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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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RFA Revamps Website



he Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) has revamped its website to be more visually appealing and easier to navigate. Like its prior format, the site still includes a Search Bar, along with information on upcoming events, with the option to register for the RFA Show or renew membership to the association online. The password-protected Member Center also remains, with member resources, including the Membership Directory.

However, the association's revamped website now includes links to RFA's social media channels, including Facebook and LinkedIn.

The RFA's 39th Annual Conference and Exhibition will be held Feb. 17-20 at the Marriott Tampa Waterside & Marina in Tampa, FL.

The association of manufacturers and suppliers of refrigerated prepared foods develops programs to enhance and promote food safety, strengthen the operating practices of its member companies and fosters a network community for information sharing. RFA members manufacture and supply wet salads; refrigerated entrées and side dishes; dips; desserts; soups; and ethnic foods.

COMING NEXT IN OCT/NOV ISSUE

COVER STORY

Going Green

FEATURE STORIES

Hummus Charcuterie

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Fried Chicken Vegetarian

DELI MEATS

Turkey

PREPARED FOODS

Pizza

CHEESE CORNER

Aging Caves Crackers

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Cooking Oils

COMING IN DEC/JAN

Deli Business will be taking a look at Certified Humane.

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TRANSITION.....ANNOUNCEMENTS.....



GRAFTON VILLAGE CHEESE APPOINTS CEO

Grafton Village Cheese Co., a subsidiary of The Windham Foundation, Grafton, VT, has appointed Ruth Flore as CEO. She previously managed marketing and business development of several partner brands for Norseland Inc. - the sales and marketing agent for Jarlsberg and other specialty cheeses. Flore has over two decades of experience in the industry, including with Vermont Creamery. Flore has been a leading member of the American Cheese Society, serving as president.

www.graftonvillagecheese.com



GRUYÈRE AOP CHOOSES SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Interprofession du Gruyère, Pringy, Switzerland, has announced the winners of its 2018 scholarship contest. Erin Harris, The Cheese Poet, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, and Chad Farmer-Davis of the Kroger Co. in Cincinnati, OH, will receive a trip to Switzerland's Gruyères region for answering a series of questions regarding Gruyere AOP, highlighting an aspect of the cheese and presenting it.

www.gruyere.com



AMBRIOLA HONORED WITH ITALIAN **FOOD AWARD**

The Ambriola Co., Caldwell, NJ, has won a 2018 Italian Food Award in the Cheese category for its Cremezzo Italian Cheese Snack line. Winners were announced during the second edition of the competition organized by Italianfood.net at the Summer Fancy Food Show, A total of 160 products from 96 Italian companies exhibiting at the show were voted by a jury composed of U.S. retailers, importers and distributors. The winners were selected from 11 product categories.

www.ambriola.com



SUSHI REVOLUTION PROMOTION UNVEILED

Hissho Sushi, Charlotte N.C., unveiled its "Join the Sushi Revolution" concept and branding at the 2018 International Dairy, Deli and Bakery Association (IDDBA) Show in New Orleans. New branding, including a new look, sophisticated packaging and product innovation, are part of the new

www.hisshosushi.com

NEW PRODUCTS



AN EXPANDED LINE

Golden West Food Group, Vernon, CA, now offers a Certified Angus Beef brand Beeftisserie roast and American BBQ Company Porktisserie roast. The meat is handcut and slow-roasted in store for fresh-made quality. The Beeftisserie provides flavor, juiciness and tenderness through the brand's 10 quality standards. There are six, 2-pound average weight roasts per case. The Porktisserie roast is available in the same product sizing.

www.gwfg.com



SOFT-RIPENED **CHEESE DEBUTS**

Roth Cheese, Monroe, WI, has introduced a new limited production soft-ripened cheese dubbed Monroe, a nod to the town Roth was founded more than 25 years ago. Made in approximately 1.6-pound wheels, the limited production cheese is smeared and turned by hand every day as it ages for 30 days in cellars. Monroe's brine-washed rind is tan with hints of pink and tacky to the touch. The interior has a creamy texture with a fudge-like density true to traditional double cream cheeses.

www.roth.com



A FRESH CHÈVRE **ADDITION**

Laura Chenel's, Sonoma, CA, has added Cranberry & Cinnamon to its fresh chèvre Medallion Collection, offering a seasonal flavor to the line of 3.5-ounce diskshaped goat cheese Medallions for the fourth quarter holiday period. The line combines slightly sweet, yet tart, cranberries with the tangy taste of fresh chèvre, adding a touch of cinnamon. The Medallion Collection is made using fresh goat milk from nearby farms in the western U.S.

www.laurachenel.com



A GLUTEN FREE OPTION

La Panzanella Artisanal Foods Co... Tukwila, WA, has introduced gluten-free Oat Thins. The 5-ounce cartons are low fat, cholesterol free, vegan and 70 calories per serving. Flavors include rosemary, roasted garlic and toasted oat. The packaging can be displayed either vertically or horizontally and includes a window to showcase the crackers.

www.lapanzanella.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

REFRIGERATED FOODS ASSOCIATION

2019ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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"Advancing and Safeguarding the Refrigerated Foods Industry"



















To successfully position your company in today's marketplace, it is imperative to stay ahead of current market trends, food safety regulations and technical issues. Attend the Refrigerated Foods Association's 39th Annual Conference & Exhibition as we work toward "Advancing & Safeguarding the Refrigerated Foods Industry."

Conference highlights include One-on-One CEO Sessions, Exhibit Hall and Reception, Golf Tournament, and many networking opportunities!

Session Speakers and Topics Include:

- Keynote, Jim "The Rookie" Morris "Remember Who You Are"
- Michael Hewett of Publix Supermarkets Sustainability
- Dick Finnegan, Author & CEO Employee Rentention &
- Sarah Schmansky of Neilsen Fresh Trends Martin Mitchell, RFA Technical Director Technical Update
- FDA Respresentative, TBD and Patricia Wester, CEO, AFSAP - FSMA 101

WWW.REFRIGERATEDFOODS.ORG

Product Disconnect
In Prepared Foods Departments



By
Jim Prevor
Editor-in-Chief

here is a dirty little secret in the business of prepared foods retailing.

The same retailers who fill their stores

The same retailers who fill their stores with signage promoting local and organic fill their prepared foods departments with completely conventional ingredients.

It is not really a mystery why this is so. A combination of the cost of these ingredients and the need to use alternative production facilities that are capable of segregating ingredients makes it very expensive to produce these prepared foods. One wonders if some of the customers in our top delis aren't falsely assuming that their favorite store, which they select because they think it is mostly organic, mostly local — that the store's supply chain has been vetted in terms of worker treatment, impact on the environment, etc. — has a prepared foods section that also reflects these values.

The very nature of branding is beginning to change, because new tools allow consumers to search for what they truly desire instead of trusting in a manufacturer or a retailer to always provide it."

One suspects that, with the rise of omni-channel retailing and, specifically, the use of computer ordering, this reliance on halo-effect marketing will become more difficult.

The very nature of branding is beginning to change, because new tools allow consumers to search for what they truly desire instead of trusting in a manufacturer or a retailer to always provide it. So instead of going to Whole Foods and trusting that all the snacks are healthy or organic, local, eth-

ically-sourced or rainforest-friendly, consumers will be able to put these terms in their laptop's or smartphone's shopping portal and select at will. The fact that the producer is Nestle or Kraft won't guarantee placement in these searches.

Indeed, although Amazon has won praise for efforts to integrate Whole Foods into Amazon.com, one wonders if, in the end, having conflicts of interest of products within the store's halo won't rebound against Whole Foods/Amazon.

Maybe consumers will want "pure plays" where online shopping portals have no interest but to serve consumers. So, in other words, no matter what the image of a retailer or a manufacturer or ownership of a brand, if a consumer sets his favorite shopping portal to only show USDA Certified organic products, then that lasagna previously sold based on its association with the store brand won't even show up in the search results!

One could also imagine a growth in certification bodies. Just as it is third-party certifiers that establish not only that a food is Kosher, but that it meets the specific standards of, say, the Orthodox Union, perhaps consumers will seek foods certified to be in accordance with the standards of the Rainforest Alliance, the non-GMO project or certifications of the future.

So, on the one hand, consumers will be able to restrict their purchases to products that meet their culinary, health, ethical and environmental standards. Because this restrains the sources of food, it might mean consumers will pay higher prices and allow for better profits.

On the other hand, the same technology that allows these consumers to buy just what they want will also tell consumers where they can get it at the best price.

This means, of course, that those standardized foods that are the cheapest to produce will also turn out to not be that profitable to sell.

Retailers need to focus on unique foods that express values consumers are willing to pay for. Then consumers will get products they thought they were getting all along and, for serving their needs, retailers will be able to differentiate themselves in a way that allows them to make a living.

DB

James 3. Trevar









At the Summer Fancy Food, Pomi will be debuting a variety of new products in **glass bottles**, practical **tubes** and classic **cans**. Pomi is always **BPA free**, **non-GMO** and made with **authentic Italian tomatoes**.



w w w . p o m i . u s . c o m

Summer Sightseeing



By
Lee Smith
Publisher

y the time you read this, I will have attended the American Cheese Society Conference and Judging. The IDDBA and Fancy Food Shows also will be over. One of the benefits of attending national shows is to identify trends, meet producers and seek out new products. The other benefit is to meet with rarely seen friends and acquaintances. It is a time to reflect on where business is going and how to proceed in an increasingly competitive market.

The healthy food trend is continuing to grow. There was an abundance of products that ranged from organic to no preservatives, grass-fed meats, no antibiotics and all natural. Fruit and vegetables were front and center. There were ancient grains and legumes. The newest group of high-profile products were foods for vegetarians.

This year, one of the vegan and vegetarian differences is new meatless products are aimed at people and families who eat meat and seafood. The goal is to reduce meat consumption, not eliminate it.

Fresh and local follow along with the quest for healthy, although just being fresh doesn't always mean low risk, healthy food. And local doesn't mean made without pesticides, additives or preservatives. Regardless, supporting farmers and producers is viewed in a very powerful light.

The question retailers must ask is whether these new products represent the newest food fad or are part of a longer-term trend that needs to be incorporated into store design and strategic planning.

One determinant is the younger audience's food choices. Gen Z., the 11- to 22-year-olds, are just making their mark on society.

According to Mintel, over half of 15- to 17-yearolds say soda is unhealthy. They are mindful of sugar and health conscious. They are also the most diverse group in the history of our country.

Their curiosity is spurred on by social media and TV. Recipes are often found through social media instead of cookbooks. It looks like cooking at home

is growing due to more interest, not by necessity.

All this points to a continuing trend towards fresh foods, clean recipes, lots of fruit and vegetables, vegetarian alternatives and better overall quality. If economic hard times occur, younger people may well turn to growing their own food.

How will it affect today's retailer? An image change may be needed, as companies fight for a larger market share of health-conscious consumers. Preservatives and additives are not necessarily the enemy and are often needed for extended shelf life. Many have been proven safe and have been used for decades.

Will consumers still want less expensive products? Of course. But far fewer will be satisfied by price alone – especially if they feel healthfulness has been compromised.

Will non-meat offerings grow? Sure, but not in the "I want to eat meat, but feel it is not a moral or ethical choice." They will, instead, be looking for meal options without meat – eggplant dishes, vegetable curries, stuffed grape leaves, Indian dishes and delicious recipes that use tofu in traditional ways.

How about specialty cheeses? Not only will great cheeses thrive because they are centerpieces for light meals, the interest in unique varieties will continue to grow. Cheese is a great alternative to meat, providing nutrition and satisfaction. Even though cheese is often expensive when considering the per pound price, it is a great value when looking at portion size. For most people, 2 to 3 ounces is more than enough.

Will specialty meats continue to grow? Yes, but these are a long way from dominating the market and probably never will. However, specialty deli meats are often higher quality, more international and, in some cases, naturally cured with only salt and air. Currently, in the deli arena, we are seeing pounds slip while dollars are increasing, probably due to a demand for better quality. However, as Gen Z creates their own families, we may well see an increase in traditional deli meats.





Delis are gearing up for students returning to the classrooms

BY KEITH LORIA

ummer is winding down, which means that kids will once again be gearing up for school shopping and parents will begin thinking about the foods they will pack in their lunchboxes.

The back-to-school season is an important time for supermarket delis. This is when the department should be upping their game to ensure that both kids and parents think about their offerings so, when patterns set in, they regularly purchase items from the deli department.

Mark Miller, vice president of marketing at Cypress, CA-based Simply Fresh Foods, manufacturers of Rojo's salsas, hummus and queso, says summer vacation is a relaxing time that flies by, and people have a different attitude when it's time to start thinking

about back-to-school shopping. By making things easier in the lunch department, delis do themselves a great service.

"Parents have to buy their kids new clothes, shoes, backpacks and school supplies, and then they need to think about what they are giving them for lunch every day," he says. "Delis that offer a convenient way to do that will separate themselves from the pack and see an uptick in sales that will last throughout the year."

Karen Toufayan, vice president of sales and marketing for Toufayan Bakeries, which has offices in Orlando, FL and Ridgefield, NJ, says to target these shoppers, products need to include healthier versions of what kids and families like, including all-natural and organic products that are non GMO.

