



ALSO INSIDE

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COVER STORY 14

Deli Business honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to the industry, their company and their community



JUNE/JULY '19 • VOL.24/NO.3

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PLMA Celebrates 40 Years



The Private Label Manufacturers Association (PLMA), New York City, recently marked its 40th year at its 2019 Annual Meeting and Leadership Conference in Pebble Beach, CA. It celebrated with a look at its past, present and future.

In 1979, retailers were searching for a way to help consumers meet their shopping needs. In France, Carrefour invented black-and-white generics and American supermarkets and drug chains saw a solution to their problem. At the Ramada Inn near Chicago's O'Hare Airport, retailers and manufacturers joined together and PLMA's first trade show was held. Nearly a decade went by before the next major steps took place. In Canada, Loblaws demonstrated how creative and successful store brands could be while, in the U.S., Walmart launched Sam's Choice Cola and the battle with national brands was on. Kroger, Safeway, Publix and A&P soon joined the fight on the supermarket side.

PLMA's annual trade shows grew bigger, as more and more manufacturers openly declared their willingness to make store brands. As the year 2000 opened, new retailers like Trader Joe's, Costco and Whole Foods moved private label to new levels of quality and assortment and drove consumer acceptance to the record heights where it remains today.

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Back to School

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Tailgating Label News

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

Food Bars Grab 'n Go

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

CHEESE CORNER

Goat Cheese

English Cheddar

Holiday Meats

DELI MEATS

Proscuitto

PREPARED FOODS

Meal Kits

COMING IN OCT/NOV

DELI BUSINESS will look at Specialty Cheese

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TRANSITIONS



BLOUNT APPOINTMENTS ANNOUNCED

Blount Fine Foods. Fall River. MA, has announced appointments. These include: Michelli Heber, retail/foodservice business development specialist Northern CA; Domenic Imbordino, foodservice business development specialist Midwest; Ashley Jones, Northwest foodservice business development specialist; Estelle Goulart; New England foodservice business development; Jim Canale, NE foodservice business development; and Matt Yusen; East Coast business development manager, foodservice.

www.blountfinefoods.com



SABRA NAMES CMO

Sabra, White Plains, NY, has named Jason Levine as chief marketing officer. He joins Sabra from Mondel z International, where he served as North America CMO. At Sabra, Levine will oversee global marketing and communications. His responsibilities include driving the company's growth strategy by introducing consumers to new ways of using hummus and developing new offerings in the high growth plant-based food category.

www.sabra.com



ACS NAMES MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

The American Cheese Society (ACS), Denver, has appointed Dawn Schipper marketing and development director. With a focus on both the Annual ACS Conference & Competition and growing new revenue streams year-round, she will have strategic responsibility for all marketing, communications, public relations and development efforts. Schipper brings to ACS more than a decade of experience in non-profits.

www.cheesesociety.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS



OSI GROUP ACQUIRES ROSE PACKING

OSI Group, Aurora, IL, has acquired Rose Packing Co., Inc., a U.S. producer of pork products located in South Barrington, IL. Rose Packing's CEO, Dwight Stiehl, along with his management team, will remain with the company and work with OSI leadership on post-transaction integration. OSI is acquiring all of Rose Packing's assets as part of the transaction.

www.osigroup.com



KETTLE CUISINE ACQUIRES HARRY'S FRESH FOODS

Kettle Cuisine, Lynn, MA, has acquired Harry's Fresh Foods, a privately-held custom food manufacturing company based in Portland, OR. Kettle Cuisine is a portfolio company of Kainos Capital, a private equity firm with experience in the food and consumer products space. Since Kainos acquired Kettle Cuisine in 2015, more than \$300 million has been invested.

www.kettlecuisine.com



WHOLE FOODS RECOGNIZES FOREVER CHEESE

Forever Cheese, Long Island City, NY, was recognized by Whole Foods Market with a Global Supplier Award for Raising the Bar for Quality for introducing new ways to improve the quality of its cheese, specialty products and the transparency of its sourcing, while reducing the environmental impact of its operations.

www.forevercheese.com



CAPUTO CHEESE WINS AT U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP CHEESE CONTEST

Caputo Cheese, Green Bay, WI, took home three awards at the 2019 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest. Caputo Cheese won first place for its hand-dipped Ricotta Red, which is handcrafted from whey, ladled by hand and packaged in baskets while still warm to maintain a delicate consistency. The company also won third place for both its Nodini knots and signature hand-made Burrata.

www.caputocheese.com



CARR VALLEY WINS AT U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP CHEESE CONTEST

Carr Valley Cheese, LaValle, WI, took home 11 awards at the U.S. Championship Cheese Contest. It won Best of Class for Smoked Marisa, Cave-Aged Marisa and Gran Canaria. The company also won second place for Airco; Porto Duet; Penta Crème; Caso Bolo Mellage; and Sweet Vanilla Cardona. Black Goat Truffle, Black Sheep Truffle and Canaria came in third.

www.carrvalleycheese.com

NEW PRODUCTS



NEW BAKED GOODS ARISE

Toufayan Bakeries, Ridgefield, NJ, has introduced Brioche Buns, Madeleines, Pita Chips and Everything Wraps. Brioche Buns in Original and Sesame have a slightly sweet taste and fluffy texture. Madeleines are lemon teacakes in a shell shape. Pita Chips are available in Sea Salt, Garlic Parmesan and Caramelized Onion varieties. Everything Wraps include garlic, onion, poppy seeds, sesame seeds and salt.

www.toufayan.com



A TRUE ITALIAN PANINI

Veroni, Logan, NJ, offers three variations of its Panino Italiano panini, all prepared with 100 percent Italian-made products. The range of Panino Italiano is available in three variants of cold cuts, including mild salami, spicy salami and prosciutto. Veroni produces all of its cold cuts in Italy and imports them into the U.S. Its salami and prosciutto are cut and assembled with 100 percent Italian Provolone Cheese and Naples' rustic pizza-bread.

www.veroni.it



THE LITTLE DIPPER DEBUTS

Venus Wafers, Hingham MA, has launched Mariner Organic Little Dippers crackers under its the Original Mariner Biscuit Co. brand. The crackers are available in Clubhouse and Thin Wheat flavors. The line has been Certified Organic by QAI, verified Vegan by the Vegan Action/Vegan Awareness Foundation and certified Kosher by the Orthodox Union. The new packaging carries these symbols.

www.venuswafers.com



CROISSANTS IN BUTTER & CHOCOLATE

St. Pierre Bakery, Manchester, UK, is expanding its portfolio with new full-sized Butter Croissants and Chocolate Croissants. The croissants are individually-wrapped and branded in packs of eight with a suggested retail price of \$4.99. Made in France using high-quality ingredients and classic techniques, the new croissants reflect the brand's commitment to producing authentic European-inspired bakery items.

www.stpierrebakery.com



GRAB & GO COOKIES

J.S.B. Industries Inc., Chelsea, MA, has introduced Muffin Town Whole Grain Cookies for grab-and-go applications. The Chocolate Chip or Sugar .7-ounce cookies come in wrapped two-packs and are peanut and tree nut free. Cookies are available by the case, which includes 210 two-packs for a total of 420 cookies.

www.muffintown.com



SLICED FRESH MOZZARELLA LOGS

Crave Brothers, Waterloo, WI, has launched I-pound Sliced Fresh Mozzarella Logs. With a 60-day shelf life, the logs can be kept on hand in the refrigerator for appetizers, burger topping and pizzas. The slices of award-winning artisan cheese have a fresh, milky flavor and are uniform in diameter. The logs can create 16 slices per pound.

www.cravecheese.com



NEW CONTAINER UNVEILED

Placon, Madison, WI, has introduced Crystal Seal refresh Wraps containers. The lines provide tamper evident, secure stacking packaging with the versatility to be merchandised standing upright or lying flat.

www.placon.com



A GOURMET PAIRING

President Cheese, Buffalo, NY, has launched Gourmet Pairings, a smooth and creamy spreadable cheese with gourmet toppings. The three debut flavors are Feta with Roasted Red Pepper, Blue Cheese with Caramelized Onions, and Aged White Cheddar with Apple Chutney. The product combines specialty cheese with toppings, making pairing more convenient for those entertaining at home or looking for an accessible snack.

www.presidentcheese.com

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

Will Tesco's Service-Counter Closings Forecast the Future of U.S. Deli Departments?



By
Jim Prevor
Editor-in-Chief

esco, the UK's largest food retailer, has begun closing fresh food service counters in many stores. Not all stores are effected, but in many stores, the expectation is that deli counters will close.

In some instances, hours are being reduced at stores that are to maintain service counters.

Tesco issued a statement explaining its efforts:

Over recent years, our convenience and online businesses have continued to grow, as have our core grocery and fresh departments in our large stores. Not only are customers shopping in different ways, but we know that they have less time available to shop, too — which means they are using our counters less frequently. We will be making changes to the counters in our large stores to ensure that we have the right offer for customers. We expect that around 90 stores will close their counters, with the remaining 700 trading with either a full or flexible counter offer for our customers.

This issue related to service departments comes in the context of what Jason Tarry, CEO for Tesco's UK and the Republic of Ireland division, explains as a "simplification" effort:

"In our four years of turnaround, we've made good progress, but the market is challenging, and we need to continually adapt to remain competitive and respond to how customers want to shop. We're making changes to our UK stores and head office to simplify what we do and how we do it, so we're better able to meet the needs of our customers. This will impact some of our colleagues, and our commitment is to minimise this as much as possible and support our colleagues throughout."

Tarry is referring to various other cost-saving efforts, such as the reduction of food service in employee break rooms as well as stock and merchandising simplifications.

It is motivated by one underlying fact: so-called "Hard Discounters" now have over a 12.5 percent share of the UK market. More than 60 percent of consumers in the UK report visiting either an Aldi or Lidl store in the previous 12 weeks.

There was a time when traditional supermarkets viewed the hard discounters as a different class of trade, but discounters improved the product quality, store attractiveness and services offered.

When the "great recession' hit, a psychological barrier was broken, and most consumers considered it acceptable to shop at these hard discounters.

Over the years, supermarkets have tried many strategies to deal with hard discounters, but none have worked, often because supermarkets have conflicting interests. They want to keep and bring back the customer attracted to the hard discounter, but they often fear their own customers trading down to less profitable lines even more.

Today, the focus is on driving costs out of the system. And with perishables, labor is a big cost.

The question is whether this approach is going to accomplish what is intended. It seems unlikely that whatever costs Tesco or other traditional retailers manage to cut will drop to the level of an Aldi or Lidl. In a way, Tesco admitted as much by launching its own hard discount division, Jack's.

Most likely, these cost cuts will leave Tesco with just a marginally less expensive cost structure, still far more expensive than that of a hard discounter. But it will also remove all the differentiating reasons why consumers might want to visit a Tesco rather than a hard discounter.

One wonders if Tesco wouldn't do better to focus on making these departments even more of a draw. If consumers have less time available to shop, shouldn't we let people order in advance on an app so the food is ready when they arrive? If similar products are available pre-packaged, shouldn't Tesco focus on selling unique products from the service counters that are not so easily packaged?

Aldi has been the fastest growing food retailer in America for several years. Lidl has had some missteps in its entrance to the U.S., but with its acquisition of 27 Best Market stores in the high volume New York Metro market, it brings a shock value to the region, especially Long Island.

This means that retailers in the U.S. will be confronted with the decision that Tesco confronts now. How to compete with hard discounters.

Those who can be cheaper can compete on that level. But if you can't be cheaper, you better be better –and that means more focus on higher quality fresh foods presented with better service. England's problem today will be America's tomorrow. U.S. retailers should be prepared.

James 3. Theres



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Strategic Schisms



By
Lee Smith
Publisher

he summer issue of *Deli Business* is always an interesting issue. With the People's Awards, we get insight into what drives some of our most successful leaders and the trends and strategic directions they see in the industry. And, before any more comments, I wish them congratulations. These people are the success stories that provide the inspiration to everyone working in the business—to everyone who got a job out of high school or college and ended up with a great career—to all of us who ended up with terrific careers that were never in our dreams.

As stated by our award winners, it is obvious that foodservice-type venues are growing and becoming the lifeblood of traditional supermarket deli departments. No longer driven by deli meat, slicing cheeses and commodity-based salads, growth is coming from prepared foods and specialty cheeses. Executives must also consider the continued growth of Mediterranean foods and flavor profiles, and a desire for more Asian-style offerings, often with a distinctly American twist.

Today's deli departments have morphed into the meal replacement concept of 20 years ago. The quality of the food and service have also increased with restaurant-quality offerings and, at the very least, fast casual service, often including tables and chairs.

On the other hand, as Jim Prevor points out in his column, large, low-cost retailers are removing service departments, lowering costs and recognizing that customers will move to online retailing for specialty ingredients. There is no doubt that the two very distinct models have a place in contemporary commerce. There are customers who will seek out lower cost regardless of service and often with a decrease in quality, availability and packaging sizes. There is also a viable segment that is looking for excellent quality, service departments, seasonal and ethnic options. In some customers'

minds, quality will translate into local, organic and environmental conservation.

The dilemma is these are often not two separate and distinct customers. There is no longer the "one" store to shop or "one" customer. We are going back to a variety of options, much like the pre-supermarket days when shoppers went to the bakery, the butcher, the produce guy and the general store. The buying occasions are different—today it is the supermarket closest to where someone lives, the discount or club store with limited selection for staples, online where every hard-to-find item exists, and hyper local options, such as farms, farmers' markets and bakeries.

For more traditional retailers, the move is toward more service, more foodservice, better quality. The competition is restaurants, fast food concepts and convenience stores—all while offering standard selections at reasonable prices. For low cost retailers, the model is to decrease labor, reduce the number of employees, cull offerings and get rid of slower moving items. For specialty retailers, it is forgetting about the staples and offering quality and service in a smaller footprint where there are enough customers to support everyday shopping trips at a higher gross profit margin.

It seems as if the industry will split into completely different models, both profitable but with different criteria. The difference may be as grand as the difference between convenience stores, supermarkets and specialty stores. To those who can differentiate and weather the change in store design, products and company culture, success may be granted. For those retailers who try to be everything to everybody, the result may be falling sales and profits, as competitors who specialize may do it just a little bit better.

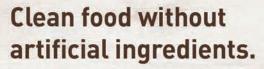
Retailers are at a crossroads. I have full confidence in the hard working executives in this business who will chose the best path for their communities and their stores.

DB



Panera at Home: Easy to prepare; Hard to resist.





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To see what clean means to Panera, visit PaneraAtHome.com



15TH ANNUAL PEOPLE'S Cluvards

Deli Business honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to the industry, their company and their community



DEBORAH JONES

Sales Manager,
Deli Prepared Specialty Food,
Pavilions, Part Of Boise,
ID-Based Albertsons

Q. How has your career evolved over the years?

A. I started in the retail grocery industry in 1987 as a pastry chef in bakery. I had the opportunity to go to the service deli side of the business. I ended up working in a variety of management roles in deli, then went into bakery/deli combo management. I moved on to leadership within the organization, specializing primarily in bakery for three years, before going back to deli for about a month. I was promoted to assistant sales manager, deli prepared food for Albertsons in its corporate office for two years. Supervalu acquired Albertsons stores, and I was

quickly promoted to regional service deli sales manager. We were then charged with being part of its centralization team, and I had the great fortune of interacting with all banners. This gave visibility from a fresh standpoint, as the go to market strategies were similar and yet unique. I eventually came back to the company's Southern California division and worked in special projects events for a year, before I was offered a position as meat operations manager. I did that for two years, then managed special projects on fresh. For a short time after this, I went on a new journey working with an independent broker and leveraging relationships with different Supervalu retailers. I thought this was where I was meant to be, but my heart has always been in specialty premium deli prepared foods. I received a call from a former colleague at Albertsons sharing with me that Albertsons Co. was looking for someone to run its service deli prepared foods for Pavilions, a part of Safeway that the Albertsons Co. had acquired. I joined the Pavilions/Albertsons team in 2016 as sales manager for Pavilions' deli prepared specialty food. We manage 26 Pavilions stores independently of the entire division, which includes 320 Albertsons and Vons stores. We have a separate team that manages Pavilions' brand alone. We have worked very hard rebranding Pavilions as a premium format separate from Vons and Albertsons.

Q. What positions have you held in industry associations?

A. I'm part of IDDBA's Show & Sell and have been for four consecutive years. I'm also on the Board of Directors for the Dairy, Deli, Bakery Council of Southern California.

Q. What is the best advice you ever received and why?

A. The best advice I received is be who you are. I'm very passionate about what I'm doing. If there is something that isn't right, don't be afraid to do something different, otherwise you'll only keep getting the same results. By doing so, you won't be an influencer of change. The industry is changing rapidly because people are willing to take a change.

Q. How do you balance your work and personal life?

A. My husband also is in the industry on the wine side, so it works out. We both have a love of food. I'm also a certified sommelier. And our family life revolves around food and wine.

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

A. There's a big play, and it's on target, with specialty premium prepared foods. People are looking for an experience, not just specialty cheese being offered, but someone at the store level who specializes in that area. I develop programs that involve certifying cheese specialists, ongoing cheese training and pairings. This takes their experience to a different level. Cheese specialists are knowledgeable about what they're offering and creating an experience. Prepared food options, hot bars and convenience continue to grow. Traditional service delis are not used to managing hot bars and recipes, as that's on a whole different level. We need to develop a higher level of expertise, so we need the right lead in the kitchen who cares about quality and managing it properly.



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ANDY **DECOU**

Category Manager, Deli, Schnucks Markets Inc., St. Louis

Q. How has your career evolved over the years?

A. Early in my career, I kept trying for the next promotion and didn't care what categories I ran as long as it meant advancement. Then, about seven years ago, I started running Specialty Deli and developed a passion for cheese. The more I learned about cheese, the more fascinated I became. From its rich history to the incredible variety of flavors and textures, to the amazing group of American artisan producers, I love that something so simple, made with only four ingredients, offers so much complexity. Plus, cheese makes people happy.

Q. What is the best advice you ever received and why?

A. Spend at least as much time in the stores as you do in the office. The best way to evaluate any program is to see it for yourself in action. Some of the best ideas for the most successful programs came from recommendations from store teammates. Plus, nothing can replace the learning that takes place as you watch shoppers interact with your programs.

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

A. While time has always been a precious commodity, over the last year we're even more intently focused on saving shoppers as much time as possible. Whether it's pre-sliced deli meats, pre-packaged salads, kiosk ordering or grocery delivery, customers want their groceries fast, but they aren't willing to sacrifice quality. Therefore, we're working to deliver high-quality products as quickly and conveniently as possible for Schnucks' deli

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

A. Dashboards with various sales reports that allow you to drill down into the data are game changers when it comes to setting strategy. Nielsen data related to market share and areas of opportunity is something I rely on, as well. But nothing's more fun than loyalty data that lets us know who's buying what and what else

amount of knowledge makes them feel good about themselves and keeps them coming back for more guidance.

