

TOP DELI TRENDS FOR 2016



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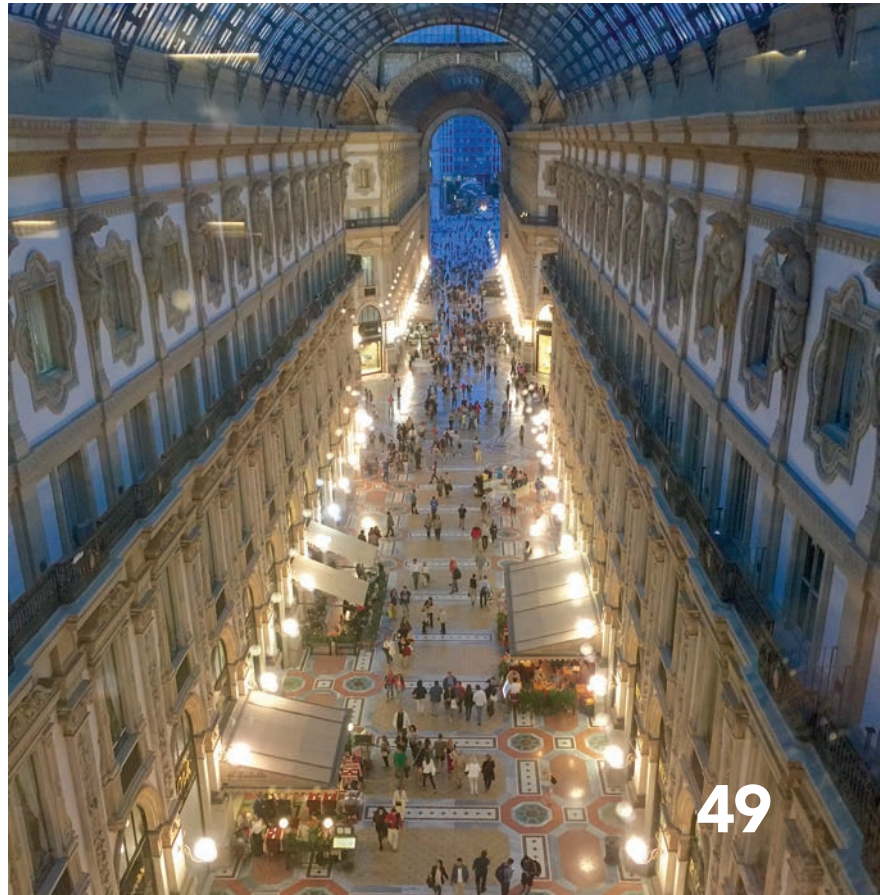
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COMTÉ SCHOLARSHIP WINNER ANNOUNCED



The winner of the fourth annual Comté Scholarship for American Cheese Society Certified Cheese Professionals (ACS CCPs) has been announced. Devin Lamma (pictured) scored the highest points in the blind essay contest and has won an all-expenses-paid trip to the Comté region to explore the area and its culture and to learn about production and the cheese's history. A 15-year Whole Foods Market veteran as well as a cheese educator, Lamma became an ACS CCP in 2013.

Second place went to Malachy Egan, head cheesemonger at the Franklin Market Di Bruno Brothers location in Philadelphia, who will receive a Comté care package.

This year's essay question asked applicants what they would hope to discover if they were to visit the Comté region as well as how it would benefit their position within the cheese industry.

The essays were judged anonymously on the basis of knowledge and creativity by a panel of three renowned cheese experts, including Peggy Smith, board president of the American Cheese Society and co-founder of Cowgirl Creamery; Cathy Strange, global cheese buyer for Whole Foods Market; and Max McCalmán, maître fromager, author, speaker, consultant and educator.

The Certified Cheese Professional (CCP) Exam was established by the American Cheese Society in 2012 to encourage high standards of comprehensive cheese knowledge and service for professionals in all areas of the cheese world. The exam is based on the knowledge and skills required to successfully perform cheese-related tasks in jobs across the board.

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COVER STORY

Italy Rediscovered

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Consumer Trends

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Grab'n'Go
Asian

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Importing
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PREPARED FOODS

Pizza
Potatoes

DELI MEATS

Rotisserie Chicken

CHEESES

English Cheddar
Gouda

COMING NEXT

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www.labonneviecheese.com

Announcements



WINONA FOODS HONORED

Winona Foods Inc., Green Bay, WI, has been named 2015 Grocery Vendor of the Year by US Foods, its second honor in the last three years. More than 60 divisions and support offices take place in the voting process. Winona Foods was chosen as the top grocery supplier award based on a variety of metrics, including sales growth, gross margin improvement, merchandising support, product quality, divisional sales support, exclusive brands and logistics.

www.winonafoods.com



AN UPGRADED FLAVOR

Tribe, Taunton, MA, recently upgraded one of its most popular flavors, Garlic. The company's new and improved Garlic hummus features heaping amounts of fire-roasted and minced garlic, but now also includes a more flavorful and eye-catching topping of parsley with an extra virgin olive oil blend drizzle, which can be stirred into the creamy hummus.

www.tribehummus.com



FABRI-KAL OPENS NEW PLANT

Fabri-Kal Corp., Kalamazoo, MI, recently opened its new manufacturing facility in Burley, ID. The new 100,000-square-foot facility expands Fabri-Kal's footprint in plastics thermoforming and will enable initiatives to add to the existing Greenware product line using a renewable and compostable material made from plant-based fiber. The new manufacturing facility will employ approximately 50 people, with plans to add an additional 100 people in the next five years.

www.fabri-kal.com



ARTHUR SCHUMAN WINS AWARDS

Arthur Schuman, Fairfield, NJ, has announced its Montforte Blue won first place, Cello Reserva Asiago won second place, and Cello Reserva Artisan Parmesan won third place at the 2015 World Dairy Expo Championship Dairy Products Awards, sponsored by the Wisconsin Dairy Products Association. The contest drew 1,210 entries from dairy processors throughout North America. Montforte Blue is produced at the Imperia Foods' manufacturing facilities located in Wisconsin.

www.arthurschuman.com

Transition



OLD CROC PACKAGING AWARDED

Trugman Nash LLC, Millburn, NJ, an affiliate of MCT Dairies Inc., has announced its line of Australian Cheddars was awarded the 2015 American Graphic Design Award for excellence in packaging design. Designed by the Zullo Agency, Princeton, NJ, the package's brightly-colored brand logo was created to reflect the adventurous spirit of the Australian outback. Nearly 10,000 entries were submitted.

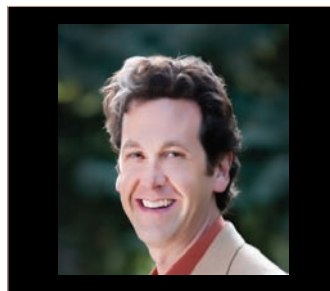
www.oldcroccheese.com



EMPIRE KOSHER GETS NEW LOGO

Empire Kosher Poultry, Inc., a leading kosher poultry company, announced the introduction of a brand logo reflecting its natural and organic product values. The brand logo is concurrent with the launch of new deli and grocery products, including the first-ever line of kosher uncured deli meat products that are minimally processed, contain no artificial ingredients, have no added nitrates and are made from turkey and chicken that are never administered antibiotics.

www.empirekosher.com



BLACKBURN JOINS FIRSTSOURCE

FirstSource Events, South Portland, ME, has announced natural products and alternative health media guru, Scott Blackburn has joined the team as a key player in its Deli&Cheese 101 and Meat&Poultry 101 events, part of a series of rebranded hosted buyer networking conferences. Blackburn brings more than 15 years of event and media experience, including four years with New Hope Natural Media and five years with InnoVision Health Media, to his post.

www.FirstSourceEvents.com

New Products



A KIT FOR CHEESE

Emmi Roth USA, Fitchburg, WI, offers Cheese Board Kits that take the guesswork out of selecting complementary cheese varieties. With the kits, smaller cuts of cheese varieties are easier to store and handle. These also offer minimal prep time and less waste for cheese spreads. Ideal for catering and cheese plate service, the kits come with tent cards to identify the varieties and pairing suggestions. Signature, Classic, Supreme Selection and British Isles cheese boards are available.

www.emmirothfoodservice.com

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New Products



A VEGAN APPROACH

The Field Roast Grain Meat Co., Seattle, was established in 1997 and is the original maker of artisan vegan grain meats, including both retail and catering ranges of sausages, frankfurters, roasts, slices, meatloaf, cutlets and more. Field Roast also has created a line of rich and creamy non-dairy coconut cheese marking the company's introduction as the first vegan meat and cheese brand. Field Roast products are high-end with a decidedly taste first approach to plant based meat and cheese.

www.fieldroast.com



GLUTEN-FREE PERFORMANCE

BFree Foods, Montebello, CA, has developed gluten-free breads that taste like the conventional counterparts and are nutritious. The line will not disintegrate, crack or crumble mid-meal. The breads include high-quality, non-GMO ingredients, including whole peas, apples, potatoes, and a blend of buckwheat and corn flours, to provide gluten-like pliability. The products are high in fiber and low in fat, with low calories.

www.US.BFreeFoods.com



RUSTIC COLLECTION LAUNCHED

Kontos Foods Inc., Paterson, NJ, has announced the launch of the Rustics Collection, Tandoori-style Naan bread in Original and Garlic flavors. The breads are light and fluffy, with the functionality of breads and wraps. The new oblong-shaped Naan contains no added preservatives and come two to a pack in a re-sealable bag with a zipper-style closure.

www.kontos.com



TWO FOODSERVICE BOWLS UNVEILED

Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA, has announced the launch of a line of broth bowls for foodservice, and introduced the first two products in the line, Thai-style Coconut Broth and Vegetable Broth. Full of flavor, these broths are the foundation for building soups and entrees and also can be distributed on the hot bar accompanied by vegetables, noodles and proteins. Both varieties are shipped frozen in four, 4-pound ready-to-heat bags.

www.blountfinefoods.com



A DIFFERENT DIP

Alouette Cheese, New Holland, PA, has introduced two new products. The Le Bon Dip is a blend of premium, soft cheese, chunky vegetables and a touch of yogurt. Four varieties are available, Basil, Zucchini & Parmesan; Zesty Garden Salsa; Fire Roasted Vegetables; and Roasted Red Pepper & Chickpea. The company also debuted Le Petite Fromage, a portioned snacking spread made of natural ingredients and preservative-free. Four varieties are available, including Garlic & Herb, Garden Salsa, Parmesan & Basil, and Cucumber & Dill.

www.alouettecheese.com



EIGHT SOUPS DEBUT

Fortun Foods, Kirkland, WA, has added eight retail soups to its product line. New soup offerings include New England Clam Chowder; Wild Northwest Smoked Salmon Chowder; Lobster Bisque with Shrimp, Crab and Cognac; Louisiana Chowder with Shrimp and Roasted Corn; gluten-free Azteca Chicken and Rice; Italian Minestrone; Cheddar and Broccoli; and Roasted Tomato Bisque.

www.fortunfoods.com



OAXACA SHREDDED STRIPS

Nuestro Queso, Rosemont, IL, has introduced Oaxaca shredded strips. Oaxaca cheese, traditionally a ball made up of long, hand-rolled ribbons, is the most popular cheese in Mexico because it melts and strings more effectively than other varieties when heated. The new cheese strips can be used as a melting cheese or as a quick and convenient snack. The line is available in 8- and 24-ounce packages and 5-pound bags.

www.nuestroqueso.com



GRAB & GO MEALS

The Greek Table launched three new split trays for the deli grab & go case (pictured, Moussaka: Eggplant & Beef Casserole). The products are made in the USA with 100 percent natural ingredients and only extra virgin olive oil. Fully cooked, microwavable, sealed trays that guarantee no leaking, make the products convenient to use. The Greek Table line, available in foodservice and retail size, is a healthy, convenient, and flavorful option for hot bars, deli case, and catering.

www.thegreektable.com

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www.CertifiedCheeseProfessional.org

by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief

Old World Trends Won't Feed The Masses

This issue features an insightful piece by Sharon Olson, a respected industry consultant whose work, including many pieces for DELI BUSINESS, is invariably thought provoking. Sharon went to Italy to visit Expo Milano 2015 and walks us through this fascinating event, with an eye on lessons for supermarket deli executives, which might be drawn from this extraordinary exhibition.

The piece is very useful as a guide to retailers looking for what is "on trend." Yet the report on this world-class event also reveals the almost schizophrenic attitude of thought-leaders and policy-makers towards the future. The entire exhibition was supposed to be focused on providing an opportunity whereby "140 participating countries show the best of their technology that offers a concrete answer to a vital need: being able to guarantee healthy, safe and sufficient food for everyone" – that is, the world population of nine billion people that is expected in 2050, up from the 7.3 billion in the world today.

Yet we wind up, as Sharon chronicles, with this: "food items were packaged in limited quantities on premise rather than combinations received pre-packaged by vendors" and "Old World was clearly the hot trend." There were items "packaged in butcher-type paper with a wax seal," plus restaurants that featured "traditional dishes and menus based on very modern trends with items based on anti-aging, detox and other diet concepts."

The overall conceit was well-expressed when Sharon quoted Mitchell Davis, executive vice president of the James Beard Foundation and the chief creative for the USA Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015: "Research indicates consumers are increasingly interested in knowing where their food is from, how it is made, and what impact it has had on the environment."

Of course, that research was not done where the main population increase is expected to occur, which is overwhelmingly in sub-Saharan Africa and India. Indeed the advanced western countries, where such research studies have been done, would all have flat or declining populations, the only variable being how many immigrants will be allowed in.