"Products should still be easy for moms to prepare, and to





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- ✓ CERTIFIED ORGANIC



The deli is an important place to pick up these foods because it aligns with general eating trends.

excite the palate, products should be more unique," she says. "Thus, instead of the traditional white bread and rolls, consumers look to all natural pita, wraps and even naan. Wraps are a staple in every household. Quick and easy to make with what's on hand, they're a great option compared to regular sliced bread."

Valerie Liu, marketing/brand manager for Jarlsberg, a division of Norseland Inc., based in Darien, CT, says when thinking about the back-to-school market, retailers need to consider lean and new flavors, as that's what young people desire.

"We know that Generation Z has an adventurous palate and loves experimenting with spicy, tangy, unexpected flavors," she says. "Offering both familiar flavors with globally-inspired options gives shoppers a sense of culinary discovery and gets them excited about coming back to the supermarket deli."

The deli is an important place to pick up these foods because it aligns with general eating trends toward fresh foods and prioritizing nutrition, as the fresh perimeter has become a destination for shoppers.

The Influenster recently polled 5,000 Millennial moms and found 88 percent ranked nutrition at their top concernmore so than price (65 percent) and convenience (52 percent)—when shopping for lunch food. If the deli can continue to offer freshness and variety while incorporating global flavors and nutritional transparency, it will be the go-to spot for back-to-school foods.

These are important foods because the snacking trend is not going anywhere. According to a 2018 Technomic report, 37 percent of consumers say any food can be a snack if the portion size is small. These smaller portions are perfect for creating "bento box" style lunches and snacks that gives shoppers the variety they crave.

One trend that Miller feels those in the segment need to keep an eye on is the home delivery market.

"It's such a remarkable phenomena; all these stores and companies where you can just order something from the deli online and have it delivered or pick it up, and that's really helped the industry thrive," he says. "And meal kits also. You can walk into the door of a store and the meal is already done, and I suspect that delis will soon be doing some sort of lunchbox kit. That seems like

it's a natural progression."

New on the Shelves

John McGuckin, CEO of Tribe Hummus, located in Taunton, MA, notes its latest innovation in the hummus category has led the company toward much more of an approach to kids, specifically back-to-school.

For example, in July Tribe Hummus introduced its chocolate hummus in an 8-ounce container and an on-the-go pack where it is teamed with Snack Factory pretzel twists. The latter is offered in chocolate, classic and roasted red pepper varieties.

"When you compare our chocolate snack to some of the traditional chocolate snacks out there on the market, like Nutella where there is 22 grams of sugar per serving, we are only dealing with 5 grams of sugar per serving, so it's a great way to encourage kids to eat healthier," says McGuckin. "It's a satisfying snack and also enjoyable, and none of our products contain any artificial preservatives."

Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president





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of sales and business development for Don's Food Products, headquartered in Philadelphia, PA, says American shoppers are concerned with taste, health and convenience when looking for these items.

That's why the company has developed several new offerings that fit into the trio of needs. Don's now offers new artisan deli salads that come in cups as well as Dips, Dips, Dips, which are snack additions geared for students.

MegaMex Foods, manufacturers of the Wholly Guacamole brand, recently launched a new line of grab-and-go snack guacamole cups with tortilla chips that it expects to be popular among kids heading back to school.

"With our new snack cups, we're answering to a growing demand for wholesome and convenient, yet satisfying snacks," says Diana Pusiri, senior brand manager at the Orange, CA-based company. "The new single-serve, portable snack cups add variety to our line of guacamole dips made only with simple and real ingredients. Like all our foods, there is no need for mashing or prep—just open the cup and let the snacking begin."

That's an important thing for children who regularly have a snack break sometime in school and often have a snack once they get home. Pusiri adds that these fit easily into lunch boxes, backpacks or recyclable bags.

Made with its signature guacamole produced from hand-scooped Hass avocados, the snack cups are available in two flavor-packed varieties—Classic (Mild) and Spicy (Hot)—and are also paired with tortilla rounds.

A new offering from Norseland is its Jarlsberg Cheese Snacks, individually-wrapped portions, which Liu notes are ideal for lunch boxes. The company also offers Jarlsberg Slices for sandwiches that can be sliced to order in the deli or purchased pre-sliced.

"Folios Cheese Wraps also come in a Jarlsberg variety; these are 100 percent cheese, gluten- and lactose-free wraps that are an alternative to tortilla wraps or bread," says Liu. "Folios Cheese Wraps also come in Cheddar and Parmesan."

Simply Fresh Foods's Miller says Rojo's offers a number of items for student lunch boxes, including refrigerated salsa, hummus and dips. Two of its latest salsas—the Salsa Con Queso and Queso Blanco—were created with grab-and-go snacking in mind.

"Our dips go well with chips but are also



good as a sandwich spread or in combination with crackers," says Miller. "We offer some 10-ounce cups and are making a shift to more single-serve items, which fit in well with the back-to-schooler. Our spreads offer a nice change of pace from the typical sandwich, and we're finding a great demand for them."

This year, Toufayan introduced five new products that are aimed at the back-to-school crowd.

"We have the Toufayan Lavash Wraps, a combination of flax, oat fiber and whole wheat that will make this uniquely soft textured bread an instant family hit, especially since it is also an excellent source of protein and fiber," says Toufayan. "Then there's Toufayan Gluten Free Smart Grain Wraps, multi grain wraps that have a soft pliable texture and hearty taste. These wraps are non-GMO, soy free, vegan and high in fiber."

There's also Gluten Free Pizza Crusts, Thin Style Pita and Tandoori Flatbreads. The company also recently released its Organic Sprouted Grains line.

Package Innovation

In 2018, Jarlsberg debuted new multivac packaging for Jarlsberg deli fresh cut slices with a peel and reseal function. Liu says this is key for families that stock up on essentials and want the convenience of pre-sliced.

Companies also need to be honest about their products and not let a design steer people the wrong way.

"Moms are savvy—they research online, know how to read labels and differentiate marketing labels from the nutrition panel," says Liu. "Many don't trust what they perceive as marketing labels, so any

displays that offer more transparency about ingredients and nutrition are a plus."

For packaging, Toufayan's new products come in zipper bags to maintain their freshness once opened.

Unlike some cereals or yogurts that try to appeal to kids with cartoon characters or bright graphics colors, McGuckin says Tribe Hummus designs its packaging with a high-level in mind, communicating to the parents who are making the decisions that hummus is a great snack decision and healthier than many others out there.

"We know more and more people are reading labels, particularly moms, who want to be sure they are providing healthy foods for their kids," says McGuckin. "We make sure our label is visible and easily understood."

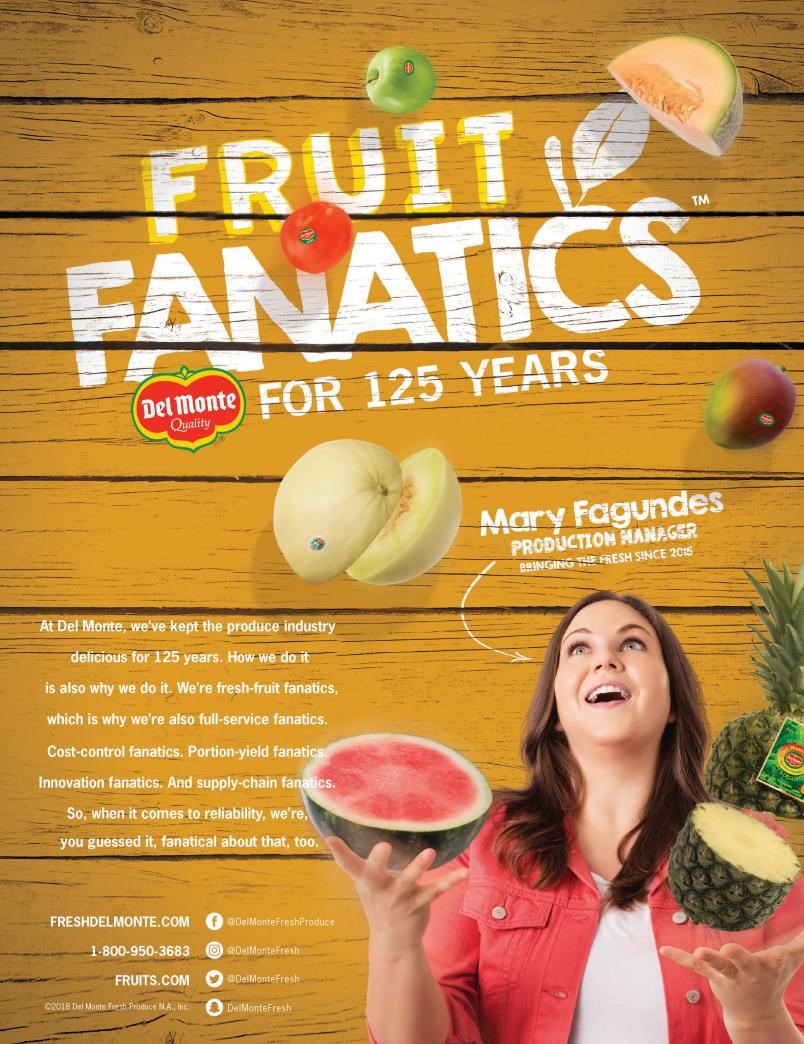
Merchandising Tips

For Rojo's products, Miller champions cross merchandising with smaller packages of chips, crackers, breads and even meats and cheeses. One savvy retailer he's witnessed recently had a stack of Perrier bottles in the deli section so people could get their beverage and lunch foods all in the same area.

As for displays, he's seen stores that have tables with a tray that holds ice and tubs of salsa or hummus and that, he says, stimulates purchase by impulse.

"They make for quite a handsome display and are very eye-catching, and that's important when there's so much for someone to choose from," he says. "Demos in the deli department and sampling to go along with it are always welcomed."

McGuckin says the company provides specialized point-of-sale displays for supermarket deli retailers, and many are specific



to a certain retailer.

'There is in-store theater around backto-school but it tends to be in the grocery aisles; there should be some noise made with the fresh part of the store, as well," says McGuckin. "Tying in insulated lunchboxes to the deli department around these foods and running demos to get kids to try can be a big part of that."

The deli is a one-stop destination for new finds and fresh lunch items.

Recipes Rule

provide consumers with ideas and easy-to-cross merchandising," she says. "Group make recipe and usage ideas during their together pre-sliced deli meats with cheese shopping experience; the company works with its retail partners to provide this cracker and bread options. Shoppers are information.

one easy-to-grab location, such as wraps, meats, cheeses and spreads in one area, is also key," says Toufayan. "By showcasing low cheese, she adds it's very easy to pair, with common accompaniments, such as meats and cheeses, retailers can provide a one-stop lunch selection."

boundaries on the items that parents and their children come to find in the department, as it will help increase sales.

"Traditional departments that were

Toufayan would like to see more delis once separated can be strengthened with snacks, pre-sliced veggies, along with also prioritizing the healthiness of foods, so "Displays showcasing a full solution in help them understand ingredients and nutritional-claims beyond the surface level."

Because Jarlsberg is a mild, nutty, melsince it won't overpower other flavors. She suggests delis cross merchandise with presliced deli meats, pre-sliced veggies, and According to Liu, delis need to blur the breads and crackers, and highlight how cheese is a fantastic school lunch option, since it offers protein while being low carb and low sugar.

Cappelli would like to see more beauty

photos and signage in the deli department touting the back-to-school food items to get people thinking about how these are normal, every-day lunch ingredients.

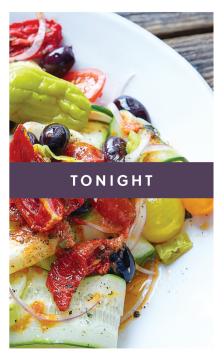
Parents strive to provide their children with healthy, fresh foods. The deli is a onestop destination for new finds and fresh lunch items, providing a quick shopping experience and plethora of healthy options for back to school lunches and snacks.

"People put in kids' lunchboxes things that they will eat, so finding a sweet spot between what kids enjoy and what's good for them is very important. As they make decisions early in life, it can play a big role in how you feel later in life," says McGuckin.

Back to school displays can lead the way in creating a fall deli destination.

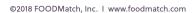






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TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TAILGATING OPPORTUNITIES

Marketing and merchandising for this popular pastime pays off

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

ailgating is one of America's favorite pastimes. However, this practice of picnicking or barbecuing off the back of a pickup truck or SUV isn't new. Food historians claim the custom dates to the 19th century chuckwagon. This was a U.S. Army wagon that an inventive Texas rancher converted to a mobile kitchen by placing a grill on the back.

The sporting element of tailgating has several, though no one official, origin. One of these is that spectators to the first intercollegiate football game between Princeton and Rutgers in 1869 gathered to grill sausages at the 'tail end' of a horse. Since then,

the practice of tailgating has grown, the menu has evolved and the whole concept is now big business.

In fact, in 2016, the U.S.-based Tailgating Industry Association projected spending of around \$20 billion for food and supplies, with 42 percent of tailgaters expending an average of \$500 each season for their tailgating essentials. Today, shoppers need for speed and craving for convenience makes the supermarket deli a perfect game day headquarters for tailgating fare.

"Tailgating is big for us," says Josh Naughton, director of deli, seafood and bakery for Roche Bros. Supermarkets, an 18-store chain headquartered in Wellesley, MA, whose football-themed deli pro-

gram goes by the name Tasty Tailgating. "Consider that we kick off tailgating marketing and merchandising at the end of August and run it through Super Bowl. It's like a holiday that's six months long. That's a huge opportunity."

