

# DELI BUSINESS

MARKETING MERCHANDISING MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT  
FEB/MAR 2018 \$14.95

*U.S. Made Italian*



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THE ART OF ENGAGEMENT  
GRAB AND GO  
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# CONTENTS

## FEATURE

### The Art Of Engagement ..... 21

Employees as your customers

## MERCHANDISING REVIEW

### Staying On Top Of Grab & Go ..... 27

Keeping current on this evolving category pays off

## CHEESE CORNER

### The Truth About Raw Milk Cheese ..... 32

A look at opportunities in this differentiating cheese segment

## COVER STORY 14

Delis are incorporating American-produced Italian offerings, further capitalizing on the popularity of the wide range of products available





# CONTENTS

## DELI MEATS

### Rotisserie Chicken.....36 At The Center Of The Plate

The complete package answers "What's for dinner?"

## PREPARED FOODS

### Pizza Keeps On Rising .....39

A new generation remakes a familiar favorite



## COMMENTARIES

### EDITOR'S NOTES

### Internet Food Shopping..... 10 Dilutes Brand Exclusivity

### PUBLISHER'S INSIGHTS

### Unexpected Benefit ..... 12 of Employee Satisfaction

## IN EVERY ISSUE

DELI WATCH .....	8
INFORMATION SHOWCASE.....	42
BLAST FROM THE PAST .....	42





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

FREDDY PULIDO

**RESEARCH DIRECTOR**

SHARON OLSON

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**CAROL BAREUTHER BOB JOHNSON  
KEITH LORIA SHARON OLSONSEND INSERTION ORDERS, PAYMENTS, PRESS RELEASES,  
PHOTOS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, ETC., TO:  
DELI BUSINESSP.O. BOX 810217, BOCA RATON, FL 33481-0217  
PHONE: 561-994-1118 FAX: 561-994-1610  
EMAIL: DELIBUSINESS@PHOENIXMEDIANET.COM**PHOENIX MEDIA NETWORK, INC.**CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
JAMES E. PREVOREXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
KENNETH L. WHITACRESENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
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DEBRA PREVORTRADE SHOW COORDINATOR  
JACKIE LOMONTEDELI BUSINESS IS PUBLISHED BY  
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## Consorzio Del Prosciutto Di Parma Launches Foodservice Training Website



**C**onsorzio del Prosciutto di Parma recently unveiled its newest training hub known as "The Whole Leg." The website (thewholeleg.com) is dedicated to educating chefs and foodservice professionals on using the entire leg of Pro-

sciutto di Parma with tips and training that reduce waste and boost profits.

The new training platform serves as a one-stop-shop for foodservice professionals looking to learn more about working with Prosciutto di Parma. In addition to helping chefs maximize the product's value, the goal of the site is also usage-based. Specifically, reducing overall food waste when using the product, by redirecting food scraps from the trash to the table.

Through extensive primary research with chef and foodservice audiences, the Consorzio discovered a void in digital training resources around prosciutto. This need was amplified by findings from a recent Consorzio study, which revealed that specifying Prosciutto di Parma on menus allowed chefs to charge \$1 to \$3 more because customers are willing to pay extra knowing they were getting a geographically-protected, high quality, 100 percent natural cured ham.

Featuring hand-drawn illustrations and professional photography, the new training hub serves as a comprehensive platform for chefs and foodservice professionals to learn how to properly identify, prepare, store, use and serve Prosciutto di Parma.

In addition, users can also download training materials, find a supplier, sign up for in-person trainings and join the Cured & Crafted monthly newsletter.

## COMING NEXT IN APRIL/MAY ISSUE

**COVER STORY**

Sandwiches

**DELI MEATS**

Artisan Salami

**FEATURE STORIES**

Food Safety

**PREPARED FOODS**

Food Bars

**MERCHANDISING REVIEWS**Sandwich Condiments  
Ribs & Wings  
Pickles**CHEESE CORNER**Roquefort  
American**PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES**

Packaging

**COMING IN JUNE/JULY**

DELI BUSINESS will be taking a look at the 13th Annual People's Awards.

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# DELI WATCH

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### SCHUMAN CHEESE CEO HONORED

Schuman Cheese, Fairfield, NJ, has announced its CEO Neal Schuman has been selected as the national winner in the Family Business category of the national EY Entrepreneur Of The Year 2017 program. The EY Entrepreneur Of The Year Program recognizes entrepreneurs who demonstrate excellent and extraordinary success in areas such as financial performance, innovation and commitment to their businesses and communities.

[www.schumancheese.com](http://www.schumancheese.com)



### RESER'S SPONSORS MONSTER ENERGY NASCAR CUP SERIES

Reser's Fine Foods, Beaverton, OR, has entered its sixth season with Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR) and third with Erik Jones, who will compete in the 2018 Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series (MENCS) in the No. 20 Toyota. The 38-race partnership affirms the company's commitment to NASCAR fans. Reser's will be the primary sponsor of races in Texas in April; Kansas in May; and Charlotte in September and will be a major associate sponsor for the balance of the MENCS season.

[www.resers.com](http://www.resers.com)



### ROGUE CREAMERY WINS NUMEROUS HONORS

Rogue Creamery, Denver, has announced a number of recent awards. These include first place for its Organic Cavemen Blue and Echo Mountain Blue, and second place for its Organic Tolman Blue at the Annual American Cheese Society Competition; a place on the 2017 Best for the World Overall list; and a gold medal for its Rogue River Blue as well as a bronze for its Echo Mountain Blue at the 30th Annual World Cheese Awards in London.

[www.roguecreamery.com](http://www.roguecreamery.com)



### BEAVERTON FOODS' HORSERADISH HONORED

Beaverton Foods, Hillsboro, OR, has announced its Beaver Brand Extra Hot Horseradish has received the ChefsBest 2018 Award of Excellence. ChefsBest identifies and honors the best-tasting grocery products to support the companies that make them and the people who choose to select them. By utilizing a "Sensory Attribute Quality Analysis" (SAQA) judging process, the ChefsBest Certified Master Tasters identify high-quality and best-tasting food, which can result in one of three awards.

[www.beavertonfoods.com](http://www.beavertonfoods.com)

## TRANSITION



### WMMB CHEESE PREDICTIONS

The Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Madison, WI, recently predicted the top five ways consumers will enjoy specialty cheese in 2018. These include on a cheese board; with bold flavors added in; blended with other cheese varieties; as a gourmet snack; and as part of a meal kit.

[www.wmmmb.com](http://www.wmmmb.com)



### I LOVE IMPORTED CHEESE CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF

The Cheese Importers Association of America, Washington, D.C., has launched an integrated promotions campaign to raise awareness of imported cheese. Sponsored by the Imported Cheese Board with funds derived from the United States Qualified Import Program, the "I Love Imported Cheese" campaign targets American specialty cheese consumers through social media, in-store merchandising, sampling events and a website with cooking videos, recipes, cheese profiles, pairings and entertaining ideas.

[www.ciaa.org](http://www.ciaa.org)



### DEIORIOS HIRES MARKETING HEAD

Delorios Foods Inc., Utica, NY, has announced Adam Hovey will handle marketing and inside sales. He brings a degree in business administration and experience with internet marketing to his post. Hovey's responsibilities will include in-house marketing and managing a working relationship with outside entities. He also shares responsibility in sales, will be active at trade shows and will be taking in-house inquiries from new and existing customers.

[www.deiorios.com](http://www.deiorios.com)



### LAND O'LAKES ANNOUNCES POSTINGS

Land O'Lakes, Inc., Arden Hills, MN, has announced the promotions of Beth Ford and Brad Oelmann. As chief operating officer, Ford will oversee the WinField United business, and continue P&L responsibility for both the Purina Animal Nutrition and the Land O'Lakes Dairy Foods businesses. Oelmann will serve as chief operating officer of Land O'Lakes Services, responsible for Member Services and Business Development Services, and SUSTAIN, Crop Nutrients, FLM Harvest and Government Relations.

[www.landolakes.com](http://www.landolakes.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](mailto:DeliBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com)**



## NEW PRODUCTS



### A ROYAL INTRO

Somerdale International, United Kingdom, has introduced new cheeses for the U.S. market. Westminster Cheddar, traditionally made by the Heler family in the Northwest of England is a 12-month aged Cheddar certified non-GMO with hints of burnt caramel and a sweet nuttiness. Claddagh Bó is a handcrafted Irish aged Cheddar made in County Limerick using milk from grass fed cows. A new range of Westminster Cheddar mini Snack Packs feature six 0.71-ounce wrapped portions of Westminster Sharp Non-GMO certified Cheddar.

[www.somerdale.com](http://www.somerdale.com)



### NO SALT TUNA

Wild Planet Foods Inc., McKinleyville, CA, offers 100 percent pole and line caught Wild Skipjack Light Tuna with no salt added. This sustainably-caught line is packed and cooked in a 43-ounce pouch pack with no fillers, broths or pyrophosphates. Its preparation method captures the tuna's natural juices, with no need to drain and no waste.

