



Making Sandwiches Your Bread And Butter

ALSO INSIDE

THE BASQUE REGION
SPECK ALTO ADIGE
GUACAMOLE
AMERICAN BLUE CHEESE
PACKAGING
SALAMI

La Bonne Vie Chanté
is a rich, creamy cheese spread made
with the freshest ingredients and is
imported from France.



Chanté is perfect for mashed and baked potatoes, spread on bagels and crackers, or as an appetizer with sliced prosciutto and dates. For more recipe ideas visit labonneviecheese.com/recipes.

**Try our
BRAND NEW
Horseradish
flavor!**



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PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEFJAMES E. PREVOR
jprevor@phoenixmedianet.com**PUBLISHING DIRECTOR**KENNETH L. WHITACRE
kwhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com**PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**LEE SMITH
lsmith@phoenixmedianet.com**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**ELLEN KOTEFF
ekoteff@phoenixmedianet.com**MANAGING EDITOR**LISA WHITE
lwhite@phoenixmedianet.com**NATIONAL SALES MANAGER**MARK GOLD
mgold@phoenixmedianet.com**PRODUCTION DIRECTOR**DIANA LEVINE
dlevine@phoenixmedianet.com**ART DIRECTOR**SUNSHINE GORMAN
sgorman@phoenixmedianet.com**PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT**

FREDDY PULIDO

RESEARCH DIRECTOR

SHARON OLSON

CONTRIBUTING EDITORSCAROL BAREUTHER HANNAH HOWARD
BOB JOHNSON KEITH LORIA

SEND INSERTION ORDERS, PAYMENTS, PRESS RELEASES,
PHOTOS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, ETC., TO:
DELI BUSINESS
P.O. BOX 810217, BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0217
PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610
EMAIL: DELIBUSINESS@PHOENIXMEDIANET.COM

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JAMES E. PREVOREXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
KENNETH L. WHITACRESENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
LEE SMITHVICE PRESIDENT EDITORIAL
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DEBRA PREVORTRADE SHOW COORDINATOR
JACKIE LOMONTE

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5 Food Trends For 2019

The "Shifting Sands: Trends Shaping the Food Industry in 2019" report from Culinary Tides Inc., Tualatin, OR, is a cross-analysis of 228 prediction lists for 2019 put forth by 170 industry experts. In all, more than 1,700 individual predictions were evaluated. All trends in the report are anticipated to remain in focus throughout 2019 and into the first quarter of 2020.

Grains, Fruits, And Vegetables Lose Risk-Taking Momentum

The grains list had some playful twists with farro, kernza, sorghum, teff, global pasta, heirloom rice and hemp. The single, global and ancient grains, and breads made from them, continue to capture media attention and consumer interest as they have strong backing from clinical health research.

Plant And Animal Protein Continue To Diverge

Groups of items mentioned for 2019 including jerky, offal, trash fish, underused meat cuts and bone broth. Since beans are a neutral palate they can move between global cuisines and compete with grains and proteins in dishes.

Cuisines And Clusters Retreat To Post-Recession Position

Cuisines were global and ranged from Cuban, Israeli, Filipino, French and Moroccan to U.S. regional dishes. Dishes followed suit but were split between African, Asian, European, Middle Eastern, South American and American. Global comfort foods was the focus for all. Cluster items included global breakfast, regional BBQ, street food, invasivors, cultured and fermented items, flatbreads, peasant and marine foods.

Desserts Replace Nostalgia With Experimentation

Desserts were experimental compared to other categories. Ice cream is really taking center stage with extreme milkshakes, vegan ice cream, upscale soft serve and frozen bars. Naked cakes and regional pies are canvases for creativity while herbs, salt, vegetables and alcohol act as their party dress.

Preps And Seasonings Act As The Party Dress

Cooking methods are moving away from live fire and dry heat methods and are toned down and mixed in with wet cooking methods. What is predicted shows a turn toward comfort, including pickled, foil packets, sheet pan suppers and house-made everything. Spicy, woody, earthy and savory replaced extreme flavors from last year. International spice blends were mentioned from Egypt, Ethiopia, Korea, the Philippines, Argentina and elsewhere.

COMING NEXT IN JUNE/JULY ISSUE

COVER STORY15th Annual
People Awards**FEATURE**Mediterranean Foods
Ethical Eating**MERCHANDISING
REVIEWS**Deli Breads
Olives
Cross Merchandising**PROCUREMENT
STRATEGIES**

Packaging

DELI MEATS

Deli Meat Supplement

PREPARED FOODS

Sushi

CHEESE CORNERAlpine, Rennet
Ultimate Pairings**COMING IN AUG/SEPT**

DELI BUSINESS will look at the Back to School segment.

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TRANSITIONS



BUTTERBALL ANNOUNCES NEW COO

Butterball, LLC, Garner, NC, has chosen Peter Brown as its chief operating officer. He brings to the company more than 30 years of executive leadership experience from many different levels of procurement, manufacturing, commercial distribution and customer support. In his new role, Brown will work collaboratively to drive results and have direct responsibility for company operations across Butterball's six turkey-processing facilities and all operational support functions.

www.butterball.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS



BELGIOIOSO CHEESE MEDALS AT U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP CHEESE CONTEST

BelGioioso Cheese, Green Bay, WI, was awarded six medals at The U.S. Championship Cheese Contest out of 2,555 entries from 35 different states. The company was honored with five first place gold medals for its Sharp Provolone Mandarin, Parmesan, Crema di Mascarpone, Fresh Mozzarella Snacking and Artigiano Vino Rosso. It received a third place Bronze medal for its Fresh Mozzarella Prosciutto & Fresh Basil Roll.

www.belgioioso.com



CRAVE BROTHERS WINS TWO FIRST PLACE AWARDS

Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, Waterloo, WI, has won five awards at the 2019 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest. The company received two Gold Awards (Best of Class/First Place) for Fresh Mozzarella Medallions and Part-Skim One-Pound Mozzarella Balls. In addition, Crave Brothers Cheese won three-second place Silver Awards for Fresh Mozzarella Ciliegine, Oaxaca and White Cheddar Cheese Curds.

www.cravecheese.com



APC ACQUIRES FRESHCO FOODS

American Pasteurization Co. (APC), Milwaukee, has acquired FreshCo Foods, a Milwaukee-based, end-to-end co-manufacturer of premium and specialty food products. As part of the acquisition, FreshCo has been renamed APC Manufacturing. APC Manufacturing was founded in 2017 and has been adding capabilities and expanding its portfolio of business for the past year.

www.americanpasteurizationcompany.com

NEW PRODUCTS



SWISS CHALET BECOMES DIVISION OF ATALANTA

Swiss Chalet Fine Foods, Elizabeth, NJ, has become a division of Atalanta Corp. Swiss Chalet Fine Foods was founded by Hans and Claire Baumann in 1968 with the goal of bringing fine European and imported ingredients to the foodservice industry. Swiss Chalet has been a Gellert Global Group member company since 2007. The move will further strengthen Swiss Chalet's position as a top specialty ingredients supplier to the foodservice industry.

www.scff.com



LIPARI FOODS ACQUIRES TROYER CHEESE

Lipari Foods, Warren, MI, has acquired Troyer Cheese, Inc., Troyer Bros. Trucking, Ltd. and Amish Wedding Foods, Inc. (collectively, "Troyer"). Troyer is headquartered in Millersburg, OH. The opportunity broadens Lipari's manufacturing capabilities, along with expanding its portfolio of deli product offerings. The acquisition of Troyer is a natural "next step," as Lipari continues its strategy of acquiring unique and complementary food manufacturing and distribution businesses in existing and adjacent markets.

www.liparifoods.com



A MATZO MARVEL

The Matzo Project, Brooklyn, NY, has launched a new take on the culturally popular traditional matzo. The sturdy, versatile Matzo flats and Matzo Chips are available in three varieties — Salted, Everything and Cinnamon Sugared. The Matzo Project has an all-natural, vegan Matzo Ball Soup Kit and a seasonal line of hand-dipped Chocolate Matzo wonderclusters from fall to spring.

www.matzoproject.com



A PETITE MUSTARD BRIE

Marin French Cheese, Petaluma, CA, has introduced Petite Mustard, a triple-cream Brie with bold, nutty aromatic characteristics of black and brown mustard seeds. Made with fresh cow's milk and cream delivered daily from neighboring Marin County dairies within a 20-mile radius of the factory, the soft-ripened cheese's smooth texture and creamy taste counterbalances the crunch of the whole mustard seeds on the inside and the added kick of flavor thanks to crushed mustard seeds on the exterior of the bloomy wheel.

www.marinfrenchcheese.com

NEW PRODUCTS



SOUS-VIDE SENSATIONS

Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY, has introduced 2.5-ounce Sous-vide Egg Bites in four varieties. The sous-vide method of cooking allows for a uniquely retained flavor and taste. Egg Bites are a high-protein snack that can be enjoyed at room temperature or heated in a microwave, skillet or toaster oven. Varieties include Prosciutto & Gruyère, Bacon & Swiss, Ham & Espelette Pepper and Spinach & Feta.

www.3pigs.com



REFRESHED CRACKER PACKAGING

Partners, A Tasteful Choice Co., San Francisco, has introduced new packaging for its Artisan Snack Crackers and new packaging and horizontal orientation for its Artisan Deli Crackers. The colors and theme also come to life in the new look of Hospitality Packs.

www.partnerscrackers.com



PRODUCT PORTFOLIO EXPANDS

FrieslandCampina, Paramus, NJ, has debuted a variety of new products. These include Frico cheese from Holland; A Dutch Masterpiece; Kroon; Gayo Azul, Wyke Farms; Organic Kingdom; Kingdom; Jana Valley; Dairyvale; Murray Bridge; Oscar Wilde; Arvaniti; La Paulina; Favrskov; Parrano; Melkbus; and DeWaag.

www.frieslandcampino.com



TASTY TOASTED TIDBITS

Kontos Foods, Paterson, NJ, has introduced Toasted Tidbits, also known as Toasted Pita Bits. The low-calorie snack also is ideal for dips, soups, snacks and salads. The tidbits are cut from signature GYRO Bread, and then toasted and packaged in 4-ounce re-sealable pouches for added freshness. Each package contains four servings, with 103 calories per serving. The product contains no trans fat and is vegetarian. It is also Kosher Pas Yisroel-certified and Halal certified.