The average tailgater is a great customer to pull into the deli. According to a 2016-published research study by the Tailgate Institute of over 20,000 tailgaters in 25 cities nationwide, 60 percent are 25 to 44 years old, 79 percent are men, 44 percent of tailgate food is bought by both husband and wife, 51 percent set up their tailgating fare three to four hours prior to kick-off, and 46 percent tailgate six to 10 times a season.



"Tailgating offers a chance for the deli to serve foods that are easily prepared and also compliment the traditional fare that is served at a tailgate party," says Nathan Kirk, marketing director for Pawleys Island Specialty Foods, in Pawleys Island, SC, known for its brand of pimento cheese called Palmetto Cheese. "Deli salads, specialty cheeses, dips and meats that tie-in to tailgating make for easier decision making for the shopper who wants to spend less time at the store."

Football Fare

Hot dogs, hamburgers, chips and dips are game-day staples that 43 percent of Americans plan to purchase this football season, according to a 2016-released survey conducted by digital savings destination RetailMeNot.com.

"Since people show up hours before the start of an event, tailgating has become a destination unto itself," says Debbie Seife, marketing director for Paramus, NJ-based Friesland Campina North America, Inc. "That means people are now planning ahead. They want to create an experience, something that reflects them and that they are proud to serve, rather than just putting anything out there. The supermarket deli is the perfect place to inspire as well as encourage customers to trade up when it comes to ingredients."

Snack items, party trays, sandwiches and grill ingredients are all categories where the deli can target tailgating shoppers.

"People are looking for snack ideas that

Snack items, party trays, sandwiches and grill ingredients are all categories where the deli can target tailgate shoppers.

are satiating; provide savory, spicy and sweet flavors; and are not overly indulgent," says John McGuckin, CEO for Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Inc., headquartered in Taunton, MA. "The hummus category satisfies all of these and is perfect when cross merchandised with carriers like pita chips or pretzels."

To appeal to a wider range of tastes, the company borrowed on popular flavor profiles from the snack chip aisle to create a new Buffalo Style and Sea Salt & Vinegar hummus. Also new is a Chocolate Hummus, which has one-quarter to one-fifth less sugar than chocolate dips currently on the market, according to McGuckin, appeals to kids and provides a dessert-style snack that can be paired with sweets, such as fresh and dried fruits. All three of these come in 8-ounce, rather than customary 10-ounce packaging, which lowers the price point and can reduce waste from left-overs. Tribe is looking at creating seasonal

flavors, such as a pumpkin flavor hummus in the fall.

Bold flavored snack dips like Pawleys Island Specialty Foods' Palmetto Cheese Original and Jalapeño are ideal for tailgating, says Kirk. "These products are gluten-free and appeal to customers with this dietary restriction. In addition, the trend now is the high-fat, low-carb, low-moderate protein Ketogenic Diet. There are over 6.8 million #keto posts on Instagram alone, which could lead one to believe that this will help influence menu options. Palmetto Cheese has seen a surge in posts related to Keto on Instagram and has introduced our product to a new generation of customers."

FrieslandCampina introduced its Cracker Cuts or cracker-sized Gouda and Maasdam Swiss Style cheese earlier this year. The pre-sliced cuts come in a peel and reseal ready-to-serve 7.05-ounce tray for easy snacking. The trays come in a display-ready case for easy merchandising in





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the cheese set or adjacent to crackers and deli meats.

"Give tailgaters more to be excited about with charcuterie trays and cheese boards to upgrade their tailgate entertaining," suggests Giuliana Pozzuto, director of marketing for the George DeLallo Co., based in Mount Pleasant, PA. "Include smoked meats, kielbasa and all their favorite tailgating staples alongside specialty cheeses, mustards and olives on a tray rather than a bun."

Trays and Platters

Trays and platters sold under the Tasty Tailgating logo are big-sellers at Roche Bros. The Sunday Tailgating Tapas Tray, for example, includes Pepper Jack cheese, pepperoni, Sicilian olives, sharp Provolone and peanuts, while the Playoffs tapas platter is a hot one with Cabot buffalo Cheddar (buffalo wing sauce hand-rubbed into white Cheddar), Daniele-brand hot bites, Beemster Gouda and stuffed cherry peppers. Meanwhile, Tasty Tailgating Snack Platters include The All-American (cubed Dietz & Watson Black forest ham, buffalo chicken, white American cheese, Ritz crackers and zesty honey mustard), and The Vegetarian (cubed Dietz & Watson Smoked Gouda and horseradish Cheddar, Ritz crackers, Carr's cracked black pepper crackers, and Blue Diamond smokehouse almonds). These platters are sold in the deli from Thursday through Monday during football season.

"There's also salad and combo trays. One of our salad trays has 8 ounces each of four types of potato salad: homemade original, red bliss, German, and egg and potato. A combo tray includes, for example, 8 ounces each of potato salad, elbow macaroni salad, coleslaw and a twist pasta salad," explains Naughton.

Sandwiches are another hit for tailgating, and homegating, which is the practice of inviting friends over to watch the game in the living room or via a television set up in the backyard.

"Soft-ripened cheeses and fresh spreadable cheeses go well in wraps and on mini croissants," says Christel Vibrac, key account manager for Fromagerie Henri Hutin, headquartered in Montlhery, France. "Our double cream Brie, Brie Couronne, is a lactic Brie and our triple cream Brie, Belletoile is very buttery-tasting."

Sandwich toppers and bruschetta-style spreads are a real hit during tailgating season, according to Pozzuto. "Items like



our chopped olive salads and tapenades, Muffuletta, Sweet-and-Tangy Pepper Spread, etc. feature unique, bold flavors that pair up naturally with their favorite tailgating staples like hoagies and subs loaded with deli cold-cuts."

Roche Bros. offers a 5-foot party sub that isn't practical to take to the game, but it does look impressive and is easier to serve for home-gating. However, what's more mobile for tailgating is the chain's 4-inch by 10-inch Ciabatta bread sandwiches, says Naughton. "There's eight different choices. One of these is the Hungry Man, with mortadella, salami, Provolone, arugula and hoagie dressing."

Thirty-nine percent of tailgaters use a grill to cook their football fare, according to the Tailgate Institute. Therefore, tying in with a grill theme can cook up extra sales for the deli. An excellent way to do this is with cheese. For example, FrieslandCampina launched a new line of Dutch cheeses earlier this year that can give burgers a new taste twist. The sixitem line includes a mild Gouda, nutty and mildly fruit flavored Emmental and Chevrette Mild Goat Cheese made from 100 percent pasteurized goat's milk. Each comes in a resealable 5.02-ounce tray that is easy to use for the grill master and a display ready case for deli merchandising.

Score Sales

"In addition to serving as dips, our Palmetto Cheese Original and Jalapeño make great toppings for burgers, bratwurst and hot dogs. Plus, our OMG! Dip, our brand of caramelized onion dip, works well as a burger topping or chicken wing dip," says Pawleys Island Specialty Foods' Kirk.

Stanchion signs in the front foyer at Roche Bros. Supermarkets direct shoppers to Tasty Tailgating offerings during football season. Displays themselves are festooned with streamers and balloons color-coordinated to the teams playing. In-store announcements, demos, print ads and social media reinforce the deli as well as the entire store's tailgate selections.

"The big thing about tailgating in New England is that it's not just about proball. There's high school games on Friday nights, college games on Saturday, and proball on Sundays as well as Mondays and Thursdays. We take advantage of all of these opportunities to make it exciting," says Naughton.

Mobile merchandisers and attractive signage are a great way to create exciting mini-destinations for tailgating, apart from your typical everyday offerings, according to DeLallo's Pozzuto

"Since each consumer is looking for an array of products, make a five for \$25 style promotion that encourages the consumer to spend. If bulk, self-serve deli options are available, have a make-your-own party platter and charge per pound. Providing simple serving tips or recipes using the bundled items allows the consumer to produce the items during the tailgate. Hamburgers, hot dogs, side dishes and snacks (chips/ dips) make the bulk of the budget, so items that can tap into this area of usage will have the highest probability of being purchased. The tailgating customer is on the hunt for their tailgate menu, so why not make their decision-making process easier?" says Pawley's Island's Kirk.

INNOVATIONS IN PACKAGED PRODUCTS

Delis focus on convenience, ease of use for customers

BY BOB JOHNSON

ood packages are coming to rival premium brands in their impact on the deli bottom line, as more congrab and go to the service counter. "Getting the packaging right for an outof-home product is almost as important as the food itself, because even the most outstanding offering will suffer if not packaged correctly," says Barrington Henry, a product specialist at Dot It Restaurant Fulfillment, Arlington, TX. "The reason being, without suitable protection, the product's shelf life is dramatically reduced, if not removed entirely. What's more, it becomes very difficult to transport and eat on the go, making the food essentially inedible."

The best thing that can be said

about a package, hot or cold, is it makes the customer's life easier.

"Shoppers want their life simplified and sumers prefer the convenience of grab and go to the service counter. Itting the packaging right for an outage product is almost as important food itself, because even the most correctly," says Barrington Henry, auct specialist at Dot It Restaurant ment, Arlington, TX. "The reason "Shoppers want their life simplified and to pick up a meal that's not only fresh and tasty, but also conveniently packaged," says Rebecca Casey, senior director of marketing at Transcontinental Packaging, Lenexa, KS. "Convenience like a handle for easy carrying, resealable zipper that stays closed and, most importantly, a functional package that protects the food from the grocery store to their car and finally home."

A good package can even play a major role in merchandising prepared foods.

"Consumers like to see what they are actually buying, and windowed packaging can increase sales by up to 20 percent," says Henry. "We have developed a wide

range of packaging and labeling

products, and almost every packaging item we offer features one or more windows per product." Packaging is expanding from fresh-cut produce and bakery to a growing variety of grab-and-go deli products.

"Retailers are looking for as many items as possible to be packaged for grab and go," says Marilyn Stapleton, director of marketing at Anchor Packaging, St. Louis. "As pick-up and delivery orders continue to increase, we can expect to see the deli expand its

packaged options."

Hot meal kits in packages are among

the most important growth categories.

"Pre-packaged items and meal kits will continue to grow in popularity," says Casey. "Shoppers want to buy, store, prep and serve their meals with the minimum amount of time and effort, but will not sacrifice quality."

In our convenience-crazed times, the quality of a packaged meal program is essential to the health of the deli.

"Retailers are positioning their delis as a center for meal solutions. Shoppers see the deli as a healthier, more fresh meal option," says Casey. "The in-store deli department is becoming a destination rather than just a stopping point for shoppers."

Hot Foods, Hot Trends

While traditionally packages held foods that are cold, or at room temperature, the newest challenge is in displaying hot foods.

"Historically you would see a mixed bag of cold food applications, such as various cold salads, fruits and meats," says Sean Norton, marketing communications manager at Milliken & Co., Spartanburg, SC. "However, with the popular growth in hot-fill and hot lamp foods, you are now seeing anything from chef-inspired soups to stir fry to rotisserie chicken to Italian dishes and beyond. The key is the package must stand up to the high heat as to not degrade the food contents inside. NX UltraClear Polypropylene checks all of these boxes."

Ideally, the package can display food hot at the deli, transport it to the customer's kitchen and hold it in the microwave.

"Convenience is also key amongst



fresh-prepared shoppers, especially working individuals and Millennials who are on the go," says Norton. "Packaging that is hot-fill tolerant and microwavable is key. Consumers want to be able to heat, eat and reheat in the same package."

Producers are competing in the market for packages that can carry food home and be put right into the oven.

Transcontinental Packaging, Robbie facility, recently released their new Oven N Done Bag, offering supermarkets the opportunity to package fresh seafood or poultry meals with vegetables," says Casey. "The new bag helps position retailers as a destination for fresh meals, especially at the seafood counter, where they might not have had the right product offering to provide a fresh alternative to shoppers wanting a fresh meal solution. The shopper selects one of the prepackaged meals or customizes their own version and places the meal directly in the oven or the microwave – no dishes, no prep, no mess."

ready-to-eat or ready-to-heat products available at the deli.

'Traditionally, cold foods like sandwiches and salads have fared best in deli packaging, but with the addition of our new Street Food line, the options are virtually limitless," says Henry.

In addition to packages for meals, producers are also finding greater demand for smaller, snack-sized packages.

"The biggest change we are seeing, besides meal kits, is the increase in snacking or single-serve grab-and-go foods," says Casey. "Prepackaged items for snacks or small meals are becoming more of a demand. Shoppers are snacking more today than they were in the past, accounting for half of all eating occasions. Smaller packages appeal to those who want to limit their portion sizes. Shoppers are looking for healthy, guick, convenient snack foods that fit into their busy and active lifestyles."

Willing To Pay More

As long as the price difference is reasonable, customers seem willing to pay a little more for the convenience of packaging.

"We do not have data that shows a significant increase in packaging; however, our consumer research shows shoppers are willing to pay a premium of up to 15 cents for a clear, microwavable, fully recyclable package," says Norton.

And price alone is probably not the best place to start in evaluating different package alternatives.

