

THANUAL PEOPLE'S AVARDS

ALSO INSIDE

CROSS MERCHANDISING
DELI BREADS
VEGETARIAN
SALADS
MEDITERRANEAN FOODS
DELI MEAT GUIDE
CHEESE BOARDS
BREAKFAST
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14th Annual People's Awards



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Correction:

In the April/May issue's Blast from the Past article, Chewy's founder Ahmad Paksima's birthplace was incorrect and should read Bombay, India. Also, the company ships 1,000 pounds of rugulach all over the country each week.

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Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board **Renamed Dairy Farmers** Of Wisconsin



he Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB), Madison, WI, has a new name – Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW). This initiative represents a new strategic mission, vision and identity more firmly aligning the efforts of Wisconsin's dairy farmers to expand growth opportunities domestically and around the world.

The Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin builds awareness of Wisconsin-produced dairy

products by creating national publicity, managing digital advertising and driving sales, distribution and trial through retail and foodservice promotions. It also supports inschool education about the benefits of dairy and funding for the UW Center for Dairy Research.

As a key economic engine of the state, the dairy industry contributes \$43.4 billion annually to Wisconsin's economy, generates tens of thousands of jobs and supports a variety of allied industries – as well as communities – throughout the state. Ninety percent of the milk in Wisconsin goes into making cheese, and 90 percent of that cheese is sold outside state lines, generating statewide income across multiple economic sectors. Through the partnership between farmers and dairy processors, the state has seen Wisconsin specialty cheese sales outpace the cheese category overall and per capita consumption of cheese more than double since 1983.

COMING NEXT IN AUG/SEPT ISSUE

COVER STORY

Back to School

FEATURE STORIES

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DELI MEATS

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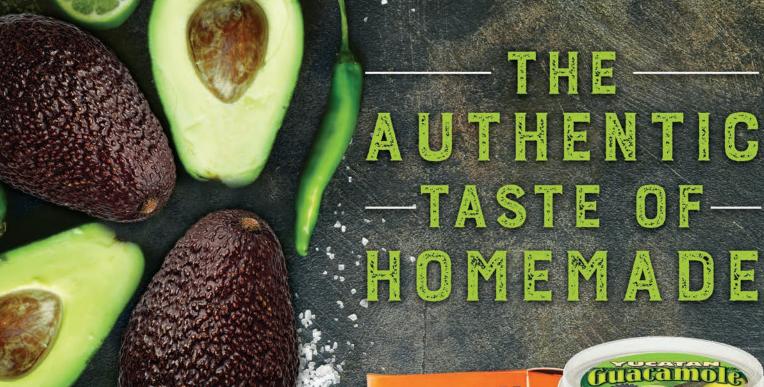
Holiday Meats

COMING IN OCT/NOV

Deli Business will be taking a look at Going Green

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With consistent product quality, preferred packaging, unbeatable taste and innovation while keeping up with trends, count on Yucatan to grow YOUR category sales.



AVOCADO.COM



IDDBA ANNOUNCES EDUCATION DIRECTOR

The International Dairy Deli Bakery Association, Madison, WI, has hired Angela Bozo as its new education director. She will be responsible for projects in professional development, research and training. Bozo joins the education team, which focuses on research, the What's in Store trends report, professional development, Show and Sell at the IDDBA show and training programs. She comes to IDDBA with 15 years of experience as the senior manager of retail event and merchandising at New Seasons Market in Portland, OR.

www.iddba.org

GREEN GIANT HIRES CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Growers Express/Green Giant Fresh, Salinas, CA, has named Mark Dendle as chief financial officer. His background is in commodities, distribution, manufacturing and finance. Building high-performing teams and solid platforms based on best practices lends to his strategic approach, creating a foundation for sustainable growth.

www.growersexpress.com

TRANSITION ANNOUNCEMENTS



FRENCH CHEESEMAKER **BECOMES CERTIFIED**

La Fromagerie Henri Hutin, Dieue, France, is the first French Brie manufacturer to be certified VLOG non-GMO. As of January of 2018, Henri Hutin cheeses officially met the VLOG 16.01, a GMO-free production and testing standard developed in Germany and recognized by several European Countries. This ensures a non-GMO guarantee, due to strict standards and requirements of the VLOG certification.

www.henry-hutin.com



DELI STAR MERGES WITH KING'S FOOD PRODUCTS

Deli Star Corp. (Deli Star), Fayetteville, IL, recently merged with King's Food Products, Belleville, IL, producer of confectionary fudge and a co-packer of several brands of sauces, dressings and salsas. The merged company, with common ownership by the families of brothers Dan and Tom Siegel, will operate under the Deli Star name, while preserving the King's Food brand name for its specialty fudge.

www.delistarcorp.com



DE MEDICI IMPORTS AND ATALANTA **RECEIVE SFA HONOR**

De Medici Imports and Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ, have announced that three of their products received 2018 Sofi Awards from the Specialty Food Association. De Medici's Villa Manodori Dark Cherry Balsamic Vinegar of Modena won the gold award for Vinegar. Mandranova Cerasuola Extra Virgin Olive Oil was the silver winner for Olive Oil. Atalanta's Agribosco Organic Italian 10 Minute Farro received the gold award in Granola and Cereal. www.atalantacorp.com



SAFE CHEESEMAKING HUB WINS PR NEWS AWARD

The Safe Cheesemaking Hub, Denver, a project of the American Cheese Society, was honored with a 2018 PR News Nonprofit Award, winning the Website category. The winners were judged on the impact of the campaigns they've led and on the positive influence they've had on society at large. ACS's Safe Cheesemaking Hub, launched in March 2017, provides resources, research, training and tools to enhance industry food safety practices.

www.safecheesemaking.org



CALIFORNIA MILK ADVISORY BOARD **NAMES OFFICERS**

The California Milk Advisory Board, Tracy, CA, has named its newly-elected officers for 2018. These include Treasurer, Tony Louters of Merced; Member-at-Large, Renae DeJager of Chowchilla; Memberat-Large, Megan Silva of Escalon; Vice Chairman, Josh Zonneveld of Laton; Member-at-Large, Kirsten Areias of Los Banos; Chairman, Dante Migliazzo of Atwater; and Secretary, Essie Bootsma of

www.realcaliforniamilk.com



BEAVERTON WINS BIG AT MUSTARD COMPETITION

Beaverton Foods. Hillsboro. OR, won 10 awards at the 23rd annual World-Wide Mustard Competition. Winning mustards include Inglehoffer Bread & Butter Pickle; Napa Valley Orange & Ginger; Inglehoffer Honey Maple; Organic Honey; Inglehoffer Inglehoffer Original Stone Ground; Beaver Brand Olde English; Napa Valley Habanero Honey; Inglehoffer Sweet Hot Pepper; Beaver Brand Sweet Hot; and Inglehoffer Sriracha Mustards.

www.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

ANNOUNCEMENTS



CIAA QIP HOSTS 15 RETAILERS AT SIAL

The Cheese Importers Association of America Qualified Importer Program (CIAA QIP), Washington, D.C., announced it will sponsor an all-expenses paid educational trip for 15 food retailers to the Salon International de l'Agroalimentaire (SIAL), the largest food exhibition in the world, taking place in Paris, Oct. 20-24, 2018. The 15 retailers will be selected at random through a lottery drawing. Information is available on CIAA's website.

www.theciaa.org

NEW PRODUCTS



NEW SNACK ON THE SCENE

Sabra Dipping Co., White Plains, NY, has unveiled a new logo and packaging redesign for its line of plant-based dips, including hummus, guacamole and Greek yogurt-based tzatzikis. The rebranding includes an updated logo, restyled label design and original on-pack photography highlighting the fresh, plant-based product.

www.sabra.com

GRAB AND GO SOLUTIONS

Don's Food Products, Schwenksville, PA, offers a number of grab-and-go solutions for supermarket delis. Pasta salads are available with Southwest and Asian flavors. These can be part of a meal kit for a quick solution. Dips and spreads are geared for sandwiches as well as for appetizers, including Artichoke and Asiago Cheese Dip. www.donssalads.com



VEGETABLE BOWLS DEBUT

Green Giant Fresh, Salinas, CA, has launched a line of fresh vegetable Meal Bowls with six world flavors. All bowls are microwave-safe and ready in minutes. Bowl varieties include Burrito; Fried Rice; Pad Thai Bowl; Rancheros; Buddha; and Ramen. Each vegan-friendly meal bowl comes with a sauce/seasoning packet.

www.greengiantfresh.com



A FRESH AND CLEAR LINE

Placon, Madison, WI, has introduced the Fresh 'n Clear SnackCube packaging line. Available in three base configurations that include either two or three compartments that fit a hard-boiled egg, and an optional inside fit lid. SnackCube products are made with EcoStar recycled PET material from curbside plastic bottles and are reusable and recyclable.

www.placon.com



DELI SALADS UNVEILED

Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, has introduced four deli salad flavors in I- and 3-pound containers. Stadium Cole Slaw, Deviled Egg Macaroni Salad, Southern Style Potato Salad with Egg, and New York Style Potato Salad are made without high fructose corn syrup, artificial flavors or colors.

www.resers.com



GLUTEN FREE TURKEY MEATBALLS

Butterball Foodservice, Garner, NC, now offers Italian-seasoned turkey meatballs, which are fully cooked for quick heating and serving, saving time and labor. A low-fat alternative to beef meatballs, this product can be the main ingredient in an appetizer or entrée or act as an add-on in different types of recipes. Turkey is naturally gluten free, and the meatballs complement all types of cuisines.

www.butterball-foodservice.com



SIMPLE GUAC

Wholly Guacamole, Saginaw, TX, offers guacamole made with simple ingredients, like 100 percent hand-scooped Hass Avocados. The line comes in easy peel-and-serve trays, making dipping chips more convenient. Flavors include Classic, Hatch Chile and Homestyle and Spicy. Portion-controlled, 100-calorie minis are available as well as new portioned Snack Cups that pair guacamole with crunchy, bite-size tortilla rounds.

www.eatwholly.com

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

A New Way Of Thinking



By Jim Prevor Editor-in-Chief

t is good that this is the issue in which we highlight some of the top-ranked people who are blazing the way to success in the deli industry, because the key question is whether our teams working in deli are up to the task of dealing with a very different industry and future.

Certainly, these individuals are up to the task, and we are pleased to highlight some of these innovative executives in our cover story. Yet, we should not be sanguine that we have the firepower to lead the industry to the places it needs to go.

Think about Kroger. It was just yesterday that it was something long recognized — the largest supermarket chain in America. Sure, Kroger had been experimenting with assortment and presentation and branding — Murray's Cheese, for example — but my family was experimenting with these things in the 1970s when we owned supermarkets in New Jersey and Puerto Rico.

Yes, Kroger's involvement with Dunnhumby was progressive, but its purpose remained as it was a half-century before: to drive business to a store optimized to attract customers and make profits.

Yet, all of the sudden, Kroger is being transformed. Its partnership with Ocado provides a ready-made back-end platform for national, even global, expansion of delivery capabilities. Deep investments have been made to automate warehouses, set up delivery logistics and dive into artificial intelligence.

Kroger has even gone beyond the supermarket to engage with the supply chain. For example, the company partnered with some tech companies in Europe to develop new robotics to harvest apples.

Much has been made of the move to omnichannel retailing and, certainly, the Ocado deal will help Kroger to compete with Amazon and Walmart. But it is also true that it provides a path for Kroger to become a true national supermarket chain. Mike Schlotman, Kroger's chief financial officer, explained this at a recent BMO Capital Markets Farm to Market Investor Conference, when he talked about new packing and distribution centers, or what he calls "sheds," and explained their plans:

"We would have the expectation that these sheds will turn up in areas where we don't have brick-and-mortar today, where the population may be more dense, and home delivery is a bigger piece of the business... and a way to get in business in parts of the country where we aren't today, and then perhaps figure out what brick-and-mortar you may need to supplement that."

This is a kind of "digital-first" strategy — but who is expert enough to know how to use the digital

t is good that this is the issue in which we highlight some of the top-ranked people who are blazing the way to success in the deli industry, play in driving online sales — or vice versa?

The path is uncertain. Amazon is going to offer Prime members an additional 10 percent off sale prices at Whole Foods market. If this is real — i.e., they don't raise margin requirements on sale items — then it is a big thing. But Whole Foods doesn't earn a net profit of 10 percent, so this will only work if it drives consumers into the stores and those consumers buy higher margin non-sale items or it drives Whole Foods customers to buy Amazon Prime and order online.

Analyzing these things calls for a level of sophistication different from setting the price on sliced ham. In fact, it is not even clear that we will sell the same products in the future as we have in the past. As part of the Kroger transformation, it also recently announced plans to acquire Home Chef.

Home Chef now can reach 98 percent of all U.S. households with a two-day delivery window. Kroger will probably want to pare that down to next day and add an option for picking up the product in its stores. Kroger already had its own Prep + Pared meal kits in about 500 stores.

Will an omnichannel capability be a big win here? Quite possibly. If consumers can get the exact meal kit they want, without having to worry about being committed so they are free if they have other options, they may buy a lot more meal kits. But maybe what is needed is a one-hour delivery service where the consumer can order from an app on his phone from work and the meal kit is delivered by the time he gets home to dinner.

When people are considering what to buy at the grocery store, they are thinking about the difficulty of preparation as one criteria. Maybe if a meal kit is delivered fully prepped and ready for easy use, perhaps people will want foods they previously thought too difficult to prepare.

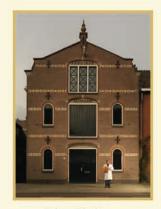
This vision of Kroger — as a national company, as an omnichannel retailer, as creator of meals — is a vision for the whole industry.

Success will depend on the very human act of execution. What goes in that box, how shall it be marketed, where shall it be distributed?

The most robotic assembly plant in the world won't answer these questions. Only people can. So, read this issue carefully and think about how you can raise the competency of your own teams. Tomorrow will be demanding. Are we, as an industry, up for the battles ahead?

DB

James 3. Theres



The old cheese warehouse on the Old Rhine in Woerden



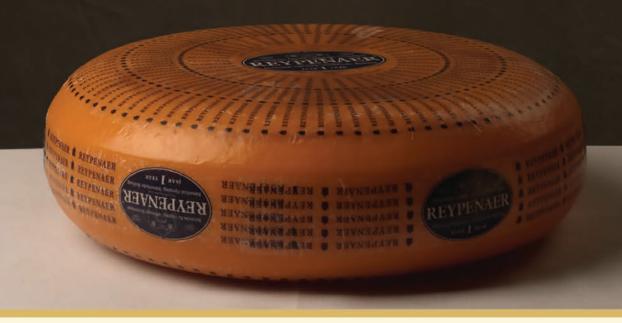
Aged for up to one year, this Gouda cheese has an intense, persistent flavor and aroma, with a soft, smooth texture.

Slightly creamy, salty, nutty, and pleasantly fruity.



The old warehouse cheese "ripening" stacks and ventilation hatches

Reypenaer



The Magical Deli



By
Lee Smith
Publisher

his is my favorite issue of the year. I love the People's Awards because it gives us a closer look at industry leaders, their thoughts and ideas about goals, objectives and management philosophies. I am usually surprised at the common elements.

This year's winners are a group of people who have taken their work and leveraged it beyond the job. They enjoy what they do and want to share their knowledge with others.

They represent different segments of the industry, but most agree that passion was the key attribute to their success. Passion gets you through the difficult times and gives a reason to get up and look forward to going to work. Some go on to say that the work/life balance is not an issue because they love what the do.

It wasn't always this way, especially in the supermarket segment. Work was work and everyone was glad when the day was over. These winners enjoy doing what they do, and their dedication spills over to their employees. There is a reason each person was nominated by their peers.

There are other similarities among this year's winners' challenges. They include:

- Meeting the challenge of online retailing
- The growth of prepared foods and the demand for convenience
- The driving force of social media
- The desire for fresher foods and clean labeling

This issue also has a bevy of interesting articles that point to industry directions that can raise sales and bring excitement to shoppers.

Some thriving trends include:

Vegetarian. It's now a must-have, but the key is not to segregate the section. It's traditional customers who want to eat healthier but are not giving up meat.

The deli meat section is changing. Staples are still important, but there is growth in specialty, ethnic, pre-sliced and Italian. The growth in

pre-sliced meats is in specialty products – products difficult to handle correctly by store associates and kept fresh due to their lower volume. Deli meats are getting sexy again!

Breakfast. For a long time, breakfast was the one daypart to avoid. Today, go for it because opportunity abounds. It's become more of an on-the-road occasion. And prepared breakfast foods are perfect for either home or work.

Mediterranean. More important than ever, as health benefits continue to be touted. Olives bars have morphed into Mediterranean food bars. In prepared foods, it's ready-to-go prepared spinach and dark leafy greens, kale salads, stuffed grape leaves, bean dishes, Feta cheese, ancient grains, fish and shrimp that are starting to lead the way in new product development.

Healthy deli. Now a go-to center for health. Clean labeling, healthy and less processed ingredients, organic, non-GMO are all overall department trends, as opposed to single-item options. The deli is no longer the unhealthy, overly indulgent department where high fat and salt were typical.

Fermented: A growing category and probably more important in urban areas. Kefir, specialty yogurts, pickles, sauerkraut, kimchi — anything with probiotics — is growing. Worth considering a separate section.

Cheese: Due to continued consumer interest and increasing sales, specialty cheeses are now worth a separate department within the deli. Eventually, it may become a department of its own and, in some cases, it already has.

Rarely have we seen such dynamic trends, and they are putting the deli and cheese departments center stage. With the addition of skilled staff, an emphasis on customer service and that magical element called passion, the deli is going back to the wonderful destination is used to be, when the deli was a magical corner of every neighborhood. **DB**







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ANNUAL PEOPLE'S ANNARDS

Steve Millard | Andy Arons | Derick Rosinsky | Season Lawrence Marissa DeMaio | Doug Jay | David Biltchik | Stephanie Clark

eli Business' annual People's Awards honors the best of the best in the industry. These individuals, which include retailers, distributors, academics, importers and marketing professionals, are stand outs in their fields, with contributions that have raised the bar for those in the deli and food industries. Read on to find out more about this year's winners' achievements, business philosophies, leadership styles and personal lives.

Deli Business is calling for 2019 People's Awards nominations. If there is a person or people that have made exemplary contributions to the industry and warrants recognition, please e-mail managing editor Lisa White at lwhite@phoenixmedianet.com.

Steve MILLARD

Senior Vice President of Merchandising and Operations Murray's Cheese **New York City**



My job has continually evolved. In the course of my career, I have done just about every facet of food retail, and I can't imagine effectively doing my job without that base of knowledge.

What positions have you held in industry associations?

- Guilde Internationale des Fromagers
- Cheese Importers Association of America
- · American Cheese Society member

What is your leadership philosophy?

My years in the Marine Corps formed my early impressions of leadership that are still what I base all my beliefs around. It's probably easily described as servant leadership, leading from the front, and leading by example. My job is to make the lives of my staff easier and to serve them effectively so that they can grow and prosper.

What is the best advice you ever received and whv?