www.kontos.com



A GLUTEN FREE ALTERNATIVE

La Panzanella, Tukwila, WA, now offers 5-ounce gluten free Oat Thins. The hand-crafted line is made in small batches with whole oat flour and certified gluten free ingredients. Three flavors are available, including Toasted Oat, Rosemary and Roasted Garlic. Only 70 calories per serving, the product is low fat, cholesterol free and vegan. The carton can be displayed either vertically or horizontally.

www.lapanzanella.com



CHEESEBOARDS LAUNCHED

Tillamook County Creamery, Tillamook, OR, has introduced a cheeseboard. These include Sharp Berry Crunch, with sharp white Cheddar cheese, marionberry spread and rosemary crackers; Spicy Berry Bite, with Pepper Jack cheese, marionberry spread and multigrain crackers; Smoky Apple Crisp, with smoked medium Cheddar cheese, apple spread and olive oil crackers; and Sharp Strawberry Heat, with sharp white Cheddar cheese, spicy strawberry spread and rosemary crackers.

www.tillamook.com



IN A PICKLE

Van Holten's, Waterloo, WI, has introduced two new pickle varieties. The company teamed up with Tapatio to create a pickle in a pouch with the flavor of Tapatio hot sauce. The company also has introduced Pickle Cutz, 1/2-inch thick, crinkle cut pickle slices in 3.75-ounce packages. The line is available in Dill and Spicy flavors and has a six-month shelf life.

www.vanholtenspickles.com



A RUBBED WEDGE

Saputo Cheese USA Inc., Montreal, has launched Stella Fontinella Rubbed Wedges. Hand-rubbed to create four flavors, including Basil Pesto, Harissa, Bourbonista and Black Pepper, the cheese has a delicately smooth and creamy taste with a hint of sharpness. It's ideal on a cheeseboard or melted into warm dishes. The line is available in 6-ounce wedges.

www.saputo.com

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New Twists On Pre-Packaged Meat – Fresh Always Wins



By
Jim Prevor
Editor-in-Chief

The *Wall Street Journal* recently ran an article that was titled 'No Baloney: Consumers Shift To Fresh Deli Over Packaged.' The gist of the article was that, due to consumer interest in high quality, health, freshness, etc., producers were focusing on the service deli as opposed to pre-packaged items.:

Meat companies are using the deli counter to showcase new and higher-priced products, as customers eschew prepackaged cold cuts in favor of healthier and more natural foods.

Hormel Foods Corp., Kraft Heinz Co., Tyson Inc. and other companies are buying smaller deli meat brands and reformulating their ham and smoked turkey recipes to meet rising demand for fresher cuts.

"There's a feeling of being a little bit special when I go to the deli, as opposed to when I go and shop off the refrigerated meat wall," said Jeff Baker, a vice president at Hormel, which bought deli-meat maker Columbus Craft Meats in 2017 for \$850 million.

Sales of freshly cut deli meat rose 2 percent over the past four years through February to \$5.9 billion, according to market-research firm IRI, while sales of prepackaged lunch meat fell 8 percent to \$3.6 billion.

Perhaps, but color this columnist skeptical. There are customers moving upscale, organic, healthy, local, etc., but the bottom line is that Walmart is the largest food retailer in America, and the fastest growing sizeable food retailer is Aldi, so this supposed quest for an upscale experience is rather limited.

The *Wall Street Journal* piece points out that many manufacturers are focused on fresh:

Companies like Boar's Head Provisions Co., known for its cuts of cured or smoked meat, have said their products appeal to consumers who perceive the deli section as a place to find better food.

Butterball LLC, a turkey producer based in Garner, NC, is focusing more on the deli counter as sales of pre-sliced cuts have fallen, said Kyle Lock, senior director of retail marketing. Last year, the company introduced a line of cuts designed to be sliced up at deli counters in new flavors like Cajun and deep-fried turkey breast. "The packaged department is really not a strategic focus for us," Lock said.

Yet we wonder if the relative decline of packaged versus fresh is actually based on accurate data. With more product sold online and in drug stores and convenience stores, maybe the statistics are missing a lot of pre-packaged sales.

Perhaps the switch is real but reflects new technology — pre-ordering deli products on an app for pickup in the store means a consumer who wants a half-pound of roast turkey no longer has to wait in line, grab a number, etc. The consumers can get the convenience of pre-packaged product but buy the fresh-sliced product instead.

The *Wall Street Journal* piece did say some companies saw opportunities in self-service, though it could be a tough battle:

Some companies have said they are succeeding in improving their prepackaged cold cuts, too.

Hormel said it has grown sales of its Natural Choice and Applegate brands that emphasize natural ingredients and, at Applegate, humane treatment of animals. Hormel's U.S. deli sales rose 19 percent to \$251.3 million in its fiscal first quarter, outpacing a 1 percent overall gain in revenue.

Tyson's Hillshire Farm brand this summer will introduce a line of prepackaged cold cuts meant to draw in consumers looking for deli-style meats at a lower price point.

No company has more to lose from the consumer drift away from pre-packaged cold cuts than Kraft Heinz, whose Oscar Mayer brand dominates that category. Kraft Heinz in February lowered the value of brands, including Oscar Mayer, by \$15.4 billion, in part to reflect diminishing profit-margin expectations.

To make its sliced meats more appealing, Kraft Heinz has removed preservatives and hormones from some Oscar Mayer products and labelled them "Deli-Fresh." Ingredient lists for those meats now include a handful of more familiar ingredients, like sea salt and honey. A Kraft Heinz spokeswoman said retail sales of lunchmeat have risen 1 percent over the past year.

"I don't think consumers are giving it full credit for those changes," Robert Moskow, a Credit Suisse analyst, said of Oscar Mayer. "Maybe it's just hard to change pre-existing perceptions."

Pre-packaged product may well wind up the winner... after all, who knows if Walmart will maintain its service deli, and the online and convenience options practically demand pre-packaged items.

Perhaps companies such as Oscar Mayer are kidding themselves that the juggling of ingredients will get consumers excited about legacy products.

Maybe the answer is for the fresh and service deli to create a brand halo for pre-packaged lines.

After all, fresh is always desirable — the key is to convince shoppers that your packaged items are fresh, as well.

DB

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James E. Prevor'.

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www.ColumbusCraftMeats.com

Big Shoes To Fill



By
Lisa White
Managing Editor

As Lee Smith recovers from hip surgery, that leaves me, Lisa White, managing editor, with the daunting task of writing her column. Typically, a blank page is to a writer as appealing as an ice cream cone is to a small child. Yet, I have some pretty big shoes to fill here, so this task is a bit more challenging than, say, writing an article on deli meats and cheeses.

Yes, I have been writing for *Deli Business* since its inception in the mid 90s, and so I am fairly well versed in all topics deli-related. Yet, writing a business or feature story from interviews with industry experts is much different than writing opinions and commentary, especially when it comes to a business-to-business audience. I'm not armed with the insider intelligence that comes along with decades of working in the deli industry.

And to top it off, considering I'm filling in for Lee Smith, who many would consider a legend in deli and cheese if ever there was one, I couldn't be more intimidated. Her perspectives and observations come from decades of experience, along with many years working in the industry. I know many of you have benefitted from her knowledge first hand. I know I have.

So where does that leave me, as I still have some space to fill here? How about I recap what I do know well, which is each article in this issue you're about to read. There is a lot of great information in the following pages that I'm confident will be valuable to you in your business.

Take our cover story, sandwiches, for example. Today's delis have raised the bar substantially when it comes to foodservice, and these products have definitely taken center stage. After all, the department has all the components to make this section a success, a plethora of meats, cheeses, condiments and bread options as well as accompaniments like pickles. It's all covered here, including how to

make your sandwich program a destination.

I was fortunate to be able to cover the packaging industry in this issue, which is ever-changing with today's technology and sustainable material options. I hope you'll find this article as interesting to read as it was to write since, although it is a topic we cover annually and within other subjects, there are always new and interesting developments. This is good news for not just the deli industry, but also the environment overall.

This issue's articles on American artisan salami and blue cheese take an in-depth look at these growing segments, as the United States has much to offer with these products. Find out what items are making headlines in the industry and offer new possibilities for your lineups. A good mix is key to customer appeal.

Speaking of deli specialties, check out the exciting products from France's Basque region that your department can definitely benefit from. Ossau Iraty cheese is unique, yet has widespread appeal, and Bayonne ham is the perfect addition to your exported meat selections. Let's show our friends across the pond some love and benefit from their tasty specialties in the process.

Lee's article on Spec Alto Adige is written from a firsthand perspective, as she was fortunate to visit this region in Italy and see the products being produced. I hope you find its history as intriguing and speck as enticing as I did reading this up-close and personal-piece.

Finally, don't miss the latest on guacamole, a dip, spread and condiment, but really a perpetually on-trend product category that shows no signs of slowing down. Who doesn't love avocados? Guac's widespread appeal makes it a staple in today's deli department.

Whew. That was easier than I thought. Don't get any ideas, Lee. We're wishing you a speedy recovery and a quick return to these pages.

DB



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Capitalizing On Foods From The Basque Region

These specialty items have something to offer today's delis

BY HANNAH HOWARD, LEE SMITH AND LISA WHITE

Specialty sections in delis can benefit from The Basque region. This area includes a number of areas in France, close to its border with Spain. Because this area has its own microclimate with the sea and the mountains, it attracts a great deal of rain throughout the year.

This is good news, as the lush landscape, full of flowers, plants and green grass lend well to producing some of the finest meats and cheeses available.

Two Traditions Merged

Despite the fact the number of entries into the American Cheese Society (ACS) competition that were made exclusively from sheep's milk increased 40 percent from 2010 to 2016, according to the New York Times, and also these cheeses remain popular in the United States, these varieties have been underrepresented in today's delis.

Said to be one of the first cheeses ever made, Ossau Iraty has increased in popularity due to an influx of sheep's milk cheese in the United States, especially aged cheeses.

Ossau Iraty is produced in two regions in the southwest of France along the Spanish border — in the Northern Basque Country's Irati Forest and in Bearn's neighboring Ossau Valley.

Ossau Iraty received AOC status in 1980, making it only one of two sheep's milk cheeses with this status — the other is Roquefort. Ossau Iraty was granted European PDO status in 1996.