Q. What is the biggest challenge vou've had to overcome on the job?

A. As I have moved to different retailers in different areas of the country, I have had to learn how to adapt to different customer habits as well as different company cultures. For example, before I moved to St. Louis. I hadn't even heard of provel cheese (a processed cheese product popular in the city). It's now my top selling cheesel

Q. What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

A. I enjoy running and have completed several marathons. I also love traveling, and wherever I go I am always on the lookout for cheesemakers and dairies along

"Spend at least as much time in the stores as you do in the office. The best way to evaluate any program is to see it for yourself in action."

is in their carts. Schnucks just launched a the way so I can continue learning about rewards program this past August, and the information we're now seeing in terms of customer behavior is beyond eye opening.

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

A. I've seen a lot of changes in the deli industry over my career, but some of the biggest include the current migration to more and more self service, while at the same time, expanding labor in key areas of differentiation like Cheese Shops and Entertaining. Cheese can be intimidating, so the more we can take the mystery out of it by educating our customers, the more they can look "in the know" in front of their families and friends. Even a small

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

A. I have a 21-year-old daughter who never ceases to amaze me. She's a junior in college working to become a special education teacher, and I couldn't be more proud of her.

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DAVID SONZOGNI

Vice President. Deli/Prepared Foods, Albertsons, Boise, ID

Q. How has your career evolved over the years?

A. I've worked in the foodservice industry for over 40 years. My career has evolved in unique ways dictated often times by both the market and consumer demands. I've had the privilege to be a part of some of the more innovative features in the grocery industry. I've never stopped learning and take influential cultures from around the world and integrate them in multiple departments. More recently. I've been able to collaborate with an awesome team here at Albertsons and bring to life the new Market Street concept. This has been a pinnacle of both timely innovation and a new demand in the modern consumer

Q. What positions have you held in industry associations?

- A. Member/Board Member:
- ♦ International Chefs Association - American Culinary Foundation (ICA-ACF), Texas Chapter
- ♦ ICA-ACF, New York City Chapter
- ♦ International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP)
- ♦ American Culinary Federation (ACF)-Idaho, New York, and Texas
- ♦ NY Culinary Olympics Team Coordinator, Big Apple Chapter, Frankfurt 1992

Q. What is your leadership philosophy?

A. I tend to have more of a democratic tional flow. management style and philosophy. I prefer involving my team and coming to a data driven conclusion with valuable input from all members. At the end of the day, I am responsible for the successes and new learning opportunities of my team. I've been known for thinking outside of the box. I have a Plan A and Plan B. I'm never satisfied or complacent. The minute I accomplish a goal, I'm on to something else and looking at what's next.

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

A. Mediterranean and Middle Eastern flavors. It's all about the approach, although it can take longer for certain items to take

fortable and an easier transition from point A to B. It really helps smooth the opera-

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

A. Delis of the past were very simple. Now to look at the transformation over the last 20 years, it has become a beautiful evolution of international food hubs. It's an emotional attachment when you walk into these environments, like the one built with the new Albertsons Market Street. Instead of a traditional deli case, these departments are likely to include elaborate food pods with wood-burning ovens, fresh Mozzarella stations, taco and gyro counters, smokers in kitchens cooking brisket for hours, custom international salad bars and bespoke grab-and-go meals. It's taking

"It's a melting pot here, and people are embracing new flavors nowadays and expanding their horizons."

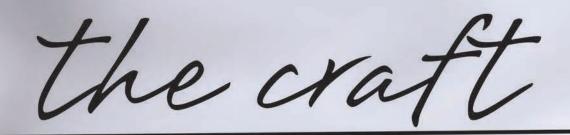
off. Middle Eastern and Mediterranean foods are still strong, with influences integrated into sauces, salads, hot foods and other items. We're now seeing things like gyros, sushi tacos and Hawaiian poke bowls in today's delis. The offerings are constantly changing, and it's extremely exciting. It's a melting pot here, and people and have a son and daughter. are embracing new flavors nowadays and expanding their horizons. This has opened up so many doors for food to go into so many different directions.

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

A. Every day, technology gets better, with online ordering apps, management and inventory tools, tablets, tableside ordering systems and kiosks. This makes the deli customer experience more comfood to a whole new level. It has become more about the customer experience when making a food decision.

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

A. I am happily married for 35 years



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RACHEL SHEMIRANI

Senior Vice President, Barons Market. San Diego, CA

Q. How has your career evolved over the years?

A. My father started the company with his brothers back in 1993. I was 13 at the time. I began working at the store when I was 15 in the summers stocking shelves, cleaning bathrooms and stocking the dairy cooler, then I became a cashier. I continued working at the store summers throughout college, working in all areas, until my early 20s, when I became assistant manager. I then decided to move to the Bay Area and spent six years in San Jose working in a law firm marketing department. About six years later, during the financial crisis of 2009. I was laid off, I learned so much and knew this wasn't an industry I wanted, so I moved back to San Diego at the end of 2009 and started back at Barons. I was able to take all my experience and bring it to manage the store's marketing. I then became vice president of marketing, managing three people. Now, as senior vice president, I'm involved in operations, new store development, marketing, a little bit of everything. I was voted Top Woman in Grocery by Progressive Grocer last year. We have experienced a lot of growth, but are still a small company right now. What's great about being in a small company that's growing is we're constantly challenging ourselves with each store we open. We also bring something new to the customer Barons Markets cur-

two more this year—one in early summer think about dinner. and another in fall or winter.

O. What is your leadership philosophy?

A. Something we encourage everyone to adopt, and is part of our company's values, is to hire the right people. We need to evaluate their strengths and let them go. We also want to hear ideas and create a safe place where people can use their strengths and talents to benefit the company. We want to create a culture where people can have pride in their ideas and pride in ownership.

Q. What is the best advice you ever received and why?

A. The best advice is staying present so you can stop and enjoy what you're doing. We have a fun job, but we're so busy and life moves quickly. It makes fun times more

rently has seven stores and we're opening ever, and the last thing they want to do is

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

A. What I appreciate is the deli industry is responding to trends. Vegan and vegetarian items are huge sellers for us in the deli. It's important to make sure labels are clear, whether it's vegan, vegetarian, gluten free, etc. Also, keeping pricing reasonable for customers is key. Yes, we value their time, but also value their money, as

Q. What is the biggest challenge vou've had to overcome on the job?

A. When I first moved back to San Diego and rejoined Barons. I had to convince everyone we had a great idea, but needed a megaphone to let people know. We then decided to come up with a new

"What's great about being a small company that's growing is we're constantly challenging ourselves with each store we open."

fun and makes challenging times a bit less challenging when staying present or not making rash decisions and taking the time to think about it. We make better decisions that wav.

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

A. Something we're doing more of are delicious grab-and-go entrées that are made with clean ingredients at a good price point. We also introduced salad and olive bars, and will add a hot food bar at our next store. Customers are busier than

logo and brand. We spent a lot of time creating the experience so customers know who we are as well as building that brand. It was a hard sell at the beginning. We spent nine to 12 months on the logo and brands. It was in 2010 that we came up with something that can easily evolve as we evolve. Reflecting who we are and creating an identity was a huge challenge, but worth spending time and money on, especially with how competitive the grocery store market is in California.



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INSPIRED CHICKEN WINGS

Custom sauced with SAUCE CRAFT™ Sauces Buffalo, Cayenne Pepper, Garlic Parmesan, Teriyaki, Honey Sriracha, Sweet Chili, Gochujang Korean Pepper

BLOW TORCHED NY STRIP (11am - 1pm)

Hand torched, Nigiri rice

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Marinated red onions, micro green, smoked salt

PORK BELLY BITES

Pickled onions, roasted chicory slaw, garlic parmesan infused naan





SUZANNE FANNING

Chief Marketing Officer/ Senior Vice President, Dairy Farmers Of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

Q. How has your career evolved over the years?

A. I've led marketing communications for a variety of global consumer packaged goods companies, but I've evolved my career on two key principles. First, you need to have a meaningful brand identity and a set of values that shows what you stand for, and it needs to resonate through every aspect of what your company does. Second, you need to deeply understand your core consumer, whether you are selling beauty items or deli products. If you know who your fans are and why they love you, you can design programs to touch their souls. That's what marketing is about

Q. What positions have you held in industry associations?

A. I've served on the Board of Directors for IDDBA, as Immediate Past President of Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) and on advisory boards for Social Media Week Chicago, iBlog and I-COM.

Q. What is your leadership philosophy?

A. I believe in finding great people, helping them uncover their inner fire and encouraging them to be trailblazers. I like to build a culture of fast-paced creativ-

ity and relentless innovation, where we work hard, celebrate victories together and face failures head on so we can learn from them. Teamwork is everything, and I have a truly brilliant and talented group that inspires me every single day.

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

A. My husband and I just celebrated our 28th anniversary—with a romantic trip to a cheese festival of course! We have two sons—one is currently working on his MBA and the other is an agronomist and artisan maker who recently started his own hard cider business. We also have a daughter who just graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Madison with a degree in biology.

shallow growth initiatives. It's about building a community of cheese lovers, giving them meaningful content to rally around and finding ways to interact with them that's so relevant to their lives that they'll be naturally compelled to share with their social circles. In fact, I surprised the team when I started, by saying I don't care if we grow our number of followers at all. I only wanted to grow our engagement. Are people sharing, are they commenting and does it feel like we are feeding their soul and identity as cheese lovers? Since we took on the new philosophy, we've increased our social engagement by an overwhelming 4,000 percent, and our quality fan base has naturally increased, as well. While we're doing our own consumer social content in-house, we are also moving towards

"If you know who your fans are and why they love you, you can design programs to touch their souls. That's what marketing is about."

Q. What is the best advice you ever received and why?

A. My best career advice came from Chad Vincent, who was CEO at another company I worked for over a decade ago and is now CEO of Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin. He said, "Every day you should do three things—have fun, make an impact and learn something." Those words have served me well personally over the years and helped me realize the importance of keeping my own team happy, productive and inquisitive.

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

A. Very—but social is not about blasting out information to us or getting hordes of people to follow us through sweeps and

more digitally-driven retail promotions by developing larger digital partnerships with key retailers. We're supporting retail marketing teams and their marketing strategies overall by providing them with inspirational content like recipe videos that the retailers can share on their own channels to meet the specific demands of their shoppers, which then leads to more sales. Now we've taken it to the extreme for our uber enthusiasts with an online/offline community called Cheeselandia.

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



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JODY BARRICK

Vice President Of Deli/ Bakery Wholesale Sales, United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI), Providence, RI

Q. How has your career evolved over the years?

A. I started working at a grocery store when I turned 16. I was hired to clean the meat department, but they realized I was too young to tear down saws, so they then moved me to the bakery department. I worked for that owner for the next 18 years through several different remodels and positions. When I left, we had put in a restaurant, deli and bakery, and I loved being part of the change from just a bakery to a full-service deli/bakery in the 18 vears I worked for them. In 2000. I went to work for Supervalu as a deli/bakery specialist in Spokane, WA. I called on independent customers in Washington, Idaho and Montana. I did that until 2006, when I got hired on at Supervalu's corporate office in Minneapolis as a department merchandising manager for the corporate stores we owned at the time. The main focus on the job was to be a liaison to help execute and roll out programs to the 800 bakeries we owned across the company. I did that for just over two years, until the job was eliminated. I then moved to Boise and ran Albertsons deli department for about a year when I was then transferred back to Supervalu's corporate office as bakery director for the corporate stores. Then we were sold back to Albertsons. I went to work for a bakery vendor for eight fun filled months to learn the other side of the business when Supervalu had an opening for a deli/bakery director for the central region. I came back and ran our Central Division. In June of 2017, I was promoted to vice president of bakery/deli and prepared foods for Supervalu, now UNFI

Q. What positions have you held in industry associations?

A. I've been involved with the International Dairy Deli Bakery Association since 2001. I was on the Show and Sell team for 10 years, and now I serve on their board.

Q. What is the best advice you ever received and why?

A. The best advice I received was coming out of retail. I worked for a boss in Spokane, and he told me in this industry nothing is ever black and white. I try to remember that every day. When some-

still have a quick healthy meal solution for their customers. It gives customers the choice to prepare at home with a meal kit or items from the meat department that are prepped and ready to cook; Ready to Enjoy—anything from rotisserie, fried chicken, hot entrées, grab-and-go salads, sandwiches or fresh fruit and veggies. The last one is Heat and Fat, and this is tied mainly around deli prepared foods and produce. An example would be a lasagna entrée to heat at home and paired with a green salad and garlic bread. Consumers can mix and match a rotisserie with some fresh steamable veggies from the produce department. This trend is only going to continue to increase opportunities for the deli department.

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

A. There's been a lot of changes, but the variety and quality of prepared foods

"There's been a lot of changes, but the variety and quality of prepared foods have been the largest change."

one comes to me with an issue or solution, how you handle a situation today can be totally different than how you handle it a week later. Also, always take the time to listen, even when you're busy.

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

A. Prepared foods is still huge, with now a focus on healthy along with all the international flavors. That is why we launched a program two years ago and are continuing to develop and modify our Quick & Easy branded program, which crosses all of fresh departments. It allows our customers to focus on the flavor profiles that fit their demographic area and

have been the largest change, especially with the focus on healthier choices. The one steady thing that has been there since day one is chicken and with the addition of more baked, rotisserie and organic chickens, we now have healthier options for our customers in that category.

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

A. I am single and I have four children and five grandchildren that I love spending time with every opportunity I get.



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MICHELLE BUSTER

Co-founder. Forever Cheese. Long Island City, NY

Q. How has your career evolved over the years?

A. I went to school not knowing what I wanted to do. I always liked languages, but I didn't know how to incorporate them. I went to study in Spain (Valencia), and it was a life changer that opened up possibilities. I love language and people, and being far from home helped me realize that I felt at home there and that I really belonged. Before going back for my last year of college, I went to Italy, fell in love with the language and was determined to learn it my final year of school. Being from Philadelphia, I was a big fan of the Philadelphia Phillies and wanted to work for them. I did marketing study projects for Spectacor (a Philadelphia-based sports and entertainment company) and an internship at the Richmond Coliseum, hoping that would help me get there. I ended up working for a tennis tournament in Philly, the U.S. Pro Indoor, as a communications director. I did this for a year until I finished the tournament and then guit my job and went backpacking in Europe on my way back to find a job in Spain. I started setting up jobs at different tennis tournaments until it actually turned into my job, and I spent the next seven or so years as an independent contractor in sports marketing. It was when I did a World Cup golf tournament in Italy that I met my current partner of today, Pierluigi, and that relationship led me back to the States. We began working together to build his family's cheeses, specifically Fulvi Pecorino Romano, then added a couple other family cheeses: Cacio de Roma and Rustico. When I agreed to help Pierluigi put his family's cheeses on the map, I had one condition—to let me find a great representative of Manchego Cheese to bring to the U.S. once we were successful with his family's cheese. I wanted the American public to fall in love with Spain like I did. My only food background prior to that other than working as a hostess and server in college was at the Olympics organizing a restaurant for NBC. I sourced purveyors. I'm so fortunate to have found two industries that have kept me engaged every day.

Q. What is the best advice you ever received and why?

A. I couldn't have gotten to where I am today without learning from everyone around me. My early cheese history

many women cheesemakers in Italy and Spain until the last few years. Also, mold is ongoing. It should be a plus, but never seems to be. We need to keep going over it. Also, the government changes, like the E. coli regulations have limited us in bringing in great cheeses. FSMA also has made things more difficult, if you want a varied line of products. It's difficult for some producers to do all the paperwork and technical things. You invariably lose the little guys. We consider all producers our family, and don't want to see them go, but sometimes it gets too complicated for

Q. What hobbies do you enjoy outside of work?

A. I like to drink wine, and I just passed the sommelier exam last summer. I love music, live concerts as well as movies, and I just love people and speaking foreign languages. I love fitness—biking, hiking, working out in the gym (my license plate

"I couldn't have gotten to where I am today without learning from everyone around me."

was learning from Pierluigi and his fam- says EXRSIZ) And I have never lost my ily; my immersion was total. It was the thirst for travel. I'm fortunate that I can cheese and Italian culture that came with travel for what I do, but I'm always trying it. I learned about everything, the prod- to fit in new places every year. It can be ucts and the industry. Every single day I challenging. learned, because I didn't know about the industry, which made me interested in focusing on educating myself. The best advice I can give is to always be open and receptive to learning.

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

A. Being a woman in this industry wasn't always the easiest. I was used to that from sports, so I didn't let it deter me. Honestly, I can't remember even seeing





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Ethical Deli Products Prevail

Products that focus on quality, integrity, responsibility and sustainability are the focus for a growing number of consumers

BY JEFFREY SPEAR

American television, and cooking became more approachable, consumers have been looking to improve the ways in which they purchase, prepare and consume food. This has been especially true over the last few decades with the launch of The Food Network, the explosion of reality television featuring food, and online resources talking about every aspect of food.

With all of this in mind, it's no surprise that consumers have become more aware of the ways in which farming and manufacturing of food impacts their health, wellbeing and lifestyle. While they seek out foods that are flavorful and deliver enjoyable and engaging culinary experiences, they are embracing ethical eating—demanding unprecedented levels of quality, integrity, responsibility and sustainability from everyone along the supply chain, including farmers, ingredient suppliers, manufacturers, brand owners and retailers.

Increased Visibility

As a result of these consumer-led pressures, we're seeing increased transparency in operations and significant changes in the way in which food is brought to market and presented within retail settings.

Federally mandated compliance in terms of product identification, nutrition facts and ingredients continue to be updated and adjusted to better align with emerging health science and consumer preferences. We are also seeing significant changes in the way producers communicate features and benefits associated with their products. While they have successfully relied on subjective claims, such as "100% Natural," "Authentic" and "Artisanal" for years, veri-

ver since Julia Child appeared on fiable certifications including "OU Kosher" and "Certified Organic" have contributed to their credibility. Products defined as "locally-sourced" or "Made in the U.S." have also been well received. The standards for excellence, especially when it comes to deli meats, are now considerably more advanced.

> placement of sales statements that describe products as free from hormones, antibiotics and GMOs

Animal Welfare

In the wake of exposés, including the film "Food Inc," Jonathan Foer's book "Eating Animals" and growing pressure from animal rights and environmental groups, consumers have become increasingly concerned about animal welfare and the impact of large scale, industrialized food production on the environment.

There was alarm among consumers when Hormel acquired Bridgewater Township, NJ-based Applegate in 2015. The good news, according to Beth Deegan, Applegate's director of brand management, is that "Applegate did not sell out, but Hormel bought in."

Ouercia Cured Meats, based in Norwalk, IA. has additional concerns "Here in Iowa. the farms and the animals are our neighbors. We see the ill effects of CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation) production on the land and water."

