* you show a passion for incomparably delicious foods – conceived with care in specific geographical regions of Italy, using traditional techniques – that have set the standard of culinary excellence for generations.



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by Lee Smith, Publisher

How To Be A Healthy Retailer

Let's be honest, healthy foods and a healthy lifestyle are not that difficult to define. A healthy lifestyle includes at least eight hours of sleep a night, plenty of exercise, intellectual stimulation and keeping your weight under control. Healthy foods are a bit more difficult to pin down as new science emerges and new technologies evolve. What was bad is now good, and what was good may now be a killer.

No doubt there is still a significant amount of consumer confusion about the best food choices, but how to eat healthy is still pretty darn easy to figure out. Cook from scratch and avoid heavily processed foods, eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables as well as whole grains and limit sugar intake. New science says fats are OK, butter is good, cheese is even better, and you really need probiotics.

Of course, easy to define doesn't mean easy to live – or easy to sell. Some people don't care and some folks don't have the time to prepare their own foods, leaving them at the mercy of restaurants, prepared food and all-day snacking.

Successful retailers understand successful selling doesn't mean telling people what to eat. It's about quickly figuring out what direction consumers are going and responding to their demands. When bran was the rage, supermarkets and bakeries were selling 1,500-calorie muffins that customers loved – until they realized the extra 6,000 calories or so each week was putting on the pounds. When sugar-free meant healthy, chemical sweeteners that were far worse than sugar in any of its forms resulted in thousands of new items made with sugar substitutes, some of which were later found to be carcinogenic. Remember the non-digestible oils that didn't add calories because it just passed through your system unchanged? Remember the leakage?

Retailers walk a very fine line. There is only one true mission – to sell what customers want to buy. As for the customers, some retailers define their customer base as everyone living within a predetermined circumference; other retailers define their customers by demographics. Still others define themselves by the customers they want to attract and then choose store locations that match up. Regardless of how retailers define their mission statement, retailers are, by nature, reactive. Hence the thousands of new products introduced every year and subsequent high failure rate.

So, from a business standpoint, do we need to

care about healthy foods, other than reacting to the trend of label-reading and a desire on the part of many for “clean” products free of pesticides, artificial ingredients, hormones and antibiotics?

The answer is yes. Yes, because the Internet and social media is the equivalent of giving every American access to the Library of Congress at the touch of a button. Consumers are becoming educated at a prodigious rate. Just recently, there was a post on Facebook about fake extra virgin olive oil. Individual brands were mentioned, both good and bad. That one post was shared 237,000 times. Not read, but shared. Is it unreasonable to think that close to 400,000 people read it?

So, the most important tactic is absolute transparency. The old saying, “Liar Liar, Pants on Fire” has never been truer. Customers will find out, and they will no longer trust you.

Next is the simplest tactic of all. Merchandise products customers want. The store I shopped in Boca Raton had only one product without trans-fat – cheesecake. I was told bakery sales were down and I wasn't surprised. By the time we moved, we no longer even checked. We shopped at another bakery.

The third step is education. Teach customers what organic means. Create signs that let people know what is in season or what is local. Explain probiotics. What used to be the sole responsibility of the manufacturer is now an integral part of gaining consumers' trust.

Sure, customers will make their own choices – good or bad. But, between transparency, product selection and education, retailers can make their stores the preferred choice for everyday shopping.

There is a fine line we walk – keeping on trend, offering reasonable prices (although not always cheap), providing clean stores, and good service as well as merchandising a selection of goods that fit the local community. Industry leaders have found that one-size-fits-all is not obtainable and, if tried, generally means selling at the lowest possible price, a position that is very difficult to maintain in a highly competitive marketplace.

DB



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.



www.labonneviecheese.com

The Benefits of

GOING GREEN



Companies implement sustainable initiatives to answer consumer demand

BY LISA WHITE



The focus has shifted in the supermarket deli industry.

Rather than emphasizing diet, consumers are zeroing in on healthier lifestyles by becoming more in tune with food sources and manufacturing practices at retail, according to the 2016 International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association's What's in Store report.

Success in the food industry is now more dependent on transparency, with consumers seeking to purchase more sustainable items that are organic, natural, with clean ingredients and locally sourced.

According to the IDDBA report, among the top 20 hot culinary trends for 2015 were locally sourced foods, natural ingredients/minimally processed foods, sustainable seafood, food waste reduction/management and farm/estate branded items.

As a result, a number of manufacturers in the supermarket deli space are responding with new products and initiatives focused on the environment and sustainability.

Transparency In Food

From a packaged goods point of view, sustainability has become more important and clean labeling is one of the top trends, say experts.

Blount Foods, based in Fall River, MA, is getting more requests for a shortened ingredient deck that includes no artificial preservatives, colors or flavors.

"Along those lines, we've focused our development on this with our innovation and renovation," says William Bigelow, vice president of research and business development.

Another more recent development is the focus on heritage brands, with consumers looking for traditional products that have a unique twist.

"Antibiotic-free proteins are gaining more traction, and we're getting more requests for these products," says Bigelow. "This is because consumers are more aware and educated about food in general, so it all circles back to clean labels."

This includes a focus on animal welfare, which consumers believe is directly related to more healthful products as well as preventing excess waste more efficiently.

This trifecta all leads back to sustainability and respecting the planet, and brands that communicate a commitment to going green are becoming more compelling to a growing demographic.

In response to this development, Blount launched branded organic and cleaner label items, and will soon be introducing a non-GMO line.

"Our technical team has done a lot of research to make our products healthier with a cleaner label, but also the quality is there," says Bigelow. "If an item doesn't taste good, we don't get a return customer, so it's important for product development teams and chefs to join forces."

Califresh of California LLC, based in Sanger, CA, has seen an increase in requests for non-GMO products.

"This is part of what the food culture is trending toward," says Sarah Dean, Califresh controller. "But with sales, this is not a main question, since it's more about preservatives."

The company offers non-GMO, fresh garbanzo beans.

"More companies are looking for options that are alternatives to what they've been doing in the past," says Dean. "Instead of using food dyes, manufacturers are turning to all natural colors, since consumer demand is making us as food producers step out of our comfort zone and be more creative in providing these items."

Rogue Creamery, headquartered in Central Point, OR, made a concerted effort to limit the ingredients in its Blue Heaven blue cheese powder, a shelf-stable, non-perishable line made of only blue cheeses and rice concentrate, an anti-caking agent. The company also purchases its milk from the company's dairy, which is 25 miles from its cheese processing plant, and only utilizes organic ingredients.

"We insist that our vendors operate under the same principals as we do," says Francis Plowman, marketing director. "We were the first Oregon company in 2014 that was organized for social benefit and B Lab Certified, which is due to our being a socially responsible operation."

Its B Lab Certification is attributed to Rogue Creamery's high values in transparency, animal husbandry, paying a living wage, being stewards of the land and its community support.



Central Point, OR-based Rogue Creamery converted to an organic operation in the last year and the process took 12 months.

Peggy Cross, founder and chief executive of EcoTensil, located in Corte Madera, CA, sees the focus on non-GMO products continuing to grow and move into the mainstream, as companies such as Dannon, Campbell Soup, General Mills, Kellogg and Mars are transitioning to voluntarily labeling GMO products.

"The concern that I hear from consumers and the natural foods industry is not just how do GMOs affect people's health, but how do they impact the health of the environment and contamination of organic foods," says Cross. "Many consumers want GMO labeling so they can decide for themselves."

Organic Benefits

According to the Organic Trade Association in Washington, D.C., the organic industry saw growth in the double digits at 10.8 percent last year.

Rogue Creamery converted to organic in the last year, which was a yearlong process that began after the purchase of its dairy in 2009.

"It wasn't a difficult transition from being certified sustainable to becoming organic, in terms of the way we operate," says Plowman. "We prepared for the last 15 years, internally transitioning our product line."

Still, this was a big change for the small

artisan creamery, which has between 30 and 40 SKUs. It involved changing its labeling and marketing, but was fully supported by its customers, including Wegmans and Whole Foods Market.

The organic initiative has opened Rogue Creamery up to a new market of consumers, while enhancing the company's philosophical mission.

"There are so many reasons to do this, but it's about proper stewardship of the land and being caretakers so it's in shape for generations to come," asserts Plowman.

Still, the company had to contend with additional costs and challenges in its organic quest.

It's inevitable that companies like Rogue Creamery have to factor in price increases and pass these along to consumers. For example, organic feed costs between 30 and 50 percent more than the conventional type. Becoming USDA certified organic also comes at a price.

Still, the benefits the company has experienced have far outweighed these challenges, according to Plowman.

Eliminating Packaging Waste

Packaging has been a primary focus for many companies looking to operate more sustainably.

Blount Foods seeks not only to partner with companies located closer to its oper-

ations to reduce its carbon footprint, but also has taken steps to eliminate plastic in its packaging as much as possible.