We have a deep dilemma. The people who imagine and execute events of this type love artisan workers producing artisanal products; they rejoice in local food, and celebrate provenance. They want to know that all is produced in a sustainable manner; they want to know the people who worked on their food were well paid and well treated; they want to know their farmer and they want to eat seasonally.

Why should they not? This is all delightful. And this columnist, no less than anyone, enjoys walking the Farmers Market and listening to fascinating stories

of how some heirloom apple variety has survived on a farm from Great-Grandpa's day while eating special batches of goat cheese on artisanal bread.

Yet, none of this is likely to have much to do with increasing food production sufficiently to feed an extra two billion people. And advocacy of these techniques and standards is irresponsible if not joined with an injunction that these are pleasures for rich countries and rich people, not solutions to food shortages.

We have undergone changes in the food system before. Recently it was the "green revolution," which involved research and development and technology transfer that dramatically increased food production. Indeed Norman Borlaug, who spearheaded the effort, won a Nobel Prize as he may be responsible for saving more lives than anyone in history.

India, for example, was on the brink of massive famine, so the introduction of IR8, a high-yielding rice variety, plus the addition of synthetic fertilizers, changed the picture. In a 20-year period, India went from a major rice importer to a substantial exporter, and the price of rice dropped by more than 50 percent.

Now the future lies in extensive use of genetic engineering, irradiation, cultured meat and the use of many more such technologies. These technologies certainly will help farmers. In Hawaii, for example, almost the whole crop is now a genetically modified variant as the industry was being wiped out by Papaya Ringspot Virus.

Indian farmers are now exporting mangos to the USA, which would not be enterable in the USA for phytosanitary reasons, except for the irradiation treatment. These technologies will also help consumers.

It is a sentimentality that leads people to focus on wax seals and local agriculture, when the need is for dramatic increases in production.

We have seen this before. Indeed in the very DNA of America, there is a battle between the Jeffersonians, who imaged the virtues of an agrarian society with diffuse power – and the Hamiltonians, who saw progress in a strong central government. There is little question the Jeffersonians won the hearts of Americans, yet the Hamiltonians wrote our future.

So with food, we will rejoice at the Farmers Market with its heirloom products and artisan producers, but the food that will feed the two billion yet to come will be the product of the most modern technology. There is no alternative.

DB



James F. Prevor

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by Lee Smith, Publisher

Millennials are the Deli's Best Friend

Talk about an important deli customer base. If there was any question about the future of deli departments, the Millennial generation sealed their fates. They are the ideal customer base.

Generally considered to be the segment of the population born between 1982 and 2000, they are now 25 percent of the total population and a larger demographic than Baby Boomers. They are the most culturally diverse group in our history, and they are socially and environmentally conscious. They also are the most educated.

Education is also equated with technology-sophisticated. While software will change, Millennials are the generation who grew up with computers and social media. They love their phones and tech toys. Education occurs on a daily basis, because fact checking and research can be done on the go and with little effort. If there is an ingredient they don't recognize on the label, they can look it up while in the store on their smart phone. While everyone else who has a smart phone can do the same thing, for Millennials this is second nature.

Millennials prefer fresh foods and avoid processed. They are label readers and easily research ingredients they do not know. They love stories and any time you can tell them a little more about where the product is produced or the family or people who made the food, or the fables surrounding its inception, the greater loyalty they will have.

This younger generation is very concerned about the environment, and they will seek locally produced over mass produced. They key in on ingredients like research scientists. They like labels with fewer ingredients and a list of chemical-sounding names is likely to deter the purchase.

Millennials are the best educated generation, and they like to read. Simplistic answers about GMOs, pesticide use, organic production, animal welfare and locally grown will not entice them. More often than not, someone will research the topic and share it on social media sites, where it will spread quickly. If a retailer announces a local product, expect a Millennial to visit the farm and take pictures to share with their thousands of online friends.

As for the deli department, Millennials are showing more of an interest in home cooking, but they also want fresh, convenient foods. Sophisticated delis, especially those that incorporate prepared food, in-store kitchens and sit-down eating, have an advantage.

Deli departments usually have the most diverse offerings, and local as well as ethnic choices can easily be incorporated. The deli/prepared food arena has a wider assortment of fresh ingredients than many restaurants. And the deli has always been a department that works with suppliers to provide custom formulations and profiles, unlike any other supermarket department.

Providing locally sourced is often easier for deli departments because individual units often use multiple suppliers and distributors. Local cheeses, imported prosciuttos and organic salami can be ordered by deli managers and sourced for local tastes by buyers.

And, of course, there are the story-telling opportunities. There are many tales to tell, like the making of Italian prosciutto and Iberico. Each cheese has a unique story – where it comes from, who makes it, the animals, its unique taste qualities, pairings and more.

But what makes the deli department the perfect fit is people. For a generation that relies so much on technology and social media, the ability to connect is a driving force.

It is about personalizing choices. In the past, typical retailers offered everything and went out of their way to be all things to all people. Now we are in the age of individualism without the isolation. Connecting is the driving force.

It may be a simple hello or recognizing a friendly face. It may be availability of recipes and prepared foods or help during the holidays. Local connections to the food community, from locally grown to saving farms and supporting the local economy, engender loyalty.

It can also be connecting one's heritage through food, so common in the USA. For the Italian-American, imported pastas, cheeses, meats, jams and sweets are very important. Unique to the United States is the designation, "Italian-American," Greek-American" or "Chinese-American." We are one of the few countries where our heritage is incorporated into our American identity.

The Millennials are characterized by education, technology, social media, acceptance of change and building connections through non-traditional channels. The deli department can be the valued differentiator between competitors. **DB**



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TOP DELI TRENDS FOR 2016



More varieties of prepared food, greener and cleaner ingredients and innovative flavors will be the hallmarks.

BY LISA WHITE

In many ways, supermarket deli trends mirror overall food trends. But there are twists that are unique.

While restaurants are offering meal deals to entice consumers with convenient options, supermarket retailers are providing affordable, transportable and healthful prepared food. Also, to better compete with the foodservice industry — which is including more nutritious ingredients in dishes — delis have stepped up efforts to provide meat, cheese, meals and meal components with cleaner labels, natural ingredients and minimal preservatives.

And although restaurants are known to be on the cutting edge of flavors, retailers have stepped up their game to more evenly match — and in some cases surpass — the foodservice industry when it comes

to innovative and unique tastes and food combinations.

Much of the change in positioning is to capture the lucrative Millennial consumer — those individuals born between 1980 and 1995 — who the Madison, WI-based International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA) identifies as the prime deli consumer.

“Supermarket delis appeal to Millennials’ values, including convenience, variety, experimentation, freshness and healthier options, and supermarkets are coming up with creative ways to capture these customers,” says Shayna Snyder, senior project manager at Culinary Visions Panel in Chicago.

Recent numbers suggest the deli department has become a regular stop for

shoppers. From 2010 to 2014, total deli dollar sales grew 27 percent and volume grew 18 percent, outpacing the 22 percent growth in total fresh dollar sales and 6 percent growth in volume, according to a report from Nielsen Perishables Group and the IDDBA’s 2016 What’s in Store report.

“Everyone, from Baby Boomers to Millennials, is looking for more out of today’s supermarket deli,” says Kim Holman, director of marketing at Wixon Foodservice Group, based in St. Francis, WI. “This is where many products start before moving to the center of the store.”

With deli food dollar sales — including prepared foods, deli meat and deli cheese — increasing 5.3 percent to \$18.7 billion in the 52 weeks ended March 29, 2015, according to the IRI/FreshLook Marketing

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FreshView database, there is much potential for 2016.

Quality Meal Solutions

A recent report from The Hartman Group in Bellevue, WA, reveals the majority of American consumers routinely eat meals cooked at home from scratch, yet 10 percent of those consumers often struggle to find ideas for what to cook.

The deli is in a unique position to solve this problem, as prepared foods comprise more than 57 percent of the deli's category share of dollars, according to Nielsen Perishable Groups' FreshFacts report.

As consumers increasingly face challenges at meal times — including what to make, to cook or not to cook, or simply not having time to shop before dinner — the IDDBA says deli departments can move in to capture some of the business that alternative providers such as online meal programs will be tapping into during the year ahead.

"With in-store dining one of the fastest-growing segments of the supermarket industry, deli departments are expanding their offerings with healthier, higher-quality food to become meal destinations and better compete with restaurants," says Snyder.

In delis, consumers are looking for easy meal solutions, and this is not just for families. It is predicted in the months ahead that more stores will capitalize on smaller households.

"Households with one or two people are the largest-growing population across the country, and these consumers

want meals that won't go to waste," says Holman.

This is further proof the lines are blurring between retail and foodservice, since more delis are recognizing and solving the portion-control problem.

Along with providing meal-size options, retailers will continue raising the bar on meal quality and variety, as a growing number of chains are bringing on chefs to better compete with restaurants.

Examples of chef-quality lines include Price Chopper's Bistro Boulevard offerings and Kroger's Chefs on the Run brand.

"Consumers want the convenience of a meal that can be prepared in under 30 minutes, but they also want food to be fresh and taste good," says Holman. "Retailers need to do research with their consumers to see what they're looking for in this regard, but also not be afraid to think outside the box to drive incremental sales and create an experience."

With more deli departments taking the lead in terms of redefining the retail prepared food segment, stores should continue getting a bigger share of the foodservice pie.

In this regard, there are many advantages stores have over restaurants that can be beneficial for 2016 and beyond.

"Retailers are listing ingredient information on foods whereas restaurants haven't had to yet," says Robert Sewall, vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, headquartered in Fall River, MA.

Also, it is predicted supermarket delis will continue to manage labor by pur-

chasing more packaged prepared foods that can be paired easily with other meal components.

For example, Blount Fine Foods recently rolled out a fresh sides prepackaged line for Rally's West Coast stores. This provides the means for an easy meal deal.

Anything that is easy to prepare, but doesn't appear to be easy, will be trendy in 2016. For instance, building a complex meal with a prepared protein like rotisserie chicken, and then purchasing side salads from the deli case is an example.

"Wegman's and Ralph's have a number of different food bars that allow customers to easily build meals from a selection of fresh foods at a reasonable price," says Steve Dragoo, president at Solutions Consulting, located in Franklin, TN. "Cold meals to go are big, and prepackaged meals are flying off the shelves. But hot bars are not as popular."

In the electronic age, there are many opportunities for delis to deliver meal solutions for busy families and individuals.

These departments can cater to busy lifestyles and those looking for healthier options by customizing mobile meals and providing the opportunity for delivery or to order ahead of time for pick up.

"If there's not an app for that yet, there likely will be," says Heather Porter Engwall, director of national product communications at the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), located in Madison, WI. "Examples of this are a build-your-own deli-style sandwich or a put-it-together cracker-cheese-veggie/fruit and meat creation complete with a bakery cookie or small cupcake."

Ingredient Transparency

Several deli categories are heeding consumers' desires for clean labels and freshness, as more shoppers take notice of ingredients, dates and times, and general dietary balance, according to IDDBA's What's in Store report.

"Essentially, we're going to see further exploration of onsite preparation methods and ingredients that hark back decades — if not centuries or longer — simplifying more complex recipes and focusing on fewer ingredients, but have those ingredients be the best and freshest they can be," says Annika Stensson, director of research communications for the Washington, D.C.-based National Restaurant Association.

This is due to the increasing numbers of consumers who have become more



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educated about the food they eat. People want more transparency, especially when it comes to how animals are being treated and what they are ingesting.

In delis, this includes nitrates and nitrites, as well.

"Hormone-free is one of the biggest trends we're seeing and will continue to see," says Holman. "Consumers are putting their money where their purchases are and looking at claims."

For these shoppers, money is typically no object, which provides more opportunities for today's delis to capitalize on this trend in the year ahead.

Gluten-free is another trend that the deli can latch onto and profit from in 2016, as this demographic is in the spotlight and growing.

At recent Fancy Food Shows, for example, there were more of these products than ever before.

It is predicted that clean labels will remain a driving force in delis, as consumers continue to question food sources.

This crosses demographic lines, with Baby Boomers and Millennials both concerned about food additives, nutrition and their overall health.

"On the broadest scale, we think the most significant change will continue to be the demand for transparency in production methods and ingredients," says Brandon Gross, marketing director at FoodMatch, headquartered in New York, NY.

Another food trend that's expected to accelerate into 2016 is one of the umbrella trends that has been evolving for the last decade — local sourcing. This includes house-made and local artisan-crafted meat, cheese, sausage and pickle products, which will be highlighted in various forms, both individually and as sandwich and salad toppings.

An example of this is Harris Teeter's new Carolina Charm, which highlights local Southern brands in its North and South Carolina stores.

In fact, "locally sourced" leads the most influential claims affecting a consumer's purchase decision in the deli or bakery section of the store, with 73 percent of respondents reporting this, according to a 2015 Culinary Visions Panel study.

Another area that has been more common in produce is seasonal or limited time offers (LTOs), which can help make delis more of a destination.

For new item launches in retail, the word "seasonal" on packs grew 13 percent and limited edition products increased about 10 percent between 2012 and 2014, according to a Mintel Group report.

"Even with holiday or event promotions, supermarket delis may be missing out on other opportunities to drive it home, particularly with deli meats," says Holman. "Creating urgency with products can help grow seasonal and LTO sales beyond the holidays."

In addition to supporting locally produced foods, a growing number of consumers are seeking to do business with stores that support the local community as well as the causes they believe in.

"Like restaurants, more supermarket delis are including origin, ingredient and product descriptions for consumers seeking products that match their lifestyle choices," says Snyder.

The definition of healthful foods is expected to continue evolving in 2016.