This comes from a book I read titled, "My Life on the Run" by Bart Yasso. "Do what you love and the rest will take care of itself". Pursue a career, or life purpose, around the thing you love most and give it all you got. By doing what you love, you are guaranteed to always like going to work, and you are guaranteed to have a higher level of passion and dedication than if you were just punching a clock every day and not thinking about work again until the next punch in. Whatever job you are doing, do it to the best of your ability. From mopping a floor to stocking a shelf to providing amazing customer service; ultimately, go home at the end of the day with the satisfaction that you gave it your all.

How has your career evolved over How do you balance your work and personal life?

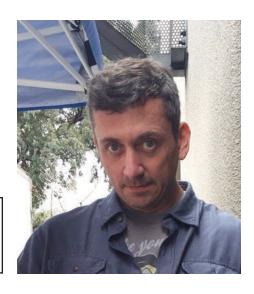
I wish I could say that I do, but this is something that I need to remind myself of often. It is important that I exercise on a regular basis, which usually involves my other passion. Running is what keeps my sanity and allows me to refocus my thoughts and work out any problems before I get home. Vacations with family are important. Travel and sharing a meal every day with loved ones are important.

What deli retail trends have impacted the industry most over the last year?

The big trend these days is toward ready-made meal kits. Consumers are looking for convenience, but also the benefit of a home-cooked meal; meal kits provide the right balance of ease and health of a home cooked meal. Digital is finally catching up to food, and the plethora of online ordering platforms for specialty food, ready-made meals, fast delivery times and ease of ordering are all radically changing food retail. Once upon a time, you needed to call the restaurant to make a reservation; now most people's first instinct is to use an online reservation platform. The same is true for home delivery options for dining. Online grocery shopping, whether for in-home delivery or pickup in the store, is rapidly gaining traction.

What technology or technical tools are indispensable to you in the workplace and why?

Having the right enterprise reporting system is critical to the success of any business. Having the ability to have 100 percent visibility into all aspects of your business makes decision making easier. We have a food safety/quality assurance team



in place, and this has proven indispensable. With FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act), this team is invaluable.

How involved are you with social media, and what are the benefits?

Social media is a very important part of our marketing platform and our ability to communicate to our customers in a direct and immediate way. Social media is a platform for building brand awareness, a communications platform for hot deals or new items, and a way to show a lighter side of our business.

What have been the biggest changes in the deli industry over the course of your career?

Perhaps the biggest change has been the shift in demographics to younger shoppers with smaller families. There is far more awareness around quality foods from around the globe than there was 10 or 20 years ago. We are seeing consumers willing to spend more for a quality item and a larger willingness to explore new foods and cuisines. There has also been a rapid shift in consumer awareness of what is in their food and the desire for increased transparency around sourcing. It used to be that organic was important, then it became local, now humanely raised and non-GMO are becoming critical.

What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome on the job?

Pushing for continued improvement and the desire to be better tomorrow than we are today. Continuously pushing for an authentic experience and conveying that authentic experience to all of our guests.



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- **✓** REAL CONVENIENT
- ✓ REAL PROFITABLE

If you want real quality in your deli, go right to the source. At Idahoan Foods, our **Certified** 100% Idaho® Potatoes deliver the homemade taste customers demand. Let us provide your mashed potatoes, casseroles, hash browns, appetizers and more!

Andy **ARONS**

CEO, Co-founder **Gourmet Garage** New York City



How has your career evolved over the years?

I was lucky enough to start my career in the early 80's, really the beginning of the gigantic tidal wave of interest in better foods in the U.S. This phenomenon has not abated at all since then. I became interested in specialty and natural foods early on. As those categories grew, my interest expanded, until today all of the growth in our industry is focused in those areas.

What is your leadership philosophy?

I would say figure out what you are good at, then stick to your knitting. Be tough and fair, let everyone you deal with,

impacted the industry most over the last year?

I love to see the explosion of new items in the deli/perishable case. Grocery is fine, but it's really the fresh stuff that rings the bell for me. It's really just beginning, too!

What technology or technical tools are indispensable to you in the workplace and why?

It's important for my colleagues to communicate throughout the day and share data. The data-driven reporting in real time has been extremely helpful to our company.

What deli retail trends have What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome on the iob?

Probably the incursion in every market of the deep pocket national and international players in our business. Now we are forced to compete with companies that are not required to turn a profit. It's really sad. I see the end of a vibrant town and cityscape in the near horizon

What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

I try to work out at the gym every morning, and seasonally I really love to play tennis and ski.

Are you married? If so, how long? How many children?

I am! My wife is a well-known and successful entrepreneur in the fashion world. We have three very spirited teenage girls. I don't think I have to say much more than that.

I love to see the explosion of new items in the deli/perishable case.

from vendors to employees to guests know through your actions that you are a trustworthy person.

What is the best advice you ever received and why?

Winston Churchill famously advised to never, ever give up. I've had some great times and tough times, but having the confidence to never guit has seen me through both.

How do you balance your work and personal life?

I have always made sure I have time for my family every single day. Even when I'm working constantly I'm always in touch with my wife and our kids.

How involved are you with social media and what are the benefits?

Very involved, and getting more so. Most of our growth is coming from the younger generations. I watch my kids' buying habits and am made uncomfortably aware daily that consumers will be acting differently in the coming years.

What have been the biggest changes in the deli industry over the course of your career?

Really watching the growth of all the amazing new foods that are deliverable through the deli case. Prepared foods, smoked items, dips, appetizers. The array and quality is dazzling.



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Derick ROSINSKY

Specialty Cheese Buyer Southeastern Grocers Jacksonville, FL



How has your career evolved over the years?

In 2002, I took a sales position with a specialty foods importer/distributor. The first day on the job, I helped the GM slot a new arrival of French cheeses. It was like going through a treasure chest full of gems. I spent 10 years with that company where specialty cheese became my area of high interest and expertise. I was also part of the team involved in the selection. merchandising and implementation of the very first Mariano's stores. It started with the Roundy's Metro Market concept in Wisconsin and evolved from there. One day, a past board member of Roundy's, Steve Harper (of HEB-Central Markets) called me and asked me about joining his team at Schnuck Markets, Inc. For six years, Schnuck's allowed me to express myself through specialty cheese and without a lot of barriers. Recently, I moved to Florida and joined Southeastern Grocers.

What is your leadership philosophy?

I would have to say 'servant leader". I am a servant to the customer (both the customers that come into the store and those that work in them). It also provides the great benefit of customer intelligence. It amazes me how sometimes people tend to guess what customers might enjoy instead of just going out there and talking to them. Even after all the years in the business. I still get excited when I see a customer try a great cheese or other specialty item and their eyes light up! A lot of people have commented on my ability to sell through a lot of product during events and demos, but I can tell you that all I attempt to do is to introduce a customer to a really great cheese or other specialty product, tell them the story and have fun

doing it. Everything kind of takes care of itself from there. I have always enjoyed being part of or lead any team that focuses on the same goal.

What is the best advice you ever received and why?

I was told by both of my past Chief Merchants to never let the flame of passion die and keep the excitement and energy up. As long as you love what you do and give it your best, the cream will always rise to the top. It's all about getting the product to the real experts, your customers.

How do you balance your work and personal life?

I am pretty solid on not getting out of balance. I am a hard worker, will do what needs to be done and love the business but I also love my wife, my kids and the rest of my family and understand how precious my time with them is and savor in it. Sometimes you need to walk a fine line and put in some extra effort.

What deli retail trends have impacted the industry most over the last year?

New innovative "on trend" products with a fresher and cleaner proposition, multicultural influence, snacking (portables) and meal solutions are obviously hot, but there still is an insatiable appetite for new and innovative products on a going forward basis so it's imperative to glean customer intelligence to remain in front of the curve. While I personally enjoy the shopping experience, statistics now show that customer patience is measured by just a few seconds, and since it is our job to serve the customer, we must be quick on our feet. I am very happy to see the

focus on fresh and the perimeter. I truly believe these still provide a point of differentiation. Since specialty cheese falls into this, it's a great thing for the industry. It is my hope that customer intimacy remains strong, even in the fast paced retail world we live in. Hearing the story's and attributes of great cheeses and other specialty products is, after all, one of the reasons why I chose the path I did. Again, I still get excited when someone tells me a great story about a great cheese (or other specialty product) and extends the olive branch with a sample. I hope we always hold this level of service and customer intimacy in high regard.

What have been the biggest changes in the deli industry over the course of your career?

First and foremost is the ability to create a culture of change mastery. Understanding that change is a constant and to not only adapt to it, but leverage it to an advantage. Many years ago, I remember reading a quote stating, "change is not always cozy or safe, but we will emerge stronger and more resilient in the process". I just loved that statement. We also must deal with pace and the ability to move faster and without compromising quality and service.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

I love spending time with my entire family, fishing with my dad and, of course, learning more about cheese!

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David BILTCHIK

Chairman **Consultants International Group** Washington, D.C.



When I started in the consulting business in the early 80s, we had no clients. Someone from Italy suggested I try getting into Parma ham in the U.S. I loved the product, but didn't have a clue how to do this. It took me about seven years to figure it out, along with many others. Eventually, the USDA accepted Proscuitto di Parma in the late 80's, and that's how I got started in this business.

What positions have you held in industry associations?

I've served as president and chairman for the American Importers/Exporters Group, which includes major importers and exporters of meat.

of Italy, and that's extraordinary since it's an expensive ham.

What is the best advice you ever received and why?

Be honest because lies have short legs.

personal life?

It's important to have work you enjoy doing and work on things you're proud to tell your wife and family about when you come home, and have fun.

What deli retail trends have impacted the industry most over the last year?

This is not just from the last year, but growth of the prepackaged deli meat mar-

This market, which is very important and we value, is increasingly difficult.

What have been the biggest changes in the deli industry over the course of your career?

The disappearance of traditional delis. How do you balance your work and It's tough to train the staff, and the cheese industry is smart. We need to have more of that in the meat business, with expertise in the store.

What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome on the job?

In terms of my experience with deli meats, it's convincing importers and distributors in retail to convince others that these foreign products are different and need to be presented in a different way. It's making customers understand why they should pay more for these products. We've managed to build understanding in the trade. These products are different, but complimentary to their domestic counterparts.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

Music, reading and walking.

Are you married? If so, how long? How many children?

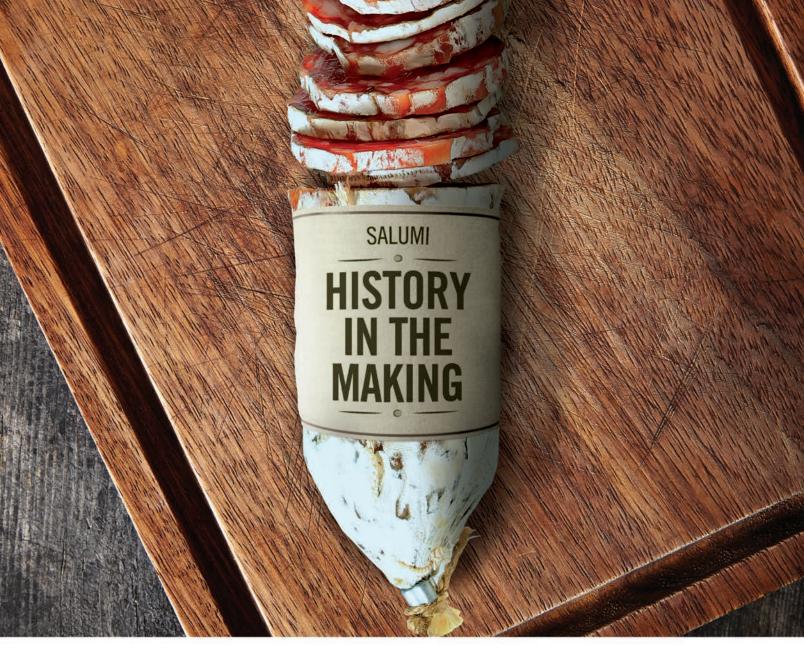
Married for 50+ years, two children and four grandchildren.

We've managed to build understanding in the trade.

What is your leadership philosophy?

Be active in a positive way and emphasize things that build reputation and confidence in the country and product. This way, when the consumer looks at labels and products, it is a product they have confidence in. In terms of the attention paid to processing, manufacturing and production to meat products to packaging, labeling and presentation to the public, we try to be as transparent and traceable as possible, America is the largest market in the world for Prosciutto di Parma outside

ket, particularly in supermarkets. Many supermarkets have delis, but the consumer is turning to prepackaged refrigerated shelf racks for deli meats. In terms of imports, this has become an increasingly important market. The largest retail outlet for Prosciutto di Parma in the U.S. is Costco, and it's a prepackaged product that customers purchase in large quantities. This means exporting countries have to be aware that it's more difficult to find delis willing to invest in slicing machines and skilled personnel to slice behind the counter.



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Marissa **DEMAIO**

Director of Marketing Atalanta Corp. Elizabeth, NJ

How has your career evolved over needs they have, as well. the years?

It's an interesting story because my career did not start in food. I used to work in the film and television industry. I was interning at Late Night with Conan O'Brien and Miramax Films. Then I moved to California and worked with Talent Agency, helping fresh new talent find work as actors. During that time, my husband, a friend and I pitched a show concept to NBC. The show was a NYC- based concept at the time I lived in Los Angeles. I moved back to New Jersey to film the promo video and

What is your leadership philosophy?

Let ideas grow. Within every challenge, there is a solution. Sometimes we look at a challenge, and we're not to be intimidated. Instead, it's an opportunity to fix something, and go above and beyond expectations.

What is the best advice you ever received and why?

Listen to your gut and heart. Nine times out of 10, the answer is there. Don't second guess yourself.

Snacking is huge and so is charcuterie, and that's what our team is focused on.

joined an imported cheese company as a temp data entry clerk while waiting to see if the show was picked up by NBC, which unfortunately never came to fruition. This company then ended up hiring me, and that was my entry to the world of imported cheese. I learned a lot about the industry during my 10-year tenure. In 2013, I joined Atalanta as a product manager. This was an exciting role, and I managed several lines for the cheese department as well as assisted with marketing, promotional and branding initiatives. In 2015, I was promoted to director of retail marketing, and I proudly remain in that role here at Atalanta. We have a great marketing team, and we help the entire organization execute marketing initiatives for key brands in addition to helping our loyal customers with any marketing/promotional

How do you balance your work and personal life?

This workplace is a very fast-paced environment. It requires a lot of dedication. It's not always easy to juggle the work life balance. My husband and my two girls are my best cheerleaders. I'd be nothing without them, and I try to include them in my travels. My girls are extremely outgoing little foodies, so sometimes I take my kids to a distributor show and together we build a recipe and talk about family-oriented cooking concepts with customers. It's amazing. They also have starred in a couple of our recipe videos and commercials, which is also so fun for me! It serves a purpose in the business, and they also they get to see what mom does. It teaches them a good work ethic.



What deli retail trends have impacted the industry most over the last year?

Snacking is huge and so is charcuterie, and those are a couple of trends Atalanta is focused on. The snacking and meal kits are huge concepts at the moment. We have solutions to fill those needs because we understand everyone is in a hurry.

How involved are you with social media and what are the benefits?

We work mostly on platforms with Facebook and Instagram more so than Twitter. It's all about showing the end user how to use an item. Video is popular and engaging. We've also been able to help customers as a third party influencer. If they're promoting on their channel, we promote as a second voice on our channel.

What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome on the job?

We work with many high-end and specialty products. These are unique items from sometimes small producers who do not have a fraction of the marketing budget of a gigantic CPG producer. We have to contend against that everyday, so we are tasked with figuring out unique ways to go to market sometimes with very little funding. But we always welcome the challenge, and most times we find ways to support the brand and the items and end up with a success story in the marketplace.

Are you married? If so, how long?

I'll be married 11 years in September and have known my husband Dave since I was II years old. We have two beautiful children. Our daughter Marina is 10 and our youngest daughter Ava is 6.



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Doug JAY

CEO/President of the Board GFI Atlanta, GA



I started in the food industry as a cook, became a bartender and then I met someone at the bar I was working at in 1984 who worked at GFI. I joined the company in 1985, starting in customer service. I transitioned into sales, then sales management, and became vice president of sales before serving as president of GFI for 16 years. I had my former position longer than all my other jobs combined! In 2017, I became CEO and Chairman of the Board.

What is your leadership philosophy?

It sounds trite, but I try to be extremely nice and supportive and help everyone on our team or who I come in contact with to understand they can be nice and be the best they can be by being understanding and open minded. If you let people try new things and be supportive, rather than micromanage and shut down their ideas, they tend to like you as a leader. This is a general philosophy of life, not just of leadership. If you have a good philosophy of life, people tend to follow you. A good leader also has to quickly recognize and take quick action that is negative when necessary, as well.

What is the best advice you ever received and why?

Not advice, but my parents ingrained in me to be extremely fair to everyone. They taught me equality is paramount with everyone you deal with, everyone is equal no matter their race, ethnicity or anything else. This circles back to being nice and not having preconceived notions about people. Their best advice has worked out good so far!

How do you balance your work and personal life?

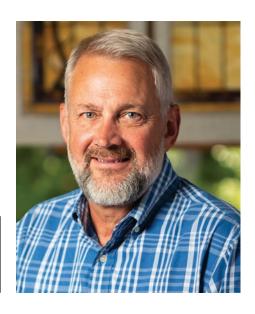
There are two answers but they're the exact opposite; one is I throw myself into my work and be consumed by it and throw myself into my personal life and get consumed by it. It's not really a balance, but I stay happy and positive and switch back and forth between the two. They don't coincide, but are so intertwined. If you're happy at home, you'll be happy at work. If your goal is to make everyone around you happy and successful, whether you're at work or at home, things are good. If you try to balance the two, you worry about it. Live in the moment and have as much fun as you can, then you don't need work/ life balance.

What deli retail trends have impacted the industry most over the last year?

Retailers in the delis are realizing people are looking for unique items. One of the big examples is what we do in the cheese case and with charcuterie. It's been going on a long time. Young people are interested in new and different things. It goes across socioeconomic areas. And now people eat differently, with smaller portion sizes, which make pricey food more affordable. These changes in eating habits have led to the expansion of people wanting to try new and different things. The interest in better, healthier and higher quality foods has also increased.

What technology or technical tools are indispensable to you in the workplace and why?

I do everything in Excel, I even think in Excel. I'm lucky to have learned it 35 years ago. I still have an original Excel floppy



disk. We love data and being able to sort through it and try to find anomalies to service our customers better. And I love my iPad!

What have been the biggest changes in the deli industry over the course of your career?

The interest in specialty foods, quality products and fresh and healthy products has expanded from 35 years ago. The demographic has expanded. There was very little artisanal cheese when I started, and now grade schoolers are cooking at home. A lot of it is the U.S. has become more international and continental. Food was looked at as a fuel and now it's a celebration of all things in life that are good. It's a fantastic thing!

What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome on the job?

To have confidence in myself and my decisions. To come up with an idea and have enough confidence to implement it. And to be able to understand that not all decisions are accurate, so make a decision and move on. Know you don't have to be right with every decision, and overcome that. Some people are perfectionists and can't get out of their own way.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

We always do taste tests between two products, also pairing food and wine, food and beer and cheese. I love the outdoors, boating and fishing.