The company recently installed new processing equipment to eliminate the amount of corrugated cardboard in its packaging.

"We also are looking at films for food-service bags that utilize less plastic, but that also are durable," says Bigelow. "Blount also is constantly working on extending the shelf life of products, not just for consumers, but also to help eliminate food waste, and packaging innovations are playing a big part in this."

Planglow USA, based in St. Paul, MN, recycles much of its scrap material and also focuses on sustainably sourcing its materials.

In fact, the company mandates that the materials for its green packaging are from sustainable sources.

"We're committed to selling green packaging that is made from compostable materials," says Steve Olk, college category manager. "People think this type of product costs more, but it doesn't."

Califresh focuses on bulk packaging that utilizes the least amount of materials to minimize waste and only offers smaller sizes upon request.

"We see a trend toward heavier packaging, with people looking for grab-and-go items," says Dean. "This makes it difficult as a manufacturer to balance between utilizing sustainable resources and giving consumers what they want."

To negotiate this, Califresh purchases its corrugate locally and only ships product 20 to 30 miles away.

The company also works with growers to reduce food waste, using it for animal feed or fertilization rather than diverting it to landfills.

San Diego-based Monterrey Provisions executes on its sustainability goals with projects like energy-efficient LED lighting retrofits, Ecobee smart thermostats and a company-wide recycling and repurposing program, which includes soft plastic recovery.

"Our soft plastic recovery program is possible through our partnership with Sprouts and Trex," says Luke Abbott, Monterrey's president. "From inbound loads and front of store, Sprouts collects bags of soft plastic waste in watermelon bins on blue pallets, which are loaded onto Monterrey trailers and taken to our distribution centers."

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At the distribution center, bales of plastic are created in a dedicated baler. The bales are sent to Trex for processing into faux wood flooring, diverting waste and reducing landfill.

One of the challenges is separating food and non-compostable waste.

EcoTensil's line of disposable tasting utensils is compostable and made from sustainable, smooth paperboard, rather than non-renewable plastic.

"EcoTensil products use significantly less material than plastic, so even if they don't make it into the compost bin, they are still reducing waste," says Cross. "Consumers are becoming more aware of sustainable packaging, so retailers using greener packaging in their delis and demos have found an easy and relatively cheap way to show their consumers they care about the environment, and not just talk about it."

Despite the fact that sustainability and going green are huge initiatives, the supermarket deli industry is not willing to give up performance for going green.

"Retailers and consumers want the quality of product to still be retained, such as leak resistance, with sustainable packaging,"

says Jason Horbac, assistant product manager for Sabert, located in Sayreville, NJ.

One of the biggest advancements in the last few years has been the merchandisability of products with fully compostable packaging.

Sabert recently launched three new PLA lids for eight of its existing bases that are fully compostable and clear.

Sustainable products, rather than technology, drive these developments.

"People purchase with their eyes in the deli, so being able to see the food is extremely important for encouraging impulse purchases, and being compostable and sustainable is a big benefit, as well," says Horbac.

Sabert offers a wide variety of environmentally friendly packaging, such as

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Plastic And Bioplastic Utensil Lifecycle

Plastics:

- The lifecycle of traditional plastics begins with potentially harmful extraction of non-renewable oil, refining and transcontinental shipping.
- Plastic's end of life is not going to happen in our lifetime, or in our great-grandchildren's lifetime.
- Discarded plastic finds its way into waterways, creating significant, long-term harm to marine life. Every year, 32 million tons of plastic accumulates in U.S. landfills and that number will increase according to the EPA.
- 13-16 percent of landfill is plastic, up from 1 percent in 1960. Plastic accounts for 50-80 percent of the waste found on beaches and in oceans.

Bioplastics:

- Pesticides and high energy use is needed in growing and converting the plant matter feedstock to polymer.
- Because a utensil is made from plant matter, or claims to be biodegradable, does not mean it is compostable. If a utensil is not compostable — it is landfill.
- Frequently, the plant matter used, such as corn or potato, is genetically modified.
- While bioplastics are compostable in industrial facilities, 90 percent of the dense bioplastic utensils do not break-down in the requisite 180 days and therefore become landfill.
- Compost facilities cannot tell the difference between plastics and bioplastic utensils, so the vast majority of bioplastics end up in landfills alongside the plastic utensils they were intended to replace.

Source: *EcoTensil*

The Breakdown Of Biodegradable And Compostable Products

The American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) describes biodegradable as a degradation caused by biological activity, especially by enzymatic action, leading to a significant change in the chemical structure of the material.

The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) general guidelines for biodegradable products are those containing materials that

break down and decompose into elements found in nature within a reasonably short amount of time when they are exposed to air, moisture and bacteria or other organisms.

Compostable objects can only be labeled and marketed as such if tested and found by a third party agency to be compliant with ASTM statutes. ASTM compliant products must biodegrade within 180 days at an industrial composting facility and release no

toxic substances.

On April 1 of this year, California passed law AB 1826, which requires businesses to recycle or compost all organic waste. Under this statute, if a business generates 8 yards of organic waste per week, it needs to arrange organic recycling services for all compostable waste. By Jan. 1, 2017, any business generating 4 yards will need to comply with this regulation. The amount decreases to 2 yards by 2019/20. **DB**





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Charcuterie:

Special Meats Finding Ordinary Uses



These fine foods showing up in snacks and sandwiches

BY BOB JOHNSON

Charcuterie may still refer to an assortment of specialty meat products made by the artisan's touch, but those high-end meats are no longer brought out for only a handful of holidays and other major family events.

"People are now thinking of specialty meats for every day use, not just special occasions," says David Kemp, chief executive of Les Trois Petits Cochons in New York. "People might have a specialty salami for a snack on a Tuesday, not just a holiday, or they might use charcuterie in a sandwich. That might explain a lot of the growth of charcuterie."

As consumers discover more uses for charcuterie it has been transformed from a highly traditional category into one with an exciting future.

"Charcuterie is a lot more versatile than it was a few years ago," says Evan Inada, customer marketing manager at Columbus Foods in Hayward, CA. "Any time you have a social gathering is a good reason to have charcuterie on the table. For a big get together it's always the best start to the meal."

In its *What's In Store 2016*, the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association listed artisanal, hand-crafted, small-batch, house-cured charcuterie among the savory meat flavor profiles to watch.

"We've seen strong growth the last five years," says Kemp. "Charcuterie as an industry has had double-digit growth. I think people are using more of it."

This growing category presents the deli with an opportunity to create an eye-catching display.

"Dedicated placement of charcuterie is important," says Stephen Juliano, vice president for retail sales at D'Artagnan in Union, NJ. "Generally, they're merchandised together — a good 20 SKU assortment should be in the planogram."

Real Eye Appeal

One of the attractions of charcuterie is its eye appeal for a generation acclimated to sharing photos on a daily basis.

"Social media is huge with the Millennials," says Inada. "They like to show off. People like to have decorations, and for edible decorations it's hard to beat charcuterie

with the dark red salamis and the red peppadews. With social media people are taking pictures of everything. Charcuterie adds a nice classy touch. It bumps up the quality of your gathering to the next level."

Others agree that the striking visual appeal is playing a role in attracting younger consumers.

"We're reaching the young demographic with Instagram and Facebook, especially Instagram," says Kemp. "They see beautiful pictures of charcuterie and want to try it. There is growing consumer awareness."

Millennials also are drawn to charcuterie because it is handmade, authentic food that comes with a story.

"Millennials are enjoying charcuterie more so than before," says Alexandra Groezinger, director of marketing at Alexian Pâté & Specialty Meats in Neptune, NJ.

"We're seeing increasing interest in charcuterie because it is traditionally described with buzzwords like 'handmade,' 'old-world' and 'rustic,' in part due to its heritage dating back centuries to Europe."

The deli can do its part to add to the attraction by telling the story of that heritage in old Europe.

"Consumers, especially Millennials, are increasingly interested in where food comes from and how it is made," says Groezinger.

"There is greater appreciation of foods that are minimally processed and even handmade as they are considered simpler and possibly better for you."

Although some consumers, especially Millennials, are experimenting with uses of these artisan meat products, most sales are still for special occasions.

One potential issue in the marriage between high tech and ancient culinary arts is that if online grocery shopping becomes more widespread it could spell trouble for some higher-end fresh foods like charcuterie.

The IDDBA reported last year that a Nielsen survey in France found e-shoppers purchase a far smaller share of fresh foods than hypermarket shoppers, and that they also devoted a far smaller share of their fresh foods to charcuterie.

An important way for deli retailers to capitalize on the importance of the visuals is to have a charcuterie display that looks interesting.

"Have a separate cheese and charcuterie section," advises Kemp. "Have enough variety so consumers can see charcuterie is not just dry salami."

Making The Traditional Modern

Few foods are so steeped in tradition as these meat products made to specifications — some of which are centuries old.