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Bring On The Flavor

Unique and innovative flavors have been on trend for a while and will continue to be a driving force in 2016.

Research from Mintel Group reveals there is an opportunity for retailers to help consumers prepare unique dishes with ethnic flare at home through

individual components.

"One of the biggest flavor profiles we continue to hear about is heat or a fiery flavor profile," says Holman. "Mintel reported chile pepper is a top flavor profile and spicy is No. 3 for all dishes in terms of the top 20 flavors on U.S. menus."

In addition, ethnic food and flavors, such as Mexican, Asian and Mediterranean, continue to be popular and will be in 2016. However, the cuisine of other regions, such as the Middle East and Africa, also will be incorporated.

The biggest challenge for delis will be how to appeal to a broad demographic to drive trial while also being authentic. Yet,

stepping out of the proverbial comfort zone can be profitable.

"Consumers are seeking items from the deli that have unique flavors that reflect regional or ethnic-inspired cuisine," says Snyder.

The variety of global cuisines that continue to make inroads into mainstream diets in the year ahead also will encompass condiments, spreads and spices.

"With this also comes a variety of international street-food items that are gaining wider awareness into the new year," says Stensson. "Consumers' palates are more accepting of unfamiliar ingredients and bold flavors than they used to be, which gives operators a lot of room to be creative."

This ethnic turn also will inspire traditional deli products.

In a report from Chicago-based research firm IRI, in the 52 weeks ended Oct. 4, 2015 volume sales were trending upward in Hispanic-style cheeses including Asadero, Queso Quesadilla and Oaxaca.

"Bold flavors continue to capture consumers' quest for heightened taste as evidenced in increasing volume sales of Asiago, Havarti, specialty Cheddars, Gouda, Brie, Baby Swiss and Provolone," says the WMMB's Porter Engwall.

Although deli trends in 2016 will mirror many food and foodservice trends overall, it is the distinctive differences and unique opportunities that will set these departments apart in the coming year. **DB**

► RESTAURANT TRENDS IMPACTING RETAIL

The U.S. restaurant industry is evolving in profound ways, according to Chicago-based foodservice research firm Technomic.

- There are a number of trends that have crossover potential from the foodservice to the retail industry, which have been identified below.
- The Sriracha effect. Having learned that Sriracha sauce can add instant ethnic cachet to something as straightforward as a sandwich, chefs are scouting the world for other assertive flavorings to employ in similar ways. Likely bets: ghost pepper from India; sambal from Southeast Asia; gochujang from Korea; harissa, sumac and dukkah from North Africa.
- Elevating peasant fare. Meatballs and sausages are proliferating — traditional, ethnic or nouveau, shaped from many
- types and combinations of meats. Likewise on the rise are multi-ethnic dumplings, from pierogis to bao buns. Even the staff of life gets the royal treatment, from haute toast to signature cheesy bread.
- Burned. Smoke and fire are showing up everywhere on the menu — in charred or roasted vegetable sides; in desserts with charred fruits or burnt-sugar toppings; in cocktails featuring smoked salt, smoked ice or smoky syrups.
- Negative on GMOs. Whatever the science says, many consumers have made up their minds — no genetic tinkering with their food. Some diners will gravitate to restaurants touting GMO-free fare; others will demand GMO labeling on menus. That's a big issue for the supply chain, since many crops — such as soy fed to livestock — have been modified to boost productivity. **DB**



Spreading The Flavor

Consumers want to dip into healthy, tasty products

BY CHRIS AUMUN

Healthful food choices have spread beyond conventional nutrition-focused outlets and into supermarket aisles, convenience stores and restaurants. But today's consumers are not looking to trade in taste for a health halo. In fact, they are in search of new, bold and spicy flavors that also are nutritious and low fat. The good news for consumers is that innovative companies in the dips and spreads category have risen to meet the challenge. As a result, retailers can do their part in deli departments to promote these healthy and flavorful new offerings in 2016.

A Movement, Not A Trend

Healthful eating is no longer a trend; it's evolved into something much larger. "There's this movement out there

towards eating healthier," says Bob Ferraro, cofounder and vice president of sales, Eat Well, Embrace Life, headquartered in Alpharetta, GA. "We're always conscious of calories, fat and things that are going to be resonating with consumers."

Eat Well, Embrace Life is well positioned to be a part of this movement with both traditional hummus and non-chickpea-based offerings. "Black bean is extremely popular, very low glycemic index, lower fat, much lower in calories, plus it's got a great flavor profile," says Ferraro.

Other nontraditional hummus varieties are making their mark as well, and edamame with roasted red pepper is the company's biggest seller.

The United Nations has declared 2016 as the International Year of Pulses, and the celebration and promotion of these legumes

makes bean- and edamame-based dips and spreads well positioned to take advantage of their time in the global spotlight.

The interest in healthful eating has spread to other items now popular with consumers, including Greek yogurt. According to Tameika Miller, senior brand manager at Alouette Cheese USA, headquartered in New Holland, PA, "The influence of Greek yogurt, which offers unique health benefits — such as containing twice the protein and calcium of traditional yogurt and active probiotic cultures — has impacted the dips and spreads category with several new product offerings."

Les Erber, chief financial officer of Sonny & Joe's, a Brooklyn, NY-based company that offers its customers a high degree of kosher certification, says his company has introduced a new raw

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sprouted vegan gourmet cheese spread that appeals to health-conscious consumers. "It's cream cheese that's dairy free and soy free," he says. "Raw sprout is becoming a major product. Health food stores are interested in a vegan, dairy-free, soy-free product, especially raw sprouted."

Kristyn Lawson, vice president of retail sales at Good Foods Group, based in Pleasant Prairie, WI, sees a broader choice for health-conscious shoppers as well. "We make dips using superfoods like kale in our Garden Greens Spinach & Kale Veggie Dip and recipes that give higher protein offerings like our Greek Yogurt Guacamole."

Hot Sriracha!

Retail consumers can thank the rise in popularity of Thai restaurants in the United States for their new favorite chili

sauce, sriracha. The condiment — made from ground peppers, salt and vinegar — is a generic term for a hot sauce popular in the coastal Thai city of Sri Racha. While Thais eat it primarily as a dipping sauce, this fiery ingredient has found a home in many products in the dips and spreads category, including salads and hummus.

Mike Stinson, president and chief executive, Walker's Food Products headquartered in North Kansas City, MO, also has observed the trend towards bolder flavors, saying, "A couple of hot buttons that we have seen in food trends are a little more risk-taking with foods like sriracha and ginger and the ancient grains. We have some products we've developed to focus on that trend. Also, we've got some products developed that take advantage of the chipotle flavors and roasted red peppers."

These flavors appeal to people who Stinson says are "mostly the risk takers who want a little more spice, a little more zest." Millennials are included in this consumer category, he says, adding, "But we're also seeing people in their mid 30s and 40s that are interested in real fiery flavors."

Hummus Gets A Taste Lift

Hummus was once considered an exotic ethnic food, but today it has become a staple of the dips and spreads category. It certainly looks at home next to salsas and French onion dip at Super Bowl parties, but it wasn't always the case.

"When we first started selling hummus nobody knew what it was," says Ferraro. But any trip though a supermarket deli department illustrates just how much that has changed. "One of the things that's cool now," says Ferraro, "is kids have grown up with hummus."

Hummus is becoming universal, agrees Sonny & Joe's Les Erber. "Baba Ghanoush is also becoming one of our best sellers," he says.

While hummus may be commonplace, it hasn't lost its appeal to consumers. But it has taken some innovation to keep it interesting. "Tribe Swirl

is one of the hottest items we're seeing in dips right now," says Adam Carr, president and chief executive at Tribe Mediterranean Foods, based in Taunton, MA. Carr is talking about the company's new Swirl line of products that combines the different flavors of garlic and herbs, roasted red pepper and sriracha and salsa by mixing them directly into hummus.

Although it may be too early to tell just how much the new varieties have impacted traditional accompaniments for hummus, for now pita chips is the most common dipping item, followed closely by carrots. Consumers are eating tortilla chips with the salsa hummus Swirl, but as Carr points out, "I think as we introduce new, interesting flavors, consumers will start to get creative with pairings that are appropriate with that flavor. We're giving consumers license to discover new things to dip into."

As consumers decide, retailers can use this opportunity to cross merchandise with other products in the deli department. For Carr, the unique, colorful and fun look of Swirls is a great selling point. "It's important from a pure merchandising perspective to show consumers the visual beauty of Tribe Swirl," he says. "They will quickly understand the functional benefits. Clever deli managers figure out ways to bring good vegetables into hummus nearby."

The way people eat hummus in the United States has evolved along with consumer tastes. "It's become a spread," says Ferraro at Eat Well, Embrace Life. "People put it on sandwiches, they spread it on meat — grilled meat and hummus go together extremely well." The challenge then is conveying this to shoppers who may never have put those two together in their minds. Cross merchandising and promotions are effective ways to associate different products together.

"Buy two loaves of pita bread and get one free hummus or vice versa," says Ferraro. "It really plants the seed and helps show people other ways to eat hummus."

However, Erber points out, "Unless you put crackers and pita chips right next to the refrigerated section, cross merchandising is difficult. The best way for retailers cross merchandising these products is to have tastings so consumers become familiar with it."

Convenient Packs Gain Traction

The convenience section continues to grow. Older consumers, those more than 50, don't want to buy large containers of



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dips or spreads because once they open them, they need to be consumed quickly. "We do see the trend towards smaller portion packs, convenience, grab and go," says Ferraro. "I don't think that's going to slow down."

Kristyn Lawson at Good Foods Group recognizes this trend as well. "We all have busy lifestyles and want to enjoy eating on the go, or enjoy a quick bite throughout the day," says Lawson. "We offer a wide variety of single serve products including our famous Tableside Chunky Guacamole, Spicy Gardiniera Hummus and protein items all in 2.5- ounce and 4-ounce cups." Good Foods has even more convenience packs in the pipeline for 2016 including a Guacamole and Chip Grab N Go product.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

For Mike Stinson at Walker's Food Products there are a number of ways deli retail managers can cross merchandise. "You can cross merchandise roasted pepper artichoke dip with bruschetta or crackers," he says. "It can be used as a base in the deli for sandwiches and rollups. Asian grain salad with sriracha and ginger

is a ready-to-eat meal with chicken or on top of a salad."

According to Tameika Miller at Alouette Cheese, "One the great things about Alouette spreads and dips is they are very versatile and pair well with many different items found in the grocery stores — everything from simple veggies to all types of crackers, dried fruits, meats and, of course, wine."

All Signs Point To The Deli

"Traditionally, shopping in the deli section has been a treasure hunt," says Miller. "Consumers often search through many, many different options, flavors and formats before making their purchase decisions."

As the holiday season approaches, time becomes a luxury few consumers can afford. Miller sees signage as a guiding light for rushed shoppers.

"Busy and time-starved consumers may welcome help from retailers to simplify their decision-making by hanging signage and point of sale that could draw consumers' attention to new products or featured products on sale," says Miller. "Branded merchandisers on shelf, bins or trays could be another way to simplify and

arrange the deli section to facilitate quick purchase decisions."

"Show consumers how to use the dips. Make it easy." That's the advice of Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development for Don's Food Products based in Schwensville, PA. "Providing images of deli trays is a good way to highlight the possibilities of dips and spreads to consumers. Showing these photos will help retail delis secure the holiday gathering sales."

Lawson at Good Foods recommends shelf tags to highlight the healthful qualities of dips and spreads. "There are more and more exciting ways to identify products that are health-focused to make shopping choices easier for today's consumers, including special color shelf tags that designate better-for-you products," says Lawson.

