

DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

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DELI BUSINESS

SECOND ANNUAL

INNOVATION

AWARD

WINNERS

NEXT-GEN DELI

10 INNOVATIONS THAT
ARE SHAPING THE
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ALSO INSIDE

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DELI BUSINESS

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TRANSITIONS



HORMEL FOODS' EXECUTIVE MOVES

Hormel Foods Corporation, Austin, MN, announced sales moves for its retail and foodservice business segments. Lynn Egner will move to the role of vice president of foodservice following David Weber's recent advancement to group vice president, foodservice. Natosha Walsh will move from her current role as vice president of marketing — retail, convenient meals and proteins to assume Egner's role as vice president of retail sales — West. As vice president of foodservice sales, Egner will oversee the sales team and strategy for the foodservice business segment. Walsh will be responsible for retail sales strategy with customers in the Western region of the U.S. hormelfoods.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS



MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS WINTER FANCY FOOD SHOW

Specialty food and beverage industry professionals from around the world gathered at the Specialty Food Association's (SFA) 49th Winter Fancy Food Show. Featuring its partner-country, Italy, the show ran Jan. 19-21 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Nearly 1,100 exhibitors from around the world across almost 50 specialty food and beverage categories exhibited at the show, which welcomed 12,000 industry participants. SFA's new first-of-year trade show, Winter FancyFaire (WFF), was announced at the First Night Celebration party. WFF will take place in San Diego in 2026, and in San Francisco in 2027. www.specialtyfood.com



EUROPEAN GOAT CHEESES BREAK NEW GROUND IN THE US

The European Union is a world power in the production of goat cheeses, which are increasingly valued in demanding international markets for their quality, flavor and nutritional benefits. European goat cheeses are attracting all eyes thanks to a high-quality raw material that in many cases comes from native breeds, which make it possible to obtain unique, versatile and delicious cheeses, which are increasingly appreciated in the most demanding international markets, as explained by the Interprofessional Dairy Organization (InLac). Spain exports approximately 1,200 tonnes of goat cheese to the U.S. per year. www.cheestories.eu



COMTÉ SCHOLARSHIP WINNER ANNOUNCED

The Comté Cheese Association announced Michael Scott has won the 12th annual Comté Scholarship for American Cheese Society Certified Cheese Professionals. Scott won an all-expenses-paid trip to the Comté region to explore the cheese and its culture first-hand and a \$750 cash stipend. Scott is a cheese specialist for Whole Foods Market in Wellesley, MA. Michael Oliver from Heber Valley Cheese in Midway, UT, and Jen Maiser from Whole Foods Market in Lake Oswego, OR, were also named as runners-up. www.comte-usa.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS



PARMIGIANO REGGIANO CONSORTIUM PRESENTS AWARDS

The Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium celebrated the annual Casello d'Oro Awards in February at London's British Museum. Now in its second edition, the awards honored the 13 winning dairies of the 2024 Palio del Parmigiano Reggiano. During the evening, an international jury also presented two Honorable Mentions to the Parmigiano Reggiano deemed to have the best structure and the best aromatic profile, both of which went to 4 Madonne Caseificio dell' Emilia dairy in Varana di Serramazzoni (province of Modena). parmigianoreggiano.com/it



CASTELLO RECOGNIZED AS PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Castello Cheese's newly launched Whipped Dips has been recognized as a winner of the 2025 Product of the Year USA Awards. Determined through a national study of 40,000 American shoppers in partnership with Kantar, a global leader in consumer research, Product of the Year is the largest consumer-voted awards program centered around product innovation. Castello Whipped Dips was awarded the honor of the best product within the Dip Snack category. The brand is part of the Arla Foods, Basking Ridge, NJ, family. www.castellocheese.com

NEW PRODUCTS



OOLIE LAUNCHES EGG-BASED, DAIRY-FREE DIPS AND YOGURTS

Oolie, Morristown, TN, a new brand, has unveiled America's first line of egg-based, protein-rich, dairy-free dips and yogurts. Crafted from free-range eggs, Oolie's products deliver up to 11 grams of protein per serving. The new product lineup includes dips: Garlic & Herb, Spicy Pepper, Yellow Curry and Mediterranean. www.ooliefoods.com



BEAVERTON FOODS LAUNCHES THREE BOLD NEW FLAVORS

Beaverton Foods, Beaverton, OR, unveiled three innovative new flavors in 2025. The trio marks Beaverton Foods' first product launch in six years, reflecting a renewed focus on innovation while honoring the company's 96-year legacy of quality and craftsmanship. The new flavors include Beaver Brand Spicy Tartar Sauce, Inglehoffer Pub Mustard with Cracked Black Pepper, and Beaver Brand Hot Honey Mustard. beavertonfoods.com

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

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Chef Grazing Boards Demonstrations a Hit at New York Produce Show

Cheeses, meats and produce combined for brunch, lunch and dessert boards.

Seven acclaimed chefs took part in a three-course Grazing Boards Demonstration, Dec. 11, during the New York Produce Show (NYPS) at the Javits Center in Manhattan.

The chefs combined cheeses, meats, nuts — and of course, fruits and vegetables — for brunch, lunch and dessert. Surrounded by exhibitors and attendees, the chefs constructed large platters on 4-foot-long boards with at least 50% produce.

Max McCalman, renowned cheese authority and wine connoisseur who is also an expert in creating grazing boards and charcuterie, was emcee for the demonstrations. Each team had one hour of prep work and two additional hours to complete their platters. Chef Chase Obenchain, California Walnuts; Executive Chef Luis Reyes, Sysco West Coast Florida, representing California Giant; and Culinary Instructor Denis Williams, Societe Culinaire Philanthropique, New York, NY, kicked off the demonstrations.

Chefs Will Horowitz, author of *Salt, Smoke, Time*, and Glenn Rolnick, director of culinary operations at Alicart (Carmine's, Virgil's BBQ), created lunch grazing boards.

Influencer Chef and Dietitian Abbie Gellman, SBH Health System, New York, NY, and Chef Felix Castro, Urban NYC Chefs, created dessert boards. Castro used grapes, edible flowers, figs, white chocolate bacon, strawberries, dark honey, cucumbers, nuts, pineapple, mangos, radishes, dragon fruit, cheese and more, to create his grazing board.

Special assistants for the grazing boards included John Abels, vice president of operations at Ketapane Kitchen LLC; Jill Overdorf, chef and president, The Produce Ambassador; and Alain De Coster, director of food services and executive chef, Encore Luxury Living.

Grazing Board sponsors included Bergader (blue cheese), Smoking Goose (smoked ham and bacon), Laura Chenel/Marin Cheese (goat and brie cheeses),



Glenn Rolnick, director of culinary operations at Alicart (Carmine's, Virgil's BBQ), creates a lunch grazing board during the Grazing Boards Demonstration, Dec. 11, during the New York Produce Show (NYPS) at the Javits Center in Manhattan.



*Chef Will Horowitz, author of *Salt, Smoke, Time*, created a lunch grazing board.*



Executive Chef Luis Reyes, Sysco West Coast Florida, representing California Giant, created a brunch board.

Red Apple Cheese (Gouda and cheddar), Cheese Merchants (Parmesan-Reggiano, Asiago and Gouda), Brooklyn Cured (Salami Charcuterie Meats), Aussie Selects (lamb cold cuts), California Berry Farms (berries), California Walnut Commission (walnuts), CMI Orchards (apples), Marengo Foods, New York State Department of Agriculture, Setton International Foods (pistachios) and Top Seedz (crackers).

The Grazing Boards Demonstration was part of a strategic initiative by NYPS organizers to add more foodservice to the overall event. It recently landed new collaborative partnerships with the New York State

Restaurant Association and the New York City Hospitality Alliance, which assisted with the show's foodservice and educational programming.

DB

SAVE THE DATE!

Mark your calendar for next year's New York Produce Show and Conference: Dec. 2-4, 2025. For exhibitor or sponsorship opportunities, visit www.nyproduceshow.com/exhibit2025.

An Explosive 2025



By Ken Whitacre

Innovation is changing the make-up of many products.

The deli department is about to go through a major change in focus in 2025. Of course, as usual, many elements will remain the same, with a focus on deli meats, cheeses and prepared foods.

The change will be from an influx of new products and new formulations. Consumers' tastes and preferences are always changing, but this year will see more revolution than evolution.

The three areas of innovation will be in prepared foods, plant-based items and vegetarian/vegan alternatives. There will also be a change within the categories of deli meats and cheeses. Retailers, especially buyers, will need to keep a constant watch over consumer trends and changing buying patterns.

The changes will be driven by a quest for better quality, with an emphasis on eliminating, or at least reducing, the number of additives and preservatives, as well as any chemical additions with unpronounceable names or dubious functions.