"Making charcuterie is a special craft, with roots in European heritage," says Groezinger. "Charcuterie can be unique and adventurous in flavor profile."

While charcuterie offers an adventure in heritage, producers are exploring ways to appeal to the sensibilities of young, modern foodies.

"We are launching an organic line of pâtés," says Kemp. "It will be the first organic pâtés out there. People want healthier options."

The Les Trois Petits Cochons organic pâté will be available nationwide beginning October 1.

D'Artagnan builds its entire charcuterie line around the use of humanely raised meats.

"Everything we sell is humanely raised, antibiotic-free protein," says Juliano from

D'Artagnan. "We've more than doubled the business in the last five years, but we're still relatively unknown nationwide outside of the Northeast and Midwest. We have warehouses in Union, NJ, Houston and Chicago."

As the company expands its business, D'Artagnan is introducing new artisan salami products.

"We're launching three new charcuterie products," says Juliano. "Our three new products are wild boar, duck and pork saucisson sec, which is French for salami. They are all handmade in small batches, air-cured, with no added sodium nitrates or nitrites, and are shelf stable."

Juliano says the desire for sustainably raised meats extends beyond the deli's charcuterie section to also include the meat department.

"Now more than ever consumers are concerned about where their food comes from, how it is raised and how it will taste. As they make better food choices, try new foods and expand their culinary horizons, D'Artagnan is there," says Juliano.

"Our retail product line satisfies consumer appetite for organic chicken and turkey, duck, buffalo, lamb, venison,

rabbit, as well as artisanal charcuterie, smoked and prepared products like bacon, hams, sausages, pâtés, mousses and truffle butter. Another D'Artagnan advantage is our four- to six-count case packs, which increase turns and help reduce shrink."

Along with new ways of sourcing the meats, producers are finding and encouraging new ways of eating the foods.

"The classic way to enjoy charcuterie is with a slice of bread and a little bit of mustard. However, consumers are becoming more adventurous, introducing new and unique flavor profiles to their palate," says Groezinger.

"Here at Alexian we try to encourage consumers to use pâté in ways they have never tried before in order to explore different avenues of flavor and texture. While pâté is always enjoyed on a nice fresh baguette, it can also be enjoyed in pasta dishes, scrambled eggs and even on pizza."

If the trends in restaurants today will appear in delis tomorrow, charcuterie is headed toward an increase.

"Pretty much every Italian restaurant has a charcuterie board on its menu," says Columbus Foods' Inada. "It's a huge chunk of business, for sure."

DB





HUMMUS HITS THE MAINSTREAM

A Mediterranean protein that's healthy, versatile and tasty

BY BOB JOHNSON

Hummus has become cool. The strange grainy beige paste once familiar largely to Middle Easterners, vegetarians and a handful of health-food devotees has grown smoother, sometimes more colorful, almost always more flavorful, and entered the mainstream as Millennials and foodies have come to appreciate the versatility of this intriguing nutritional powerhouse.

"Millennials are certainly a part of it, as they are more interested in the ingredients in their food. Also the huge vegan movement is a contributor," says Makenzie Marzluff, founder of Delighted By Hummus, Phoenix. "The Mediterranean diet is definitely now accepted as a healthy, desirable lifestyle."

Hummus is most popular among consumers who are relatively young, tend to be upscale and are looking for foods that are nutritious and interesting.

Delighted By Hummus makes a dessert hummus, one of a number of innovative new products that are expanding the

flavors available for this healthy, convenient food.

In what was once the heart of a thriving California chickpea industry — Fresno — one independent is getting rave local reviews for a line of hummus made from garbanzos that are still green, which is how the Hispanic workers prefer to eat them.

"Our Sarah's Harvest hummus is unique in that it is made from fresh green garbanzos, never dried or reconstituted, for a truly superior eating experience with exceptional flavor and texture," says Morgan Murray, managing partner at Califresh Company, Sanger, CA. "It is preferred 10 to 1 over traditional hummus. Sarah's Harvest hummus is made with fresh ingredients and consumers can tell; good taste always matters."

"Hummus is on target with how snacking needs are changing today for Millennials and others," says Eric Greifenberger, director of marketing at Sabra Dipping Co., Dallas. "They seek great taste from fresher ingredients and snacks that are seen as better for you. Hummus

offers just that with the broad variety of delicious flavors and the protein and fiber offered from the humble chickpea. Hummus also meets the needs of consumers seeking vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, non-GMO and non-dairy offerings."

And continued steady growth is helped by the discovery of many new ways hummus can be used.

Any Way You Spread It

Once a healthy food of the Mediterranean sort, hummus is finding a broader base of consumers using it in all sorts of ways.

"I think hummus has outgrown the label of just a Mediterranean food and has become a trendy new staple in diets," says Aimee Tsakirellis director of marketing at Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Ward Hill, MA. "Because it is appearing in so many new flavors and because new recipes using it are constantly shared on social media, household consumption rates are increasing and the product is becoming more popular than ever."

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Hummus is showing up in all sorts of places, including lunch boxes children take to school.

"For the last five years, hummus has been a popular lunch box item, driving many manufacturers, such as Cedar's, to create grab-and-go items like portion pack hummus and snack packs," says Tsakirellis. "These items make hummus inclusion in a lunch box that much more convenient for parents."

Sweeter varieties should make hummus even more popular with children, a use that's likely to grow.

"A lot of kids love hummus," agrees Delighted By Hummus' Marzluff. "And now with dessert hummus, it is expected to be even more accepted and loved by children."

This use should increase as health-conscious Millennials decide what to send their children off to school with for lunch.

"I think as consumers trend to the healthier side of the aisle more and more kids will see sweet hummus in their lunch box," says Sarah Dean, controller at Califresh. "I am not sure if the numbers show them loving it yet, but I think it is on its way to being a favorite of kids and parents alike. I know the grab-and-go packs of hummus are easy for lunch boxes of grownups and kids."

This is becoming a convenient way for parents to get their kids to enjoy eating healthy.

"Hummus is a great way to get kids to eat more vegetables, and our singles make it easy to toss one in a lunch box or for a quick after school snack," says Sabra's

Greifenberger. "As a matter of fact, if eaten daily, our two ounce hummus fulfills recommended bean consumption according to the MyPlate initiative."

Part of the attraction is that hummus adds a health punch of protein and fiber to the newly popular trend of eating several snacks, rather than large meals.

"We believe the popularity of hummus is being driven by several factors," says Dean. "Recent eating behaviors have moved to more frequent small healthy meals throughout the day, away from three large meals. Hummus lends itself well to this trend."

// **MILLENNIALS WERE INTRODUCED TO HUMMUS EARLY ON BY THEIR PARENTS AND THEY HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO IT AS A STAPLE IN THEIR DIETS RATHER THAN A NEW FOOD.** //

— Aimee Tsakirellis, Cedar Mediterranean Foods

As a snack food it fits with most of the recognized mega trends.

"Hummus is quick and easy, healthy and inexpensive and also filling, making it a no brainer for those looking for all of those requirements in one yummy product," says Dean. "Healthy eating trends are up across consumer demographics and people are reaching for more fresh local options that fit the trend. They are reaching for hummus."

Consumers are trying and accepting hummus as a healthier alternative to many

spreads and even cooking ingredients.

"Hummus has always been a great substitute for other condiments and spreads in sandwiches," says Cedar's Tsakirellis. "Substitution is being used in a multitude of recipes now, like hummus crusted chicken rather than panko crusted, or hummus used to make mashed potatoes rather than cream/milk and butter."

Much of the experimentation is driven by Millennials, who are looking for foods that are nutritious and interesting, and are most adept at spreading the word through social media.

"Millennials were introduced to hummus early on by their parents and they have become accustomed to it as a staple in their diets rather than a new food," says Tsakirellis. "As Millennials are getting older, they are becoming the newest regular purchaser of hummus helping to drive growth. Because Millennials are social media savvy, they are constantly sharing new ideas to enjoy the food or new recipes to make with it. They also are very creative and eager to try new flavors, so not only is popularity being driven by them, but the need to have unique flavors is as well."

The Flavors Keep On Coming

As hummus grows more popular, innovative producers are adding to the buzz by coming up with creative new flavors.

"Dessert Hummus will be a national category that is well-known by Americans as an option," says Marzluff. "Hummus is

still making its way into the marketplace, but in the near future it will come in both savory and sweet varieties. Dessert Hummus can be used as breakfast or in place of high-sugar, processed desserts like ice cream, cookies and cookie dough."

This new product adds one more use for the most versatile source of vegetable protein.

"Hummus is being used as a condiment in place of mayo or other processed spreads," says Marzluff, "and now, as a dessert."



In California's Central Valley, Califresh found ample local markets for chickpeas sold green in the produce section, rather than canned in the grocery aisles.

"We grow, pack and ship fresh green garbanzos to the produce department," says Murray. "It's a growing market; it's gaining in popularity. Hispanics have been eating green garbanzos for generations, and a lot of the foodies are looking for new ingredients."