Are you married? If so, how long? How many children?

I've been married 33 years and have two children and two grandchildren.

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Season **LAWRENCE**

Traditional Deli Director The Kroger Co. Cincinnati, OH

How has your career evolved over personal life? the vears?

I had a desire to become a graphic artist and found my creative nature suited working with people in the retail environment. Selling and leading have driven me throughout my career. I started as co-manager with Kroger in Michigan and spent five years learning the industry alongside some great leaders. I eventually became a store manager and managed several locations throughout the Michigan Division. I then spent nine years learning the deli/bakery, from some very knowledgeable deli and bakery managers as the assistant deli merchandiser and then as the deli merchandiser in Michigan. I became the director of deli for Kroger two years ago.

My work life balance has been difficult to manage at times, but my husband keeps me grounded when I spend too much time away from home. I have had to place importance on my boys' events and though I wasn't the school mom, I never missed an important event. The deli industry is constantly changing and evolving, which keeps me interested.

What deli retail trends have impacted the industry most over the last year?

Meal kits have been the largest trend this year and impacted the deli industry, as all retailers find ways to solve this trend for the consumer and make the Ship-to-Home options less important.

Meal kits have been the largest trend this year and impacted the deli industry.

What is your leadership philosophy?

As a leader, one must listen, lead and provide position reinforcement.

What is the best advice you ever received and why?

See it, fix it, change it. I love this advice and use it all the time. You must see who you are, your reactions, and your leadership before you can fix anything or change others. It has helped me stop, breathe and listen before acting.

How do you balance your work and

What technology or technical tools are indispensable to you in the workplace and why?

Cell phones are bringing food and shopping closer to our customers than ever before. They can shop, clip coupons and so much more. Production tools are vital to our ability to use labor effectively and to improve profitability.

How involved are you with social media and what are the benefits?

Social media is the new paper ad or will be very soon. New items, sale items, customer interaction will change to social marketing.



What have been the biggest changes in the deli industry over the course of your career?

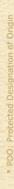
The largest change I have seen in my career has been in the growth and importance of prepared foods and the shopping behavior of customers. Customers are searching for meal solutions and convenience that accompanies the eating occasion. The share of stomach is more important to capture than the share o wallet. The increase of ship-to-home has also created changes to the grocery industry and in meal delivery.

What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome on the job?

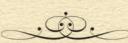
The largest challenge I have faced thus far is changing from a division team to the corporate environment. I was used to creating solutions and initiating them quickly. I was comfortable in how to accomplish just about any task, plan or project. But when I moved to the corporate office, it took a lot of adjusting to my methods, communication style, networking building, etc. I had to learn to take steps back to move forward. It was frustrating and uncomfortable to turn a now larger wheel, but I learned if you're uncomfortable, you are learning and growing.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside

I enjoy spending quality time with my family on vacation, riding on the trails with our four-wheeler/dirt bikes, hiking and finding great places to try new foods.







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Stephanie CLARK

Professor Iowa State University Ames, IA



Growing up in Massachusetts, I received a goat for my seventh birthday. I got started in 4-H showing dairy goats, then experimented with the milk and making cheese. The path in my mind was animal science, so I went to Cornell for this major, but started taking classes in food science. I received my Master's and PhD studying goat's milk at Cornell, but when I was done, I wasn't sure if I'd do academia or industry. I worked with a food packaging company as an intern, then got a sense it was bottom line driven and that industry to be afraid of what people would think, but realized I'm not the only one.

How do you balance your work and personal life?

I'm not sure if I do. I find I have more balance in the summer when I can work outside. I enjoy gardening, and it makes me feel more satisfied and content. During the cold months, I balance my creative and scientific side with crafty things, since having outlets is important. A year and a half ago, my husband and I moved my in-laws here from California, so we spend several nights a week having a family dinner together. I



some cheeses. We need to communicate with a level head to educate well-meaning consumers that not all scary-sounding words are dangerous.

What technology or technical tools are indispensable to you in the workplace and why?

I use two computer screens to multitask, since I'm regularly doing teaching, research, outreach, etc. at one time. I can read a manuscript on one screen and provide critical review for the author on the journal website on the other. Modern technology helps me be more efficient.

What have been the biggest changes in the deli industry over the course of your career?

The institution of modern technology, such as high pressure processing. I was a skeptic of HPP when I joined the faculty at Washington State University. My research investigated if it was promising for the dairy industry, and I discovered HPP is not great for all foods. There are limitations with queso fresco cheese, although it works well for some deli meats and avocado spreads. We continue to look at modern technology, but the old standby of pasteurization really is best for safety, quality and affordability.

What is the biggest challenge you've had to overcome on the job?

One of the biggies is a tendency for me to want to fix things. I want to solve problems and fix mistakes to help people understand the truth about their food. When I hear or read mis-statements, I struggle with whether to intervene or keep my mouth shut.

DB

I'm a consensus driver and see myself as a facilitator.

wasn't my thing. I had done a lot of assistant teaching with my graduate work and enjoyed it, so academia was a fit for me. After I got my PhD in 1997, I started my career at Washington State University and worked there until 2009, when I came to Iowa State University.

What is your leadership philosophy?

As I've matured, I've come to value input from every team member. Everyone should have a voice, listen, be heard and be valued, and we should work toward the betterment of the whole. I'm a consensus driver and see myself as a facilitator.

What is the best advice you ever received and why?

Never be afraid to ask questions. I used

need both social and alone time, it's good to have a mix.

What deli retail trends have impacted the industry most over the last year?

One of the biggies is clean labels, and this is good and bad. It's a trendy mantra that "if you can't pronounce it, you shouldn't eat it", and that's not the case. People don't understand why we food scientists use what we use. The industry was so quick in taking synthetic colors out of food, but there's a limit when it comes to safety and how far we can go. The internet has non truths and overstatements that mislead consumers to worry about what's in their food. The deli industry has had to respond to that, especially with meats and





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Jordan Klawiter, No. California Director of Operations Troy Feist, Founder & Head Sandwich Maker Dude Beach Hut Deli, LLC



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Four ways to successfully build basket rings through cross merchandising

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

ross merchandising is a cornerstone selling technique in the cheese departments at Roche Bros. Supermarkets. The 18-store chain, headquartered in Wellesley, MA, regularly pairs products via techniques like displays and demos within the department, such as combinations of cheese, jam and crackers, and taking fresh Mozzarella over to the deli to pair with pizza crusts and pepperoni.

"Cross merchandising motivates sellers because it boosts sales," says Kathy Shannon, Roche Bros. cheese buyer/merchandiser. "And it motivates consumers by giving them new pairing ideas as well as making it convenient for them to pick up everything in one place."

The retail practice of cross merchandising entails putting products that eat well together to encourage shoppers to purchase several items rather than just

one. Many times, the products cross merchandised are not in the same category. Whether consumers shop categories or shop the whole store is a long-standing question. However, according to the 2015-released report, From Category Management to Shopper Centric Retailing, by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), Winston Weber Associates (WWA), and Deloitte Consulting LLP, the answer is in favor of the latter.

"The entire premise of cross merchandising is one of simplicity," explains Tom Orlando, national sales director for Pittsburgh, PA-headquartered Conroy Foods, Inc., makers of Beano's-branded spreads, sauces and dressings. "It is common sense to place tertiary use products, such as our condiments, close to primary driver purchase items like deli meats and cheeses. While we don't have syndicated data to support this point, we do know

that retailers who cross merchandise our product turn the product quicker, and we ship more product when compared to retailers who don't cross merchandise."

Numbers on the effectiveness of cross merchandising are something George Gavirati, national accounts manager for the Brooklyn, NY-based Damascus Bakery, which sells its hearth-baked white and wheat flour pizza crusts to delis under its retail Brooklyn Bred division, shared. "We have partnered with cheese, olive oil and protein companies in the past in a retail demo and, as a result, saw a lift in sales of at least 20 percent that has lasted over a three- to five-week period."

Price incentives, sampling demos, displays, ads, education/signage, and meal and snack deals are some of the most effective methods of cross merchandising to boost impulse sales and build basket ring in this department.



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An important component of Brooklyn Bred's successful pizza crust and partner produce cross promotion started earlier with an FSI in local newspapers to draw shoppers in-store, says Gavirati. "Since there were four companies involved in the in-store demo, it made it cost effective for us to promote the products at the same time. For example, instead of \$4.99, we put our crusts on sale for \$3.99 and saw a 30 percent [sales increase]. The whole focus of cross merchandising is to drive consumer trial, and there are some customers who respond best to price incentives."

Similarly, Joan MacIsaac, co-owner of Hyde Park, MA-headquartered Effie's Homemade, manufacturer of crackers, crisps and biscuits, says, "We work with deli managers to find out what they want to promote, and we agree to be on ad, too. For example, we've done 'Buy hummus and get \$1 or 50 cents off our crackers'. Recently, too, we did a promotion with Grafton cheese's two-year aged Cheddar that was on sale at AJ's; we put biscuits on sale, too, and the sales lift was 15 to 20 percent. We also provided product in support of a demo. Having product on sale and demoing at the same time is a great combination.

Taste Sample

Demos or taste sampling are a key component of cross merchandising success at Roche Bros, says Shannon. "We'll either

set up a demo stand with something like a cracker topped with cheese and jam pre-made or offer the components and let customers prepare it themselves. We like to cross merchandise out of the box combinations and products that aren't on customers' shopping lists. This creates an impulse buy."

Suppliers are a great resource for supermarket deli operators in terms of creative demo combinations.

"Sampling our cheese crisps with tomato soup from the hot bar has been popular," says Elizabeth Schwartz, vice president of sales and marketing for John Wm. Macy's CheeseSticks, Inc., in Elmwood Park, NJ. "Seasonally, we've set up the demo table with a party theme during the holidays and displayed prosciutto wrapped around our Melting Parmesan CheeseSticks and in either a large bell pepper or wheel of Parmesan cheese like a flower as an entertaining idea."

Demos are an ideal platform for education, according to Effie's MacIssac. "We offer a variety of ideas that change seasonally. For example, cheese, jam, chocolates, lemon curd and Blue cheese all paired with our sweet and savory products. In addition, we recently ran a demo with Murray's Cheese, in Kroger stores, with Chiriboga Blue and our chocolate oatcakes, called Cocoacakes. Pairing or recipe cards are something we offer for demo staff to hand out. Often, these ideas will include two,

three or even more products. After all, the more rings, the better."

Since demos are expensive and there is no way to predict the store traffic during the appointed day, Effies offers free samples in every box so that deli operators can set up their own in-store manned or passive demos. "The free samples are our best-selling tool. There's also an information sheet included with suggestions on what to sample with what to make it easy," says MacIsaac.

Demos are a great way to introduce new products.

"We're pushing our new Mariner-brand organic saltines for the first quarter of 2018, when shoppers are looking for healthier options," says Jim Anderko, vice president of sales and marketing for Venus Wafers, a Hingham, MA-based maker of crackers and flatbreads. "This opens up a whole new area of cross merchandising other organic items like cheeses."

In the reverse, Anderko says his company recently paired its flatbreads with a new tapenade to successfully introduce this latter product during an in-store demo.

Display Destinations

Displaying two or more items adjacent to each other is a simple way to cross merchandise, says Roche Bros'. Shannon. "Our cheese program is a cut and wrap operation, so we are able to change displays and what we cross merchandise on

the counter tops above as often as weekly."

Suppliers, such as Brooklyn Bred, offer their own merchandising racks for pizza crusts, according to Gavirati. "We suggest placing these in the deli next to the cheese and olive oil to create a destination display. Or, to be more creative, build a display with ingredients for a pastrami and Gorgonzola, or prosciutto and arugula pizza."

Center-plate, or products that have a temperature prerequisite, need to be the 'base' of the display, says Conroy Food's Orlando. "For example, the prepared foods chicken area (strips, nuggets, tenders) are behind glass and hot, but in front of or on top of the counter is where our Beano's Honey Mustard, Sriracha or Southwest Sauce could be located. You just need to provide a solution for the consumer, you don't need to wow them by expensive fixtures. We have an easy-to-set up, easy to place cardboard shipper with themed header cards. An example is our 'Football theme-Beano's Deli Condiments Have All the Right Moves for Your Tailgate Party'. This reminds shoppers to pick up a bottle in the deli for their tailgate."

Non-food items merchandise equally well in the deli and can add to the ring.

"The top of self-serve precut specialty cheese should be utilized to feature

Non-food items merchandise equally well in the deli and can add to the ring.

some cheesewares, knives, graters, boards etc., that customers can purchase with cheese," says Cindy van Turnhout, public relations and communications manager for Boska Holland Cheesewares, based in Bodegraven, the Netherlands. "More specifically are other items that pair with specific cheeses like Parmesan graters to go with a piece of Parmigiano Reggiano, partyclette's to accompany fresh or prepacked slices of Raclette and cheese curlers for the Swiss Tête de Moine, which is rather unknown in the U.S. These are opportunities many deli buyers overlook."

Make Meals

Take a cue from foodservice and cross merchandise to provide deli meal solu-

tions, recommends Bob Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Fall River, MA-based soup manufacturer, Blount Fine Foods. "Combo meals are something you see everywhere, from price fixe menus in fine dining to fast food restaurants. Capitalize on how the American consumer is conditioned to buy by offering soups cross merchandised with cornbread or a croissant rather than giving away free crackers. Soup and sandwich or salad combinations also work well in the deli."

Creating Connections

Connectivity is another way of thinking about cross merchandising. For example, deli-prepared chicken is the highest dollar-generating category in deli/fresh prepared and is strongly connected to deli appetizers, sides, desserts and salads, according to the Washington, D.C.-headquartered Food Marketing Institute's Power of Fresh Prepared/Deli report, which takes an in-depth look at these areas through the shopper's eyes.

Take this concept one step further, suggests Eric Le Blanc, director of marketing for Springdale, AR-based Tyson Foods, Inc. "Instead of only pairing rotisserie chicken with macaroni and cheese or potato salad, encourage customers to think differently and consider the entire store for their ingredients. For example, cross merchandise boneless wings with cheese, Kings Hawaiian rolls and lettuce from the produce department to make sliders."

Or, Le Blanc continues, "show shoppers how to take one item, like rotisserie chicken, and create different and interesting uses with small modifications and additional ingredients they can buy at the same time. For example, chicken with rice or chicken with salad. This 'one for today and one for tomorrow' meal concept isn't something that anyone is doing right now, but there is a desire by major retailers to cultivate this message in the future." **DB**





read is the food of life. This flourand water-based food has fueled mankind for over 10,000 years, dating to when humans first cultivated grains and pounded them with liquid to make porridge, according to John Mariani's The Dictionary of American Food and Drink. Since then, every culture has evolved its own signature bread, unique to regional ingredients, cooking styles and menu design. Americans have fallen in love with this global bounty, including in their bread basket. In fact, 'authentic ethnic cuisine' ranks ninth among the Top 20 Food Trends, according to nearly 700 professional chef members of the American Culinary Federation surveyed in the Washington, D.C.-based National Restaurant Association's What's Hot 2018 Culinary Forecast. This staff of life is also the stuff that goes hand in glove with deli staples like meats and cheeses. It's knowing what consumers are looking for in deli breads and offering it as part of easy meal solutions, such as sandwiches and more that build the department's basket ring and bring customers back.

"Bread has an interesting role in the sumer tastes and tells them if the sandwich deli," says Camille Krupa, director of is fresh and reinforces good value. Also, if marketing for Bäckerhaus Veit Ltd., a the bread is too soft to hold the sandwich

family-owned artisan bakery based in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. "When consumers select a sandwich, they don't usually start with the bread. They look for a ham sandwich or a turkey sandwich. But if the bread doesn't look interesting or looks dry, they won't pick it up. Whether it's a panini bread, focaccia, pretzel or gourmet bun, it must provide visual appeal, has to be fresh, soft and structured enough to support the protein, lettuce and condiments in the sandwich. It's the first thing the consumer tastes and tells them if the sandwich is fresh and reinforces good value. Also, if the bread is too soft to hold the sandwich



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together and it ends up tearing and not holding the ingredients together, they're not likely to buy it again."

Stock What Customers Want

The types of breads sold in the deli should differ from those sold elsewhere in the store, recommends Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager for Valley Lahvosh Baking Co., a Fresno, CA-headquartered manufacturer of Armenian-style flatbread. "Shoppers come to the deli to look for something innovative, something elevated, something more gourmet."

This translates into offerings that include best-sellers and new flavors, on-trend health and diet ingredients, and right sizing as well as convenience.

When it comes to best sellers and new flavors, crusty/health-style breads represent the largest category share of bread sales in the U.S. in 2017 at 37.9 percent, according to Chicago, IL-headquartered Nielsen Perishables Group data. Artisan breads follow at 30.2 percent, sandwich bread 17.8 percent, flatbreads 8.7 percent and other types of bread 5.4 percent

"Our classic French baguettes and demi French baguettes continue to remain the most popular items that we carry, largely because of their versatility and familiarity among consumers in the market," says Courtney Wilman, marketing manager for the Rise Baking Co., in Minneapolis, MN,

Some health-conscious deli shoppers are looking for more of certain ingredients, while others want less.

which acquired the New French Bakery back in 2013.

White, multigrain and sourdough loaves baked in stone hearth ovens are deli staples, according to Bäckerhaus Veit's Krupa. "Artisan breads made by following traditional recipes and processes, such as the use of clean ingredients like cultured wheat, enzymes and fruit juices that produce acids needed to give the bread a natural longer shelf life, combined with a high amount of water to retain moisture, keeps the texture and crumb of the sandwich fresh longer without the use of artificial additives. flavors and colors. Millennial consumers are particularly ingredient-conscious these days and are more likely to check labels for simple ingredients."

Sandwich buns, such as the latest from Boulart Inc., a large-scale artisanal baker in Lachine, Quebec, Canada, are other register ringers for the deli.

"Consumers are looking for more

exotic items with toppings or textures," says Camille Fortier, marketing supervisor. Our Everything Bun and our Focaccia Sandwich bun add variety in terms of look and flavor. They both have a topping and come pre-sliced, which makes use easy execution wise."

Bäckerhaus Veit has expanded its Gourmet Buns offerings to on-trend flavors like Caramelized Onion Pretzel Buns, Sriracha Pretzel Buns and its Life Craft Beer Bun. These savory ingredients complement protein sandwich fillings, thus enhancing the overall eating experience, according to Krupa. For example, "the Craft Beer Bun delivers a rich caramelized malt flavor that's perfect for hot sandwiches and burgers."

Rolls baked with unique ingredients, such as ancient grains, provide a twist on common flavor profiles, says Erica Elliott, marketing manager for Tribeca Oven, Inc., hearth and artisan bread bakers based in Carlstadt, NJ. 'We have recently launched our Sprouted Grain Bistro Roll. This sandwich carrier is a flavorful option that works across multiple day parts."

Flatbreads are a mainstay of the deli aisle, says Karen Toufayan, vice president of marketing and sales for Toufayan Bakeries, in Ridgefield, N.J. "This popularity reflects their familiarity, ease of use and acceptance by the entire family. They are also affordable, making price-sensitive shoppers receptive to stocking up on them as a meal staple. We've just introduced a Tandoori Flatbread. These traditional Indian-style flatbreads make a delicious change of pace."