American-Humane. According to which advocates for the health and safety of animals, less than 10 percent of Americans trust corporations to do the right thing. This is especially true for Millennials, the most influential buying force in the U.S.

Born between 1977 and 2000, these individuals are expecting greater transparency from manufacturers, foods that are organic, locally sourced and sustainable, and are willing to pay more.

Verifying Practices

Recognizing these dynamics, a growing The most apparent is the prominent number of farmers, producers and marketers have adopted the Five Freedoms outlined by American Humane (described as the gold standard of animal welfare) and are embracing third-party certifications that verify humane treatment of animals on the farm—from birth all the way through to handling and slaughter at meat processing facilities. The most widely accepted of these certifications are "Animal Welfare Approved (AWA)," "Certified Humane" and "Global Animal Partnership (GAP)."

Third-party verification and certification for many of the issues associated with environmental responsibility and the humane treatment of animals did not come into use until recently. The Certified Humane program was unveiled by Humane Farm Animal Care in 2003, the Non-GMO Project started in 2007, GAP in 2008 and AWA in 2014. While all of these cer-Kathy Eckhouse, co-owner of La tifying organizations are making headway, and consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their importance, they still have a long way to go.

For companies such as Niman Ranch in Westminster, CO; Salt Lake City, UT-based Creminelli, Applegate and La Ouercia, the notion of quality, integrity, sustainability and humane treatment of animals is nothing new. Having embraced these practices as an essential part of their operations, these brands have become distinguished advocates.

Niman Ranch has a clearly defined mission that ensures its products are always all natural and the animals are always humanely raised on environmentally-sustainable ranches. The company also participates in the Certified Humane program and proudly displays this certificate on the front of every product.

According to Russ Smoke, vice president of prepared meats at Niman Ranch, "We pay for 100 percent of our farmers to be certified. We're very appreciative of our third party certifiers, partners, farmers and ranchers, who all work together to make us the best we can be." From a qualitative perspective, Smoke adds "Animals raised with care on sustainable farms yield the highest quality meat. You can tell the difference. The quality translates into fantastic finished cooked and smoked products."

At Creminelli, producers of noteworthy artisan salami, a similar philosophy prevails. According to Chris Bowler, CEO and founder "The best quality finished products start with humanely-treated animals raised on family farms. In contrast to industrialized brands that rely upon conventionally-raised animals, our meats are well-marbled, allowing them to age properly and yield a consistently flavorful finished product."

Advocating the Cause

In order to effectively inform and educate consumers about the efforts being made to improve the quality, integrity and healthfulness of deli meats, there are tremendous opportunities for issue advocacy. Considering that many responsibly-produced deli products are found in self-serve refrigerated cases and hang wall displays adjacent to the service counter, the depth of information that can be displayed in this space is limited, relying on the buyer to pick up and inspect individual packages that may or may not have vital information included on their labels. When it comes to the service counter, there is little evidence that advocacy for ethical eating is taking place at all, either through staff insights, signage or handout literature.

Healthy food retailers, such as Whole Foods, Sprouts Farmers Market, Earth Fare and Lucky's Market, are some of the most visible advocates for ethical eating. That being said, meaningful depth of information and links to third-party resources is not available at the deli counter. For consumers eager to obtain product-related information, they must seek out and visit ences and culinary trends is nothing new

supermarket and manufacturer websites or follow these organizations on social media.

Earth Fare's website proclaims, "We are passionate about healthy meat raised by farmers dedicated to sustainable agricultural practices that support the health of the animal and our environment. Because every purchase of sustainably-farmed meat is a vote in support of family farms, humanely-treated animals and good health." Similarly, the Lucky's Market website states. "Through a variety of partnerships, we support the conservation and restoration of our local environment. We

to Applegate. Deegan explains, "We're constantly watching for emerging culinary trends, looking for those things that will better align with our customer's lifestyle."

As part of their effort to satisfy growing demand for both convenience and snackability, Applegate has just launched a new line of snacking products. One of the more distinctive is their Charcuterie Plate, containing uncured Genoa salami, Cheddar, roasted salted almonds and dark chocolate chunks. La Quercia has also responded with their pre-sliced Ridgetop Prosciutto Piccante rubbed with fennel and red chili.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CREMINELL

foster support for local farmers and producers by promoting the sale of their products."

From a manufacturing perspective, savvy producers understand that, while communicating their humane treatment of animals and responsible stewardship of the land is important, the larger issue is delivering excellent food experiences and catering to the lifestyle preferences of their customers. The good news is that ethical deli brands are paying attention to consumer trends and preferences and have responded remarkably well.

Staying abreast of consumer prefer-

For everyone along the supply chain, there are untapped opportunities to advocate the benefits of ethical eating leading up to, and including, the point of sale. Creminelli's Bowler suggests, "We believe the industry has to move towards, and eventually align its practices with, humanely-raised animals and environmental stewardship." In the meantime, and through third-party verification, adherence to governmental mandates, and actions that respond appropriately to evolving consumer preferences that favor better quality foods and healthier lifestyles, there are plenty of ways to keep the ball rolling. DB

Mediterranean Foods Still A Category Leader

Interest in healthy regional cuisine is growing

BY BOB JOHNSON

editerranean remains a key area of the deli, and one reason is the foods. while delicious and good for you, are also often associated with Old World local culinary traditions going back centuries.

Many of the most familiar items the staples. have names that include a town or region that have become familiar to the main- and run importer that started with a handstream largely through the deli.

"Parmigiano Reggiano and Pecorino Romano are still our strongest selling items

in the cheese category; Prosciutto di Parma and Prosciutto di San Daniele in the cured meats category; seafood salad and octopus salad in the seafood category and Kalamata, Cerignola and Castelvetrano in the olive category," says Joe Macaluso, buyer at Musco Food, Maspeth, NY, as he recounts

Musco is a 93-year-old family-owned ful of Italian cured meats and cheeses, but now possesses a product portfolio of 1,600 items from around the world.

"In general, we feel that Mediterranean cuisine offers so many options, since it encompasses so many countries and regions within these countries," says Macaluso, "Each has their own unique individual culture, traditions and cuisine. not to mention the varietals of the raw products. As an example, the olives from Sicily are much different than those grown in Apuli. Therefore, the olive oil is different and even the dishes prepared with these oils are, therefore, affected."

While many Mediterranean foods come



with stories going back centuries, one Middle Eastern enterprise offers a line of products that are in high demand.

"The story behind our products has become more attractive; Arab and Jewish women in Israel working together to build bridges and create social impact on their societies," says Hadas Lahav, who serves as CEO at Sindyanna of Galilee. "International awards for our olive oils, including 'one of the 100 top olive oils in the world' in Evoleum 2018, have placed Sindyanna's olive oil among the best and most premium olive oil on the shelves."

Sindyanna sells its prize-winning olive oils, herb mixes and honey through Amazon, Fairway Markets and fair trade groups, like Ten Thousand Villages and Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap.

Interest in foods and flavors from intriguing locales around the world, including the Mediterranean, continues to gain traction in the deli.

"There is an influx of unique flavors within the snacking segment, representing the growing multicultural influence," according to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's in Store 2018. "Innovative flavors like lamb Feta or pineapple curry incorporate popular concepts from both Mediterranean- and

Asian-inspired cuisine."

The supermarket deli does well to offer enough variety in the Mediterranean program to give consumers choices in both flavors and localities.

"Within our offerings, we have a wide range of flavors and textures that are suitable for a multitude of applications—eaten alone, mixed into recipes, atop pizza or on sandwiches and paninis," advises Macaluso. "We've seen an increase of sales and popularity of mortadella, which once was considered ethnic Italian and is now being received by a broader customer base. Certainly the quality of the product and the recipe of spices used is very important to that success. We carry several brands, including Levoni, Negroni and, of course, Vantia, each having a unique recipe and flavor profile."

The Olive Bar Anchor

A well-stocked self-service olive bar continues to serve as the gateway to deli Mediterranean food programs.

"Olive bars are still the number one way to merchandise and gain the largest weekly sales," says Giuliana Pozzuto, director of marketing at DeLallo Foods, based in Jeanette, PA. "However, to reach a broader audience, we have created more ways to merchandise olive bars and fix-

tures within a smaller footprint—this, of course, needs to be relevant to today's smaller store formats. Still, the olive bars are king and continue to help drive specialty cheese sales."

George DeLallo began selling Italian grocery items door-to-door in immigrant neighborhoods of Western Pennsylvania in the 1940s and established the grocery store in Jeanette with his wife Madeline in 1954.

The store grew to become national supplier DeLallo Foods, and along the way pioneered in the development of the olive and antipasti bar as a staple in U.S. delis.

"The olive bar encourages customers to try new things and be more adventurous," says Pozzuto. "The best way to offer up their favorite Mediterranean goodies is on a supermarket deli's self-service olive bar with the addition of olives and antipasti packaged in-line with specialty cheeses. The packaged items are vital for the graband-go consumer who might also need a little pairing inspiration that can be best accomplished via cross merchandising."

Some suppliers see, along with continued popularity of the olive bar, increased potential for packaged versions of higher end olives.

"As we see a change in consumer demands, we will soon offer a comprehensive selection of Mediterranean olives in a



pre-packed/shelf-stable format under the Vantia brand," says Macaluso. "Olive bars and olives sold from behind the glass in the deli are certainly still popular. In addition, we also offer a range of jarred olives under the Vantia brand, Italian olives and Iliada Greek olives, brands."

An ever more vibrant olive and antipasti program can open the door to a flourishing Mediterranean section of the deli.

"With the overall increase in the popularity of Mediterranean cuisine. olives and antipasti are at the top of their game," says Pozzuto. "As experts in the category, we are constantly innovating the Mediterranean food items in our olive and antipasti programs for both self-service bars and packaged goods. By studying consumer trends and monitoring the social media buzz, we have in-depth insight into what consumers are after. In response to trending world flavors and dynamic cuisines, we are exploring more regional-specific flavors and recipes, focusing on unique spices for single olive varieties and new antipasto salads with unique value-added components."

Variety Spices the Section

There are certain items that any well-stocked deli must always have in its Mediterranean section.

"Staple items include olives, cheeses, marinated vegetables like artichokes and peppers, cured meats and more," savs Pozzuto. "We make it easy to cross merchandise antipasti items with deli complements by packaging over 36 of our top-selling items in our SQF-certified USA facility. These grab-and-go solutions are ready to sell, no labor required, for repacking at the store level. For example, we include specialty meze items like our stuffed grape leaves and seasoned Kalamata olives, items that are ready to pair up with classics like Feta and Kasseri from the deli's specialty cheese case. Retailers can showcase them for simple pairing inspiration or as gourmet accompaniments to cheese boards and charcuterie plates."

While high-quality standard items are always important, new and exciting offerings keep Mediterranean adventurous.

"There are always new and exciting developments regarding products from the Mediterranean," says Macaluso. "We are launching several varieties of pitted olives—Cerignola from Italy, Atlas from Greece and Domat from Turkey, each with a different and unique flavor profile. We will also offer pre-sliced coppa piancintina,

An ever more vibrant olive and antipasti program can open the door to a flourishing Mediterranean section of the deli.

which is the most recent deli meat permissible to import from Italy. We are anticipating the launch of the Veroni Italian panini sandwich, which uses authentic focaccia from Naples, Italy."

Meats from old and interesting places can be a magnet for the entire deli Mediterranean section.

"We sell a tremendous variety and volume of deli meats that are imported from Italy and Spain," says Macaluso. "Prosciutto di Parma, Prosciutto di San Daniele, culatello, prosciutto cotto, mortadella, smoked pancetta, various regional salami and speck, all from Italy. Serrano ham and chorizo from Spain are certainly great selling items for us."

In addition to olive oil from Galilee, Sindyanna also offers crafted honey and herb products from the region.

"Sindyanna's zaatar mix is drawing interest all over the world," says Lahav. "Grown in the Galilee and mixed in Sindyanna's warehouse, our zaatar herb mix is loved by growing circles of foodies."

Future Possibilities

Some suppliers see possibilities for Mediterranean foods that offer a broader range of flavor profiles.

"It appears hot and spicy, which was often associated with other cuisines, are now being associated with certain regions within the Mediterranean," says Macaluso. "We have seen sales increase in our red pepper primo sale. We will soon introduce moliterno pepato, black peppercorns from Central Formaggi, and they will begin producing moliterno peperoncino, red Calabrian pepper, soon. Strong and vibrant flavors are also popular, such as truffle and wine infused."

One reason to be optimistic about the future of the Mediterranean section is that these foods seem to have gained traction among the next generation of consumers.

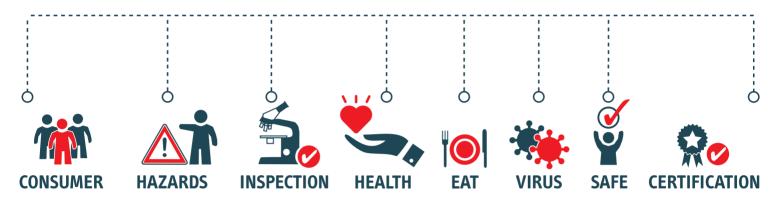
"Who doesn't love Mediterranean food? Though everyone seems to really enjoy olives and antipasti, Millennials are a demographic that really drives the spike in popularity these days," says Pozzuto. "They are interested in unique spices and truly ethnic flavors from all over the world. A simple pitted olive amps up the excitement when it's marinated in an authentic spice with a food story to tell. For the Millennial, olives and antipasti are more than snacking and entertaining items, they have made the olive bar a destination for upgrading grain bowls and grain salads, pasta dishes, kale salads and more. Our social media is rich with these types of recipes, and we have tons of engagement when we post these topics."

Creative Displays

When creatively displayed, the variety of foods from different locales on the Mediterranean can create a unique destination within the market.

"These foods can stand alone in their respective departments based on their categories or as we often suggest in the 'Mediterranean Store within a Store' concept for supermarket chains," advises Macaluso, "We feel these products reach nearly every demographic, since there is something for everyone. Let's use cheese as an example; we have a wide variety of cheeses for nearly every flavor profile. Italian cheeses, as an example, are usually considered strong, sharp and flavorful, which often are well-received by a more mature consumer who might appreciate pairing these cheeses with wines, yet we sell a cheese called primo sale, which is not well known in the general trade, vet is the perfect introduction of Italian cheeses to the younger consumer. It has a smooth, milky flavor that is great as a snack. I predict primo sale is now ready to make its way into the mainstream supermarkets."

KEPING FOOD SAFETY AT THE FOREFRONT



With heightened awareness of food safety in today's deli departments, it pays to look at the big picture and learn about the latest methods being used to minimize foodborne illness outbreaks

BY LISA WHITE

he statistics are sobering. Listeriosis, a serious infection usually caused by eating food contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes (Lm), causes about 1,600 illnesses, 1,500 hospitalizations and 260 deaths in the U.S. annually, according to the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS). Although it is rare, its fatality rate is about 16 percent, compared to 0.5 percent for Salmonella and E. coli.

Lm is a bacterium that is found in moist environments, soil and decaying vegetation and can persist along the food continuum.

Transfer of the bacteria from the environment (e.g., deli cases, slicers and utensils), employees or raw food products is a particular hazard of concern in readyto-eat foods, including both meat and poultry products.

"Given the complexity of operations and high-risk products involved, delis require a risk-based audit approach that can identify and prioritize food safety hazards," says Rade Jankovic, senior account

manager of retail and retail services at Alexandria, VA-based NSF International. "NSF International has been conducting risk-based audits of supermarket delis for many years and also has extensive experience in conducting risk assessments and food safety gap analyses of deli operations as well as HACCP plans and SOP development to help retailers build their food safety programs."

To implement a successful food safety program, supermarket delis must first identify potential food safety hazards in the operation, then develop policies and procedures to address these hazards and establish active managerial controls that call for a proactive approach to the program, according to FSIS.

Implementing proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures and training staff must be accompanied by a myriad of other key procedures, such as the establishment of process flows to prevent cross contamination between raw meats and ready-to-eat foods during preparation and

storage, adequate product temperature controls, equipment maintenance as well as daily supervision of staff to ensure adherence to food safety policies and procedures.

The Basics

While the new menu labeling regulations and their impact on retailers have been publicized widely, food safety and sanitation-specific regulations have not changed in the last year.

However, it should be noted that due to the heightened concerns associated with Listeria monocytogenes in ready-to-eat deli foods, FSIS has been conducting on-going surveillance of retail delis to assess how closely retailers follow its guidance document on controlling Listeria.

Since the study began in 2016, results have shown a continued increase in retailers following recommendations from the guidance document.

According to FSIS, effective food safety sanitation in delis requires a comprehensive approach that includes proper product



handling, cleaning procedures, temperature controls, preventive maintenance, cross contamination prevention, employee health and practices as well as appropriate training at the store level.

Furthermore, to control Listeria and other pathogens in the deli environment, it is essential that food equipment, such as slicers, be fully disassembled during cleaning and sanitizing, all surfaces be thoroughly scrubbed during cleaning to prevent biofilm formation and that cross contamination from raw meats, unsanitary items and employee practices be prevented, according to FSIS.

Removing standing water and proper date marking of products that support bacterial growth are also important in controlling Listeria.

While practical, environmental testing, such as ATP testing or rapidly measuring actively growing microorganisms through microbiology techniques, could be considered as a way to augment the sanitation program, it must be based on a well-thought-out sampling plan, according to the FSIS.

Creating the Culture

As the complexity and extent of food preparation in retail delis increasingly resembles that of full-service restaurants, it is essential that deli operators conduct a risk assessment of their processes before

expanding their menu offerings to ensure the existing facilities and resources can accommodate the added burden imposed by the addition of new products in a way that ensures their safety, recommends the FSIS.

It is important for leaders to establish a food safety culture as a key prerequisite for a successful training program.

While sales and customer service are essential to the success of any business, these should not be achieved at the expense of food safety, and this message should be shared with the entire team, the FSIS recommends.

The food safety program can be successful only if every team member from the sandwich maker to the executive stays engaged in the food safety effort. When the deli is at its busiest, the food safety program must be at its best.

"Delis present challenges, since the healthier the food, the more susceptible it is to pathogen growth," says Dr. Hilary S. Thesmar, vice president of food safety at the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), based in Arlington, VA. "That's why deli and fresh departments are so focused on food safety."

High protein and moisture contribute to food safety issues, so FMI has focused on minimizing foodborne illnesses through multiple channels and audiences.

"We work with retailers on in-store food safety programs, as it's important to be

aligned on best science and have consistent protocol nationwide to ensure products are safe," says Thesmar.

Although regulations depend on a store's jurisdiction, state codes prevail over FDA food codes.

"If products are prepared in a commissary or central kitchen, this is under a federal jurisdiction and must follow the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)," says Thesmar. "These are for facilities not located adjacent to retail establishments."

FMI offers its Safe Mark, training program for those managing food safety programs as well as food handler training for those working with food.