Califresh branched out with a unique line of hummus flavors made from green garbanzos.

"Our hummus is made with fresh green chickpeas," says Califresh's Murray. "It's a superior product; it gives the hummus a better flavor profile."

Sarah Dean added her name and recipes to the Sarah's Harvest line of hummus made from green garbanzos.

Sarah's Harvest — creamy light green rather than sandy brown — has a subtle fresh flavor that traditional hummus from processed chickpeas lacks. It comes in three distinctive flavors — Original, Roasted Garlic & Rosemary and Cilantro & Spicy Jalapeno.

"Consumers demand new fresh ideas in food, and although hummus is nearing staple status in the average American's home, they will be offered new and innovative ways to enjoy it," says Dean. "Beyond different flavors and infusions there are options such as hummus made with fresh green chickpeas or garbanzos instead of dry, which offer different flavors,

textures and health benefits from the traditional hummus that has been blowing up the market."

This fresh garbanzo hummus is currently available in a handful of supermarket delis near Fresno, CA.

"We merchandise Sarah's Harvest in containers in the deli section," says Murray. "We're in some local Von's Markets and Save Marts."

As more people get a taste of this smoother, more refreshing hummus, it has the mouth appeal of a product poised to go national.

The hummus industry leader continues to offer new flavors and products.

"We are always working on delivering great taste and have recently introduced some popular new hummus flavors including Caramelized Onion with Smoked Paprika and a Taco Inspired Hummus with Pico de Gallo," says Sabra's Greifenberger. "Our latest innovation — Sabra Spreads offers consumers an incredible tasting sandwich spread that contains 75 percent less fat than mayonnaise."

Sabra expects innovation and change to be the rule with hummus moving forward.

"Our Center of Excellence is at the forefront of innovation in the category as we continue to inspire fresh new ways of eating and connecting," says Greifenberger. "We will continue to drive category growth with consumer-insight driven innovations."

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Pickles

PACK PLENTY OF POTENTIAL

Average American consumes nine pounds annually

BY BARRY SPARKS

“Everybody loves pickles,” asserts Jeff Siegel of Farm Ridge Foods, an Islandia, NY-based company. “Pickles appeal to every age demographic.”

Statistics back up Siegel’s enthusiasm for pickles. Americans eat 2.5 billion pounds of pickles each year, according to Pickle Packers International (PPI), located in Washington, DC. That works out to about nine pounds per person. And, more than 78 percent of American households eat pickles.

“The deli is a natural spot for pickles,” says Steve Byrnes of Van Holten’s, headquartered in Waterloo, WI. “Consumers already associate pickles with sandwiches and fried chicken. Having pickles visible and available in the deli just helps consumers to make those connections.”

“Delis are evolving into more than a

place to buy just meat and cheese. Consumers want to purchase a complete meal,” says Van Holten. “Pickles are a natural accompaniment to nearly every meal. They are also a high-impulse purchase item and an easy add-on. People will buy them, if they see them.”

Siegel says unfortunately pickles over time have migrated from the deli to other parts of the store, such as the dairy, meat and grocery sections.

Thirty years ago, virtually every deli had a big barrel of pickles, says Siegel. Customers would select a pickle or pickles from the barrel. Sales tended to be brisk. But, the USDA said the pickles needed to be refrigerated and consequently that ended the barrel of pickles in the deli.

“As a result, the deli has lost a lot of the pickle business, which really belongs there,” says Siegel, who notes his company’s pickle sales are up 40 percent. “It’s

a shame because pickles pack potential. Some delis, however, are in a rut, and they are missing a great opportunity. It isn’t difficult to increase pickle sales.”

Array Of Tastes And Textures

Pickles’ numerous attributes make them an attractive commodity. There are nearly 50 varieties of pickles, offering an array of tastes, cuts and textures. Pickles are versatile. They can be used as an accompaniment or as an ingredient in a recipe. Since pickles are a mature product, consumers tend to be well versed about them. Consequently, retailers generally don’t need to do much product education.

According to PPI, dill or kosher dill pickles are the most popular variety. Sweet/bread and butter and sour/half sour pickles rank second and third in popularity. Whole pickles account for 28.5 percent of sales, while spears garner 21.5 percent. Chips



haven't picked up on the trend," he says.

Natural Time For Promotion

International Pickle Week — actually 10 days in May — is a natural time to promote pickles. The special week that started in 1948, is one of the longest running food promotions in the country. Contests such as guess the number of pickles in a jar, name the various pickle varieties and a pickle word scramble are opportunities to engage families in some fun activities. Advertising, in-store fliers and recipe cards also can increase awareness.

Although pickles are steady year-round sellers, they do best during the summer when picnics and family get-togethers abound. Siegel says 3-lb. containers of potato salad, macaroni salad and cole slaw tend to be very popular during the summer months. He suggests pairing a 3-lb. container of pickles with those items.

"Delis can take advantage of these bulk purchases," says Siegel, whose company offers pickles in quarts as well as 1, 2 and 3-lb. containers.

Byrnes says Van Holten has been successful with cross promotions, such as a free pickle with a sandwich or fried

(20.6 percent), relish/cubes (15.2 percent) and sandwich slices (11 percent) also appeal to consumers.

Pickles are receiving more attention nationally as the pickling process becomes more popular. It used to be only grannies pickled foods, but younger generations are embracing the process.

"Consumers see the health benefits of

making their own food," observes Byrnes. "Judging from social media, pickling is a growing trend."

Siegel says a stop at virtually any farmers' produce stand or farmers market will provide plenty of evidence of the growing popularity of pickled food items.

"Although consumers are expressing their interest in pickling, most supermarkets

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chicken, or a sandwich, chips, pickle and a free bottle of water. He also suggests pairing pickles with subs and hot dogs.

Makes A Healthy Snack

Promoting pickles as a healthy snack and lunch box item for kids are two uses frequently overlooked by delis, according to Byrnes.

"It seems everyone wants to eat healthier these days," he says. "Pickles are low in calories, gluten free, cholesterol free, fat free, low in carbs and have no GMOs. Moms also love them as healthy snacks for their children. They are a great alternative to potato chips and high-calorie sweets."

Surprisingly, crispy, crunchy pickles rate high with teens and younger kids. In a survey conducted for the pickle industry, teens identified pickles as one of their favorite vegetables.

According to the USDA, 1/8 cup of pickles counts as one of the five recommended daily servings of fruit and vegetables.

Pickles are becoming part of more lunch boxes than ever before. Moms are always looking for variety to keep lunches interesting. Retailers can aid mothers by making recipes available for creative sandwiches featuring pickles, such as sweet pickle sliders, pickle rolls, Reuben rollups, pickled tortilla rollups and Cuban sandwiches.

According to PPI, 47 percent of pickles are consumed at lunch, 40 percent with dinner and 8 percent as a snack.

Increased Appeal

Individually wrapped pickles have added another strong element to pickle appeal. Farm Ridge Foods sells individually wrapped pickles, which contain no brine or juice. Byrnes says pickle-in-a-pouch is one reason Van Holten's has experienced 13 consecutive years of growth.

According to Byrnes, retailers love pickle-in-a-pouch because it's much more efficient than selling pickles out of a large jar. It requires less labor and it eliminates

a potential mess. There's also less waste because pickle-in-a-pouch has a long shelf life. Finally, it offers better food safety. Packaging also allows the individual pickles-in-a-pouch to stand on end while being displayed.

Van Holten's offers four flavors of pickle-in-a-pouch: sour, hot, dill and kosher, as well as its character equivalents Sour Sis, Hot Mama, Big Papa and Garlic Joe. In order of sales, Byrnes says dill is first and hot is a close second. Kosher is third and sour ranks fourth.

"The stronger flavors are definitely growing," he says. "Teens particularly have been exposed to more flavors through cooking shows and ethnic dishes. They are more adventurous."

Flavored pickles such as Atomic Spicy Spears, Hickory Smoked Spears, Sweet Horseradish Chips and Wasabi Ginger Spears have been selling well, according to Farm Ridge Foods' Siegel.

"People are looking for something different and this is a way retailers can make a bold statement," he says. "This has been a great growth area for us."

Siegel suggests delis consider creating a pickle bar, similar to an olive station. "Stores that have introduced pickle bars are doing well with them," he says. "With the variety of pickles and array of flavors, ranging from hot and spicy to sweet and sour, a pickle bar offers something different and fun for consumers."

DB



Going Gaga for Gouda



PHOTOS BY YVONNE PALSGRAAF

Cheese lovers everywhere can't seem to get enough

BY SAMANTHA LYSTER

For people who love dairy and cheese, a visit to The Netherlands is a must. So prevalent is the national love of dairy that it's difficult to avoid the sight and smell of cheese, or 'kaas' in Dutch. From the proliferation of independent cheese shops to the tourist attractions based around huge yellow wheels, for such a small country there's a lot of cheese to be had.