Healthy eating is more important than ever. For many consumers, that translates to organic and/or clean labels. A simple ingredient list will drive sales. Many of these foods will

be more expensive, which will be difficult to justify, since many consumers who are experiencing high inflation or job insecurity will be looking for less expensive alternatives.

The good news is consumers may be returning to eating at home, cooking more, and willing to pay a premium price for better quality. Think about adding cookbooks to your department.

Innovation is changing the makeup of many products. Plant-based foods are gaining traction. It's important for buyers to recognize that plant-based and vegetarian or vegan are very different.

Plant-based means common items are not produced with the use of animal products. As an example, plant-based cheeses are growing in popularity. The early examples were mainly a failure, featuring an overwhelming flavor of chemicals and plastic, and the texture was even worse. Even more distasteful were vegan meats.

However, plant-based cheeses and dairy products have gotten very good. No, they do not taste like dairy-based cheese, and some people debate whether they should be called "cheese," but the quality is high, and they are very tasty. They should be included in every cheese department.

Additionally, plant-based meats are increasingly

becoming popular, although the location may be in the frozen food aisle.

Eating more fruits and vegetables is a growing trend. It goes along with consumers looking for cleaner labels, as well as moving away from processed foods. When it comes to health, eating healthier is a popular pursuit. Staying away from processed foods is one of the strongest recommendations given by health gurus.

It is not about consumers becoming vegan or vegetarians, but it is about consumers looking to add more fruits and vegetables to their daily diets.

Typical deli salads are changing, too. While potato, macaroni and coleslaw salads are still staples, adding salads, such as fruit salads, spinach salads and Cobb salads can cater to everyone.

Preparing foods in-house may add to consumers' perception of fresh. In-store prepared products, while simple, require safety measures and employee training. Mediterranean foods are still growing in popularity, and they are most often pre-packaged by the manufacturer. Further expansion of the category may well be warranted.

Freshly prepared foods, purchased at supermarkets, are a welcome addition to the family meal and are affordable. People may be cooking more, but convenience is still important.

The traditional deli case, with deli meats sliced to order and slicing cheeses, also needs to be reevaluated. Whole muscle meats have dominated the category for years, but a change in product mix should be considered.

People are cutting back, and food prices are expected to rise. While it may seem like an oxymoron, adding products like bologna, liverwurst, chipped chopped ham, and turkey roll may find a welcoming audience. Less expensive, they are perfect for brown bag lunches for adults and kids.

There are other products that should be added. While olives and antipasto are popular on the East Coast, there are many opportunities around the country to add in olives and other fermented foods.

Pickles are another example of low calorie, fermented, and affordable options that can add variety to everyday meals. With high gross profit margins, they offer add-on sales without infringing on other categories.

Consumers are concerned about high inflation, rising food costs, nutrition, and they are changing their eating habits. Deli departments can offer many solutions by focusing on less expensive alternatives that are also healthy or alternatives that are better quality, more expensive, but feature clean labels.

DB



NEXT-GEN DELI

10 INNOVATIONS THAT ARE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF FLAVOR

Cast Your Vote for This Year's Deli Innovation Award

The entrants of the second annual DELI BUSINESS Innovation Award showcased their top innovations that are sold in the retail deli department.

With a focus on Product, Packaging and Process, DELI BUSINESS presents the 10 top-scoring entrants and leaves it up to the industry to decide which item merits the DELI BUSINESS Innovation Award.

This year's submissions showcase key trends, with the deli industry aiming to inspire healthier eating habits and create innovations

that drive sales growth. This crop of winners highlights innovations that are shaping the future of the deli.

The judging, which took place in the Boca Raton, FL, offices of DELI BUSINESS, was conducted by editors and staff who are well-versed in the industry.

Only DELI BUSINESS readers will evaluate the top-scoring products selected from numerous entries. Please read the descriptions below and cast your vote by June 2 using the form below to choose this year's winner.

**CAST YOUR
VOTE**

**CHOOSE A
WINNER**

1. GO TO DELIBUSINESS.COM.
2. CLICK ON THE INNOVATION 2025 BUTTON.
3. FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS TO SELECT YOUR TOP THREE CHOICES.
4. POLLING ENDS AT 5 P.M., PST ON JUNE 2.

Brooklyn Cured

Dirty Martini Salami
BROOKLYN, NY

Crafted with premium Spanish olives and dry vermouth, this pork salami echoes the flavor profile of a classic dirty martini with briny and savory notes. This new flavor is a nod to a classic cocktail that has seen a resurgence in the past decade. Now, more than ever, people across generations seek both classic sophistication and modern twists in their drinking and dining experiences. Like all of the salami in this line, the Dirty Martini-inspired flavor plays on the rise of the craft cocktail movement and retro trends.



Mifroma USA

TÊTE DE MOINE AOP ROSETTES
STAMFORD, CT

Tête de Moine AOP is a specialty cheese with a history that dates back 800 years, and which originates from the Bellelay Abbey in Switzerland's Bernese Jura region.

Tête de Moine AOP is a strong, semi-hard cheese with a robust aroma and texture. Its full flavor is due to natural untreated milk from dairy cattle. These cylindrical cheeses are produced in village dairies around the Bellelay area — a designated area of origin that earns this cheese its AOP status. The cheese is matured on pinewood boards for three months, adding depth of flavor. This cheese is commonly eaten in wafer-thin rosettes, which are shaved off the cheese with a device called a Girolle or a Pirouette. These delicate pairings enable the full flavor of the cheese to develop, heightening the tasting pleasure. Mifroma has taken out the guesswork and is bringing convenience with a pre-shaved rosette, allowing consumers to enjoy the full flavor of Tête de Moine AOP without the need for a Girolle. The package comes with two compartments which can be separated and enjoyed at different times.



Giant Eagle, Inc.

STRAWBERRY PRETZEL SALAD DIP
CRANBERRY TWP, PA

The Strawberry Pretzel Salad Dip is inspired by traditional crowd-favorite sweets, transforming familiar flavors in a different application. The dip category has no limits. Creating mashups, integrating familiar flavors are drivers expanding and growing this category set. A regional favorite, the dip is a sweet strawberry-flavored whipped cream cheese with pretzel pieces.



POSHI (Power of Simple Healthy Ingredients)

POSHI PETITE DILL PICKLES
MIAMI, FL

An extension to the full portfolio of POSHI pouched veggie snacks, and in keeping with POSHI's mission to make vegetable snacking accessible, affordable, and completely convenient — POSHI introduces its innovation launch for 2025: POSHI Petite Dill Pickle. The premium whole petite dills come in single-serve, brine-free and liquid-free pouches, offering the perfect mess-free snack on the go. Firm, crisp, and bursting with flavor, they're ready to enjoy straight from the pouch. Store them in your pantry or fridge — you've got the freedom. Shelf-stable and always ready when you are, made with care to suit your lifestyle and eating preferences.



Ovtene

BYOVTENE
MARION, MA

ByOvtene is a tri-fold deli system used by many deli counters and grab-and-go deli items. It is also used in many cheese shops and delis. ByOvtene film is a revolutionary film for maintaining the organoleptic characteristics of fine cured meats and cheeses. It is also great for smoked fish from the deli. The film is breathable, reusable and environmentally responsible. It also repels water and is a grease repellent. The dispensing system minimizes counter space.



Smoking Goose

SLICED CHARCUTERIE PACKAGES IN STAND-UP RETAIL DISPLAY
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Among the salumi, smoked meats, sausages, whole muscle charcuterie, and larder meats that Smoking Goose brings to the table is a brand-new line of pre-sliced charcuterie packages delivered in its own reusable, stand-up retail display. Not only do the stand-up retail displays set these packages apart and make attractive, tempting displays super easy for deli staff, but they also open self-service options for customers at the deli counter. These pre-sliced, pre-portioned packages are ideal for charcuterie boards, cocktail hour, and game-day snacks without the need for a slicer, prep space, staff labor and more.



Schuman Cheese

DELVE
FAIRFIELD, NJ

At Delve, cheese is kind of our thing. With years of sourcing the finest cheeses from around the globe, we've developed a mastery in the art of cheese making. Now, we've used our knowledge to create the culinary delights you currently behold. Delve was born from the expertise and innovative spirit of Schuman Cheese. The Delve lineup includes three flavors: Basil Pesto Parm: A fresh and vibrant blend of basil and Cello's award-winning Copper Kettle Parmesan Cheese; Garlic Herb Asiago: A bold and savory mix of garlic, fresh herbs, and Cello's award-winning Asiago Cheese; and Whipped Feta: A rich and smooth take on this Mediterranean classic with the standout integration of award-winning Dodoni Feta Cheese made from 100% Greek, pasteurized sheep's and goat's milk.