"These programs train employees on preventing contamination and how to know when things go wrong," says Thesmar. "These are essential components for store employees."

State health officials also are willing to help deli operators with food safety.

"Retailers can reach out to food companies directly for assistance and advice, as well," says Thesmar.

FMI also has a Listeria action plan available to its members and the public on its website and works closely with the FSIS to communicate with the deli industry on Listeria control.

A Game Changer

There has been much innovation in recent years in the area of food safety when it comes to identifying pathogens, tracing their origin and finding patterns of food illness outbreaks.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control's (CDC) PulseNet system isolated organisms from specimens of those with suspected foodborne illness and entered these into a database to separate the type of pathogen. Because the exact pathogen was able to be identified, patterns of illness outbreaks could be found.

"This was helpful in shortening the speed in which outbreaks were identified," says Marty Mitchell, technical director at the Marietta, GA-based Refrigerated Foods Association.

Whole Genome Sequencing, or WGS, has accelerated the process of identifying foodborne illness outbreaks. With this process, scientists can look at the whole genome makeup or sequence of bacteria and have a very reliable fingerprint.

"We can reduce the number of people getting sick with each outbreak, since it can be stopped faster with information disseminated quicker," says Mitchell. "We can track or implicate a deli from a swab at a health agency months later. It's no different than getting a fingerprint off a gun and implicating someone for a crime years later."

Every time a case of foodborne illness is diagnosed, the public health agencies are on the hunt to find the source. This is where WGS has been instrumental.

"Twenty years ago, public health labs used pulse field gel electrofreezes," says Craig Hedberg, professor in the division of environmental health and former epidemiologist at the University of Minnesota. "Chopped up DNA chunks arrayed themselves and formed a pattern characteristic of the isolate."

By comparing these patterns, scientists could see which ones were related and identify an outbreak pattern.

"This was successful, but a crude technique, since it didn't tell us what was going on with the chunks of DNA," says Hedberg. "WGS goes beyond that to reconstitute the genetic sequence of the organism. The cost and speed have gone down so much that we can do this on a tify previously unrecognized food vehicles," routine basis"

The technique is used to link individual cases together and identify clusters.

WGS has been used for Listeria for awhile now, but just recently is being implemented for Salmonella and E. coli, which are more common.

"WGS also allows us to go back and compare clinical isolates with environmental or food isolates from food processing plants," says Hedberg. "It is more accurate and provides us with a lot of information about the isolates."

WGS has been used for Listeria for awhile now, but just recently is being implemented for Salmonella and E. coli, which are more common.

"This method also may help us idensays Hedberg. "What's important is we recognize outbreaks will happen despite our best efforts, and this gives us better tools so the industry can work to provide new solutions for better prevention methods."

Re-enforcing food safety policies and procedures through on-going training and daily monitoring of employee practices cannot be overstated, FSIS emphasizes. Food handling in a retail deli poses numerous challenges that, if not managed properly, could lead to serious consequences with public health implications.

Given the high employee turn-over rates in the industry, efforts to properly train new employees and re-enforce the food safety knowledge of experienced employees must be viewed as a daily necessity.

GET EDUCATED:

FSIS is conducting surveillance and outreach to educate retail delis in ways to better control Lm.

FSIS investigators complete the ready-to-eat (RTE) retail deli tool, a guestionnaire in FSIS' web-based inspection application, Public Health Information System (PHIS), to assist the investigator in comparing the practices observed in retail delis with best practices. FSIS investigators observe product handling, cleaning and sanitizing, facility and equipment controls, and employee practices. FSIS investigators also discuss observations with the firm's management.

In addition, if investigators observe conditions that may cause adulteration or misbranding to an FSIS regulated product, they have the authority to detain the affected product. FSIS investigators would also document and refer the facility conditions to the appropriate state or local authority that regulates delis.

On November 28, 2018, FSIS issued a Federal Register Notice (FRN), Seeking Stakeholder Input on Federal Outreach to Control Listeria monocytogenes (Lm) at Retail announcing that the agency, in coordination with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), planned to conduct focus groups to gather feedback about the usefulness of existing outreach materials to retail delicatessens. Some of the members of the focus groups will include stakeholders from industry, state and local public health and agriculture departments, and retail delicatessens. FSIS continues to work closely with FDA, CDC and state and local authorities.

FSIS has identified the following eight recommendations in the FSIS Retail Lm Guidance as the most important actions that retailers can take to protect public health:

- 1. Eliminate visibly adulterated product present in the retail
- 2. Refrigerate ready-to-eat (RTE) meat or poultry products promptly after use.
- 3. Do not prepare, hold or store RTE meat or poultry products near or directly adjacent to raw products in the deli case or elsewhere in the deli area.
- 4. Cover, wrap or otherwise protect all opened RTE meat or poultry products when not in use to prevent cross contamination.
- 5. Ensure that insanitary conditions (e.g., flies, rodent droppings, mold or dirty surfaces) are not present where RTE meat and poultry products are prepared, packed and held.
- 6. Clean and sanitize equipment used to process RTE products at least every four hours.
- 7. Eliminate facility conditions in the deli area or storage area that could cause the products to become adulterated (e.g., condensation dripping on exposed product, construction dust or broken equipment).
- 8. Require deli employees handling RTE products to wear disposable gloves. DB

Bread Helps Carry the Deli



Deli bread has become more diverse to accommodate upscale and unique meats and cheeses

BY HOWARD RIELL

pecialty breads sold in supermarket delis—pitas, flatbreads, artisan breads, naan, wraps, specialty buns, gluten-free varieties and more—usually aren't destina-

handled correctly.

With attractive displays, smart cross merchandising and inventive menu ideas,

fresh, delicious breads can help invite shoppers to sample the deli department's many wares.

The quality and variety of specialty deli breads has never been better. For example:

* Backerhaus Veit Ltd. in Ontario, But they can still help drive sales when Canada, boasts an extensive line of artisan breads, including craft breads, panini, delicatessen breads, specialty and fruit breads, baguettes and dietetic/lifestyle breads. All

are prepared with naturally-aged dough using bromate-free flour and naturally cultivated sours. No artificial colors or flavorings are added, and they are baked in stone hearth ovens.

* Boulart, based in Quebec, Canada, states its philosophy clearly: "Keep your fluff. Because we believe that less is more. No additives. No added sugar. No GMOs. Sometimes saying no can be a good thing."



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Its line includes baguettes, dinner rolls, loaves, focaccia, bites, burger buns, fougasses, submarine, demi-baguettes and sandwich buns.

* ACE Bakery Ltd. in Ontario, Canada, produces a line of high-quality baguettes, loaves, buns, rolls, bagels and more. Behind the tag line "Only the simplest, premium ingredients," it makes a strong case to consumers looking for all-natural products. "No preservatives. Ever. Flour, Water, Salt, Yeast...we only use ingredients you can pronounce and can find in your home. No preservatives. No enzymes. That's all that goes into our remarkable bread."

"Deli breads can be best merchandised as providing full sandwiches or accompaniments to meals, (both) lunch and dinner," says Karen Toufayan, vice president of marketing and sales at Toufayan Bakeries, based in Orlando, FL. "Thus, deli cheeses, meats and hummus can provide excellent cross merchandising opportunities and make this section a total meal destination."

Retailers will benefit most, says Toufayan, from a display that shows a

"Deli breads can be best merchandised as providing full sandwiches or accompaniments to meals."

— Karen Toufayan, Toufayan Bakeries

complete meal "consisting of the various items found in the deli section." She recommends that operators "play up either the breads" exotic flair, with for example naan or brioche, or the health benefits the breads offer, including non-GMO, organic and gluten-free varieties."

Since retailers are competing with other outlets offering meal solutions, Toufayan adds, "use the breadth of the deli offer-

ings for exciting, new, different meal solutions that are easy to prepare. Also, since a number of breads offer 'healthier' alternatives—such as all-natural, organic, gluten-free, non-GMO—you can attract consumers looking for these options that other meal outlets do not offer."

Opportunity and Change

Warren Stoll, marketing director for





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Kontos Foods, Inc. in Paterson, NJ, says panini breads are the dominant trend in supermarket delis at present. "Flatbreads in general, and breads that have grill marks on them to mimic a panini, are absolutely there. You see them stacked along the glass near the pre-made sandwiches to get people through lunch quickly."

While trends are, of course, important, Stoll points out that in the deli "some things probably haven't changed. I am a big fan of delis, whether they be in the supermarket or independent. Of course you can always get white, rye, wheat, round rolls, long rolls, etc."

What the best deli departments do, Stoll says, is display their wares almost theatrically. "You can see many a glass counter, and a lot of delis lay out meats and cheeses with salads that they make. They make a beautiful fresh array every day of what is there, and then next to that you can see an array of pre-made sandwiches."

Retailers know that when people come

"Artisan breads represent an opportunity that too few retailers take advantage of."

— Warren Stoll, Kontos Foods

in during the day, they are often "looking to have lunch on the go or to sit in the park. They want to be in and out quickly, and the stores want to get them in and out quickly. So they pre-make things often for just that day, and they arrange it so nicely next to everything else that they have so you can't miss it; it looks very appetizing."

Artisan breads represent an opportunity that, according to Stoll, too few retailers take advantage of: "I don't know that I have

seen too many deli counters advertising artisan breads as artisan breads."

Another major force in supermarket delis continues to be easily handheld foods, most notably sandwiches, Stoll notes. "Things that you can walk around with, that you don't have to sit to eat with a fork and a knife, are definitely there."

Stoll says the best items to cross merchandise with are the obvious ones. "If the bread is going to be used to make the



sandwich, the items that I have always seen cross-referenced would be the salads, like coleslaw and potato salad, along with pickles or any kind of pickled vegetable, whether it be cabbage or pickled green tomatoes. Even potato chips and other snacks; anything that would go with a sandwich at lunch, right next to it."

The Great Thing

Supermarket deli shoppers "usually find a mix of specialty breads, such as flatbreads and ethnic breads, plus more traditional breads, like sandwich rolls," notes Jenni Bonsignore, marketing manager for Valley Lahvosh Baking Co., based in Fresno, CA.

What Bonsignore calls "the great thing about the deli section" is that it "perfectly lends itself to cross merchandising opportunities. We make Lahvosh crackers that are a perfect carrier for cheeses and spreads as well as a 15-inch Lahvosh Round that is a healthier option for pizza crust. Most of the ingredients you would need for hors d'oeuvres or pizzas can be found in the deli, so it's an easy match to merchandise the ingredients with the bread."

Showing the bread with compatible ingredients, possibly with a recipe or serving suggestions, is "a great way to entice customers to purchase multiple deli items," Bonsignore has found over the years. "You want to make it easy for the consumer to see the possibilities for combining it all into a meal."

Bonsignore calls for creative displays, recipes and "continuing to offer a wider variety of breads," which she points out "are all positives. Consumers are more adventurous and willing to try new varieties and flavors. At the same time, they want information about the food they buy—especially if it helps make their menu planning easier."

Front and Center

Jim Viti, vice president of sales, marketing and product development for Delorio Foods, Inc. in Utica, NY, suggests that flatbreads and specialty breads "can take front and center in the deli to entice the consumer with new ideas for meal planning that can be out of the ordinary."

Menu ideas that shoppers can download on their phones or take with them is one way of spurring sales. So, says Viti, is having "easy grab-and-go placement of all the components that tie into the bread item being promoted."

What Viti judges to be a good bread

display in delis is one that offers "fresh presentation and enticing graphics," which he insists are key for impulse sales and meal-time ideas. As for packaging innovation, he cites clean-label presentation on the front of the package and "easier to understand claims for fiber, protein, etc."

Operators should find and generate ideas and promotions that tie into the product itself, says Viti, "and the ideas should be only for a limited time so they

don't become stale; every week, if possible. They should tie into the seasonal planogram."

The bottom line, says Viti, is that generating a crisp bread business out of the produce department requires "nothing terribly new—fresh, clean, organized, simple to understand and easy for the time-compromised consumer."

Opportunities abound for bread in the supermarket deli.

DB



AN ANCIENT FOOD WITH MODERN DRAW

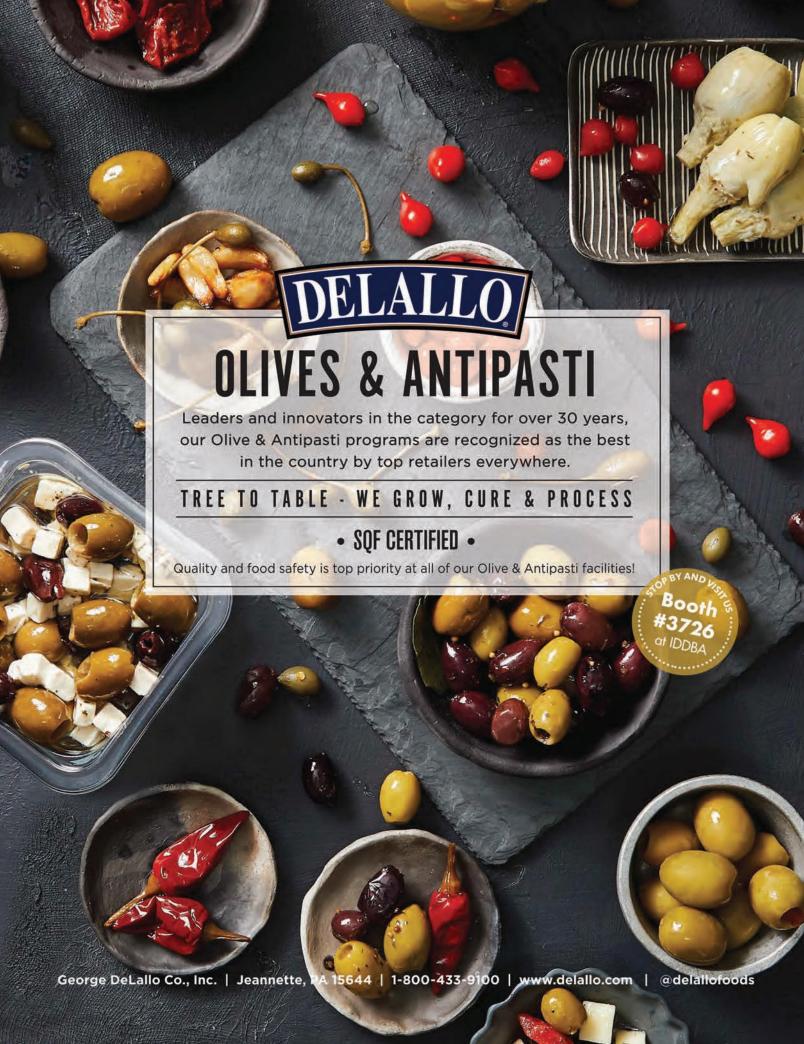


lives are one of the world's most ancient foods. Olive trees are some of the oldest trees ever harvested by humans, a practice

some were green, some were black, some were pitted, and the best ones were pimento-stuffed...and that was the end of the story.

Today, there's a wider variety of olives available than ever before—a great thing for supermarkets and delis. Fun fact: olives are fruits, not veggies. They're a specific kind of fruit called a "drupe," with a single large stone inside. But unlike, say, peaches and plums, olives are full of the compound oleuropein, which make them incredibly bitter. Tasting an uncured olive is not a very pleasant experience. That's why olives are cured before they're ready to be sold with water, lye (in big commercial operations), a brine or even the sunshine.

Because olives get their unique color, flavor, shape and texture from their genetics, their region and climate, and how they were harvested and cured, there are a huge number of possibilities. Factor in marinating, seasoning and stuffing olives, and the list just gets longer. Olives provide big pops of flavor that are indispensable for cooks, snackers and entertainers alike. Olives add briny, complex flavors to salads, pizza, pasta and beyond.





As customers seek wholesome, "real" foods, olives fit the bill. They are packed with healthy monounsaturated fatty acids. associated with decreased risk of heart disease, reduced risk of chronic disease, lower blood pressure and more far-reaching health benefits. Plus, these healthy fats may also aid in weight loss. Olives are also rich in polyphenols, which fight oxidative stress and may protect against diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol. And they're full of Vitamins A and E. As the Mediterranean diet, with a focus on fresh fruits and veggies, legumes and healthy fats, becomes more popular, so do olives, a Mediterranean staple increasingly popular in the U.S.

A Lucrative Business

Olive and antipasti bars bring the Mediterranean experience to life with vibrant colors and flavors on eye-catching display, and they are often a top-selling product for any specialty or deli department.

David Dottorini, who heads up the export office at Italy's Ficacci Olive Co., emphasizes the many benefits of bulk

olives. "The bulk-sized range provides counters loaded with yummy olives, either plain or garnished with recipes offered from the Italian tradition, thus bringing taste and assortment to food counters, saving time, reducing waste and, most importantly, arranging a catchy deli display with a balanced assortment both in flavors and in colors with great sales turnover," he says.

To break it down, the self-serve, mixand-match components of an olive bar means customers can try something new without committing to a whole jar from the grocery aisle. Stores can buy in bulk, which keeps costs down. Customers can buy as much or little as they like, which makes the experience feel personalized. These bulk olive are usually of higher quality—and price—than the pasteurized olives sold in the grocery aisle in glass jars or tin cans.

The olive bar is such a lucrative, popular choice it has expanded to include non-olive options, from cherry red South African peppadew peppers to Roman-style artichokes to cippollini onions marinated in balsamic vinegar to marinated Mozzarella and Feta. The deli olive bar differs from the

grocery aisle in another way, too; with its bright colors and cornucopia of options, it feels like a destination.

"Today, the ubiquitous olives serve as both a cultural staple and a gourmet specialty," says Patty Amato, senior vice president at Farm Ridge Foods, based in Islandia, NY.

Olives in attractive displays "look more fresh and of higher quality, which allows margins to be higher," according to María Becerra, a representative from the Trade Commission of Spain in New York City. Yet the need for constant rotation and supervision—to make sure kids don't put their hand in the olive jar, for example—means more time, training and attention are required at the store level.

Well-trained staff can help educate customers and sell product. Deli teams should be well-versed in maintenance, display and proper opening and closing procedures. They should also be familiar with the taste and usage for each olive variety.

But the olive bar is not the end of the conversation. Snack packs in individual-sized containers are having a bit of a moment, as are larger pouches of

resealable packs. "The classic stand-up packaging dating from the '60s is experiencing an incredible rebound," states Dottorini. Ficacci has a new line of six SKUs, packed in a protective atmosphere with no preservatives. "Look and quality, with an eye to price, are the keystones of this brand-new range," he says. Another innovation that makes snack packs more appealing is the new brine-free offerings, which means no mess and no oily residue on snackers' hands.

Popular Varieties

Which olives are the most popular? "Pitted Kalamata olives, pitted green olives, stuffed olives and olive salads are the staples for the supermarket deli olive bar," Amato weighs in. The Kalamata, sometimes called the black pearl of Greek olives, is a versatile bestseller.