The most popular, and the cheese that accounts for 60 percent of the entire product this dairy-loving country produces, is

Gouda. Named after the town of Gouda, located in the south, this small city never produced its namesake but was the trading capital for Gouda sales.

Historically, cheese was brought to Gouda to be weighed, taxed and traded, and this is how the town located in South Holland, an hour away from Amsterdam by train, came to be associated with cheesemaking.

If a trip to The Netherlands isn't on the agenda then a trip to the cheese case of your favorite deli is the next best thing.



Making Gouda

Popular throughout the world, Gouda is made throughout The Netherlands and in many countries of the world. The cheesemaking process is always similar but may include Gouda made with cow, sheep or goats' milk. The fat content may vary, and animal, vegetable or microbial rennets may be used.

In order to protect and preserve the original and most traditional Gouda, The Netherlands applied for and received Protection of Denomination of Origin status (PDO) for Noord-Hollandse Gouda or North Holland Gouda. A semi-soft, sweet curd cheese made from whole and partially skimmed cow's milk, it ranges in size from 6 to 50 pounds. It is always pasteurized and made using calf rennet.

The process of making North Holland Gouda starts, as one would expect, heating the milk and adding the rennet. At the proper time, the culture is added. In this case it's type-A lactic acids, *Lactobacillus lactis*, *Lactobacillus cremoris* and *Leuconostoc cremoris*. It is this very specific cocktail that gives traditional Gouda its very special taste.

But there is another trick the old cheese masters perfected. At a certain point, most of the whey is drained and replaced by hot water. Aptly called a washed-curd cheese, apparently the reason for this goes back to the days of wooden vats in which the cheese was made. These vats could not be heated so hot water was added to increase the temperature of the curds.

Today, the curds are washed to create a cheese that has a non-acidic taste. The water stops the acidification process and makes for a sweeter flavor. After the





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cheese has taken its characteristic round shape, it will be soaked in salt brine for a few days and then removed and left to age in warehouses. While materials are changing, typically wooden shelves were used to age the cheese and still are in some cases.

North Holland Gouda may only be made from cows grazed in the North Holland polders, the most famous of which is the Beemster Polder, now a World Heritage Site. Constructed in 1612, this famous flat landscape covered in swaths of green grass, was one of the first experiments in reclaiming agricultural grounds from the sea. Extremely rich in nutrients, the milk produced is considered to be some of the finest in the world.

A Long Heritage

Dutchmen were traders and famous for their cheese exports. Crossing the Atlantic, they settled in the area now called New York City, bringing with them technology developed in the Beemster Polder. Beemster became the model used to drain and build this magnificent city.

One thing lacking in the polders was wood and on return trips, Dutchmen

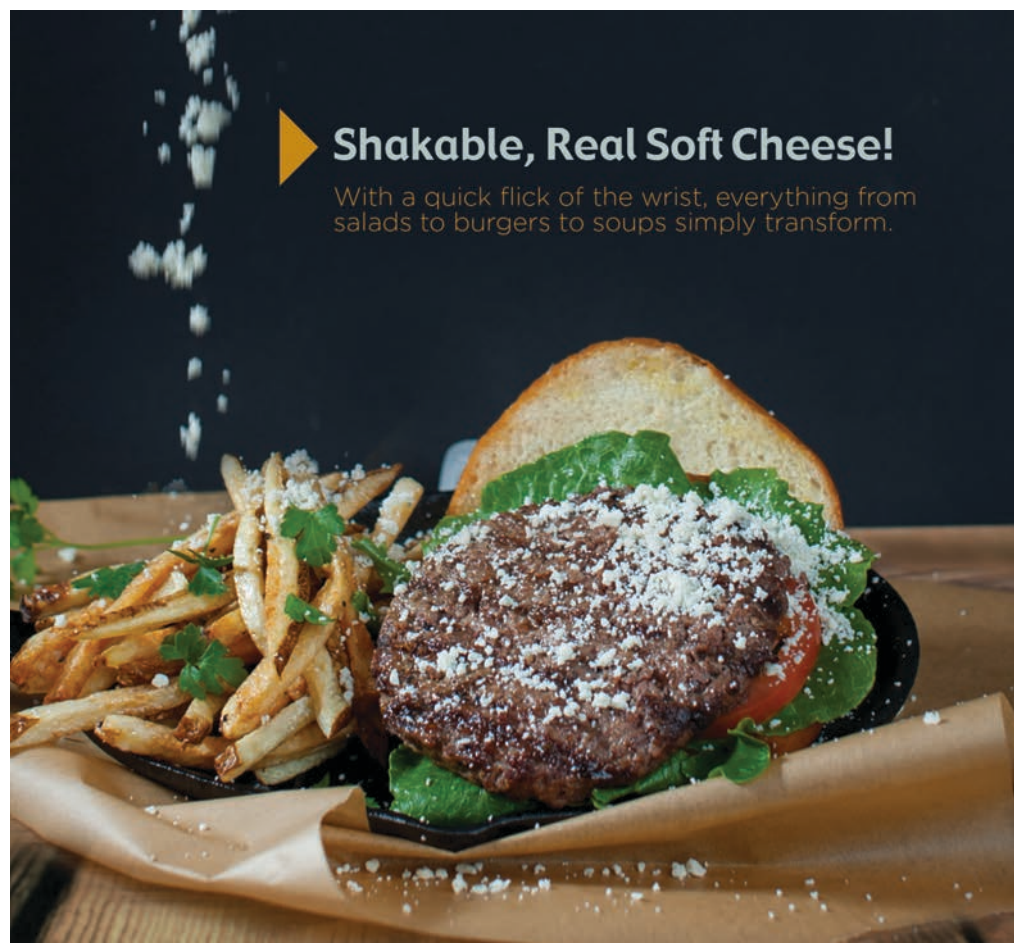
brought back hardwoods from the North American forests. Today, visiting the cheese-aging warehouses, you may find the same 400-year-old wood being used to age cheese. It is a rather eerie feeling to be standing in a warehouse filled floor to ceiling with wheels large and small of Gouda aging on dark boards hard as steel and smooth as glass.

The rafters and beams are hand-hewed with original cuts and marks. Realizing this unique cave is filled with wood from forests outside of New York City that have long ago disappeared gives one a feeling of wonderment about cultural exchanges and the sharing of wisdom.

While the North Holland Gouda PDO is the most traditional, The Netherlands produces many varieties that fall outside of the PDO requirements. Gouda is often made from the milk of sheep and goats. Ewephoria Sheep Milk Gouda is exceptional Gouda from North Holland made from pasteurized milk and microbial rennet. Goat Gouda is becoming quite commonplace. Snow white in color, it is often young, sweet and creamy with notes of sour cream or yogurt on the nose.

REALIZING THIS UNIQUE CAVE IS FILLED WITH WOOD FROM FORESTS OUTSIDE OF NEW YORK CITY THAT HAVE LONG AGO DISAPPEARED GIVES ONE A FEELING OF WONDERMENT ABOUT CULTURAL EXCHANGES AND THE SHARING OF WISDOM.

Flavored cheeses are also very popular and U.S. cheese lovers have embraced these tasty varieties with a passion. Since the number of cheeses produced is limited, the varieties are endless. Often flavored with cracked pepper, cumin, caraway, herbs and pesto, other flavors such as truffles and coconut are also being made. **DB**



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Pizza

In The Deli

The latest trends of one of America's most popular foods

BY KEITH LORIA

While it may appear as though there's already a pizza parlor, national chain or delivery specialist on every street corner in the U.S., consumers still can't seem to get enough pizza options. Pizza ranks as one of America's most sought-out lunch and dinner items and is enjoyed by virtually every age group and ethnicity.

It also continues to present a great opportunity for deli operators. According to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, or IDDBA, 49 percent of consumers purchase pizza from the deli

of a grocery store at least once a month, making it the second-leading foodservice source for pizza.

What's Popular?

Tony Pellerite, director of marketing at Rich Products in Buffalo, NY, cites two main trends in pizza merchandising. The first is featuring more artisanal and upscale pizzas, such as Neapolitan style, while the second is offering a variety of pizza crusts, like Sicilian- or Detroit-style pizza, in addition to more traditional selections.

Another emerging trend is the growing competition from fast-casual pizza con-

cepts like My Pie, Blaze, Pie Five, Pieology and others, says Pellerite. "As the demand increases for fresher, better ingredients and a higher level of customization, retailers who have invested in their stores perimeter, in particular in the prepared foods/deli areas, are responding by taking pizza to the next level," he says.

Many delis have begun to offer made-to-order/ready-to-eat pizza programs often featuring by-the-slice, personal pizzas and whole pie options, baked fresh and ready-to-eat on premise or to take home.