"The best packages include visibility of the food contents to drive impulse sales, maximize shelf space, extend shelf-life to reduce shrink, preserve the presentation to make it look fresh and appealing, maintain food safety, secure closure yet easy-opening for the consumer and are reclosable for leftovers," says Stapleton. "They should also offer versatility to display hot foods to go or items in a refrigerated case to be microwave reheated before consumption."

good deli package must look appetizing.

"Package design creates eye-appeal, while maintaining performance," says Stapleton. "Hot food temperatures make the package more pliable. To maintain rigidity during handling, an increase in material gauge can cause the cost to increase. To keep food visible on display, the anti-fog additive in the material blend will increase the cost."

The package carries and protects, Packaging is increasing the range of but it also displays and merchandises the

> "The role of packaging is to preserve and protect the product it was designed for through transport, storage and consumption," says Casey. "But first the package must sell the product. Packaging should be attractive, informative and help educate the shopper on the product. And, let's not forget the emotional connection a package can have, especially with the impulse shopper. A package must communicate the brand value and use features like print, shapes, convenience features and words to entice the shopper to pick up the package and investigate further."

Transparency And Convenience

Transparency means the package must both let you see the product and contain information about the ingredients and where and how it was produced.

"Two words come to mind - transand convenience." parency savs Casey. "Shoppers want to where their product's ingredients come from. Complete transparency is an important factor for building brand loyalty. Incorporating locally-produced items into displays or at least highlighting even a single local ingredient creates confidence and entices the shopper to look further or ask questions about the freshly-prepared product. Clean labels are a key packaging element to engage shoppers. Transparency also includes a package that clearly shows

the quality of the food inside. Incorporating large windows to view all sides of the product has become very popular."

The ability to clearly see the product is a major factor differentiating packages.

"The trend toward ultimate clarity in food packaging continues to be a leading driver," says. Norton, "Consumers want to be able to see the food they are purchasing, and high clarity packaging provides a sense of quality and freshness."

In addition to protecting and displaying Customers buy with their eyes, and a products, packages also make a statement about the brand and store.

> "There are three things we emphasize with our customers when designing packaging for the supermarket perimeter - what does the package say about your brand; is the package visually appealing and finally, does the package attract new shoppers while keeping brand recognition for current shoppers?" says Casey.

> One statement to make through packaging is that care has been taken to ensure food safety.

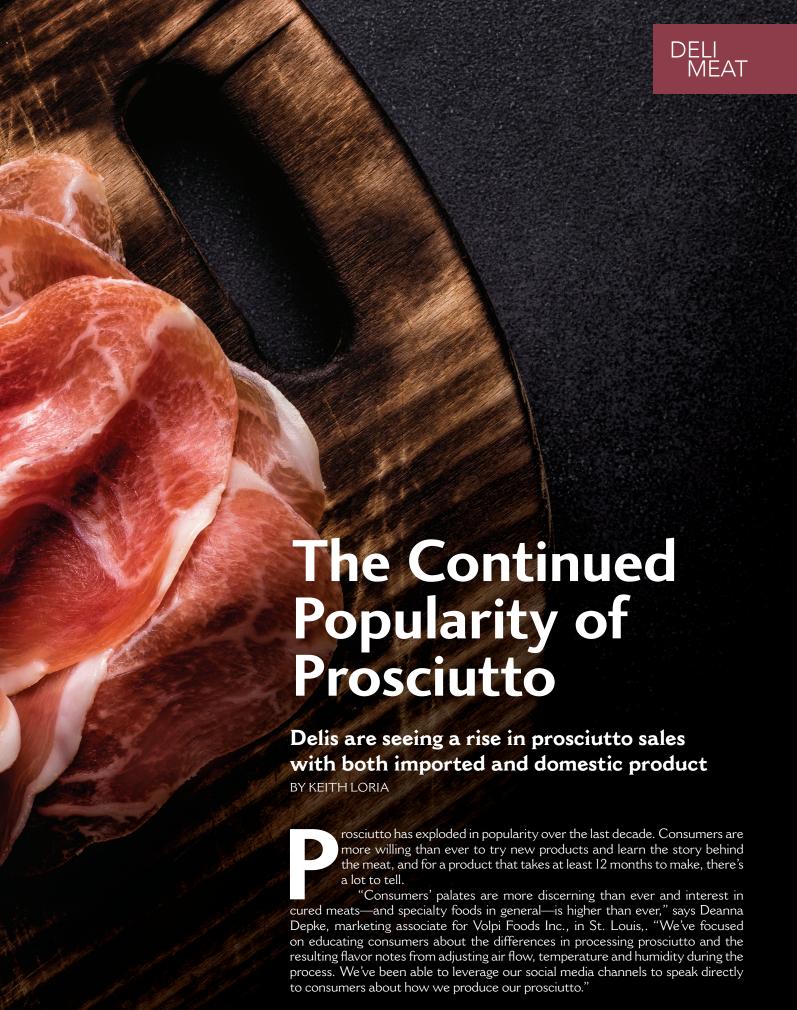
> "[The focus on food safety is prevalent], so tamper-evident packaging around the perimeter of the grocery store is also on the rise," says Norton. "Finally, with the growing trends around single-use packaging, it is paramount food packaging be fully recyclable and/or reusable. Milliken's NX UltraClear Polypropylene packaging is crystal-clear, microwavable and fully recyclable and reusable."

> Alongside food safety, the package has to make a statement about the freshness and taste of the contents.

> "The store's reputation depends on every item in the deli being fresh and safe to eat," says Stapleton. "Presentation and food safety go hand in hand to drive repeat sales. Food has to look good to be sold and taste good to encourage the consumer to come back for more."

> Another important statement is the store and the brand are committed to sustainability.

> "We offer a range of fully compostable deli packaging solutions, including sandwich boxes, windowed bags, salad packs, coffee cups, containers and now takeaway boxes for hot foods," says Henry. "Our products are made from plantbased materials - even the laminate we use to line our sandwich and salad packs and form the windows is certified to the American (ASTM D6400) and European (EN13432) standards for compostability." DB



Simone Bocchini, president of the family-owned Fratelli Beretta USA, Inc., headquartered in Mount Olive, NJ, feels in 2018 there is more knowledge about prosciutto due to exposure in food publications and food-oriented TV shows.

"Consumers are starting to understand the different levels and learning what makes it special," he says. "In the delimarket, you can find everything from a \$3 prosciutto to one that is \$25 per quarter of a pound. There's an entry level, you can move up to a domestic and then you start getting into the imported product and niche items."

The lower end, he explains, is done with a blend of slices and a short curing period, so there's not much time to create a strong flavor profile.

The process of making prosciutto is deceptively simple — fresh pork, salt and patience are the only ingredients.

"As you grow more in aging time, around 20 months you start to have a product that is sweeter and a bolder, rounded flavor," says Bocchini. "At 14, 16

and 20 months, you feel the salt less and less because, over time, it pulls it away and it goes from the pinkish of a young age to a more dark red meaty color on the more aged product."

Kimberly Sayid, director of strategic partnership with Principe Food USA, based in Long Beach, CA, notes there is plenty of interest in the category, and a lot has changed in recent years.

"Pre-sliced proscuitto as a whole continues to grow in all channels; domestic product is certainly on the rise as well as antibiotic-free (ABF) and High Animal Welfare pork as key drivers in consumer purchasing patterns," she says. "Imported, the most popular are certainly Prosciutto di Parma and Prosciutto Italiano; San Daniele is growing and Modena is a new entry. With domestic, it's ABF"

Sweetness, savoriness, complexity, texture and moisture all change with different products/origins and different ages, not to mention with different producers and quality of raw materials.



Gil Perales, marketing manager of Olli Salumeria Americana, based in Mechanicsville, VA, says the company has handed down a curing technique and process over four generations, which has been the substantial force in its success.

"The process is anywhere from nine months to two years, so like fine wine, it gets better with age and that drives the demand for finding the best prosciutto," he says. "Prosciutto elevates the taste and experience when it's included in a meal, such as veal or chicken saltimbocca."

The process of making prosciutto is deceptively simple—fresh pork, salt and patience are the only ingredients. The difference in flavors are due to the variance in



pork quality and processing technique.

"At Volpi Foods, we use only fresh, never frozen, Midwest pork and constantly monitor air-flow, temperature and humidity to control the drying process and develop our signature delicate flavor," says Depke. "We tend to use less salt than most producers, allowing the taste of the pork to shine."

From traditional prosciutto to its Sofi Award-Winning Culatello prosciutto, Volpi Foods' lines are crafted from fresh pork and slow-cured with sea salt to develop their unique flavor.

Principe offers the only ABF, High Animal Welfare DOP prosciuttos from Italy, both Parma and San Daniele, and also offers Prosciutto Italiano in conventional, ABF and/or HighWelfare formats.

"Principe uniquely produces over 1.2 million legs a year," says Sayid.

Fratelli Beretta's latest addition is its Prosciutto di Carpegna, a specialty of Italy's Marché region, which has never been available in the U.S. until now. To cure the prosciutto, the salumai use the famous sweet salt of Cervia exclusively over a 20-month period, and the company has developed a secret coating blend of lard and spices.

Rise of Pre-Sliced

Most in the industry believe pre-sliced is the way of the future. With high turn-over and minimal training behind the deli counter, it also helps guarantee perfect slicing for prosciutto.

"For the general public, pre-sliced is taking over a lot of consumption," says Bocchini. "Retailers appreciate that they know exactly how much they are buying and consumers love the convenience. They can buy high-end product, consume it in one sitting and not have to worry about it going bad over time."

Grab-and-Go

Another trend catching fire in the category involves snacking, and this boom has led to some companies changing up product offerings.

For instance, Depke says Volpi Foods has adapted its prosciutto products to include grab-and-go items, such as Roltini Singles that feature Mozzarella cheese wrapped with prosciutto, allowing consumers to indulge on-the-go without compromising quality and taste.

Sayid agrees that snacking is clearly a

very fast growing and important category. For retail, Principe Food offers pre-sliced 3-ounce ovals in two portions with unique pull out trays and undulating slices. It also has 1-ounce snack packs.

Traceability and Sourcing

More consumers are demanding traceability in the prosciutto they purchase today, asking questions like, "Where did this prosciutto come from?" or "How was the hog raised?"

In response, Volpi Foods has partnered with neighboring family farms to develop a unique Heritage Breed Prosciutto offering.

"We're able to isolate premium breeds like Berkshire and Red Wattle, control feed and ensure that each hog is humanely raised," says Depke. "We've lengthened the drying time on these hogs to 18 months





to develop the superior flavor in the pork."

Principe Food's Sayid notes consumers also are returning to the roots, and prosciutto is the most natural and direct link to the land it comes from, with only three ingredients—pork, salt and time.

Volpi Foods' prosciutto is available in a variety of formats, including traditional style for specialty stores, easy to slice square cuts for supermarkets as well as shelf-stable pre-sliced packages ideal for cross merchandising in the produce or wine departments.

Tips for Sales

Sayid notes that while prosciutto has certainly grown in consumption and awareness, there is still a lot of opportunity and work to do as consumers have very little understanding of the origin, production, differences/varieties and applications of the product. The same is true for many retailers and the deli counter.

"There needs to be more training in both slicing and product knowledge," she says. "Prosciutto is expensive, retailers need to offer consumers the best experience possible if they want them to return. Offer variety, recipe suggestions and information to consumers."

Cross merchandising prosciutto is key, Depke notes, and he suggests merchandising prosciutto by pairing it next to fresh fruit, specialty cheese or liquor to increase trial and basket ring.

"Volpi has developed hundreds of digital and print recipes that pair our products with everything from fresh vegetables to craft beers, giving the consumer an opportunity to build an experience around the product," says Depke. "The ever-popular charcuterie and cheese board trend offers a great opportunity for supermarket delis to work across departments to create new pairings and recipes."

The real key to increasing sales, Bocchini shares, is in live demos. This is a tried-and-true measure he says never fails.

"Every time we have a demonstration at the store level and we have the time to explain to consumers the differences in the several levels, we notice a tremendous spike in sales and a greater retention as we go along of the consumer upgrading," he says. "Having literature available also is important for those who want to know more about these meats."

Prosciutto can be a lucrative deli department item, but having the right assortment and knowledgable staff are key.