[www.wildplanet-foodservice.com](http://www.wildplanet-foodservice.com)



### GERMAN CHEESE ADDED TO ROSTER

Schuman Cheese, Fairfield, NJ, in partnership with German company Bergader Privatkäserei, will now be the exclusive importer and distributor of Bergader cheeses. Varieties include Bavaria Blue, the original triple crème blue soft cheese hybrid, as well as Edelpliz, the German alpine blue cheese, and a range of Bavarian soft cheeses. Bergader crafts its cheeses with Bavarian alpine milk following time-tested original recipes.

[www.schumancheese.com](http://www.schumancheese.com)



### CHEESE PROCEEDS FUND CLEAN WATER

The Farm at Doe Run, Avondale, PA, has released a new Mayfly cheese to protect streams and rivers. The Farm at Doe Run is donating 10 percent of proceeds from the cheese to the Stroud Center, an independent, non-advocacy non-profit organization dedicated to advancing knowledge and stewardship of fresh water through scientific research, environmental education and watershed restoration worldwide.

[www.chestercountycheese.org](http://www.chestercountycheese.org)



### MARINATED GOAT CHEESE UNVEILED

Laura Chenel's, Sonoma, CA, has introduced Black Truffle Cabecou, the third in its marinated goat cheese line. Featuring rich, earthy overtones of truffles, the line is dense, yet soft and steeped in truffle oil and black truffles. The round is dried on racks for five days prior to being hand-packed in leak-proof, recyclable plastic jars. Other varieties include Original Marinated Cabecou with Herbs and Marinated Spicy Cabecou.

[www.laurachenel.com](http://www.laurachenel.com)



### CELEBRITY GOAT CHEESE

Atalanta Corp., Elizabeth, NJ, offers Mariposa Dairy's Celebrity Goat Cheese, a mild, tangy product that is unique as a snacking option or spread. The award-winning line is made with 100 percent Canadian goat's milk from family-run farms in Eastern Ontario. Produced with microbial rennet, it's a vegetarian product. Flavor varieties include Chocolatey Cherry and Rum Raisin. Mariposa Dairy closely works with 50 family-run farms that use modern humane practices.

[www.atalantacorp.com](http://www.atalantacorp.com)



### AUTHENTIC PITA DEBUTS

California Lavash, Gilroy, CA, has introduced a thin, all-crust Traditional and Whole Grain Pita. The new pita joins the existing flatbread line that includes lavash and naan. The product is vegan and non-GMO Project Verified. The company has recently expanded its product lines into retail grocery stores, allowing consumers to produce restaurant-caliber wraps and other recipes at home.

[www.californialavash.com](http://www.californialavash.com)



### OLIVES ARE SUSTAINABLY GROWN

Legacy III Partners, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, offers Alive & Well probiotic-rich organic olives that are sustainably sourced. Grown, harvested and cured on small family farms and village co-ops throughout Greece, each olive batch is naturally fermented to preserve its taste and live, active cultures, which are similar to those found in naturally cultured yogurt, cheese and sauerkraut. Five varieties are available.

[www.aliveandwellolives.com](http://www.aliveandwellolives.com)



# Internet Food Shopping Dilutes Brand Exclusivity



By  
**Jim Prevor**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

**T**he best use of branding in the deli is uncertain. The industry's most prominent brand, Boar's Head, has much equity with consumers. But the Boar's Head deli positioning, with prominent signage and a commitment to keep non-Boar's Head SKUs to a minimum, is also problematic. Unless a retailer has an exclusive in its area — the Boar's Head positioning makes it difficult or impossible to differentiate oneself from other stores that feature almost identical delis.

Of course, that close identification with one brand leaves a retailer vulnerable if it was to ever lose the right to sell the brand or if a competitor begins selling it. And in an age of increasingly prevalent internet shopping, the whole idea of exclusivity is uncertain. Fresh Direct, for example, sells Boar's Head product, so if a retailer's stores are within a Fresh Direct delivery zone, they don't really have an exclusive.

Tying one's reputation to a master brand has the great advantage of simplifying procurement, but it also makes it difficult to use this as a competitive edge.

Sam Walton used to speak about Wal-Mart as the buying agent for the consumer. He was speaking of price, but also quality. Translated into food, it means the consumer should be able to trust not just food safety, sustainability and traceability in the supply chain, but also that the retailer has curated a quality assortment of products based on more than a one brand relationship.

Kroger has squared the circle on many of these dilemmas with its in-store Murray's Cheese Shops. A reputable name and brand that has equity with consumers, Murray's was purchased by Kroger supermarkets so it can maintain exclusivity when desired. Since the brand is retail, Kroger can still procure specific products, including a large array of items and brands from around the world.

This issue's cover story, *U.S.-Made Italian* (page 14), includes a look at the Volpi Foods store-within-a-store concept being executed at Schnucks. Because both Volpi and Schnucks are St. Louis-based, the concept manages to simultaneously tie in global cuisine trends with local sourcing. There is a hometown pride element that will be difficult for others to duplicate — though, of course, these

unique elements also may limit the scalability of the concept.

Private-label branding also is a seemingly irresistible trend for supermarkets, and the trend extends to the supermarket deli. With the rapid growth of concepts that are heavy or exclusively private label, such as Aldi, Trader Joe's and Lidl, and the enormous margin pressures such concepts create, one can only see the trend continuing. However expedient, even necessary, such an effort might be, it comes with a price.

Consumer-brand companies use their margins to market and do research and development on new products. If retailers turn to private label, who will develop the new products and do the marketing that increases consumption and builds the next generation of consumers?

Also, it may be completely fine to have private label laundry detergent, but food sales, especially food in the deli/retail foodservice arena, depend on being evocative and eliciting desire from the consumers. Turning the department over to massive brands can lift consumption of new products due to consumer confidence in the brand, but it can also create a homogenized, even boring, offer.

Using one brand in the deli makes retailing easier. But if a retailer is going to survey the globe and identify unique high-quality products, most likely from smaller companies that don't have the funds for mass marketing, the retailer not only has to invest in procurement but also has to take on the obligation of teaching consumers about each one of these products.

It's great to create a store-within-a-store retail brand or collaborate with a specialized vendor to build unique venues that others can't duplicate. But if you drop the job of building brand equity in your own store and stop curating unique assortments by surrendering that equity to one brand, don't be surprised when some internet food site swoops across your trading area offering the same brand and the same assortment all at a cheaper price with some convenience thrown in.

At that point, there will be a rush to leverage a store's own brand equity, but retailers may find that there is not much equity left to leverage. **DB**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "James F. Prevor".



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# Unexpected Benefits of Employment Satisfaction



By  
**Lee Smith**  
*Publisher*

**S**haron Olson and Y-Pulse, a division of Chicago-based Olson Communications, have shared with us an article called, “The Art of Engagement,” researching the power of employee satisfaction and its impact on business.

Notable is the attitude that deli department employees are viewed as working in the foodservice arena as opposed to working as retail clerks. Since I have worked in grocery, produce and deli departments, I am in complete agreement that deli is more foodservice than retail, especially with the growth of high-quality prepared foods.

Deli service is far more than a polite smile. If you work in the deli, you are the face most customers relate to. As a deli clerk, you help people select products and determine quantity, quality and product differences, much like a waiter or waitress does in a restaurant. You may provide nutritional information. With a clean coat or apron, hat and clean hands, you are the living personification of food safety assurances.

If you are more directly involved in prepared foods, you are often behind the counter, preparing soups from the same company that sells to restaurants and institutions. Making sandwiches in a supermarket or a deli or a restaurant is the same, although today's deli departments often offer the best alternatives in town.

The really big change in the last few years is supermarket delis are often the first choice for traditional foodservice offerings. Twenty minutes down the road from me, is a supermarket called Yoder's with a full restaurant that is a sought-out breakfast destination. They make all their own donuts from scratch; in fact, everything is made on the premises!

On the other hand, come movie time, we always plan on having dinner at Wegmans, whether we're in the mood for sandwiches, the Chinese food bar, sushi or pizza. They have become our first choice.

Rotisserie chicken is almost untouchable. Restaurants have tried to compete, but the best

is always at a local supermarket – reasonably priced; hot, fresh and juicy with crispy skin. While all supermarkets have not embraced foodservice, the best have and are competing with restaurants quite successfully.

Going back to “The Art of Engagement,” there are more surprises in the research results. In almost every case, retail deli/foodservice associates had a higher level of satisfaction than people employed in traditional foodservice venues. Of course, maybe that is not surprising.

As Olson points out, retail offers better hours, year-round employment, benefits and a more stable environment. Retail also offers more room for personal growth, a better-defined career path and more respect. Unless you are a celebrity chef at a fine dining restaurant, there is usually little growth in the restaurant industry. In retail, however, the uncelebrated can rise to the top.

That was my experience. I was a music major in college and when I got out into the world, there were no music jobs. So, I got a job as a “scale girl” in the produce department of a local supermarket. For me, it worked out and has brought me great personal satisfaction.

The result of having challenged employees who view their jobs as a career path to long term success, who are team players and enjoy their jobs has many more benefits than just reduced turnover.