Deb Crisan, senior vice president sales of Rao's Specialty Foods, headquartered



in New York, says the company is still seeing a continued focus on traditional artisan wood-fired or brick-oven pizzas using fresh, all-natural ingredients with options for a gluten-free or whole-wheat crust.

James Viti, vice president of sales and marketing for Delorio Foods, Inc., based in Utica, NY, says organic dough, sprouted, whole and ancient grains have become buzzwords for the food industry.

"No question, what started with gluten-free a decade ago has morphed into a varied life style with Baby Boomers and the Millennial generation alike," he says. "There are distinctive trends addressing overall healthier lifestyles, while at the same time we're seeing trends of 'two-times the size, triple-bacon-cheese indulgence' hold tight position on menus as well."

Healthful Options

If there's one thing the Millennial generation cares about it's consuming foods that are considered more healthful fare, and that is true with the pizza segment as well.

"Most delis, being sensitive to dietary or lifestyle choices, are already offering gluten-free and whole-wheat crusts with

vegan and vegetarian options," says Crisan.

As it relates to more healthful eating, in general, pizza has been affected in several ways. Consumers are looking for fresher ingredients with a cleaner label, no artificial preservatives or dyes.

"Natural and organic have become more popular not only in the toppings for pizza but in the crust as well. All-natural meats and healthy vegetables are being incorporated into toppings," says Pellerite. "Sprouted grain and ancient grains are being considered for crusts in place of traditional white flour. And lastly the popularity of thinner pizza crusts with a lighter portion of toppings, resulting in a reduction of calories, has risen."

Delorio Foods' Viti says gluten free still remains one of the single-largest movements over the past decade, regarding the dough/crust portion of the pizza.

"I think incorporating legumes and pulse items such as chickpeas and lentils will continue to evolve, along with further introduction of ancient grains," he says. "It's amazing to see how much development has occurred just over the past few years, taking the pizza base portion to the

next level. I'm excited for the future of gluten free."

Vegan, vegetarian, and flexitarian lifestyles also are affecting the pizza market with the development of more unique plant-based proteins, and higher protein content in general. However, don't take that pepperoni or meat lovers pizza off the menu just yet. Viti says your basic cheese and pepperoni will continue to be a beloved mainstay comfort food with regards to market demand.

A Complete Flavor Profile

The saying "It's a small world" certainly applies to the pizza category over the past few years. Viti says the introduction of such global influences as Latin American, Indian, Polynesian and European flavors have altered the landscape of the pizza scene.

"An example of the global and health influence may be our pizza shells with chickpea and gluten-free shells, while an example of toppings might include spicy hot barbecue," he says. "The key is to remain fluent with your ingredients, so you can adopt quickly as new flavors hit the

market.”

Similar to overall food trends, the demand for ethnic flavors has crept into the pizza world. Pellerite has seen a rise of Thai, Caribbean and Asian flavor profiles being incorporated into pizza offerings.

“These types of pizzas can be marketed as a limited time offer or a special to capture the attention of the more adventurous pizza shopper,” he says.

Rao’s pizza sauce is made in Italy combining sweet Italian cherry and Italian plum tomatoes to create a true Neapolitan-style pizza.

Crisan says a few of the more creative twists include pesto pizza with chicken; Alfredo-based pie with seafood; aioli with clams; a southwestern style Buffalo chicken pizza with blue cheese; sliced potato with caramelized onions and roasted garlic; and breakfast and dessert pizzas.

Top It Off

Regarding toppings, manufacturers have been accommodating the end user as much as possible by introducing local and ethnic flavors, customizing with more variety than ever before.

Fresh ingredients are being incorporated into many pizza recipes. Fresh tomato slices — San Marzano or Roma tomato — onion, fresh mushrooms (roasted wild) are just some examples.

Additionally, Rich Products’ Pellerite notes, savory sauces like sweet barbecue and ranch are becoming popular. At the same time, spicy cheeses (jalapeño), unique cheese blends and fresh Mozzarella are all trending upward.

Crust Of The Matter

Flatbread pizzas have been coming on strong for a few years, but thick crusts and flavored crusts are making a comeback.

“Various regions across the United States have their own family history of introducing thin crust, thick crust and stuffed crust pizzas to America,” says Rao’s Crisan. “It takes a personal palate to determine your favorite.”

Pellerite says the Sicilian crust — a thicker crust — is becoming more popular as are the thin and crispy-style crusts.

“While not yet mainstream, savory herb crusts and cheese-flavored crusts have been showing up on menus,” he says. “More popular are the flavors and treatments on the edge of the crusts where garlic butter, Parmesan cheese, sesame



seeds and any number of ingredients are being used to create a unique, impactful flavor profile for the edge.”

Pizza Plus

According to the experts there are several methods of successfully cross merchandising with pizza.

“Retailers with strong pizza programs

offer meal deals bundling several items together,” says Pellerite. “For example, pizza, salad mix and a 2-liter soft drink. Another example might be a tailgate package that includes pizza, Mozzarella sticks and chicken wings.”

Pizza products can also be cross merchandised with the ingredients and supplies needed to make a pizza. At most stores



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pre-portioned sauce, cheese, pepperoni and other toppings are sold alongside pizza crusts or raw pizza dough. In addition, general merchandise can be included like a pizza baking stone or pizza cutter.

Viti points out typical pairings with a beverage and dessert are strongest for family meal replacement, but creativity is key here as well.

"A fig, arugula and balsamic pizza might be paired with a particular wine and salad to help upscale the experience," he says. "

Marketing Matters

One recent trend popping up in deli departments, according to the IDDBA, is a 4-foot, self-service case containing all of the components for shoppers to assemble and make their own pizza. It's popular with Millennials and families seem to enjoy them as well.

If you want to be different, Crisan says, delis can create an Italian-style kiosk that invites the customer to watch how it's made and gives them a sample when it comes out of the oven. That will encourage pizza for dinner that night, she says.

Refrigerated space is a premium for most retailers, and pizza does take up quite

"SIGNAGE IS IMPORTANT TO GRAB SHOPPERS' ATTENTION OR CONVEY MESSAGING LIKE 'MADE IN HOUSE.' OFFERING TAKE-AND-BAKE PIZZAS, PAR-BAKED CRUSTS AND RAW PIZZA DOUGH GIVES THE SHOPPER MANY OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM."

— TONY PELLERITE, RICH PRODUCTS

a bit of real estate. However, Pellerite notes, to have a successful pizza program that drives sales and profit, retailers must dedicate enough space to demonstrate they are in the pizza business.

"Providing an ample number of facings and an assortment of formats are essential to accomplishing this," he says. "Signage is important to grab shoppers' attention or convey messaging like 'made in house.' Offering take-and-bake pizzas, par-baked crusts and raw pizza dough gives the shopper many options to choose from."

In the current do-it-yourself environment, Pellerite says it's helpful to make recipe cards available and direct consumers to DIY videos that can be referenced via the retailers' websites.

"For retailers who have made to-order programs, taking online and mobile orders is a great idea," he says. "For the Millennials online ordering has become the method of choice for pizza."

Above all, to be successful in the category, a retailer must have variety, asserts Viti.

"The variety comes in the form of traditional comfort food we remember fondly as a child, it comes as healthier lifestyle food, it comes from an ethnic experience we'd like to try, it comes from local farm-to-table support," he says. "You may choose to pick one direction and be the 'expert,' or maintain a good variety of items, and aggressively seek out new trends quickly as they emerge, to stay ahead of the game."

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Holiday Meat Guide



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High-end products more prevalent, as consumers seek natural, quality foods

BY LISA WHITE

Move over chips and salsa. With entertaining and celebrations throughout the fourth quarter, high-end meats have become more of a staple during the holiday season, and this year will be no exception.

From prosciutto to imported salamis, the demographic for these pricier cuts continues to expand.

According to New York-based market research firm Nielsen, premium meats like salami and prosciutto, are growing 3.5 times faster than the entire deli category.

"We really see significant bumps in salami sales during the holidays and around key three-day weekend holidays throughout the year," says Jay Holt, senior vice

president of sales for Columbus Craft Meats, based in San Francisco. "Charcuterie is a great solution for entertaining, and retailers who are leading with premium product solutions for key occasions are really winning."

2016 Trends

Accessible entertaining is all the buzz, as consumers look for ways to simplify entertaining in November and December. Consequently, there are several key trends for high-end meats this holiday season.

"Rather than hunting for specific meats to assemble into a party platter, shoppers want retailers to make it easier for them," says Holt. "This could mean anything from offering curated variety packs of premium

craft meats that allow for easy trial to merchandising solutions that allow shoppers to easily pair premium meats with other accompaniments like crackers, wine, beer, etc."

For deli retailers, this has expanded the opportunities for high-end meats during this period.

There are essentially two principal demographics that are being targeted in this segment.

"The first is Millennials, or young people beginning families that are more conscious of health issues and supportive of artisanal purveyors, but also want a product with a story and pedigree that's local and less corporate," says Dan Estridge, founder and chief flavor officer at Concord, MA-based NYDP Deli Patrol.