Some health-conscious deli shoppers are looking for more of certain ingredients, while others want less. Bread manufacturees are accommodating both.

One example is Kontos Foods' Greek Lifestyle Flatbread. This high-protein, low-calorie bread appeals to carbohydrate-conscious shoppers and ticks the box for aligning with the trendy healthful appeal of the Mediterranean-style diet, accord-



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ing to Warren Stoll, who serves as marketing director for the Paterson, NJ-headquartered company.

Another is Toufayan's Lavash Wraps, made with a combination of flax, oat fiber and whole wheat as well as the company's newly-introduced line of sprouted whole wheat breads, including Sprouted Whole Wheat Organic Pitas, Wraps and Smart Pockets.

There is growing popularity of gluten-free and GMO-free breads and wraps, says Toufayan. Examples of these products include the company's Gluten Free Smart Grain Wraps, which have a soft pliable texture and are non-GMO, soy free, vegan and high in fiber, and Gluten Free Pizza Crusts, thin-style breads perfect for personal-size pizzas.

Concern over food waste and portion control are key purchasing decisions for some consumers. This has led bakers to create smaller package sizes and smaller-sized breads.

"We've reformulated the packaging for our wraps from 10- to five-count," says Bonsignore of Valley Lahvosh. "The 15-inch wraps are a softer, shorter shelf life version of our traditional cracker-like bread. The smaller size makes it easier for customers to use the whole package and then come back and buy more."

Toufayan Bakeries has recently introduced its Mini Pitettes. These 4-inch, bite-sized, pita pockets, available in white and whole-wheat, make excellent 'slider' carriers for both snacks and parties.

On the convenience front, flow pack technology is becoming more popular, says Boulart's Fortier. "It's an easy solution for operators to have items that come already pre-packed as it's convenient and easy to manage. For consumers, it offers an easy grab-and-go option and conveys food safety, as your food is packaged and not touched by anyone else."

Offer Fresh-Baked Meal Solutions

Creating meal solutions through cross merchandising is one of the best ways to sell more bread in the deli.

"Sell artisan loaves on knee knocker displays in front of the deli service case. Or merchandise half panini loaves in a basket next to or on the grab-and-go case that holds the pre-sliced deli meats and cheeses so time-starved customers can get their bread when picking up their sandwich ingredients," recommends Bäckerhaus Veit's Krupa.

Savvy merchandising can drive cross-department traffic and purchases between the deli and bakery.

"For example, sandwiches can be wrapped in a ring that mentions the bread is also available to purchase in the bakery section of the store," says Fortier's Boulart. Vice versa, bakery staff or point-of-sale signage in the bakery can direct customers to the deli to purchase a sandwich or other innovative culinary use of a particular type of bread."

Set up a grilled panini station in the deli to create interest and theater, suggests Krupa. "This offers customers a hot grilled-to-order sandwich without adding to the service case or prepared foods lineup. Having added theatre in the store is a great way to create visual impact."

Beyond sandwiches, the sky's the limit as far as cross merchandising ideas for bread in the deli.

Position sourdough or ancient grain Mini Boules to be used as bowls in stores that have a hot soup or chili bar, Krupa adds. "Not only is the bread a great tasting compliment to the soup, it eliminates extra packaging appealing to Millennials' desire for increased sustainability."

Valley Lahvosh's Bonsignore suggests several other out-of-the box cross merchandising ideas for flatbreads. Merchandise in place of crackers on charcuterie platters. Display as a platform for madeat-home personalized pizzas cross promoted with shredded cheeses, topping sauces and meats like sliced pepperoni, ham or prosciutto. Crumble and top a green salad instead of croutons or bundle slices alongside as a salad accompaniment. Finally, brush with butter and seasonings to create an assorted bread basket as a dinner go-with for deli proteins, such as rotisserie chicken.

Finally, the drive for perishables departments like the deli to keep things fresh and innovative has meant that many stores have broken free from their everyday planograms and are testing out alternative product placements

throughout their stores to drive sales, according to Rise Baking Co.'s Wilman. "Having recognized that each market is driven differently based on the demographics, time of year and so forth and our products are a complimentary accompaniment to multiple categories, such as soups, salads, deli-meats and fresh-prepared meal kits, we strongly encourage cross merchandising for our artisan breads throughout the store. All can be easily be achieved through the means of mobile display racks and merchandisers, providing the flexibility to adapt the merchandising to each store and location, recognizing what may have worked well at one time in a store might not ring true long term."





Items aimed at vegetarians are on the rise

BY KEITH LORIA

recent report by Mintel revealed that 31 percent of Americans are now practicing "meat free" days, so a deli offering extensive and delicious vegetarian options in-store can position the department as trendy and in touch with consumers' dietary concerns.

Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel, a division of Olson Communications based in Chicago, IL. says the rise in vegetarian items in the deli is very much a part of the veg-centric movement.

"Veg-centric items are not necessarily vegetarian, but appeal to the majority of consumers who are interested in adding more vegetables to their diets without eliminating meat protein all together," she says. "Colorful and flavorful veg-centric dishes may be vegetarian, but often they include meat, as well. We consider this the age of the omnivore, with consumers interested in eating many different things."

> Delis that offer vegetarian/vegan items are great places for plant-based diet newbies to explore a wider range of choices than what they feel confident to initially make at home.

> "Foods such as guinoa, farro and other whole grains as well as edamame and kale may be unfamiliar to those just starting to experi-

ment with plant-based diets, and there's a large measure of comfort in finding them ready to go in tasty and colorful take-out

options," says Georgia Orcutt, program director for the Oldways Vegetarian Network,

a Boston-based nonprofit food and

sider that people who seek vegetarian items at delis might not consider themselves vegetarian but are looking to go meatless one or two days a week. Also, people will shop at the deli to buy vegetarian foods for friends or house guests.







of Farm Ridge Foods, headquartered in Islandia, NY, notes that while vegetarian eating seems like an inconvenience to many people, it's important that healthy, convenient meals are readily available in supermarket delis.

Maeve Webster, president of Menu Matter, based in Arlington, VT, agrees that vegetarian items are becoming more prevalent, but thinks that to keep them relevant to a broader array of consumers, these foods shouldn't necessarily be pushed specifically as vegetarian.

"Given the ongoing focus on produce-forward items, these dishes are enjoying the same level of innovative care on the operator side and broader interest on the consumer side," she says. "Frankly, the vegetarian-ness of the dish should be simply one factor of the fact that it doesn't include meat, rather than the primary innovation objective. Additionally, deli operators should not create these items as some type of somewhat disappointing substitute for a meat dish, but rather a celebration of the ingredients in their own right."

The Healthy Way

Orcutt notes today's supermarket delis understand the need to be relevant to all of their shoppers, especially in terms of health and wellness, and this includes the

Patty Amato, senior vice president ever growing trend toward plant foods and meatless meals.

> "Emerging science continues to show how a plant-based diet can prevent and even reverse the progression of coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and other chronic conditions," she says. "Eating more plant foods promotes human health and also contributes to the health of the ket deli to offer lots of plant-based planet."

Mark Miller, vice president of marketing at Simply Fresh Foods, based in Buena Park, CA, sees a lot more people watching their diets and looking for plant-based proteins in place of meat.

"We do some stuff with chickpea salads with other beans mixed in, and the hummus world has exploded," he says. "We've had success with black bean dip also, which is fairly new to our lineup, but something that can be sold in the refrigerated section of the deli."

The Better Bean Co., based in Wilsonville, OR, is the first bean company with products sold in the deli sections of local grocers like Whole Foods and Fresh Market, and co-founder Hannah Kullberg believes that [vegetarianism] is a trend that will be on the rise.

"People are becoming very aware about the impact of industrial meat on their bodies and the environment, and Better Bean has been on a mission to change the

way Americans eat beans," she says. "We make a line of chilled, ready-to-eat beans that taste so good, they inspire even the bean wary to fall in love with them."

The Better Bean Co. products are vegan, gluten-free, Non-GMO Verified and with half the sodium of canned beans.

"I would encourage any supermaroptions without dairy, eggs or gluten," says Kullberg. "This offering will cater to vegetarians as well as special diet eaters. Vegetarians want to eat high-quality whole foods, too."

Demographics Play a Role

Shoppers represent widespread cultural diversity, which tends to be greater in urban areas, but some of the smaller retailers are committed to offering vegetarian take-out items, says Orcutt.

"One thing to consider is the way options for the supermarket deli's party platters are changing," she says. "For example, Fareway, with 117 stores in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, and South Dakota, offers fruit and vegetable kabobs, along with the more traditional meat and cheese platters."

Miller believes that the vegetarian movement is more big city urban than the middle of the country, but sees it slowly catching on around the country.

Though younger consumers tend to have a significantly greater interest in vegetarian specifically and produce-forward generally, Webster says there is a growing interest among Gen X and Baby Boomers as well as across other demographics, including age and income level.

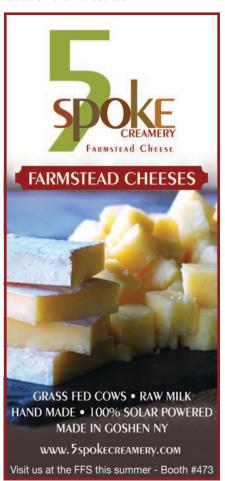
"It's becoming wider spread, but I think urban consumers, which do tend to be younger so that fits with the other demographic skews we see, tend to be more focused on vegetarian and produce-forward dishes," she says.

Marketing to Vegetarians

Nationwide, vegans make up less than 5 percent of the population, and while in some areas they will certainly account for a larger share, most deli operators will have very few vegan customers.

"Deli operators should note that when an item is identified as vegan, it may appeal to a niche group of consumers, but it will immediately turn off another, typically larger, group," says Webster.

Savvy supermarkets are highlighting the presence of a chef in their deli departments and calling attention to plant-based foods on their websites.



Savvy supermarkets are highlighting the presence of a chef in their deli departments and calling attention to plant-based foods on their websites.

Supermarket dietitian programs differ widely from retailer to retailer, but in some cases the dietitians plan promotions with the deli department and increase their visibility as agents of health and wellness in the deli signage.

"In many cases, local farmers and food producers can be highlighted to appeal to consumers who are becoming increasingly more mindful of everyone involved in bringing food to their tables," says Olson. "In a recent Culinary Visions Panel survey, 63 percent of consumers said they love talking to vendors who are passionate about the food they sell."

Delis can become a destination by offer-

ing a wide range of tasteful, flavorful foods that appeal to vegetarians and mainstream consumers who want to enjoy more vegetables. And, of course, there are a myriad of opportunities to cross merchandise with the produce department.

Innovative deli managers can also could work with brands to partner on promotions for Meatless Mondays or annual events tied to plant protein or vegetarians.

Premium vegetarian- and vegan-friendly products can create a sense of excitement for regular customers who are looking to reduce their environmental footprint or cut down on their red meat consumption. **DB**







Salads Take A Creative Turn

A look at how delis are improving sales by focusing on salad offerings

BY KEITH LORIA

he perimeter of the grocery store has always enjoyed the trending reputation of being fresher and more health forward than its center store counter parts.

This is definitely the case in the deli salad segment, which has substantially expanded over the years to include more unique, nutritious and ethnically-inspired options.

"Deli/prepared salads have always enjoyed this reputation, along with saving time and being convenient," says Amanda Hughart, senior associate brand manager for Reser's Fine Foods, headquartered in Beaverton, OR. "The newest trends in the deli department include emphasizing convenience, food exploration, choice and fun, especially vital for younger audiences."

According to New York City-based Nielsen's FreshFacts figures, deli salads make up close to 10 percent of the deli category's share of dollars, right behind specialty cheese. This category makes up about 16 percent of the department's prepared food dollars, second





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Healthy Has It

Although the staple potato salad, coleslaw and macaroni salad are still key players, today's delis are supplementing the traditional with healthier alternatives.

"Customers are looking for healthier options in deli that are focusing more on the nutritional panel with a particular emphasis on the product's sugar content and cleaner ingredient labels," says Wendie DiMatteo, CEO of ASK Foods, which is based in Palmyra, PA. In addition to products with lighter dressings, she has noted an increase in more grain combinations with increased vegetables.

"Additionally, we see more interest in bean salads, as customers are changing up their proteins," says DiMatteo.

The consumers seem to appreciate highlighting attributes on the labels.

This includes calories per serving, sodium, vegetarian, vegan and no preservatives added. "In our fast-paced world, customers want convenience, so there is strong demand for pre-pack salads in clear packaging that allows for a better display of the product," says DiMatteo.

ASK Foods' culinary team recently created lower fat cheese spreads and potato salads that are both healthy and flavorful.

"Our focus has been on giving our customers options for healthier products with reduced fat and sugars," says DiMatteo.



"Of course, the trick is making these new, healthier products taste great. We create our own dressings from scratch, which helps us to adjust their fat and sugar levels appropriately."

Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development for Don's Food Products, based in Schwenksville, PA, says the company has long been a leader in colorful grain salads, which is a good fit for delis because they are beyond a bag of chips and sandwiches.

"We are developing items that meet the needs of health and wellness because that's what people want today," he says. "It's really the Millennial generation that is driving this."

Along the healthier realm, communicating great taste, freshness and transparency also are top priorities in packaging design and graphics. Products that have the resealability function are perceived by consumers as being fresher.

Packaging that features transparent windows communicates food safety and fresh appeal. These should all be considered when showcasing items revolving around salads.

Healthful eating is vital to consumers in any category and is especially true for salads in the deli department.

"More importantly and aside from our perimeter of store location, all our American Classic Salads are made fresh and are on trend with free-from food benefits, never containing high fructose corn syrup, artificial flavors or colors," says Hughart from Reser's Fine Foods. "Further maximizing freshness for our consumers and retailers, our salads are made regionally from one of our closest facilities to ensure



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What's New

According to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakerv Association's (IDDBA) What's in Store report, the salad category offers a great platform for showcasing a prepared foods department's ability to differentiate while incorporating popular culinary trends appealing to a diverse customer base. While traditional salads continue to have their place as easy crowd-pleasers, innovation will be a necessity in order for the deli to command its share of stomach for young, health-conscious or ethnic-driven shoppers and those looking to the deli for entertainment occasions.

Manufacturers have stepped up to the plate to provide unique salad options for these consumers.

For example, Reser's Fine Foods recently launched its regionally-inspired flavors, including Southern Style and New York Style Potato Salads, to national audiences who are demanding diverse alternatives.

"Our Southern Style with Egg Potato Salad has a touch of sweetness, which pairs well with grilled meats and the New York Style Potato Salad features classic ingredients inspired by New York delicatessens," says Hughart. "Also new, our Stadium Cole Slaw is a creative twist on a fan classic that can be served as a traditional side salad or as a relish on hot dogs, brats or pulled pork sliders."

She believes that potato salad, macaroni salad and coleslaw should be foundational staples provided at both self- and full-service locations.

"In the grab-and-go section of the deli, we are finding it important to fill the needs of impulse buys, as younger consumers are looking for new food flavors as well as traditional salads when shopping the perimeter," says Hughart.

Merchandising Matters

Delis should be creating excitement around food exploration by highlighting the variety of flavor/taste options available in the deli salad category.

"There is ample opportunity and space in the supermarket deli section to execute engaging sampling demos that focus on recipes, application ideas, event concepts, ease of preparation, freshness and taste," says Hughart.

Research shows that younger audiences want to engage with brands while they're in-store, and part of that engagement means the brand should be fun to interact with.

For this reason, Reser's is engaging with consumers in a deep, meaningful and fun way through in-store country music pro-

motions and giveaways tied to CMA Fest 2018 and Country Jam.

"Our CMA Fest promotion provided consumers with an opportunity to enter to win a trip to CMA Fest and hang out with Reser's at an event," says Hughart.

Meal Kits Matter

Cappelli says that meal kits continue to rise in popularity in the deli, and healthy side dishes are always in vogue with this segment. That means salads are seeing an increase in sales, as well.

"Don's has responded to the trends, and we want to be a meal kit companion partner, and have an advertising campaign aimed at this," he says. "Staples that delis should have from Don's include traditional protein salads, clean deli salads, and clean and colorful grain salads."

He says that it has only been the last six to eight months that the company has focused on this meal kit market because he kept reading about how this segment was going to evolve and explode.

"Americans want health, wellness and convenience, but they don't want to do two hours of cooking and cleaning, which is required with some of these delivery services that were getting popular," says Cappelli. "We knew the evolution would be for retailers to start selling meal kits and consumers seeing displays of items in the deli that can be used in these groupings."

Foodservice Incorporation

Deli managers should have signage highlighting new items, he adds, without giving up on the staples that people have been buying for decades. That means having some items behind the glass as well as offering the grab-and-go.

Savvy delis should be incorporating salads into a sandwich or foodservice program, as well.

"Retailer foodservice programs represent a strong, competitive threat to the restaurant industry and a unique opportunity to cross promote other products in the deli section, like salads," says Hughart. "Busy and on-the-go consumers are key to finding insights that drive these programs. Engaging the busy consumer with samples and seasonal specials in the foodservice section is vital."

Salads are a key category in supermarket delis and with expansion of prepared food programs, new varieties and healthier alternatives, retailers have more options than ever before.

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Mediterranean Foods A Strong Niche in Delis

From meats, cheeses, dips and spreads to flatbreads, olives and other accoutrements, foods from this region remain on trend

BY LISA WHITE

see the potential of according to the council. Mediterranean foods in supermarket delis, one only has to look at the hummus category as a barometer.

U.S. grocery sales of hummus are now topping \$725 million annually, according to numbers cited by the USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council. It's estimated that 25 percent of American homes now stock hummus in the fridge. Just 20 years ago, hummus sales barely topped \$5 million,

Market Research Future's report on the global hummus market projects U.S. sales to top \$1.104 billion by 2022 growing at a compound annual growth rate of 9.38 percent from 2016 to 2022.

"It goes without saying that hummus is a staple of Mediterranean dishes, but more Americans are experimenting with and embracing more ethnic and exotic foods," says Lori Bigras, director of marketing and communications at Salinas, CA-based

Green Giant Fresh. "As hummus continues to grow in popularity, people are more inclined to include this as a staple item on their shopping lists."

Current Trends

Today's consumers are seeking healthy options with added health benefits, and because Mediterranean foods fit this profile and tends to be minimally processed and nutritious, these items are on trend.

Shoppers also are demanding authentic









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flavors, and are not afraid to experiment.

"Younger shoppers in particular love experimenting with bold new flavors or types of cuisine they haven't experienced before, including authentic, Mediterranean offerings that are regionally specific," says John Sullivan, president and CEO, Norseland Inc., Darien, CT.

Mediterranean foods have become more entrenched in many American dishes. as well

"In the U.S., hummus is not just an accompaniment to falafels and Mediterranean dishes, but also is gaining popularity and usage ideas beyond the obligatory healthy veggie tray dip option," says Bigras. "People are getting creative with how they include this creamy, nutritious and protein-packed topping in a variety of dishes and meals. From including it on sandwiches, flatbreads and burgers as a tasty spread, to putting it on grilled meats and chicken, consumers are finding new and unique ways to infuse hummus into American cuisine."