As the Y-Pulse's research shows, these associates are the community good will ambassadors. And, since most retail clerks tend to live near to where they work, they can spread a positive message and have immediate results. Since this study is research about what is happening, congratulations are in order. For others still struggling with the changing dynamics of today's retail environment, take note.

**DB**

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Lee Smith.



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# U.S.-Made Italian



**Delis are incorporating American-produced Italian offerings, further capitalizing on the popularity of the wide range of products available**

BY CAROL BAREUTHER



MAKE ENTERTAINING EASY





**F**elino, Copia, Bresaola and Culatello. These are just a few of the Italian-style cured meat products offered in the new 'store-within-a-store' concept at the Des Peres, MO-location of Schnucks supermarkets.

This St. Louis-based, 100-unit retail chain collaborated with fellow hometown headquartered supplier, Volpi Foods, to offer Volpi-brand products akin to the way Kroger has incorporated Murray's Cheese shops in-store. The prototype 6-foot-long refrigerated glass-fronted case of products is located within the specialty cheese set, across from deli and behind the craft beer display. It boasts a rich, authentic look, right down to cured meats hanging over-top the case like a true Italian salumeria.

However, this partnership stemmed from much more than a general desire to offer Schnucks' customers Italian foods. After all, pizza and pasta are ubiquitous in American supermarket delis. It's more the fact that Volpi, like other U.S.-based producers of traditional Italian products, uniquely blends the Old World and New World. For example, the company combines the time-honored process of low temperature fermentation with twists, such as locally-sourced fresh pork from heritage breeds and from heirloom farms. In doing so, these products strike a chord with what today's customers are



PHOTO COURTESY OF DI STEFANO

looking for when shopping the supermarket deli, according to Derick Rosinski, Schnucks' category manager for deli. "At any given time, you may find up to nearly 50 high-quality, clean-labelled and artisan Volpi products in our stores."

The evolution in consumer demand for Italian foods in the United States, spe-

cifically American-made Italian foods in the supermarket deli, has been tremendous over the past five years, according to Simone Bocchini, chief operating officer and president of Mount Olive, NJ-based Fratelli Beretta USA, Inc. "Not only is this evident in the variety of products demanded, but also in the quality of the products sought after. We saw the trend starting a few years back, with consumers having a greater knowledge of this category, knowing exactly what they want and exactly what they like. Thus, demand is increasing every year."

### Ticking the Trends Boxes

Authenticity and quality, clean labels and distinctive flavors and forms are key attributes of U.S.-made Italian products, such as deli meats and cheeses.

"Consumers are foremost looking for authenticity," says Shelby Walker, marketing coordinator for the South Chesterfield, VA-based Campofrio Food Group America, which markets cured meats under the Fiorucci-brand. "For example, we continue to create in the United States the same products we currently manufacture in Italy. This allows us to bring from our European operations both the true heritage and the new trends, while meeting U.S. standards. If a company is not able to represent their authentic heritage in their products, consumers will not choose



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRATELLI BERETTA



their brand. Authenticity is the way people choose whether or not to connect and engage with an Italian brand.”

The authentic nature of U.S.-made Italian products is founded not only in production methods, but also in conditions that mimic those of the mother country as well as high-quality, ultra-fresh starting ingredients.

“Our Italian-Style dry salumi is one of our most popular domestically-produced products,” says Giuliana Pozzuto, marketing director for the George DeLallo Co., in Mount Pleasant, PA. “These dry-cured sausages are made in the same way they are in Italy — even down to the geography of the land, in an area that mimics Italy’s dry mountain air.”

Similarly, it’s the climatic influences of the Mississippi River, rather than the river Po in Parma, Italy, that is essential to the prosciutto produced by Volpi, says Tim Urban, chief commercial officer. “Our prosciutto has a more subtle, fresher forward, sweeter tasting fat than the deeper flavored Prosciutto de Parma. It’s like United States versus European wines. The former has more of a fresh fruit notes, while the later has stewed fruit or jam-like notes. The idea, like in wines, is not to promote one versus the other, but to promote the overall pie of consumption.”

Milk sourced less than 30 miles from the cheese-making plant is used in the production of American Grana by BelGioioso Cheese Inc., in Green Bay, WI. “This premium Parmesan is made the same traditional way as imports, that is, aged on wooden shelves for 18 to 24 months, except that we use fresh Wisconsin milk,” says Jamie Wichlacz, marketing public relations manager. As a result, “our flavors are unique and the quality high at an affordable price point. Consumers today are more aware of the quality of American-made Italian cheeses.”

The quality of core ingredients is also a priority for Fratelli Beretta USA with its product line, according to Bocchini. “We focus a lot on the freshness of the raw material and our old-time processing method. This allows us to bridge the gap with the imported item that requires at least 30 days of transportation from Italy before it reaches the U.S. market.”

A product’s entire ingredient list is important to shoppers, too. In fact, clean labels or ingredient lists that read like a recipe rather than a chemist’s catalog, are a potentially profitable trend. For example,

## The authentic nature of U.S.-made Italian products is founded not only in production methods, but also in conditions that mimic those of another country.



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73 percent of consumers surveyed in 2016 by London, UK-headquartered public relations agency, Ingredient Communications, said they'd be happy to pay more for a food or drink product that contains recognizable ingredients.

"There's a rising tide, a crescendo if you will, of consumers who look for minimal processing and clean labels," says Volpi's Urban. "This speaks to our products. There's no MSG, artificial color or flavors or nitrites."

The opening of a new plant in Mount Olive, NJ, has enabled Fratelli Beretta to develop a special line of no nitrate or nitrite added salami with a 45 percent reduced sodium content, says Bocchini. "The combination of these two factors is definitely something new to the industry and really focuses on consumer attention to a clean, understandable ingredients list as well as health concerns."

Clean label cheeses are a hallmark of products made by the Di Stefano Cheese Co., LLC, in Pomona, CA. The company, founded in 2009, helped put lesser known Italian-style cheeses like Burrata on the U.S. culinary map.

"Our smoked Scamorza, for example, is hand smoked; we don't use liquid smoke," explains Alyssa Lightner, national sales manager. "Our Mascarpone is thick with cream, not gums and fillers."

Beyond authentic quality and clean labels, says Campofrio's Walker, "Consumers also constantly demand consistent and unique flavors but with a sense of indulgence."

A good example with Southern Italian origins is Di Stefano's Caciocavallo, which the company produces in both lemon and orange flavors as well as traditional and smoked varieties.

"A whole lemon or orange is placed inside the cheese as it's shaped by hand. Then, the fruit's flavor permeates the cheese as it ages," explains Lightner.

Volpi has enjoyed success with its wine-infused cured Italian meats, says Urban. Examples include a Chianti Salami, Rosé Salami and California Pinot Grigio Salami, each sold in 8-ounce chubs.

The recently-introduced La Bottega di BelGioioso line of handcrafted Italian cheeses includes the newly-created Artigiano, a small batch hard cheese available in three flavors: Vino Rosso, nutty Classico and Aged Balsamic & Cipolline Onion, each sold in 4-ounce wedges.

As for form, suppliers are creating con-



PHOTO COURTESY OF DELALLO





venient snack-type products to fit U.S. consumers' shift from the European-style of three meals a day. In fact, nearly 94 percent of Americans snack at least once daily, and more than half of Americans snack two or three times a day, according to *Snacking Motivation and Attitudes US 2015*, a report by Mintel.

Examples include Volpi's fast-growing 1.5-ounce single-serve meat-wrapped Mozzarella cheese sticks in three choices: pepperoni, prosciutto and spicy salami. Additionally, BelGioioso expanded its snacking cheese line from 1-ounce fresh Mozzarella snacks to include ¾-ounce Fontina and Parmesan snacks, along with a Provolone-salami snacking roll sold two per 1.5-ounce pack.



### On-Trend Ways to Sell

Variety always sells, and it's important to offer something for everyone.

"We have all four segments represented in our store-within-a-store concept at Schnucks: classic behind the glass, self-service deli, specialty deli case and snacks," says Volpi's Urban.

It's best to market American-made

Italian-style goods alongside their Italian counterparts, recommends DaLallo's Pozzuto. "This is where consumers will go for their Italian goodies, but also, they can compare the quality of the domestic product with the Italian product."

Hanging a whole waxed and roped Provolone in the deli department from

a BelGioioso-provided wooden rack draws attention, according to Wichlacz, especially if it's also promoted with a guess-the-weight contest.

Also effective is providing deli shoppers with meal solutions and increasing the deli's basket ring through cross merchandising.

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lar entertaining spreads (charcuterie plates, cheese boards, etc.), our domestic Italian-Style Salumi line is a natural fit for deli displays featuring entertaining ideas for all seasons: from game day get-togethers to holiday parties and everything in between,” says DaLallo’s Pozzuto.

For in-store supermarket deli marketing, says Campofrio’s Walker, “shippers, product displays and cross promotions, particularly with wine products, tend to work very well. Having small snacking presentations or sophisticated meals in stores can create excitement around preparing a meal. While it is not as traditional, it creates a feeling of something special for the consumer.”

The story behind a product, in other words, the ‘why’ and ‘how’ behind it, have become as important as the product itself, often becoming the primary decision-making criteria that drives a purchase, according to the August 21, 2017-released report by Nielsen, *It’s Clear: Transparency is Winning the U.S. Retail Market*.