The most popular Italian olive worldwide is the green Castelvetrano from Sicily. Amazingly crunchy, green due to an early harvest with a buttery taste and a low salt content, it's easy to see why. Other popular varieties include the Bella di Cerignola from Italy's Puglia region, well known for having a huge size and being the first Italian olive sold in the U.S. and the Nyon, petite, jet-black olives from the south of France. More olive bar staples include the Nicoise. a crucial ingredient in the classic dishes of vors of olives, seasoned with herbs and serious draw for customers.

Most olives for sale domestically are imported from Spain, Italy, Greece, Tunisia and Mexico.

the French Riviera; dry-cured and flavorful Moroccan olives named Beldi; small, purplish-brown, wrinkled olives from Puglia called Gaeta: and Mission olives, which are from America.

Speaking of domestic olives. Mission olive trees have flourished in California since the 1700's: most of the yield goes to make olive oil, but black oil-cured and green brine-cured table Mission olives are both mild, grassy and bright in flavor. California is the only state in the U.S. that commercially produces olives. Most olives for sale domestically are imported from Spain, Italy, Greece, Tunisia and Mexico. Spain accounts for 87 percent of olive

Customers are eager to try new fla-

spices or "other ingredients like carrots, peppers, sundried tomatoes and cheese," says Becerra. "Stuffed olives and unique varieties are increasingly popular. There is innovation in the category of stuffed olives from Spain, including anchovies, lemon, tuna, salmon, piquillo pepper," as well as creative blends of flavors and seasoning, from gazpacho to Provencal.

From dry pack to glass jars, tins, pouch packs and plastic cups, the methods used to pack and transport olives are numerous. This rich variety of olives lends itself to natural cross-merchandising opportunities with cheese, charcuterie, nuts, hummus, fresh pasta, wine and beer. With some consideration and effort, an olive bar can be a true expression of a deli's brand and a



Making Cross Merchandising Work

Deli departments have many opportunities to pair complimentary products to increase sales and encourage impulse purchases

BY ANTHONY STOECKERT

e're living in a high-tech world, but one of the most effective ways to increase sales in the deli department is through a tried and true method — cross merchandising.

It's a simple concept — showcase items that go well together and you entice shoppers to buy multiple items in the deli. It's a great way to encourage people to try something different, promote new items and give a boost to products that aren't making the register ring.

"The benefits of cross merchandising include not only meeting, but exceeding, your customers' expectations by providing them with both a primary product and an accompaniment product, which wasn't on their original list but expanded their enjoyment in end use," says Jim Conroy, owner of Conroy Foods, based in Pittsburgh, PA.

He notes that other obvious benefits include increased sales for the retailer and the manufacturer.

"The retailers who are consumer centric will benefit by



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Little did they know, when the Conroy family began making Beano's Original Sub Dressing in 1986, they were following in the footsteps of another Pittsburgh area sauce company.

Today, what ketchup is to hamburgers, Beano's Original Sub Dressing is to sub sandwiches.

To learn more about Pittsburgh's other sauce company, visit conroyfoods.com



increasing sales and enhancing the shopper experience," says Conroy.

Show Off the Deli

John McGuckin, CEO of Tribe Mediterranean Foods, based in in Taunton, MA, says supermarket deli departments can help themselves by creating an experience based on cross marketing.

"They can make the deli more of a destination, which is critical for supermarkets, because that's where they differentiate themselves, in the fresh food area," he says.

Cross merchandising also gives supermarket deli departments an opportunity to educate customers about new and exciting foods, including Tribe Mediterranean Foods' new lines of sweet hummus.

"The hummus category has 26 percent household penetration," says McGuckin. "And when you consider all channels, it's about a billion-dollar category. And more than 50 percent of its growth is coming from sweet hummus, which is really significant because it's the first time that we're reaching beyond savory, and we're attracting new consumers."

Attract New Customers

McGuckin notes that the growth of sweet hummus is not cannibalizing sales of traditional savory hummus.

"It's actually bringing new people to the category," he says. "That's exciting. The sweet hummus, which is currently available in chocolate, vanilla and mocha, brings

There's also an opportunity with the trend of offering pre-cut and packaged deli goods to retailers.

up a whole new way to create theater in the deli, and you can now tie into fruit."

People know traditional hummus lends itself to pita chips, crackers, cheese and veggies, but now it's time to let folks know about other foods like fruit that complement sweet hummus, including bananas, strawberries and apples.

"These all become tie-in opportunities for produce in the deli department," says McGuckin. "So put a banana tree in the deli or put a secondary location of hummus in produce, where you don't find a lot of good-for-you dips, even though produce is supposed to be a health mecca in the store."

Traditional hummus is also ideal for cross merchandising in the deli section, as it can be a condiment on sandwiches and featured in all sorts of meals.

"The potential for hummus in this health and wellness environment that we live in today is really just a matter of education and creating solutions for consumers," says McGuckin.

Conroy says the key to a successful cross merchandising initiative is to provide consumers with a solution.

"You don't need to wow them with expensive fixtures," he says. "We have a cardboard shipper with themed header cards. For example, our football theme — '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."

Precut and Packaged

There's also an opportunity with the trend of offering pre-cut and packaged deli goods to retailers.

"More and more retailers have a prepacked deli area for the consumer who does not want to wait in line," says Conroy. "These consumers grab some pre-sliced cheese, ham, maybe turkey, and right above the grab-and-go case you have a selection of condiments that this consumer will also



grab, and their purchase decision is done."

This, he says, encourages consumers to try something new with condiments, such as flavored mustards. It allows retailers to develop innovative flavors that are unique to their program, helping them stand out amongst the competition.

And he notes that Conroy Foods makes sauces that are geared for this method.

"For more unique cross marketing ideas, we pair our sauces with both new and established use profiles." savs Conrov. "For example, we have an All-American Sandwich Sauce that pairs extremely well with corned beef, fish and burgers so it is a very versatile sauce that has the ability to be cross marketed in several categories."

And with cranberry sauce a staple of Thanksgiving meals, he says that Conroy's cranberry honey mustard is the perfect teammate for turkey sandwiches.

Get Creative but Keep It Simple

Conroy offers several ways to cross promote his products, including displaying Beano honey mustard near frozen chicken nuggets or placing the company's horseradish sauces near the meat case when beef is on sale.

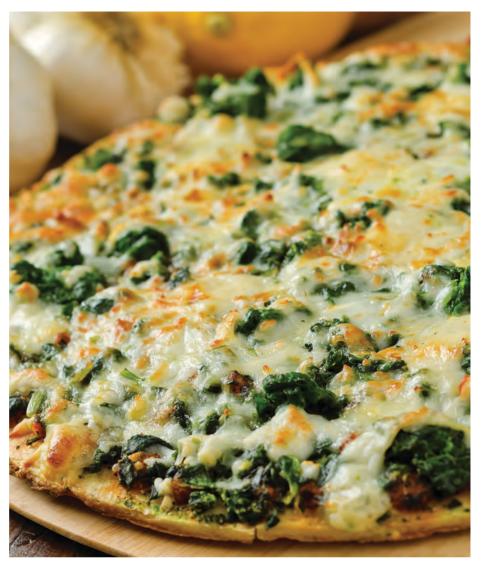
With shelf-stable condiments, we are able to be placed anywhere in the store," he says. "Our balsamic dressing merchandised by the bagged salads gives the consumer the option of saving a trip to the salad dressings area and provides an easy placement opportunity."

The company's line also offers lots of options for a variety of uses, such as snacks, meals and sandwiches, both hot and cold.

"Our product line offers a number of condiments that can be applied to multiple uses when matching with hot, cold or snacks and meals," says Conroy. "Whether it is deli style, jalapeño or pineapple honey, we have the mustard to pair with snacks, such as pretzels, cold ham sandwiches or grilled panini."

But he adds that the cross merchandising premise is essentially simple, and should be kept that way.

"When you think about the practice, it is such common sense to place tertiary use products close to primary driver purchase items," he says. "Everyone is time starved when shopping — read delivery and curbside pick-up — 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 cross merchandising white pizza sauces.



cheeses, and right there while they are waiting for their deli order, we position our condiments. And if there are bread, rolls or flatbreads, that makes a complete occasion fulfillment of their need.

It Takes Teamwork

Cross merchandising is most effective when manufacturers and deli managers work together.

"Transparency and sharing of information are key factors in how manufacturers and retailers can work together on cross merchandising," says Conroy. "If a retailer were to share their promotional plans for the deli department with manufacturers that don't directly compete with the promoted products, then these manufacturers would be better equipped to pair their product for a cross merchandising experience."

For example, a retailer who plans on promoting naan breads or pizza dough could collaborate with Conroy Foods on

"The consumer wins by such a natural pairing," he says. "In addition to our white pizza sauces used on pizza shells and flatbreads, they are also used on bread sticks and baked potatoes."

McGuckin says collaboration varies from deli department to deli department and that sweet hummus is a perfect opportunity for deli managers to get involved and work with Tribe.

"You have people who are guick to adapt to the trend, and it's clearly a trend, not a fad," he says. "And you have people who are a little slower and they want to wait and see how it does: we deal with that in every business. The ones who are jumping out of the gate are having some fun with it because there hasn't been a tremendous amount of innovation in the hummus category in the last five or six years. People are having fun with this sweet phenomenon and playing with different types of merchandising solutions, which is always good." DB

Success In Salad Selling

Along with traditional favorites, the salad category has evolved to include varieties that appeal to health conscious consumers

riven by their insatiable hunger for variety and healthful ingredients and preparation, produce department shoppers are eager to sample deli salads—from long-time staples like potato salad, macaroni salad and coleslaw to a host of more exotic varieties.

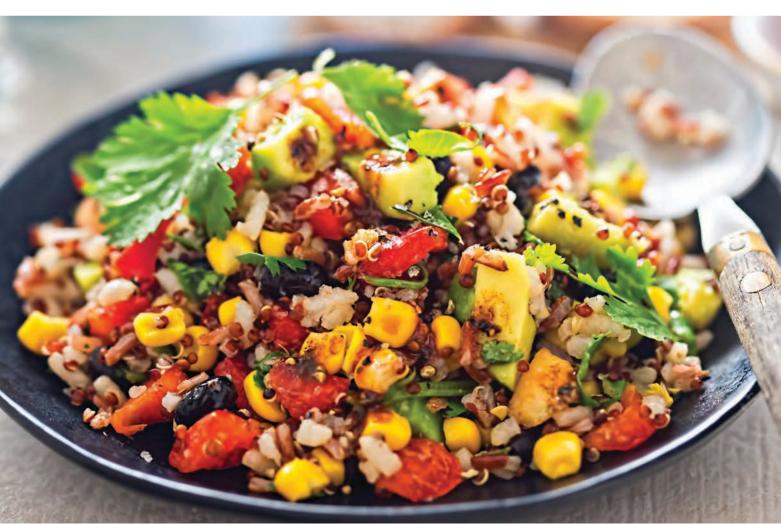
Merchandised and promoted well, and with a careful eye on shelf life issues, it is a category that can easily be made a destina-

tion by savvy retailers.

Food companies today are offering a larger assortment of healthful and exciting deli salads than ever before. For example:

*Reser's Fine Foods Inc. based in Beaverton, OR, produces a line that includes Southern Style Potato Salad With Egg, Stadium Cole Slaw, Bacon Ranch Pasta Salad, Deviled Egg Macaroni Salad and Garden Pasta Salad.

* Sandridge Food Corp. in Medina, OH, markets deli salad





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varieties like Chicken Salad with Almonds in Lemon Dressing, Chicken Salad with Pecans and Mermaid Salad.

*Sally Sherman Foods in Mount Vernon, NY, produces a line of so-called "Ancient Grain" salads such as Athens Farro, Harvest Wheatberry, Mango Cashew Basmati, Pesto Farro and Tricolor Garden Quinoa.

*Simply Fresh Foods Inc.'s San Francisco Foods line includes Seafood Salad with real Snow Crab Meat, Quinoa Cranberry Grain Salad and Savory Seafood Salad.

Cleaner Labels

Consumers are moving towards healthier salad dressings and sauces, says Katie Mackie, marketing specialist for T. Marzetti Co. in Westerville, OH. Citing data from Datassential MenuTrends, she says 59 percent of consumers would be more likely to buy a sauce or salad dressing with a clean label.

"So, including clean-label items at your deli and salad bar is key," Mackie adds. "Most consumers believe that clean-label dressings and sauces have no artificial flavors or colors, GMOs, artificial sweeteners, MSG or high-fructose corn syrup."

Caesar is by far the most popular salad variety, Mackie reports. Other hot sellers include Greek, tuna, cobb and chef. Staple deli salads include cole slaw, potato salad, and fruit and pasta salad. Trending salad toppings include quinoa, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds. Sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts and kale are also on trend, she adds.

"Traditional ethnic salad ingredients are trending," she notes. "For example, ingredients such as poke, falafel, seaweed and edamame have all seen significant growth on menus."

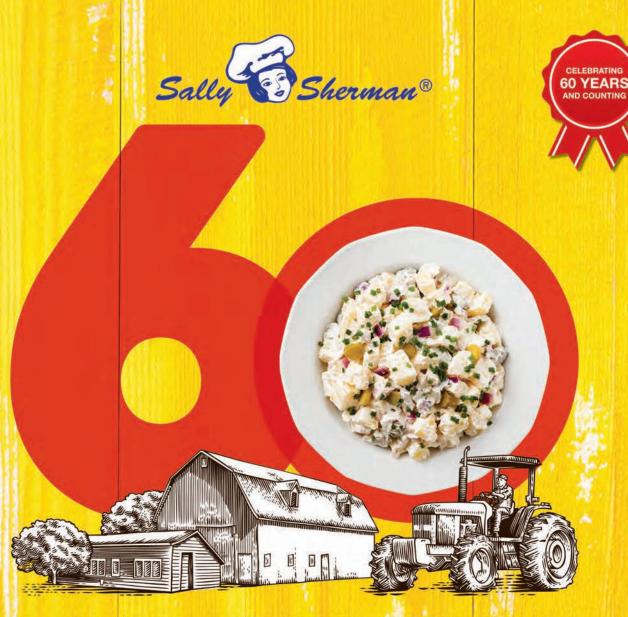
Mackie believes that salad bars and delis can effectively market and merchandise their wares by using branded products. "For example, a 32-ounce bottle with a logo will resonate with consumers more than a pan with dressing and a ladle."

Jeffrey Siegel, CEO of Farm Ridge Foods, headquartered in West Palm Beach, FL, says he learned the industry from his family's business, which had been one of the major producers of salads in the country between 1980 to 2000.

"We have witnessed a race to the bottom," Siegel says. "Who can make the product the fastest and the cheapest? We have ended up with either mushy or hard potatoes in the potato salad and watered







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"Grains and hearty vegetable salads are becoming more popular, especially under the glass."

— John Becker, Sandridge Food Corp.

down macaroni salad and coleslaw-all look, dairy-free formulation and better tasting okay. The products are not terrible. but far from great."

Siegel promises that he and his colleagues are "definitely going to be changing that dynamic. Good food sells good; great food sells great." He says that "while innovation and new styles of foods are the lifeblood of any business, there will always be a place for comfort foods. I believe that potato salad, macaroni salad and slaw fit into these categories. People are clearly eating them less, often as they do not have a healthy halo on them, but they're still very popular."

When people are eating them, he adds, "I believe they want a wonderful eating experience. The salad products out there do not deliver that; they are way too focused on cost."

While cost remains critical, Siegel points out, "so is building a business. I believe we're going to see a sea of change in this arena. It has laid fallow for many years. We at Farm Ridge expect to revitalize this entire category."

A Healthful Focus

Krystle Turnbull, brand manager at Litehouse, Inc., based in Lowell, MI, is continuing to see growing demand for healthier and better-for-you products with cleaner labels and streamlined ingredient panels, with a focus on non-GMO ingredients, healthier oil types, natural sugars and natural preservatives.

To address these needs. Litehouse recently reformulated its Pourable Vinaigrette Dressings, which are now made with less fat, sugar and calories. Its Organic Pourable Dressings were also recently reformulated and feature a new

John Becker, senior director of marketing for Sandridge Food Corp. in Medina. OH, suggests that plant-forward options are gaining in popularity. "Grains and hearty vegetable salads are becoming more popular, especially under the glass."

Consumers "now want transparency," Becker notes. "It's not just about clean, it's about being honest about what ingredients are used in foods and letting them make educated choices." Consumers, he adds, "are looking to food as functionality. whether looking to reduce added sugars, looking for alternate protein sources or managing calorie intake." Beans and grilled vegetables are also growing in popularity, driven by perceptions of nutritional

Traditional Favorites

While American consumers will always love variety and newness, they unceasingly tend to come home to the traditional favorites, according to Becker. "Potato salads, macaroni and pasta salads, and coleslaw still show the highest volumes in customer portfolios," he says.

Popular ethnic varieties, such as Italian, Mexican and Mediterranean, have wider appeal and are growing, Becker confirms. "But consumers seem to be more risk averse to less popular global flavors, such as Thai and Indian, at least in the fresh salad category. Folks may try a unique flavor for their family, but don't want to alienate their guests at a gathering."

Becker urges deli managers to keep retail offerings geared toward mass appeal, "but add ethnic or new flavor options behind the glass. Try pairing ethnic offers



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with other complementary deli products. Provide a meal menu theme, not just a single product."

He and his colleagues have addressed many historic shelf-life challenges "utilizing our HPP technology," Becker says. "We can offer several cleaner tasting-and labeled—products without need for preservatives or acidifiers all with extended shelf life to better survive the refrigerated cold chain."

International Flavors

Bold and spicy international flavors, such as those often found in Asian. Mexican and Mediterranean cuisines, continue to be popular among consumers.

"We offer a variety of products inspired by flavors from around the world, including our Sesame Ginger dressing, and fresh flavor combinations with a touch of heat like Sriracha Lime dressing and our award-winning Mango Habañero dressing," says Turnbull at Litehouse. "We also have several Mediterranean-inspired flavors that are perfect on salads or as marinades for meat, fish and chicken, including our zesty Balsamic Vinaigrette



Bold and spicy international flavors continue to be popular among consumers.

and Italian dressings, our savory Red Wine ready to grab and go." Vinegar with Olive Oil dressing and our delicious Greek dressing."

Carl H. Cappelli, senior vice president of sales and business development for Don's Food Products in Schwenksville. PA, is finding that consumers look for more international flavors and clean salads. His company is meeting that need with its new Gourmet Sides & Artisan Deli line. They also want to stay healthy. "They seek clean products and globally-inspired flavors" and both grab-and-go and meal solution ideas, which he calls "key. Fresh, not frozen, also is important."

Classic Tuna. Italian Style Tuna. Seafood and White Meat Chicken.