Bergader

EDELBLU CHEESE CUBES
MARLBOROUGH, MA

Bergader edelblu cheeses are crafted using traditional methods and state-of-the-art technology, ensuring consistent quality and a refined flavor profile in every batch, and offering a diverse selection of edelblu cheeses to suit various culinary applications and consumer preferences. The innovated edelblu Cheese Cubes add a flavorful punch to salads, pizzas and more — convenient and delicious. Edelblu cheeses are a hit with consumers, thanks to the rich taste and versatile uses. They are perfect for enhancing menus, artisanal cheese boards and upscale offerings.



Van Holten's

VAN HOLTEN'S X WARHEADS BLUE
RASPBERRY PICKLE-IN-A-POUCH
WATERLOO, WI

Inspired by the viral TikTok trend, Van Holten's has teamed up with Warheads for a special edition Extreme Sour Blue Raspberry Pickle-In-A-Pouch. No sugar coating here. They packed all the sour flavor they could into this Warheads Extreme Sour Dill Pickle, built for super sour fanatics. The Pickle-In-A-Pouch is an on-the-go snack with a bold flavor to quench any salty craving. Van Holten's Pickles are gluten-free, certified kosher, fat-free, low calorie and low carb. Every cucumber that goes through Van Holten's factory is grown, pickled, and packaged in the USA.



Woodside Cheese Wrights

KRIS LLOYD ARTISAN MONET-RYE FLOWER FLATBREAD
WOODSIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Indulge in a sophisticated cheese experience with Monet-Rye Flatbread Crackers. Made with artisan rye and adorned with delicate, dried edible flowers, these crackers are the perfect blank canvas for any cheese of your choice. Each cracker is made with the finest quality South Australian flour, ensuring an elegant and flavorful pairing for artisanal cheeses. Elevate your next cheese board with the subtle yet elegant flavor of Monet-Rye Flatbread Crackers. World's Best Cheese is now stocking the whole range. **DB**



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After April 7, all registrations will take place on-site at CheeseCon.
Learn more and register at CheeseCon.org



The Shuk Kosher Kitchen, inside the ShopRite of Livingston, NJ, includes certified kosher grab-and-go meal options like rotisserie chicken, soups, salads and meatballs.

PHOTO COURTESY VENUS WAFERS
PHOTO COURTESY WAKEFERN

Target a Broad Audience FOR KOSHER FOODS

The US has the largest demand for kosher food worldwide.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Shoppers searching for kosher foods can easily find a wide assortment in the Shuk Kosher Kitchen, located inside the ShopRite of Livingston, NJ. Certified kosher grab-and-go meal options include rotisserie chicken, soups, salads and meatballs. This store-within-a-store is part of the Sumas family's Village Supermarket company, and one of the 365 supermarket members of Wakefern, a retailer-owned cooperative based in Keasbey, NJ.

Similarly, at the ShopRites of Englewood and Paramus in New Jersey, a kosher marketplace exists, with on-site Orthodox Union (OU) supervision that includes kosher foodservice, prepared foods and catering, and a kosher deli, meat and seafood selection.

"At all of our supermarket banners, we work hard to ensure we have a wide variety of authentic products that reflect a community's customs and traditions, and that often

includes a growing selection of kosher items," says Maureen Gillespie, spokesperson for ShopRite. "While some of the cooperative's member families' stores feature a designated kosher section with a variety of goods all in one location, others have kosher grocery, dairy, and frozen items labeled by signage in each respective department."

The Global Kosher Food Market Size was valued at \$40.6 billion in 2023, according to a February 2025-released report by Spherical Insights & Consulting, in Mason, OH, with this market forecast to reach \$73.5 billion in 2033. North America, particularly the U.S., has the largest demand for kosher food worldwide.

A BROAD CUSTOMER BASE

Kosher foods are traditionally associated with Jewish dietary laws. However, nearly 80% of all kosher food sales are purchased by non-Jewish consumers, according to the OU, the world's largest and most widely

recognized kosher certification agency headquartered in New York, NY.

"Many non-Jewish consumers are increasingly turning to kosher products for reasons beyond religious observance," says James Anderko, vice president of sales and marketing for Venus Wafers, Inc., a Hingham, MA-based specialty cracker manufacturer. "Kosher certification is often seen as a mark of quality and cleanliness, leading consumers to choose kosher options for reasons like food safety and ethical sourcing."

Anderko says Venus Wafer's family of brands, Mariner and CaPeachio, are kosher, non-GMO and vegan-approved.

Similarly, products from Seville, Spain-headquartered Spanish artisan extra virgin olive oil tortas maker, Ines Rosales, are kosher, non-GMO and vegan.

"Savvy customers look for the kosher certification and are willing to pay for an artisan product," says Lucia Conejo-Mir, the Arlington, VA-based vice president of sales

REFRIGERATED FOODS ASSOCIATION



The Refrigerated Foods Association offers members numerous opportunities to learn about technical aspects of manufacturing and distributing prepared refrigerated foods, address issues of common interest and build lasting connections with others in the refrigerated foods industry.

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Associate Member

Joining the Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) is undeniably a game-changer for all professionals in the refrigerated foods industry. Don't miss out on the incredible learning opportunities, connections, and growth waiting for you with RFA.



Manufacturing Member

When I joined the RFA, I was hoping to advance my technical knowledge, but that was only a portion of what I truly gained. I have gained a mentor through the organization and many long lasting friendships that will last a lifetime. The RFA has helped with both professional and personal growth.



Manufacturing Member

I have found the RFA programs to be a great educational resource, with tremendous value as a growth and development tool for my team. The technical and marketing seminars are timely and informative, and the annual conferences provide terrific content and valuable networking opportunities.

www.refrigeratedfoods.org | info@refrigeratedfoods.org | 678-426-8175

for North America. “We use a 115-year-old family recipe to make our tortas, so there is nothing artificial. The original is our top-selling, but Rosemary & Thyme, Lemon, and Cinnamon are popular, too. We have Ginger Spice tortas for the holidays. All our tortas are ready to sell in a retail pack.”

Kosher consumer trends also mirror broader lifestyle movements in the general market, adds Shani Seidman, chief marketing officer at Kayco, the Bayonne, NJ-headquartered global leader in kosher and specialty foods through its iconic brands, including Manischewitz, Kedem, Gefen, Heaven & Earth and Tuscanini, among others.

“Keeping kosher is a lifestyle, not a monolith, so its trends naturally align with other consumer behaviors, such as actively seeking cleaner ingredients, whole foods, and an overall healthier lifestyle. As a result, kosher product offerings extend beyond the kosher consumer. They represent larger lifestyle trends, proving that kosher is not just a dietary choice, but a reflection of evolving consumer values.”

Kayco has created a comprehensive guide for buyers, *Essen Kosher*, which means “keeping kosher” in Yiddish. This book delves into kosher customs and purchasing behaviors in detail.

Vegans, lactose-intolerant, and those of other faiths, including Muslims and Seventh Day Adventists, are also consumers of kosher-certified foods, according to the September 2024-published report, *Beyond Religion: The Business Case for Kosher Certification*, by The Food Institute, in Pine Brook, NJ.

WHAT DOES KOSHER MEAN?

At its most basic, certain protein foods, like pork and shellfish, are non-kosher, kosher animals, such as cows and lambs must be slaughtered in a particular way, and foods cannot contain meat and milk.

There are also different levels of kosher, with Orthodox being the strictest. Kosher foods comply with strict dietary standards and must be certified kosher by a trained rabbi from a kosher certification agency. In the U.S., the largest of these are the OU, OK Kosher Certification, Star-K Kosher Certification, and Kosher Certification and Supervision (KOF-K). Kosher foods labeled “pareve” can be eaten with either meat or milk.

Rabbi Yakov Teichman, Rabbinic Coordinator for OK Kosher Certification, headquartered in Brooklyn, NY, offers an



PHOTO COURTESY VENUS WAFERS

analogy to help guide supermarket deli employees in handling kosher products and assisting customers.

“A simple way for the average layman, who has no experience in kosher, to understand is that it’s like an allergen. In the same way somebody might be allergic to peanuts, so they too are ‘allergic’ to non-kosher foods. Someone with a peanut allergy is not going to buy products that have peanuts or even something made in the same facility where there are peanuts because of potential cross-contamination. That’s why there are allergen disclaimers on food packaging. Once a product is certified kosher and packaged, and that package is not open, it remains certified kosher,” says Teichman.

The rabbi continues, “In retail establishments with unpackaged foods, typically there must be an on-site supervisor, a Jewish rabbi, responsible for ensuring the product is kosher. Different levels of kosher dictate how often a rabbi must be in-store. Suffice it to say that the stricter the product is in being kosher, the more often you must have a rabbi. A rabbi in-store is also a good resource for customers and employees to answer questions about kosher.”