By accentuating the positive health aspects of dips and spreads with signage and displays, as well as suggesting appropriate pairings through cross merchandising, retailers can satisfy consumer demand for bold, new flavors in the deli department throughout the holidays and into the new year. **DB**

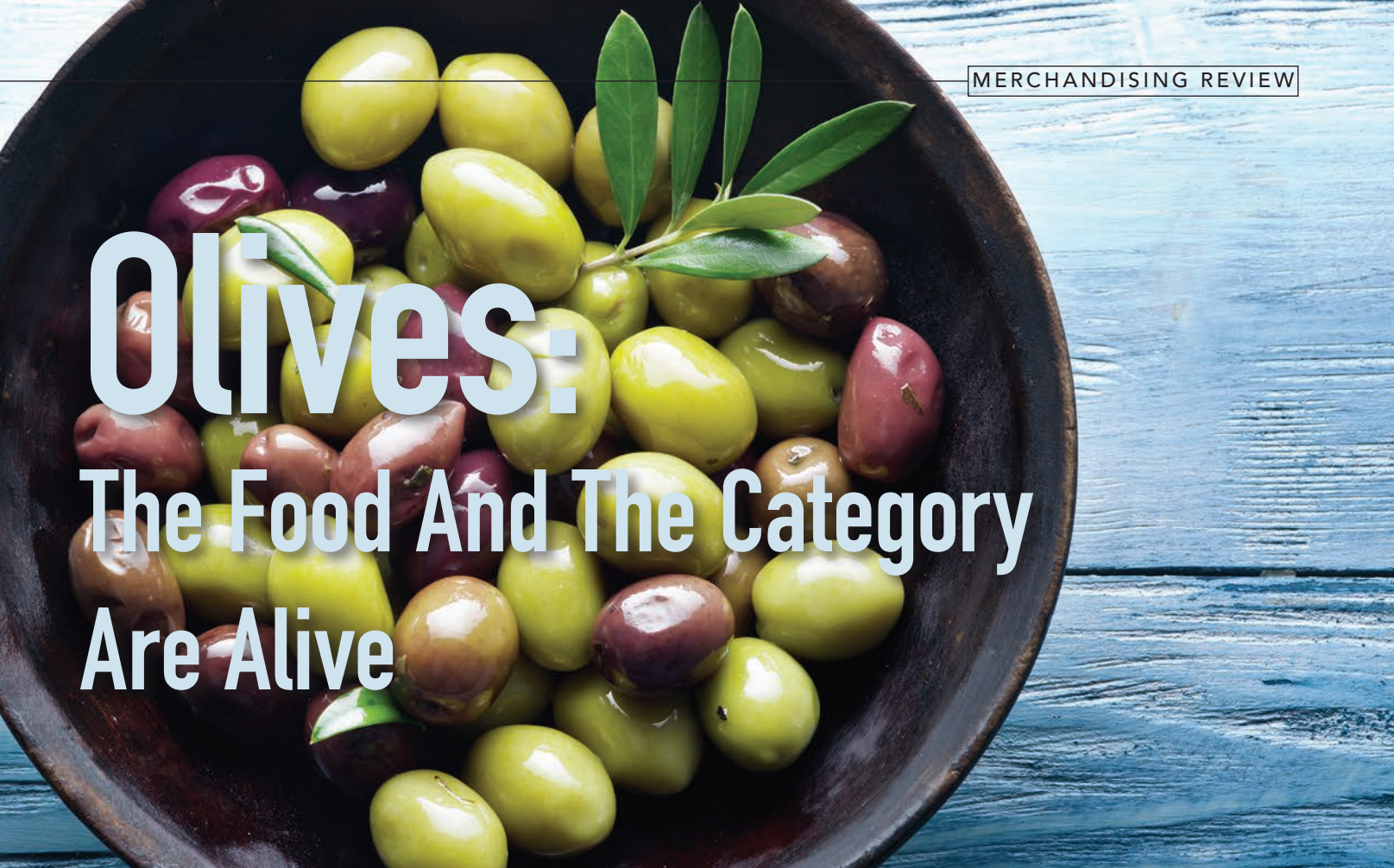


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Olives: The Food And The Category Are Alive

Olive bars thrive with attention to quality and variety

BY BOB JOHNSON

Just as olives are a living thing and must be taken care of, the olive bar also needs regular attention to survive, thrive and grow.

Enthusiastic suppliers offer a dose of friendly advice to keep introducing new products and suggest new uses for olive bar fare.

"Retailers need to keep their programs fresh," says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at George DeLallo Co., Mt. Pleasant, PA. "Don't be afraid to try new items; capture the consumer. Along with new items, retailers need to invite and inspire their customers with fresh and exciting new ways to use their olive bar favorites at home — as super snackable items, kitchen ingredients and entertaining features."

The olive bar, when well done, can be the anchor of the deli's Mediterranean destination.

"Some successful retailers are turning the olive bar into a Mediterranean bar," says Jeffrey Siegel, chief executive of Farm Ridge Foods, Islandia, NY. "They are offering a lot of antipasti varieties, specialty pickle blends and olive blends from all

over the world. Showing off complex new blends is hot this year."

In addition to olives, Farm Ridge Foods focuses on innovative products including flavored UnTypickles, salads and a variety of prepared foods.

"Many retailers have the same olive displays and products for many years," says Siegel. "The only thing different is they keep raising their prices. They need to update the bars, their signage, and the mix of olives as well as informational sheets for the various olives. Many customers love the variety but do not know, and would love to know, what the differences in the olives are and where they come from. They need to make their olive bars a destination."

The place to start putting the fresh back into fresh olives is to check out exciting new varieties to complement the mainstays.

"We have 64 varieties of olives, and we add two or three every year," says Al Sozer, president of Valesco Foods in Lyndhurst, NJ. "We get them from remote areas. An olive bar should have at least 12

varieties. Twelve is a minimum. Some of our customers have 40 to 45 varieties."

Sozer takes an annual trip to the European back country in search of new varieties to add to the extensive portfolio available from Valesco Foods.

As U.S. consumers become more educated and discriminating, quality matters more when it comes to olives.

"Quality olives are on the rise," says Pozzuto. "Customers are demanding more from their table olives and ingredients, and it shows. The success of an olive bar depends not on price, but on three key factors: quality, selection and cleanliness of the bar. Over the past 30 years, since we created the olive bar category, we have watched the most successful retailer programs focus and follow these. When retailers dedicate staff to the olive bar, these principles are much easier to maintain."

Take Care Of The Olives

Price comes after quality and good maintenance of the most important factors in creating a successful olive bar program.

"Offer the best quality for a reasonable price, and take care of the olives," advises Sozer. "They are a living organism, and they get old. We teach our customers how to maintain them. It is not a simple process."

Other suppliers agree a good program begins with learning proper care of the olives.

"The key to making an impact with your olive and antipasti program hinges on three main components: keeping your bar clean and full, diversifying your product selection and providing simple but engaging signage that gets the attention of the shopper," says Brandon Gross, marketing director at FoodMatch, New York, NY. "Simply, a successful program finds ways to engage the consumer, be it passively or in person."

FoodMatch produces a wide variety of olives and antipasti from U.S. orchards and the Mediterranean region.

When they are picked olives are bitter, and an important measure of quality is how suppliers process out this bitterness before they are sold as "fresh."

"Bulk olives sold on a per-pound basis are extremely successful if they are good

tasting and processed correctly," says Ronald Johnson, owner of Encore Foods, Hingham, MA. "When producers use lye, if they don't rinse over and over, you can taste the lye. Most consumers in the U.S. have gotten educated. The Greek company Peloponnese was the first to bring water and salt-cured olives to the U.S. When they are naturally cured with salt and water you enhance the flavor of the olive."

The green thing dropped into martinis is probably cured with lye, as are some other olives on the market.

"Some of the green olives from Spain are lye cured, but only if they go through an exhaustive rinsing process," says Johnson.

"On a mass-market basis, quite a few are lye cured. Virtually all the green olives from Spain are lye cured, and some of the black olives from California are. Our European suppliers from France and Greece are careful to cure the old fashioned way. It takes longer, so they cost more," he says.

Maurice and Cindy Penna, owners of M&CP Farms in Orland, CA, grow olives on 100 acres of Sacramento Valley land and always process their fruit slowly with salt and water.

"Color, texture and, of course, good flavor are what sell product," says Maurice Penna. "We thought the route for us was to do some specialty cures."

Some of the specialty gourmet olives the Pennas offer via the Internet take 12 months to 18 months to ferment to their specifications.

Many retailers may be limiting their choices with financial barriers that smaller artisan producers like the Pennas cannot overcome.

"If you don't pay the slotting fee you can't get into the supermarkets," says Penna. "The smaller producers are being kept out or they're being funneled to the suppliers who will pay the fees. The deli doesn't have slotting fees, but it has high markups. It gets prohibitively expensive. You look at olive bars, and it's \$9 a pound for olives. If you have a family how are you going to pay \$9 a pound for olives? We're trying to go more toward the Internet stuff."

The deli has one important advantage with the olive bar — it is easy to sample before deciding whether to buy.

"When olives are in a bar it provides the consumer with an opportunity to reach in



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and taste, even though there is usually a sign saying not to,” says Johnson. “Once they taste it they have an opportunity to take the spoon or ladle and take four or five ounces. They can even take two or three varieties.”

This secret sampling, a good argument for supervised tasting, is not possible when buying olives in the grocery department or through the Internet.

“Unfortunately, in the grocery aisle, you have to buy the whole jar,” says Johnson. “At the deli they can buy a half pound, a third pound, or as much as they want. There’s a lot of flexibility.”

Diversity Matters

Diversity of flavors matters in olives, and suppliers are constantly looking for ways to add new and exciting flavor profiles to the olive bar.

“Tri-Color Pepperazzi have gone crazy for us this year,” says Pozzuto. “Consumers love the vibrant colors and how versatile they are, plus their spicy-sweet tang. Customers get really creative with these colorful peppers, stuffing them with everything from herbed goat cheese to savory sausage as unique appetizers.

Our Pitted Olives Jubilee and Provoloni Antipasti have been huge hitters this year as well.”

Other suppliers also are introducing products with combinations of numerous varieties of olives.

“The olive trend needs to be invigorated,” says Siegel. “At Farm Ridge Foods we have come out with Olives of the World. These are olives blends that showcase the way different cultures enjoy olives.”

Each of the blends is crafted to add a unique flavor profile to the selections at the olive bar.

“Our Agrodolce is sugar cured, blended with lemon and orange rinds,” says Siegel. “Our Tunisia is kalamatas with traditional Moroccan flavors like cinnamon, figs and African spices. We have eight of these from this line.

“We have also developed pickle blends for the bar. We have a Greek blend, in a lemon vinaigrette dressing with pepperdews and olives, and a Mediterranean blend, with a white balsamic vinegar and fresh rosemary,” says Siegel.

The olive bar — a key component of a category that keeps on growing at the

deli — is worth the extra attention.

“The Mediterranean diet is one of the world’s true lifestyles, and both olives and antipasti are a core staple of what makes that lifestyle healthy, diverse and delicious,” says Gross.

“Eating habits continue to stray from larger meals into smaller snacks throughout the day, and our products are a perfect fit. FoodMatch has never viewed the olive and antipasti category as a trend simply due to the fact the word trend implies an end date,” he says.

Other suppliers agree the entire Mediterranean category will continue to grow, and the colorful, flavorful olive and antipasti bar is particularly hot.

“There has been a lot of talk about the healthy Mediterranean diet, and studies now show how beneficial it is to one’s health,” says Pozzuto.

“This leads to more healthful snacking and entertaining ideas. It’s a hot restaurant trend these days to order an antipasto or cheese plate brimming with olives, peppers, artichokes and the like. The popularity of antipasti items is climbing, too, not just straight olive varieties.”

DB

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THE YEAR OF THE FLATBREAD



One of the largest areas of growth in the deli has been seen in this category

BY KEITH LORIA

Take a look at any operation that sells food, and it's a good bet flatbreads are part of the sales equation. In restaurants, on the bread aisle in supermarkets, at pizza parlors and the deli, flatbreads seem to be everywhere in 2015.

Industry experts note the crisp, crackler-like bread's perceived health halo as well as its ability to be served in numerous ways have fueled the surge in flatbread sales.

"In general, the flatbread segment is growing because the products are unique and different from the usual bakery offerings," says Cara Caulkins, a spokeswoman for Stonefire Authentic Flatbreads, headquartered in Toronto. "Consumers are also seeing flatbreads on menus when they go to restaurants and want to recreate those preparations when they're cooking at home."

John Leonardo, head of retail marketing at Grecian Delight Foods Inc., headquartered in Elk Grove Village, IL, says like many other categories within the retail marketplace, more flatbreads are being introduced that are gluten free or organically produced as consumers are looking for more options to meet their dietary needs and wants. Manufacturers also are calling out key nutritional benefits on packaging, such as "high in fiber," "low in calories" and "contains whole grains."

"Traditional flatbreads such as pita, naan and pizza crusts still continue to do well and offer consumers usage versatility," he says. "Flatbreads are continuing to deliver strong retail sales. Scan data shows us the flatbread segment within bakery is driving more than \$215 million in sales annually and growing at 5 percent compared to the total category, which has declined 1.3 percent."

Bob Pallotta, senior vice president of marketing for Flatout Inc., in Chicago, says flatbreads have a "place at the table" as they increasingly become mainstream and move beyond specialty breads.

"Flatbreads have a healthy halo, a range of uses and great taste," he says. "They are increasingly meeting the needs of consumers looking for authentic and healthy foods. The shapes and forms offer taste and variety to what has been a boring category. Flatbreads pair well with deli and fresh produce as consumers shop the perimeter of the store."

David Mafoud, owner of Damascus Bakeries, headquartered in Brooklyn, NY, notes as a flatbread supplier, he has seen an increase in lavash wraps for chicken Caesar or chicken-based wraps and flatbreads for sandwiches.

"We see both breads becoming more popular for breakfast sandwiches," he says. "The customer's appreciation and demand

for a better sandwich is the reason. As a bakery we naturally feel every good sandwich starts with great bread. Certainly, the widespread variety of artisan breads and artisan flatbreads has created opportunities for an even greater range of sandwiches."

What's New?

Warren Stoll, marketing director for Kontos Foods, Inc., headquartered in Paterson, NJ, notes the company has seen growth in line extensions that offer added value in terms of flavor, different sizes, health benefits or simply added grill marks (to make a panini when you don't have a panini press).

"For example, Kontos manufactures more than 50 varieties of flatbread and pita. While white is our top seller, we have seen tremendous growth in our multi-grain, whole wheat and pizza crusts," he says. "Additionally, our fastest-growing SKU is Kontos Greek Lifestyle Flatbread, which has two times the protein, half the carbohydrates, with less sugar and calories versus the traditional flatbread."

In October, Kontos launched a traditional tandoori naan in two varieties, with no added preservatives.

Jim Viti, vice president of sales at Delorrio's Frozen Dough, based in Utica, NY, says flatbreads is such a broad category that it has mass appeal.



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"We feel the trend towards additional health benefits applies to the flatbread just as well as other categories," he says. "An example of this would be higher protein, which certainly has growth appeal."

In Viti's opinion, the trend hasn't peaked but continues to evolve into something bigger.

"Items such as naan and lavash are part of the category for ethnic offerings that consumers are looking to explore," he says.

Flatout just introduced three new flatbreads: Red Pepper Hummus; a gluten-free wrap that tastes great and is easy to roll; and new flavors in its Foldit sandwich line — Ancient Grain and Roasted Garlic.