Cappelli calls the staple salads "inexpensive belly stuffers. Those meet the needs of some consumer needs; younger consumers seek flavorful and fresh." He identifies "grains, clean, grains, clean, grains" as the prevalent product trend. "They marry well with chicken and fish. Consumers want healthy and delicious meal solutions." He ing sure the cases are full and clean and and his fellow executives also see ethnic salads growing, especially "global flavors" such as Asian. African. Mediterranean and Latin.

Cappelli says he is a believer that delis can market and merchandise "meal solutions and clean items bursting with flavor and globally inspired." Ordering and merchandising weekly can help assure product freshness. "Properly handle products and plan to sell items within five days gently on shelf life, doing rigorous testing after the re-pack."

Meal Replacement

"We are seeing growth in the entrée side of the business or meal replacement," says Moira Gavin, director of marketing and business development for Winter Gardens Ouality Foods in New Oxford, PA. "There is a convergence of two trends -less time to make a meal from scratch as well as a desire to have a healthy meal

Gavin says she and her colleagues work closely with a full spectrum of customers in developing proprietary entrées. "We are seeing growth in this arena. What we are finding is a high level of involvement towards clean ingredients as well as innovative flavor profiles. Our salad staples are potato salad, coleslaw, macaroni salad and pasta salad."

Although these sell consistently throughout the year, the peak time for them is the Memorial Day through Labor

Winter Gardens has found that the Don's Artisan Deli line of salads includes trend is still strong with clean ingredients, which consumers are demanding. "We have had success with some of our partners with ethnic salads," Gavin says, "but so far this is limited to certain geographical locations. Product evolution is inevitable, and innovation will lead the wav."

> Presentation is key, Gavin suggests. "Setting a high standard for variety, makcolorful, which is easier said than done. The companies that are most successful set high standards and best practices to insure consistency."

> The company's offerings include Amish Macaroni Salad, Amish Pepper Slaw, Cream Slaw Amish Style, Creamy Cole Slaw, Dutch Potato Salad, Potato Salad with Egg and Red Potato Salad.

> "We, as a company, work very diliall throughout the process," says Gavin. "Each category has a different profile. As far as the deli managing the shelf life, that requires an essential understanding of rate of sale and seasonal impacts as well as trending items."

> Bottom line, Gavin concludes, maximizing sales of supermarket deli salads means "really staying close to the customer, while always reviewing and refining the product assortments." DB





Puts Deli Sales On A Roll

The department's prepared food offerings have been given a boost by this increasingly popular segment

BY CAROL BAREUTHER

eep in the heart of America, in the land-locked. meat-and-potatoes state of North Dakota, customers seek out chef-prepared sushi at Hugo's Family Marketplace. The 10-location supermarket chain headquartered in Grand Fork introduced Snowfox brand sushi, a franchise of independently-operated Grab-N-Go Cafes by JFE Franchising Inc., in Houston, TX, in March. The cafe is run by a trained chef five digits in sales per store each week. and operates from counter space atop a

to pre-prepared and made-to-order salads and sandwiches. Today, long since the 1950's when Japanese restaurants first served sushi to California residents and the 1960's when New York Times restaurant critic Craig Claiborne wrote sushi may be too 'far out' for American palates, Midwest retailer Hugo's sushi program is so popular that it represents 2 to 3 percent of total store sales, according to JFE, and brings in

"Sushi was still viewed as exotic when service case within Hugo's deli adjacent we started in 2005. Now, customers

notice if a retailer doesn't offer sushi," says Stacy Kwon, president of JFE Franchising, which operates nearly 900 franchise locations in major retailers nationwide, such as Kroger, Costco, Albertsons, Fresh Market and King Soopers.

Sushi originated in Southeast Asia in the 8th century as a method to preserve fish., which was wrapped in fermented rice and stored for up to a year. The fish was then eaten and rice was discarded. During its early years in the U.S., sushi was thought to be synonymous with raw fish. Yet, in

reality, it's a dish of vinegared rice topped and filled with a variety of ingredients, including vegetables and a broad range of raw and cooked seafood.

Over the past five years, the foodservice sushi industry in the U.S. has grown by 4.8 percent to reach \$22 billion in 2019, according to the February 2019-published report, *Sushi Restaurants Industry in the U.S.*, by IBISWorld, a market research firm headquartered in Los Angeles.

Behind this, research shows there is a broad demographic of customers that buys sushi. For example, while 39 percent of those living in urban areas are interested in Japanese/sushi, according to *The Power of Foodservice at Retail 2018*, published by the Arlington, VA-based Food Marketing Institute, 34 percent of those in suburban areas are, too, followed by 26 percent in small towns and 25 percent in rural locations. Similarly, 46 percent of Millennials are attracted to Japanese/sushi, followed by 32 percent of Gen X-ers and 19 percent of Boomers. Perhaps Generation Alpha,

those born after 2010, will be most influential when it comes to sushi purchases.

"Five years ago, we wanted to attract kids to the kiosk in hopes of getting their parents to buy sushi," recalls Patrick Vanlehn, president and CEO of Royal Oak, MI-based Sushi Kabar, a supplier of sushi to supermarkets via customized franchise operations. "To do this, we flattened slices of wheat bread, rolled turkey up inside sushi-style and topped this with a dollop of ranch dressing-flavored cream cheese and a Goldfish cracker. We did this in a couple of store locations. What we discovered is that the kids were attracted all right; they asked for the spicy tuna rolls."

A Menu Of Programs

Sushi is a rapidly-growing category, outpacing other, older deli sub-categories, according to Breana Jones, director of marketing for Charlotte, NC-based Hissho Sushi, which provides sushi bars to venues such as supermarkets. "This is driven by the changing demographics of the coun-

try, evolving pallets and the push to have a broader variety of prepared foods in store. At the same time, it is essential that offerings are not just delicious and restaurant-quality, but conveniently packaged and able to be eaten on the go," she says.

One of the most eye-catching and potentially revenue-enhancing types of supermarket sushi programs is a chef-made operation in-store. Companies such as JFE, Sushi Kabar and Hissho provide these turnkey solutions.

"Retailers provide the capital equipment, a section in their refrigeration and dry storage areas, and preparation and selling space. We provide all the other elements, which include ingredients, food safety licensure as required by each state in which we operate and, of course, trained labor. Even though we are branded separately, we still operate within a retailer's stores and while not managed by, have strong bonds and work harmoniously with the deli staff both in-store and at the corporate level," explains Vanlehn about the



Sushi Kabar program.

Chefs that apply to work for JFE cafés attend a two-week sushi academy training program, says Kwon. "Our in-store chefs and their staff are backed by a team of quality controllers, food safety experts, marketers, number crunchers and nutritionists that are all there to help support the franchisee as they implement a unique plan for each of our partner stores. A key part of our program is customer engagement and daily sampling, especially at peak hours such as 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 4 to 6 p.m."

Retailers who want to test the waters with a sushi program can start with direct store delivery (DSD) of the product from a company with a central commissary.

"When delis are making \$1,200 to \$1,500 per week on sushi, that shows the store has enough volume to convert to a full chef location. This conversion, moving to a chef in store, can double or triple sushi sales," says Sushi Kabar's Vanlehn.

Frozen sushi is a solution for deli operators in settings too far from DSD operators and those unsure if potential sales volume can support a full-time sushi chef.

"Our secret is in the rice," says Matt Christenson, sales manager for Seattleheadquartered Banzai Sushi, which offers a refresh and display sushi program under its Mojo brand. "We have an innovative four-step process, which retains the texture and integrity of the rice. The product is all pre-cooked. It takes three hours to thaw and has a five-day shelf life once thawed. Operators can thaw as much of the sushi as they need on a daily basis, which maintains freshness, reduces shrink and solves out-of-stock issues."

The company offers four flavors in eight-piece tray portions: Classic California Roll, California Cream Cheese Roll, Spicy Crab Roll and the newest introduced six months ago, a Coconut Shrimp Roll.

Global Flavor Profiles

The essentials to having a great deli sushi program is variety, says Hissho Sushi's Jones. "You need to have a mixture of the staples that people know—like the California Roll—and new items. There should be enough to appeal to a wide range of tastes, something for everyone in a household. We make sure that our chefs prepare a wide variety of options every day. There will always be cooked, raw and vegetarian (no fish at all) rolls as well as poke and appetizer salads."



Poke, a Hawaiian staple made of marinated fish served over rice and under fresh veggies, is still on trend, Jones adds. The company has multiple SKUs in its portfolio, each growing in popularity. Another big trend is plant-based proteins.

"We recently launched two new rolls the Veggie TNT and Spicy Pepper—that use roasted red bell peppers. It mimics the look and consistency of tuna, but is a vegetarian (non-fish) option. People love them," says Jones.

In the last few years, JFE has introduced a poke roll, sushi taco, sushi donut and sushi sandwich. In addition, the company will customize rolls to fit the flavor profiles of a deli's customers. This has included, for example, a Baja sushi roll in Southern California, Tex-Mex roll with pica de gallo in the Southwest, Jambalaya roll in the South and Buckeye Roll in Ohio. However, JFE's Snowfox brand New York Crunch Roll remains its most popular. This roll is filled with avocado, crab salad, cucumber and fried onions, topped with spicy mayo and sweet sauce.

"New flavors are important to draw customers in, even if once they get to the counter they still purchase their favorite California roll," says Kwon.

It's All About The Theater

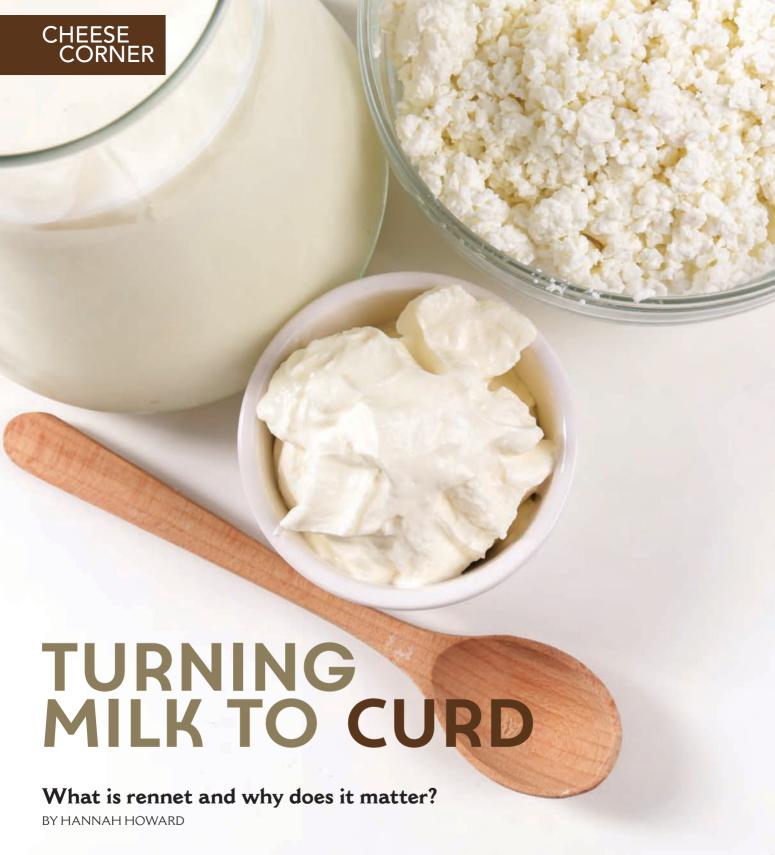
The best place to display and merchan-

dise sushi not in its own dedicated kiosk, bar or cafe is packaged in single-serve trays in the grab-and-go case next to sand-wiches and salads. Similarly, a franchise operation is best located either in-line with other supermarket deli prepared foods or as a separate freestanding aisle near the grab-and-go case. The latter is what Sushi Kabar's Vanlehn recommends.

"Chef-prepared sushi is all about the theater, so it's important to be in a very visible high-traffic area of the supermarket's deli," says Vanlehn.

As for the product display itself, be sure to include nigiri sushi, the kind made with raw fish.

"Nigiri will bring people to the case because it's so beautiful. That's why it should be the center of a display planogram, along with other specialty raw rolls, even if it's not a big seller," recommends JFE's Kwon. "Place basic and fully-cooked rolls, like California Rolls, to the right and crunch-type and specialty cooked rolls to the left. On the upper level of the case, feature appetizers like seaweed salad, poke, dumplings and spring rolls and items on promotions to the left, combo menu selections and party trays in the center and custom items as well as extra sauces like wasabi and spicy mayo to the right. The correct type of visual merchandising can increase sales 30 to 35 percent." DB

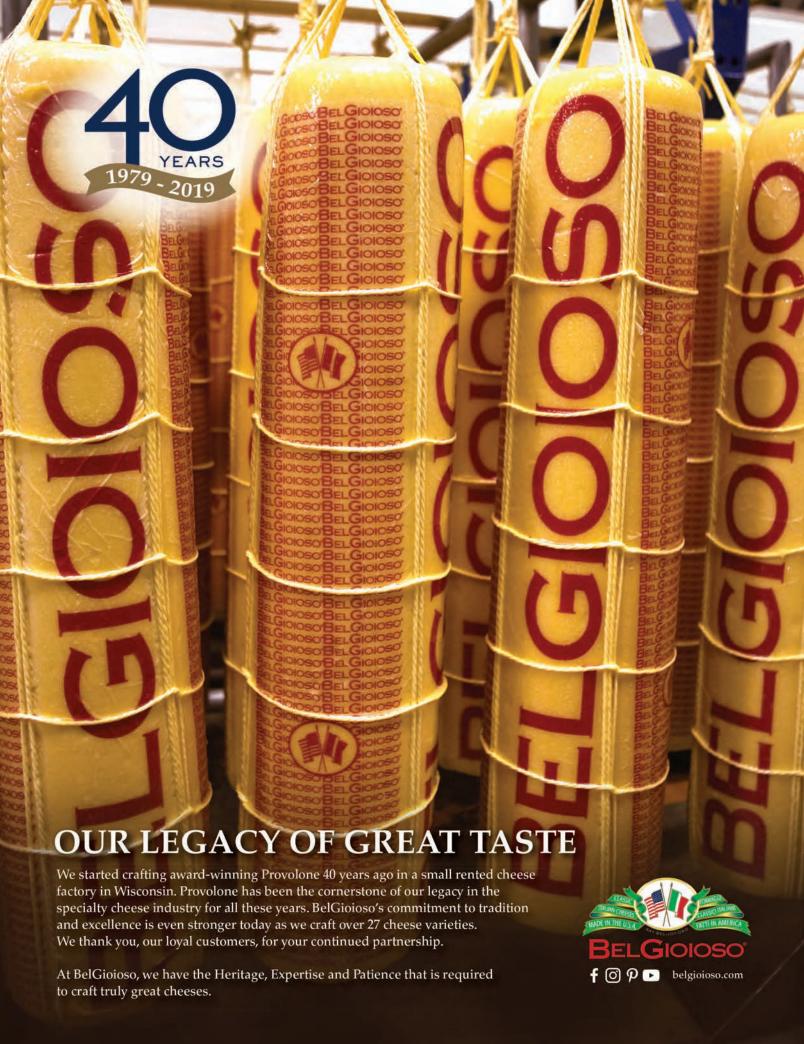


hat is the big deal about rennet, and what part does it play in the cheesemaking process? Delis can help educate the growing number of consumers looking for insight.

Cheese is traditionally made with milk, salt, cultures and rennet. Rennet allows cheesemakers to efficiently turn fresh milk into curd, a technique they've been using for thousands of years. Over time, milk curdles on its own, but

hat is the big deal about rennet, and what by that time, the milk may sour. Rennet speeds up this process so part does it play in the cheesemaking process? Delis can help educate the growing runs off as whey.

Not all cheese is made with rennet. Coagulation can happen in two ways: as an enzymatic reaction (rennet) or as a product of acidification (adding acid). "Ricotta is a simple example of a cheese coagulated using acid—lemon juice or vinegar, depending on the recipe," says Elena Santogade, author of "The Beginner's Guide



to Cheese Making". Chevré and fresh lactic cheeses are also made with acid rather than rennet, "Though some cheesemakers will add a pinch of rennet to these to insure good curd formation," Santogade adds.

But most cheeses, from bloomy rinded Bries to aged wheels of Cheddar and beyond, are crafted with rennet, and more specifically the enzyme in rennet called chymosin. The first rennet came from the fourth stomachs of calves, lambs or goats before they consume anything other than milk—and traditional cheeses are still made with animal rennet. According to Matt Spiegler, head cheesemaker at Churchtown Dairy in Hudson, NY, "some old-school makers even use a small strip of dehydrated abomasum (the lining of a baby ruminant's stomach), rehydrating in milk and adding to the vat, but these days rennets are generally extracted in highly-controlled laboratory settings to achieve precise levels of potency." Churchtown Dairy uses commercially-prepared calf's rennet.

Lab-produced vegetarian cheese coagu-

Lab-produced vegetarian cheese coagulants have become the most common form of rennet in the marketplace.

lants have become the most common form relying on animal matter. Some vegetarians of rennet in the marketplace. In spite of having no vegetable matter in them, they are often mistakenly referred to as vegetable rennets. The correct term for these of rennet, which is derived from plants is microbial rennet. Microbial rennet is that have been injected with cow genes. extracted from the microbe Rhizomuchor Although produced by a genetic modifica-Miehei, which produces an enzyme that tion, the resulting product does not contain

seek out cheeses made with microbial rennet for this reason.

That brings us to yet another type acts similarly to chymosin, but without any GMO organisms and is not a geneti-





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cally-modified product. "Vegetarians seem to debate whether this fits in their ethical dietary restrictions," says Civitello.

Vegetable Alternative

Vegetable rennet does exist; it is the least common and perhaps most distinctive of all rennet types. "Many plants have milk clotting properties," says cheesemaking consultant Yoav Perry, founder of Artisan Geek in New York City. "Early attempts took place as early as ancient Greece with fig sap, which is still used today in some regions of Africa. Nettle is another example." Cheshire and Gloucester cheeses were originally coagulated with the flowers of Curdwort, and occasionally combined with calf rennet for speed. The yellow pigment from the flower colored the cheese before Annatto became popular.

The most famous vegetable rennet is thistle rennet. Produced by making a "tea" from the dry pistils of the flower of Globe Thistle Artichoke (Cynara Cardunculus), it uses thistle as a coagulant and dates to the Roman Empire. The cardoon, which is related to the artichoke, was once a mainstay of ancient Roman, Greek and Persian cuisines. In De Re Rustica (On Agriculture).



written during the first century, Columella details the use of wild thistle to clot milk.

Thistle rennet made its way to the Iberian Peninsula, where it was mainly

used to craft hard sheep's milk cheeses. "The vegetarian properties of this rennet also made it popular early for use in Kosher cheese with Jews prior to the Spanish Inquisition" Perry explains.