"Also, Baby Boomers, who are growing older, and empty nesters are more price tolerant and may be more health conscious today than 20 years ago, which is good news for the gourmet meat segment."

From a broad perspective, most customers today are more in tune with the quality of production, raw materials, processing and the heritage behind the brand.

It's not only imported brands, but also domestic products have emerged and become more prevalent during the holidays.

"Rather than Italian or French meats, lines from small artisan producers on the East and West Coasts, and even Chicago, are providing innovative varieties," says Kimberly Sayid, director of strategic partnerships for Principe Foods USA, located in Long Beach, CA. "Also, presliced continues to be strong and growing, like presliced prosciutto di Parma, and exports from Italy are growing in double digits. Party packs are huge as well."

"It's not only about imported product now," says Tim Urban, chief commercial officer at Volpi Foods, based in St. Louis. "It's like the early 1970s when the most sought after wine was European, but then California varietals emerged. Now Americans are beginning to recognize that there also are high-quality domestic meats available."

In addition, cleaner labels and uncured brands with no nitrates or nitrites are coming to the forefront due to a better understanding of these products. Antibiot-

ic-free lines, which were rare in the past, are now sought after and more available during the holidays.

"There is increasing demand for antibiotic-free meats with clean ingredient statements," says Holt. "Retailers should expect to see this trend continue during the holiday season and beyond."

For example, Olli Salumeria, based in Mechanicsville, VA, emphasizes clean labels with its gourmet salami lines.

It's expected that those offering these meats can provide more insight into flavors, applications, pairings and recipes, in addition to processing techniques.

The holiday season is a prime time to demonstrate the differences of these products.

"We had the largest demand in the fourth quarter [of 2015] than ever before," says Urban. "Most consumers know prosciutto, but not culatello."

The holiday season is a prime time to introduce consumers to high-end meats they may have not yet been exposed to or overlooked at other times of the year. It's also a good opportunity to expand offerings to include different sizes.

Mt. Olive, NJ-based Fratelli Beretta USA has experienced big increases in requirements and requests from retailers for variety pack combinations, as stores are seeking larger sizes and more varieties during the holidays.

As a result, the company offers a 24-ounce multipack with six different

components inside.

"Retailers are moving away from low-end multipacks that were popular for many years," says Simone Bocchini, president. "We're also seeing a push for cleaner ingredient statements, but there remain challenges on the raw ingredient side, especially with organic and antibiotic-free meats."

A few Italian specialty meat brands are launching items that are closer to authentic Italian salami, but there also are higher-end salamis incorporating whiskey and other innovative ingredients.

"High-end Spanish meats like our imported jamón Ibérico de bellota and imported jamón serrano also benefit from holiday seasons, as more consumers look for entertaining options to wow their guests," says Garrett Digney, marketing supervisor at Campofrio Food Group America, based in South Chesterfield, VA.

Profitable Party Platters

In the 2015 What's Hot Culinary Trend report from the National Restaurant Association, house-cured charcuterie was the No. 2 trend for appetizers.

Consumers looking for ways to replicate this at parties are turning toward supermarket delis to make it happen.

"Party platters are being converted into charcuterie plates that hold an assortment of craft meats that can be complemented with gourmet cheeses, crackers, beer and wine," says Columbus Craft Meats' Holt.

This year, retailers also can expect to see prepared combinations of craft meats and cheeses, like paninis, that are rolled together for easy finger food on party platters.

"We've seen this trend reflected in strong demand for our Genoa, prosciutto and hot soppressata paninis this year and expect that to continue through the holiday season," says Holt.

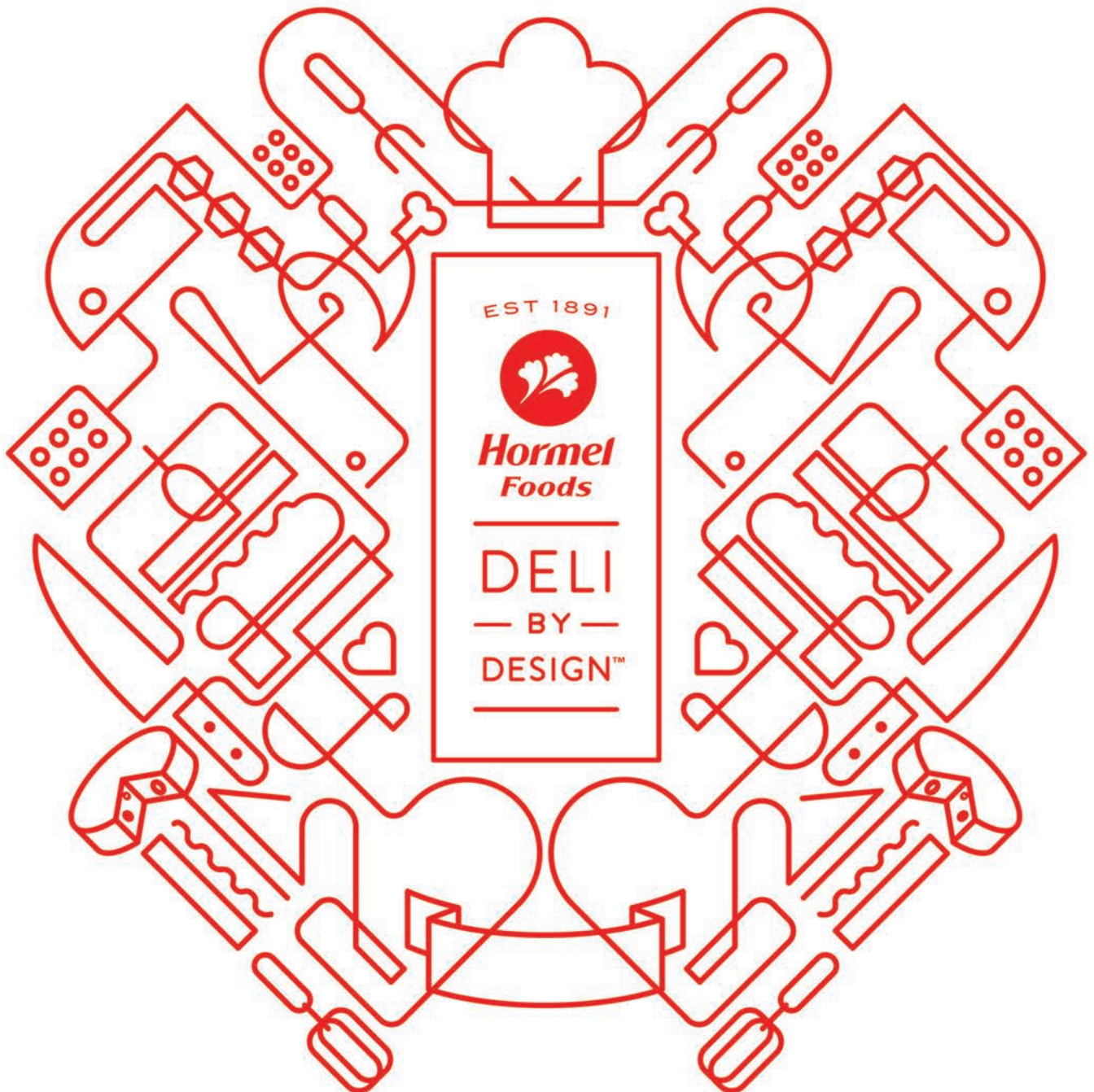
Although a slower build, there is expected to be more demand for natural and artisanal high-end meats in supermarket deli platters during the fourth quarter.

It can be a challenge for some stores to build these offerings, with demand typically greater than the supply.

"Some delis can manage it and some cannot," says NYDP Deli's Estridge. "Still, the bulk of the platter business is conventional product."

Suppliers recommend being consistent with high-end meats in terms of providing natural product platters, even though it can

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be costly for consumers who are feeding 20 to 40 people.

This demographic is willing to pay more for these products, so having a few options is justified in most cases. The most important thing is to provide visibility for the clean labels and ingredients.

"We're not seeing much high-end meat on prefab platters, it's more so people purchasing these products can create their own charcuterie plate," says Volpi Foods' Urban. "Still, atypical buyers are purchasing culatello, mortadella and other gourmet meats." For a complete offering, Urban recommends retailers mix whole muscle, mixed muscle and minced product on platters.

In the past, party platters were priced by number of servings, but with more high-end meats in the mix, the pricing tiers are more varied and based on how premium the products are.

"The more discerning customers will pay more for these platters, and this will drive store revenues up," says Estridge. "But there needs to be a complete assortment as well as complementary product that can be mixed and matched."

Another emerging trend in the grocery

stores is assembling custom party platters in the deli.

"The stores are using the expertise of their deli staff to curate party platter options, or charcuterie boards that fit the demand for delicious and high-end components," says Campofrio's Digney.