In addition to offering a full range of flatbreads under its One Republic brand, Grecian Delight is introducing a sub-line of flatbreads that contain no artificial flavors or preservatives that appeal to the health-conscious consumer seeking more natural alternatives. The line consists of white and wheat pita breads, hand-stretched naan, focaccia bread, 90-calorie skinny buns and ultra-thin pizza crust.

Stonefire recently launched new Stonefire Artisan Flatbread and Pizza Crusts that are available in three varieties: Italian Artisan, Italian Artisan Thin Crust and a rectangular Artisan Flatbread.

Following The Restaurant Trend

Leonardo notes culinary trends typically begin in restaurants and then migrate over to the retail space. Flatbreads are becoming a staple on restaurant menus as they offer chefs an array of flexible options to create new menu ideas.

Today, according to Food Genius, about 25 percent of chain restaurant locations contain some form of flatbread on their menus. These range from flatbread pizzas to sandwiches using flatbreads

in place of traditional breads.

Creativity in menu development thrives on flatbreads. They are found in appetizers, pizzas and either hot or cold sandwich alternatives. From fast casual to fine dining, flatbreads offer ease of use and menu innovation

A Perfect Canvas for Chefs

Similar to other bases, the flatbread provides a perfect canvas for chefs to build upon, and when they can offer a variety of flavors it can expand upon their use and start micro trends that help establish the overall brand at the deli level.

Recent data published by GuestMetrics, a Leesburg, VA-based company that tracks business intelligence solutions for the hospitality industry, reveals strong sales of pizza in tableservice restaurants were driven largely by expanded flatbread offerings. In fact, pizza sales were up more than 10 percent in 2014, gaining nearly 20 basis points of share in the overall food category.

Peter Reidhead, vice president of strategy and insights at GuestMetrics, says approximately 65 percent of the incremental growth for pizza was due to strength in flatbread pizzas.

Consumers are seeing flatbreads appear increasingly on restaurant menus and even at local fast-food chains. Food magazines and recipe websites are flooded with flatbread ideas so there is an interest for people to get creative in their home kitchen.

One of flatbread's appeals is its versatility. Caulkins notes Stonefire naan can be used as a base to create pizza-like combinations or elevate traditional sandwiches by using specialty flatbread in place of conventional bread or tortillas.

"For example, your favorite taco recipe inside of a Stonefire Mini Naan takes flavors to a new level," she says. "Encourage customers to experiment with flatbreads as part of traditional favorites for new eating experiences."

Continued growth of the flatbread segment is being driven by Millennials' acceptance of the bakery product as being authentic, consumers' recognition of it as being healthful and easy to work with, and

food-conscious shoppers' quest for better-for-you ingredients.

"In addition to offering consumers packaged flatbreads within their stores, retailers can take cues from the trends in restaurants by including flatbreads as menu applications within their service deli and grab-and-go sections," says Grecian Delight's Leonardo. "Additionally, retailers can partner with their flatbread suppliers to develop recipe and usage ideas in the form of recipe cards, take-ones, etc., to educate consumers."

Flatout has a full-rack merchandising system it offers to retailers, which Pallotta says displays the flatbread packages as well as recipe and usage suggestions. Demos also help the brands to showcase themselves.

"Tasty recipe suggestions have been the key to Flatout Flatbread's success. Easy and interesting ways to make wraps, panini and pizza using premium products make flatbreads a perfect fit in the deli," he says. "Stores should look to the flatbread partners to support them with displays, recipe suggestions/pads and cross promotions within the deli."

Stoll says Kontos works with its deli partners to promote product use and help drive business. He says the company places seasonal stickers on retail packaging, like "Great for Grilling" during the summer, while providing recipe stickers for dishes like pepperoni pizza on packaging. "Retailers are encouraged to promote in store as well," he says.

Viti says the best marketing in-store is to display it as an alternative to take-and-bake pizza. Baked at home, a flatbread pizza can offer slightly better carbohydrate control and, with the right toppings, can help provide a health halo when compared with traditional pizza items.

DB



BOOST BLUE CHEESE SALES



Boomers and Millennials alike gravitate to this crumbly or creamy fromage with a kick

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

A wide variety of Blue Cheeses enjoy an ardent following by consumers who can't seem to get enough of blue-veined distinctively flavored cheeses. It's for this reason that Blues tend to have a relatively stable slice of sales, which tallied at 2.6 percent of deli cheese dollars during the 52 weeks ending September 26, 2015, according to Chicago-based Nielsen Perishables Group's FreshFacts data.

"There's a variety of customers that look for Blues," says Jennifer Hodges, deli category manager for Edina, MN-headquartered Lund Food Holdings, Inc., which operates 14 Lunds and 13 Byerly's supermarkets in metro Minneapolis-St. Paul. "These include Baby Boomers and Millennials, and those looking for a specific Blue for a cheese plate to those who want to use Blue in a recipe."

All About Blues

Blue cheese is a general term for a variety of cheeses.

"The first established Blue cheese was Roquefort," explains Margi Gunter, brand manager at Lighthouse Foods Inc., in Sandpoint, ID.

According to legend, a young shepherd boy went into a cave in the Cambalou region of southern France to eat his lunch of bread

and cheese. Seeing a beautiful and sexy nymph, he was lured farther into the cave, where he spent months doing goodness knows what. Exhausted and hungry, he finally returned to the mouth of the cave and found his original lunch covered in a blue mold, which he gobbled down anyway. Thus begins the story of Roquefort cheese.

"What unites all Blues is the *Penicillium* mold," explains Jeff Jirik, vice president of quality and product development at Swiss Valley Farms/Caves of Faribault, in Faribault, MN, whose company continues to make and market AmaBlu, the first Blue made in America dating to 1936. "What differentiates each [Blue] is the amount and type of mold (most commonly *P. roqueforti*, *P. gorgonzola* or *P. glaucum*), the source of the milk (cow, sheep or goat) and length of aging."

Beyond this, the process of Blue cheesemaking is both a science and art. The blue mold culture is added to the milk, although some old school traditions add the blue mold to the curds themselves. This is the traditional making of Roquefort, although most producers have moved to adding the culture to the milk.

After hooping the cheese, the cheese is pierced by long needles. This is an important step because in order to bloom, the mold must be exposed to air. The number of piercings as well as

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the type of culture and length of aging controls the amount of blooming.

There are some Blues that are made by coating the surface of fresh cheese with the blue mold and letting it bloom on the rind. The interior will then be free of blue mold and the outside a lovely shade of blue.

"We really concentrate on the careful monitoring of the aging process," says Myrna Ver Ploeg, president of the Maytag Dairy Farms, in Newton, IA, a company that started making its acclaimed Blue in 1941 thanks to a patented process discovered by two Iowa State University microbiologists. Farm owner Fred Maytag II, grandson of the founder of the famous appliance company, employed the scientists, who used the milk of his family's prize-winning herd of Holstein cattle.

"Affinage (the ripening and maturing of cheese) is our specialty. We age our Blue for 6 to 8 months in caves built on the farm until it achieves a dense crumbly texture with its characteristic spicy flavor followed by a bit of a bite at the end. Each wheel is handcrafted and each wedge hand-cut and wrapped in foil to maintain its quality."

Blues are customarily sold to retail delis in 4- to 5-pound wheels for cut-to-order at store level, in pre-cut portion packs weighing from 3- to 8-ounces, and in 4- to 5-ounce cups of crumbles.

Litehouse Foods' newest Blue, launched in 2014, is its Simply Artisan Reserve Gorgonzola crumbles in a 6-ounce stand-up see-through re-sealable pouch bag.

Ploeg says sales of Blue cheese didn't really take off until the 1980's. This is when Blue cheese started making a mainstream appearance on menus in salads, over steaks and served in dips with bar food like hot wings. Now, even QSR chains like Burger King (Burger King Bacon & Bleu) and Carl's Jr. (Buffalo Blue Cheese Burger) have used Blue cheese as an ingredient.

What You Sell

The Blue cheese offerings at Lund Food Holdings includes European classics like Roquefort, Gorgonzola and Stilton as well as a variety from small U.S. producers including a Cheddar-style Blue and Smoky Blue from Rogue Creamery in Oregon. This mix appeals to a diverse group, including the two biggest consumer groups: Baby Boomers and Millennials.

"Boomers purchase specialty cheese in a desire to try new things and to satisfy a more adventurous palate as well as a desire to eat natural and healthy foods. Health to this

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group means the absence of artificial ingredients,” says Litehouse Foods’ Gunter.

Super premium artisan Blues like Swiss Valley Farms/Caves of Faribault’s St. Pete’s Select fit this market perfectly, due to its tangy flavor and only 5-item ingredient list.

Millennial shoppers want an experience and authenticity.

“They want a story and they want to know the person making their cheese. As a result, Blues made by family farms or locally do well,” says Lund’s Hodges.

A good example of this is Jasper Hill Farm’s Bayley Hazen Blue, which won ‘World’s Best Unpasteurized Cheese’ at the 2014 World Cheese Awards.

“We worked on this recipe for 12 years to try and even out some of the seasonal variations,” says Zoe Brickley, director of sales and marketing for this Greensboro, VT-based cheesemaker. “Our herd is pastured and cheese made from summer milk is firmer and has more interesting aromatics, while winter milk, when the cows are eating hay, is creamier, richer and super buttery tasting. This is a great story for those who are interested. Plus, even though we live in a lightly populated area,



PHOTO COURTESY OF BELGIOIOSO

we are fairly local to Boston. It’s only three hours away, so our cheese brings a taste of place.”

How You Sell It

“Education is key to selling the Blue cheese category,” says Lund Food Holdings’ Hodges. “First is staff education. Get-away trainings have taken us to California as well as cheesemakers locally to visit caves, tour specialty producers and get hands-on cheesemaking. In

turn, we educate our customers with in-store ‘Meet the Maker’ events, signage, passive sampling and active demos with interesting pairings.”

Do Taste Demos: Gorgonzola, with its creamy texture and mild flavor, is a great gateway cheese especially to entice customers who don’t think they like Blue.

“Each Gorgonzola looks, smells and tastes different,” says Jamie Wichlacz, marketing manager for BelGioioso Cheese, Inc., in Green Bay, WI. “Our Creamy-



Anna Wolfe

Editor-in-Chief, The Gourmet Retailer; Senior Editor, Progressive Grocer



Oren Kariri

Culinary Training and Development Manager, Market of Choice



Max McCalman

Maitre Fromager, maxvol, inc.



Lee Smith

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Jamie Powell

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Gorg has a rind and a soft texture and the Crumbly Gorgonzolas are made with different milks and have a more crumbly texture. Deli staff or cheesemongers would benefit by offering small size trial pieces of various Gorgonzolas to their clientele or offering demos of these cheeses to gain a following."

Smoky and peppercorn-flavored are also great entry-level Blues.

"Our Smokey Blue is the first of its kind worldwide and it was inspired by a chef," explains Francis Plowman, marketing and merchandising director for Rogue Creamery, in Central Point, OR. "The flavor comes from gentle cold-smoking over the shells of Oregon-grown hazelnuts. This gives the cheese a creamy sweet caramel flavor balanced with the earthy tastes of smoke and nuts."

Bleu Peppercorn is a signature of Tahoe Cheese, located in Carson City, NV, and the first American cheesemaker to combine artisan crafted Blue with organic roasted cracked peppercorn.

"I got the recipe for the Bleu Peppercorn from a lady at the farmers' market who in turn got it while working in a mission in India," explains David Green, chief executive and owner. "It's not mundane like a Pepper Jack. Instead, it's a high-end cheese with a vibrant, complex flavor that appeals to those who like the spiciness of pepper."

Green will also break new ground by launching the nation's first Kosher-for-Passover certificated Blue. This will be available in 6-ounce wedges and 6-pound wheels in markets such as New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Chicago in early 2016.

Beyond the cheese itself, it's what is paired with the Blue during a sampling demo that can create an 'a-ha' moment that translates into purchase.

"I love the idea of sampling our Chèvre in Blue with spreads, nuts and honey," says Melanie Considine, marketing manager and customer relations representative for Montchevré, headquartered in Rolling Hills Estates, CA. "Fig jam pairs

especially well with the natural tang of the goat milk Blue."

The unlikely pairing of Blue and chocolate proved a winner during a taste demo Swiss Valley Farms/Caves of Faribault's Jirik conducted at a Whole Foods Market in Florida.

"The deli manager and I paired one of our well-aged Blues with a fine piece of milk chocolate and handed this to shoppers in 1-ounce soufflé cups. We told them to chew once and then let the two melt in their mouths to enjoy a pure flavor experience. That day, we sold well over a few weeks' worth of Blue cheese in 4-hours," says Jirik.

Serve-Up Trendy Usage Tips

Cheesemakers say the American consumer is waking up to specialty cheeses like Blue and is looking for more ways to use it, especially in cooking.

"We do a lot of pairing with meat. For example, drizzling olive oil and Blue cheese over a steak for sampling. Or, using Blue cheese to make a Juicy Lucy (a cheeseburger with cheese on the inside). We'll also make a sauce with Blue cheese to go over pasta and top a pizza or flatbread with a combination of Brussels sprouts, bacon and Blue cheese," says Lund's Hodges.

Today, it's 'anything goes' as to the creative ways to utilize the cheese, says Rogue Creamery's Plowman. "There's an ice cream maker in Portland called the Salt & Straw that uses our Crater Lake Blue to make a Pear & Blue Cheese flavor."

Cheesemakers shared a number of other on-trend uses. These include Blue cheese crumbled over hot popcorn, made into a creamy sauce for salmon, paired on a cheese board with candied pecans, stirred into a bread pudding topped with maple syrup, and served with cider, craft beer or a sweet dessert wine.