"It is said that an accident in dosage and temperature made some 'undesirable' cheese that was not hard enough to store, age or sell in the warm weather," Perry says. "Accelerated proteolysis caused the paste to collapse and turn supple. This happy accident resulted in the precursor to some of the most beloved Spanish and Portuguese cheeses: Torta del Casar, Zimbro, Azeitao, Serpa, Nisa and Queso de La Serena. They have in common a tangy bitterness that crosses paths with the sweetness of sheep's milk.

Experiments of Necessity

Like with many things, rennet experiments have often been born of necessity. During World War II, Germans had taken much of the Italian livestock—so Italian cheesemakers used pig rennet to make a traditional sheep's milk cheese, Pecorino di Farindola. "Porcine rennet is predominantly pepsin, low chymosin and has a really interesting flavor profile," says Brian Civitello, founder and cheesemaker at The Mystic Cheese Co. in Lebanon, CT.

Which brings us to another point how does rennet influence the flavor of the end product, cheese? Rennet is a protease, an enzyme that breaks down proteins





and peptides. While most of the rennet is lost to the whey during the cheesemaking process, a small percentage is retained in the curds of a newly-formed cheese. The residual rennet breaks down the milk protein (casein) into peptides. Those peptides can be further broken down during the ripening process by starter and non-starter lactic bacteria, yeasts and molds into amino acids, which form flavor compounds.

Breaking It Down

If all this sounds complicated and scientific, it's because it is. "It's really hard to isolate one single variable in cheesemaking, so it's ultimately kind of hard to tell how rennet effects flavor," Santogade believes.

It's sometimes most apparent to experience the effects of rennet when something goes wrong. "Excessive rennet can produce bitterness and issues with the final texture," says Spiegler.

Cheesemakers take rennet seriously it is a crucial ingredient in their cheese. "As a modern cheesemaker, I want to

It's sometimes most apparent to experience the effects of rennet when something goes wrong.

the best cheese I can," says Civitello. "At Mystic Cheese, the type of rennet I use depends on the type of cheese we are making. For example, when making a ripened toma cheese like The Twain, we employ traditional animal rennet from Walcoren because we need the proteolysis to produce its desired complex flavor profile. While in Melville, producing a fresh Stracchino cheese, we employ a synthetic use all the tools available to me to make chymosin camel-based rennet called Chy-

max M because of its high clotting to low proteolytic ratio, which aids in producing a high-moisture, high-yield cheese that has very little structural breakdown during its short shelf life.

Animal-based rennets can be purchased in powder, tablet, paste or liquid form. Vegetable and synthetic rennet are typically found in liquid form. Whether animal, vegetable or microbial, rennet plays a crucial role in making cheese.



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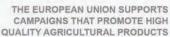














CHEESE PAIRINGS CAN ELEVATE DELI OFFERINGS

The intricacies of pairing cheeses and complementary items enhances the profile of a variety of department items

BY GIGI RAGLAND

heese profiles in the supermarket deli can be elevated by pairing fromage with a variety of foods and beverages to enhance their profile at the store level. This provides consumers with options for their party planning or nights at home, which are increasingly including specialty cheese.

In this 'Age' of "anything is possible"

cheese lovers have a lot to look forward to when selecting pairings.

But first let's start with the most traditional of pairings: cheese and wine. Historically, cheese was often served with locally-produced wines of the geographic region. Throughout ancient Europe, cheese became a fundamental part of many local villager's diets. With the addition of bread, a filling meal could be savored along with a

beverage produced from local grape vineyards or orchards. Industrious people used what they had to survive, wasting little in efforts to preserve and sustain foods during sparse times. Cheesemaking was a method of preserving milk while crushing grapes or apples for their juice. Essentially, cheese and wine were very often produced within the same regional area or farm. Families passed down their cheesemaking recipes



spanning generations, creating the many varieties we enjoy today.

For example in Italy, an Italian Chianti or Brunello wine might be offered with Asiago cheese, which originated in the same region. A sparkling red Lambrusco from the same area as Parmigiana Reggiano is an equally delicious pairing. Or in France, it might be surprising to learn that Beaujolais and Brie cheese is produced in the same vicinity. Although considered quite a tannic wine, Beaujolais has been a popular match alongside Brie cheese for centuries.

Appropriate Accompaniments

Science studies claim that fatty, creamy foods combined or paired with astringent foods create a pleasant taste sensation. These opposites "attract" so-to-speak, developing a pleasing taste profile on the palate. Some hold fast to the belief that bold and robust flavors go well together. while the same holds true for lighter flavors.

Michael Cervin, professional wine and spirits judge as well as author of "California Wine Country", and noted wine columnist, also thinks that the more acidity in the wine the better it works with the fat in the cheese, though years of experience has sharpened his perspective on the subject. "Most folks in the wine industry espouse the idea that white wines are bet- with cheese as evidenced by history, but

Some hold fast to the belief that bold and robust flavors go well together, while the same holds true for lighter flavors.

greater acidity over red wines. I could not disagree more. Sure acidity plays a crucial role depending on a cheese's fat content, but plenty of red wines have high acidity and most red wines are not typically overly tannic to begin with," says Cervin.

He recommends matching the intensity of the wine with the intensity of the cheese, emphasizing that a bold cheese with a weak wine won't work. "The bottom line is if you like a wine and cheese that go together, then that is all that matters. Never let anyone tell you that you're making a mistake or that your choices aren't viable." Cervin advises.

Wine might be the most popular pairing ter matches due to the reduced tannins and it certainly isn't the only beverage or food

paired with cheese in a more contemporary world filled with choices that now reach beyond the boundaries of regional tried and true options for pairings. It's all about the cheese, though, bringing out nuances of flavor and finding the perfect match for that 'mouth-feel'.

Supermarket delis can learn from restaurants that focus on cheese pairings. Bradley Frank, cheesemonger for SHED Restaurant, headquartered in Healdsburg, CA, which sits in the middle of Sonoma County wine country, finds that people are becoming more inquisitive with their selections. "I think that the more obscure and unique pairings that are unexpected and actually taste delicious and texturally work are attractive to both seasoned adventur-



ous cheese eaters as well as new, curious consumer palates."

Frank, who carries dozens of cheese selections produced in California, and an inexhaustible supply of unique local foods to browse over for developing pairings at the SHED, emphasizes "the challenge when creating a pairing is in ALWAYS maintaining the cheeses integrity on its own merit and not taking from the cheeses' original flavors."

Bradley Franks shares some of his favorite pairings and accompaniments created from local Northern California producers of specialty foods and cheeses.

Cheesemaker Soyoung Scanlan's Andante's Pianoforte drizzled with Pinecone Bud Syrup. The herbaceous sweet syrup goes well with the mushroomy lactic flavors in this St. Marcellin-style cheese. For a unique tasting, warm the cheese (in the crock it comes in) in the oven briefly and add some sugar to the syrup to give it a brûlée finish.

Audrey Ramini's Buffalo Mozzarella with fresh strawberries, almonds and HomeFarm Olive Oil combines sweet, creamy, crunchy and nutty. This also pairs well with tomatoes come summer.

Valley Ford's Grazin Girl with spicy pickles and SHED's pickled carrots features the sweet, creamy Gorgonzola



dolce-inspired Blue, which is well complemented by crunchy spicy pickled treats. It is best served with a thick toasted slice of country bread.

Bellwether Farms Basket Sheep Ricotta

drizzled with SHED Sonoma wildflower honey and HomeFarm Olive Oil can also be served with a country loaf. The floral honey makes this an any time of day meal, snack or treat.



A welcoming attitude towards trying more varieties of cheeses has swept its way across the country. Cheesemongers are sourcing more local speciality products for curious cheese lovers seeking to pair some of their favorite foods or beverages with cheese. From the East to West Coasts and in-between, more and more people seek cheese pairings to complement favored local beverages and foods.

Many are noting out of the box trends evolving over the past several years. More and more customers are interested in cheese and cacao (chocolate) pairings.

Cervin believes the days of a "cube of cheese and a glass of wine are long gone." There's much more to entice the palate with creative food options. He goes on to explain that layering of flavors and textural components makes any pairing more fun and possibly a bit complicated. For an example of more unique pairings, Cervin explains that "Many pairings these days are all about small bites, such as taking cheese but adding a protein for a pairing."





DELI MEATSupplement

Profitable Proteins Prevail72	Roast Beef Remains A Staple8
Even under increased pressure and scrutiny from con-	Consumers are not giving up on red meat, which is still a
sumers leaning towards plant-based diets, the ap-	strong seller, despite competition from healthier proteins
peal of deli meat shows no signs of waning	
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Turkey Stays On Top74	With ethnic flavors and cleaner products available,
Due to its widespread appeal and healthier	the ham segment is undergoing a resurgence

profile, turkey remains a top seller in today's delis

can create a destination in the department





Profitable Proteins Prevail

Even under increased pressure and scrutiny from consumers leaning toward plant-based diets, the appeal of deli meat shows no signs of waning

BY CHUCK GREEN

upermarket dell section meats are drawing crowds.

According to data published in Chicago-based Winsight LLC's "Consumer Perishable Databook," the deli actually outpaces most other departments, with consumers still turning to the deli for prepared everyday meal solutions and "on-the-go" snacking.

Deli sales totaled \$33.3 billion in the 52 weeks ending July 21, 2018, representing 4.2 percent of total store sales, according to New York City-based Nielsen's *Total Food View* data. From 2016 to 2018, total deli dollar sales grew 14 percent and volume grew 14.5 percent. Looking more granularly, the deli department shines as a true growth engine for the store, having posted dollar growth of over \$875 million and an increase of over 240 million in units in the last year, Nielsen reports.

Accounting for 58 percent of total deli sales, deli foodservice realized 19 percent growth in dollars and 18.2 percent in the same three years. According to Nielsen data, prepared foods throughout the store—not limited to deli items—reached \$36 million, an increase of 139.5 percent over the previous year.

Total deli household penetration hit 99.5 percent and deli prepared foods reached 96.7 percent, according to the Arlington, VA-based Food Marketing Institute's (FMI) *The Power of Foodservice at Retail Part 2* report. Shoppers made 32.7 trips per year to the department and 17 trips for deli prepared foods. The average purchase for deli items was \$8.29 and \$8.56 for prepared foods.

According to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA), the number of shopper trips to the deli, as reported by Nielsen Fresh Fact,

upermarket deli section meats are is up 3.2 percent from a year ago and trips drawing crowds. to the deli prepared section are up 5.2 percent from July 1, 2016 to July 1, 2017.

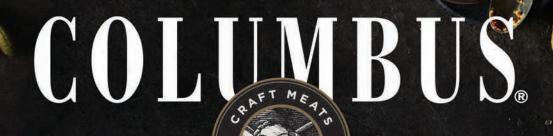
Healthy and nutritious options were among the top priorities of shoppers for retail foodservice, according to 2018 FMI research. Three-quarters of all shoppers and 87 percent of frequent purchasers of grocery deli/prepared food indicated those factors are important.

Along with deli meats, convenience also rates on the shopping lists of busy consumers. An FMI report found 65 percent of Americans usually don't know what's for dinner two hours before mealtime, while 15 percent frequently consider grocery deli/prepared when unsure about pared section, acreation, acreation,

dinner. Many consumers emphasize the importance of options in the deli/prepared foods department, led by factors such as healthier ingredients.

Affluent, older consumers who live in urban centers also are playing their part, helping drive and sustain sales within deli prepared, while households with an income over \$100,000 are 20 percent more likely to purchase items in the deli prepared section, according to a 2017 Nielsen report. Empty nesters and senior couples, likely with a higher disposable income, are also more apt to shop in the deli prepared section, purchasing 17 percent and 21 percent more than the average consumers respectively





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TURKEY STAYS ON TOP



Due to its widespread appeal and healthier profile, turkey remains a top seller in today's delis

BY CHUCK GREEN

t's time to talk a little turkey.

And why not, given that more shoppers are eating it up.
According to data published in Chicago-based Winsight
Grocery Business' "Consumer Perishable Databook," when
it comes to meat over the deli counter, with a share of 34.6
percent, turkey is even more popular than ham.

Taste has something to do with it. Jaline Isidor Horta, an associate in the marketing department at Cibao Meat Products in The Bronx, NY, says their turkey has a nice golden brown

to it. "It's juicy and easily sliced, and people seem to prefer it over our chicken. At demos, our in-house slicer just slices right through (the meat)," which is cooked skinless and browned in oil. "Customers like the taste and texture."

While Evan Inada, customer marketing manager at Columbus Craft Meats, part of Hormel Foods in Austin, MN, says the company always strives to satisfy its customers' taste buds by providing deli items using whole turkey breast and natural juices to provide a home-cooked flavor and texture, he thinks flavor



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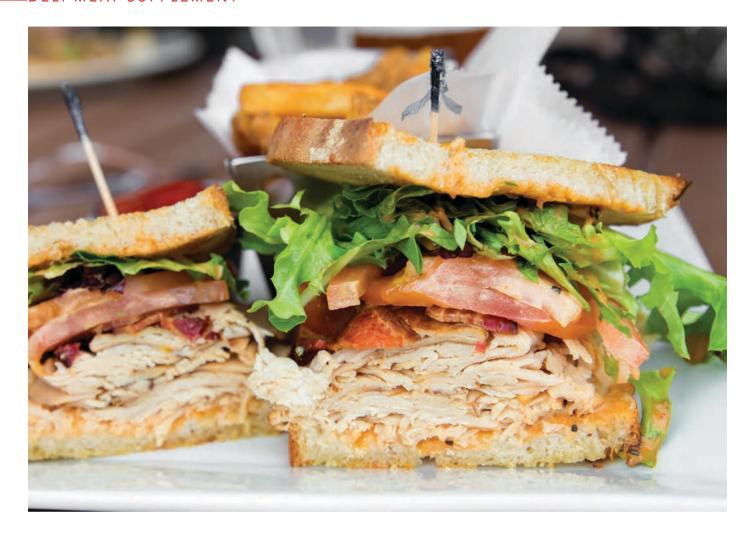
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tends to play second fiddle to what meats like turkey are made of. "They want to know that what's going into their bodies is healthy," he says.

Healthy Has It

According to Livestrong.com, sliced turkey is the healthiest deli meat. It's low in calories, fat and sodium and is the lowest-calorie option, with 22 calories per 1-ounce slice.

Health claims continue to be popular. This will include low/reduced fat and low sodium. Sodium content works against ham, and a lower natural fat content works to the advantage of turkey, says William Knudson, professor in the department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics at Michigan State University in Lansing.

Packaging, of course, also can help generate the attention of customers. Horta says Cibao's labeling on its packaged turkey is based on rich colors, including blue and black, with gold lettering "to make it look prestigious and stand out above other products. It gives it a little pop."

Safety also is a factor in packaging. Columbus Craft Meats makes safety a priority, remarks Inada. "We've transitioned all of our deli meat items to grip-and-tear packaging, so that a knife is no longer needed behind the deli counter and to avoid cross contamination."

Packaging Pays Dividends

Smithfield, VA-based Smithfield Foods' 2017 sustainability report shows product packaging helps ensure food quality and safety and offers protection during transit, extends shelf life, and communicates important nutrition and safe-handling information to consumers.

an attractive and informative container for fresh and processed meat and poultry, reports the Washington, D.C.-based USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. However, because it touches the food, packaging is considered an indirect additive. That's because chemicals in packaging can migrate into the food. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves all food packaging materials. Any

material intended for use in food packaging must be formulated in compliance with FDA requirements for its intended use. The manufacturer of a new material must petition FDA and provide data proving the material is safe to use if it is not already regulated for the proposed use.

Meat and poultry products may not be packaged in a container composed of any substances that may adulterate the contents or be injurious to health. Packaging materials entering a meat or poultry plant must be accompanied or covered by a guaranty or statement of assurance from the packaging supplier

In recent years, the packaging of sliced Consumers may see packaging as turkey improved markedly, with most now featuring a peek-a-boo window, according to Mike Hudson Distributing, based in Petaluma. CA. The window allows consumers to view the selection of fresh, prepackaged deli meats before they purchase, which has increased sales of pre-packaged deli meats.

The Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) What's in Store 2019 reports that twothirds of consumers want nutritional information by the item or spoon size, rather than by the ounce or as a percentage of the daily value, while 64 percent want the information prominently highlighted on grab-and-go items. Delis can also help point out better options for the calorie counter.

Packaging also can pay dividends at the cash register. Smithfield's Prime Fresh line offers consumers premium deli-quality meats already packaged and at affordable prices. The proprietary, minimalist packaging, designed to look like the meat was just sliced at the deli counter, keeps it fresher longer. The bagged packaging also uses 31 percent less packaging than the conventional tubs that hold other pre-sliced deli meats, which provides a host of sustainability benefits, such as fewer transportation miles (due to more product able to fit on trucks) and less waste sent to landfill.

Delis also can promote turkey by emphasizing that, as the IDDBA states, the fewer the pieces of turkey muscle used to form the turkey breast, the better the quality. Processors have developed cured turkey versions of other deli products, such as turkey ham, turkey pastrami, tur-

Delis can also help point out better options for the calorie counter.

key salami and turkey bologna.

Another tactic that's paying dividends for Cibao is hitting the airwaves with a commercial to promote several of its products, including deli turkey. The spot portrays these as healthier alternatives, says Horta. "Our commercial is basically a few kids playing basketball and then they come home to these nice sandwiches with our products in it."

But it's not all about publicity. The store also leverages social media, she says. "A dish of that particular product by itself in a

sandwich or some kind of food setting and then the product being shown out of the picture that people can see and associate with our logo [are effective]."

Ease of use and eye-catching features are key to packaging as much as a freshness message, says IDDBA's trends report.

Once shoppers walk through the front door, Cibao now offers in-store sampling. "What we have been doing now is sampling in-store. That way, it all goes hand in hand; people can taste the product and then also buy it," remarks Horta.

DB



A Special Place for Specialty

When successfully implemented, specialty meats can create a destination in the department

BY CHUCK GREEN

oday's delis are increasingly becoming a place for more out of the ordinary products, especially when it comes to meats.

The beauty of specialty meats? "Their simplicity," says Deanna Depke, marketing manager for Volpi Foods, headquartered in St. Louis.

Volpi's prosciutto, for instance, is made with the highest quality fresh pork and coarse sea salt – "and nothing else," Depke chase specialty foods, leading the industry notes. For salami recipes, the goal is to limit each spice batch to about five ingre-

one another without overpowering the accoutrements that consumers usually consume alongside charcuterie, she continues. Consumers want products with no Retail dollar sales for specialty foods grew shortcuts, no synthetic nitrates or nitrites, and no skimping.