A combination of older and new generation customers is the demographic of U.S.-manufactured Italian-style foods, and

## Digital platforms are one of the latest ways to target and connect with shoppers.

these shoppers are looking for authentic old fashion-style products, according to Fratelli Beretta USA’s Bocchini. “Vintage’ is a word that applies to fashion and food. Consumers want to discover, or re-discover, the flavor of the past; simple and clean. The deli manager should allow suppliers to display more information about their items, the making of it and the passion that goes into the process. A small name tag at times is not enough to transmit all the difference between an imported item or a domestic item and their quality. The Millennials are driving a lot of these changes in the category with their curiosities and attention.”

Finally, digital platforms are one of the

latest ways to target and connect with shoppers. In fact, 77 percent of U.S. shoppers have used their smartphone in the store when shopping, according to the *Mobile Maturity Model: 2016 U.S. Retail* report by Bethesda, MD-based Mobility Services Co, DMI.

“By trying to create social media-optimized photos and sharing easy-to-prepare, non-traditional recipes, we are able to connect with our consumers more efficiently than ever before. True Italian brands with authentic original recipes and flavor profiles can be displayed next to any imported products. The same cannot be said if you do not have authentic Italian roots,” says Campofrio’s Walker. **DB**



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRATELLI BERETTA



# THE ART OF ENGAGEMENT

**Employees as your customers**

BY SHARON OLSON

**T**he line between customer and employee is not always clear, especially in today's deli and foodservice operations. Consumers under 35 are among the most sought-after customers, and they are also vitally important to the workforce. This year's study explored specific aspects of the workplace experience in the retail food industry and the significant impact this experience has on employees' personal food and foodservice decisions.

The Y-Pulse survey collected insights and opinions from consumers age 35 and under about their experiences at work and their choices when dining out or purchasing food away from home. Of the more than 1,400 survey participants who worked in retail food establishments, more than 400 worked in deli operations. The survey included workers with direct customer contact as well as those working in the back-of-the-house operations.

The food industry employs more than 14.7 million people, according to the Washington, D.C.-based National Restaurant Association. The perception of jobs in the food industry as being mind-numbing choices of last resort employment does not reflect the opinions of the majority of the respondents in this survey. Indeed, the majority of those surveyed said they want to continue working in foodservice for a full-time career. That sentiment increases with experience; among employees with four or more years of experience, 75 percent want to continue working in the business. Eighty-seven percent of those with four or more years of experience would recommend their employer to someone who wanted to work in foodservice.

Foodservice employees interviewed for this study said managers who pitch in and help at peak periods earn their respect and make the workplace more enjoyable.

Employees also noted managers who have been promoted from entry-level jobs give them a clear view of the opportunities that might be available to them.

## **The Pleasures Of The Food Business**

There are a lot of different jobs in the food business, some more appealing than others, yet more positive experiences were reported than negative ones. Eighty-three percent of survey participants reported they liked their foodservice job. Among deli employees, 92 percent had a job they liked and 88 percent said they would recommend their employer to someone who wanted to work in foodservice. Some of the reasons mentioned for liking a job in the deli business more than restaurants were higher pay, benefits and the chance to get to know their customers who visit regularly. Eighty-six percent said they liked dealing with customers at their job and 87





their coworkers were their friends, and the percentage was even higher for deli employees at 94 percent.

### Experience Shapes Expectations

Previous Y-Pulse studies have revealed younger consumers pay great attention to how employers treat their employees and that it affects their decisions when dining out. This study took a closer look at the relationship that exists between co-workers and their management. Ninety-three percent of the employees said they seek out restaurants that treat their employees well when they dine out. Because of their work experience, they are able to spot subtleties related to management behaviors that the average consumer might not notice. Eighty-nine percent of those surveyed said great management impacts their overall experience positively when they dine out.

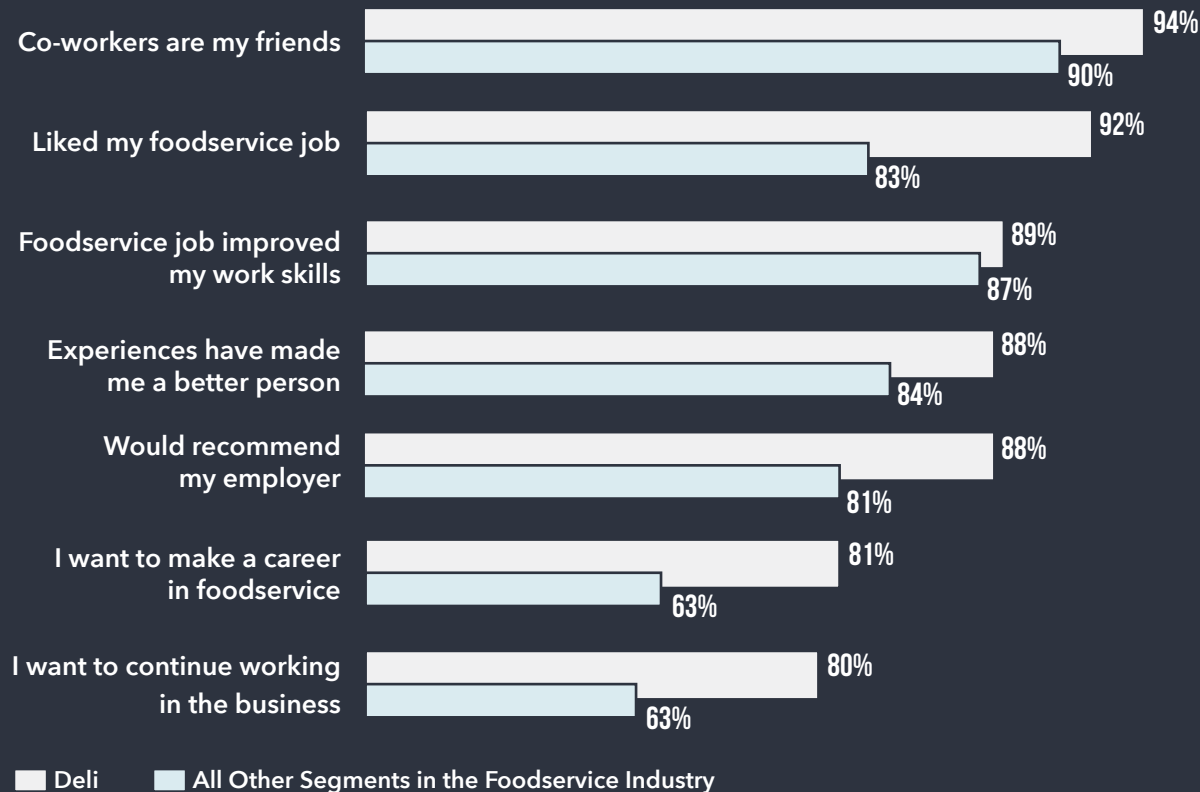
Experiences at work also create a service expectation when employees dine out, as 83 percent compare their away

percent enjoyed helping customers find something delicious to eat.

The food business has a way of connecting people whether they are working or enjoying a meal. The vast majority of those surveyed (89 percent) agreed that

## EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction is high and deli employees tend to be more satisfied than those in other segments of the food industry.



Source: Y-Pulse® (ypulse.org) 2017

Figures show % agreeing with statement



from home experience to their experience at work. Ninety-three percent of those surveyed also said they were able to tell when a restaurant had good food safety or cleanliness practices.

Those who have an insider's perspective from working in the foodservice industry can be even more impatient with poor service when they dine out. Eighty-five percent said they were more critical of service in a restaurant than before they started working in the foodservice industry.

On the other hand, experience gained from working in the foodservice industry provides employees/customers with a better understanding of the difficulties faced by their counterparts when dining out. They are able to appreciate the efforts and professionalism of other employees, even when off duty. As a result, those who work in the industry are more inclined to give second chances, with 83 percent saying they usually give a restaurant a second chance if the dining experience didn't meet their expectations.

## It is a true testimony to a foodservice establishment when its employees want to dine there on their own time.

Great service also drives return visits, with 90 percent in agreement that service is a key factor in their decision to return again to a restaurant.