GROW THE RING

To effectively sell more kosher foods in the deli, Venus Wafer’s Anderko says, “Supermarket operators need to combine thoughtful product selection, engaging displays, and strong merchandising strategies that resonate with both kosher and non-kosher customers. Regarding product selection, stock kosher products that focus on quality, feature popular and trending products, and highlight seasonal and holiday offerings.”

An example is the world’s first-ever instant matzo ball soup from Nooish, a Chicago, IL, company focused on bringing modern Jewish food to the masses. Like instant ramen, consumers only need to add water, and microwave, and they have a fresh

bowl of vegetarian, kosher pareve-certified matzo ball soup made with clean ingredients. According to Sarah Nathan, founder, this product satisfies the trends of convenience, easy meal making, comfort food, and an interest in global flavors.

“Many Jewish cultural foods are beloved by all. For example, you wouldn’t necessarily put minestrone in the pasta aisle, just as Matzo Ball Soup doesn’t need to be relegated to the kosher aisle. We encourage stores and delis to place us with other instant soup products, including instant ramen. We are also a fantastic grab-and-go option above the salad bar for those seeking a satisfying lunch,” says Nathan.

The kosher category has always been shaped by the seasons, or more specifically, the Jewish calendar, adds Kayco’s Seidman. “Among these holidays, Passover is our Super Bowl. Due to the additional dietary laws observed during Passover, the kosher set undergoes a complete transformation to feature Passover-approved products. This is also the time of year when new products take center stage, as the kosher aisle is more prominent than ever. Most kosher sales occur during this period, though that trend is shifting.”

Seidman adds that other key moments in the Jewish calendar, such as Rosh Hashanah and Chanukah, also bring seasonal holiday products to the forefront.

Effective display, merchandising, and promotion of kosher products in the supermarket deli are crucial to both attracting customers and driving sales, according to Venus Wafer’s Anderko.

“Clear signage will help customers quickly locate what they’re looking for and feel confident in their purchase choices. Build impactful displays through shippers and/or cross-merchandising. Cross-merchandise items that work well together. For example, place kosher deli meats next to kosher crackers/flatbreads, condiments, and cheeses. This encourages impulse buying by making it easier for customers to assemble a meal,” he says. **DB**

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BLUE CHEESE: A Whole World of Tradition and Flavor

There are countless ways to enjoy this unique cheese.

BY HANNAH HOWARD



Blue cheese is not exclusively blue. Look closely at the veining throughout a blue cheese and you'll see shades of blue, green and gray in a beautiful web. All cheese is the controlled spoilage of milk — with blue cheese, this fact becomes visually clear.

Blue cheeses encompass a wide array of styles. You can find mellow triple cremes with just a hint of peppery blue, or super piquant, salty blues that will make you pucker. They might be creamy or crumbly; spreadable or meltable.

Blues are made with goat, sheep and cow milk all over the world, crafted with different recipes, and aged for different lengths of time. Most blues are crafted in much the same way — by the addition of blue mold powder to milk during the cheesemaking process. That mold is usually *Penicillium roqueforti*, although it might

also be *Penicillium glaucum*, which has a milder, sweeter effect on the cheese.

Most blues are pierced — or veined — with tools that look like long skewers. This allows oxygen to reach the interior of the cheese wheels as they age, developing their characteristic veining. Less often, blue cheeses are made with ambient mold, meaning the wheels mature in caves where spores in the air colonize the cheese.

There are myriad factors that determine the flavor and texture of a blue cheese. How much moisture remains in each wheel and when the rind is pierced are two major aspects in determining a cheese's character.

Marguerite Merritt, cheese emissary and brand manager at Rogue Creamery, in Central Point, OR, says that terroir, that ineffable blend of soil, topography, and climate, impacts blue cheese deeply.

"Our cheesemaking and aging rooms have been in production for over 70 years," Merritt explains. "Over this time, naturally occurring yeasts, blue molds, and other microbes have evolved to create an entirely unique environment that cannot be replicated."

CULINARY GOLD

There are countless ways to enjoy blue cheeses. Blue cheese's burst of salinity and richness makes it a welcome addition to salads, grilled steaks, burgers and sauces. Add some buttermilk, fresh ground pepper, and garlic powder and you have yourself a salad dressing or burst that adds flavor to anything from crudité to chicken wings. "I enjoy topping a pizza and creating a creamy sauce for pasta or adding blue to a polenta and stewed beef dish," says Sofia Krans of BelGioioso Cheese, Green Bay, WI.

BLUE CHEESES TO FALL FOR

ROQUEFORT

For centuries, the cheese has been made from Lacaune sheep's milk in the small, southern French village, where its name and production methods have been protected since 1411. A favorite of kings and popes, the creamy cheese is balanced with a peppery zing and an earthy complexity. The wheels mature in naturally formed caves in the cliffs overhanging the village of Roquefort. Serve with a Côtes du Rhône and juicy, ripe pears.

GORGONZOLA

Another ancient blue, Gorgonzola has been made in the town of Gorgonzola, near Milan, since 879 A.D. Today, Gorgonzola is mainly produced in the northern Italian regions of Piedmont and Lombardy, with local cows' milk. The cheese comes in different varieties, including Gorgonzola Dolce, which is soft and lusciously creamy, with a distinct sweetness, and Gorgonzola Piccante, which is firmer,



PHOTO COURTESY BELGIOIOSO

crumblier, and as the name suggests, not shy at all. Try it added to gnocchi, or served alongside polenta, or served with a drizzle of honey and a glass of bold Barolo.

BELGIOIOSO BLUE CHEESES

In 1979, Errico Auricchio moved his family from Italy to Wisconsin with the goal of crafting the best Italian cheeses in the U.S. Four generations later, BelGioioso's

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goal remains unchanged. “My grandfather, Nonno Nino, used to bring Gorgonzola Dolce in his suitcase over the holidays when he visited from Italy. We loved the cheese so much, and didn’t want to wait a whole year, that my father chose to start making small batches in Wisconsin,” says Sofia Krans, of BelGioioso Cheese, Green Bay, WI.

“We are very proud of the artisan attention we have given to our entire line of blue cheeses,” says Krans. “Our master cheesemaker, Jeff Allen, has embraced crafting BelGioioso blue varieties. Many people are often intimidated by blues and, from past experience, feel they will be too strong and overpowering in flavor. All of our blues and purposely crafted to give you a well-balanced flavor and a clean aftertaste.”

BelGioioso has a whole portfolio of blues, from a creamy, mild earthy Creamy-Gorg (they refer to this as their gateway Gorg, a wonderful introduction into the world of blue cheeses). Then they have Belgioioso Blue, which is aged 60 days and Crumbly Gorgonzolas that are both aged 90 days for deeper flavor and aroma. And finally, the uniqueness of the cow and sheep’s milk Gorgonzola, with a creamy, tangy body. “A twist on blue with baa and moo,” says Krans.

ROGUE CREAMERY’S ROGUE RIVER BLUE

All of Rogue’s milk comes from Southern Oregon, within 30 miles of their cheesemaking factory. “We use only certified organic, non-homogenized, and non-standardized cow’s milk from a herd composed of mostly Holstein and Brown Swiss cows,” explains Marguerite Merritt, cheese emissary and brand manager at Rogue Creamery. “Our cows graze for the majority of the year on native grasses, and the flavors of our terroir make our milk distinctive.”

Fall brings the start of production season for Rogue River Blue. The cooler, wetter climate makes the pastures lusher and the cows’ milk richer. A complex cheese, its paste is fudgy and rich. Try Rogue River Blue with crushed toasted hazelnuts and a drizzle of honey.

CARPENEDO’S BLU 61

This creamy Italian blue cheese is ripened for 60 days before being infused with local Raboso Passito wine and cranberries, which impart a boozy depth and tart, fruity



PHOTO COURTESY BELGIOIOSO

notes. It’s the brainchild of Alessandro Carpenedo, who created Blu 61 in honor of his father Antonio and his mother Giuseppina’s love — they were married in 1961.

STILTON AND STICHELTON

Producers in the English counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire use local cows’ milk and follow traditional recipes that have been around for generations to make the iconic Stilton.

The buttery, dense cheese has a mineral aroma from the blue-green veining, and is a brilliant choice to end a dinner party with shards of dark chocolate and pours of port all around.

If you’re a Stilton fan — and you should be — Stichelton will bring you absolute joy. For centuries, Stilton was made with raw milk. Then in the 20th century, regulations were put in place that stipulated Stilton must be made with pasteurized milk. But since 2006, working in collaboration with Neal’s Yard Dairy, Joe Schneider has been making traditional British blue cheese with raw milk on his own farm, from his grass-fed cow herd. He couldn’t call it Stilton, so Stichelton was born. It’s a small production version made with raw milk on his Welbeck Estate, in Nottinghamshire, the birthplace of Stilton.