This type is a single cheese that melds tradition from two neighboring but distinct places. The Basque-type cheese from the Irati Forest is called Ardi Gasna, which means "sheep's cheese" in Basque. These wheels tend to be smaller; they weigh in

at about 5 pounds. The unctuous sheep's milk curds are warmed and drained until very dry in the vat before being pressed into wheels. These cheeses tend to be firmer and drier than their Ossau Valley counterparts. There's also an Irati Forest practice of aging cheeses near the chimney for a smoky flavor. This is the tradition from which the cheese Idiazabal is born.

Nearby in the Ossau Valley, the wheels tend to be twice as big, about 10 pounds. These cheeses have a more complex process of being aged — they are left to mature in humid caves, sometimes underground, where they are brushed with salted water.

The Ossau-Iraty in the United States is usually a fusion of these two customs. The wheels come in two sizes. The small one has a diameter of about 8 inches and weighs between 4.5 and 6.5 pounds. The larger size has a diameter about 10 inches and weighs about 9 to 11 pounds. The cheese is made with raw milk from the local sheep, with bright red and black heads. Wheels must age for 80 to 120 days.

A New Appreciation

Around eight major dairies and co-ops craft Ossau Iraty. They get their milk supply from 2,000 small farms located in the region.

Savencia Cheese USA, New Holland, PA, makes Esquirrou Ossau Iraty, a PDO cheese in a 5-pound wheel.

"The name means 'bell' in French, signifying a bell around a sheep's neck," says Sebastien Lehembre, Savencia's senior brand manager. "Rather than most wheels that are 10 to 15 pounds, this wheel is sliced down smaller to evolve differently."

Another Savencia cheese from the Basque region is Etorki, which means 'origin,' and is a pure ewe's cheese.

"This is a mild 10-pound cheese that's

pressed," says Lehembre. "It has a nice texture, as it's hard and not chewy."

Both are award-winning cheeses.

Savencia has recently introduced Cayrol, a hard goat's milk cheese that was unveiled at the San Francisco Fancy Food Show in January this year.

"Milk is collected daily from surrounding farms, and it's a small production," says Lehembre. "This mild cheese is aged for three months. The outside is orange and inside is very white and characteristic of goat's milk."

"There is a misnomer about goat's milk cheese," says Lehembre. "Most goats don't have strong cheese, rather it's fruity in a citrus way. Ours has a caffeine flavor with a little (hint) of hay."

In 2011, a 10-month old Ossau Iraty from Fromagerie Agour, a family-owned business in the southwest of France, was named World's Best Cheese at the World Cheese Awards in Birmingham, England. Five years later in 2016, the cheese won the award again.

Agour was founded in 1981, and it's the last family-run dairy in Basque country. "We have a strong relationship with our farmers," says Diane Sauvage, the North American branch director for the company. "We make a cheese that celebrates a strong sense of terroir." When the late Jean Etzeleku founded the company, his goal was to maintain the rich traditions while innovating to keep up with a changing, growing market. Back then, 15 family farmers combined their milk for Agour's Ossau Iraty. Today, that number is 130.

The Perfect Bayonne Ham

Also from the Basque, Jambon de Bayonne is considered one of the most exquisite dry-cured hams in the world.

Made for more than 1,000 years,

Bayonne ham has a history as rich as the people of the Basque. While salting techniques to preserve meat and seafood probably go back more than a millennium due to the salt water springs and easy access to the ocean, the process of using salt to dry cure legs of pork probably arrived with the Romans.

Bayonne is in the French Basque area of Southwest France straddling the border of Spain.

While the origins are a bit of mystery, legend has it that Bayonne Ham was created after an extraordinary hunt. One day, Gaston Febus, the Count of Foix, wounded a wild boar, which then ran off. The boar was not discovered until months later in the Salies-de-Bearn salt-water area, perfectly preserved.

More logically, salt curing was well known by then, and it was refined by the Romans who had a long history of curing pork with salt and natural winds. Additional evidence is the similarity of production between the prosciutto of Italy and Bayonne ham of France.

The native pig is an unusual creature and not the best for commercial production. Called the Pie Noir du Pays Basque, it is as its name suggests a piebald black and pink animal. It takes longer to mature and puts on more internal fat, making it the perfect pig for Bayonne ham. Today, the large, white breeds mostly have supplanted the breed. The Pie Noir almost disappeared by the 1980s, but is seeing a slow resurrection, as demand for authenticity and the preservation of original species grows.

Regardless of breed, pigs must not be fed or treated with steroids, fish oils or antibiotics. The piglets must stay with the mother, and all must be allowed to free forage on roots, corn, nuts (usually acorns) and grasses. In addition, they may be offered cereals.

Bayonne ham is an EU Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) product, and strict rules and regulations are necessary for the rearing of the pigs, production and aging of the hams. The controlling body for enforcing regulations is the Consortium du Jambon de France.

Pigs to be used for Bayonne ham must be born and raised in Southwest France. The production of the ham must be done in the Adour Basin, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pyrenees Mountains.

Part of the beauty of Bayonne ham is its simplicity. There are three ingredients

— pork, salt and air. Just as important as the pork is the salt that will transform a raw leg into a dry-cured ham. The salt cures the ham, drawing out the moisture and acting as a preservative.

The salt required to be used in the salting and curing process is Salies-de-Bearn. It is a treasure found under the Pyrenees Mountains that rises to the surface through natural waters and salt springs.

Aged for a minimum of nine months, Jambon-de-Bayonne is produced using traditional methods. It is believed that nothing is a secret when you trust in a product that has a respect for tradition. Each step plays an essential part in curing the perfect ham.

Producers may only use legs from authorized slaughterhouses, and they must be transformed within seven days.

The salting is done in winter-style conditions. The fresh hams are rubbed with salt exclusively from Salies-de-Bearn. They are then covered in a thick layer of salt and placed in the salting room.

The hams are hung to rest at low tem-

peratures, where the environment is kept artificially winter-like, using modern techniques. They will stay there to begin to dry.

After a period of resting, the hams will be hung from the rafters where the long process of maturing begins.

After a period, the process called “Panage” is done to slow down the aging process. A mixture of pig fat, rice flour and pepper is applied to the exposed part of the ham. This will allow for a gentler aging and the curing of flavors.

While the ham is maturing, it is developing its mild and refined flavors. The hams must be aged for at least nine months, but depending on the size of the ham, it may take as long as 12 months. Hams can be aged up to 22 months, but are generally preferred younger.

The final step is the testing period, when independent and highly-qualified experts will assess the quality of the ham. After passing rigorous quality control steps, the ham will be branded with the Lauburu Cross, the Bayonne seal.

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF ESQUIRROU



Making Sandwiches Your Bread And Butter

How to find success with inspired, signature deli programs

BY KEITH LORIA

With a rise of Millennials looking for healthier meal options, many are foregoing the usual fast food restaurants and turning to supermarkets for prepared foods, salad bars and freshly made offerings — and one of the most popular segments in the deli department is a sandwich program.

More people than ever before are thinking of supermarket delis as meal destinations.

That's why offering a sandwich program is a golden opportunity for supermarket delis to cater to the lunch crowd and attract people during the workday.

Many delis today offer signature sandwiches and a selection of gourmet offerings on paninis, wraps and different types of bread — and manufacturers of meats, cheeses and breads are making sure they are getting in on the additional business by teaming with deli departments on their products.

Daniel Levine, director of New York-based Avant-Guide Institute, a global trends consultancy, says sandwiches are getting fancier, and that's also bringing a lot of eyes — and mouths — to the category.

"In general, deli sandwich makers are finding increased competition with ever more exotic offerings from QSR brands," he



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says. “Delis are changing their game in response to an onslaught that includes KFC’s Cheetos Sandwich, McDonald’s Spicy McChicken Sandwich line, Carl’s Jr.’s Beyond Famous Star Burger (made with a Beyond Meat patty), Dunkin’ Power Breakfast Sandwich and Arby’s 5 Meat Mega Stack.”

There’s also competition from smaller shops. For example, in New York City, the upscale bagel chain Black Seed Bagels is now selling a bagel sandwich made with lobster cream cheese and, according to the company, has a taste that is simultaneously “tart, briny and crunchy.” Needless to say, for traditionalists this combo is definitely not kosher — either literally or figuratively.

“Breakfast sandwiches are also having their moment, as many delis are seeing that upping their morning game ups their profits,” notes Levine. “An example of this I’m seeing around is a BLT with scrambled egg in a bun with balsamic mayo.”

An Evolution

Karen Toufayan, vice president of marketing and sales at Toufayan Bakeries,



headquartered in Ridgefield, NJ, has been baking breads for more than 90 years, and many of its products are the foundation for a number of supermarket sandwich programs operating today.

Over the company’s long history, it has seen sandwich programs evolve in several

different ways.

“First, healthier breads are becoming more popular — especially among the younger generations; for example gluten-free wraps, organic and all-natural options, and non-GMO have become more popular among today’s sand-

THE PERFECT COMPLEMENT

There are some things that just go perfectly together — peanut butter and jelly, milk and cookies, Ernie and Bert — and when it comes to the perfect sandwich, everyone has their own idea on what condiment equals perfection.

It wasn’t long ago when things as simple as ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise were the only condiment options available at a deli counter. While some people still enjoy these traditional choices, any condiment selection that doesn’t have at least 10 different products is almost considered laughable now.

Between sriracha, barbecue sauce, different hot sauces, soy sauce, salad dressings and variations of all of the above, there are a multitude of flavors people like to add to their sandwiches; plus there are things like hummus, salsa, pesto, guacamole and different oils that many consumers consider condiments and necessary to complete the ideal sandwich.

While Don’s Food Products, based in Philadelphia, doesn’t make normal

condiments like ketchup or mustard, the company does play a role with complementing sandwiches using some gourmet sides that go with any meal that comes from the deli.

Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development for the company, points to Don’s Artichoke Asiago Cheese Dip as a unique option that’s a great addition to flatbreads, paninis or grilled chicken sandwiches.

“We’ve found the latest flavor trends for add-ons to be Korean, Asian and African inspired, which people really enjoy on their lunches,” he says. “We’ve also seen products that are pre-made, made fresh and made innovatively are big sellers.”

Tom Orlando, national sales director of Conroy Foods, headquartered in Pittsburgh, says some retailers are creating “free-from” or a “does not include” list of ingredients they offer to the consumer and merchandise with signage, which allows the consumer to know the quality and healthier options available to them.