### Pride in the Workplace

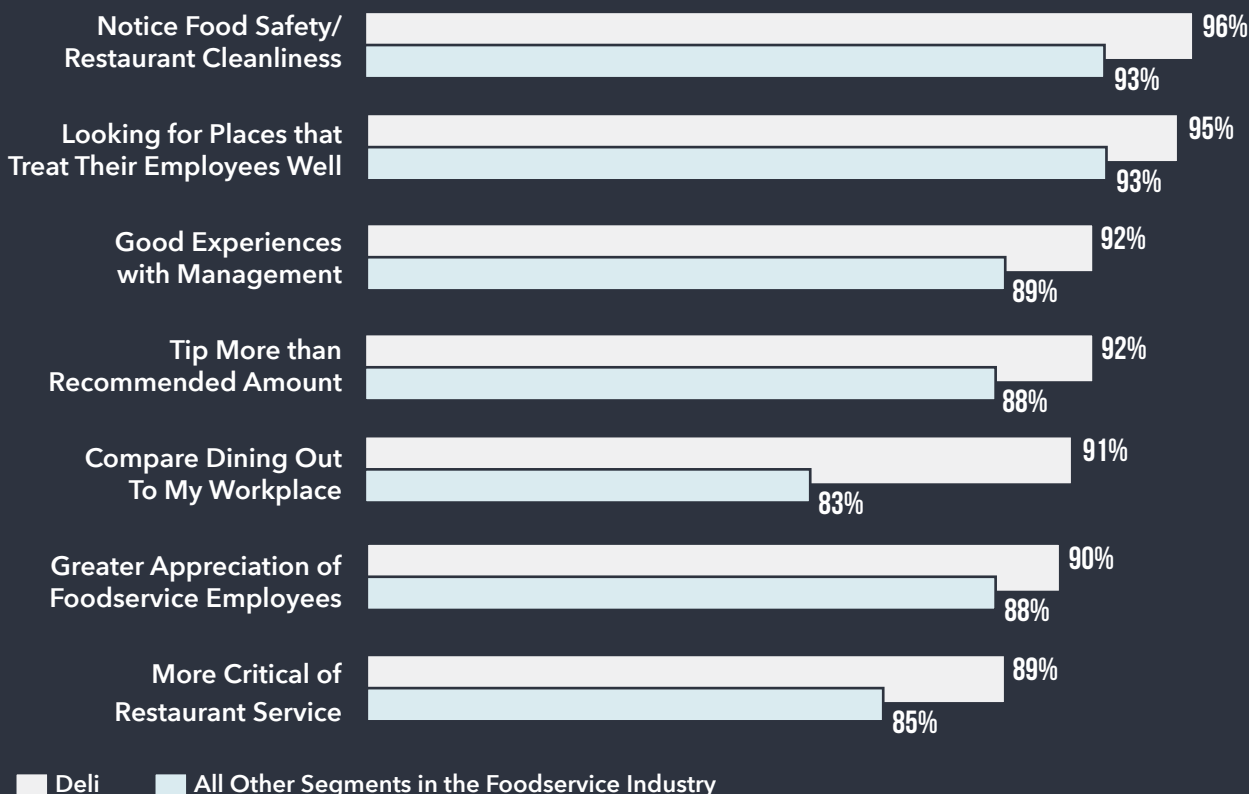
When employees are on the front lines with customers, their enthusiasm and sincerity can make a real difference. Seventy-two percent of employees surveyed said they enjoy eating where they work. Foodservice can be a very demanding job, and there are often restrictions

or incentives for employees to dine in the workplace. In higher end foodservice establishments, price points make it unrealistic for employees to dine at work, even with discounts. Yet, in many cases, employees appreciated employers' policies to provide food at no cost.

When asked about their perceptions of the quality of food where they work, 82 percent of the total sample said, "I am glad to work in a place that has really good food;" that percentage was even higher for deli employees at 88 percent.

## FOODSERVICE EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE DINING OUT BEHAVIOR

Workplace Experience Shape Expectations and Behaviors when Dining Out.



Source: Y-Pulse® (ypulse.org) 2017

Figures show % agreeing with statement



Perception of food quality drives employee preference to dine at their workplace; 84 percent indicated the quality of the food makes them want to eat where they work, and 91 percent of deli employees shared this sentiment. Seventy-nine percent of deli employees said, “I never get tired of the food where I work.”

### When Employees Become Customers

It is a true testimony to a foodservice establishment when its employees want to dine there on their own time. Seventy-five percent of respondents said that seeing how their co-workers treat customers determines whether they will eat at their workplace when they are off duty.

One restaurant manager interviewed for this survey stated that having employees eating at their workplace was good for business. “When I see employees getting off work and eating in the lobby or at a table, I think of it as free marketing to advocate how good our product is.” However, a lot depends upon the type of business. For example, in some levels of fine dining, it would not be realistic to



expect employees to become customers, yet in casual dining, quick service and deli, it is a real possibility.

Working in foodservice creates a great deal of empathy for employees when dining out in other establishments. Eighty-

seven percent of those surveyed said they have a greater appreciation for foodservice employees since they started working in the foodservice industry. A majority of those who have worked in the foodservice industry tend to leave higher than the rec-

## WHEN EMPLOYEES BECOME ADVOCATES

Employees share their work experiences with friends and family. Their endorsement as someone with an insider's perspective can give a big boost to businesses.



■ Deli ■ All Other Segments in the Foodservice Industry

Source: Y-Pulse® (ypulse.org) 2017

Figures show % agreeing with statement





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When people who work in the foodservice industry dine out, a significant majority says they are also willing to pay more for ethically-produced meals. Eighty-four percent say they appreciate restaurants that use natural and organic ingredients.

### Employees As Advocates

There are few better advocates for a foodservice establishment than those who work in the back-of-the-house and know the inside stories on ingredients, preparation methods and attention to food safety. Eighty-six percent of those surveyed who said they had back-of-the-house jobs, also said the quality of the food where they work makes them want to eat there, and 84 percent said they recommend their place of work to others.

Consumers under 35 years old, in general, consider themselves to be opinion leaders in many subject areas. Those who work in the food business often become the person in the know to make dining out recommendations. In this study, 76 percent of those surveyed said their friends consider them to be a "foodie." Furthermore, 72 percent said that when dining out with friends, they are the one making suggestions on what to order.

Today's employees also understand and appreciate how important reputation can be; 86 percent said reputation was important to them in making choices. Committed employees want to contribute to an establishment's good reputation. Some restaurant employees interviewed for this survey revealed that more than two negative comments about them on a social media platform were grounds for termination. In some cases, employees mentioned that positive comments from customers on surveys were the basis for their bonuses.

Employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction go hand and in hand. Innovative programs to attract and retain the best employees certainly make a difference.

### A Fresh Perspective

Flexible schedules appeal to employees who want to balance their life, family and work on their terms. Personal time off (PTO) has become the benefit in demand offered by most major employers in the food business. Conventional schedules and routines are far less appealing in today's "gig economy," where employees want to craft their own work experience. Yet right-sizing flexibility may also make it eas-

ier to fill traditionally less desirable shifts, like nights and holidays.

Major chain restaurants offer benefit programs with health insurance starting on day one. This may add some initial extra cost, but employers who are able to demonstrate they care about their employees in tangible ways earn their loyalty.

401K programs and stock options also make employees feel valued and appreciated as part of the team that is making the business successful.

Programs like tuition assistance and scholarships let employees know they are valued for more than the task at hand. Some forward-thinking quick service restaurants recognize that not every employee may choose to make their career in the food business, but their employees could easily become customers for life based on their good experience with that first job.

### The Ultimate Customer Experience

With so many great competitors in the industry, customer satisfaction has moved far beyond the basics. Some successful

retailers go so far as to say that it is a matter of seduction, using the charms of great service and unique product offerings to make customers choose their store over so many others. That personal connection with employees and exceptional service are what can make the difference.

Technology makes it easier to find options and reviews when making a decision about an establishment, but food remains a very personal choice, and a lot of factors can come into consideration. Experiences at work have shaped dining habits for 82 percent of those surveyed. Thinking about both the customer experience and your employees' perspective might provide some fresh ideas to enhance the experience you deliver. **DB**

*Sharon Olson is the executive director of Y-Pulse® a division of Olson Communications based in Chicago. Y-Pulse (ypulse.org) is a research and consulting practice that specializes in helping companies in the food business better understand tomorrow's tastemakers today.*

## TOP CULTURE CHARACTERISTICS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE'S CHOICES OF WHERE TO DINE OUT

**Q:** When it comes to your dining out experiences, how do you feel about the following statements?

*Top 2 scores were "Strongly Agree" and "Agree."*

1. Good Food Safety or Cleanliness Practices - 96%
2. Seek Out Restaurants that Treat Employees Well - 95%
3. Great Experiences with Management - 92%
4. Great Customer Service - 92%
5. Restaurant's Reputation - 90%

Source: Y-Pulse® (ypulse.org) 2017





# STAYING ON TOP OF GRAB & GO

## Keeping current on this evolving category pays off

BY KEITH LORIA

**F**resh-prepared foods at the supermarket deli continue to grow in popularity, with Supermarket Guru reporting these items generate nearly \$25 billion in annual sales. And a growing percentage of this category is in grab-and-go products.

In today's quick-paced world, people just don't have the time to make big meals and are more likely to stop at the deli to pick up something already made that they can quickly pay for and leave the store with.

Last year, a study commissioned by the Fresh Foods Leadership Council of the Arlington, VA-based Food Marketing Institute released findings that showed prepared foods made up approximately 58

percent of the \$24 billion in deli sales, and these grab-and-go favorite meals were on the rise.

When Bob Sewall, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Blount Fine Foods, based in Fall River, MA, thinks grab-and-go, his mind immediately turns to soups and fresh foods.

"People don't have the foods to make at home, so they come to the deli and look for something they can grab and take to work, school or home for dinner," he says. "Convenience is the big factor, and it's obviously a trend that we've seen more and more of over the years."