The creamy, fudgy blue has notes of caramel and a bright piquancy that’s welcome after a rich dinner. It’s decadent, brawny and brilliant.

JASPER HILL BAYLEY HAZEN BLUE

This fudgy, luscious blue is a modern classic. Jasper Hill makes cheese with the intention of building environmental and economic resilience in their community. Bayley Hazen gets its name from Bayley Hazen Military Road, a supply route com-

missioned by George Washington during the Revolutionary War, located in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Bayley Hazen Blue has a peppery tang and a salty finish, with a bit of peanut buttery sweetness. It’s as welcome on a cheese board as it is crumbled in a salad or baked into a quiche. It needs something bold for pairing, like an oatmeal stout or a juicy Zinfandel.

VALDEÓN

If you’re up for a strong blue with a bit of funk, reach for Valdeón. Crafted in the Castile-León region of Spain, Valdeón is made from a mix of cow and goat milk. The proportion of the two types of milk varies during the season, based on what is available. The result is a tangy, peppery blue with a great balance of spice and salt, with a bit of nuttiness. Try with slices of chorizo and a strong Belgian ale, or a juicy Tempranillo.

BERGADER EDELBLU

European cheesemaker, Bergader, introduced its flagship edelblu cheeses to the U.S. retail marketplace in 2024. Renowned for its rich flavor, creamy texture, and artisanal Bavarian craftsmanship, edelblu cheeses have gained significant traction among retailers, food industry professionals, and cheese enthusiasts. Crafted in the Bavarian Alps with the care and expertise honed over a century, edelblu cheeses bring authentic European excellence to American consumers.

“Our introduction to the U.S. market has been met with incredible enthusiasm,” says Antje Müller De Leo, head of international business at Bergader. “Through the expertise of Abbey Specialty Foods and the precision of our marketing efforts, edelblu has found its place on American shelves and tables. This is only the beginning.” **DB**

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LUNCHTIME? SNACK TIME? CONDIMENTS AND PICKLES ARE FOR ANYTIME

Delis should stock a wide range of condiment brands and flavors.

BY SARAH LOUISE KLOSE

Sauces, toppings, condiments and more are the key to complete meals. They're the dollop of deliciousness the consumer desires. That sweet sensation. That intense heat. That spicy twist.

And the desire for condiments is growing. Statista forecasts \$31.31 billion revenue in sauces/condiments in the U.S. market for 2025, with annual growth of 2.76% through 2030.

THE STAPLES

Let's start with the staples — the classic condiments.

Beano's Original Submarine Dressing is "the optimal balance of oil and vinegar, infused with a perfected blend of spices

that you can see," says Jill Huff, Beano's brand manager at Conroy Foods, Inc. in Pittsburgh, PA.

"All-natural cream cheese is one of our top three products," says Carl Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and development at Don's Prepared Foods in Schwenksville, PA. Local farmers produce it.

THE FLAVORS

Moving beyond the basics, grocery stores are advised to stock a wide range of condiment brands and flavors.

Mike's Hot Honey comes in Original and Extra Hot, and is ideal for drizzling on pizza, grilled cheese sandwiches, even cheesecake.

"What is fantastic is, the sweet of the honey hits the front of the palate, and the

heat of the chile peppers hits the back of the palate," says Cheryl Smith, senior vice president of retail sales for Mike's Hot Honey in Brooklyn, NY. "Mike's Extra Hot Honey is the perfect pairing with cheese, because the dairy element softens the heat a little bit."

Beaverton manufactures everything from Inglehoffer Ghost Pepper Mustard to Beaver Spicy Tartar Sauce.

"Our Beaver Cranberry Mustard won the silver medal in blind taste testing at the 2024 World-Wide Mustard Competition," says Domonic Biggi, chief executive at Beaverton Foods, Hillsboro, OR. The competition is held at the National Mustard Museum.

"Maple mustards are on the rise. Dill mustards are popular," says Patti Bridges,



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owner/operator of the National Mustard Museum in Middleton, WI. Spicy pepper mustards are favorites too.

“For the more adventurous palate, Wasabi Sandwich Sauce delivers a sinus-clearing punch to salmon bowls. Our Roasted Chipotle Sauce and Peach Habanero sandwich sauces make for the perfect savory dip or drizzle to chicken quesadillas,” says Huff of Conroy Foods.

Don’s Prepared Foods offers innovative cheese spreads and dips. “Artichoke & Asiago Cheese Dip — imagine that one on a flatbread with grilled chicken salad or a burger. Dynamite Shrimp Dip has spice on the back end — imagine warming up a sandwich with this dip on it,” says Cappelli.

CONDIMENT TRENDS

In its *Sauces, Dressings And Condiments Market Analysis 2025-2030*, Mordor Intelligence says international travel spurs demand for global flavors, like Sriracha, hoisin sauce and chimichurri.

Nashville Hot Sandwich Sauce is made from honey and cayenne peppers and complements cheesy eggs, and chicken and waffles. “We’re continuing to see interest in more dynamic flavor combinations (like sweet + spicy = ‘swicy’) and trendy ingredients like honey that adds a more charismatic sweetness,” says Huff.

Social media and cooking shows encourage people to experiment with cuisines and flavorings.

“People are putting mustard on anything. I see people making their own sauces by using our mustard as a base. The sauces could go on any chicken, fish — really on any protein,” says Biggi.

Mike’s Hot Honey expects more uses for its product, such as on fried chicken, chicken strips and sandwiches. The company partners with Dunkin’ Donuts on a breakfast sandwich and with Cinemark Theaters on popcorn.



PHOTO COURTESY BEAVER TON FOODS

THE NATURALS

Statista reports consumers are seeking healthier and more natural items, which is leading to a rise in organic, clean-label and plant-based condiments.

“We have artisan dips: clean dips without preservatives. Our flavors include Cheddar, Horseradish — and Sweet Corn, which is everywhere now,” says Cappelli.

“People want good flavor, but want to be healthy. You can have a pop of flavor without putting something on that is high in sugar or overly processed. We try to use honey and fruit juices in our products,” says Biggi.

BENEFITS OF THE DELI AISLE

Compared to the grocery aisle, the deli aisle offers cross-merchandising and meal solution marketing for condiments.

“Deli shoppers love convenience, and purchasing all the components to make restaurant-quality sandwiches at home in one area of the store saves time,” says Huff.

Mike’s Hot Honey likes the deli for sampling. “In the honey aisle, I am not able to show you how to use it. Grocery stores partner with us and sample Mike’s Hot

Honey at the deli aisle, and usually convince people to buy it,” says Smith.

Don’s Prepared Foods likes the impression of freshness. “When you put our fancy cream cheeses in the deli department, the consumer perceives that the store makes it fresh every day. The deli can say, ‘Try this, taste this, add this to a turkey sandwich for unique flavor,’” says Cappelli.

PERFECT PACKAGING

When packaging condiments, companies consider safety and convenience. Conroy Foods’ retail sauces come in resealable plastic bottles.

Beaverton has two options. “We offer glass and plastic. For a big outdoor picnic or a boat ride, a plastic squeeze bottle is safer because it doesn’t break,” says Biggi.

In the grocery aisle, Mike’s Hot Honey is packaged in 12-ounce squeeze bottles. In the deli aisle, the product is in 1.55-ounce mini jars perfect for charcuterie boards and cheese pairings. “We are infused with real chile products, so our hot honey is thicker in general, and won’t come pouring out,” says Smith. *Article continues on pg. 26*



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PICKLES OFFER COOLNESS AND CRUNCH

Pickles are known for their crisp taste and hip vibe. They're popular — per Statista, over 252 million people consumed pickles in 2024.

STAPLES AND NEW FLAVORS

Pickles have basic categories, just like ice cream (chocolate/vanilla).

"The staples of pickles are Garlic Dill and Hot, but we keep the category fresh with LTO (limited time offer) flavors, such as Ranch and Sriracha," says Patti Amato, retail sales director at Patriot Pickle in Wayne, NJ.

Grillo's Pickles sticks to clean ingredients: no colorings, additives or preservatives. So does Yeehaw Pickles — even for its Hot Damn Dills and Giddy-Up Garlic Dills.

"We use fresh dill, raw honey, fresh chiles, like capsicum," says Andrew Cesati, owner/director at Yeehaw Pickles in Crested Butte, CO. "When customers wanted a sweeter taste in our Honey Sweet Stackers, we cut some of the honey and added coarse cane sugar."

SNACKING AND TRENDS

With pickles, flavor trends include spicy and Asian. Health trends include drinking pickle juice to prevent cramping and dehydration.

Sandwich trends include Pickle Subs. "Instead of bread, people are using pickles and stuffing them with their favorite sandwich fillings," says Amato.