Marketing & Merchandising

The holidays can be a stressful time for shoppers, and entertaining can be a big contributor. Retailers should be looking to provide entertaining solutions to help reduce the stress.

"Those retailers most effectively addressing this need are offering all-in-one products that can be purchased and unpacked for a party as well as creating dedicated charcuterie stations in their more premium stores," says Holt.

"Retailers also are merchandising products by hanging or displaying them beautifully in their cases. Actively merchandising with other key charcuterie accompaniments is also helping drive rings up, from adding mustards or specialty cheeses, to wine and beer; solution-oriented merchandising is a best practice that we see in some of our key

customer accounts."

Supermarket delis also are increasingly providing fresh-sliced charcuterie to go, which allows customers to more conveniently pick up these products without waiting in line at the counter.

"We are seeing an increased demand and interest in different types of craft meats in traditional grocery," says Holt. "Retailers should take advantage of that trend and offer a variety of charcuterie that is sliced fresh and merchandised in pre-made packages."

There are a number of ways retailers can bring added attention to these products.

For example, a number of stores will distribute printed fliers, circulars or menus for catering applications and platters during the holiday season.

Location also is key for these products, since cross merchandising can build basket rings, especially during the fourth quarter. "Stores should be required to display charcuterie within 5 linear feet of the craft beer, wine, bakery or specialty sections, since these products attract the same consumers," says Volpi's Urban. "These will be more loyal customers who are not buying



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on deals or promotions, so it's about brand bunkering and building."

This approach, which consists of creating a high-end section with gourmet brands, is no longer reserved for specialty food shops, but becoming more of a fixture in traditional supermarket delis.

During the holidays is a prime time for retailers to develop innovative and unique cross-merchandising displays.

High-end meats can be marketed with fresh bread, seasonal produce, specialty cheese, jams and marmalades and a variety of wine.

"Millennials are the consumers of today and tomorrow, but empty nesters are looking for ways to entertain with unique foods, as are young families with kids, who would be more into different pack sizes that can be eaten throughout the day," says Principe's Sayid. "Including signs and explanations of the different products, along with photos, can entice all types of consumers to purchase."

Educating customers remains key in marketing high-end meats, since this provides the impetus to spend more for these products.

"Retailers should not only be including the normal cheese pairings, but also showing some extra board adds like nuts, bread, crackers, etc." says Jennifer Johnson, director of marketing at Olli Salumeria. "It also helps bring attention to high-end meats whenever there are beer and wine pairings."

Olli Salumeria's artisanal salumi has grown outside of specialty and is now getting noticed by more consumers.

In terms of marketing gourmet meats during the holiday season, some retailers are taking it to the next level by offering all the items required for a consumer's table in one central location.

"One retailer in the Midwest has a table with a variety of cheese, cold cuts, red and white wine and dried fruit, providing a one-stop-shop," says Fratelli Beretta's Bocchini. "This is where the focus should be to make it simple and convenient for consumers."

The bottomline is during this time of year people are trying to create a unique entertaining or dining experience with a few key elements, such as gourmet meat and cheeses.

Retailers who expand their offerings and raise the bar, will be well positioned to capitalize on this growing segment and profit on the higher price points throughout the holidays.

DB

LET'S GET SAUCED

Cross promoting new, flavorful and innovative products



By
Jeffrey Spear
President - Studio Spear

Ever since the launch of the Food Network, America's fascination with food has been growing. Today, it is a seemingly insatiable cultural phenomenon that has consumers clamoring for culinary experiences that are entirely new, exotic, deliciously cool and groovy. Coupled with increasingly active lifestyles and an unmistakable preference for clean, authentic and healthful foods, there is no shortage of opportunity for retailers to exploit.

For deli managers, taking stock and evaluating current inventories is an excellent first step. While there are lots of traditional products that have been deli standards for decades, it may be time to set the legacy brands aside, making room for newcomers.

If you need proof, recent statistics indicate consumers, in steadily increasing numbers, are demonstrating a clear preference for more contemporary, innovative, better-formulated and better-tasting products, many of which are produced by health-conscious artisanal enterprises. Since this profile aligns better with much smaller, more responsive and agile producers, mass-produced brands are being pushed off shelves in ever increasing numbers.

If the products in your deli case are sacrosanct, there are still plenty of ways to impress, delight, and engage customers. One of the most regularly overlooked tactics is strategically planned cross promotion. Sure, delis are quick to place a few loaves of bread and some mustard on the counter or on nearby racks. This being said, identifying bread, mustard (or mayonnaise or ketchup) as appropriate "go-withs" for deli meat or cheese takes little to no imagination. In this day and age, and with the glut of ethnic and exotic foods on the market, retailers should be prepared to put in a little extra effort.

Two of the most vibrant food categories are condiments and cooking sauces. These are the ready to use sauces, spreads, dips, pastes, preserves, dressings and toppings that are typically found in the center of the store that represent wonderful pairing opportunities for products in the deli department. When you consider the trends, and the fact that consumers are looking to create new and exotic meals at home, offering creatively formulated and/or ethnically-inspired condiments at the deli counter can help transform an ordinary ham sandwich or turkey rollup into something truly magical.

The good news is that there is no shortage of companies producing these inspired culinary creations. Fisher & Wieser, acclaimed for its innovative preserves and sauces, has come up with impressive

flavors including Whiskey-Soaked Cherry Pasa-la Sauce, Black Currant Hibiscus Guajillo Sauce and Savory Fig & Onion Spread. Similarly, Robert Rothschild Farm maintains an alluring range of condiments including Toasted Garlic Horseradish Spread, Pineapple Coconut Mango Tequila Finishing Sauce and Balsamic Caramelized Onion Spread.

Without going into detail, a few additional producers worth investigating include Stonewall Kitchen, Wildly Delicious, Earth & Vine, Terrapin Ridge and Wild Thymes Farm. Of course, there are an endless number of smaller producers, many international in origin, that offer equally delicious, if not better, options for sandwich toppers and spreads.

It's truly amazing what happens when you offer a little bit of inspiration — prompting your customers to think outside the box. The key is helping them make informed decisions about the deli products they order and the condiments they purchase to go with them.

Just because a product is called a dressing does not mean it can't be creatively applied to sandwiches in place of mustard or mayo. Likewise, shelf stable preserves, dips and tapenades are all ready to eat and can transform ordinary snacks and sandwiches into incredibly delicious culinary masterworks.

Aside from day-to-day meal preparation, let's also acknowledge the holidays are just around the corner. Assuming you acknowledge the enormous buying potential these last few weeks of the year represent, opportunities are (at least) twofold.

The first is giving your customers exciting new tips and techniques they can apply to liven up the dishes they prepare for holiday parties and dinners. Many of the same condiments described above can be folded into sour cream, cream cheese and mayonnaise to make dips and spreads that will have your customers — and their guests — raving long after the food is gone and the party is over.

The second consideration is gifting. With food ranking as one of the top subjects for conversation and culinary gifts always appreciated, making an assortment of ethnic, exotic and creatively inspired condiments available makes the deli experience that much more satisfying.

Whether you simply pull products from the center aisles to cross merchandise at the deli counter, or you enter into exclusive purchase arrangements for the department alone, there are tremendous opportunities to engage with your customers, increase cart totals and enhance the overall buying experience at the deli counter and in your store. **DB**

NUESKE'S BRAND TRANSCENDS TIME

R.C. Nueske founded Nueske's in 1933 — in the midst of The Great Depression. Times were hard for everyone, and, in an effort to relieve hardships, R.C. began selling traditionally-made smoked meats created with recipes that the Nueske family had used for generations.

He loaded up the back of his automobile with the Nueske family's freshly smoked hams, sausages and bacon, and traveled through Wisconsin's Northwoods, stopping at the many resorts in the area to see if people wanted to sample his wares.

Today, Nueske's Applewood Smoked Meats is still located in its hometown of Wittenberg, WI, and continues to be operated by the third generation of the Nueske family. The company has expanded since its inception and now has distributors and a following of chefs and foodies nationally.

Nueske's creates a wide variety of items, ranging from traditional German sausages like mettwurst and bratwurst to an Applewood Smoked Bacon that is hand-rubbed with Tellicherry peppercorns. Applewood Smoked Chicken, Duck and Turkey Breasts are available, as are Applewood Smoked Honey-Glazed Hams.

Nueske's Applewood Smoked Bacon has received four Gold Medals from the Specialty Food Association and has been mentioned in almost 100 books and cookbooks in the past decade, not to mention full articles in The New York Times and The Chicago Tribune.

Nueske's Wild Cherrywood Smoked Bacon, its newest product, also took the Gold Sofi Award at the 2011 Fancy Food Show in Washington, D.C. for special Diet & Lifestyle Product, while its Applewood Smoked Chicken Breast took 2012 Sofi Gold for Outstanding Perishable Foodservice Product.



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