DB

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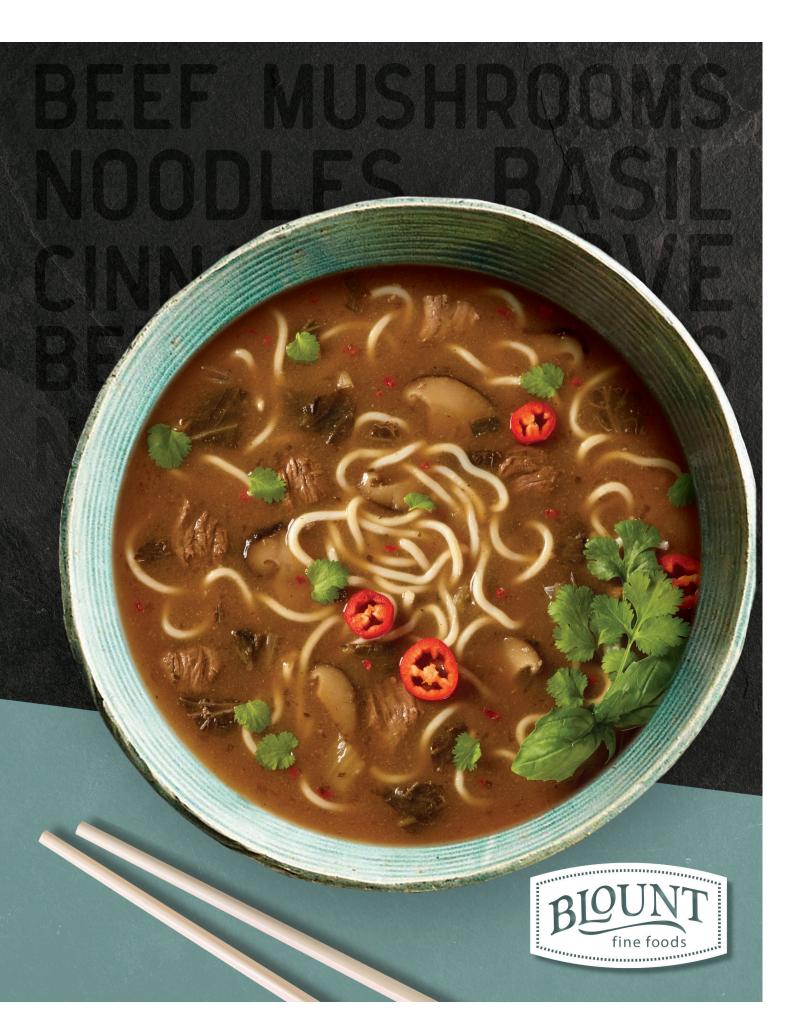
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Grabbing the Dinner to Go Market

Here are three key ways your department can grow grab-and-go dinner sales

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

alk into an H-E-B store or let your fingers do the walking on the 400-store chain's website at the 'What's for dinner' hour of 4 p.m. The choices are incredible. It's not so much a single large menu as it is the choices for preparation and diversity of foods that are available, all in an easy grab-and-go format.

Take the San Antonio, TX-headquartered retailers' Meal Simple program, for example. Want to simply eat? Select a prepared couscous salad. Want to heat and

eat? Nearly two dozen selections include herb-seasoned salmon paired with roasted fingerling potatoes and steamed broccoli. Want to cook? All the pre-portioned and prepped ingredients for a seasoned beef steak with asparagus and potatoes are ready to bake and serve in less than 20 minutes. There's some 30 other selections, too.

That's not all. H-E-B's deli and Food To-Go departments also serve up classic soups and sandwiches, rotisserie and fried chicken, edgier ethnic favorites like sushi and tamales, and even true Texas barbecue with all the fixings ready for the family

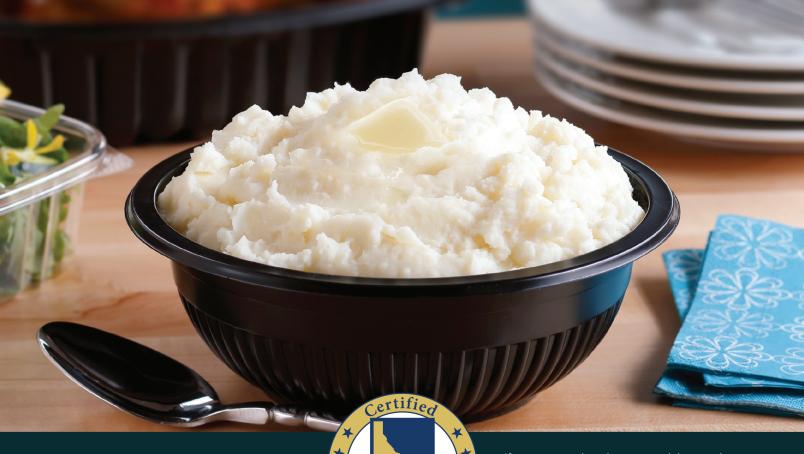
dinner table. It's the supermarket's distinct ability to offer shoppers a soup-to-nuts of have-it-your-way selections that is a key differentiator from traditional foodservice and especially advantageous at dinner time.

"U.S. consumers ate almost 100 billion dinner meals last year, with over 80 percent of those dinners consumed in the home," says Kim McLynn, executive director of public relations for the Port Washington, NY-based global information company, The NPD Group. "It's the one main meal of the day where more care is given to what's eaten and more time is put into its



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Here are three ways delis can capitalize on this trend:

1. SERVE THE 'TRINITY MEAL' IN AN ON-TREND WAY

Chicken and cold salads from the deli are still dinner plate mainstays, according to the NPD Group's McLynn. "However, as major generational cohorts shift into new life stages, the demands of family and the need for convenience take on new dimensions. Empty nest boomers will have different expectations than Millennials, who are forming families. Gen Z, while still influenced by their Gen X parents, are emerging with their own unique approaches to dinner."

What this means is that the traditional dinnertime 'trinity meal' composed of a protein, starch and vegetable, now tends to be a 'multi-component' meal, where these separate items are combined into one item, like tacos, according to the NPD Group's Future of Dinner study. At the same time. while breakfast and lunch have become more snack driven, this research reveals that it is hot main dishes, often paired with a side, that continue as the dinner meal's basic structure.

"Most recently, we launched a fully-baked chicken pot pie with tender white meat chicken in a retail-ready carton," says Amy Fattori, channel development manager, North America, for Glendale, CA-based Nestle Professional, whose brands include Stouffers and products that can be merchandised hot or cold for consumption now or later. "Pot pie is a classic comfort food that provides deli shoppers a full meal solution that can guickly be warmed at home or can be served in store already warmed."

rise, and Dot It Restaurant Fulfillment sumers like, according to the Washington,





has recently introduced five home and industrially compostable 'Street Boxes' specifically for this growing market, according to Barrington Henry, product specialist for the Arlington, TX-based specialized restaurant distributor. "Made from a sustainable and renewably sourced triple-corrugated Kraft board, the packs showcase our award-winning Street Food branded design. Durable and versatile, the Street Boxes offer an eco-alternative to polystyrene clamshell packs. Pair with hot sandwiches and wraps, burgers, curries, pasta and more."

Macaroni and cheese is another deli dinner favorite, according to Tim Crain, vice president of retail sales for Kettle Cuisine, in Lynn, MA. "We are looking forward to expanding our prepared foods, however comfort flavors are equally popular in our core product of soups. Products like chicken and dumplings and pasta fagioli are best-sellers. Also, we're seeing increased demand for fringe flavors, like coconut curry chicken soup and chipotle sweet potato soup. It's important to have a broad range of flavors to satisfy all customer demographics."

2. WIDEN DINNERTIME MENU **HORIZONS**

New flavors, ethnic cuisine and Hot to-go deli offerings are on the vegetarian dishes are what Millennial con-

D.C.-headquartered International Food Information Council Foundation's Food and Health Survey. The same is true today, according to food professionals selling their products in the deli.

"On weekdays, when consumers are too busy to cook an entire meal, we've seen an increase in no-cook grazing boards comprised of a few different charcuterie options, their favorite cheese and fruit or crackers," says Deanna Depke, marketing associate for Volpi Foods, in St. Louis. "Our pre-sliced Volpi Trio pack features small portions of Genoa Salame, Mild Coppa and Slow-Roasted Mortadella, perfect for an easy high-protein meal. Cured meats are incredibly versatile for makeat-home meal kits. Our chopped pancetta and prosciutto packs, for example, are an easy way to elevate recipe kits."

Deli sushi is one of the top selling items for grab-and-go dinners, according to Breana Jones, director of marketing for Hissho Sushi, in Charlotte, NC. "California Rolls continue to dominate for us. It is not only a go-to for sushi lovers, it's the gateway choice for sushi beginners. To make sushi more approachable to shoppers of all backgrounds, ages and diet preferences, our chefs have created new, innovative rolls. For example, our Spicy Pepper Roll is a play on tuna, but we use roasted bell pepper as the substitute for the tuna, a vegetarian option that everyone can enjoy. We've also developed new poke bowls. Poke is the next generation of sushi."

World flavors is the theme in a new sixitems line of vegan Meal Bowls introduced by Salinas, CA-based Growers Express, under the Green Giant Fresh Brand. Flavors include Buddha, Burrito, Fried Rice, Pad Thai, Ramen and Rancheros Bowls. The bowls contain value-added vegetable products, like the company's Cauliflower Crumbles line that helped kick off the riced/chopped veggie craze in 2015 as well as Vegetable Noodles, introduced in 2017.

"Any protein items that can easily be added to turn the guick and convenient microwavable bowls into a rounded meal, like eggs, avocados, beans, tuna fish, tofu, etc., would help consumers visualize possibilities that would appeal to themselves/ their family's tastes and preferences," suggests Lori Bigras, director of marketing and communications.

Similarly, Don's Food Products have put a global flavor spin on deli staples like salads, while also catering to a younger

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demographic that is looking for clean label offerings. Choices include a Mango Lime Quinoa Salad, Deluxe Orzo Salad and Island Grain Salad with Beans.

"These grain salads make ideal sides in dinner time meal kits," says Carl Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development for the Schwenksville, PA-based company.

Following on a Latin theme, deli operators can take a cue from QSR's like

Wendy's to offer pre-made or ideas for dinner-style sandwiches con queso. Last year, Rojo's, makers of restaurant-style salsas and dips, introduced its Salsa Con Queso and Queso Blanco in 12-ounce tubs.

"Retailers can tell shoppers to make sandwiches at home with our queso dips using leftovers from a deli rotisserie chicken," says Mark Miller, vice president of marketing for Cypress, CA-headquartered Simply Fresh Foods,

Inc., which markets the Rojo's brand.

Authentic Columbian-recipe empanadas made of beef or vegetables are sold with sides like rice and beans in retailers such as Fiesta Mart.

"We sell 50 frozen 2.5-ounce empanadas to a box. Deli operators can either re-heat by frying or baking in the oven for 20 minutes," says Luis Sanchez, in accounting at D'Gusto Foods, in Brookshire, TX.

3. FOCUS ON THE WHOLE MEAL

Consumers are less concerned about getting the parts and pieces for their dinner and more focused on getting the meal, according to the NPD Group's McLynn. "Even with more focus on getting the entire or most of the meal at once, the types of dinners forecast to grow over the next five years show meal preparers' willingness to invest a moderate amount of time into the meal. The average dinner meal takes about 30 minutes to prepare and cook, and this level of involvement will continue in many U.S. households, based on our *Future of Dinner* study."

This is where the deli's distinct positioning as part of a supermarket, with its 45,000-plus SKUS, creates opportunities for endless customization, according to Eric Le Blanc, director of marketing for Springdale, AR-headquartered Tyson Foods, Inc.

"The big challenge for supermarkets is to give enough information to educate and inspire, but not overwhelm. In research we conducted with a major mid-Atlantic retailer, sales went from minus 11 percent to plus 5 percent by communicating meal ideas, rather than just item and price. The key was moving beyond individual ingredients or complicated recipe ideas to convey simple hacks with no more than five ingredients and to do this in the deli between the hours of 4 to 7 p.m. For example, a rotisserie chicken, bag salad, strawberries and almonds for a restaurant-quality salad that only requires opening bags or our Buffalo boneless wings, King's Hawaiian rolls, Blue cheese and celery to make sliders. This way of merchandising grab-and-go dinner ideas requires no new ingredients or fixtures for the deli, but makes this department the place to go for customers to get what they want, " says Le Blanc It pays to become a dinner destination.





This comfort food can be marketed and merchandised to create a destination in delis.

BY HOWARD RIELL

oups sold in the deli, including both soup bars and prepackaged soups, can become an important profit center with the right combination of variety, marketing and merchandising.

"Soups are a staple," says Mary Shepard, director of sales and a partner in Fortun Foods Inc. in Kirkland, WA. "They are expected and the first place someone will go for comfort food. Soups are extremely profitable if done right; quality is the key for repeat business. Comfort flavors are still top sellers, but you are seeing more international influence."

Americans are getting their meals outside the home more, they expect top quality and are willing pay for it. And the

category has a number of varieties, points out Shepard.

Consumers are also changing. In Shephard's view, they are "much more educated on what they are consuming these days. Fresh ingredients are very important. Anything artificial or engineered in a lab is going away fast. The Millennials are driving the healthier lifestyle and also pushing the trend to follow for all generations."

"Soups are a fast-growing category for our business," says John Becker, senior director of marketing for Sandridge Food Corp., headquartered in Medina, OH. "They are versatile and can be a snack, appetizer or a complete meal. In fact, we just invested in additional soup capacity to address increased demand."

Chili flavors have expanded greatly, according to Becker. His company's portfolio used to include just chili with beef and beans, but has expanded to include white chicken chili, pork chili, bison chili and vegan chili. "We've also seen a tremendous growth in the bisque category," he says.

Becker says he is convinced that the soup consumer is also changing. "Traditional shoppers still exist, but new flavors of soups address Millennial demands, whether through more global flavors like Thai Ginger Carrot or Espresso Black Bean, or through superfood ingredients like our Chicken Quinoa and Kale or Sweet Potato Kale."

Of course, chicken noodle and chili still top the current volume list, adds Becker.

"Besides the flavors mentioned above, there's lots of interest in vegetarian-based soups," he says.

Delis can become soup destinations by offering consumers consistent, great-tasting menus, which Becker says is "paramount. Consumers expect to get great-tasting products every day. We've had good success with operators who offer a base menu of flavors available every day, but also those who offer some daily specials to create some excitement."