“If you are purchasing a deli lunchmeat that is free from preservatives, why put a condiment that is full of them on the sandwich?” he asks.

Conroy Foods offers the Simple & Saucy Sandwich condiment product line, which is comprised of high-quality simple ingredients that are gluten-free and all natural.

“Each flavor has a distinctly artisan feel from classic flavors, such as Submarine Dressing made with 100 percent pure olive oil and red wine vinegar to the exciting, fiery Sriracha Mustard Sauce and the specialty mustards, Deli Dijon and Whole Grain,” says Orlando. “The Simple and Saucy sandwich condiment line meets the consumer demand for the natural option of clean ingredients for preparing gourmet sandwiches at home.”

When merchandising condiments, Orlando notes a deli just needs to provide a solution for the consumer; it doesn’t need to wow them with expensive fixtures.

“We have a cardboard shipper with themed header cards,” he says.

continues on page 18

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More and more retailers have a pre-packed deli area for the consumer who does not want to wait in line.

wich programs,” says Toufayan. “On the other end of the spectrum, more exciting taste options and fillings have also grown. Products like naan and brioche buns filled with more exotic or international flavors have grown in demand.”

In fact, Toufayan has recently introduced a number of new breads to keep up with these trends, such as all-natural naans, brioche buns, smart pockets and non-GMO gluten-free wraps. The company says it has experienced tremendous success so far.

The Role Of Meats

Cibao Meat Products, located in the Bronx, NY, has been providing sausage for more than 50 years, but made the decision to venture off into deli, and now the com-

pany features a variety of meat options for delis to choose from.

“It only made sense for us, since this is something we know so much about,” says Jaline G. Isidor Horta, digital marketing director for the company. “We currently have three new items — Induveca Ham, which is a ham cooked with natural juices, gluten free, low sodium and 98-percent fat free; a turkey breast, which is gluten free, contains no MSG, is browned in oil and allergen free; and a chicken breast, which is gluten free, MSG free, extra lean, only 60 calories per serving, fully cooked, and 98-percent fat and allergen free.”

Since it began offering these items to deli departments three years ago, it has seen great success, as have its deli partners. That’s why the company will soon be offer-

continued from page 16

“For example, our football-themed ‘Beano’s Deli Condiments Have All The Right Moves For Your Tailgate Party’ allows the consumer to pick up a bottle of each of the four choices for their tailgate purchase in the deli.”

Grab-and-Go: Making a Fast Decision

More and more retailers have a pre-packed deli area for the consumer who does not want to wait in line. These consumers grab some pre-sliced cheese, ham and maybe some turkey. Right above the grab-and-go case there is a selection of condiments that consumers will also grab, and their purchase decision is done.

“When you think about the practice, it is such common sense to place tertiary-use products close to primary driver purchase items,” says Orlando. “Everyone is time-starved when shopping, so if we make the trip as convenient and satisfying as possible, we all win. The busy consumer who needs to make school lunches for their children selects the different lunch meats and cheeses and right there, while they are waiting for their deli order, we position our condiments in fulfillment of their need.”

Orlando says the more diverse a product is in usage applications, the better, as a number of Conroy Foods’ products have multiple uses, such as the Pineapple Honey Mustard, which in addition to being a great condiment with ham also makes for a great dip for soft pretzels.

“Deli operators need to balance the classic condiment portfolio and also offer their own unique flavor or sandwich-matching profiles,” he says. “Our Cranberry Honey Mustard is a huge seasonal product paired with turkey sandwiches, but deli operators are finding consumers enjoy this sauce year-round on their turkey sandwiches.”

By giving the consumer a few more twists to the regular condiment choices and developing innovative flavors that are exclusive to its program, the deli creates a signature offering to differentiate the department from its competition.

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ing pastrami and is considering other meats to provide delis with in the future.

"We are all very excited where this new road is leading us," says Isidor Horta. "We also ventured through the dairy lane and started a cheese called Queso Jeo. It is the perfect companion to go with any of our products. If you slice it thin and put it on your sandwich, it is delicious. It has a nice creamy texture, and it cuts smoothly. If you were to toast your sandwich, the cheese melts nice and even."

Levine notes there is a trend toward 'ethical' meats, meaning the product comes

from animals that were humanely raised.

"A good example of this is Applegate Organics' Herb Turkey Breast, which is not just organic and preservative-free (another trend), but also sourced from farms that raise animals with ethics in mind," he says. "That's something many people consider when buying and eating meats in 2019, and one deli managers should be thinking about."

Relevantly, McAlister's Deli, a 400-location American sandwich chain, recently debuted a meatless Chimichurri Sandwich, the chain's first-ever plant-based protein sandwich that also includes Provolone

cheese, tomato, spring mix, balsamic onions and chimichurri aioli on a toasted ciabatta bun. This is something Levin says supermarket delis must pay attention to and provide similar offerings to ensure they don't send customers back to the chains.

Bread Helps Bring The "Bread"

Kontos Foods Inc., which is based in Paterson, NJ, does its part for deli sandwich programs by supplying flatbreads, pita breads, paninis and filo bread. A number of supermarket delis have been using these offerings to make fresh sandwiches and note a rise in sales.

"We do very well with pre-grilled breads, where we make them with the grill marks already on the product, which the deli departments love. The sandwiches can be stacked in refrigerators, because our thickness holds up well, allowing staff to pre-make the sandwiches; when the busy time comes, they have them at the ready," says Donna Appy, regional sales manager for the company. "They don't need to press the sandwich, since we did that already, so all they need to do is heat it up for a couple of seconds, and they are out the door."

She says any Mediterranean bread is very popular with today's consumers, as people rarely look to white breads, opting instead for artisan tastes.

PERFECT PICKLES

Pickles have long been a staple at the deli counter and even more so when customers purchase a sandwich, because almost nothing is a better complement.

But no longer are dill and sweet and sour pickles dominating the market. In fact, over the last decade, a host of new pickle flavors have penetrated the deli, with everything from garlic-infused to hot and spicy to other innovative flavors.

Patty Amato, senior vice president of Farm Ridge Foods, headquartered in Islandia, NY, says the company has focused its efforts on the refrigerated pickle category and is seeing growth year after year.

"We are passionate about our pickles and bring them from farm to the container in just seven days," says Amato. "They are hydro cooled to ensure crispness, vibrant in color, and hand-packed and produced locally, which consumers really appreciate."

Farm Ridge Foods' collection of flavors includes Atomic Spicy, Devilish Dill, Sweet Autumn Spice and Wasabi Ginger, and those flavors are ever evolving.

Les Trois Petits Cochons, based in Brooklyn, NY, began in 1975 as a small charcuterie in Greenwich Village and continues the tradition of handcrafting high quality, all natural pâtés and

charcuterie as well as other French specialties.

"We are selling cornichons (French pickles) because these pair really well with charcuterie, and it is probably the favorite condiment of French people," says Morgane Huet, who serves as marketing associate for the company.

Huet adds while cornichons are sold alone, in many stores it presents a sandwich recipe that incorporates cornichons, such as part of the classic French sandwich that includes a baguette, butter and ham.

"We have regular cornichons and sweet and spicy cornichons that are sold in 12.4-ounce jars and are also

available in a foodservice size," says Huet. "Cornichons are different from the American pickles. They are sour because of the amount of vinegar used to pickle them. We always promote them as a French classic, an indispensable part of a charcuterie board or sandwich. The French touch and traditional recipes are always a plus, and people usually respond positively to that."

Packaging Matters

Pickles are available in a variety of packaging options from quarts to single serves for grab-and-go, and many delis are seeing a rise in the individual options to go along with their deli sand-

"We have a gyro bread that we spray with oil that, when heated, is very flexible and is almost like a soft taco shell. We find younger groups are looking for products like these — things different than the traditional sub sandwich that sandwich shops offer," says Appy. "We have a tandoori oval-shaped bread that can be layered and is also a favorite at the deli counter because it's different."

Appy notes the rise in these sandwich sales also is a big driver for Kontos' sales, as people get interested and look to buy the breads to make sandwiches at home. This helps increase sales in the store, as well.

"The delis are asking me for more products so they can sell it in front of the supermarket deli counter for customers to take home," she says.

Tech Matters

Many supermarket delis have installed tech or turned to online ordering to help compete with the likes of Panera Bread, Cava and Chipotle Mexican Grill, allowing customers to quickly place their order and have it ready when they arrive.

For example, Publix has a feature on its website and app where customers can create their sandwiches ahead of time, and H-E-B stores utilize its mobile app to send out information on the sandwich specials

of the day, along with ingredient lists and daily deals.

Some grocers also are teaming with food delivery services, such as Grubhub and DoorDash, to have their sandwiches brought directly to a customer's home or work place, further increasing business.

Marketing Tips

Isidor Horta suggests that deli programs market sandwiches with beautiful images, which include an artisan bread and the meats almost coming out of the bread, slices of cheese, tomatoes and lettuce with a side dish of freshly made fries.

Toufayan says a big component of a successful deli sandwich program comes down to those in charge doing more than just putting out signs and advertisements about what's available.

"Both the more adventurous tasting options and the healthier variations are the focus of the more progressive retailers," she says. "A number of retailers also point to the calorie content of their offerings, when it's relevant. This brings more people to look and buy. And that's the goal everyone should be gunning for."

Still, there's nothing wrong with the old-fashioned merchandising tricks. She notes using enhanced-product beauty shots to entice potential customers and

"trigger the crave" is being used more aggressively than in the past.

Kontos Foods' Appy says stores that stack pre-made sandwiches are finding it to be very impactful for customers.

"They are almost telling the customer what to buy when they see it in the display cases versus just seeing it up on a menu board or menu," she says. "It's very appetizing, and those who are doing this are seeing an increase in sales."

Kontos provides delis with signs that highlight the health benefits of the breads and point out unique differences. And it also has teamed with delis for in-store demos and tastings of different sandwiches utilizing their bread products.

It's no surprise deli departments are seeing the benefits of offering gourmet and specialty sandwiches.

"At the deli department, they make the sandwiches fresh — where the bread is never too hard or too soft, the lettuce is nice and green, the tomatoes are perfectly sliced, plus the meats and cheese have a perfect balance," says Isidor Horta. "When someone takes their first bite, they forget all of the hunger and enjoy the freshness of the ingredients. You can't really get that anywhere else."

The opportunity is there for delis to benefit from these programs. **DB**

wich programs.