Make Blue Easy To Find

"The best way to display Blue cheese depends on the audience. We do it by country in our urban stores with foodie clientele that knows where different cheese comes from and we group by type in our suburban, family-oriented stores," says Lund's Hodges.

Either way, make sure your selection of Blues is well illuminated, suggests Swiss Valley Farms/Caves of Faribault's Jirik. "Good lighting will show off the beautiful texture and color as well as the glistening composition of the Blue cheese." **DB**



An Appetite For Italian

Consumer interest in craft foods, exotic flavors opens door for new products from the Old Country

BY MARK HAMSTRA

Americans' growing love affair with specialty foods has reached across the Atlantic to the Old World flavors and culinary traditions of Italy.

The handcrafted, traditional nature of many Italian food products, often made using high-quality, locally sourced ingredients and techniques perfected over the course of generations, are in high demand. Consumers seem to have developed a taste for Italian meat items in particular.

"Highlighting the craftsmanship of salumi on a charcuterie board as a starter for any occasion has been one of the biggest trends coming out of the deli this year," says Jay Holt, senior vice president of sales at Hayward, CA-based Columbus

Foods, a maker of artisan salami and other deli products. "This new trend is perfect for us because it allows the quality and the art of making salami to be highlighted in each slice."

He cited data from the Nielsen Perishables Group showing the Italian Deli segment, including sausage, salami, pepperoni, and Italian specialty, had the highest retail dollar growth of any deli category in 2014, up 9.4 percent over the previous year.

Sherrie Zebrasky, a retail advisor for Principe Foods USA, based in Long Beach, CA, agrees traditional Italian meats like those made by Principe have been in high demand.

"Charcuterie is coming on strong as domestic producers are creating a variety of new salami," she says. "Some are

organic, which is pretty new also, and pretty trendy."

More and more shoppers also seem to be enjoying prosciutto, says Zebrasky, as well as value-added items such as prosciutto combined with fresh cheeses and combination packs.

"These become more prevalent as the holiday season approaches," she says.

Sales Could Go Even Higher

The impressive level of growth in sales of Italian deli items may even be accelerating, if demand for imports is an indication. Through the first three quarters of this year, imports of Italian cooked and cured meats rose 15.9 percent, compared with the same period a year ago, to \$30.4 million, according to data from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, supplied to Deli

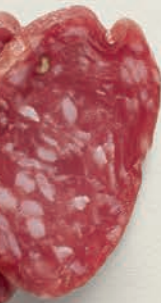


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beer offerings may also be helping to drive demand for Italian meats and cheeses, says Forte of the Italian Trade Commission.

"Cured meat and cheese boards have become a steady pairing go-to in bars and restaurants, and have certainly impacted consumption patterns in the home as shoppers seek to replicate and create new experiences for themselves, family and friends," he says. "Peanuts no longer do the trick. The specialty consumer is more sophisticated."

Likewise, Holt of Columbus Foods — which offers a line of finocchiona, sopressatas, prosciutto, Italian dry and secchi salami for charcuterie plates — says there has been an increase in the popularity of those offerings and salumi-wrapped fruits on the appetizer menus of wine bars and brewpubs.

"We have also seen these same items being highlighted as pizza toppings to bring flare to restaurant menus," he says. The company's hot sopressata, which is slow cured with chili de arbol from Spain, is being called by some culinarians "the next pepperoni," he says.

Johnson of Olli says she's seen an increase in consumer demand for the Italian meats derived from fatty tissues, such as lardo, guanciale and pancetta, which have long been used for cooking in restaurants.

Authentic Italian

Crisan of Rao's says she's a fan of authentic Italian foods in the deli.

"I love to see prepared Italian foods

Business by the Italian Trade Commission.

Italian sauces and condiments also showed big gains, with imports up 13.2 percent, to \$124.2 million, in that time frame. Italy was already the top cheese exporter to the U.S., but imports still rose 1.2 percent through the first three quarters of 2015.

"The evolution of the specialty food consumer in America has been extremely exciting for Product of Italy as independent retailers and supermarkets continue to seek to satisfy their customers with both indulgent and healthy choices," says Maurizio Forte, executive director of the Italian Trade Commission. "Italian Products fit the bill in both cases.

"The changes in the U.S. palate are catalyzing growth of specialty products and piquing interest in gourmet cheeses, meats and other grocery items that may have proved a harder sell just a few years ago," he says. "The interest especially from the echo-boomer generation regarding production, traceability and the focus on craft or artisanship is important and playing a role in shaping product portfolios."

Jennifer Johnson, director of marketing at Olli Salumeria, says strong demand for the company's products led the company to build a new 80,000-square-foot facility in Oceanside, CA.

"One reason for this is we have seen the growing need to get our products, like large format salami, into the deli," she says. "In reading the market, we see the need for

this sort of product behind the glass."

Traditional Italian prepared dishes also remain popular in the deli, says Deb Crisan, senior vice president of sales and marketing at Rao's Specialty Foods, New York, which supplies premium branded sauce to foodservice accounts. Prepared, heat-and-serve meals and pizza are among the items retailers are offering.

Influence Of Restaurants

Restaurant and bars offering more sophisticated snacks to pair with their craft





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being highlighted as using authentic ingredients — Italian tomatoes or ‘made in Italy’ sauce, imported pastas and cheeses,” she says.

Zebrasky, the Principe advisor, says in-store prepared foods often reflect the authenticity of foods made in Italy, if the staff preparing them is professional. Often,

however, premade foodservice products lack that authenticity.

“Lasagna is a good example,” she says. “In Italy the lasagna is often a single noodle

► 4 Tips For Merchandising Italian Foods In The Deli

Many Italian foods will sell themselves, but retailers have the opportunity to drive additional sales through merchandising that showcases these products. Many Italian food lovers are interested in trying new products, or in trying familiar products prepared in new ways. And plenty of other consumers, especially younger generations, are looking for ways to expand their palates with new foods and flavors they’ve never tried. Here are four ways to turn them on to the Old World goodness of Italy:

1. Run limited-time, multi-department promotions with an Italian-foods theme that includes the whole store in print and online ads. Cincinnati-based Kroger, for example, recently ran a multi-week Italian promotion highlighting Italian foods, ingredients and recipes in which it devoted almost all of its print ads, mobile app and store displays to this, says Sherrie Zebrasky, a retail advisor for Principe Foods USA.

“This presents an entire shopping experience for the customer who either wants to purchase premade Italian foods or make it at home — all the ingredients are available at Kroger, along with the directions to make the foods.”

2. Create prepared dishes that feature ingredients for sale in the deli and elsewhere in the store, and promote them along with the prepared meals. “Merchandise your deli department with the authentic Italian products you are using for customer awareness,” says Deb Crisan, senior vice president of sales and marketing at Rao’s Specialty Foods.

Having the consumer understand the products and their various applications and uses at home is key, offers Maurizio Forte, executive director of the Italian Trade Commission. Today more and more deli counters provide take-away home cooked options, exciting lunch specials, platters and sandwiches,” he says. “Products of Italy being cross merchandised in this context is vital because it provides insight to how these products can be used in multiple ways.”

3. Provide pairing suggestions by cross merchandising within the deli. “A great way to merchandise Italian products to generate more sales is to have the salami items merchandised close to your gourmet cheese section and olive bar,” says Jay Holt, senior vice president of sales at Columbus Foods. “Quality cheeses, olives, and artisan crackers are perfect pairings with our salami. If they are merchandised together, the customer can make sure they have everything they need to ensure having an impressive charcuterie offering for any occasion.”

Jennifer Johnson, director of marketing at Olli Salumeria, says, “Any time a retailer can cross promote, it helps both the store and the customer. It gives ideas.

“Also, making pairing/serving suggestions can really make a product more friendly to a customer,” she adds.

4. Provide sampling and demos during busy times, and incentivize employees to promote the products. “Demos, product tastings and an old-fashioned conversation go a long way,” says Forte of the Italian Trade Commission.

“In the end, the consumer wants to feel confident and great about what they are buying and bringing home to their loved ones, and so sharing the messages of quality and authenticity is important now more than ever and an integral part of what Product of Italy represents.

“Retailers providing education and incentives to their sales staff along with consumer giveaways do a lot to generate excitement and drive sales as well.” **DB**

folded in half with a unique sauce, light on the cheese. In the U.S., lasagna is normally a number of layers with a fair amount of cheese.”

Gnocchi is another example where the U.S. product often differs widely from the authentic Italian version.

“I do see some pizza shops using vegetables, etc., which is often found on an Italian pizza, but Americans use too much cheese and the crust is too thick,” she says. “The naan pizzas at Wegmans are light and have more authentic Italian toppings than traditional pizza shops provide — light on the cheese.”

Holt of Columbus Foods says there are very few “authentic” brands of Italian meats, although Columbus has been using authentic Italian recipes since the business was launched in the Little Italy section of North Beach, San Francisco in 1917.

“Columbus slow-ages every one of our salami with traditional methods without taking any high temperature cooking or drying shortcuts,” he says. “This is why every slice of our salami tastes as authentic as if you were eating it in Italy.”

The increase in Italian exports, says Forte, speaks to the availability of authentic Italian foods in the retail environment.

“That being said, we believe education is key and the consumer will decide the characteristics that distinguish an authentic Italian product,” he says.

Italian Education

This year the Italian Trade Commission launched the Extraordinary Italian Taste

Campaign in the U.S., with the goal of educating consumers about Product of Italy.

“We are seeking to sit virtually at the American table and share the best of Italy with consumers,” says Forte. “U.S. retail trade partners are on the front lines setting the scene and the proverbial table, if you will, engaging the U.S. consumer with their passion and knowledge about our specialty products. Our retail partners in deli are invaluable allies.”

The Italian Trade Commission, under the auspices and direction of the Italian Ministry for Economic Development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, is investing in a dynamic, multi-pronged market approach that includes an aggressive multimedia communications campaign entitled “The Extraordinary Italian Taste.” The effort is aimed at “celebrating Italy’s bounty, educating trade partners and empowering consumers to distinguish and recognize authentic Italian products from their counterparts in the grocery aisle, thereby driving product sales,” explains Forte.

Strategic collaborative relationships with retailers, such as the one the Italian Trade Commission recently announced with Schenectady, NY-based Price Chopper, are designed to help promote Italian products, including those in the deli department. Earlier this year, the Commission unveiled partnerships with other leading regional retailers, including San Antonio-based HEB and Chicago-based Mariano’s Fresh Market.

“In store promotional activations in favor of Products of Italy will be executed together with our retail partners across categories including deli, a very important component, throughout 2016,” says Forte.

Outlook For 2016

Industry experts have high hopes for Italian foods in the year ahead.

“The demand for Italian meats continues to climb,” says Holt of Columbus Foods. “The largest retailers in the country have already committed to increased distribution for 2016. Shoppers continue to want more craftsmanship in their foods, which is why artisan products like Italian cheese, bread, salumi and wine are popular choices in the shopper’s basket and restaurants.”

Johnson of Olli agrees changing consumer taste trends will buoy sales of Italian foods in 2016.

“I like to look at it as less of an outlook for Italian foods, and more as an outlook of the growth of the American palate,” she says. “It is endless.”

That doesn’t mean American-Italian prepared dishes will go away anytime soon.

“Italian food continues to be one of America’s favorites, prepared ‘ready to serve’ as a quick meal solution or prepared frozen will be top of mind to the consumer,” says Crisan of Rao’s.

Zebrasky, the Principe spokeswoman, notes many Italian foods have become “as American as hamburgers and hot dogs.

“For example lots of families have spaghetti for dinner weekly,” she says. “It’s easy, fast, and the kids love it.”

In addition, Zebrasky adds, Italian foods will likely become even more popular and sophisticated as consumers are exposed to them through the media.

Forte of the Italian Trade Commission says he remains bullish on Italian foods for 2016. In 2015, Italy was a partner country at two significant trade shows — the Food Marketing Institute’s FMI Connect and the Summer Fancy Food Show.

“We will ring in the New Year as partner country at Winter Fancy Food (January 17-19 in San Francisco),” says Forte. “There is a genuine and palpable enthusiasm that encircles the Italian Pavilion at these shows. It’s so terrific to have a concentration of some of the country’s most important trade partners and taste makers.” **DB**





GOOD TO GO

Authentic, restaurant-quality meals drive retail deli takeout

BY MARK HAMSTRA

Rotisserie chicken has been a gold mine for retailers for decades now, but there's more to dinner than just a hot, juicy entrée, especially for Millennials.

"With this whole fresh food revolution going on in the deli, customers are really looking for more restaurant-quality meals," says Robert Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Blount Fine Foods, Fall River, MA. "Supermarket delis are competing with foodservice really well."

Millennials are seeking minimally processed offerings from the supermarket deli, with fewer added ingredients and interesting flavors.

That led Blount to launch a line of fresh, microwaveable side dishes for retailers to offer with their entrees.

Raleys Supermarkets, a regional supermarket operator based in West Sacramento, CA, is one of the retailers that have adopted the products. The chain offers a dinner that includes a rotisserie chicken and three sides for \$19.99.

"It's a great ring for the deli, and a great price for the customer," says Sewall. "People want to feed their families high-quality food at a great price."

The 12-ounce sides include several organic and clean-label options, such as an organic kale-and-spinach dish and a clean-label mac-and-cheese.

"People want simple foods, and they want less processed foods, especially Millennials," he says, "They want to eat healthier. That doesn't mean they won't indulge, but they want to know what they are eating."

The sweet potato side dish at Raley's, for example, includes organic butter and organic nutmeg, among its minimal list of four or five ingredients.