And pickles aren't just a condiment — they're a snack, too.

"People are making better choices about snacks — instead of grabbing potato chips and crushing the entire bag in one sitting, you can grab one of our pickles and get that salty tangy fix," says Cesati.

For home chefs, pickles can elevate recipes.

"We love to add Grillo's Hot Chips to a homemade pizza, mix Pickle De Gallo into egg salads, or even add a Dill Spear as cocktail garnish," says Eddie Andre, vice president of brand for Grillo's Pickles in Westwood, MA.

"The pickle to Gen Z is what avocado toast is to Millennials. A takeoff on that, is all kinds of crazy collaborations," says



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRILLO'S PICKLES



Eric Girard, sales and marketing vice president at Van Holten's in Waterloo, WI.

The company's fastest growth is with licensing. Its newest pickle is Warheads Blue Raspberry. On TikTok, Girard noticed people turning Van Holten's pickles blue, and thought the company should make them.

"Our serious research is me surfing Instagram and seeing if their vibe feels like ours. That is honestly how we came up with Warheads. We saw people eating sour candy and pickles together," says Girard.

MERCHANDISING AND PACKAGING

Pickles are merchandised in the deli, where shoppers will pay a premium for quality products. Pickles can pair with other deli items to make a meal.

"Grillo's are the perfect addition to any meal and are typically cross-merchandised near your go-to sandwich ingredients and barbecue essentials," says Andre.

Pickles come in jars or pouches, and the containers are made of glass or plastic.

"We prefer glass — it is cleaner and you don't have plastic seeping into your bodies. And you can reuse the jars," says Cesati of Yeehaw Pickles. Each jar has a specific-colored label — the company updated them to make the brand name more prominent.

"Our pickles are packed in clear tubs, allowing the consumers to see the quality and freshness," says Amato of Patriot Pickle. The company offers single-serve pouches, too.

Grillo's Pickles revised their plastic jar and added grips. "After years of seeing feedback that the old jar design was more difficult to open and often was a mess with brine splashing out, we were finally able to introduce our new jar that features a convenient screw top lid to prevent spills and enhance functionality," says Andre.

Van Holten's pickles come in individual pouches with clear windows. The largest pickles are in bold, bright pouches that feature cartoonish characters, such as Sour Sis and Big Papa. "We could try to put pickles in jars, but we want fun single-serve snacks that grab people's attention," says Girard. **DB**

Capitalizing On Olives

Deli departments are the ideal space for marketing olives, with various marketing opportunities for successful selling.

BY LISA WHITE

live popularity shows no signs of waning in the U.S., with varieties expanding and uses growing.

The North America Olive Market is expected to reach \$7.3 billion in 2025 and grow at a compound annual growth rate of 5.74% to reach \$9.64 billion by 2030, according to Mordor Intelligence.

Deli olives are typically sold in self-serve olive bars, grab-and-go sections, and full service from behind the deli case.

"Retailers offer various formats for selling olives and antipasto, each catering to different consumer preferences," says Daniela Jensen, business development manager at Elizabeth, NJ-based Atalanta Corp.

These include:

- **Branded Packs:** containers of olives or antipasto mixes are convenient for shoppers looking for quick, ready-to-eat options and specific attributes
- **Olive Bars:** customizable, bulk-style self-serve areas where consumers can select specific olives or antipasto items by weight
- **Deli Cups:** bulk items are purchased and re-portioned by weight and sold directly from the deli/retailer in generic packaging
- **Antipasto Platters:** ready-made assortments featuring olives, cheeses, cured meats and other accompaniments for entertaining or personal indulgence.

"Olive bars, in particular, are growing," says Al Sozer, president of Valesco Foods, in South Hackensack, NJ. "We just put up five new bars; bigger containers also are a trend, as these offer better eye appeal."

Bulk olives are ideal for self-serve salad and Mediterranean bars and lend themselves to prepared food and other ingredient-based programs within delis, notes Brandon Gross, senior vice president of brand for Divina and FOODMatch, New York City.

"It's essential that delis offer all packaging formats to ensure they activate customers



PHOTO COURTESY GEORGE E DELALLO CO.

in-store, online, for delivery and more," says Gross.

TODAY'S CLIMATE

The olive industry took a bit of a hit during the pandemic, with the shutdown of self-serve olive bars in delis. Fortunately, since that time, there has been a resurgence of this popular format.

"The olive bar remains the best merchandising tool even post-pandemic, offering superior visual appeal to customers shopping in the deli," says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director at George E DeLallo Co., Mt. Pleasant, PA. "It encourages customers to browse and purchase more variety and volume than they would from pre-packaged options."

Innovative retailers have continued olive bar programs, since this approach has consistently proven to be the most effective way to increase olive sales volume.

"Many of our major retail partners either immediately returned to olive and antipasti bars post-pandemic or have done so in the

past 12 to 18 months after seeing a fuller data story of the revenue being left off the table by leaving this popular program out of the deli," says Gross.

"What we've seen in our insights for years has been a sharp split among customer preference and loyalty in deli to either the bar or prepack — but not both. Often, the tradeoff when a deli doesn't have a consumer's preferred package is a migration to center-store, or worse, a competitive retailer. Bars also help set retailers apart from one another — they provide theater, engagement and life," he says.

Atalanta's Jensen says olive bar popularity depends on the retailer. Sprouts is one chain that has permanently closed its olive bars.

"But many remain open and have become part of a broader approach with expanded formats to meet diverse consumer preferences," says Jensen. "Rather than offering one platform like a self-serve olive bar, many retailers are merchandising accompaniments on and around the olive bar, accompanied by pre-packaged olive/specialty sets that include

“The olive bar remains the best merchandising tool even post-pandemic, offering superior visual appeal to customers shopping in the deli.”

— Giuliana Pozzuto,
George E DeLallo Co.,
Mt. Pleasant, PA

an expanded assortment of branded olive and antipasti items.”

With pre-packaged olives continuing to drive sales, retailers need to commit to the category.

“Grab-and-go selling options can be effective when treated as a full program rather than just a few SKUs,” notes Pozzuto. “This requires a commitment to a large enough assortment to create an attractive, colorful destination like an olive bar. The benefit of packaged options is the ability to directly merchandise product next to complementary items, like charcuterie and cheese, to increase basket sales.”

On the grab-and-go side, Divina offers pre-packed cups and smaller, single-serve pouches. Many of these selections are brineless for added convenience, flavor and optimal texture.

In delis, the most popular olives are the Greek Kalamata, the newer Italian Castelvetrano and stuffed and marinated olives.

“The North American market is dominated by pitted olives, generally mixed or stuffed with garlic, blue cheese and red pepper paste, all items in Ficacci’s catalog,” says David Dottorini, export manager, Ficacci Olive Co., based in Castel Madama, Lazio, Italy. “Concerning Italian olives, the most famous are the Sweet Castelvetrano, the Huge Cerignola and the black Gaeta olives from Rome.”

Ficacci also offers grab-and-go items ranging from 4.4- to 7-ounce packages and bulk olives conceived for olive bars and deli counters, with sizes ranging from 2 to 5 pounds.

“Over the past several years, beyond the tried-and-true staples like Kalamata, Castelvetrano and others, we’ve seen a massive rise in popularity among uniquely marinated olives,” says Gross. “Our Divina



PHOTO COURTESY VALESKO FOODS

Tangerine and Chili Marinated Olives have quickly become a top seller along with other favorites like our protein-packed Calabrese Antipasti Salad, which is a mix of olives, peppers, asiago cheese and calabrese salami. The category has an educated and engaged consumer, which means some of the unique mixes and marinades are really moving the growth needle.”

Olive medleys, or blended varieties, continue to sell well for entertaining.

“Pitted Jubilee-style medleys are also still top-ranking for their versatility,” says Pozzuto at George E. DeLallo Co.

Of the 79 different olives in Valesco’s warehouse, 25 to 30 are blends. It also uses whole foods to stuff olives, with no chemicals added.

“Customers like different colors and textures in the same blend,” notes Sozer at Valesco. “Blended olives can be different varieties, not only different olives but also different spices and marinades.”

Olives seasoned with herbs, citrus or chile oil are growing, and stuffed olives with garlic, blue cheese, almonds or peppers are entertaining favorites, says Jensen.

Bell-Carter Foods’ Lindsay Olives are available in a variety of pantry-friendly formats, including cans, jars, pouches and single-serve cups. The olives are

pitted, sliced, halved, stuffed or whole (with pits).

“U.S. consumers continue to choose black ripe olives due to their versatility and flavor, allowing them to be used in a variety of recipes ranging from shareable appetizers to salads and main dishes,” says Scott McCoy, vice president, olives at Bell-Carter Foods, Walnut Creek, CA. “Kalamata olives, specifically, have grown in popularity and are one of the fastest growing segments in the category.”