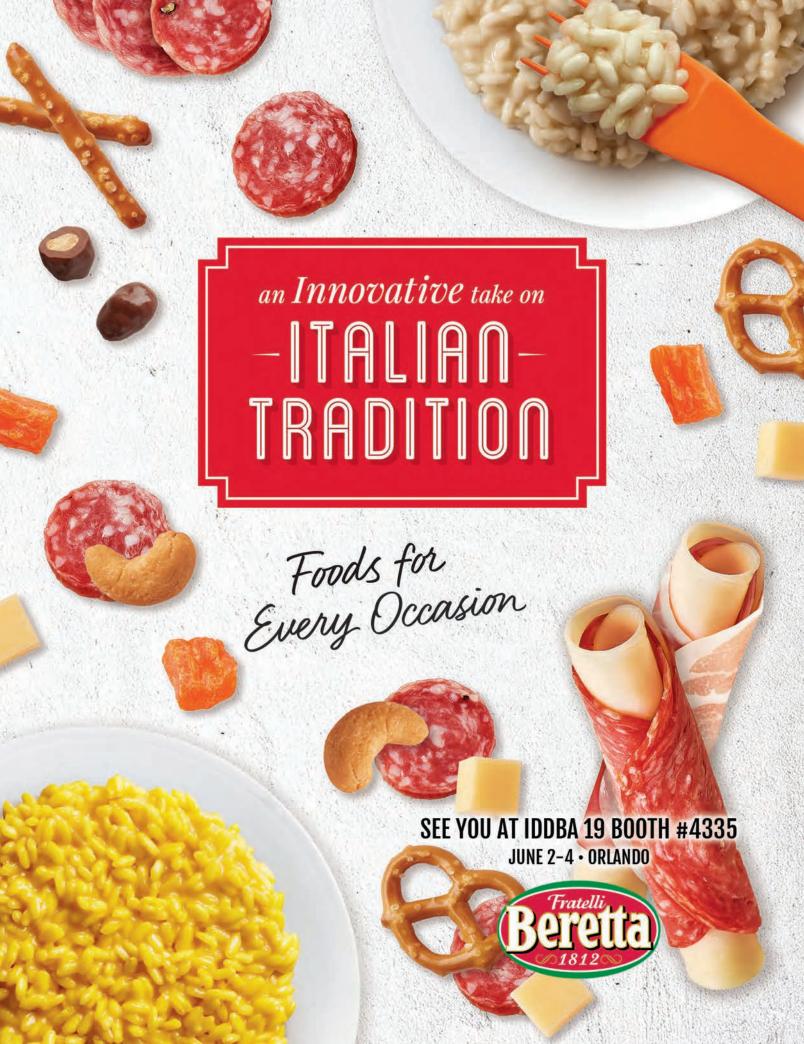
The Demand

About two-thirds of consumers purto \$140.3 billion in retail and foodservice sales in 2017, an 11 percent increase over

dients, ensuring the flavors complement 2015, according to the State of the Specialty Food Industry 2018 report, published by the New York City-based Specialty Food Association in collaboration with Mintel. 12.9 percent during that time period, versus 1.4 percent for all food. Plant-based categories dominate the top four spots and are expected to grow over the next five years.

For the past few years, there's been what Evan Inada, customer marketing manager at Columbus Craft Meats, part of Hormel Foods in Austin. MN. describes





as a "huge demand" for traditional Italian deli in the marketplace. "People across the country are looking for traditional salame to enhance all of their sandwiches in the deli. With the trending prepared deli offerings like flatbreads, paninis and toasts, thin-sliced salami and super premium deli meats are the perfect items to highlight behind the glass."

Then there's the fact that people flat out like to snack, Depke points out. "It has been a game-changer in Volpi's ability to introduce these products to new audiences and convert them to everyday users."

According to a report from Mintel, Snacking Motivations and Attitudes U.S., nearly all Americans (94 percent) snack at least once a day. What's more, half of adults snack two to three times per day, with 70 percent agreeing that anything can be considered a snack these days. Mintel's research is pointing to the pervasive nature of snacking, as only a year ago 64 percent of consumers said they often snack between meals, according to Mintel's report.

Mintel's *The Fifty* highlights that more frequent snacking might be supplanting standard daily meals. Americans also claim a preference for healthier snacking, with 33



percent saying they are snacking on healthier foods this year compared to last year, specifically those with simple ingredients and low calorie counts. However, they most often snack to satisfy a craving (62 percent), highlighting the important role taste and flavor play on snacking behavior.

The rise in snacking has forced a shift

in how supermarkets structure their stores. Best in class stores are pushing for a 'better for you' snacking section included toward the front of the store, allowing consumers to quickly pick up a fresh lunchtime snack. "Grab-and-go is a top priority. Placing our Roltini Singles beside the fresh juice or kombucha is a great way to cross merchandise and increase basket rings," Depke adds.

Convenience in Packaging

But it's not all about snacking, not when shopper convenience is at stake. David Brandow, director, international sales, at Piller's Fine Foods in Waterloo, Ontario, says Piller's launched a new resealable type package with a non-zipper package format, which he says is exceedingly prevalent and well known in the U.S. "It's almost like a label," he notes. "It's easy peal, with a small tab at the bottom of the package. You just peel that up and it opens up a cavern, so to speak, in the package. People reach in and grab a couple of whips or slices of the product, depending on what they purchase, and then simply put that label back down overtop, and it reseals."

People also seek ease, including with pealibity as well as reseability, and sustainable packaging, says Jeff Brandenburg, president of The JSB Group, a consultant for the flexible, produce and food packaging industries. "(The emphasis is on) something that's recyclable, potentially compostable and made from a renewable resource. Those are the kinds of areas where you begin to see differentiation in innovation."

New convenient consumer packaging makes it easy for the consumer to use or



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take home or take on the go, which consumers are looking for, says Brandow.

Conveying the Message

More broadly, Volpi recognizes the importance of reaching out to the next generation of consumers. To help enable that initiative, it established a strong partnership with the U.S. Soccer Federation, which they plan to fully leverage during the Women's World Cup and Send Off Series this summer, explains Depke, "We've partnered with key retailers in high-power markets to build out integrated marketing campaigns around the series, featuring unique merchandising displays in-store, digital media campaigns and experiential events [highlighting these products]."

While it's not allowed in soccer, Brandow describes how he tackled the issue of shelf space with a buyer, to whom he introduced his company's product line. "The main pushback or concern that they have of bringing on products is they don't have enough counter space." But because can accommodate products, leading to

Once customers are in the store, Hormel uses the proper point of sale materials that highlight its products.

many of Brandow's Black Kassel's company's products dry aged and, therefore, shelf stable, "we can put them on display racks that they have in store. They can put them on attractive baskets that are on top of their existing counters or bunkers, or on top of the service deli counter and the knee knocker displays in front of the counter where they have the bread offerings."

What's more, unused room in the store

more sales per square foot, he adds. "It's a way to bring on new products without taking something out that's already in place," savs Brandow.

Highlighting Products

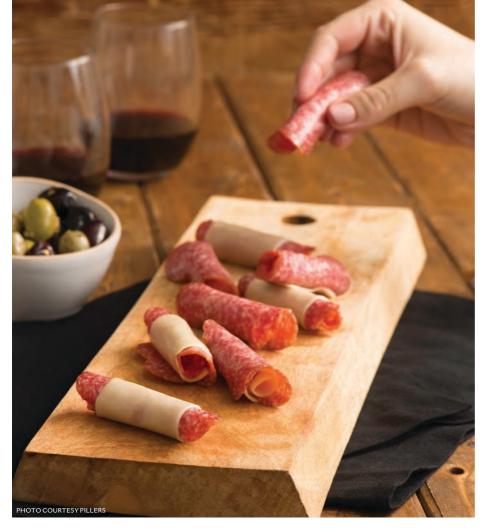
Once customers are in the store. Hormel uses the proper point of sale materials that highlight its products and pair suggestions for shoppers, essentially prompting them to create a "grocerant-worthy sandwich at home," says Inada.

Speaking of attracting the attention of shoppers, Brandow says that, prior to meeting the buyer, he visited one of his stores, where he saw a display of artisanal breads and buns, which Brandow savs his company's product would complement well. "If our products were displayed right next to them, a consumer would sav. 'Wow! Artisanal breads, artisanal deli meats, okay I get it. These two should go together.' So, they buy one of each at the same time."

Brandow also suggested his products, which are fermented like fine cheeses and wines, could be displayed in the buyer's wine department. "You can have a display of some Cabernets or other red wines and position our sliced salami or meat snacks next to it." When someone is looking for some wine and sees some fine salami, he notes, it could spark a sale.

In the meantime, Depke notes a shift over recent years toward pre-packaged specialty meat products. "Convenience plays a part in this demand, but also the ability of the consumer to connect with the package directly; understanding what the ingredients are—and what they aren't also plays a significant role."

As consumers become more discerning about the products they purchase, she continues, they want to know the story behind the salame. "A prepackaged format allows for that direct contact," he says. DB



Roast Beef Remains A Staple

Consumers are not giving up on red meat, which is still a strong seller, despite competition from alternative proteins



ne thing's certain: meats like roast beef aren't getting out of dodge, notes Roxanne Johnson, president of RJ & Associates in Houston

"Consumers aren't giving up beef, poultry or pork. Meat is here to stay," says Johnson. That said, what is changing is the approach shoppers are taking when eating, shopping and cooking, she continues. Their new considerations are convenience. ingredient and recipe inspiration, food production practices, better for me, the planet, and the animal. "We're opening our minds and mouths to these new foods and ingredients. Manufacturers are faced with recreating their core products. Retailers are challenged to become educated for the purpose of selling it," she says.

The United States consumed the fourth most beef per capita in the world in 2016, Beef2live.com reports.

A Growing Segment

Meat consumption here is likely to undergo a noticeable shift over the next decade, as production of beef and pork grows and prices decline, reports the Washington, D.C.-based USDA Economic

Stores also can promote roast beef by driving home its key selling points.

– IDDBA

Research Service. USDA baseline projections, which provide a long run view of the U.S. farm sector, show that production of beef and pork will expand steadily between 2016 and 2025, driven by lower feed costs and strong meat demand domestically and abroad. Both beef and pork production are projected to grow by 11.7 percent and 10.3 percent respectively during this period.

beef, of course, is cut from lean cuts of beef and is low in fat, rich in protein and loaded with beneficial minerals, reports SFGateHEalthyEating.

There's also a growing craving among

shoppers for snack food, which seems to be smack dab in the wheelhouse of roast beef. Besides its nutritional value, including new high end beef classifications like Kobe and Waygu, roast beef is also portable and flavorful, explains David Brandow, director, international sales, at Piller's Fine Foods in Waterloo, Ontario.

But shoppers also are thinking sand-Healthy products count, too, and roast wiches, pre-manufactured roast beef sandwiches, to be exact, even though a pre-manufactured product would, of course, have less potential for customization, both in terms of the amount of beef. type of bread and other add-ons, says Lars Perner, Ph.D., assistant professor of clinical marketing, department of marketing, Marshall School of Business. University of Southern California in Los Angeles. "Roast beef sandwiches are a product with a long history, and there's a history of custom orders." One caveat: with increasing concerns about dietary fat, he suspects that some of the business has been lost to chicken-based items and items based on other lower fat meats.

> That said, while sliced roast beef from the deli counter might make an ideal sandwich, it can also be used to create a number of different dishes

Getting the Word Out

Then there's the matter of fueling consumers' desires for meats like roast beef to begin with. Along those lines, Johnson cites evolving developments in marketing and merchandising, both of which she calls "a big deal that warrants serious attention." The fact that deli beef and ham. the traditional favorites, will need to be 'reborn' should be embraced. "Resistance." she adds, "will only waste time. [It's important to move forward with great knowledge, creative minds, re-education and strengthen everything in-store and in the deli, especially experiential events that



stimulate all five senses at one time."

She emphasizes the importance of diving deep into signage, digital, social media and mobile promotions with education.

Evan Inada, customer marketing manager at Columbus Craft Meats, part of Hormel Foods in Austin, MN, comments that merchandising items, such as condiments, cheeses and spreads, that enhance the beef, "is a great way to cross merchandise in or around the deli case. Making a 'go to set' of fresh ingredients to enhance the shopability of making a sandwich at home is a fun way to make a build-a-kit experience with your deli meats supported by recipes for craft sandwiches."

Brandow says roast beef marketing is a matter of having an understanding of free range and grass fed cows; the authentic story behind the higher end Kobe and Wagyu beef, and product usage in authentic recipes.

Stores also can promote roast beef by driving home its key selling points, like the fact it's a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin B6, vitamin 12 and zinc, says the IDDBA, which also

points to new roast beef flavor offerings and texture options.

Brandow suggests reinforcing its packaging in the form of individual portion or multi-packs of individual portions.

Proper Merchandising

Not surprisingly, regardless of the industry, it's important to only merchandise items together that make sense, states Bostonbased Repsly, which helps retail execution teams to achieve peak performance in the field and maximize their impact on sales. By leveraging mobile CRM software, field merchandisers can take photos of different displays to keep track of which items are being paired together in each store, and then the marketing team can analyze the sales data of those groupings to determine which ones sell most effectively together.

To succeed, cross merchandising relies on research and analysis, followed by the implementation of new ideas based on that research. The first step is arming yourself with knowledge about which brands your customers like most, says Repsly. Managers should have their field merchandisers regularly visit each store and collect customer data, such as the type of products being purchased, the quantity of the product, in addition to any special notes, such as whether an item is on sale. That way, companies can determine which of their cross merchandising strategies are working.

In the meantime, Johnson says both prepackaged and full service offerings are necessary. "Recognizing the introduction and expansion of self service fresh sliced and packaged roast beef has been interesting. It was curious from the start and not always executed in the finest manner," she says. But it has gained traction, thanks to support from customers who appreciate fresh sliced deli items but who are uninterested in extended waits.

"The concept has advanced from simplistic, small displays in a shared merchandiser to dedicated expanded displays, branded cases and new business." On top of that, "it's so operationally viable, production and labor positive and shouts 'fresh' and 'easy'. It's a great concept to building sales in the standard deli selection. I wish I'd thought of it," she exclaims.





With ethnic flavors and cleaner products available, the ham segment is undergoing a resurgence

BY CHUCK GREEN

overshadowed by turkey and smoked products." roast beef in deli departments,

am can sometimes seem to be very traditional types of naturally wood- sites in both Canada and the U.S., con-

Like other deli meats, shoppers apprebut cleaner labels and innova- ciate when ham is hormone free, raised tive varieties have meant added without antibiotics and incorporates natu-

Convenience remains a major underlying driver of packaging trends in the industry.

attention for this meat category.

Deli ham's ethnic flavors are a big drawing card for consumers, says David Brandow, director, international sales, at Piller's Fine Foods in Waterloo, Ontario. "[Consumers are] being introduced to

ral ingredients than products with chemical names, adds Roxanne Johnson, president of RJ & Associates in Houston.

Contract Testing Inc., which conducts sensory evaluation and consumer product testing, with corporately-managed test

ducted two central location product tests to explore the sliced and packaged varieties of deli black forest ham and turkey. It found that packaged Black Forest ham and turkey brands were all reasonably similar in meat protein, ingredients and nutritional labelling. Some test participants called out claims of gluten and lactose free, while others focused on product being a good source of protein or trans fat free.

The test also revealed some brands that achieved high standards of product performance, and some that didn't. Standing apart in the crowded space of the packaged deli section means providing the best possible sensory experience, one to which consumers will return, the company reports. It also found varied results in terms of the look and feel of the deli meats. The winning ham and turkey brands had just the right thickness and firmness, while the underperforming slices tended to be very thin and much too soft, wet and floppy.

The Importance of Packaging

As with the other meats, when it comes to packaging ham, it's largely a matter of being easy to open and reseal, notes Brandow. "The home demographics are getting smaller; the number of people per household is dropping. Couples on their own—or even single people on their own—are driving the market, which impacts the portion size and package."

Convenience is increasingly king in ham packaging, whether you're adding efficiencies within the supply chain or making it easier for consumers to put dinner on the table, according to Flairpackaging.com. Other marketing and demographic factors are in play, but convenience remains a major underlying driver of packaging trends in the industry.

Remaining Flexible

That points to the importance of flexible packaging, which is expected to represent most of the industry's growth over the next few years.

Leveraging the range and versatility of flexible packaging products can improve the marketability of meats and poultry in almost any form, whether you're packaging traditional cuts in case-ready materials or offering end users innovative single-serving prepared products for quick meals.



A trade consulting firm, The Freedonia Group, concluded in its 2017 survey of the industry's direction that "high-value meat packaging is expected to gain share tions and single-serving sizes will create over commodity alternatives or package formats." Judicious use of the right meat

packaging supplies can help you ride that wave, it adds.

Additionally, the trend to smaller porongoing opportunities for ham in vacuum pouch packaging.



Vacuum sealing provides raw meat cuts with roughly double the shelf life of conventional overwrapped retail trays, and the low-oxygen environment minimizes both oxidative browning and oxidative damage to the proteins and lipids in meats.

Vacuum pouches offer significant potential for value-added products targeting consumer interest in convenience, authenticity and artisanship. The printable packaging provides scope for additional

consumer appeal, providing the option to add recipe ideas, safe preparation and handling instructions or a compelling brand story, as needed.

Research bears out that push for reseal-ability; a recent survey from research firm Mintel showed that nearly half (47 percent) of consumers said they purchased lunchmeat in resealable packaging in the prior year. Many deli-meat packages are pegged on recloseability. While resealability and

pre-sliced products are key aspects of convenience, versatility is also tied to making things easier for the end-user. Processors are adding more versatility-driven features to ham packages.

William Knudson, professor in the department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics at Michigan State University in Lansing, adds that in packaging, the trend is eco-friendly packaging. "This has the potential to reduce the cost for processors, as consumers increasingly prefer minimal packaging."

Providing the Visual

Then there's the marketing and merchandising of meats like ham and "evolving developments," which Johnson describes as "a big deal that warrants serious attention." Deli beef and ham are traditional favorites that will need to be "reborn, resistance will only waste time." It's paramount, she declares, to move forward with great knowledge, creative minds, re-education and strengthen everything in-store and in deli, especially experiential events that stimulate all five senses at once.

She also encourages diving deeply into signage, digital, social media and mobile promotions with education.

It's also important where ham is placed, says Brandow. "Depending where it is on the shelf, you can imagine walking into a store that has a 10-foot-high counter, right down to probably two feet above the floor. What's at eye level is going to catch the consumers' eye. The other thing that is great for packages is claims, again like antibiotic free, natural, naturally wood smoked, no nitrates added and protein call outs, which are really key right now. People are looking for sources of protein."

But, of course, proof is in the pudding, which is where techniques like sampling come in, says Brandow. "Especially when it comes to new [ham] products. Getting consumers to try them will help convince them to make the purchase."

At the end of the day, he refers to behind the glass deli counter as 'like a showroom' for a car dealership. "In the showroom, you've got the top of the line models, but a consumer purchases off the lot. The deli counter is the showcase, and the graband-go package format is what they'd buy most often because nobody wants to wait in line at the deli counter. They'd rather say, 'oh, that looks good' and then they see it prepackaged, buy it and away they go," says Brandow.



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Caputo Crafting Customized Distinction

aputo 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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