With the movement towards cleaner labels, hummus maker Tribe Mediterranean Foods, LLC, located in Taunton, MA, has changed its entire line to eliminate potassium sorbate.



this, and shelf life is not impacted," says CEO John McGuckin. "Every Tribe item is either completely clean or completely organic. We felt this wasn't just our responsibility, but also an opportunity to attract new consumers to the category."

Plant-based proteins are playing a bigger role in the health and wellness revolution. and hummus is low in fat and sugar, while high in protein, so it meets the exceedingly "Pasteurization has enabled us to do strict criteria of many Millennial shoppers."

"Other trends we're seeing is innovation in form and size," says McGuckin. "We discovered through consumer insights that 10 ounces is too much, so we offer an 8-ounce hummus line with a more accessible price point geared for any occasion."

At FOODMatch, a producer and importer of Mediterranean foods located in New York City, the olive and antipasti category is constantly evolving.

"Many global flavor trends lend continued on page 55



KICKSTARTING OLIVE OFFERINGS

to any Mediterranean section, and there are many options for supermarket delis when it comes to these products.

"I believe that many successful delis are embracing their customers' desire for having multiple purchase touchpoints throughout the department," says Brandon Gross, vice president of marketing at New York City-based FOODMatch. "Offering a diverse array of products at the olive/antipasti bar, packout (a great place for organics), paired with cheese and charcuterie and mixed into prepared food items ensures you capture the eye of everyone in the deli.

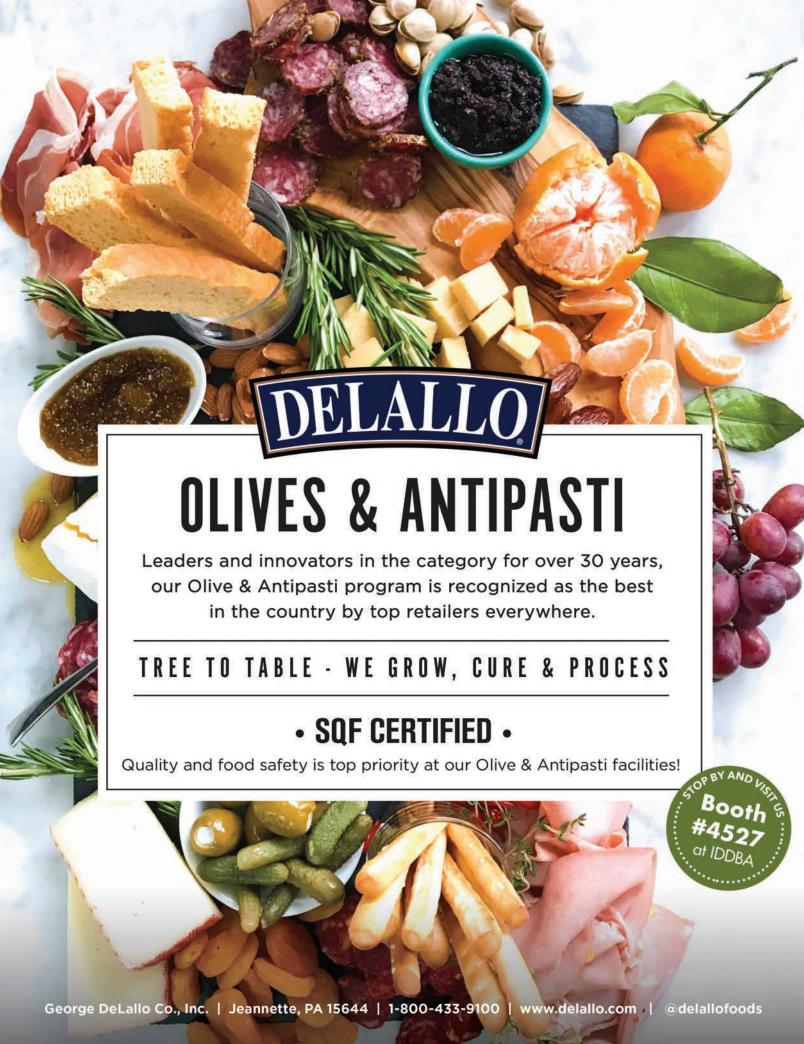
Jeannette, PA-based DeLallo Italian Marketplace offers 180 olive varieties in a range of flavors and colors from all over the world—from

lives are a key component the famous purple-hued Greek Calamata with its tart and tangy bite to the buttery green Castelvetrano from Italy.

"Olive sales in the deli are about more than just olives," says Giuliana Pozzuto, director of marketing, DeLallo Italian Marketplace, Jeannette, PA. "Sadly, not everyone loves olives as much as we do, which is why it is crucial to offer antipasto mixes featuring more favorites like bite-sized cheeses, artichokes, roasted peppers, etc. As for programs, we offer a number of customizable Olive & Antipasti programs for every type of retailer to include olive bar (bulk) items and prepackaged fresh deli items (in eye-catching crystal-clear deli containers)."

The Olive Branch division of Farm Ridge Foods, based in Islandia, NY, is on the cusp of today's latest trends in this category.

"Our emerging, varieties include Caribbean Black Olives, Tropical Blend and Classic Moroccan Citrus," says Patty Amato,



senior vice president. "Today, the ubiqui- areas of the world. tous olives serve as both a cultural staple and a gourmet specialty."

Staple varieties for the department's olive bar include include Kalamata. Greek Black, Green, Moroccan and Stuffed olives.

Olives are big and only getting bigger. While there has been an overall increase in the popularity of Mediterranean cuisine, consumers are opting for more adventurous and diverse flavors from different

"Due to the ever-expanding reach of the internet and social media, Millennials are more in-tune with these trending world flavors and dynamic cuisines," says Pozzuto. "In response, DeLallo continues to expand its lineup with more regional-specific flavors and recipes."

Along with more ethnic flavors, the company has been experiencing a lot of success with some new medleys featuring

unique Italian olive varieties.

Effective marketing and proper merchandising can create an olive destination

Olive Branch's Tasty Trios promotion is designed to drive sales and educate consumers. With this program, each guarter the Olive Branch features a trio of theme-related olive products from around the world. Products are promoted with various merchandising materials.

"Tasty Trios is a carefully managed marketing campaign that affords choice retailers the opportunity to elevate the customers' experience while maximizing profit," says Amato.

Table olive supplier Musco Family Olive Co. in Tracy, CA, has noticed a surge in sales of olives packaged for snacking, including its Olives to Go line.

"[Millennials] want products to consume immediately and on the go, and product attributes are more important than brand names," says Dan L. Kell, vice president of sales for Musco Family Olive Co. "They research products and the companies that make them and experiment more often with new products."

Olive bars have proponents and opponents, but in general are sought after by customers in most supermarket delis.

"It's pretty common knowledge that there is a segment of the shopper base that will not shop in an open container (but covered) environment, typical of olive bars for food safety issues," says Kell. "Having said that, consumers do like the fresh presentation of the olive/Mediterranean bars that often have select products that cannot be found on the shelf in packaged products."

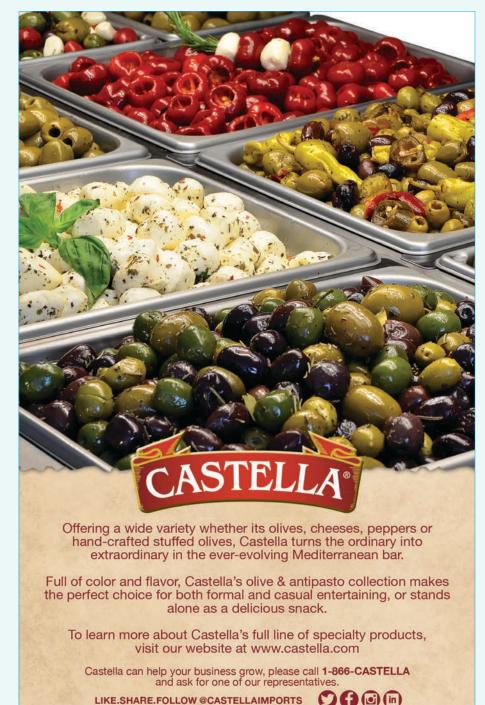
Musco's most popular olive types are black ripe pitted, Spanish Pimiento Stuffed, and Greek Kalamata.

There also are various varieties of stuffed olives with products like garlic, cheese, jalapeños and various nuts that are on trend.

DeLallo has created new seasonal and holiday-themed items and events around these items to promote at the olive bar in the deli.

"We have a very rich social media presence, where we can connect with consumers directly and inspire them with usage ideas for their favorite olive and antipasti items—from simple cheese, wine and olive pairings to more elaborate kitchen creations," says Pozzuto.

DeLallo also partners up with some of



Effective marketing and proper merchandising can create an olive destination in the deli.

the top food and lifestyle bloggers to promote its olives and antipasti.

"Deli associates can encourage customers to try new items and new flavors," says Pozzuto. "Because we consider our items to be recipe-driven ingredients, olives and antipasti are sure to increase basket sales. This means consumers are more likely to make additional specialty purchases in your deli, produce, wine and bakery departments."

Freestanding self-serve olive bars are effecting for merchandising and creating a one-stop shop for Mediterranean foods.

"Olive bars can range in size from 10 to 50 items, but at DeLallo, we have customizable solutions for all stores and spaces," says Pozzuto.

Along with freestanding bar programs,

DeLallo's offers integrated bulk bars all the way to an assortment of packaged olives and antipasti for deli wall merchandisers.

"Even if a retailer only has a small space to work with, offering these items is crucial due to the fast-growing charcuterie and cheese board category," says Pozzuto.

Musco merchandises its specialty olives and to-go packs in the deli with off shelf merchandising.

"We recently introduced a single cup Olives to Go that has great applications for the on-the-go consumer shopping in deli for their meal occasion," says Kell. "We definitely try to bring the consumer solutions for usage occasions through our website and Facebook page, but also through various forms other marketing applications from radio to print."

DB

Continued from page 52

themselves perfectly to traditional fare – mushrooms and artichokes marinated in spicy harissa sauce, grape leaves stuffed with brown rice, grilled olives and artichokes – are just a few examples," says Brandon Gross, the company's vice president of marketing.

From pita to naan to lahvosh, Mediterranean breads also have made big inroads in the deli.

"People want a bigger variety of breads, and are going into ethnic and ancient grains, which offer more value for the money," says Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager at Valley Lahvosh Baking Co. based in Fresno, CA. "Consumers are wanting traditional bread alternatives to add something to sandwiches and meals.

What's New

Mediterranean food suppliers have unveiled a number of new products in this segment geared for supermarket delis.

Norseland's new Garcia Baquero Mediterranean Tapas Platter, with presliced Manchego, Iberico, Cabra al Vino and Redondo Iglesias Serrano Jamon, addresses two major trends -- the rising demand for specialty cheeses and the



demand for portability and convenience.

"A Millennial who is always on the go or lives alone is not always going to buy an entire wedge of cheese, but the tapas platter enables them to try out several of our Spanish cheeses as well as a traditional cured ham, ready to pair for a quick snack or lunch," says Sullivan.

Parmissimo is bringing the popular kid's snacking item, 1,2,3Cheese!, to the U.S. through Norseland. This nutritionally-balanced, portable snack box includes spreadable Parmigiano Reggiano, breadsticks and a juice box.

"Also, Garcia Baquero is debuting a mini wheel of their DOP six-month aged Manchego, complete with a wooden guillotine and two handle stainless steel knife," says Sullivan. "This kind of special holiday, limited edition packaging is perfect for creating engaging displays and delighting foodie shoppers. Packaging that is eye-catching and creates an exciting, special experience is key for driving interest and repurchase."

With the emergence of sweet or dessert hummus, along with spicier versions, Tribe seeks to expand sales in this category with sea salt and vinegar, buffalo and chocolate hummus varieties. The company also has





recently introduced a snack size and multipack of 2-ounce mini hummus cups.

Sabra Hummus in White Plains, NY, rotates different hummus flavors into its offerings every six months to complement its conventional flavors.

"We like to freshen up the category with new Greek-inspired flavors as well as unique tastes, such as barbecue and jack fruit," says Eric Greifenberger, vice president of marketing.

This past winter, the company debuted its Mediterranean bean dip, which includes white, black and red bean offerings.

"We're capitalizing on the shift from meat- to plant-based diets," says Greifenberger. "This is a flavor variety seeking category where people really like a wide selection.

Toufayan Bakeries, a supplier of Mediterranean-style breads based in Ridgefield, NJ, now offers naan and tandoori lines.

"We've had supermarket delis use our Mediterranean-style flatbread for sand-wich programs," says Karen Toufayan, vice president of marketing. "We've come out with an organic line, as well."

Kontos Foods, headquartered in Paterson, NJ, has launched a two-piece 9-inch panini with pre-grilled marks for deli sandwich programs that don't have a grill.

"The other new product is a 2-inch cocktail flatbread, which is popular in deli soup and salad bars," says Warren Stoll, Kontos' marketing and business development director. "We also introduced a two-piece pizza crust."

Packaging introductions also are more

prevalent in this category. For example, Valley Lahvosh updated its packaging line, pumping up the color scheme while simplifying the graphics.

"We also wanted something that honored us being a 95-year-old company that's family owned and operated," says Bonsignore. "We updated the look, but also retained the information of our history on the package."

The Staples

When deciding on the proper assortment of Mediterranean foods, supermarket delis need to keep the staples in check first.

"Delis should balance their traditional European cheeses with American originals," says Sullivan at Norseland. "All milks – cow, goat and sheep – should be represented."

In terms of bread, pita and flatbread are must haves, but organic and non-GMO varieties are beginning to impact the segment, as well, notes Toufayan.

For sandwich programs in particular, panini bread has become more of a staple in many regions.

"We make gyro bread without a pocket, so the bread is either cut in half or folded around ingredients," say Stoll at Kontos. "We also have tandoori and other naans, which make for flavorful ethnic sandwiches. The General American population is looking for unique, niche, ethnic, flavorful and innovative products."

Staple hummus flavors are regular or classic, roasted red pepper, garlic, olive tapenade and pine nut.

"The staple flavors that are 70 percent

of the category," says McGuckin at Tribe. "Then, it's all about bringing timely flavors that add value and attract more uses."

The 10-ounce sizes are dominant, but there's been increasing popularity in smaller sizes for snacking and single-serve use.

Successful Selling

Marketing and merchandising Mediterranean foods properly is key to creating a destination in the deli.

There are a number of methods that work well to bring added attention to this category. For instance, Sullivan at Norseland recommends displaying cheeses based on occasion; offering cheeses that are easy to cook with as well as cheeses for entertaining.

Items should be grouped together to inspire occasions and displayed with complementary foods for added convenience.

"It's an added plus to have a cheesemonger behind the counter to answer questions," he says. "Alternatively, shelf-talkers that provide more details about the cheese, like origin, usage and ingredients, are popular with shoppers. Ultimately, shoppers want to feel like they're making informed decisions, so providing them with specific information about the cheeses you carry is a must."

Social media continues to be an import-

There are a number of methods that work well to bring added attention to this category.

ant part of how consumers shop and learn about products. Consequently, collaborations between retailer social media and brand channels have become more common, as digital coupons and digital recipes become standards that shoppers expect.

"However, it's important to still collaborate on the store level, so that social media initiatives translate to the retail experience," says Sullivan. "Retailers and brands should increase their collaboration on shelf talkers, danglers and special displays so that shoppers can see social media imagery come to life. This strengthens both the brand recognition and the retail experience."

To capitalize on the lunch daypart, delis can offer prepared food stations, pair promotions with Mediterranean occasions and set up a grab-and-go area that includes food from this region. Enhancing these areas with visual displays also can be effective.

"Supermarket delis have to focus on

offering quality and variety in order to compete with the boom of fast-casual restaurants, meal kit delivery services and on-demand delivery apps," says Sullivan. "The Culinary Visions Panel out of Chicago reports that 44 percent of their respondents would make the deli their go-to eatery if a chef was creating the meals. Taste, freshness, convenience and customization options all have to come into play to drive repurchase at the deli."

While hummus should never be out of the cold chain—and should always be merchandised in refrigeration—there are several cross promotional opportunities that retailers can take advantage of.

"Place hummus near premium cheeses, and display crackers, pitas and chips nearby for quick appetizer platter ideas," recommends Bigras at Green Giant Fresh. "Display signage to have on counters with recipes and imagery showing how hummus



can be used in and on a variety of dishes."

Retailers who merchandise hummus near value-added and ready-to-use veggie packages can get a leg up for those seeking quick and healthy snacking solutions.

'Back to School is also an occasion to remind parents that hummus is a great snack for kid's lunches," says Bigras. "Our 2.5-ounce snack cups make it easy to pack a healthy snack for everyone in the family."

Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese in Waterloo, WI, offers marinated fresh Mozzarella, cherry sized, in olive and canola oils and spices.

"We recommend taking the marinade and drizzling it on other items like olives, salami, veggies, veggie trays, bruchetta, appetizer in a cup," says Debbie Crave, vice president. "If you don't have time to make marinade, you have Mozzarella with hummus story to generate more repeat marinade that can be drizzled on other items, skewered with basil and tomatoes or warmed for an appetizer with meat or tortillas."

Telling a supplier's story also is effective in grabbing the attention of consumers seeking Mediterranean items. Crave likes to get its story out about its sustainable operations, as an increasing number of consumers are looking for environmentallyfriendly food options.

Sabra's recent packaging redesign brings added focus to its fresh ingredients.

"We try to put bundles together, like carrots and hummus, to provide a value incentive and more turnkey solutions," says Greifenberger. "We do this with cross merchandising, cross promotions or a great traffic and more dollars in the basket."

Effective Merchandising

Toufayan's product is merchandised in two ways-either in its own wooden display rack, which includes one specific to its organic line, or in front of the deli if there is no rack program.

We do tie-ins with other merchandise. like hummus or deli meat, along with cross promotions," says Toufayan. "Stores that have a strong foodservice program include our breads as part of a meal replacement or grab-and-go program."

The company's packaging includes recipe suggestions on the back, while its website has recipes and at least four videos a month informing customers on innovative usage.

Valley Lahvosh's pizza crust is a top seller as are its shape line with a Christmas tree, star and heart.

"So many things work with our products in the deli, so there are many opportunities for cross merchandising," says Bonsignore. "We've seen our bread and crackers on top of cheese cases and featured in recipes as well as used as a sandwich bread alternative. And it's versatile enough to customize the pairings and uses."

Because hummus is rarely eaten solo, if ever, this product encourages secondary purchases, whether pretzels, pita chips or

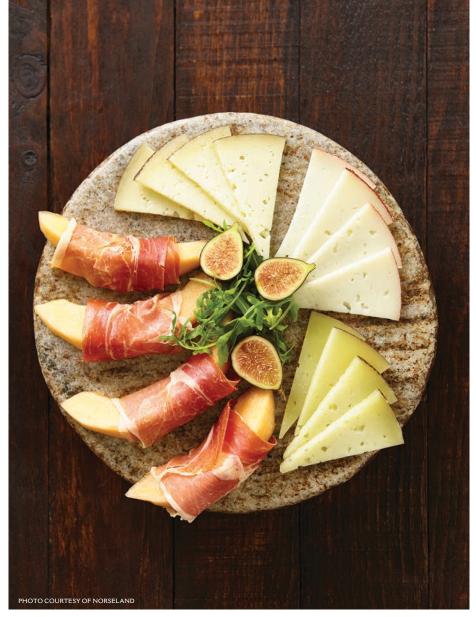
"Hummus can also be used as a spread and is a great alternative to mayonnaise," says McGuckin at Tribe. "This is where the category can expand, since it's only at 25 percent usage in terms of those purchasing the product.'