A decade ago, you wouldn't see the delis doing too much in the category, but

it has evolved from simple cold cuts and sliced cheeses to grab-and-go items like soup, hummus, potato and macaroni salad, to more elevated dishes like chicken marsala or poached salmon.

Patty Amato, senior vice president of Farm Ridge Foods, based in Islandia, NY, says the biggest buzz in the grab-and-go segment concerns healthy and delicious offerings, and the company has responded with a host of products.

"From clean entrées and salads to single-serve pickles and olive salads, Farm Ridge Foods has an extensive array of deliciously different items," she says. "Time-crunched consumers should be targeted, because grab-and-go items are a



part of their routine, and the more they get used to eating these items, the more they will buy it regularly.”

Another big trend she sees is with ethnic foods, in particular Asian dishes, being on an upward trend in the deli’s grab-and-go segment.

And this trend of convenience is not just centered on the lunch and dinner dayparts. In 2017, Future Market Insights reported the demand for grab-and-go breakfast products registered more than \$1 billion in the past year, numbers that are eye-opening to supermarket delis and a big reason why many stores are upping their offerings in the category.

### Health Matters

For those worried about the health aspects of grab-and-go items, by May of this year, it will be required that all food prepared in the grocery’s deli space contain details on ingredients and calorie counts. This should ease the fears of some health-conscious shoppers.

“Consumers are more health conscious — and savvy — nowadays than ever before,” says Lori Bigras, director of marketing and communications for Green Giant Fresh, headquartered in Salinas, CA. “They’re reading labels and educating themselves on ingredients, diets, nutritional values and the antioxidant

capacity of foods.”

Besides, most companies have put a health-first focus on many of their grab-and-go staple items, understanding that the mindset of today’s Millennial consumer is to eat more nutritiously.

Bigras says the brand offers delis four flavor-packed hummus varieties available in 10-ounce tubs in an assortment of savory herbs and spices, and includes a variety of all-natural, preservative-free, popular flavors including classic, roasted garlic, roasted pine nut and roasted red bell pepper.

The company also has two grab-and-go 2.5-ounce hummus snack cups, which she says are more convenient for travel, lunches, ball games and road trips.

“Snack cups come four to a box and can be merchandised with other dips, salads and spreads, or included with a variety of cut vegetable cups or trays,” says Bigras.

## Most companies have put a health-first focus on many of their grab-and-go staple items, understanding that the mindset of today’s Millennial consumer is to eat more nutritiously.

“Being on the go or in a hurry doesn’t mean junk food is the only option. These [healthy] and convenient single-meal snack cups will add flavor, as well as nutrition, to consumer’s snacks and lunches.”

A new line of Asian bowls by Blount Fine Foods is also very health-forward for the consumer and a popular grab-and-go item on the deli shelf.

“We have four different bowls, which can help the deli compete with the frozen and meat departments, because they are all fresh meals,” says Sewall. “These are healthy options [that are very on trend].”

### Marketing Tips

Convenient merchandising is an important factor for grab-and-go selections, and Amato says delis should work to make things quick and easy, consistent with a uniform size for portion control, and offer a







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homemade taste and appearance.

"Additionally, colorful packaging is a great eye-catcher that will draw people to the grab-and-go products," she says.

Bigras says grab-and-go hummus packs should be placed near premium cheeses, and there should be display crackers, pitas and chips nearby for quick appetizer platter ideas.

When it comes to soup, Sewall says delis should be targeting both families and individuals, so having a 32-ounce, and smaller snack-size soups selection available is important.

"You don't want to lose out on one

customer. Some people may want soup to have with salad for their families, while some of the younger people may just be looking for something quick to eat on their way to whatever else they have planned for the evening," says Sewall.

He adds that if a supermarket deli really wants to succeed in the grab-and-go segment, the department needs to do more than just carry grab-and-go sandwiches, which they are already known for.

"You have to build it up and make it look like a supermarket deli destination for these products," says Sewall. "You may have fresh meals on the go or soups

or something else, but whatever it is that's being offered, it needs to be something that answers all the questions and gives people enough opportunity to buy."

Blount Fine Foods offers grab-and-go fresh food and Asian bowls, soups and other items, and Sewall notes it's important as a company to provide delis with a number of different things so it can build the category.

That's seen through its marketing efforts, as well. For instance, he says, one week it may be advertising the soups, the next putting a promotional campaign around mac and cheese, and the following doing something on the meals.

"Our job is to have enough things in the segment so we can bring people to the category and the department on a regular basis," he says.

### The Rise Of Hummus

The Sabra Dipping Co., headquartered in Astoria, NY, has seen double-digit growth in its on-the-go hummus sales over the last few years thanks to offering a full portfolio of dips for the deli space. It was about four years ago when the brand first created an allocation for premium dips in the deli space so consumers could find something new, flavorful and fresh.

Green Giant Fresh's Bigras says hummus is not just a perfect accompaniment to falafel and many Middle Eastern and Mediterranean dishes, but that in the United States, hummus is gaining popularity and usage ideas beyond the obligatory 'healthy' veggie tray dip option.

"While it is a great item to pair with crunchy fresh vegetables, people are getting creative with how they include this creamy, nutritious and protein-packed topping in a variety of dishes and meals," she says. "From including it on sandwiches, flatbreads and burgers as a tasty spread, to putting it on grilled meats and chicken, consumers are finding new and unique ways to infuse hummus into American cuisine."

One of the things that keeps people coming into the stores, rather than simply ordering their groceries online, is the prospect of making a quick dinner choice by grabbing something from the supermarket's deli, be it an individual meal or something for the whole family.

By concentrating on healthy options and creating an environment that is welcoming to the on-the-go shopper, the grab-and-go options should only continue to increase, providing great rings at the register. **DB**



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Photo from: Visit Huntington Beach





# The Truth About Raw Milk Cheese

**A look at opportunities in this differentiating cheese segment**

BY KEITH LORIA

Consumers are more health conscious about what foods they are purchasing and with cheese consumption always on the rise, supermarket delis are stocking larger varieties of natural cheeses that meet this demand. This includes raw milk cheeses, which are touted for their nutritional benefits or natural profile.

Giulia Angoscini, brand manager, Bertozzi Corp. of America, based in Norwalk, CT, says the best way for retailers to compete against the growing trend of online food shopping is to offer a whole experience to the consumers. She says introducing raw milk cheeses can help delis differentiate themselves.

"Raw milk cheese offer aromas, texture and flavors that are generally more multi-dimensional than pasteurized cheeses," she says. "They are also more rooted in the land where they come from. All those elements can help the deli areas of the supermarket to create a more unique experience and give personnel the opportunity to connect with the consumers and become a point of reference for them."

Joe Baird, cheese buyer at O'Brien's Market, located in Modesto, CA, says that by stocking raw milk cheese, delis can draw in new customers who would normally look elsewhere for the products.

"Popularity with raw milk cheese is growing with customers who are looking for natural products," he says. "Some also credit raw milk cheeses as better for their digestion because of beneficial bacteria that survive the production process."

Carlos Yescas, program director of the Oldways Cheese Coalition, a Boston-based international organization made up of cheesemakers, retailers and enthusiasts, fights to promote artisanal cheeses and traditional cheese-making practices, especially production with raw milk.

"Since 2014, we have been celebrating Raw Milk Cheese Appreciation Day in the United States and around the world," he says. "In 2017, we had more than 700 events in 14 countries, and we are planning a bigger number of celebrations in 2018."

On April 21, 2018, Yescas notes retailers can join the celebration to promote raw milk cheeses with discounts, promotions, educational tastings and suggesting pairings. Some retailers may even go as far as selling only raw milk cheeses for one day.

"Savvy consumers are looking for options that are more nutritious, but also that have values that they identify with," he says. "In 2015, the OCC conducted a cheese-lovers survey, and we found out what respondents were interested in: 90 percent say they should be able to select cheeses made with raw milk; 50 per-





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## According to the ACS, raw milk cheese, when produced and sold under current FDA guidelines, can be consumed without unnecessary risk.

cent prefer raw milk cheese and buy them regularly; and 73 percent of consumers who prefer raw milk cheeses appreciate their probiotic properties.”

Laure Rousseau, marketing manager at Promotion Gruyère AOP, located in Switzerland, says raw milk cheese is a way to “eat the real thing” with no additives and an ideal taste.

“To be a good raw milk product, you have to have very, very high quality control and a milk that is 200 percent perfect,” she

says. “Therefore, this has a cost and is one reason why our product price can be quite expensive, but consumers understand it’s worth the difference.”

The American Cheese Society (ACS) notes that raw milk cheese, when produced and sold under current FDA guidelines, can be consumed without unnecessary risk.

The ACS endorses current FDA raw milk cheese guidelines for manufacturers, including producing cheese in licensed

facilities that are routinely inspected on the local, regional and federal level; producing cheese under the oversight of licensed dairy handlers; and aging cheese for a minimum of 60 days before it is sold.

### Diverse Demographics

The OCC survey revealed raw milk cheeses are popular with women who are between 25 and 35, and those 45 and over — many of those making purchasing decisions and often, the deciders of the menus for their families.