Marketing and merchandising these products effectively is not difficult, but requires management's attention. Becker suggests event or theme merchandising as "a nice tool for incremental sales. Try a chili bar for tailgating or a chowder bar featuring various seafood soups and chowders on Fridays. Vary the menu for more broth-based, lighter soups during summer months and hearty recipes like our Loaded Baked Potato or Braised Beef & Vegetable for the cold winter months. And don't think those kettles are just for soup; our White Macaroni and Cheese makes a great option in the soup well."

Moira Gavin, director of marketing and new business development for Winter Gardens Quality Foods in New Oxford, PA, is convinced soups "are becoming an important feature in the deli and a mainstay in the burgeoning hot bar locations. Soup is a quick meal in a bowl with infinite variety."

Gavin and her fellow executives at Winter Gardens see the expansion occurring in two realms, beginning with the convenience of the prepack soups sold in the refrigerator section. The other growth area is soups sold in bulk that can be found in the kettle section of the hot bars. "I think the other important factor is the infinite possibilities — vegan, vegetarian, hearty, etc.," she says.

As Gavin is quick to point out, "This is not a new trend. Consumer tastes and preferences are always changing, It happens over time. If you are not paying close attention, these indicators and subtle shifts can be missed." Generally speaking, she adds, consumers are well informed about food, its origins and the integrity of the ingredient profile.

The staples are always the chicken noodle and tomato bisque varieties, says Gavin. "We find there is a seasonality to the business, as well. In the fall, it's the hearty chilis and squash soups. During the summer, some of the chilled soups and gazpachos are the winners."



The ingredient trends are simple, vibrant and seasonal, notes Gavin, with an emphasis on rich flavors "no matter if the cuisine is American, Asian or Mediterranean."

Multi-Faceted Approach

Maximizing the profit potential of soups in the deli means focusing on several different areas.

Americans' seemingly unending desire for healthful eating has, in Becker's view, impacted the soup category greatly. "Protein and calories are important as well as sugars and sodium content." Beans and vegetables help with functionality, he continues, "but the challenge with soup has historically been the sodium levels. It's easy to remove salt, but much more difficult to retain flavor after doing so. Our innovation team is constantly working on this balance. It's really about flavor first."

Grains and other functional foods as ingredients continue to drive product development, says Becker. "Soups are a great category to introduce on-trend ingredients, and gluten-free continues to drive demand with these products."

Comfort soups will always come out ahead, predicts Shepard. "Also, we are seeing more vegetarian and vegan options

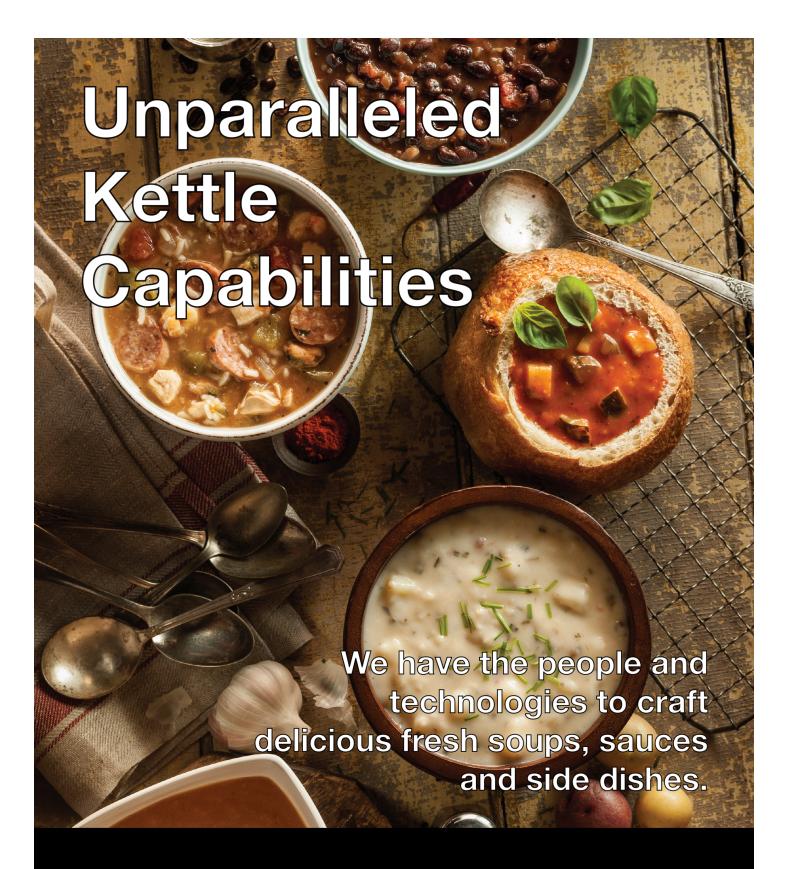
within the comfort soup category, such as tomato soup." Today's soups also feature an abundance of seasonal vegetables for each season, she adds. "Spring, summer, fall — all fresh."

Shepard says she and her colleagues see ingredient alternatives that offer healthier choices. For example, coconut milk instead of whole milk. "Real ingredients, no preservatives, no artificial flavors; consumers are reading the nutritionals and paying attention to their health."

Americans' hunger for healthful foods has, Gavin is convinced, "most definitely" impacted the category in fundamental ways. "But this transcends just the soup category. Food is a topic everyone can relate to. It can be a very unifying experience. Clean ingredients matter."

Gavin is equally certain soup can turn the deli into a destination. "Absolutely. It may require some retrofitting of existing space, but that can be a very exciting proposition."

"The category continues to mirror the broader changes in eating habits across all categories," says Matt Anderson, co-owner along with his brother Jon of Frontier Soups in Gurnee, IL. "Consumers want healthier options all the time, with





To learn more about our uncanny soups, contact: Frank Sidari, Senior Vice President of Sales & Business Development frank.sidari@sandridge.com the emphasis on clean labels infiltrating the soup market. Low salt, no preservatives and nothing artificial are three major trends that we have seen in the soup space. We want all the ingredients on our label to be easy to both read and pronounce."

With plant-based proteins becoming more mainstream, soups that contain beans, legumes and peas continue to resonate with the consumer, says Anderson. "We have also worked on incorporating some ancient grains into our mixes, such as our kale and quinoa vegetable soup mix."

Anderson calls soups "the perfect extension" of the deli counter. "We have found retailers that display our soup mixes on or near the deli counter see an immediate impact on their soup sales as well as their deli business. Soups and sandwiches are the perfect combination."

Tom Leahy, founding partner and president of CropSource International LLC in Walnut Creek, CA, says his company is "just now tinkering with the use of plum ingredients to significantly lower the sodium content of soups as well as to provide an alternative to high-fructose corn syrup." The formulations, he adds, remain "a work in progress."

Sodium has, indeed, been an enduring issue in the soup category. "The only

thing I can tell you is sodium levels are a big problem for canned soups and are affecting sales," notes Leahy. Lowering the amount of sodium while maintaining flavor "is a big challenge for the industry, and is the reason we became interested because our plum ingredients can assist in this effort."

Leahy also points out that at the recent IDDBA show, he "did not come across many soup offerings and was surprised. This could be because soups are much more of a challenge to process and package than, say, sauces."

Cross marketing soups with salad and premium breads adds value. Retailers can add retail soups to the meat and seafood department to promote a dinner alternative.

"Add retail soup to the produce department," suggests Fortun Foods' Shepard. "Grab a bag salad and soup and you have another meal solution."

Shepard believes, as many do, that delis can become soup destinations. "Soup is a great meal; bundle a half sandwich or salad. Have that restaurant quality, the wow factor. Start with quality, be the best, be different, don't have the same soup as the local deli or the next grocery chain down the street. Up your game — it pays off throughout the whole store. It also helps drive them in."

Indeed, she suggests retailers go further and market "like a restaurant. You are competing with the restaurant fare. They have choices, (and) quality will always sell. Drive them in for lunch or dinner by having a section where they can dine in or take to go. It has to be that level of quality for the experience. Subpar does not bring them back; it's called one and done."

Cross merchandising and/or meal-bundling options always help boost sales. Becker recommends a few retail cups merchandised in the produce department to create incremental sales. "Bring some bread bowls from the bakery department and toss them in a wicker basket next to White Chicken Chili or our Chicken Pot Pie soup."

Adhering to the marketing and merchandising fundamentals is essential. "Firstly, there needs to be a point of view from the retailer — i.e., this is a category we believe in," says Gavin. "The environment needs to reflect that point of view, not just a few kettles brought in to call it a day. That won't work or drive the category."

People, she insists, eat first with their eyes. "Small café seating, the aroma of fresh bread, beautiful artisan salads being assembled — the addition of theater is essential. It doesn't need to be elaborate, just inviting and authentic."

The only real mistake Anderson sees retailers making with this category is delis not showcasing their daily soup offering. "It is a great add-on item to someone ordering a sandwich, so make sure your customers know what you are serving."

"The one mistake I see over and over is trying to save a penny or two per ounce just to achieve a certain margin percentage," emphasizes Shepard. "In reality, they are selling less soup and have more waste. Skimping on quality does not make a successful soup program. Go for the program that will excite your customers to come back for more."

Another misstep Shepard notices at retail is not having enough variety of flavors available on a daily basis. "Build it and they will come — professional signage, well-stocked cups and soups, menu cards per soup flavor. Look like you are in the soup business and the perception of quality has just raised in that consumer's mind. A kettle behind the counter doesn't bring the profits in. Presentation plus variety plus quality equals performance and profits."

For soup, added options equal more profits.

DB



HERE'S The Rule

Spicy, sweet, herbal and floral are hallmark flavors of rubbed rind cheeses.

BY HANNAH HOWARD



hen selling specialty cheese in the deli, the rubbed rind varieties can add something unique to the mix. Exploring these cheese types is an education all its own.

It helps to be aware that the rind, or the exterior skin or crust of a cheese, is more than just its packaging. Some cheeses, like spreadable Chèvres and fresh Ricotta, are rindless. Others, like block Cheddars and Blues, including Roquefort and Point Reyes Blue, are vacuum-packed or wrapped in foil, respectively.

But most artisan cheeses are sheathed in their rinds. Rinds form on a cheese during the cheesemaking and aging process. These can be looked at like the crust on a loaf of bread — they are an essential, defining part of the cheese they encase. Whether they are snow white and bloomy or rubbed in aromatic herbs and spices, the rinds give the wheels their unique flavor and character. Retailers can learn a lot about a cheese from its rind.

As consumers continue to expand their culinary knowledge and seek new and intriguing products, cheesemakers are creating flavor from the outside in. Cheeses are soaked, rubbed and washed for rinds that are as special as what's beneath. This

is the hallmark of rubbed rind cheeses.

Cheese Rinds 101

"Do I eat the rind?" is a question everyone who works in cheese has heard — probably over and over again. Most rinds, with the exception of wax, cloth or bark, are naturally edible and will enhance a cheese's flavor. Whether to eat the rind or to leave it behind on the plate is a personal decision for consumers.

Here's a quick primer on cheese rinds. Bloomy rinds are the white, cloud-like exteriors on cheeses like Brie, Camembert and Bucheron. They come from the spores of Penicillium candidum, camemberti or glaucum spores and have a woodsy, mushroomy flavor; these can be either smooth or fluffy. The rinds are more than just pretty packaging; they break down the fat molecules in the cheese and give them their creamy texture.

Many cheeses that mature over several months depend on their rinds to protect them while their flavor develops and to allow them to breathe without drying out. Natural rinds are created by the natural process of aging; they form over time when a cheese is exposed to air. Their formation depends on the humidity and temperature of the cave in which the wheels mature, and cheesemakers carefully monitor this aging process.

Sometimes they rub the rind with oil, lard or other natural ingredients to encourage their development and add moisture, which helps prevent cracking. Parmigiano Reggiano is an example of a natural-rinded

Many cheeses that mature over several months depend on their rinds to protect them while their flavor develops.

wheel. It can be a bit gnarly and tough to eat, but the rind's complex, rich flavor will brighten stocks and tomato sauce.

Funky, pungent cheeses usually have washed rinds. They get this name because the wheels are "washed" in a saline solution that fosters an environment hospitable to a variety of bacteria, usually including brevibacterium linens (b. linens). B. linens is responsible for that orange-red color and soft lusciousness in cheeses like Limburger and Époisses de Bourgogne, which is washed in a brandy-infused (Marc de Bourgogne) brine. Meaty, salty and almost animally flavors can be found in washed rind cheeses, which also include Winnimere from Jasper Hill in Vermont, Italian Taleggio, and the "monastic" cheeses, with origins from Franciscan monasteries of France and Belgium.

Endless Possibilities

Brothers-in-law Pat Ford and Tim Welsh left their jobs in real estate and soft-

ware to make artisanal cheese in Uintah, UT at their company Beehive Cheese. "We rubbed our first cheese back in 2006, just after starting making cheese," remembers Ford. Their cheese, Barely Buzzed, starts with the sweet milk of Jersey cows. As the Cheddar-style cheese ages, it gets hand-rubbed with finely-ground espresso beans, French Superior lavender buds and vegetable oil, which imparts a subtle earthy and butterscotch fragrance to the interior. It has won a number of awards, including first place at the American Cheese Society competition five times.