"Eating simple foods is here to stay," says Sewall. "That's not going to go away."

A recent report from the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association and The Hartman Group backs this up. The report, called "Culinary Concierge: Engaging Millennials Through Meals" found that authenticity and transparency are critical to gaining the trust of young consumers.

The most important concern for Millennials is "being able to live a long and healthy life," cited by 45 percent of respondents to a Hartman Group survey, followed by "having enough time for family and friends," cited by 42 percent of respondents, the report states.

In addition, the report found the best way for food and beverage companies to gain the trust of consumers is by being "open and honest" about the ingredients in their products, cited by 54 percent of respondents.

Millennials are also much more likely than other generations to purchase pre-

pared foods, the report found. Millennials (age 18-35) indexed at 127 for buying prepared foods (with 100 being average), while Gen-Xers (age 36-49) indexed at 91 and Boomers (age 50-68) indexed at 84.

"Millennials are the primary consumer engaging with your prepared foods departments," the report states.

The Blount line of sides seeks to meet the needs of both consumers and retailers. For retailers, having prepackaged sides reduces labor and shrink, and also allows retailers to more easily offer an organic or non-GMO certified product, which would be much more difficult for them to do in-house.

For consumers, the microwaveable sides allow a busy parent to throw together a whole, high-quality dinner in minutes. With 36 ounces of side dishes, the combo meals provide enough for a family of four, and easily provide a hearty meal with leftovers for two or three people.

"For two people, you are eating really well for under \$10," says Sewall. "People look at it and say, 'If I can pay \$6-\$10 for a really good meal, that's a great deal.'"

Ethnic Dishes

Another trend Millennials have embraced is the pursuit of new and authentic ethnic dishes.

Maria Kardamaki Robertson, founder and chief executive at importer and fresh-prepared foods supplier Demeter's

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MILLENNIAL PREFERENCES

The following are the most important factors when Millennials are deciding what to order at foodservice establishments:

51%
FRESH

38%
REAL

36%
PESTICIDE
FREE

35%
NATURAL

32%
GMO FREE

31%
NO ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS/
COLORS PRESERVATIVES

Source: IDDBA/The Hartman Group, from Culinary Concierge: Engaging Millennials Through Meals

Pantry, Silver Spring, MD, which offers a line of prepared, authentic Greek and Southern Mediterranean foods called The Greek Table, says traditional deli meals can be adapted with new flavors, new cuisines, and healthier recipes.

"Younger consumers are looking for healthier food, more interesting flavors, and are willing to pay a little more for it," she says.

Deli offerings should be tailored to the local demographics, says Kardamaki Robertson.

"Successful delis adapt to the changing demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods," she says. "Get out and notice who the people are that live around your neighborhood, and what kind of restaurants there are."

Likewise, Sewall notes his company's line of sides, available as private label products for retailers, can be tailored to the local demographics, with dishes such as collard greens for Southeastern markets, for example, and ethnic dishes for other demographics or for adventurous consumers who enjoy a selection of global flavors.

Make It Easy

Kardamaki Robertson suggests deli managers give consumers as much help as possible in assembling meal solutions.

"Customers, especially when they rush to go home in the evening, are tired and unimaginative," she says. "Give them meal solutions, and pair dishes to create sets."

"If you want to promote your roasted chicken, and you have too much of two sides that go with chicken, put them all together for the special of the day."

Sampling is also key for supermarket delis, says Kardamaki Robertson.

"I am surprised how few delis bother putting a tray on the counter with some sampling cups introducing a new dish or cuisine with a tag showing the item name and price," she says. "Most suppliers like us will be happy to offer free product for this kind of sampling."

Demeter's Pantry also offers a one-page brochure and display stand to sit atop the deli counter, in order to encourage sampling, she says, noting this provides an economical alternative to having someone in-store to hand out samples.

At Raley's, Sewall notes the chain has been aggressive in promoting the chicken-and-sides deal using social media, in addition to in-store signage.

Kardamaki Robertson says while deli

managers and chefs can be hesitant to source prepared meals through outside vendors because they perceive a higher cost per pound, creating meals in-house presents its own set of challenges.

Trained Staff Is Vital

"You need to have trained staff in place to do the cooking and to do it well," she says. "And you need to be able to make enough quantity to meet the needs of busy times, especially for holidays and for catering orders."

Unless supermarkets have a large, experienced staff, it can be difficult to meet these demands and vary the department's prepared-meals offerings.

"I usually recommend to our customers that they follow a combination plan, where they leverage their staff's expertise and discounted ingredients from other store departments or ingredient suppliers and make part of their selection in-house," says Kardamaki Robertson. "Use suppliers like us who offer a unique selection of products to make your deli counter stand out and please your customers that are looking for variety."

She notes vendor-supplied products with fairly long shelf life allow retailers to keep a stock of fully cooked products that are ready to serve on an unexpectedly busy day or to satisfy a catering order.

Sewall of Blount notes supermarket delis need to offer high-quality meals to compete with the foodservice channel.

"It's all about competing for share of stomach," he says. "The consumer is used to buying combos in restaurants. In pretty much any type of restaurant you go into today, they are offering some type of combo meals — an entrée with soup or salad, or whatever."

"In order to stay relevant and compete with foodservice, supermarket delis have to offer these combo meals," says Sewall. "To be able to do it without increasing labor is great for the retailer."

The IDDBA/Hartman Group report concludes that offering a variety of options and easy solutions is key for today's consumers.

"Having ready-to-eat, ready-to-heat and ready-to-assemble items that can be mixed and matched is essential for time-crunched Millennials — singles, couples, and families — who desire a variety of food options and flavors that are quick and convenient, at a fair price," according to the report.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHARON OLSON, CULINARY VISIONS PANEL

REPORT FROM EXPO MILANO 2015

'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life' comes alive for millions

BY SHARON OLSON



Expo Milano 2015, which was designed to create and encourage an international discussion about feeding the world and sustaining the resources to do it, brought together citizens from more than 140 countries to examine the best of technology that “offers a concrete answer to a vital need: being able to guarantee healthy, safe and sufficient food for everyone, while respecting the planet and its equilibrium.”

With a core theme of “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life,” the expo ran six months, from May 1 to October 31, in Milan, Italy. The conversation was as much about feeding the hungry as it was about enlightening those who suffer the effects of poor nutrition and excessive food intake.

The objective was clear; identify and collaborate on solutions to feed our world population of 9 billion by the year 2050. Lofty goals and high ideals were the order of the day, yet realistic conversations about small measures that empowered individuals left those attending the Expo with a glow of inspiration and great intentions. Our exploration focused on finding ideas and inspiration for supermarket deli executives and managers who want to become leaders in educating and engaging consumers today and tomorrow.

Supermarket Of The Future

The Future Food District was a large exhibition space dedicated to the supermarket of the future. One might have expected some sort of futuristic technology-enabled fantasy, yet the focus of this space was on using technology to connect the consumer with the provenance of every item they might wish to purchase



in a supermarket or deli. It's important to note the technology enabled a free flow of information for those who wanted to know, yet it would not deter shoppers who know what they want and want it quickly.

Refrigerated display cases had consumer accessible panels and clear glass overhead panels that would display origin, production methods and details about products in the cases when activated by the consumer. This system called “augmented labels” enabled consumers to see the story behind a product by simply brushing their hand over a panel and looking up at the display screen. It demonstrated how to feed the consumers' desire for transparency by connecting them directly with the supply chain.

The personal connection with in-store experts took center stage attention in the supermarket of the future where product specialists were able to connect with consumers, providing product details, tasting samples or tips on serving and preparation. The Future Food District also attempted

to demonstrate that the traditional marketplace concept of a place where people connect over food will be very much part of the future.

Packaging highlighted many things available in today's delis, like combinations of cheeses and meats in clear plastic compartmented containers to conveniently serve a one or two person household. The impression was that food items were packaged in limited quantities on premise rather than combinations received pre-packaged by vendors.

Old world was clearly the hot trend with products displaying generations of family commitment to unique products and time-honored craftsmanship. Some packaged in butcher-type paper with a wax seal communicated an exclusive, limited availability of a luxury product. Exploration of the Future Food District made it clear consumers' attraction to small production niche products has the potential to fuel an influential consumer food movement.

Exploring International Cuisine

Cultural and culinary tourism was clearly a focus of Expo Milano. Foods and wines from Italy dominated the Expo with products available from all of the Italian regions for consumers to explore and wholesalers to consider for export. Lines at various pavilions, which covered more than one million square meters, provided an informal focus group of thousands who presented insight into the most intriguing world food cultures. Mediterranean countries including Italy, France, Turkey, Israel and Morocco were among those with the longest lines.

Brazil captivated visitors with a physically engaging suspended exhibit where movement of visitors triggered light and sound. The educational focus was on how



Brazil has been able to sustainably increase its food production six fold over the past 40 years with controlled expansion of cultivated areas.

Mexico used its pavilion to showcase the great diversity of foods from the six different regions/states of Mexico, giving attendees a far broader culinary perspective on Mexican food, which is so popular around the world. While visitors enjoyed the exuberant display of fiesta so typically associated with this country, their eyes were opened to the rich cultural diversity of the region.

Japan and Korea, both countries that have invested significantly in promoting cuisines throughout the world, also welcomed significant crowds. At food expositions worldwide, Japan has demonstrated the art of utilizing umami in cooking for many years; this was a main theme in their pavilion. Korean food relies heavily on vegetables and feeds the growing demand among Americans for veg-centric dishes. The restaurant in the Korean Pavilion offered traditional dishes and menus based on very modern trends with items based on anti-aging, detox and other diet concepts.

The U.S. Pavilion, American Food 2.0, United to Feed the Planet, gave international visitors a broader perspective of American food culture than the limited stereotypes that often exist. A 7,200 square foot vertical farm that was harvested daily provided an impactful demonstration of the possibilities of urban agriculture. According to Mitchell Davis, executive vice president of the James Beard Foundation and chief creative officer, USA Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015, "Research indicates consumers are increasingly interested in knowing where their food is from,

how it is made, and what impact it has had on the environment."

American cuisine was on display at the pop-up James Beard American Restaurant in downtown Milan. Top American chefs were invited to prepare meals during the Expo and visitors from around the world were treated to a unique and intimate showcase of American gastronomy.

One evening, James Beard Award-winner, Chef Alex Young, chef/partner of Zingerman's Roadhouse in Ann Arbor, MI prepared an unforgettable experience that was uniquely American. His passion for farming and sustainable agriculture was the foundation of the dining experience, which included New Mexico lamb posole, a salad of soured, parched and sprouted oats with toasted oat vinaigrette, eastern North Carolina pulled pork served with green beans and a flight of grits, and Native American Indian pudding.

The Power Of Food

Food trucks at the U.S. and the Netherlands Pavilions created instant communities of global visitors around these installations. Food Truck Nation outside of the U.S. Pavilion served up iconic and innovative American street food from around America. The organizers were mindful of wholesomeness, sustainability and nutrition; yet hungry showgoers appreciated the indulgence of Maine lobster rolls, barbecue, burgers and a variety of classic desserts. Bleacher seating, adjacent to the trucks, demonstrated how a restaurant, supermarket or chef brand can take to the streets and create an instant food community.

The Dutch Festival was the first thing visitors to the Netherlands Pavilion encountered. It was a vibrant scene

of colorful trucks set up in a park-like area where attendees lined up for indulgences like fries and burgers but also gave a nod to more healthful offerings like yogurt and smoothies.

Connecting With Consumers

Today's consumers want to be connected to each other and to those in the know about what interests them. They do not want marketing that tries to sell them on a product or an idea; they want information and experiences that captivate them. All types of food experiences fascinated the millions of consumers attending the expo.

Storytelling was a large component of many of the experiences at Expo Milano. In the Italian Pavilion children were given large coloring books to learn and share their own stories about food and agriculture. In the U.S. Pavilion a visual display of the Great American Foodscape required no words to communicate America's history and food culture with visitors from around the world.

In the Holy See Pavilion visitors were welcomed to walk around a long table with video projected from the ceiling, which was, motion activated. When a visitor would place their hands over various places at the table the video would begin showing the hands of peoples from different countries and cultures preparing and serving food. This was a dramatic and captivating example of how food connects people and cultures — food is the common language.

Consumers also connect with suppliers they believe to have ethical business practices. Sustainability is a concept that was barely understood by mainstream consumers a decade ago, and today it can be a powerful selling tool.

Insight For Deli Operators

When Davis was asked what he would advise supermarket deli executives and managers to consider doing to become leaders in educating and engaging consumers today and tomorrow, he said, "Much like Expo Milano, the deli counter is a place to support entrepreneurs, artisans, and quality food producers, from both the local region and from abroad. Being educated and informed about the products you sell allows you to educate and inform clientele so you can guide them to the best tasting, most healthful, most environmentally-friendly choices."

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Meats Going Natural

Strong growth of natural mirrors Millennials' desire for better quality

BY KEITH LORIA

With the Millennial generation doing more shopping than ever before, an emphasis on “natural” foods has been a driving force for sales throughout all sections of retail — including at the deli counter.

Today, when Americans shop for products at the deli, many are seeking out hormone-free, antibiotic-free and organic meats produced from pasture-raised animals without artificial colors and added salts for flavorings.

Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian

Pâtés and Specialty Meats, based in Neptune, NJ, says the latest trends involve natural meat from animals that have been humanely raised and contain no added nitrates, antibiotics or hormones.