Mediterranean foods are growing, as consumers are seeking healthier and more nutritious food options. Opportunities in this segment for delis continues to grow.

"Over the last couple of years, we've seen a strong trend in the Mediterranean way of eating," says Bonsignore. "People like that aspect of Mediterranean foods in general, so it helps to be creative with these products and make them fun."

Packaging also plays a huge part in deli merchandising. FOODMatch offers olive and antipasti programs for any format from fresh bars, to behind the glass, to prepacked cups, packout programs, grab and go, portion pack, etc.

'Shoppers aren't one-size-fits-all, and our offerings reflect their diversity in terms of flavor and packaging," says Gross. DB









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The Future Is Now, And It Is Not In The Service Case

Convenience reigns supreme, even in high-quality meat

BY BOB JOHNSON

hen Austin, MN.-based Hormel Foods completed its acquisition of San Francisco Bay Area-based Columbus Craft Meats last November, it was the latest sign of a dramatic change in deli meats.

Columbus trademarked the phrase "No Baloney" for its web site, and proudly promises meat that is crafted, rather than contrived.

In announcing the \$850 million acquisition, the Midwestern meat conglomerate referred to Columbus as "an authentic premium deli meat and salami company."

Three years before the Columbus deal, Hormel acquired Applegate Farms, described in its press release and announcing the move as "the number one brand in the natural and organic value-added prepared meats category."

This dramatic remake of the company that invented Spam during the Great Depression symbolizes a tremendous change in customer preferences in the deli meat category.

"The world has changed since Hormel acquired Applegate and Columbus," says Alberto Minardi, CEO of Principe America, Long Beach, CA. "Tomorrow's consumer will have meats that range from antibiotic free to organic. Those are huge acquisitions."

Principe Foods produces 300 specialty deli meat products, is the largest producer of San Daniele prosciutto, and also produces Parma prosciutto.

According to the International Food Information Council Foundation 2017 Food & Health Survey, no added hormones or steroids, natural and raised without antibiotics all rated as significantly more important among retail food and beverage customers than even locally sourced or organic.





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For more information, email Sales@DietzAndWatson.com Dietz & Watson, INC. | 5701 Tacony St., Phila, PA 19135 | 800-333-1974 Consumers want high-quality, clean label special meat products, but they also want them in formats that take convenience to a new level.

E-commerce food sales grew by nearly 25 percent over the last year, according to Inmar Willard of Bishop Analytics, as supermarkets, super stores and dollar stores alike ran into competition so convenient, the consumer doesn't even have to leave their home or cubicle.

Total deli meat sales declined a half percent over the last year, according to Nielsen Fresh statistics cited in the Madison, WI-based International Deli Dairy Bakery Association's *What's In store 2018*, but the demand for convenience still creates oases of opportunity within what could be a stagnating market.

While a prepared meals program is worth developing, sliced meats for snacking in convenient grab and go packages are a major growth area in the deli.

"We're seeing retailers hiring buyers for just those products, which should tell you something," says Emil Rufolo, business development manager for imported meat from Spain and Italy at Atalanta, Elizabeth, NJ. "The real growth is in the sliced [product]. Trays that you can bring to a party are

The demand for convenience is a major driver of growth in grab-and-go lunch combination products as well as sliced deli meat snacks.

also very popular, but snacking, snacking, snacking is what I hear all day. The market is getting crowded with so many companies entering the sliced category."

The demand for convenience is a major driver of growth in grab-and-go lunch combination products as well as sliced deliment snacks.

"The retailers are going insane on the snack packs for lunch," says Minardi. "If you look at the luxury side for the young professionals, there is a humungous amount of lunchable products. People want protein-based diets made with higher end meats.

Processing and packaging improvements have helped make these pre-sliced products look fresher and last longer.

"Vacuum packaging and post-pasteurization techniques have increased the refrigerated shelf life of meats without the use of preservatives," says Justin Siegel, president of Deli Star, Fayetteville, IL. "This not only helps producers achieve a longer shelf life, it also meets a growing consumer desire for less preservatives in finished products."

These snack packs offer convenience, and many of them also provide high-quality deli meat along with companion foods.

"Combo packs are the newest: deli meat and crackers or meat and cheese," says Athos Maestri, president and CEO of Maestri d'Italia, Lakewood, NJ. "More and more deli meat is marketed in pre-sliced formats to maximize convenience."

Maestri d'Italia unabashedly claims to be the "Masters of Prosciutto," and specializes in slow cured, slow cooked and pre-sliced meats.

"We see our largest growth in snacking, smaller format, pre-sliced products," says George Gavros, founder of Zoe's Meats, Santa Rosa, CA. "They belong on peg boards of hanging, sliced deli meats. Consumers want convenience and ease of use. They don't want to wait for someone behind the counter to slice their meat."

Zoe's specializes in artisan-cured meats from sustainably-raised animals and takes pride in appealing to chefs with a range of pork and turkey salami products as well as prosciutto and uncured meat sticks.

"Everyone seems to be going bonkers over meat snacks, but I don't know how long that will last," Gavros says. "It started two or three years ago. Maybe it's a fad, and maybe it's going to last."

If trends on the other side of the Atlantic are any indication, the convenient combinations of pre-sliced meat and complementary foods will continue to rage for at least a few years more.

"The snack packs started about a year ago," Minardi says. "I see a lot of influence from Europe, where this has grown the last two or three years. It's sliced, packaged and ready to go."

What the years ahead will bring depends on evolving consumer preferences. **DB**





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Through It All, Italian is Still Royalty

Adventurous consumers seek authenticity in Italian meats

BY BOB JOHNSON

ome of the newest trends in deli meat flavors have origins that go back centuries, as our increasing multiculturalism and diversity have done nothing to diminish Italian meats.

A new generation of Americans is enchanted by the romance and unparalleled taste of traditional Italian deli meats.

"Consumers are looking for new/old – I know seems strange, but that is the best definition – flavors," says Simone Bocchini, president and CEO of Fratelli Beretta USA, Budd Lake, NJ. "They want to discover the old world traditional flavors like Rustico, Piccante, Finocchiona, Truffle."

Fratelli Beretta is a long-standing, family-owned Italian charcuterie business, starting as a small local meat processing business more than 200 years ago. The U.S. facility in Mount Olive, NJ produces salami, prosciutto, mortadella, pancetta, coppa and bresaola and antipasti, and also

imports deli meats from Italy.

"The staples are different in different markets," says Bocchini. "The West Coast calls for Italian dry as a staple item to have in the assortment line, while in the East Coast it is Soppressata. As a new flavor that seems to attract consumers, I will suggest fennel as well as innovative flavors like jalapeño. Wine and beer as well as cheese are the perfect pairings, but I will also suggest dry fruit or nuts."

Italian products are not suffering, as our meat tastes grow more global: pre-sliced salami sales increased more than 12 percent in the last year to pass ham as number two, according to Chicago-based Nielsen Fresh statistics, while total salami sales held steady.

Retailers should take full advantage of this renewed interest in the classics with a traditional Italian destination area within the deli.

"Create a 'charcuterie/salumeria' cor-

ner, including craft cheese," advises Antonio Corsano, CEO of Veroni USA, headquartered in Gloucester, NJ. "Cheese, artisan beers and imported wine are cross merchandising options."

Fiorentino, Francesco, Paolo, Adolfo and Ugo Veroni started Fratelli Veroni, which translates as Veroni Brothers, in Corregio in 1925. Today their descendants make dry-cured and cooked ham, salami, coppa and pancetta, speck and bresaola, and are famous for their giant mortadella, including the Guiness world record holder weighing in at well over 4,000 pounds and 20 feet long.

"The newest flavors and varieties are imported mortadella with the original recipe from the Bologna area, imported salami from the Parma area, and imported roasted ham and porchetta," Corsano says. "Combo antipasto varieties, salami/prosciutto and cheese, and salamini snack bites are popular. Party trays, or combo





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Domestic producers are building their own reputation for meats in the Italian tradition, including many made from animals raised to a higher ethical standard.

packages with multiple items are musthave items."

Domestic producers are building their own reputations for meats in the Italian tradition, including many made from animals raised to a higher ethical standard.

"In addition to our snack innovations, we have recently introduced a humanely-raised, heritage-breed prosciutto aged for a minimum of 15 months," says Deanna Depke, marketing associate at Volpi Foods, St. Louis, MO. "These legs are larger and have a more delicate flavor than traditional prosciutto due to their superior marbling and prolonged aging time."

Volpi Foods began in 1902 when Italian immigrant John Volpi produced dried salami small enough for clay miners in the St. Louis area to fit into their pockets at work. Today, the company, still family-owned, produces a wide range of pork products using methods that date back 5,000 years in Europe.

"At Volpi, we break down charcuterie into three families—whole muscle, mixed muscle and minced muscle salami," says Depke. "No charcuterie board is complete without one of each variety. In the whole muscle category, you're looking at classic prosciutto that can turn heads when you seek out our new heritage-breed prosciutto with superior marbling and a softer texture than its traditional counterpart. Mixed muscle coppa or cooked capocolla are also essentials to a balanced assortment, along with salami that can really add a uniqueness in flavor when you choose one of our Primo wine-infused or spicy varieties. Recently, we have seen a strong demand for pre-sliced assorted packs that make it easy for consumers to try several of these products at once."

There are so many pairings for authentic Italian meats that the cross merchandising opportunities are limited only by the retailer's imagination.

"Our products lend themselves to cross merchandising very well," says Depke. "Whether it be our chopped pancetta next to the fresh pasta selections or our shelf-stable pre sliced prosciutto next to cantaloupe in the summertime, our products are easy to pair across departments and provide consumers with guidance in recipe uses."

The main qualification for cross merchandising candidates is that they, too, must be authentic.

"Deli meat can be cross merchandised with any other product that can elevate the taste experience, mainly cheese and bread alternatives," says Athos Maestri, president and CEO of Maestri d'Italia, Lakewood, NJ. "Authenticity, convenience and clean labels are the must-haves."

New Flavors

Producers are competing with combinations that include Italian deli meat in convenient packages.

"New flavors coming out are sopressata, chorizo and prosciutto for our snack packs product," says Gil Pareles, marketing director at Olli Salumeria, Mechanicsville, VA. "Our staple products are our Olli Chubs. Must-have or popular products would be our grab-and-go items—Olli snack packs with cheese and crackers and sliced chub snack."

Olli Salumeria produces whole cured a pre-sliced meats, Salamini and natural salami, including an organic offering, from humanely-raised animals.

"We see the best results with crate displays for Olli chubs and club display boxes we use for Sam's and Costco," says Pareles. "With Olli snack packs, we pair Olli salami with Belgioso cheese and La Panzanella crackers, which helps us cross merchandise our products. Our innovative packaging allows us to have up to nine months shelf life. We package and seal in-house for quality assurance."

Producers have developed pre-sliced grab-and-go Italian products, many of them in packages that also include complementary foods, aimed at satisfying the growing appetite for convenience.

"Our line of Roltini Singles snacks has

exploded over the last couple of years, so we've been hyper-focused on expanding our assortment in the grab-and-go snack space," says Depke. "We've introduced a line of premium, single-serving Salami Stix that are made from pork raised without antibiotics and vacuum sealed for shelf stability and merchandising versatility."

Some of the packs are designed to provide a combination of foods that make for a convenient meal.

"We have a tray pack of Prosciutto di Parma and Parmigiano Reggiano," says Alberto Minardi, CEO of Principe America, Long Beach, CA. "We're seeing combinations of meats, fruits, olives or bread sticks. You have your protein, your carbohydrates and your fruit. You can put it in the grab-and-go section, with the snacks or in the cheese aisle. It allows the opportunity for the retailer to use the item in multiple locations."

Growth is very healthy for some snack combinations of very familiar products that include Italian meats.

"Dollar sales of Mozzarella, basil and prosciutto hors d'oeuvres have increased by more than 76 percent, according to Nielsen," reports the Madison, WI-based International Deli Dairy Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's In store 2018. "Consumers are moving beyond the traditional sandwich tray, opting for charcuterie boards and specialty cheeses."

The snack packs and trays are making packaged and sliced authentic Italian meats more important at the expense of the service counter.

"We are seeing the pre-sliced in moisture modified packaging," says Minardi. "We're going to see more packaging that is bio-degradable or recyclable."

Some producers, however, do not want packaging that will help their meats last longer before the consumer takes it home.

"We prefer to shorten the shelf life to guarantee the consumer the best freshness," says Maestri. "Packaging has not had an impact on shelf life for us."

Many producers treat their meats with high pressure pasteurization (HPP), a technology that puts pork under high enough pressure to kill pathogens.

"We treat all bulk items imported from Italy with our high pressure pasteurization plant to guarantee against the presence of salmonella and listeria," says Corsano. "We do not increase the shelf life, but the product it is more stable in the vacuum packaging.

DB

New Wrinkles To Ethnic Meats

Ethnic meats are growing, and growing more complex.

BY BOB JOHNSON

hile Italian and Mediterranean may still be royalty within the deli, foods from virtually every corner of the globe are developing their own followings.

"We are exploring flavors from these cuisines in appetizers or marinated products: North African, Korean, Vietnamese and Peruvian," says Cindy Turk, director of marketing for the duck division of Maple Leaf Farms, Leesburg, IN.

The U.S. is already more diverse ethnically, with immigrants from Latin America and Asia comprising virtually all of our population increase, but the change in tastes for meats is even more dramatic.

As the Millennials, the most diverse generation in our history, take center stage, there is already another even younger generation that will afford tremendous opportunities in ethnic meats for retailers who can navigate these new waters.

"Almost 45 percent of Millennials identify as ethnic or multicultural, making the generation the most diverse in U.S. history," according to the Madison, WI-based Interational Dairy Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's In store 2018. "An even larger percentage of individuals, more than 50 percent, identify as ethnic or multicultural in Gen Z, which is projected to make up almost 25 percent of the population by 2020."

These people born from the mid 1990s to the early 2000s are tomorrow's customers, and they are already shaping the deliment landscape: We are becoming both more multicultural and more open to trying cuisines from other ethnicities.

"In the deli, Asian and Indian influences are popping up in a lot of places," says chef Charles Hayes, vice president of culinary innovation at Deli Star, Fayetteville, IL. "We are also seeing a lot of interest in the 'Nashville Hot' flavor. Away

from the deli, caramelized roasted vegetables are becoming a big hit with customers and consumers."

The Washington, D.C.-based National Restaurant Association's What's Hot 2017 Culinary Forecast includes authentic ethnic cuisine, authentic African cuisine, ethnic-inspired breakfast items like Asian-flavored syrups and Chorizo scrambled eggs on the list of the year's top 20 prospects.

As our population becomes more diverse and adventurous, ethnic ingredients are showing up in many new deliproducts.

"We continue to see products flavored and made with sriracha, kale and other ingredients, many of which are derived from ethnic cuisines and tastes," Larry Levin, executive vice president for consumer and shopper marketing at Chicago's IRI, told the IDDBA. "Product launches are about personalizing and individualizing palate tastes."

Because the change reflects not so much ethnic immigrant neighborhoods looking for meats that remind people of home as an entire society more ready to try foods of the world, attractive presentation and clear explanation are critical.

"It's important to say what it is; it's also important to say how you can use it," says Diane Slome, director of marketing at Pocino Foods, City of Industry, CA. "You want to explain the product. If I say Bon Mi sandwich, people may not know what I



mean. If I say Bon Mi pork belly sandwich with cilantro mint and rice, people say, 'I know what you mean.'"

Pocino Foods began when Dennis Pocino's grandfather opened his first deli in Los Angeles at the beginning of The Depression. In addition to traditional Italian, today the company makes Mexican and Japanese meats, and pizza toppings.

"Based on what I'm hearing from our customers, Asian is really big," Slome says.

"Japanese, Korean and Phillipino, in addition to Cuban, [also are popular]. It's more pork products. Beef teriyaki is also popular, but not as much as pork. I think there is some crossover, the market is not just ethnic anymore."

If the next big geographic origin for deli meats is Asia, it will include far more than Japanese sushi and variations on Chinese and Thai favorites.

"While certain cuisines, tastes and

flavors may originate from the culinary traditions of specific cultures, they're much less likely to be viewed in those terms," according to *What's In Store*. "For example, today's consumers are less likely to say they're going out or cooking a certain style of food (Mexican, Thai, Chinese) and instead refer to the specific dish (tacos, Pad Thai, Kung Pao chicken)."

This portends an evolution for ethnic meats similar to that already experienced by Italian foods in the deli.

"Scott Allmendinger, director of consulting, Culinary Institute of America, told IDDBA that the evolution of today's culinary concepts follows a similar path to the adoption of ethnic dishes in past years," according to What's In Store. "You see the progression of ethnic food trends from a macro view and exploration down to more micro exploration,' he said. 'Just look at how Italian cuisine has evolved through the years. First, it was just Italian, then it split to become Northern Italian and Southern Italian. From there, it became more regional, even down to city states from within Italy."

For the retailer the challenge will be in telling the story behind these meats, and offering information on their use, because many of the customers will not be immigrants but curious and adventurous consumers with a more open attitude.

"When assessing Boomers from different ethnic backgrounds, it's known that they shop much more traditionally to their own culture than other generations," according to Sarah Schmansky, director, Nielsen Fresh, based in Chicago. "Across all ethnicities, multicultural Millennials are more apt to purchase cuisines outside of their traditional culture. Conversely, multicultural boomers tend to stick more often to their cuisine of origin."

The primary target now is curious and adventurous Millennials, according to Slome, and educating is an indispensable part of merchandising.

"The Japanese have Chashu, the Chinese call it Charsui," says Slome. "It's a rolled pork belly, and it's really popular. They also use pork bellies in Cuban sandwiches. You can slice Chashu, put it in sandwiches or use it on an Asian pizza. You can put it in a Vietnamese Bon Mi sandwich or a Cuban sandwich. We put it on a pizza, and it was a huge hit. It's the same product, but you can use it in all kinds of ways. I market it as Chashu pork belly."

Flexibility is key with ethnic meats. DB



An Adventurous Public Is Ready For A Taste Of Specialty Meats

Signage and demos help move these upscale, pricier products

BY BOB JOHNSON

s consumers grow more adventurous and open to new culinary experiences, a range of specialty meats are finding favor.

This includes, for example, entire lines of meat products made from smoked duck paired with a variety of fruity flavors.

"One of our newer products that's destined to become a staple is our Applewood Smoked Duck Bacon," says Cindy Turk, director of marketing for the duck division of Maple Leaf Farms, Leesburg, IN. "The fruity smokiness complements duck perfectly. Our most popular fully cooked product is Roast Half Duck with orange sauce – another classic pairing for duck. Featuring sauces that compliment flavors for the featured deli product option is the best way to merchandise."