"Lately, we have seen a lot of grab-and-go packaging for the pickles," says Huet. "In a small pack, you can find few pickles that you can eat as a snack."

She suggests deli retailers offer "buy-one-get-one-free" specials to attract customers who are not used to having pickles as part of their sandwich programs, and once they do, they will become as normal to them as buying chips as a complement.

Greg Smith, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Mt. Olive Pickle Co., headquartered in Mt. Olive, NC, says packaging is where we're seeing

the most innovation when it comes to the pickle category in the deli.

"With packaging, you're going to see more on-the-go, easier to handle from the backroom perspective," he says. "You've seen a lot of entry into the cooling space, but we're coming out with shelf-stable, pouch pickles in single-serve and multi-serve options. In the future, we'll also be able to vary sizes based on customer demands."

Mt. Olive Pickle Co. has always done a healthy deli business, working with major grocery chains and their deli departments. Both their pickles and peppers tie into the deli sandwich pro-

grams well.

"What we're seeing all over the grocery space that is impacting everywhere from restaurants to grocery to deli is a rise in clean ingredients," says Smith. "We set out several years ago to have an offering for every customer — and even though we still do about 70 percent of high fructose corn syrup products — the high-end stores like Wegmans are looking for something else."

The company started out with a culinary sea salt option that sold extremely well and put that in delis. The product was followed up with a clean line called Simply Pickles, which was free of all preservatives, and that

sold even better.

"We found the penetration for the category was falling every year, but with the data available to us now, we discovered what generational segment we were losing at a faster pace, and it turned out a lot of younger consumers were not only not heavy consumers of the category, but weren't even coming to the category because there was no offering that was clean enough," says Smith. "Now, we're doing the first full-scale organic pickle, which a lot of retailers are choosing to put in their delis, so it's a trend that is only growing larger."

This proves that picking a pickle leads to profits. **DB**

ALTO ADIGE

THE HOME OF SPECK

Learn what makes this
Northern Italian specialty unique

BY LEE SMITH

Located in Northern Italy, Trentino-Alto Adige or as it is also called, South Tyrol, is a peaceful autonomous region of Italy sharing the border of Switzerland and Austria. Its past is a series of changing borders, cultural diversity and raging wars. Sitting on the south side of the Alps and Dolomite Mountains, the terrain is beautiful and mountainous.

During the First World War, the area was the scene of some major battles and considered a key, strategic location. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian war, Italian troops occupied the area, and it was later annexed as part of Italy in 1918.

The result is a complex mix of cultures. A number of languages are spoken in this area, including Italian, German, Ladin, Mòcheno and Cimbrian. The last two are old Bavarian dialects. After the Roman Empire, centuries before, integrated the Alps, the local Rhaetian people adopted Ladin as their language. Isolated, they developed their own cultural identity.

The area is a unique, autonomous area of Italy with a cuisine more typical of Germany and Switzerland. Here, you'll find knuddels (bread dumplings), apple strudel, dark gravies, local cheeses, fine wines and, of course, the famous Speck Alto Adige PGI.

Speck Alto Adige PGI

Is it any surprise that Speck Alto Adige is a mixture of Mediterranean and Northern European cultures? Between ancient and modern times, Alto Adige has been a diversified mixture of many cultural identities.

Speck Alto Adige should not be confused with the German speck. On the contrary, Speck Alto Adige is unique. Made from the thighs of specially-raised pigs, the meat must meet specific standards. Speck is smoked, but it should never be confused with prosciutto from Italy.

The process combines preservation techniques from the Mediterranean and Northern Europe. From the Mediterranean, the hams are dry-cured using salt and aged in the mountain winds. From Northern Europe comes the method of salting, smoking and seasoning with local herbs and spices. The result is a dry-cured ham best described as "a little salt, a little smoke and lots of fresh mountain air."



When it comes to the spices, every producer has their own recipe, often closely guarded for generations. The actual production includes five separate processes.

Step one is the selection of the raw material. The pigs are fed a specific diet, and speck is made from lean, full meat thighs that have passed through a careful inspection. The meat must not be frozen or imported from another region. Each ham will be marked with its own identification number indicating the beginning of the production process. This assures the ham will be properly aged, and no shortcuts are taken.

Step two is the seasoning of the hams. The salt and pepper mixture remains the same for all, but each producer adds its own carefully-guarded recipe that includes its own mixture of spices. Typically, juniper berries, rosemary, oregano and bay leaves are used, but garlic, coriander or cumin may also be added. This gives the

ham its characteristic fragrant aroma.

Before the smoking process, the thighs will be allowed to marinate for up to three weeks in cold rooms. During this period, the hams will be turned, and the marinade will penetrate. At the end, salt must not be more than 5 percent of weight. This is the process that will distinguish producer from producer. This will be the mark of distinction.

Step three occurs after the curing. The hams will be smoked in a traditional manner using a little smoke and lots of fresh air. The process will alternate between smoking and air-drying.

Beach wood is the typical wood used, and it is a cold smoke process. If the temperature gets too high, the pores of the ham will close, not allowing the smoke to penetrate.

Step four is when the hams will rest. This long and slow curing process allows the hams to mature and develop a mild, sweet taste. As in the past, the cellars of South Tyrolean farms are well ventilated with mountain air, fresh and clean. The time to maturity averages about 22 weeks.

An edible layer of mold will develop on the rind, preventing the ham from drying out too much. Once the hams are finished aging, the mold layer will be washed off prior to packaging. It is this layer of mold that allows the aging to be even. It balances out the intense flavors and aromas.

Step five is the stringent quality checks that assure Speck Alto Adige PGI delivers on its promise of high quality and satisfied consumers. Auditors have access to every step in the process and check on everything from the fat to lean ratio, the salt content, fragrance and flavor.

Eating Well

Keep in mind, this is not prosciutto. It is uniquely Speck Alto Adige PGI. It may be eaten in paper-thin slices, but traditionally it is cut by hand into thicker slices. Do not cut off the fat, as it is meant to be eaten. Many people, however, prefer to cut off the crust, as it may be strong and aromatic.

Speck can be served as a snack by itself or with fruit, such as apples and pears, or with cheese. A perfect pairing is Asiago from nearby Trentino, although any alpine-style cow's milk cheese will do.

Speck is also used in cooking, such as chopped and incorporated into dumplings.

DB

Guacamole's Popularity Continues to Grow



**This heart-healthy dip or spread
spells opportunity**

BY BOB JOHNSON

A quarter of a billion avocados are consumed on that day known as Super Bowl Sunday, as guacamole has become standard communion fare at this end of the football season celebration.

Avocados have gone mainstream in a big way, and the deli is well-positioned to feature the many uses of the creamy dip or spread made with this delicious but nutritious fruit.

"Guacamole has been growing, both in deli and throughout the grocery store and has seen very strong growth in foodservice, as well," says Neha Goradia, associate marketing director at Sabra Dipping Co., White Plains, NY.

Sabra started as a hummus manufacturer in 1986 in Astoria Queens, NY, and over the decades developed a number of flavor profiles that allowed it to become the category leader and play a major role in taking the traditional Middle Eastern spread mainstream.

An Increasing Opportunity

The versatile, rough-skinned avocado has been discovered as a rare item — a delicious, heart-healthy source of cholesterol-free fat, which has led to greater interest in this incredibly popular dip.

"Overall, refrigerated guacamole sales are continuing to increase in both the deli and produce sections of the store, which is predominately where refrigerated guacamole is sold in retail stores," says Diana Pusiri, brand manager for Wholly Guacamole, a subsidiary of Hormel Foods, Austin, MN.



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"The growing sales can be attributed to an increase in U.S. households that are purchasing refrigerated guacamole — current household penetration rate is around 22 percent, which is up a little under 5 percent."

Guacamole in the supermarket deli can be particularly inviting as an ingredient that adds something special to fare served at a social gathering.

"Deli is a convenient section of the store for people to grab quick items for a gathering," says Pusiri. "In comparison to guacamole that is sold in the produce section, deli guacamole over indexes with party or group occasions. Many delis offer their own store-packed guacamole, which often uses a combination of prepared guacamole and other fresh ingredients."

While a number of producers offer bulk or consumer packs, some supermarket delis take advantage of their unique opportunity to offer the freshest possible guacamole by making it in-house using ripe or even over-ripe avocados from the produce department.

"The retailers I'm aware of are bringing avocados to their store and taking them from the produce department to the deli for guacamole when they are ripe," says Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing at the California Avocado Commission, Irvine, CA. "There is a trend toward fresh guacamole, prepared in their deli. They are using avocados that are guacamole ready. They might even be too ripe to eat, but they are perfect for guacamole. It's an opportunity to reduce shrink. The flavor profile is awesome, because it is fresh."

Although Mexico produces most of the avocados eaten in the United States, California farmers account for the lion's share of the domestic harvest, with 50,000 acres planted almost entirely in the variety first sold by Southern California mail carrier Rudolph Hass.

Hoping to augment his pay delivering the mail in Pasadena in the mid 1920s, Hass used every dollar he had and a few borrowed from his sister Ida Hass, to buy an acre-and-a-half orchard of avocados of the Fuerte variety, which was the standard of the day.

He discovered what has become the dominant variety by accident. One of the seeds he bought from a local nursery was a highly productive and manageable-off type that Hass gave his name before he took out a patent and planted 80 acres in the Fallbrook area near San Diego, which is still

a center of domestic avocado production.

The California Avocado Commission helps market this fruit from the state's 3,000 avocado growers under the slogan 'A Taste of California.'

"When we are in season, some of the stores are putting up 'Made With California Avocados' signs by the guacamole," says DeLyser. "We're seeing more and more guacamole in the stores."

The Hass Avocado Board offers dozens of recipes, including many for mild to spicy guacamole, and for dozens of dishes that include guacamole as an ingredient.

The major suppliers offer recipes and ideas for the deli to expand its use of guacamole or pass on to the customers.

"We continue to see a lot of opportunity to expand on the already strong popularity of guacamole by sharing recipes and inspiring guacamole uses on menus in more creative ways," says Sabra's Goradia.

One of the Sabra recipes helps expand the use of guacamole to the breakfast hour as the featured ingredient in the increasingly popular avocado toast.

The Full Display

A full display in the deli should include, in addition to generous portions appropriate for a social gathering, small packages suitable for a single person.