“They are informed consumers, who want to support products made by artisans and in sustainable rural communities,” says Yescas. “We also found out that people who purchase raw milk cheeses do it quite often.”

Others who are interested in these products are health-conscious consumers — those following a local-organic diet or people using the Mediterranean diet as a guiding principle in buying food; environmentally-conscious consumers who are





looking for low-carbon impact products; and aspirational consumers, who look for artisan cheeses paired with wine, beer or ciders to serve as a dessert during celebratory dinners or get-togethers.

### Dealing With Misconceptions

The word “raw” can be confusing for some customers, which is why Baird notes education and sampling of raw milk cheeses from deli staff or a cheesemonger is the best way for consumers to understand the difference between pasteurized and raw milk cheeses.

“Raw milk cheese contains all eight of the essential amino acids that we require,” he says. “Educating customers about what good bacteria is can help them overcome the stigma of raw milk cheese.”

The OCC has developed resources to help educate consumers, including brochures, counter labels and fact sheets to provide information.

Many cheese counters use these resources during Raw Milk Cheese Appreciation Day as an effective tool to engage more consumers.

“People who already know about the benefits of raw milk cheese and may be looking for them, feel like there is not enough information available to distinguish these cheeses,” says Yescas. “This is why so many stores and supermarkets now put a label on the products to identify them as made with raw milk, or they highlight cheeses made with raw milk at the counters.”

Charles Duque, managing director, Americas, for the French Dairy Board, says because of the strict FDA limits on raw milk imports, consumers can only purchase hard pressed cheeses, such as Comté or Cantal, Fourme d’Ambert and Roquefort from France.

“The FDA needs to recognize that there can be raw milk cheeses that undergo rigorous safety checks at every stage of production, and it can be safe for consumption,” he says.

### Marketing Tips

Baird says retailers should be marketing these cheeses based on their developed flavor and can even tout nutritional benefits.

Duque adds cheese counters at the supermarket deli should be promoting the raw milk cheeses’ intestinal flora health benefits, texture and flavor.

“Supermarkets that have a strong deli presence could see raw milk cheeses as



an opportunity to educate the consumers and gain their trust,” says Bertozzi Corp. of America’s Angoscini. “Creating specific training for the deli managers and displaying educational pieces on raw milk cheeses around the deli case could certainly help. When creating the education pieces, retailers should focus on key points, such as the facts that raw milk cheese is safe, generally more flavorful than pasteurized cheese, unique and a great expression of biodiversity and craftsmanship.”

She also says it would pay off to highlight the connection between the cheese and the country/locality of origin and offer guidance on how best to authentically use the cheese.

### The Right Presentation

“Today’s consumer wants the ‘real’ experience eating the cheese just as the experience of those who created it,” says Angoscini. “If supermarkets could convey the overall message that raw milk cheese production is a lifestyle, a craftsmanship and a cultural heritage that needs to be protected, and if, well-regulated, it is completely safe, we believe it would certainly

help the consumers to get over the stigma.”

Raw milk cheeses pair well with many other raw foods, such as chocolate, fruit and nuts.

Baird says that’s why delis should create menus showcasing how to create a meal with these items and how to cook with them, which would be a great way to cross merchandise.

Retailers can take advantage of the technology to present traditional “old world” recipes and pairings that engage the consumers in a more contemporary and active way.

“Raw milk cheeses, as other specialty items, have been gaining increasing popularity in the last few years, because they embody values in contrast with the sterilization and homogenization of mass produced food,” says Angoscini. “In the United States, the producers of raw milk cheese constitute a real movement with a history going back more than 20 years. This is an indication of how raw milk cheese is now part of the ‘foodies’ culture. It is not a fad, it has strong roots.”

There are benefits for delis adding raw milk cheese to the case.

**DB**

# ROTISSERIE CHICKEN AT THE CENTER OF THE PLATE



## The complete package answers “What’s for Dinner?”

BY BOB JOHNSON

**R**otisserie chicken has been with us long enough to be universally known, but opportunities to sell even more are available for retailers ready to invest the time into creating and promoting quality meal deals as well as other menu items that start with this healthy poultry fare.

While some measurements have sales of rotisserie chicken barely rising at just a percent or two annually, the meal deals are increasing at an impressive rate.

“The meal deals are going up significantly, around 8 or 9 percent, and some

of that may not be captured by the 1 or 2 percent figure,” says Eric Le Blanc, director of marketing – deli at Tyson Foods, Springdale, AR.

Tyson Foods has grown to become a corporation with annual revenues of \$38 billion from producing 20 percent of all the chicken, beef and pork in the country in the decades since company founder John Tyson began distributing chickens from a modest Arkansas farm early during the Great Depression.

In addition to deals for meals that look and taste more interesting than the com-

petition, there are also opportunities for other menu items that begin with rotisserie chicken.

“There are things you can do with what’s left over,” says Brad Dunn, director of retail deli for Koch Foods, Park Ridge, IL. “Rotisserie chicken salads, cold chickens and chicken pot pies are all huge hits. The rotisserie chicken category continues to grow; it is a large category.”

Koch Foods, a privately owned Fortune 500 firm not related to Koch Industries, supplies foodservice outlets worldwide with chicken, and recently moved to take



its products to the retail segment.

Cold cooked chicken also opens up markets serving more than 40 million of us who can only buy the rotisserie product when it cools after cooking, because Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations bar recipients from buying it hot, but permit buying the same food cold to take home to the microwave.

### The Healthy, Economical Protein

Chicken is on a long-term roll, with consumption in this country steadily climbing from 28 pounds a person in 1960 to more than 90 pounds a person in 2017, as consumers look to more economical and healthy alternatives, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics cited by the Washington, D.C.-based National Chicken Council.

Beef and pork consumption combined, on the other hand, peaked at just less than 150 pounds per person in 1970 and began a steady decline to less than 110 pounds in the U.S. last year.

"Rotisserie chicken sales are expected to continue to grow slightly better than the annual head count; that is at 3 percent or so," says Tom Super, who serves as vice president of communications at the National Chicken Council.

The council, established in 1954,

represents producers and processors responsible for 95 percent of the chicken in the country.

Most of the continued increase in rotisserie chicken is in the center of the plate as the star of a meal deal.

"The consumer doesn't want rotisserie chicken; they want dinner," advises Le Blanc. "Get into the meal game. It's not just adding a beverage; it's turning rotisserie chicken into an appetizing meal. This category is still trending up, but at a rate that isn't great. Yet in the past year or so, you see the meal deals really move."

Deli prepared chicken dollar sales increased 4 percent in the year ending April 2016, according to Nielsen Fresh statistics cited in the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) *What's In Store* 2017, and consumers will respond to meal deals thoughtfully done.

Twenty eight percent of respondents to a 2014 survey conducted for the National Chicken Council indicated they plan to increase their consumption of chicken from the grocery store, and health or nutrition was the number one reason cited for intending to eat more chicken, followed closely by taste. Cost was the third most cited reason.

"Rotisserie chicken is continuing to trend

very well," says Dunn. "People are trying meal deals of rotisserie chicken together with side dishes, soda and Hawaiian rolls."

The continuing popularity of this delicious, nutritious and economical food is the good news.

The sobering news for deli retailers is there is newly strong competition and 20 percent of the respondents to the Chicken Council survey said they plan to increase their consumption of chicken from foodservice outlets.

"Convenience stores and gas and go stores that have successful fried chicken programs are moving toward adding a limited rotisserie assortment of parts," says Super. "There is no indication that warehouse club chains will move away from using rotisserie chicken as customer traffic drivers. It is not so much new versions that are driving growth, but rather a broader array of outlets."

The newest player in the meals business could also compete for a share of the rotisserie chicken market.

"Home deliverers of meals and meal kits are mulling how best to work with a broadly-appealing product like rotisserie chicken or boneless but not skinless rotisserie chicken meat," says Super.

In the face of the potentially formidable competition, the deli would do well to step



PHOTO COURTESY OF TYSON FOODS

up its merchandising game.

"Drive awareness by talking about your rotisserie program," advises Tyson Foods' Le Blanc. "Very few retailers use their digital and social media to talk about their prepared foods."

Another important part of merchandising is to always have all the rotisserie chicken dishes available for the customer.

"Make sure you have product ready for the consumer," says Koch Foods' Dunn. "When someone walks into the supermarket deli, you have to have product available. Keep it fresh."

The rewards for retailers who put together a good rotisserie chicken program, and let people know what's available, go beyond sales of rotisserie chicken and companion items in a meal purchase.

In addition to those considerable sales, 62 percent of rotisserie chicken purchases involve other items in the purchase that are not part of the meal, according to Le Blanc.

### Some Need It Cool

The classic rotisserie display is the cooked product in a grab-and-go hard shell clear plastic case under a heat lamp, sometimes in full view of the juices coming from the birds still cooking on the slowly rotating spit.

But there are also opportunities to mar-

## The rewards for retailers who put together a good rotisserie chicken program, and let people know what's available, go beyond sales of rotisserie chicken and companion items in a meal purchase.

ket this food in salads, sandwiches and other ways after it has cooled.

Recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, are only allowed to buy rotisserie chicken after it is cold.