McCoy attributes this to increased visibility due to viral recipes such as baked feta pastas and tapenades.

“Additionally, stuffed green olives continue to thrive as consumers are enjoying them in snacking and beverages,” notes McCoy.

Sozer at Valesco says olive shelf life is long since pH levels are lower than 4 and salt levels are 5.5% to 5.7% so bacteria can’t grow.

“We have shelf life on the buckets, and it’s not less than eight months,” says Sozer. “If a retailer is not selling a bucket in eight months, then they shouldn’t have an olive bar.”

The challenges of shelf life can be improved by moving away from industrial/chemical curing and going back to naturally fermenting olives.

“Vacuum-sealed or brine-filled containers

also extend shelf life while preserving freshness,” Jensen at Atalanta notes.

“Fresh olives have shorter shelf lives (240 days) compared to glass-jar pasteurized olives (1,080 days); however, consumers are drawn to the taste, texture and freshness, leading to a quicker sell-out,” says Dottorini at Ficacci Olive Co. “Therefore, shelf life acts as a motivating factor rather than a problem.”

NEW INTROS

Olive launches in delis have focused on signature flavors, as well as convenient packaging formats.

Ficacci has introduced a paper-based range with olives that are free of preservatives and liquids packed in sustainable 100% recyclable packaging. Currently, three lines are available in the U.S. — the PaperTray, a 6-ounce retail single tray; the Mini Trio, a multi-pack weighing 7.5 ounces, and the Paperboard, a larger 1.65-pound platter.

George E. DeLallo’s newest olives are inspired by restaurant-marinated antipasto salads, where the marinade includes flavorful herbs and spices.

“We launched two new citrus-centric items — lemon peel, garlic and Italian herb marinated green pitted olives, and the second is made with crushed Calabrian chile peppers paired with sweet orange pieces marinated pitted green olives,” says Pozzuto at George E. DeLallo Co. “We have a third new item that features a marinated feta cheese with roasted tomatoes, garlic and herbs.”

Regenerative Organic Certified products are trending across all major categories, and Atalanta’s Big Picture Foods is the first and only brand offering olives, peppers and capers that are nutrient-dense and have a positive impact on carbon sequestration and climate.

Valesco has introduced Triple S olives, which are a combination of sweet, sour and spicy, as these are marinated in orange juice, chile pepper spices and sugar.

“People taste sugar first, then taste sour from the orange, and the taste ends with heat from the chile pepper,” says Sozer. “We also introduced grilled olives a couple of years ago that are growing.”

Divina recently expanded its “On the Go” line of olive pouches to include pitted green, pitted Kalamata and Orange Chili marinated green olives.

“These are a great grab-and-go option for cross-merchandising displays across the deli or an ideal inclusion with entertaining



PHOTO COURTESY VALESKO FOODS

boards, catering trays and more,” says Gross.

Bell-Carter Foods’ Lindsay Olives brand offers shelf-stable California-style black ripe olives and Pimiento-Stuffed Spanish olives, along with premium olives across the Lindsay Crafted and Organic portfolios.

Last year, Lindsay introduced a handful of new varieties to its specialty olives collection, driving growth of stuffed green olives for the category.

“[This includes] Lemon Twist Martini Olives, a Spicy Trio Medley and an organic Greek Green Olive Stuffed with Real Red Pepper,” says McCoy.

MARKETING & MERCHANDISING

Cross-merchandising different olive varieties in the deli helps drive both customer awareness and trial.

Jensen recommends pairing olives and antipasti items with wine or cocktail mixers or regenerative items in a themed display. Also, bundling olives with cheeses, cured meats and crackers creates entertainment options.

“Place olives near salad kits or dressings to encourage salad enhancements and conduct tastings to familiarize customers with lesser-known varieties or marinated options,” Jensen recommends.

Another effective marketing method is storytelling with education, which highlights the origin of olives, unique production methods or regenerative agriculture practices using signage or QR codes.

Seasonal promotions work, as well.

“[Retailers can] tie olives to holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas or events like the Super Bowl, when entertaining spikes,” Jensen says.

Sozer at Valesco says the most important thing is maintaining olive bars, which need a lot of attention.

“If staff just stirs them, it’s OK for a while, but it’s important to change and clean buckets,” Sozer says.

Valesco supplies retailers with ingredients and nutrition fact cards to put on olive bars so customers are aware of what they’re purchasing.

“We provide entertaining ideas, recipe pairings with cheese and wine pairing suggestions,” Sozer says.

Gross often sees olives being purchased with specialty cheese, jams and honey, crisps and crackers, and dips.

“Basically, if it goes on a cheeseboard, it’s in the basket,” he says. “Our products also merchandise well with fresh pasta programs and rotisserie chicken.”

George E. DeLallo Co. seeks collaboration opportunities with retail partners.

“This initiative allows us to feature a selected olive or antipasto item each month, helping to build customer baskets and drive incremental sales,” says Pozzuto.

“By highlighting our products this way, we can not only increase visibility, but also encourage customers to try complementary items, enhancing their overall experience.”

Consumers continue to explore new olive varieties in different ways, from beverages and entertaining to snacking and cooked meals.

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PHOTO COURTESY DIETZ AND WATSON

SALAMI'S SLICE OF THE MARKET

The latest trends and transformations in the deli case.

BY KEITH LORIA

Salami has always been a staple in the deli department, but it's experiencing something of a renaissance in recent years.

Driven by the enduring popularity of charcuterie, evolving consumer preferences for both indulgence and health, and a wave of innovation in product development and packaging, the salami segment is going strong.

Today's consumers are exploring bold, international flavor profiles, inspired by cuisines like Mediterranean, North African or Asian. Therefore, flavors like chile, smoked

paprika, truffle and garlic are in high demand.

"Shoppers are opting for higher-quality, craft-style salami made using traditional methods," says John Meyer, creative director and brand marketing specialist for Scottsdale, AZ-based Sigma USA, the parent company of Fiorucci. "There's growing interest in products with unique spice blends and premium ingredients, such as Sopressata, Finocchiona (fennel salami) and hard salamis with cracked pepper or wine infusions."

DEFINING ARTISAN

Artisan salami distinguishes itself through

its commitment to quality and tradition. Sourcing often prioritizes free-range or grass-fed meats and avoids fillers, nitrates or synthetic preservatives commonly found in mass-market products. The production methods are slower, emphasizing natural fermentation and curing, which allows for complex flavor development and a superior texture.

"In terms of flavor, artisan salami tends to be richer and more nuanced, with distinct regional or experimental flavor combinations, compared to the standardized taste of mass-produced options," says Meyer.

Evan Inada, charcuterie and partnership director for Hayward, CA-based Columbus Craft Meats, notes buying salami is like seeking out a favorite wine.

"It comes with a sense of craft and artisanship," he says. "This has allowed for exploration into flavor profiles that include a bold and artisan texture. Salami is one of those specialty products that shoppers are happy paying a bit more on if they know the quality is superior."

PRODUCTS IN DEMAND

Supermarket delis are increasingly becoming destinations for culinary exploration, offering both traditional and innovative options.

"Consumers also gravitate toward products that combine convenience with quality, while flavor innovation remains a key driver of new product success," says Meyer.

Fiorucci offers a range of salami that reflects its commitment to craftsmanship and heritage, like its Sopressata and Genoa Salami, made using traditional Italian recipes.

"We've prioritized clean-label initiatives, offering nitrite-free and minimally processed salami, ensuring it meets the demand for wholesome, natural products while retaining our signature flavors," says Meyer. "Our pre-sliced salami and snack packs, such as the Panino line (salami wrapped around cheese), cater to busy consumers and the growing charcuterie culture."

Additionally, as snacking continues to rise, salami is becoming a popular choice in ready-to-eat formats.

Katie Milani, marketing manager of Brooklyn, NY-based Brooklyn Cured, notes convenience and snacking have really taken off not just with salami in supermarket delis, but throughout the supermarket as a whole.

"Rather than the average three meals, consumers are snacking throughout the day," she says. "We've seen a boom in on-the-go and ready-to-eat snack packs in the charcuterie industry with cheeses, nuts, dried fruits, crackers, and much more accompanying cured meats."

With this convenience trend in mind, Brooklyn Cured recently launched four new snack pack products featuring its Smoked Beef Salami, Tuscan Red Wine Beef Salami and Bresaola — all pork-free and accompanied by unique, flavored cheeses like Truffle Gouda and Rosemary Gouda.

The company also recently added a Dirty Martini Salami due to its resurgence in the past decade.



PHOTO COURTESY COLUMBUS CRAFT MEATS

"With the rise of the craft cocktail movement and retro trends, we know this product will resonate with our customers," says Milani.