"Guacamole is often sold in a tub container, which is great for sharing, but we also make guacamole available in single containers for individual use, and we get a lot of positive feedback for that," notes Goradia. "People are on-the-go and often use guacamole on a pretty regular basis, even outside of larger gatherings, so individual servings are appreciated."

Guacamole can be used as an ingredient in deli sandwiches or salads and can also be the mainstay in a variety of grab-and-go deli snack products.

"In our newer offerings, we pair Sabra's popular Guacamole Snackers with Tostitos for a snack, and one of the most exciting new offerings has been Sabra's Breakfast Avocado Toast — a blend of Hass avocados ready-to-spread and paired with crusty whole grain toasts," says Goradia. "It is a convenient on-the-go breakfast snack."

Smaller packs expand the range of uses for guacamole as a convenient grab-and-go snack item.

"There are many opportunities for guacamole in foodservice deli programs," says Pusiri. "It is great as a spread or a quick add-on using Wholly Guacamole Minis."

The Hass Avocado Board has set the lofty goal of doubling consumption, from 7 to 14 pounds per capita, in the four short years from 2017 to 2021.

The growing popularity of guacamole and avocados is off the charts: The U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service forecasts imports of more than 4 billion pounds of avocados from Mexico in the 2018-2019 season.

U.S. retail avocado sales in dollars increased nearly 32 percent more than the previous year in the quarter ending Sept. 30, 2018, according to Hass Avocado Board statistics, which easily outpaced tangerines as the fastest growing fruit. The Hass Avocado Board has set the lofty goal of doubling consumption, from 7 to 14 pounds per capita, in the four short years from 2017 to 2021.

The Hass Avocado Board annual consumer survey demonstrates the strong position this fruit has already gained in the marketplace.

Although Hispanics are the strongest market, more than 70 percent of non-Hispanics buy avocados at least monthly, and this group consumes an increasing average

of more than 75 a year, with the news that avocados are good for you; outpacing even taste, appearance and price in reasons for customer purchase.

The U.S. guacamole market has already reached around \$375 million, according to Chicago-based IRI market research, and the opportunity has attracted a number of large and medium-sized firms competing for supermarket and deli business.

Over the last decade, the Strauss Group and PepsiCo acquired the Sabra brand and expanded the hummus leader to become a dipping company producing, in addition to hummus, a line of guacamole.

In addition to the PepsiCo and Strauss Group operation, Santa Clara, CA-based Landec's Apio unit late last year acquired Yucatan, which markets guacamole under its Yucatan and Cabo Fresh brands, and a decade ago Hormel and Herdez del Fuerte formed MegaMex Foods, which produces salsas, sauces, tortillas, peppers and dressings, in addition to guacamole. **DB**



HIGHLIGHTING FLAVORFUL AMERICAN BLUE CHEESE

**It pays to become familiar
with domestic varieties
that provide added sales
opportunities for delis**

BY HANNAH HOWARD

When it comes to products, there are few as polarizing as Blue cheese. Whether you crave them or crinkle up your nose at the very thought, Blue cheeses have a rich, ancient history. Legend goes that a busy shepherd neglected his lunch of bread and cheese one day in a cave sometime in the 7th century. A few months later, he returned to find his cheese had become a vibrant shade of blue-green. It had been inoculated with *penicillium roqueforti*, a mold that was naturally growing in the cave, and that today is injected into wheels like Roquefort (with intention and precise control).

Salty, funky, satisfying Blue cheese gets its color from one of two species of mold: *Penicillium roqueforti* or *Penicillium glaucum*. Either way, the mold thrives on the proteins in milk in miniscule cracks and holes in an environment with almost no oxygen. Often, cheesemakers pierce their young wheels to allow pathways for the mold to grow — a process called needling. Blue cheeses are often made with a higher salt recipe than non-Blue wheels, as the salt slows down the Blue molds from taking over the cheese too fast, allowing the wheels to develop complexity without becoming overly blue.





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Blue cheeses can span a wide range of flavors and textures, from spicy and fudgy to sweet and crumbly. They can be made with milk from goats, cows, sheep or even buffalo. Their “blue” may vary in hue from grey to green to a deep purplish. Some Blues hit you over the head (and nose) with their intensity, while others are more subtle. In other words, it’s a big, wide world of Blue cheese.

From the Old World

The most classic styles of Blue cheese are Roquefort, Gorgonzola and Stilton, which come from France, Italy and England respectively. All three remain highly sought after. But more and more quality cheese is being produced in the United States every year, and Blue cheese is no exception. The Old World may have written the great Cheese Canon, but American cheesemakers are dreaming up and crafting cheeses delicious enough to rival any dairy across the Atlantic.

Roth Cheese in Wisconsin is known for making a variety of Blue cheeses, including Buttermilk Blue, a flagship Blue that’s cellar-aged for two months for a slightly tangy, exceptionally creamy Blue cheese.

“We also make a six-month aged Blue and a smoked Blue in small batches, which are earthy and tangy and perfect for topping steaks and salads,” says Heather Engwall, vice president of marketing for Emmi Roth, based in Fitchburg, WI. “Earlier this year, we also acquired a Blue cheese plant in Seymour, WI, which has allowed us to expand our Blue cheese production.”

Buttermilk Blue is one of the many acclaimed American Blues. Maytag Blue is one of the originals, crafted since 1941 by Maytag Dairy Farms in Newton, IA. The

cheese is made from cow’s milk sourced from the farm’s own herd. The wheels’ creamy paste is intersected with bright sapphire bluing and its flavor is acidic, sharp and balanced.

Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co. in Point Reyes Station, CA, makes a variety of Blue cheeses on their farm 40 miles north of San Francisco, perched on Tomales Bay, which opens onto the Pacific Ocean. Its dense, creamy Original Blue has become an American classic. It starts out sweet and finishes savory. Their Bay Blue

Blue cheeses can span a wide range of flavors and textures, from spicy and fudgy to sweet and crumbly.



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takes its inspiration from Stilton, with a natural rind and fudgy texture. It has a rich earthiness and just a hint of caramel.

In Central Point, OR, Rogue Creamery crafts their Rogue River Blue only in autumn, when the cow's rich milk is ideal for making this cheese. The wheels are wrapped in pear-brandy-soaked grape leaves, and the texture becomes slightly crystallized as the cheese ages. They also make a Smokey Blue Cheese, which gets its smoky, nutty and savory flavor from a long cold smoking over shells from local Oregon hazelnuts.

There are plenty more high-quality American Blues to discover, and it's best to sample as many as possible.

Don't Be Afraid of Blue

Unfortunately, Blue cheeses can make shoppers squeamish. "Blue cheese is a cheese that some people are afraid to try," notes Engwall. "I think by showcasing the varied flavor profile of these cheeses and the numerous applications, retailers can help educate consumers." She suggests beginning by introducing new consumers to milder flavored Blue cheeses and highlighting the variety of ways it can be served

— from a cheese plate to salad topping, or balancing the flavor as an ingredient in a main course.

The many possibilities for merchandising Blue cheese echo the myriad ways it can be served and enjoyed. For the purists — drizzle with honey or place atop a cracker or slice of baguette. The sweetness of honey provides a welcome contrast to the piquant salinity of Blue cheese. Blue cheese also shines on a cheese plate with walnuts, dried fruit and honeycomb. For an unexpected but crowd-pleasing pairing, serve it with dark chocolate.

Blue cheese also shines in a wide array

of recipes. From dips to salads, Blue cheese is a way to add just a bit of funk and personality to dishes. It can temper the heat in a spicy dish, balance bitter greens in a salad and amplify the natural sweetness of fruit. It works well in a salad with arugula and ripe peaches or plums — the sweet fruit is a great complement to the salty cheese. A buttermilk Blue cheese dip kicks up a plate of crudité or wings. A crumble of Blue adds depth to roast sweet potatoes, and Blue cheese makes a dish of mac and cheese feel just a little bit grown-up. It makes a welcome addition to a steak or burrito and is even better with caramelized onions.

"Cheese can sometimes be overwhelming simply because there are many varieties to choose from," explains Engwall.

Educating the consumer on how the cheese can be used — either with information on the product packaging or through in-store demos, signage and cross-merchandising with crackers, nuts, jams and beverages — is a great way to help initiate trial and lead to purchase.

As for beverages, aromatic Viognier or Riesling are a great match for a milder Blue. When it comes to bolder, funkier cheeses, Sauternes and Port are classic pairings — and make for an elegant dessert. Dark beers like porter or stout also stand up to big Blue cheeses. The piercing acidity of Ice Wine and the fig notes of Pedro Ximénez Sherry are excellent foils for the spiciness that can be found in Blue cheese.

Blue cheese has quite a long shelf life — it is mold, after all. Soft-ripened varieties are often good for a month or two once they arrive at a store, whereas firmer cheese wheels usually last for about six months or longer.

How can you tell what mold is good mold? The paste of the cheese should be white and creamy; if it has become pink, green, brown or very yellow, it's past its prime. By that time, it should be sold. **DB**

The many possibilities for merchandising Blue cheese echo the myriad ways it can be served and enjoyed.

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THE PACKAGING PREDICAMENT

It can be a challenge developing sustainable containers that enhance shelf life and merchandising, but innovative materials and processes are hitting all the marks

BY LISA WHITE

As deli department offerings have evolved, so has the packaging used to contain its food offerings.

Much of this is in response to the current trends in prepared foods. For example, the meal kit market is predicted to grow substantially through 2022, according to a report by Radiant Insights, which is expected to have a big impact on containers and packaging.

"Just in the last year, we are seeing more retailers competing for their share of the 4.7 billion meal kit industry by introduc-

ing their own version of meal kits, either partnering with a meal kit provider or creating their own signature program," says Rebecca Casey, vice president of marketing and consumer market development at TC Transcontinental Packaging, Montreal. "In-store meal kits meet the needs of on-the-go consumers that have little time to search for recipes, shop for groceries or measure each ingredient."

Sustainability also continues to be a focus with deli product packaging, and for good reason. About one-third of an aver-

age dump is made up of packaging material, according to a study by the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville. Every year, each American throws out about 1,200 pounds of organic garbage that can be composted. The United States is the top trash-producing country in the world at 1,609 pounds per person per year.

"Our focus, and what we're seeing others in the industry focusing on, is trying to determine how to reduce plastic usage in packaging while still keeping food safe, fresh and appealing to consum-

ers,” says Peggy Cross, founder and chief executive of EcoTensil, a Corte Madera, CA-based company.