"We rub the coatings on the cheese the day we me make them, so the flavors have months to sink into the paste of the cheese," says Ford. "Because we use Jersey cow's milk, the cheese is very rich and creamy." Ford thinks rubbed rind cheeses "are here to stay. We use Old World cheesemaking techniques and put a New World twist on them with the rubbed rinds."

Beehive Cheese also crafts Seahive, a





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full-bodied cow's milk cheese rubbed with wildflower honey from a local farm and sea salt harvested from an ancient seabed near Redmond, UT. The salt contains unique flecks of color from more than 50 natural trace minerals. Ford and Welsh's Teahive wheels, rubbed with tea and bergamot, balance a rich creaminess with complexities of the tea-rubbed rind that continue through the finish of the cheese.

Lavender and coffee, or tea, may sound like unusual cheese ingredients, but when it comes to flavors for rubbing into rinds, cheesemakers have nearly endless options. "We have used olive oil, vanilla, butter, lard, paprika, native molds, b. Linens, cocoa, wax and a few secrets," says Sid Cook, master cheesemaker at Carr Valley Cheese Co. in La Valle, WI.

These ingredients are endlessly valuable to the producers of cheese. "The contribution to flavor is made by whatever is allowed to grow or cover the surface of the cheese," explains Cook. "With a cave-aged cheese, the rind could be covered with lard or butter and the native molds allowed; they will eventually cover the cheese. The result will be an earthy flavor added to the already cheesy flavor. A book could be easily written on the subject."

"Our edible hand-rubbed rinds all impart different levels of flavor, depending on the cheese," says Dave Christoff, Carr Valley's national sales manager. For example, their Cocoa Cardona is a goat's milk cheese with cocoa powder and black pepper coating the exterior, which gives it a subtle flavor that doesn't penetrate the interior of the cheese. But Carr Valley's Fontina de Provence is a cow's milk variety hand-rubbed with savory Herbes de Provence, which really kicks up the flavor. The fragrant herbaceous aroma permeates the whole cheese.

Carr Valley also makes Sweet Vanilla Cardona, crafted with 100 percent goat milk and then hand-rubbed with cocoa powder and vanilla sugar. Their white Cheddar is cold smoked over applewood and then gently rubbed with paprika. "The complexity is perfect," says Cook. It scored first place in the 2016 Los Angeles International Dairy Competition.

And then there's the beauty factor — rubbed rind cheese can be photogenic and Instagrammable. Alp Blossom is an example. It's inspired by its home in Western Austria's "Hay Belt." Cheesemaker Senneri Huban coats this wheel in local wildflowers and herbs, like marigold, rose

petals, lavender and chervil. The flora imparts a mellow sweetness into a cheese with lingering robust and nutty flavors. It's almost as pretty as it is delicious.

Sartori, a fourth-generation family-owned and operated cheese company in Wisconsin, is renowned for their rubbed rind offerings. Their original BellaVitano, a fruity, complex cow's milk cheese, gets rubbed, bathed and seasoned to become a long list of varieties, from Citrus Ginger BellaVitano and Balsamic BellaVitano to Merlot BellaVitano and Chai BellaVitano. These cheeses stand out on cheese platters and in deli cases — they're crowd-pleasers that balance tradition and innovation.

Serving, Pairing And Fun

Rubbed rind cheeses' uncommon flavor profiles make them extra appealing for pairing with condiments, accouterments and beverages. "Consumers are adventurous and like to try different flavors; we're excited to continue to come up with exciting and new cheeses to meet the demand," explains Christoff. "While most people associate cheese with wine, pairings with coffee and beer are becoming increasingly popular, and rubbed rind cheeses offer endless pairing opportunities."

Endless opportunities abound for deli

sampling. Carr Valley Cocoa Cardona and Sweet Vanilla Cardona are well-suited on a dessert cheese board with chocolates and fresh and dried fruit. This also can be savored with champagne or port. Fontina de Provence pairs well with antipasto, like as olives, red peppers and cured meats.

Apple Smoked Cheddar adds a pop of color to a cheeseboard and makes an easy snack with summer sausage, whole grain mustard and crackers.

Sartori's Raspberry BellaVitano is a nutty, creamy wheel soaked with hand-crafted Raspberry Tart ale. The bright notes of ruby-red raspberries combine with hazelnut and brown-butter flavors to make a complex cheese. These flavors stand out with a milk chocolate, raspberry jam and a minerally, crisp glass of Riesling.

Ford recommends Seahive with fresh fruit and a good crusty baguette. It also shines when paired with hoppy ales, fruity white wines or smoky bourbon. Stouts and ciders echo the rich coffee notes in Barely Buzzed, as does a full-bodied red wine or a frothy café au lait. Add some toasted nuts and shards of dark chocolate for good measure. "The pairings are endless. It seems every time we try the cheese with something new, we end up with a new favorite," notes Ford.





With its unique flavor and appearance, this fromage is worth a second look

BY HANNAH HOWARD

Uffalo milk cheese is something remarkable. Even in places where all sorts of cheeses are available, buffalo milk products are scarce, often expensive and undoubtedly precious. And for good reason.

"Buffalo milk is special," says Bruno Gritti, who with his brother Alfio owns and runs Caseificio Quattro Portoni, a cheese company in Cologno al Serio, near Bergamo, in northern Italy's Lombardy region. "It has a taste, a color and a different composition from the other milks. It is almost a concentrated milk, richer in all the nutrients that compose it compared to cow's milk."

The second largest global source for milk, buffalo milk "is almost allergy free," says Andres Salazar, managing director at Annabella Buffalo Creamery, Inc., based in Longmont, CO. It's a good choice for those with a sensitivity to cow's milk. Rich in vitamins and minerals, buffalo milk is easier to digest. "This milk is also higher in fat — good fats — which makes our cheese creamier, our yogurts rich and our caramel decadent," adds Salazar.

Indeed, the composition of buffalo milk sets this cheese apart. It contains about

twice the fat of cow's milk, which makes its texture and flavor exceptionally creamy. Despite the higher fat content, the amount of cholesterol of water buffalo milk is lower than cow's milk. The substance also has about 30 percent more protein than cow's milk, which creates its distinctive, luxurious richness. It contains the A2 protein instead of the A1 protein found in cow's milk. "It has a delicate, enveloping flavor of cream, which gives a feeling of great pleasure," notes Gritti.

Mozzarella di Bufala

All that richness makes for unique cheese. Most Americans first come into contact with buffalo milk by way of the Italian Mozzarella di Bufala, which, when fresh, is silky, rich and tender. It has a distinct tanginess and a depth of flavor. In Italy, Mozzarella refers to this buffalo milk, while the denser cow's-milk version we often consume in the United States is called Fiore di Latte.

Calabro's legacy can be found in Graniti, a picturesque mountainous town in Sicily, edged with terraced gardens, rich in history, and flush with water buffalo and their sweet milk. Every day for centuries, fresh

milk was brought down from the mountains to the Calabro household, where it would be transformed into cheese.

In 1953, Joseph Calabro and his father, Salvatore left their native Sicily to pursue their slice of the American Dream. In their new home, they continued to make the cheeses of their ancestors. They delivered to mom and pop Italian grocers, throughout Connecticut, supplying them with fresh Ricotta and Mozzarella.

These days, they craft a variety of cheeses that stay true to this tradition. Their Ricotta di Bufala is made from the whey of the Mozzarella di Bufala and raw bufala milk, gradually cooked to a high temperature until the curds rise to the top of the kettle, delicate and creamy. The finished product is smooth with a citrusy tang.

Calabro's Caciocavallo di Bufala is a mature stretched cheese made with fresh buffalo milk and encased in a pale-yellow colored edible rind. Beneath, the soft cheese is sweet, delicate and designed for pairing with a fruity red wine. And then there's the classic Mozzarella di Bufala, which Calabro imports from Italy. The snow-white balls are tender and milky, ideal for antipasto dishes and caprese salads.

Why is buffalo milk cheese, not to mention other items crafted with the milk, so rare in the United States? First, the animals aren't native to this part of the world. The animals we call "buffalo" are technically bison. (If you order a "buffalo burger" from a menu, that's a whole different animal — a bison.) Water buffalo originally hail from Asia, where they've been bred and raised for centuries for their quality meat and dairy, plus their ability to pull heavy loads. They are strong, hearty animals.

The majority of the water buffalo that get milked to make cheese descend from Italian and Romanian breeds. Their milk has nourished sizeable populations throughout Italy and the Balkans since the Middle Ages. In certain African and Indian regions, buffalo milk is eaten fresh and made into yogurt, ghee and paneer.

Strong, Yet High Maintenance

Water buffalo "are robust animals, have thick skin, have strong hooves and massive limbs, do not suffer from metabolic diseases, give birth without help, and live long lives," explains Gritti. "In short, they are strong."

Salazar points out, "They are super smart, and if you treat them nice, it is a pleasure to work with them." But if they are hearty, they are also difficult. Working with the animals is also incredibly challenging. They are sort of the divas of the dairy world. "The difficulty is that their milk production is very low," says Salazar. "While milk cows produce more than 40 liters per day on average, a water buffalo produces between 8 to 14 liters per day. This is why our milk is a lot more expensive."

Water buffalos are incredibly sensitive — sometimes just seeing a stranger will stop the animals from producing milk. If they are going to be milked, they like to be nuzzled. And in the United States, we don't have a tradition of breeding and raising water buffalo for dairy. The genetics pool is poor, the quantity of animals is low and the economic demands are significant. A handful of water buffalo dairies have gone out of business in recent years. Several entrepreneurs have dreamed of a thriving U.S. buffalo dairy, but the dream has not quite been realized.

Once a producer has buffalo milk, crafting cheese poses its own set of challenges. Everything about making buffalo milk cheese is different than making cheese from cow's milk. "Different temperature, different rennet, different recipes," says

Gritti. Making cheese, like caring for buffalo "is all in the small details," he adds.

Buffalo Milk Cheese & Beyond in Colombia

The Salazar family has been farming for three generations in Colombia. Their first water buffalo was an experiment — they called her Annabella. They loved the milk she produced so much that they named their whole operation after her. Today, the family raises more than 3,000 free-range water buffalo. Each day, a refrigerated flight from Colombia flies their fresh, small-batch products to be distributed within days of production.

Annabella's animals are not confined, but instead graze freely on grass year-round in Colombia's semi-tropical climate near the equator. They are regularly moved to fresh pasture to protect their abundant food supply and prevent overgrazing. With the milk, Annabella makes two cheese varieties a slightly salty, subtly tangy tender fresh Mozzarella packed in water and a meltable vacuum-packed low moisture Mozzarella. They also craft a rich yet delicate water buffalo yogurt, which comes in flavors from honey to blackberry. Their decadent Dulce de Leche is made in the time-honored Latin American tradition. The creamy butterscotch-colored confection is made from three ingredients: water buffalo milk, sugar and baking soda.

"We are in the process of educating the consumers via demos and educating store employees and media that this milk is a super milk," says Salazar. "These amazing attributes translate to all the products, not only are they delicious, they are also incredibly healthy."

The Gritti Brothers: Tradition Meets Innovation

In Southern Italy, fresh buffalo milk cheeses like Mozzarella and Stracciatella are ubiquitous and beloved. But in Lombardy, in the North, the cheese tradition is a vastly different animal. Grana Padano, Gorgonzola and Taleggio, all made from cow's milk, come from this region. The Gritti brothers were the first to successfully make aged cheese with milk from water buffalo.

"In southern Italy with a climatically difficult environment for a cow, the buffalo has shown its adaptability, taking advantage of poorer and more inaccessible pastures in the marshy areas of Campania," explains Gritti. "Certainly seeing a herd of buffalo in

Lombardy is still unusual and fascinating."

"Before raising buffalos, I was a breeder of cows — animals that produce five times as much as a water buffalo," says Gritti. His father before him also raised cows. "The biggest challenge was not to increase the production of buffalo milk, but to change my vision...to switch from a production logic dependent on quantity to one linked to quality." Gritti has been breeding water buffalo since 2000. He began making cheese as a hobby, and at some point he had a lightbulb moment: "the idea of making cheeses linked to the Bergamo tradition with buffalo milk."

"In the province of Bergamo, where I live, nine types of cheeses with DOP recognition can be produced," says Gritti. "It is the richest cheese tradition of Italian territory. I thought honoring this dairy culture, even in a buffalo version, was the right way to link tradition and innovation."

Caseificio Quattro Portoni have harnessed their high-quality buffalo milk and turned it into nearly 20 unique cheeses, many inspired by the time-honored cheeses of their region.

These cheeses include Casatica di Bufala, a soft-ripened Stracchino-style. Barely restrained by its bloomy rind, it has a custardy texture and a lush richness. It pairs well with something bubbly and brightly acidic, like Prosecco.