Maple Leaf Farms has made duck products for 60 years, from appetizers to the whole duck, using birds raised at local farms under strict humane practices guidelines.

"We just came out with a new addition to our 'IntroDUCKtions' appetizer line – a fully cooked duck meatball," says Turk. "Made from duck breast with a blend of Cheddar and chili pepper spices – it has great flavor on its own, but can easily adapt to other flavor profiles in sandwiches, wraps or soups."



Other producers are also sensing increased interest among deli customers in duck meat products.

"Duck has tremendous potential in the deli section," says Turk. "Consumers are looking for new prepared meal options, and duck is the perfect solution, whether that's a fully-cooked heat-and-serve product like roasted duck legs; a new version of an old favorite like duck meatballs; or something brand new they haven't tried before like a Peking Duck kit."

A variety of smoked bacon flavors are also finding favor with enthusiastic consumers.

"The biggest seller for Nueske's in delis continues to be our smoked bacon, whether that is our applewood-smoked, pepper-coated or wild cherry wood smoked uncured bacon," says Megan Dorsch, marketing manager at Nueske's Applewood Smoked Meats, Wittenberg, WI. "Nueske's smoked, natural-casing bratwurst are now offered in bulk and are pre-cooked and ready to warm and serve, and the jalapeño bacon Cheddar variety that's made with Wisconsin cheese and our own applewood smoked bacon won the Specialty Food Association's Best New Product Sofi

Some of these meat products have a distinctive visual appeal when displayed in the cold case.

Award in its intro year of 2017."

The Nueske family is in their 85th year "The biggest seller for Nueske's in of producing premium smoked meats at s continues to be our smoked bacon, their smokehouse."

"Our newest bacon is Nueske's wild cherry wood smoked uncured bacon and it recently earned a bronze Sofi Award from the Specialty Food Association in the 2018 Meat, Poultry, & Charcuterie category," says Dorsch. "Customers are noticing the clean ingredient list and also the rich, mellow smoke and pleasantly sweet caramelization this bacon yields and adds to dishes, making them instantly craveable, memorable and creating return customer visits to the deli."

Some of these meat products have a distinctive visual appeal when displayed in the cold case.

"Customers enjoy seeing the appealing bulk, linked sausages in the deli case," says Dorsch. "They also appreciate that these brats are fully cooked and ready to take home to warm and serve quickly, and this particular flavor combination, which is rich and smoky with a light bit of heat on the finish, is proving to be widely appealing. Other smokehouse staples we see being used are deli slicing meats, such as boneless applewood smoked ham and boneless applewood smoked turkey."

While there is undeniable consumer interest in higher-end specialty handmade meat products, some question their economic viability.

"The category of deli meats has seen a reinvention of charcuterie and things European," says George Gavros, founder of Zoe's Meats, Santa Rosa, CA. "It might be cool, but I don't see the poundage. People might like the super artisan products, but then they see they are \$25 a pound. Our goal is to create products good enough for discerning chefs, and hope that people at corporate and consumers see the value."

Sales of pre-sliced Italian specialty meats, however, increased more than 5 percent over the last year, according to Chicago-based Nielsen Fresh statistics, and sales of specialty cheeses suggest this could be a continuing trend.

"Italian-type cheeses like Parmesan, are seeing volume up 2 percent. Mozzarella is up I percent and Romano is up I.9 percent, and these products continue their popularity and growth," according to the Madison, WI-based International Deli Dairy Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's In store 2018. "In the future, however, look for other Italian-type cheeses to accelerate their growth. In fact, Fontina was one of the 10 fastest growing cheese types, up 25 percent in volume for the year ending July



16. 2017."

This continuing upward trend figures to hold with Italian specialty meats, too, in part because restrictions on these imports have been made more lenient.

"The USDA ban on imported cured pork products for certain regions in Italy ended in 2013," according to What's In Store. "Italy's Association of Meat and Cold Cut Products predicted the lift on the ban could bring an additional \$9 to \$13 million per year in Italian meats exported to the United States, like Prosciutto di Parma, Prosciutto di San Daniele and mortadella. High-end salami and charcuterie are pushing the deli meat category to be a major growth opportunity in delis, as consumers reveal their willingness to spend more for better quality, authenticity and variety in specialty meats."

Some high-end specialty charcuterie is increasing market share to the point of becoming mainstream.

"Everything we sell could be considered specialty; even the lower-priced items are premium," says Emil Rufolo, business development manager for imported meat from Spain and Italy at Atalanta, Elizabeth, NJ. "Prosciutto di Parma has become a

Some high-end specialty charcuterie is increasing market share to the point of becoming mainstream.

mainstream product. It's in Kroger's. Tanara is the best Prosciutto di Parma. We do a 3-ounce package we fly in from Italy."

Although their products are premium, Atalanta is finding mainstream markets in a lot of places.

"Our biggest markets are the East Coast, Florida, Texas and the West Coast, but we're still seeing markets in the rest of the country," says Rufolo. "Additional signage can tell the story and drive sales, and you can have more signage when it is behind the counter. Demoing is also a great way to increase sales. Educating the employees really helps, too."

Research indicates there is a potential market of curious consumers for different meat products waiting to be tapped.

"Datassential reported a 22 percent increase from 2013 to 2016 among those interested in trying something new because staff recommended the item," according to What's In Store. "Quality staff appreciate the products they sell, understand the importance of quality and transparency, and are willing to engage customers. Indeed, 64 percent of consumers said it's important that the employee behind the deli counter can answer their questions about the food they're interested in purchasing. It always helps to have clean, professional looking employees, too, as 78 percent of consumers are more likely to order in that scenario."

It can pay off to increase offerings of high-end meats in today's market. **DB**



Beef, Poultry and Ham: It's What's for Dinner

Time to step up the merchandising game for old favorites







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eef in the deli declined another 4 percent in dollar sales over the last year, according to the Madison, WI-basesd International Deli Dairy Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's In Store 2018, and slumped to a distant third place behind turkey and ham, with just 11.6 percent of deli meat sales.

The trend is even more challenging in sliced meat sales, where beef dropped nearly 20 percent last year and stands in fifth place at barely over 6 percent of dollar sales.

There are, however, new pockets of opportunity for beef and other traditional meats within the deli.

"The prepared meals to go are where the real growth is," says Bruce Belack, vice president for sales at Vincent Giordano Corp., based in Philadelphia. "What's new is not so much flavors or varieties, it's that foodservice within the market is becoming more impactful."

Vincent Giordano produces slow,

Rising consumer interest in convenient prepared meals creates cross merchandising opportunities for the deli.

precision-roasted hand-trimmed beef, Philly-style steaks, corned beef, deli pastrami and specialty items including prime rib, Italian-style meatballs, meatloaf and pot roast.

"The service deli business is dropping because people don't want to wait," says Belack. "The meat is fresh looking because they are slicing it behind the counter, but I

don't have to wait for them to do it."

Rising consumer interest in convenience in preparing meals creates cross merchandising opportunities for the deli.

"We see the most opportunities to cross-promote with sauce and bread companies," says chef Charles Hayes, vice president of culinary innovation at Deli Star, Fayetteville, IL.





Ham sales in the deli also declined ever so slightly over the last year, according to the IDDBA's *What's in Store 2018*, but at more than 30 percent of dollar sales, still runs a strong second to turkey.

There was nearly a 15 percent decline,

however, in ham's share of sliced meat sales, which dropped just behind salami into third place.

Among the traditional mainstream meats, poultry has fared best in holding or even increasing market share.

Turkey is still king of deli meat dollar sales at 34.6 percent and growing, according to *What's in Store 2018*, and also at the top of the charts in sliced meat sales, despite losing share over the last year.

In 2017, deli turkey sales in pounds increased 3.4 percent, according to IDDBA statistics, while ham and beef pounds went up less than 1 percent and chicken actually declined a little.

But well over 90 percent of delis offer grab-and-go rotisserie chicken, and more than 80 percent also display fried chicken in this consumer-friendly convenient format, according to *What's in Store 2018*.

While chicken remains very strong among supermarket deli prepared foods, it is just 7.6 percent of deli meat sales, and doesn't even make the list of the top five among sliced meats.

Clean labels and information about where and how the product was raised and processed helps with all of the traditional meats.

"With protein consumption rising, deli meat is best marketed as an important source of healthy protein for both children and adults," says Hayes. "Today, more than ever, consumers want to know the source

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It is worth keeping an eye on trade negotiations because they could have a major impact on the price for mainstream meats like beef, pork and poultry.

of their food, and they want to know how the animal was raised. In addition, more consumers want to know their deli meats contain no antibiotics, hormones or artificial ingredients, and that they're were humanely raised and all-natural or organic."

Chemicals accepted on the ingredient list a few years ago have become marketing liabilities.

"The biggest demand in new products is centered around clean label and removing the ingredients from national foodservice providers' and retailers' 'no-no' lists," says Hayes. "From a taste profile, bold flavors are on trend."

A well-educated staff ready and able to engage consumers, essential in specialty products, can also be an important resource in maintaining market share of the mainstream meats.

Labor is a perennial issue for operators, but quality staff can make or break the shopping experience," according to What's In Store. Eric Le Blanc, marketing director, Tyson Foods, told IDDBA that past research has revealed there is no correlation between the number of people working in the deli and the performance of the department or store. It's more about how well-trained they are.

A trained staff should be able to engage customers, and help them decide what to take home for dinner.

Le Blanc told IDDBA that more than 50 percent of shoppers have confusion while shopping, but only 3 percent will ask a question. "It's like people are walking around your deli with a sign that says, 'Tell me what to do and I'll do it." Le Blanc said if the department needs staff on the sales floor "being a curator of the department," then enthusiasm matters most. Instead of asking "Can I help you?" to begin an encounter, Le Blanc recommended asking

something like, 'What's for dinner tonight?' You can build your sales so much with that kind of encounter."

Deli entrée dollar sales were up 3.3 percent last year, according to IDDBA statistics, which suggests there are still pockets of expanding opportunity.

Recent shifts toward new meats, and new meat products, should serve as an incentive to constantly monitor changing consumer preferences.

"Consumers' tastes and demands are constantly changing," says Justin Siegel,

president of Deli Star, Fayetteville, IL. "Our team of research food scientists stays in front of current trends and work handand-hand with our customers, both at their facilities and in our St. Louis Innovation Center, to develop safe, flavorful and consistent products. Whether it's refining a supermarket deli staple to meet today's needs or crafting a new product, Deli Star strives to be a partner with our client's and their ever-changing needs."

It is worth keeping an eye on trade negotiations because they could have a major impact on the price for mainstream meats like beef, pork and poultry.

The American farmer is a main exporter of meat, and even more of animal feed, and if tariffs and trade wars unsettle those markets, we could have temporary surpluses and lower prices here.

"The overall demand for beef is very high now, so the prices are high," says Belack. "But with the potential for tariffs, the prices for beef here could drop."

Beef, pork and poultry are deli staples, but this does not mean these meats should be taken for granted. On the contrary, these items' popularity provides ample opportunities for increased sales.

DB







Freshen Up Your Cheese Case with

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Delicious on its own as a wholesome and convenient alternative to traditional snacks, Fresh Mozzarella freshens up any summer gathering.





heese has a way of making people happy. It follows that a collection of multiple great cheeses served with snackable treats, fresh bread and a bottle of wine makes people...well, pretty much ecstatic. Making it as easy as possible for customers to serve cheeses and condiments together at home is a great way to boost both satisfaction and sales.

Delis can provide customers with the means to put together a cheese platter they can be proud of. "Designing a cheese-board is meant to be enjoyable and shared with loved ones," says Emma Boonstra, who oversees marketing at Zingerman's Creamery in Ann Arbor, MI. "It's a lot like making a piece of artwork; it should be a fun and creative process." Yet, such a task can feel intimidating to shoppers who don't consider themselves cheese experts. Many grocery stores offer hundreds of cheeses and even more condiments. Where to start?

The easier we can make it for customers, the more rewarding an experience they will have shopping for, assembling, savoring, and sharing a wonderful cheese platter. Here are some ways to set up



your market for cheese board ease...and deliciousness.

Selecting Cheeses that Work Together

It all starts with the cheese. "Personally, I like to make sure there is a nice variety of textures and flavors represented," says

Steve Lorenz, director of marketing at La Panzanella Artisanal Foods Co, Tukwila, WA. "You never know how much your guests appreciate complex cheeses, so I like to keep it simple yet varied so there is something for everyone."

It may help to think of selecting a range of cheese from "mild to wild." Begin with a







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When it comes to serving cheese, quality is more important than quantity.

few mellow varieties like a creamy Chevré or a buttery Brie or Camembert. Proceed to something with plenty of balanced flavor, like a Cheddar, Manchego or an Alpine or Swiss-style cheese. "Hard Alpine cheeses, like Gruyère and Comté, are crowd pleasing, easy to cut into geometric shapes, and match with a broad range of accouterments," advises Rory Stamp, the artisan food manager at Burlington, VT's Dedalus Wine Shop, Market & Wine Bar. Finish the cheese board with those "wild" wedges

that pack a punch—aged Gouda, Blue, Parmigianno Reggiano or a funky washed rind wheel for the adventurous.

Mild to wild is just shorthand for variety, which can also be considered in terms of geography (mix up local American



cheeses with European classics), texture (choose both spreadable and soft and crystallized and crumbly), and familiarity (go with tried-and-true favorites and one new surprise). Another way to ensure variety is to include cheeses from different milk types. An example would be a fresh goat's milk cheese from a Vermont creamery, a Basque sheep's milk cheese from the Pyrenees and a cow's milk cheese like the Swiss Appenzeller.

According to Boonstra, contrasts are key. "Old and young. Funky and fresh. Spicy and sweet. Imported and domestic."

Another tip: three or four cheeses seem to be the sweet spot. That's enough cheeses for customers to dig into and experiment with different flavors, but not so many that their palates and minds start to lose track. Although when it comes to serving cheese, quality is more important than quantity. "Sometimes you only need one cheese on a board," emphasizes Stamp.

Plus, whole wheels and big wedges make a great visual impact in the deli.

Merchandising Cheese Board Essentials

Putting out a cheese board is one of the easiest ways to entertain—there's zero cooking required. Still, the cheese department can be an intimidating section of the grocery store. By taking some of the guesswork out of how to create a cheese platter, customers will breathe easy.

Boonstra recommends stores establish "a go-to group of cheeses and group them in the cheese display. Having 'kits' that people don't have to think about is a great way to increase cheese sales for cheese boards. Retailers can even pre-cut three to five cheeses and wrap them on a deli tray so that they are easy for customers to grab and go."

Another invaluable edge is having staff who know and love cheese. "Probably the most successful approach is to have people working the cheese case who are not only knowledgeable, but who are also outgoing and approachable," says Lorenz. "As long as the cheese or deli manager is willing to open a dialogue, it is a win-win."

"A well-educated staff is your best sales tool," Boonstra agrees. "They will be able to make the best suggestions for the guests and help them better in their quest to find the perfect cheese."

Delis may consider creating a small space in the case or on the counter with a







mock up cheese board for people to taste. Strategic signage that suggests potential pairings or cheese plate ideas can be effective, especially if the messaging is kept clear and concise.

Beyond Just Cheese & Crackers

It helps to begin with the classics; cheese and crackers are a favorite for good reason. There are plenty of traditional

pairings for cheeses: apples and Cheddar, Manchego and quince paste, Blue cheese and figs, and Brie and a baguette. But these combinations are just the tip of the iceberg.

Try switching out crackers for flatbreads, pita, raisin walnut bread, bagel chips, or even veggies like Belgian endive and cucumber slices. Sure, grapes are pretty on the plate, but don't stop there. Slices of fresh pear and persimmon play excellently against the salty richness of cheese. Dried fruits, fresh figs, Marcona almonds, olives and event shards of dark chocolate are other options

"Make suggested pairings, but don't force them," advises Stamp. "Group friendly components together without being prescriptive or emptying a jar of condiments directly on top of a cheese. Incorporate unconventional but flexible ingredients, like potato chips, corn nuts, or peanut butter pretzels These help cut through the pretension and break the ice."

One of Lorenz's favorite pairings is a La Panzanella Original Mini Croccantini cracker topped with Beecher's Flagship and a dollop of Oregon Growers Quince Paté. He also likes Cambozola cheese topped with a little fresh chopped rosemary and then drizzled with honey, especially served on their new La Panzanella Gluten-Free Toasted Oat Thin cracker. Imaginative combinations like this are great opportunities for sampling.

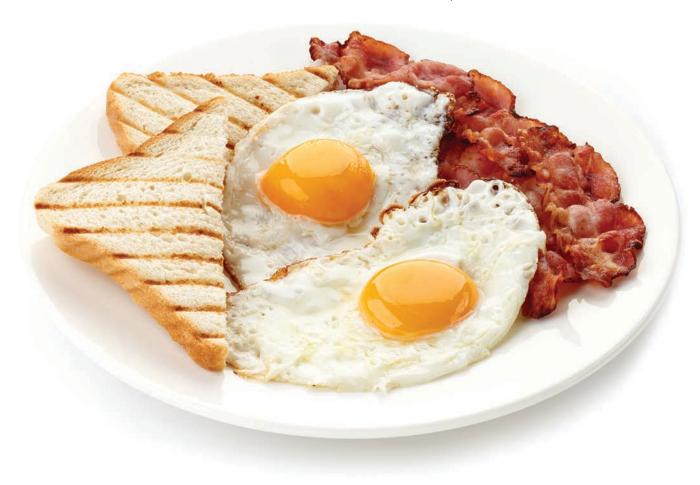
"Cross merchandise compatible products and provide eye-catching visuals to help shoppers dream of what they might create at home," urges Stamp. "Social media is a very effective tool to get customers excited about building their own cheese boards and foster brand and store loyalty." Cheeses often come with great stories, and customers love to understand the who, what and where behind what they're bringing home.

"Take the mystery and fear out of cheese shopping and have something for everyone—from flavor to price to dietary restrictions," suggest Lorenz. "Beyond that, sample, sample, sample."

DB



BUILDING A DELI BREAKFAST PROGRAM



Don't miss out on this lucrative day part that can add incremental sales to the department.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

utritionists say breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Number crunchers, especially those in many supermarket delis, will beg to differ. That's because breakfast traditionally has taken a backseat to lunch and dinner as the meat and potatoes of the deli's dollars. No longer. Some delis, such as those with strong prepared food programs and in-store cafés, are jump-starting the day's register rings by offering a repast for their early risers. This includes everything from quartered in Carson, CA. "We figured the

grab-and-go to sit-down restaurant-style menu options. For those delis that don't have a breakfast program, the good news is that it's easier to implement than expected.

"We discovered breakfast was a missed sales opportunity several years ago, as we ventured into the morning offerings along with all the fast food restaurants and coffee shops in the country," says Richard Ferranda, foodservice and cheese director at Bristol Farms, a 12-store chain head-

stores are open early and we are selling coffee and juice to our customers already, maybe we should be offering some prepared breakfast to our customers."

What's For Breakfast?

Breakfast is the most functional and routine meal of the day, according to the report, Transformation of the American Meal 2017, published by the Hartman Group Inc., a Bellevue, WA-headquartered food insutry research and consulting firm.