“Consumers are increasingly conscious of where their products and those products’ ingredients come from,” she says. “Products with an artisanal flare continue to be on the rise. Buzzwords like ‘local,’ ‘farmer-owned,’ ‘craftsmen,’ ‘handmade,’ ‘artisanal,’ ‘craft,’ ‘sustainable’ and ‘clean’ are becoming more present in marketing messages.”

Heidi Diestel, a turkey farmer with the Diestel Family Turkey Ranch, based in Sonora, CA, says consumers are looking for their deli meat to offer a clean source of protein. They value products free of fillers, antibiotics, hormones and nitrates, and seek pure, quality meat to support a healthy diet and lifestyle.

“The natural meats market is growing with more demand placed on transparency and products that offer a cleaner choice,” she says. “Consumers are looking for their deli slices to be made with natural ingredients that are non-GMO verified, free

of nitrates and low in sodium and sugar, to name a few. These trends are driving growth in the category.”

Daniel Estridge, founder and chief flavor officer for New York Deli Patrol, headquartered in Westford, MA, believes consumers are starting to look past buzzwords and are trying to understand how their food is actually made and what are the differences between competing products.

“It’s commonly understood that many claims — even regulated claims — like ‘all natural’ don’t really have much specific meaning,” he says. “So for a lot of consumers of natural products, it’s no longer enough that a brand claims to be ‘all natural,’ ‘artisan’ or ‘hand-crafted.’ These people want to know the story behind their food, and they want to know whether it’s true.”

Today’s savvy consumers are deciding for themselves whether food products match what they consider to be “real” food in restaurants and home-cooked meals.

Camille Collins, marketing director for Les Trois Petits Cochons, in Brooklyn, NY, says it all comes down to three trends — organic, GMO-free and local.

“More and more markets are offering



natural meats, and they are doing a better job of labeling and promoting such products,” she says. “Consumer demand is there, so the category will only expand.”

With all the focus on food and chefs in our culture, Estridge says the Millennials and educated consumers of all ages are starting to understand the label alone doesn’t tell the real story.

“People don’t know what they are eating. The government doesn’t regulate phrases like minimally processed, and the

words appear but they don’t mean anything,” he says. “If you see a piece of meat that weighs nine pounds and it says it’s a turkey breast, pretty clearly it’s not. “So in the typical deli department you see a lot of ‘Frankenmeat’ items carrying claims like ‘all-natural,’ ‘raised without antibiotics’ or even ‘organic.’”

NYDP’s approach — and the approach it advocates for manufacturers and marketers looking to satisfy today’s more discerning customers — is to go beyond

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What's New?

The Diestel Family Turkey Ranch recently introduced a line of certified organic and non-GMO-verified pre-sliced deli turkey.

"These are the first-ever antibiotic-free, non-GMO-verified and GAP Step 3-rated, pre-sliced deli turkey on the market," says Diestel. "Diestel's premium turkey deli slices are made from whole muscle meat and contain higher protein and less sodium than conventional brands. The turkey is also 100-percent vegetarian fed, thoughtfully raised without the use of antibiotics, growth stimulants or hormones, and completely free of artificial ingredients or preservatives, added nitrates or nitrites, gluten, carrageenan, casein and MSG."

Jennifer Johnson, director of marketing for Olli Salumeria, based in Mechanicsville, VA, says natural meats are growing across different channels, which is why the company just completed an 80,000-square-foot facility to answer this need as it expands into deli and pre-sliced meats.

"We have really noticed a growth in the

grab and go. No waiting in line at the deli, just picking up a package of pre-sliced while walking the aisles," she says. "We are excited to be getting our new deli, large-format salami out there. In addition, we have released our pre-sliced packaged line."

Kayem Foods recently repositioned its all-natural deli line as McKenzie Natural Artisan Deli, expanding this antibiotic-free, uncured line from 12 to 17 items in early 2015.

Alexian's pâtés have always been all natural, but its newest product is its Saucisson Smoked Sausage, a garlicky pork and beef sausage that also boasts those properties. It is typically merchandised with specialty cheeses and other charcuterie items.

Les Trois Petits Cochons is debuting an organic Pâté de Campagne this fall, the first one on the market, and is working to expand the organic line in 2016.

Estridge notes turkey is scarce and expensive this season due to the avian flu, so the company is seeing more action in other proteins than before.



Meat Snacking

Mark Whitney, brand manager McKenzie & Private Label for Kayem Foods, Inc., based in Chelsea, MA, says the company has seen great interest over the last year in its Natural Artisan deli meats, and while it is still very Northeast heavy, it is hoping it will gain distribution in other parts of the country over the coming year.

"Meat snacking has become a very busy category with growing numbers of jerky and meat stick companies as well as ready-to-go snack packs with meat and cheese," he says. "Many accounts are looking to fill a need in the category with clean ingredient, natural, antibiotic-free offerings. Many accounts have limited space in their deli cases and are looking to expand deli sets with their own private labels with cleaner ingredient products."

While Whitney says there is a place for branded products in this space, the competitive sets are becoming smaller as non-GMO items are showing up all over the store.

"[Non-GMO labeling] has been introduced in the meat case, typically with organic products, but it has not yet made it into the deli case," he says. "In our categories we are finding the selections are constantly changing and retailers are looking for items that fill the latest trends, though this often means something has to come out in order to introduce these new items."

Marketing Matters

Consumers want to know exactly what they are eating because they are more educated about nutrition and health





plays, information labels and inclusion in the weekly circular and other marketing materials are all great avenues for promotion.

Diestel adds retailers should prominently display natural deli products at eye level in the packaged deli section.

Cummins notes in-store demos are a great way to introduce a product to a consumer and allow them the opportunity to taste the product before purchasing.

The natural meat market sees higher price points — which can sometimes be a deterrent to sales — and sampling is instrumental in demonstrating the added value, she says. “Offering on-product or on-shelf promotions also incentivizes the purchase.”

Johnson says cross promotion is key, as is educating the consumer.

“Show them how to pair and serve. Give them ideas. Make it easy,” she says. “Multiple displays are always best when available. When not available, displaying salami with some cheese and crackers to give the consumer an easy grab and go is best.”

Collins says signage within the deli department and any relevant literature

issues than ever. In recent years, the industry has heard claims that certain foods are unsafe to consume due to the way they are grown, raised or produced, which has caused a surge in the demand for information and transparency.

Retailers can benefit from promoting the natural deli meats they choose to carry on their shelves, says Diestel.

“Showcasing the brand’s values, attributes and sustainable-farming practices reflect their priorities as a retailer and reinforce that they are listening to consumers’ needs and wants,” she says. “Taking the time to train their in-store team on the products’ attributes is a very important part of how to market these products.”

Additionally, point-of-purchase dis-



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about the “natural” meat producers should be displayed in central positions.

“Retailers might offer a discount when initially bringing in the product ... typically these products come with a higher price tag, and even though the demand is there it’s always nice for markets to give consumers an incentive to buy higher-priced items, which they will typically continue to purchase. Demos are also very useful to get customer attention,” she says.

Customers are looking for products that are organic, GMO-free and local, so make it easy for them to find.

“Premium placement within the case with appropriate signage is imperative,” says Collins. “Don’t make them search around for these products.”

Estridge says merchandising natural versus conventional should highlight the differences in how products are made, just as many retailers segregate organic versus

conventional in the produce department.

“Store-level staff should be empowered to answer specific questions about why natural products are different, beneficial and more expensive,” he says. “Growing top-line in natural often requires an up-sell and needs to start with education. We see the best results in stores where deli personnel are most familiar with product attributes.”

He also says a specific area set-aside in the case, and signage calling out the “department within the department” is highly effective.

Rise Of The Millennials

Millennials are known for asking questions about what they’re eating, demanding transparency of the producer and voicing interest in discovering the history of a company. These characteristics have driven the food industry to grow in more of a “natural” direction.

“Millennials want to feel good about what they’re eating,” says Cummins. “They want to know where the products and ingredients are coming from, and are leading the charge toward more transparency and accountability.”

According to Diestel, Millennials are more willing to pay for fresh and healthful food and appreciate organic farms and artisanal products.

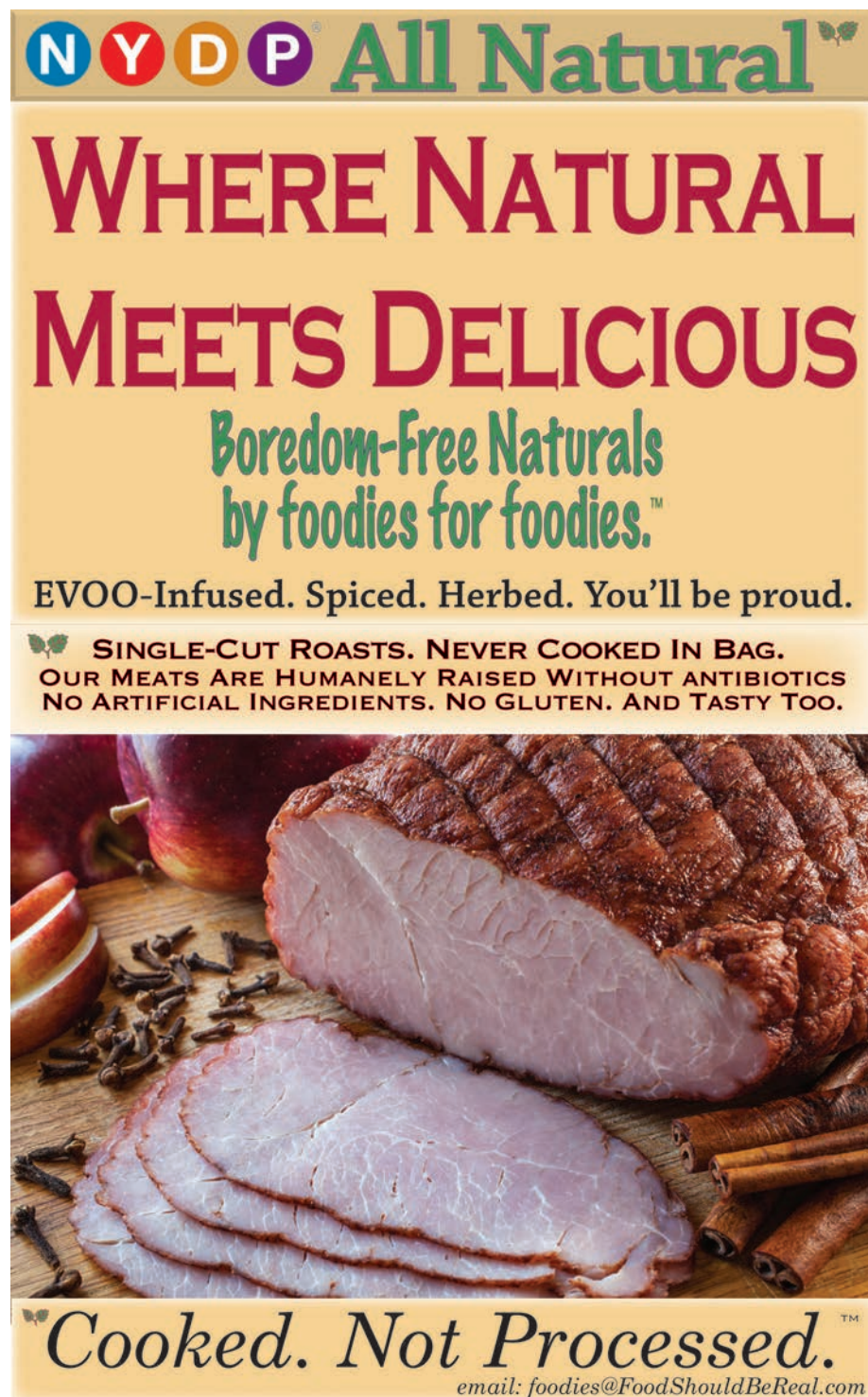
“This shift in priorities from other generations help brands like Diestel continue to thrive,” she says. “Our deli slices offer pure and quality protein that families can feel proud of and tastes like turkey should.”

There’s no question Millennials have played a strong role in the increase of natural meat sales, but Whitney notes natural meats are on everyone’s mind.

“The Millennial population is looking for clean ingredients and high protein offerings so they are a good target for this type of product. But they are not the only segment looking for these attributes,” says Whitney. “We find that often it is women who shop for themselves and their kids and want better-for-you ingredients for lunches and snacks throughout the day.”

Increasingly, Americans are asking questions about the provenance of the foods they consume. More than ever before, they are concerned with what they are putting in their mouths and where their food comes from, say experts. And that trend is expected to grow. Providing “natural” meats helps consumers address those concerns.

DB



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BLAST FROM THE PAST

DIETZ & WATSON — A DIFFERENCE IN THE DETAILS

In today's competitive landscape, it's rare for a company to withstand the test of time and rarer to do so under the same family's ownership.

Dietz & Watson was founded in 1939 by Gottlieb Dietz, a young German sausage maker.

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

Gottlieb Dietz trained as a butcher and sausage maker in his native Germany before arriving in Philadelphia. A chance meeting with another local meat smoker, Watson led to a partnership. Upon Gottlieb's passing, Ruth and her husband took control and transformed the company.

Today, with the support of Ruth's three children and two grandchildren, Dietz & Watson is now the second largest preparer of premium meats and artisan cheeses in the country, with 450 products and distribution in more than 45 states.

"I'm so proud to mark our 75th anniversary, and I think my father would be amazed at how far his company has come," says Ruth.

An anniversary documentary detailing Dietz & Watson's heritage can be viewed at dietzandwatson.com/75th.

"When I came into the business I saw tremendous potential," says Louis Eni, chief executive of Dietz & Watson and son of Ruth. "We've grown from a small local company to a national brand and deli powerhouse."



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

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