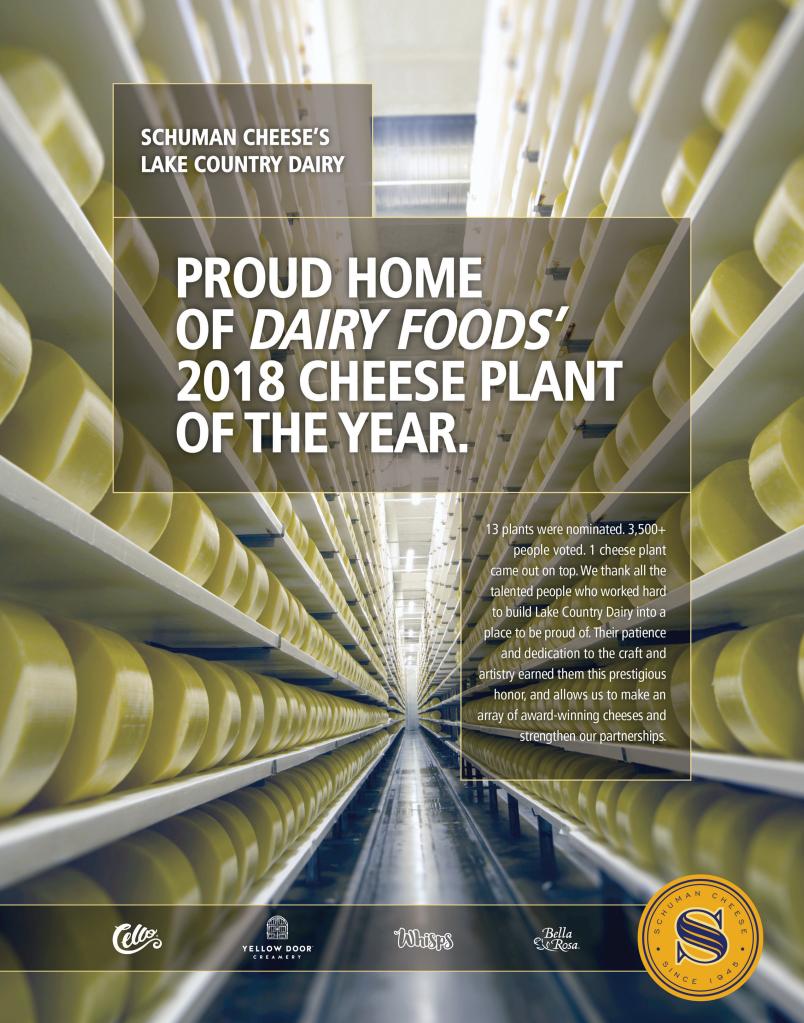
Quadrello di Bufala is the Gritti brother's update on a classic Lombardian Taleggio recipe. Creamy, sweet and robustly pungent, it has a bit of a mushroomy funk and is a match with a hefty Barbera.

Their Blu di Bufala is a cube-shaped cheese. It makes use of an ancient recipe that lends an ever-changing texture to their wheels. A buttery sweetness and punchy blueing makes for a Blue cheese that is great for snacking, salads, topping crostini and savoring for dessert with a glass of Moscato d'Asti.

"The only advice I can give is to go and visit those who make buffalo cheeses," suggests Gritti. "A visit inspires feelings that you do not find in catalog descriptions. Without a visit, you do not experience the smells, the sounds, the temperature, nor seize the passion. You will feel the sincerity of those who speak to you."

Both local or domestic buffalo cheeses are rare. Incredibly hard work has gone into raising the animals and crafting the cheese and other products. The price tag may be high, but the deliciousness makes the value high, as well.

DB





Make holiday meats memorable with simple solutions

BY BOB JOHNSON

he holidays are big business at the deli, as many consumers are looking for help preparing spreads that are both convenient and memorable.

Prepared holiday meals alone bring supermarkets well over a quarter billion dollars worth of business, according to FreshView database statistics cited in the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's In Store 2018.

But that is just one part of the story, as this season, like no other, is the time the deli department gcan show its unique selection of fine meat products that require little or no preparation.

'Consumers are looking for unique and special items to celebrate the holidays, but they are also very short on time," says Cindy Turk, director of duck marketing at Maple Leaf Farms, Milford, IN.

Just as the holidays are the easiest time to peddle a little pie indulgence, they can bring an opportunity to offer meats that for epic flavor.

"We see a surge in retail bacon sales, holiday season, both for themselves and for guests," says Megan Dorsch, marketing manager at Nueske's Applewood Smoked of producing premium smoked meats. Meats, Wittenberg, WI.

merchandising challenge for the deli. guarter, is our corned beef hash," says Customers are, as always, strapped for time but they want to present meals or out easy-to-prepare, restaurant-quality platters that are special.

Make It Memorable

Maple Leaf Farms has made duck prod-part of the brunch trend, as well." ucts for 60 years, from appetizers to the whole duck, using birds raised at local farms holidays also bring an opportunity to offer under strict humane practices guidelines.

ers who want to differentiate their meat Farms offers a wide variety of ready-to-tional authentic paté and charcuterie. cook appetizers, such as duck quesadillas,

give a little ground on health in exchange duck potstickers and duck bacon wontons. We also offer an assortment of fully-cooked products that allow the deli staff as consumers are looking to prepare to use their culinary creativity. Our all-nattop-quality, memorable meals during the ural pulled duck meat is great for wraps, salads and sandwiches."

The Nueske family is in their 85th year

"An item we have also seen grow in The holidays present a unique meat popularity, both overall and in the fourth Dorsch. "As consumers increasingly seek products that allow them to create better meals at home, we have seen corned beef hash become part of these purchases and

Along with the center of the plate, the platters with meats that bring a special "Duck is the perfect solution for retail- touch to a variety of social gatherings.

Les Trois Petit Cochons, the Three department," says Turk. "Maple Leaf Little Pigs, is a premier producer of tradi-

"A good idea is to create ready-made

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'holiday charcuterie spreads,' to include both saucissons and patés as well as cheeses, nuts, condiments, etc.," advises Neera Jokitalo, marketing coordinator at Les Trois Pettit Cochons, New York City. "These should be merchandised near the meat items that are used on the board to give ideas to the consumer of how the products can be used. This may be a project more suited for the specialty department."

There are must-have items within the premium category of holiday charcuterie party platters.

"From our point of view, staple items for the holidays are definitely the foie gras and terrine de trois rois," says Jokitalo. "Condiments also pick up during the holidays, due to people drinking more cocktails and looking for things to snack on, like cornichons and caper berries."

While a bit of indulgence may be seasonable, there can also be opportunities to offer meat products that are unique and also pay homage to the growing desire to eat healthy.

"Our newest product is a duck meatball that has 30 percent fewer calories, 45 percent less fat and 56 percent less saturated fat than a comparable portion of beef/pork meatballs," says Turk. "Meatballs can be

served as an appetizer, soup, sandwich or in a pasta."

Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years offer a premier opportunity for deli meats, but this opportunity to entice consumers can also be extended to the secular holiday that has come to be observed by nearly the entire country.

"Sometimes the peak season goes all the way through to the Super Bowl," says David Kegley, vice president for sales and marketing at Blue Grass Meats, based in Erlanger, KY.

Blue Grass Meats is a fifth generation family-owned company that was started back in 1867.

The Special Display

Unique displays, signage and sampling can be crafted to make the deli a destination spot for holiday meats.

"Holiday meats are, in my opinion, best merchandised in 'showcase' coolers, similar to cheese counters, where everything is set up in a specific and visually appealing way," says Jokitalo. "This is not often transferred to charcuterie or meat, but I think it could be a great way to increase sales."

Another approach is to develop displays built around the concept of offering solu-

tions to common holiday eating questions.

"Be solution-based by offering recipe ideas, signage and coupons to encourage consumers to take advantage of the solutions and services the deli offers," advises Turk. "Merchandising is an important aspect to driving interest and trial. For duck, demonstrations or sampling increase sales and help consumers discover the great taste of duck. We always say, 'If they taste it – they will buy it!'"

A free taste of some of the more special holiday meat products can be the best mode of persuasion.

"Allowing deli department customers to sample a premium product that truly has a unique, signature flavor leads to increased holiday sales for retailers," says Dorsch. "We find that one of the best ways to support retailers is to offer product for demo or demo services during promoted holiday shopping events."

Cross merchandising can also play a role in creating a destination as well as increasing the total ring.

"Condiments can be cross merchandised between the meat and specialty, which are great add-ons for deli purchases," advises Jokitalo. "Mustards are also more often being merchandised within the meat coolers next to a supportive item."

Sauces that go with the meats, side dishes or suggested wine pairings can all provide helpful cross merchandising, according to Turk.

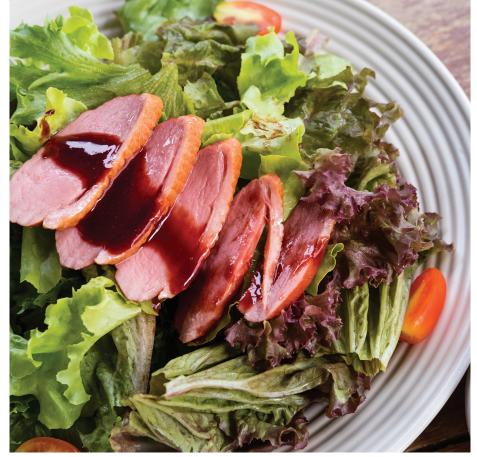
Some of the items included in effective cross merchandising can have connections to the geographic origins of the meats.

"Our home state of Wisconsin has a large number of outstanding cheese producers, and our products pair particularly well with many of these cheeses," says Dorsch. "Nueske's products and fine cheeses are typically sold in the same segment of high-end and specialty retailers, so both are products that would typically be stocked and can be easily positioned together, with holiday serving suggestions provided alongside."

Suppliers should be equipped to help build a holiday meat destination within the deli department.

"Support materials can include wall and counter graphics, special holiday item (ham) order forms, recipe/suggested serving cards and images provided for social media," says Dorsch.

Along with signage and recipes, suppliers are also equipped to offer expert advice on the campaign.



"Maple Leaf Farms is a full-service marketing department, so we can offer custom signage, coupons and recipes for retailers to create a holiday destination within their store," says Turk.

Deli Holiday Traditions

As much as the holidays offer a unique opportunity to promote special meat products, the season also has deli items that customers expect to find.

"There are things the deli has been doing for some time," says Kegley from Blue Grass Meats. "They offer holiday meals that are convenient for the consumer. They also provide deli trays for get togethers during the holidays."

Complete holiday meals can be an extension of the convenient grab and go category that is gaining favor year round.

"The delis are providing more take out from the foodservice side," says Kegley. "They have become more expansive in their offerings."

Snack trays for social gatherings can be an opportunity to both offer special meats, and promote a brand.

"Branded cutting boards are a great idea for suppliers to provide to those retail-

Snack trays for social gatherings can be an opportunity to both offer special meats and promote a brand.

ers who wish to create charcuterie boards/ spreads," says Jokitalo. "This helps create brand recognition as well as reducing the costs for the retailers to build the boards."

The superarket deli can also offer items that customers can quickly and easily combine in their own unique snack trays or cutting boards.

"We see customers creating holiday cheese boards and charcuterie boards at home, using our products, fine cheeses, crackers, craft pickles, nuts and chutneys," says Dorsch. "For charcuterie and cheese boards, consumers make Nueske's purchases, such as our smoked liver

paté, smoked duck breast, and traditional Midwestern cured sausages like summer sausage and landjaeger."

Nothing says holidays, however, like a memorable, premium quality ham.

"Our core holiday products consist of smoked hams for holiday tables; many retailers and delis receive special holiday orders from customers for items like our applewood smoked honey-glazed spiral-sliced hams, which some in sizes ranging from an average weight of 8 pounds, all the way up to an average weight of 16 pounds," says Dorsch.

Holidays are made for meats.

DB



BLAST FROM THE PAST

A CO-OP REMAINS

n late December 2008, FrieslandCampina was founded on two great Dutch dairy companies — Friesland Foods and Campina, which developed along similar lines during the 19th and 20th centuries.

It all began in 1871, when farmers joined forces in local cooperative dairy factories. Specifically, nine farmers took over a cheese factory in the Dutch Wieringerwaard. Due to the lack of refrigeration, the farmers had to work together to deliver the milk quickly to their customers. The companies also joined forces to gain more power in the market.

Many of these farms from the 19th century are still around today, and their farmers are just as firmly anchored in their regions and local communities just like their ancestors. These farms, factories and products have continued to be a part of daily life in many countries across the globe.

Frico, one such brand, started as a co-op in Holland in 1898, when six Dutch dairy factories united into what was named the Foundation of Friesian Cooperative Dairy Export Association. The first export was butter, followed by a selection of quality cheeses that soon gained popularity and led to an expansion of the lines. This included the introduction of Friesche Vlag, Dutch Baby and Bonnet Rouge for international markets in 1919; the founding of the De Meijerij Veghel/

De Melkindustrie Veghel in 1926; the Campina brand in 1947; Coberco in Zutphen in 1965; the DMV



Campina and Melkunie Holland lines, introduced in 1975; and the launch of Campina Melkunie in 1989. In addition, Frico another of FrieslandCampina's brands, is made with 100 percent fresh Dutch cow's milk.

A number of mergers and acquisitions took place in the subsequent years. This included the 1993 acquisition of Südmilch (Heilbronn); the 1997 merger of Coberco, Friesland Dairy Foods, De Zuid-Oost-Hoek and Twee Provinciën; and the merger of Friesland Foods and Campina in 2008.

Other notable milestones for the company were the international launch of the Campina brand and cooperative in 2001 and Friesland Foods receiving Royal designation on its 125th anniversary in 2004.

Although a multinational company with many products, FrieslandCampina still remains a cooperative of dairy cow farmers who are both the owners and suppliers of fresh milk and dairy products. The company's products are available in more than 90 countries across the globe.

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