As such, breakfast is typically focused on quick, often portable options that provide nutritious, lasting energy.

In terms of actual foods, ethnic-inspired items such as huevos rancheros, avocado toast, traditional ethnic breakfast foods, overnight oats and breakfast hash are the top five breakfast/brunch trends according to the nearly 700 professional chef members of the American Culinary Federation surveyed in the Washington, D.C.-based National Restaurant Association's What's Hot 2018 Culinary Forecast.

"Omelets do well, yet it's our signature breakfast burritos that steal the show. Perhaps it's that they are easy to grab-and-go while making the morning commute," says Bristol Farms' Ferranda.

Breakfast sandwiches are driving growth in the restaurant arena and are a natural for the supermarket deli, according to Shayna Snyder, senior product manager for Y-Pulse, LLC, a subsidiary of Olson Communications, Inc., a Chicago-based food-focused marketing company. "A few new and unexpected items like breakfast pizza and breakfast quesadillas are also now emerging."

One of the most popular types of breakfast sandwiches is the New York deli-style bacon, egg and cheese, says Megan Dorsch, marketing manager for Nueske's Applewood Smoked Meats, in Wittenberg, WI. "Premium bacons and cheeses are being worked into these simple sandwiches to breathe new life into them and make them even more memorable to today's customers.

The company now offers thicker cuts of its most-popular Applewood Smoked Bacon and the company's newest, Wild Cherrywood Smoked Uncured Bacon. The added width creates a dramatic looking and tasting breakfast sandwich, says Dorsch. She adds that delis can choose to slice their own bacon off the slab or simply order pre-sliced to the desired thickness.

Beyond sandwiches, bowls, bakes, wraps and hashes make great deli breakfast selections. This is especially true when made with potato products, such as French fries, often sold at lunch and dinner, as well. For example, the J.R. Simplot Co. offers a foodservice-size recipe for its Sidewinders Fries Breakfast. Sidewinders are the Boise, ID-headquartered company's signature-style twisty-shaped fries that come in four flavors. This breakfast recipe calls for the battered variety, along with roasted peppers and onions, scram-

bled eggs and turkey ham all sold in a single-serve bowl. Other breakfast recipes the company offers for its potato products includes an egg-based Farmer's Breakfast Bake, Southwest Deli Breakfast Wrap and a Roasted Sweet Potato Breakfast Hash.

"If the supermarket deli already has made a big investment in a hot bar for retail meal solutions, breakfast is an excellent opportunity to get more use out of this piece of equipment," says Travis Dryden, senior marketing manager for J.R. Simplot's commercial accounts.

Making It Happen

One of the biggest challenges for supermarket delis in implementing a breakfast program is competition from restaurants, especially quick-serve restaurants for weekday business, says Y-Pulse's Snyder. "It's a little bit unexpected for consumers to think about getting a ready-to-eat breakfast at the deli. However, it seems that consumers would be open to this new behavior, evidenced by three points that we discovered in last year's Deli Experience survey. First, that 72 percent of respondents like a supermarket deli where the prepared foods are comparable in quality to their favorite restaurant. Secondly, that 60 percent of surveyed consumers consider the deli a good option for prepared meals that can be brought to work. Third, 54 percent of consumers surveyed wished their local deli had catered meals as good as their favorite restaurant."

Snyder adds that with delivery becoming more popular, having mobile ordering and curb-side pickup integrated into the deli's foodservice offerings would be an opportunity for supermarkets to gain some share of dollars from younger consumers who are more apt to use technology to order food and do so at traditional restaurants.

Another hurdle is the labor needed to prepare and staff the deli at breakfast time. For example, the prospect of expanding to this morning meal at some Bristol Farms' locations was a no-brainer, according to Ferranda, as these stores already had restaurants and line cooks scheduled early for the full-service experience. In this case. all he had to do was have the line cook prepare some hotel pans of scrambled eggs, grill off some extra home fries and bingo a small offering of breakfast was available in the deli. The next question then became what to do at the chain's other locations. Some of these operations were really small, and finding additional hours to capture the

One of the biggest challenges for supermarket delis in implementing a breakfast program is competition from restaurants.

morning sales without jeopardizing lunch and dinner sale was Ferranda's dilemma. In the end, he made the investment to bring a cook in early enough to execute a full breakfast offering.

"It paid off," he says. Today, "we offer a variety of breakfast foods such as scrambled eggs, sausage links and breakfast potatoes to appeal to a broad range of customers. The cooks are armed with some simple pre-made and pre-cut solutions to the morning fare in addition to cooking some items from scratch. Food like Belgium Waffles, precut potatoes with peppers and onions, and ground black pepper bacon sausage that can be made into patties or used in a scramble are a few. Having some pre-made options also allows us to offer some popular extras: egg whites are a must in addition to your traditional egg offerings, and oatmeal is very popular, even in Southern California.'

Setting up an oatmeal bar, yogurt bar or similar DIY selections would make it easy for retailers and consumers who are used to building a salad based on a per-pound price, says Y-Pulse's Snyder. "Oatmeal is on the menu at popular restaurants like QSR, coffee cafés and casual dining, making it ubiquitous in consumers' minds as an item that should be available everywhere."

Beyond the deli, Bristol Farms merchandises breakfast foods in several areas of the store

"If you have a coffee bar with a self-serve offering, consider having fresh-cut fruit and yogurt parfait cups with granola as cold options. With the addition of a Turbo Chef speed oven in the operation, a cold breakfast sandwich or a burrito can quickly become a warm morning meal. Our coffee and juice bar departments are all cross merchandised with these offerings," says Ferranda.

Eggs are a breakfast staple. New hard-cooked and peeled egg products from Prime Foods, called Pro-Go Protein Packs, are perfect for selling in the wall deli or refrigerated snack cases at the front of the store any time of day or at in-store beverage bars

for breakfast. The four-item single-serve line includes two eggs; one egg, pepper jack cheese and Genoa salami; one egg, Colby Jack cheese and dark chocolate-coated almonds; and one egg, Gouda cheese and dark chocolate espresso beans.

"This line capitalizes on the trend we're seeing in consumers looking at adding more protein to their diets," says Cindy McGarrigle, vice president of sales for the Boonville, IN-based company. "On the operator side, our product has a 70-day shelf life. If a supermarlet deli hard boiled and packed their own eggs, the shelf life is a week or less."

Use all the tricks of the trade to let customers know the deli is a destination for breakfast. For example, Bristol Farms uses its self-serve hot cases to show off its menu choices, along with simple signage that states availability and price. Other suggestions include digital-, online- or circular-advertised special pricing, offering bundled meal deals like a breakfast sandwich, side of breakfast potatoes and coffee for one price, and even having front register cashiers wear buttons that let shoppers know the deli now serves breakfast.

Finally, the key to developing, building and sustaining a morning business in the deli is consistency, says Ferranda. "Customers once familiarized with your breakfast offerings will be back during the week to shop again. The key to success is timing: knowing when the food needs to ready, knowing when it is time to end and knowing when to switch out to the lunch menu. This timing will be different in every location. City stores will see more traffic earlier than residential stores, where sales are softer as people have more time and options. If there's debate regarding offering breakfast on the weekend, stop thinking and start cooking. Weekends are as popular as weekdays, with Sunday being one of the best sale days of the week. After all, they say breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It certainly has become so for us and will continue to be a focus point in the future, as sales continue to grow." DB



Re-evaluating Roquefort

Retailers can capitalize on this cheese's esteemed history and unique flavor

BY LINNI KRAL

n Delphine Carles' first memories of Roquefort cheese, she's following her father around a drafty limestone cave, one of the many that naturally occur in the rugged, dolomitic rock of France's Mont Combalou. At 1,970 feet above sea level in the country's southern Massif Central, this intricate network of caverns has earned global renown as the only place in the world Roquefort cheese can be aged. The esteemed sheep's milk Blue — a staple on holiday cheese plates and one of France's most popular cheeses after Brie and Comté — can only be made by seven approved cheesemakers, and Delphine is one of them.

'Since I was a tiny girl, around four years old, I followed my father around, and very soon Roquefort had no secrets for me," says Delphine, who now serves as CEO of Roquefort Carles and the modern link in a chain of three generations, beginning with her grandfather in 1927. "I keep hunk of Roquefort. the secret recipe of the bread we use in a locked drawer in my house."

Rye bread defines Roquefort — the penicillium roqueforti mold used to make the cheese is cultivated in large loaves of dark rye bread and that mold is responsible for the viridescent blue veins that cut across

Roquefort's pure white paste. It's even woven into the cheese's origin story: Legend holds that Roquefort (and Blue cheese, more broadly) was accidentally invented in the seventh century by a sheepherder who'd settled down to eat cheese on a piece of brown bread at the mouth of a cave. At one point, he abandoned his lunch to chase after a girl, returning later to find it covered in mold. Being a shepherd and not a billionaire, he had no choice but to test out what had become of it, making him the first person to taste the fudgy cream, salty crunch and snappy tang of a

Despite some holes in that story, the regal Blue is no doubt ancient. Some speculate that Emperor Charlemagne and Pliny the Elder favored it, while its first written record appears in a 1411 decree from Charles VI — to protect the geographically unique product against imitation, and to aid a region not hospitable to other French crops like grapes or grains — he granted the people of the Roquefort-sur-Soulzon village the exclusive right to make Roquefort. Charles VII strengthened that decree in 1666, making it sanctionable to produce fakes.

In 1935, it became the first cheese to receive an AOC designation, which defined the seven rules that producers must follow to this day. To be called Roquefort, a cheese must be made with the raw, unfiltered, whole milk of sheep that are pastured on the land around the caves. Their milk must

be delivered at least 20 days after lambing and be treated with animal rennet within 48 hours of milking. The aforementioned mold must be used, along with dry salt, and the whole process of maturation, cutting, packaging and processing must occur in Roquefort-sur-Soulzon on a strip of land only a mile and a quarter long.

That painstaking process doesn't just govern Roquefort in France, either. In 1951, eight European countries signed an agreement to regulate the use of cheese names, confirming Roquefort as an Appellation d'Origine on an international level.

Later, in 1996, the rindless, foil-wrapped wheels also received the official stamp of the Appellation d'Origine Protegée to further protect their name. Even the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office granted a geographic certification mark to the name "Roquefort," which can now only be used in the U.S. to mark sheep cheese originating from the Combalou caves. The name is so protected that even dips and salad dressings in France must contain genuine Roquefort cheese if they want to use the word in their packaging.

Though Blue cheese can polarize even the most devout of the cheese cognoscenti, Roquefort's perfect balance has a way of attracting consumers.

rated wheels from traveling the globe - crumbles of the cheese turn up on top of steaks, poached pears and walnut salads in restaurants the world over. The Carles family exports 15 percent of the 220 tons of cheese they make in a year, while Fromageries Papillion, another one of the seven approved producers, exports 40 percent of their 2000 tons.

A Worldwide Treasure

Though Blue cheese can polarize even the most devout of the cheese cognoscenti, Roquefort's perfect balance has a way of attracting consumers. In France, even the children don't mind the briny bite of the

These rules haven't kept the deco-mold or the barnyard funk imparted by the sheep's milk. "I do not know any young child that [does] not love Roquefort," says Hervé Bourgeois, the export director at Papillion who loves to enjoy Roquefort on a cheese plate beside Valencay, Comté and raw milk Camembert. Bourgeois conducts tastings in the classrooms of his two young daughters and said many of the students comment, "it's like a party in my mouth!"

How do the seven chosen cheesemakers create that festive experience? It starts atop the plateau of Larzac, the summit of Mont Combalou, where Lacaune sheep teeter on rocky pasturage, feeding on wild herbs. Some 80,000 ewes live in the area, and they're tended to by some 2,200 dairy



For every consistent variable, there are close-guarded family flourishes that set each Roquefort maker apart.

Roquefort cheese.

In this remote region, the production of Roquefort is the primary economy. Some Roquefort producers, like Societé and Papillon, have grown into multi-million dollar industries, while others, like Yves Combes or Carles, work with fewer than 20 employees. Those not shepherding livestock or processing milk can be found in the caves, carefully tending to aging cheese. The Roquefort caverns enjoy near-constant hygrometry and temperature (95 percent humidity and 45-60 degrees F), thanks to fault lines, or "fleurines," that provide natural ventilation. Wheels of Roquefort will spend a minimum of three months in these caves, bathing in the salty, moist air

Before they reach the caves, the lives of these wheels begin with calf rennet infusing raw ewe's milk, then heated to a tempera-

farms, most of which lend their milk to ture of 82-93 degrees F. The resulting curds are stirred, cut and drained, then transferred to cheese molds, where they drain further as they are flipped three to five times a day and dry-salted at a cold 50 degrees F. After about a week, they're off to the caves, where they age, uncovered. During this time, affineurs wipe moisture from the exterior as the blue mold breaks down casein in the cheese's structure, making it creamier every day.

> For every consistent variable, there are close-guarded family flourishes that set each Roquefort maker apart. For starters, there are 700 varieties of penicillium roqueforti in existence. Traditionally, cheesemakers created the mold for their cheese by baking large loaves of rye bread and then inoculating it with p. roqueforti. Once the bread has been consumed by the mold, it's dried out and made into a blue/green dried powder, a method Papillon and Carles still

adhere to today.

The mold can also be created in a lab, in whatever form is most convenient — liguid, powder or even aerosol. Societé, the largest of the seven makers, responsible for 60 percent of all Roquefort production, streamlines their process by adding a liquid penicillium at the curd stage. Others sprinkle blue-green powder in the curd. Some use a combination of these methods, and all result in varying degrees of those famous streaks of greenish-blue.

Beyond the mold, variations also occur in how much salt is used (this has been reduced over the years in response to demand), what type of containers are used for draining (earthenware, metal, plastic), or what shelves the young wheels age on (the Carles family uses oak). At Papillon, wheels are aged slightly longer to reduce crumble and achieve lower salt levels; Gabriel Coulet ages nine months for even more flavorful texture.

For Ihsan Gurdal, owner of the Formaggio Kitchen line of cheese shops in the northeastern U.S., these little tweaks make a world of difference. "Our favorite has always been the Vieux Berger, immediately followed by the Carles," he says. "I have always liked the texture and the finesse of the Vieux and the prolonged mid-







dle flavors of it. On the other hand, Carles to me is more robust and has more forward pronounced flavors right at the beginning."

Red Flag Regulations

Gurdal has personally imported Vieux Berger, Carles and Gabriel Coulet, and brought in Societé from distributors to fill in between imports — though he is not currently able to bring in his favorite, the Vieux, due to FDA regulations.

"There was a red flag by FDA a couple of years ago, and we all struggled for almost eight months," says Gurdal. "Vieux is still red flagged, but somehow we are allowed to import Carles."

That FDA flag occurred in August 2014, when many raw milk cheeses were placed on Import Alert because of bacterial counts that exceeded the FDA's newly-stringent tolerance level. Cheeses on Import Alert can't be sold in the U.S. until the producer documents corrective action and passes five subsequent tests, so many retailers went without Roquefort during the busy holiday season.

Murray's Cheese Shop in New York City put their existing Roquefort on sale, using #rescueroquefort on social media to encourage more people to try the endangered cheese. According to FDA press officer Lauren Sucher, most of the cheeses put on Import Alert in 2014 have since been removed, save for a few that still contain trace amounts of listeria or non-toxignogenic E. coli. As of October 2017, the Yves Combes La Vieux Berger is the only Roquefort still on the list.

The FDA isn't the only branch of the U.S. government with this ancient blue in its crosshairs. In 1999, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) imposed a 100 percent tariff on all Roquefort entering the country. To keep it affordable for Americans, makers continued to sell to the U.S. for less than half of market price, greatly limiting their profits.

The American market got even riskier for Roquefort producers in 2008, when the outgoing George W. Bush administration tripled punitive duties to 300 percent, in retaliation against a French ban on U.S. beef treated with growth hormones.

When Barack Obama took office in 2009, Roquefort producers lobbied him hard, even sending samples of their cheese, and were able to reach a compromise just before the new tariff was to take effect: Roquefort could remain at the 100 percent tariff until its expiration date in 2012, if the EU quadrupled their imports of nongrowth-hormone-treated beef.

"Roquefort has been used as a political tool," says Carlos Yescas, program director of the Oldways Cheese Coalition, which works to preserve raw and traditional cheeses. "[It] is the quintessential French cheese. This is among the reasons it has been drawn into ongoing trade battles." When the 100 percent tariff expired in 2012, French Customs Authorities reported a 31 percent increase in Roquefort exports to the U.S.

To pressure the EU into keeping their end of the 2009 deal, the U.S. beef industry again recommended punitive tariffs on Roquefort in 2017, urging the Trump administration to reinstate them. In response, the Confédération Générale de Roquefort, a trade association of cheesemakers, testified before a USTR panel to request that it impose duties on beef-related products instead, rather than singling out a specialty product that, by law, is made with sheep's milk in a single village by a community of less than 700 people.

Despite this tension, Roquefort producers aren't likely to stop shipping to the U.S. any time soon — but the cheese may become more of a luxury than an everyday staple if costly tariffs drive the prices up.

Time will tell if this is the case.







Steeped in Swiss Tradition

he year Lustenberger & Dürst was founded, in 1862, was a Cham from George glorious time of milk and cheese. Today, more than 155 years Page, the founder later, what remains is natural quality through the terroir, tradition and passion.

Condenced Milk

The company's products are characterized by old values and the outstanding personalities of its founders Maurice Lustenberger and Niklaus Dürst, cheesemakers conscious of their tradition.

Lustenberger & Dürst's story began even before 1920, when two companies joined forces and became Lustenberger & Dürst SA.

Lustenberger was the son of a passionate Entlebucher, Switzerland cheesemaker, Anton, who devoted his life to the refinement of untreated raw milk cheese of the highest quality. He realized natural landscapes with unique flora, meadows rich of herbs, centuries-old rock and stones and a balanced climate are the best conditions for the finest milk with a unique floral flavor.

Dürst grew up on a Swiss small farm. His father served as a farmer and judge who, in 1845, traveled to America. He founded New Glarus in the state of Wisconsin, later known as America's little Switzerland. His son Niklaus inherited the pioneering spirit and his father's entrepreneurship and founded a Zurich, Switzerland cheese company, Bros. Dürst, in 1862. That same year, Lustenberger established a cheese export company in Sursee.

In 1894, Lustenberger purchased the Langrüti in Hünenberg/

Cham from George Page, the founder of the Anglo-Swiss Condenced Milk Factory. That same year, the company was renamed Maurice Lustenberger + Söhne.

In 1923, three years after Maurice Lustenberger +



Söhne's merger with Bros. Dürst in Zurich, Lustenberger and Dürst introduced its LeSUPERBE brand.

Today, Lustenberger and Dürst continues to combine traditional knowledge for the production of cheese with the gifts of nature. Its founders' passion for an authentic and natural experience, uncompromising commitment and expertise based on many years of experience have been passed down through many generations - then as now the cornerstone of the company.

The company still makes cheese by the values that have been proven for generations: using fresh raw milk from hay and grass-fed cows. Its handcrafted line's flavors are characterized by rich pastures with powerful herbs.

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