Key Characteristics

Packaging today is not only being designed to be greener and more functional, but also safer.

“Tamper evident and convenience packaging are trends we are seeing in the marketplace and something that is becoming more prevalent in deli packaging,” says Derek Skogen, marketing manager at Madison, WI-based Placon.

Safety has been predominant in Lake Forest, IL-based Pactiv’s R&D.

“Safety is a big concern for deli operations,” says Mark Spencer, Pactiv’s director of category management.

Value-added packaging alternatives also are coming to the forefront in deli departments, with an increased focus on prepared foods as well as meal kits.

“If the meal needs accompanying starches or sides, everyone wants it all merchandised conveniently together. That’s why we are seeing more product in value-added packaging solutions, which are offered more today than ever before,” says Casey at TC Transcontinental Packaging.

Going hand in hand with value adds are convenience features, such as easy-to-open, re-sealable, portability and one-handed use features. Convenience

features continue to drive innovation in flexible packaging.

“Attributes such as zippers, handles, spouts, and venting for microwaving and oven cook-in can be added to the bags and pouches,” notes Casey. “Also, single-serve and controlled-portion packaging appeals to several different consumer demographics. They allow consumers to snack healthy without being concerned with measuring to determine the nutritional content of a single-serving size.”

Packaging that can help control or maintain temperature of the product in addition to increasing shelf life is also important in the deli.

Finally, transparency in deli food packaging with see-through windows continues to grow.

“Going beyond just the listed ingredients on the label, it’s also important to consumers to see the physical product before purchasing,” says Casey. “They

can determine on their own how fresh and healthy the product is. Seeing the product through packaging also provides inspiration for consumers.”

A Sustainable Focus

Probably the biggest emphasis in the packaging industry overall is sustainability. As a result, there have been recent developments on the material side as well as with designs to minimize the impact on the environment.

With the continued reduction of plastic use, a number of companies are seeking greener materials that are recyclable, compostable and marine degradable.

One recent development is plant-based plastics. Although these don’t break down in the ocean, they are compostable in industrial facilities and a step up from traditional plastic. Called PLA or polylactic acid, this biodegradable, bioactive thermoplastic aliphatic polyester is derived from renewable

Packaging today is not only being designed to be greener and more functional, but also safer.



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biomass generally from a fermented plant starch, such as corn, sugarcane or sugar beet pulp.

"PLA is better than poly-based plastic, since it comes from plants instead of petroleum, but it only breaks down in industrial compost facilities and not in the ocean or in nature," says Cross at EcoTensil. "Paperboard with SFC or SFI certification is preferable, because the paper is coming from certified, sustainably-managed forests. We are seeing an industry shift toward development of more affordable barrier paperboard that has truly compostable and/or recyclable capability, as this is a potentially Holy Grail solution for much deli packaging."

Paperboard is becoming more common in Europe for the production of salad trays and sandwich containers.

"Consumers are demanding sustainable products that are recyclable or compostable," says Casey at TC Transcontinental Packaging. "They wish to contribute to a better environment, starting with what they consume. However, they are also asking to understand how recycling works, and how they can make a significant impact. There are definitely opportunities to educate them on the topic."

Bans on certain materials mean the changeover to sustainable alternatives may not be optional for long.

In response, there have been a number of production changes to accommodate the evolving market.

"Thermoformed packaging helps maintain longer shelf life and can be recycled into something new," says Skogen. "At Placon, we are taking post-consumer PET bottles and thermoforms and processing them back into a usable PET, FDA food-grade approved package for salads, sandwiches and other deli products."

Recent Innovations

New technology and material innovations have been instrumental in the development of packaging that meets the necessary criteria.

At this year's Packaging Innovation trade show in London, there was a big buzz around the EU's ban on single-use plastic, which will be implemented by 2021.

"In response, I think we'll see a big impact in the United States with even more innovation," says Cross at EcoTensil. "There will be more pressure here to reduce plastic in packaging. It's wise to pay

Tight lids, leak resistance and tamper-evidence features are becoming standard on today's deli product packaging.

attention now so retailers are not suddenly trying to play catch-up in complying with new regulations or more sudden shifts in consumer demand."

Much of the conversation is centered on compostable versus recyclable materials. While both methods are environmentally friendly ways to handle waste and keep it out of landfills, composting turns organic waste into usable materials, while recycling takes manufactured product and turns it into something that can be reused. There are different capabilities and regulations, depending on the municipality with both.

Still, changes in materials that impact packaging can be swift, as with the recent plastic bag and straw bans.

"Consumers also are becoming more aware regarding misleading communications," says Cross. "In the past, they might have looked at a spoon that's beige and assumed it's sustainable when it's not. Consumers are wising up, and their demands can happen fast, as we've seen with bags and straws, or the very public outcry around specific companies."

Retailers are looking to be a destination and provide the consumer with an experience to drive traffic in-store. They are also looking for packaging that can be used in online grocery pick-up and delivery.

"Besides convenience and portability, retailers also have to look at the size of packaging. Households, especially Millennials, are now just one to two people and represent two-thirds of all U.S. households," says Casey at TC Transcontinental Packaging. "They are more and more looking at reducing their food waste, which smaller packaging could allow them to do."

TC Transcontinental Packaging has created a couple lines geared for deli and designed with consumers' needs in mind. Its Hot N Handy bag for chicken uses perforation and film technologies and features a pouch to keep product fresh and juicy in a typical heated display case at the grocery stores. It also can be reheated in the microwave and is leak proof. Its Oven

N Done bags were developed to offer supermarkets the opportunity to package fresh seafood or poultry meals with vegetables using their own stores' chef-inspired recipes, spices and seasonings. The bag, offered in black or a brown Kraft design, can go directly in the oven or the microwave.

Pactiv's Earth Choice brand is made out of recycled PET. The square-shaped containers are available in 8- to 64-ounce sizes. The company also offers two polypropylene containers in large and medium sizes for hot bars or grab-and-go sections.

According to Pactiv's Spencer, small-sized rotisserie chicken packages are getting bigger.

"Smaller-size containers are getting a bit larger to have extra capacity for more protein," he says. "Also, because today's packaging needs to enhance what's inside, clear lids are important to allow more product visibility."

Tight lids, leak resistance and tamper-evidence features are becoming standard on today's deli product packaging, as well.

To meet market needs, Placon recently launched a new GoCubes product line that offers an 8-inch packaging option that is designed for salads and meal kit single or two-person portions. They are equipped with one to four insert tray compartment options that hold wet or dry ingredients to be added during meal preparation.

"When consumers are ready to prepare their meal, they simply remove the lid from the GoCubes, add any insert tray ingredients, and their meal is ready to eat," says Skogen. "GoCubes also can work with our SnackCubes packaging that allows for smaller ounces and portion control."

Placon's HomeFresh Entrée line features a microwavable and vented lid option for reheating and on-the-go convenience.

With the packaging segment continuing to evolve, it's essential to keep an eye on changing trends, regulations impacting materials and new products that may be game changers in the department. **DB**



PHOTO COURTESY OF PILLERS

SPOTLIGHTING SALAMI MADE IN THE USA

**Five ways to upsell shoppers on this popular salted,
artisan-flavored deli meat.**

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

Salting, fermenting and air-drying are among mankind's oldest food preservation techniques. In Roman times, pork prepared in this way was part of a group of foods called 'salsum' or salted. It's from this ancient term that we get the word 'salami.'

Fast forward through the ages and salami making spreads throughout Europe. Germany, Hungary, France, Spain and especially Italy are known for its salamis.

Salami making crossed the pond to America in the early 20th century, when Italian immigrants brought this culinary craft with them.

Then, the country fell into what some producers call the 'scary days' of the 1970's and 1980's. This is when much of the deli salami in mainstream supermarkets was mass produced to suit less adventurous American palates and, thus, lost a chunk of its rich storyline.

Today, and over the past five to 10 years, a renaissance has been happening. That is, some U.S. and Canadian producers haven't taken grandfather's old country recipe and used carefully curated ingredients and curing methods to produce artisan salami products with both traditional and trendy flavors.

It's no wonder that, in 2017, salami ranked as the fifth most popular American deli meat, after turkey, ham, beef and chicken, according to *What's In Store 2019*, published by the Madison, WI-headquartered International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA).

Following are tips to capitalize on this popular deli favorite.

1. Sell The Artisan Flavor

Taste experience is driving the growth of artisan salamis, says David Brandow, director of international sales for Piller's Fine Foods, makers of Black Kassel brand meats, based in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. "The time-honored traditions in producing these authentic products allow for the complex flavors to develop and mature and provides a taste experience much like consumers' experience with fine wines, craft beers and fine cheeses. These unique taste experiences cannot be achieved in cooked products that are produced in a day."

Shoppers are also looking for unique flavors. For example, Tempesta Artisan Salumi, co-founded in 2014 in Chicago by fifth generation father and son Italian salumi makers, Agostino and Antonio



Fiasche, first introduced Nduja. This spreadable salami spiked with Calabrian peppers cannot be imported into the United States from Italy. Beyond this, the duo's first experimentation outside of customarily seasoned salami was their 'Nostrano,' meaning 'our own,' Pink Peppercorn Salame, which offers a slight sweetness. More recently, the company developed its Salami di Manzo, made from 100 percent American Wagyu beef seasoned with black pepper, thyme and Cabernet wine, for customers who don't eat pork.

"Quality and taste are most important," says Matt Reilly, Tempesta's national sales director. "Just because a salami is imported doesn't automatically make it better than one produced in the United States."

Clean-labeled and better-for-you salami products, such as those made from heritage breed pigs raised without antibiotics and fed a 100 percent vegetarian diet as well as those labeled natural, gluten-free and with no nitrates or nitrites added, are key to artisan production for U.S. producers.

"We have remained an industry leader in terms of removing synthetic nitrates and

nitrites from our products," says Deanna Depke, marketing manager and fourth generation of family-owned Volpi Foods, in St. Louis.

2. Create An Entertaining Destination

Salami is mostly consumed as the centerpiece of a charcuterie platter, says Al Adelson, vice president of sales for Veroni USA, Inc., a Swedesboro, NJ-based slicer and repacker of Italian-made salami. "It's possible to create great in-store theater with charcuterie, however supermarket

deli operators need to figure out how to tell the story and romance the products. More specifically, because of the high cost per pound, operators need to show that a little salami goes a long way, that customers shouldn't think about the \$24 per pound price because one-quarter pound is only \$6 and that can be a lot of great tasting salami. Restaurants charge a lot for charcuterie, so consumers can enjoy, for a fraction of restaurant prices, creating their own platters at home."