Columbus Craft Meats recently reintroduced the Columbus Salame Secchi, which has been widely successful, as it represents everything special in the artisan salami space.

"With its high-quality raw materials, proprietary spices, and its natural casings that still has the fiore (natural mold bloom) encasing it, not only does the natural casing give the salami its ideal texture and bite, but aesthetically, it creates that picture perfect charcuterie board," says Inada.

Matt Reilly, ambassador for Vernon Hills, IL-based Tempesta Artisan Salumi, has seen a rising interest in grab-and-go and pre-sliced salami offerings.

"Innovation is key to staying ahead of the game," he says. "We're constantly experimenting with new flavors, ingredients, and techniques to create unique and delicious products that our customers love."

A HEALTHIER CHOICE

The latest analysis from the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA) reveals demand for cleaner labels, nitrite-free, and lower-fat salami options is growing, as consumers prioritize health while still enjoying indulgent foods.

"Companies are creating healthier versions of salami to appeal to health-conscious consumers," says Heather Prach, the IDDBA's vice president of education and industry relations. "Many of these products

focus on using leaner meats and natural flavorings to reduce fat and sodium, making them more heart friendly."

Other salami makers are incorporating plant-based proteins or blending them with traditional meat, offering lower cholesterol and higher fiber options. Plus, organic and nitrate-free varieties emphasize clean ingredients, using natural preservatives like celery powder.

"Some salamis are also enhanced with functional ingredients such as probiotics, omega-3s, or collagen to provide additional health benefits," says Meyer. "These innovations are gaining popularity among consumers who value taste, quality, and transparency, with clear labeling and health-driven marketing enhancing their appeal."

In addition to its traditionally cured offerings, Dietz and Watson offers a selection of uncured pepperoni and dry salamis made with no added nitrates or nitrites to better appeal to the health-minded shopper.

BOARDS ON THE RISE

Charcuterie boards are more popular than ever, according to industry insiders, especially for entertaining or gifting.

"This has driven demand for premium salami paired with other deli items like cheeses and crackers," says Meyer. "The charcuterie board trend has significantly influenced sales by increasing demand for premium, diverse and convenient salami options."

Inada says more consumers are falling in love with the world of charcuterie, as



“Companies are creating healthier versions of salami to appeal to health-conscious consumers. Many of these products focus on using leaner meats and natural flavorings to reduce fat and sodium, making them more heart friendly.”

— Heather Prach, International Dairy Deli Bakery Association, Madison, WI

it's a versatile solution for any eating occasion, whether a large social get-together, an on-the-go solution for snacking, or a great way to add some flavor-packed protein into one's day.

Columbus offers two versions of charcuterie boards with salumi, cheese, crackers, olives and accoutrements to educate the consumers through eating on the ideal charcuterie schematic.

“Charcuterie is exciting, but it can be intimidating,” says Inada. “You can make your charcuterie board Instagram-worthy while keeping it simple. The focus is to create the most exciting food experiences possible by sharing our creative charcuterie combinations of meat, cheese, acid and crunch.”

Lauren Eni Canseco, CMO and executive vice president of brand strategy for Baltimore, MD-based Dietz and Watson, notes charcuterie boards are getting a major upgrade in 2025, and it's all about cleaner ingredients, smarter choices and total customization.

“Consumers are ditching over-processed meats and artificial fillers in favor of minimally processed, clean-label deli meats and artisan cheeses with bold, innovative flavors,” she says. “Transparency is now a non-negotiable — shoppers want to know exactly what

they're eating and serving their guests and are seeking brands that prioritize quality and natural ingredients.”

PACKAGING MATTERS

Recent innovations in salami packaging include vacuum-sealed and modified atmosphere packaging (MAP), which significantly extend shelf life by reducing oxygen exposure and preserving freshness. Easy-peel films and resealable packaging enhance user convenience, allowing for portion control and maintaining product quality after opening. These advancements not only improve the customer experience, but also reduce food waste and support sustainability.

In recent years, Fiorucci has explored eco-friendly packaging options to reduce its environmental footprint.

SAVVY MARKETING

Canseco notes transparency, quality and choice are what resonate most with consumers, so from a marketing perspective, Dietz and Watson focuses on its transparent ingredient label and production from start to finish.

“In the economic climate that we are in, we see consumers looking for choices that fit their dietary choices and budget,” she says.

“Comfort and nostalgia seem to be popular as well, with familiar flavors and formats with improved label claims.”

Meyer believes the most effective marketing messaging is rooted in Fiorucci's authentic story and ability to balance tradition with innovation.

“Conveying quality and uniqueness through storytelling, sensory visuals and practical applications ensures we meet customer desires for both indulgence and everyday convenience,” he says.

To enhance sales and improve the shopping experience, Meyer notes to consider cross-merchandising salami with complementary products.

“Pairing salami with artisan cheeses like aged cheddar or gouda creates a perfect charcuterie board experience,” he says. “Including premium crackers, breadsticks, or small artisan baguettes makes it easy for customers to build a complete snack or appetizer. Adding marinated olives, pickles, or Mediterranean antipasti offers a flavorful Mediterranean touch.”

He also suggests pairings with red wine or craft beer to enhance the salami's taste profile. Fresh fruits, like grapes, figs, or pears, provide a sweet and savory balance, while gourmet mustards and spreads make it effortless to craft sandwiches or platters.

Reilly notes Tempesta partners with other artisans, producers, and retailers to share knowledge, ideas and resources, to better understand the consumers' mindset and improve growth in the category.

“We recommend cross-merchandising with specialty products, craft beverages and other artisanal items,” he says. “These partnerships offer a unique way to create a cohesive and engaging shopping experience for customers.”

As the salami market looks to the future, it's clear that the trends of quality, health and convenience will continue to shape the industry. With consumers increasingly seeking out premium and artisanal products, salami makers must balance tradition with innovation to meet their needs.

By prioritizing transparency, quality, and customer experience, and embracing collaboration and innovation, the salami industry can continue to thrive and meet the evolving needs of consumers. Whether it's through online marketing, in-store promotions, or strategic partnerships, the key to success will be finding new and creative ways to connect with consumers and showcase the unique qualities of salami.

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CAPUTO CHEESE: FROM FAMILY LEGACY TO INDUSTRY LEADER

For Caputo Cheese, excellence isn't just a goal — it's a family tradition. What started as a small cheese shop in Chicago, IL, has grown into one of the nation's premier cheese manufacturers, serving foodservice providers, retailers, and distributors across the country. But at its core, Caputo Cheese remains a family business, built on a foundation of passion, hard work, and an unwavering commitment to quality.

ITALIAN TRADITION

The Caputo story begins with Pasquale Caputo, who immigrated from Italy to America in 1954 in search of opportunity. With a deep appreciation for authentic Italian ingredients, he founded Pasquale Caputo Foods in 1978, importing and distributing cheeses, olive oils, and specialty products to Chicagoland grocers and restaurants.

Pasquale opened a small cheese shop in Chicago. The front of the shop sold retail-sized cheese packages, while the back served as a processing area for grated and shredded cheeses.

This hands-on, customer-focused approach laid the groundwork for what Caputo Cheese would become. Over the next four decades, the company grew exponentially, moving from a modest storefront to a cutting-edge, 200,000-square-foot facility

that now processes over 35 million pounds of cheese annually.

MODERN INNOVATION

What sets Caputo Cheese apart from its competitors is the way it blends time-honored Italian traditions with modern efficiency. The company is known for producing both aged Italian cheeses — such as Parmesan, Romano and Asiago — and fresh varieties, like mozzarella, burrata and ricotta.

While tradition is at the heart of Caputo Cheese, innovation has been key to its success. By investing in advanced processing and packaging technologies, the company has streamlined production while maintaining the authenticity of its products.

NATALE'S JOURNEY

For Natale Caputo, president of Caputo Cheese, the company has always been more than just a business — it's been a way of life. His first job was at the cash register at just 10. By his teenage years, he had worked in nearly every area of the business, from slicing cheese at the deli to handling deliveries.

During college, he transitioned into administrative and accounting roles before fully stepping into operations. In 1996, he officially became president, working alongside his father to lead the company.



PHOTO COURTESY CAPUTO CHEESE

Pasquale Caputo immigrated from Italy to America in 1954 in search of opportunity. With a deep appreciation for authentic Italian ingredients, he founded Pasquale Caputo Foods in 1978, importing and distributing high-quality cheeses, olive oils, and specialty products to Chicagoland grocers and restaurants.

"It is about more than just making delicious cheese — it's about providing a great experience for our customers. By staying true to our heritage while embracing innovation, Caputo Cheese is ensuring that future generations will continue to enjoy the same authentic, high-quality products that first put it on the map," says Natale.

And for the Caputo family, that's what success truly means.

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