A great way to do this is through attention-getting displays.

Clean-labeled and better-for-you salami products are key to artisan production for U.S. producers.



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"Marketplaces are using their artisan salami sets to help transform the overall appearance in their deli and specialty cheese sections to create a one-stop solution for entertaining the taste buds for any occasion," says Evan Inada, customer marketing manager for Columbus Craft Meats, a Hayward, CA-based brand of the Hormel Foods Corp., headquartered in Austin, MN. "Merchandise great pairings, such as olives, crackers and breads,

alongside the artisan salami to drive sales for customers looking to have a culinary experience with their salami."

Piller's Fine Foods sells its Black Kassel brand salami in eye-catching shapes, such as flowers, hearts, squares and diamonds. These can make deli-made charcuterie boards, or those customers make at home, Instagram worthy.

"We also provide a detailed flavor profile of each of our salamis and a pairing

**"Data shows
meat snacks
skew younger,
with 60
percent being
consumed
by 18- to
34-year-olds."**

— David Brandow, Piller's Fine Foods

guide of complementary food and beverages," says Piller's Fine Foods' Brandow.

3. Promote As A Grab-And-Go Snack

Snacking, and in particular meat snacks, has had tremendous growth since 2012, according to Brandow. "Consumers today are seeking a good source of on-the-go protein. Data shows meat snacks skew younger, with 60 percent being consumed by 18- to 34-year-olds. We have launched our traditional salamis in meat-snack formats that have been received very well. However, meat sticks and options that provide a softer, easier-to-chew texture may open up consumption across other demographics."

To this point, Volpi Foods offers its Roltini Singles, which includes spicy salami wrapped around a Mozzarella cheese stick. These snacks are packaged 1.5-ounces each and are sold 12 to a pack.

This spring, Principe Foods Inc., USA, in Long Beach, CA, will introduce a six-item line of pre-sliced antibiotic-free snack salami in 3-ounce packs. Four of these are imported — Genoa, fennel salami, soppressata and hot soppressata, and two are made in the United States — pepperoni and chorizo. All are sliced in the United States for a longer shelf life.

"The pre-sliced business, especially the snack segment, is growing, and I think you'll see products such as these

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transform the wall deli in years to come,” says Alberto Minardi, Principe’s chief executive. “These products can also be merchandised in the cheese case, in the dairy case or in the meat department.”

4. Open Shoppers’ Eyes To All The Possibilities

Salami isn’t just for charcuterie platters and snacking. There’s a full menu of other usages that can lend to creative merchandising in both the supermarket’s deli and prepared foods department.

“Salumi is being used as a sexy ingredient to complement salads and roasted meats because of the umami that slow-cured meats add to any dish,” says Columbus Craft Meats’ Inada.

Artisan sandwiches, paninis, pasta dishes, unique pizza toppings and even garnishes for craft cocktails are innovative ways chefs are using salami today, notes Volpi Foods’ Depke.

Out-of-the-box usages, such as a Scotch egg wrapped in Nduja rather than sausage before being breaded and deep-fried and Nduja spread on fresh Mozzarella and rolled up pinwheel style, are gaining traction. “These are a few of the things my chefs came up with when I let them play with the product,” says Tempesta’s Reilly, a Culinary Institute of America-trained chef who managed the Salumi and Formaggi



cases at Eataly locations in New York City and Boston. “When your staff plays with and understands a product, they are better equipped to educate customers and sell it.”

5. Take Advantage Of Seasonality

Much like the way consumers covet special vintages of wines and spirits at specific times of the year, this is now spilling over into food products, according to Piller’s Fine Foods’ Brandow. “We launched special ‘Winter Salami,’ which lends itself perfectly to social gatherings

and celebration.”

This product has a history that dates to the 13th century, when sausage from hogs harvested in the fall was lightly smoked over select hardwoods, along with spices like nutmeg and white pepper, to provide a product with an initial subtle pepper flavor finished by nutty overtones. It was a luxury food in the cold of winter for European villagers. This dry-aged premium salami, produced in the same way and packaged in an 8-ounce chub, comes in a wood veneer box with a gift tag.

DB



PHOTO COURTESY OF OLLI SALUMERIA

True To Its Roots

For more than 26 years, Partners, A Tasteful Choice Co., has been rolling out artisan slow-baked crackers. It all started in 1972, when founder, Marian Harris was running a small business in downtown Seattle. Unable to find a casual restaurant serving high-quality, affordable lunches, she opened one herself.

Harris couldn't find quality crackers to accompany her home-made soups and salads, so she developed a recipe and started making her own. The crackers proved so popular, people took them home by the bagful.

After many years as a respected restaurateur, Harris sold her business.

One rainy, blustery day in the fall of 1992, Harris sorted a batch of her crackers and set out to visit eight stores with the samples. Her determination and products resulted in seven orders, and Partners, A Tasteful Choice Co., was born. She named it Partners because the crackers were a perfect "partner" for any food.

To meet demand, Harris recruited her son, Greg. He offered to help for a couple of weeks and today is vice president of operations.

The company grew rapidly, and by the summer of '93, Marian's daughter Cara committed to helping for three years. She is now its president.



Marian Harris with her son Greg circa 1994.

Partners operates a state-of-the-art, eco-friendly, 150,000-square-foot bakery near Seattle. The company has developed six different brands featuring a wide variety of non-GMO, gourmet artisan crackers and cookies, including organic, low fat and allergy-friendly options. These award-winning products are slow-baked and sold in all 50 states and around the world.

DB

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Cibao Meat Products	18	Hispanic Deli Meats.....	718-993-5072
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Conroy Foods.....	15	Condiments	412-781-1446
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Gourmet Foods	2	Cheese	404-954-7698
LaPanzanella	11	Flatbreads	206-322-6760
Piller Sausages & Delicatessens Ltd....	40	Deli Meats	800-265-2628
Placon	35	Packaging.....	800-541-1535
Sally Sherman Foods	19	Salads	914-664-6262
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Veroni.....	39	Italian Salami	646-256-2638
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GEORGE DELALLO CO., INC. | JEANNETTE, PA 15644 | 1.800.433.9100 | DELALLO.COM | @DELALLOFOODS

Caputo Crafting Customized Distinction

Caputo Cheese began in 1978 as a small retail cheese shop selling small bulk domestic and imported cheeses. The owners, René and Pasquale Caputo soon began providing processed and blended cheese to food distributors and manufacturers. Initially, these cheeses included Parmesan, Romano and Mozzarella, but expanded to include other cheeses as well as Italian specialties such as oils, vinegars, pastas and spices.

Substantial expansion took place in 1991, growing from a



5,000-square-foot facility in Chicago to a 50,000-square-foot building in Melrose Park, IL. A big change in the company came in 1994, as Natale Caputo, son of René and Pasquale, became Caputo's president, while Pasquale took on the role of CEO. Nat took off running and decided to continue growing the Caputo legacy by opening the Caputo Cheese Market in Melrose Park that same year.

Nat knew that one of the best ways to control the product was to start caring for it himself and so, in 2004, a 30,000-square-foot temperature- and humidity-controlled cooler was added for aging and storing hard Italian cheese. The cooler can hold 2,100 pallets and some 5.5 million pounds of cheese.

To satisfy a need in his own community of Lake Forest, Nat and the Caputo team opened a second Cheese Market in 2009. Caputo is always looking to expand.

In 2019, they created a professional kitchen for chefs to come in and do their own research and development, and they've just opened their online store featuring several hundred cheeses, vinegars, spices and other culinary essentials.

From the classic grated cheeses to the award-winning Fresh Mozzarella, Caputo products possess the quality, flavor and consistency that only high standards and family pride can produce. **DB**

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BelGioioso Cheese, Inc.	61	Cheese	877-863-2123	Nueske's Hillcrest Farm's Meats	80	Smoked Meats.....	715-253-4006
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Campofrio Food Group America.....	75	Deli Meats.....	804-520-7775	Placon	91	Packaging.....	800-541-1535
Cibao Meat Products	84	Hispanic Deli Meats	718-993-5072	Pomi USA.....	2	Tomatoes.....	732-541-4115
Columbus Foods, Inc.	73	Salami & Deli Meat	510-921-3417	Sally Sherman Foods.....	53	Salads.....	914-664-6262
Conroy Foods	47	Condiments.....	412-781-1446	Simply Fresh Foods.....	56	Refrigerated Salsa & Dips.....	714-562-5000
Country Fresh Inc.....	15	Fresh Meal Kit	281-453-3300	Stella Foods Inc.	17	Cheese	800-863-4094
Crave Bros.....	64	Farmstead Cheese	920-478-4887	Toufayan Bakeries, Inc.	39	Pita Chips	800-328-7482
European Union	63	Cheese & Prosciutto.....	646-218-6025	Tribe Mediterranean Foods	25	Hummus.....	800-8-HUMMUS
Fratelli Beretta USA	79	Italian Specialties.....	201-438-0723	Uncommon Flavors.....	67	Italian Cheese & Ham	
George E. DeLallo Co.	43	Olives	800-433-9100	Vandersterre Groep International B.V.7		Gouda Cheese	31172631059
George E. DeLallo Co.	92	Olives	800-433-9100	Ventura Foods, LLC.....	21	Shortening, Oils, Spreads.....	877-VENTURA
Gourmet Foods	23	Cheese	404-954-7698	Venus Wafers, Inc.	41	Crackers	800-545-4538
Ken's Foods Inc.....	5	Salad Dressing	800-633-5800	Veroni	77	Italian Salami	646-256-2638
Lactalis.....	65	Roquefort Cheese	212-758-6666	Volpi Foods	81	Italian Meats.....	800-288-3439
LaPanzanella.....	37	Flatbreads	206-322-6760	Westrow Foods.....	27	Turnkey Sales	905-669-5412
Litehouse, Inc.....	54	Blue Cheese	800-669-3169	Winter Gardens Quality Foods.....	51	Entrees, Soups, Sauces	717-968-4788
Marzetti	11	Null.....	614-572-7039	Yucatan Foods	55	Guacamole.....	310-837-2300