"There's a big upside in cold rotisserie chicken sold a lot earlier in the day and reheated at home," says Le Blanc. "People with SNAP are eligible to buy it cold, but not hot. There are a lot of working people who could use a little help, and if you make cold rotisserie chicken available, you do a good thing."

There is also a market for rotisserie chicken sold as convenience-sized pieces, rather than the whole bird, and the National Chicken Council's Super hears of

success selling large breasts singularly.

Always having the full bird and pieces, hot and cold, ready to go is more important than offering a variety of flavors.

There are three rotisserie chicken flavors that matter, and only three, but you might be able to stir up some interest by offering another unique flavor for a short period of time.

"Barbecue, savory and lemon-pepper are the big flavors," says Le Blanc. "If you do a one-time offer of something else, it drives awareness."

According to Dunn, some retailers are creating interest by using their own rubs or marinades at the store level.

With rotisserie chicken programs, creating a destination pays off.

DB

## Do You Know Where Your Chicken Fat Is?

Part of the appeal of rotisserie chicken is that the fat drips from the bird during the cooking process, leaving behind a leaner meat that is lower in calories and cholesterol.

This is all well and good for the health-conscious consumer, but that grease goes somewhere, which leaves the question – do you know where your chicken fat is?

"Retailers place a bucket under the rotisserie's drain or they drained it directly into the sewer system," says Giovanni Brienza, vice president of Frontline International, Cuyahoga Falls, OH. "When fat congeals inside pipes, it can cause blockages to a building's internal plumbing. But it can also flow into the public sewer system. If your own plumbing is blocked, you can try to jet out the fat with high-pressure water, but you still might need to dig up your pipes and re-plumb the entire building."

Frontline designs and produces equipment to capture the fat, contain it and eventually sell it for use as bio fuel.

A deli with a robust rotisserie chicken program produces a significant amount of grease that must be disposed of somehow.

"Per month, it's approximately 90 gallons, which translates into 675 pounds," says Brienza. "If it blocks the public sewer, then you're looking at thousands of dollars in fines."

You can catch the fat in buckets, which has the virtue of keeping it out of the pipes, but there are flies in this ointment, too.

"The bucket method is no better and is a major safety risk," says Brienza. "Workers usually have to carry a smaller bucket from under the rotisserie and dump it into a larger bucket. This creates plenty of opportunities for grease to get all over the floors and other surfaces, creating slip hazards, not to mention the burn risks. Next, that larger bucket is usually placed on a dolly and transported to an outdoor loading area, trailing dripping grease all the way. This translates to even more slip hazards."

Then there is also the question of how this larger bucket of decomposing grease smells.

Frontline promotes a scalable system that captures the grease before it reaches the drain, separates it from the water, and once concentrated is a product suited for sale as part of a bio fuels mix.

"With the caddy, rotisserie chicken fat drips into the collection tray, which drains into our machine that separates oil from water, and the oil is safely transported to a containment tank." Says Brienza, "It is scalable to the amount of grease each operation produces. Caddies come in capacities of 75 to 120 gallons. Containment tanks are 150 or 350 gallons."

DB





# Pizza Keeps On RISING

**A new generation remakes a familiar favorite**

BY BOB JOHNSON

**N**o matter how you slice it, pizza is worth some thought, as the category accounted for more than 5 percent of all deli prepared foods sales in the year ending in April 2016, which was more than sushi and far more than soup, according to the Madison, WI-based International Dairy Deli Bakery Association's (IDDBA) *What's In Store* 2017 report.

In the two years ending in the spring of 2016, these sales increased from just over \$250 million to more than \$280 million, and grew by a robust 7.2 percent in the most recent year.

As deli pizza continues to grow at a pace impressive for such a mature category, Millennials lead the way in flocking to the counter for a slice.

"Delis are catering to Millennials by changing their offerings to cater to their lifestyle of something quick, new flavors and healthy," says Jim Pierson, vice president of sales at Pocino Foods, City of industry, CA. "What we see are requests for more natural, minimally processed deli meat products, like natural roast beef and pastrami that have no nitrates or nitrites with a smaller list of all natural ingredients."

Pocino Foods is a specialty meats producer tracing its origins back to 1934, when

Dennis Pocino's grandfather opened his first deli in Los Angeles.

The change in the pizza market can be seen by looking at the Blaze, Mod Pizza, Pie Fi and Pieology shops that have overnight come to compete with the more familiar Roundtable and Domino's chains.

"There's kind of a division between the volume chains and the Millennial-driven high end shops," says Jeanine Kaaz, Northern California sales manager for Armanino Foods of Distinction, Hayward, CA. "The high-end market is increasing."

Armanino's has produced pesto, pasta and other Italian specialties since Guglielmo Armanino began supplying fresh vegeta-



PHOTO COURTESY OF POCINO FOODS

bles and herbs to San Francisco's growing Italian community in the 1920s.

"The deli probably wants to identify itself with the higher end pizza options," says Kaaz.

Among deli items, Millennials index highest in sushi and pizza, according to the IDDBA's 2017 *What's In Store* report, and as in so many things, when these 20- to 35-year-olds browse pizza, they are looking for something a little different.

"Millennials want a unique experience," says Laurie Falluca, chief creative officer at Palermo Villa, Inc., Milwaukee. "They are not satisfied with run-of-the-mill deli pizza, branding or packaging."

Since Gaspare and Zina Falluca started Palermo's as an Italian bakery on Milwaukee's east side in 1964, a decade after they immigrated to the United States, the firm has remained a family-owned and run operation.

There are many ways the supermarket deli can serve up something unique, from offering crust that is low in carbs or gluten free to including topping choices that stray a bit from the straight and narrow pepperoni and Mozzarella.

### Can You Top This?

The deli can differentiate itself from the competition by offering distinctive toppings, in addition to the familiar favorites.

"The Millennials are a lot more experimental," says Kaaz. "They want Korean or Latin American toppings; they are look-

ing for international flavors. You even have sweet and savory combinations, a savory pizza with a sweet drizzle."

There are still standard toppings, but younger consumers are leading the way in looking to also try bolder alternatives.

"Pepperoni continues to be king, but consumers and restaurants alike are looking for something new, the next 'big thing,'" says Pierson.

He recalls the recent success Pocino's had adding an Eastern Asian touch to this Italian favorite.

"At the last Pizza Expo and other trade shows, our Asian meats were popular, to the surprise of all who tried it," says Pierson. "Chashu, a Japanese-style flavored pork belly, was sliced and flavored with a proprietary sweet and salty sauce atop a traditional flour crust, baked to a mild crisp and was the most popular. We also tested our Ginger Miso Pork and Teriyaki Beef on the same traditional flour crust, each with their own sauces with veggie toppings of carrot and green onions."

There are also familiar mainstream foods that can bring a special touch to the pizza topping.

"Traditional toppings — cheese, pepperoni and supreme — are always popular, but we're also seeing trends toward unique flavors like chicken and white sauce pizzas," says Falluca.

Distinctive flavors that cannot be found elsewhere are most likely to appeal to the younger generation that is driving

the pizza category.

"Retailers are employing some subtle changes to better cater to the Millennial consumer. This group is more willing to try new flavors, especially flavors with ethnic flare," says John Leonardo, director of marketing at Palermo Villa Inc., headquartered in Milwaukee.

While fresh, nutritious and interesting all matter, pizza can be a forbidden pleasure, with a few chemicals and other nutrition indiscretions not tolerated elsewhere.

"When it comes to pizza, pepperoni, for example, is not an all natural product due to nitrates and nitrites, and is not being called out by Millennials — go figure," says Pocino Foods' Pierson.

UPC-coded refrigerated pizza declined by more than 9 percent in unit sales in 2016, according to Nielsen statistics cited in the latest *What's In Store* report, but convenience is still a powerful magnet.

"Frozen pizza is slipping in the minds of young shoppers in terms of quality and health attributes," according to the IDDBA's report. "However, it maintains a strong hold on the pizza category at 82 percent. Refrigerated/frozen crust/dough, and do-it-yourself kits hold slightly less than 9 percent of the market, but reached \$524 million and saw 3 percent growth in 2015. By 2020, the segment is expected to hit \$579 million."

Deli pizza programs can beat this competition by offering products that look and smell more inviting.

"Consumers buy with all of their senses," says Palermo Villa's Falluca. "They need to be emotionally moved to buy a product. Neuromarketing has been found to be very effective, but it takes great flavor to keep them coming back. The pizza consumer is a very educated consumer. More than 85 percent of consumers eat pizza — at pizzerias, frozen, deli or foodservice — wherever they can get it. They know what they want."

The deli may be positioned to go the extra mile in developing a unique custom pizza program.

"I wonder if they could use the ingredients already there in the deli in a personal made-to-order pizza program?" says Armanino Foods of Distinction's Kaaz.

### The Crust Matters

One way the supermarket deli can differentiate its pizza from the frozen case or convenience store competition is offering healthier crust options.



"Thin crusts are a category staple in frozen pizza, and we see delis following that trend," says Fallucca. "There are consumers who want to experience the great flavor of pizza, but prefer a thin crust so they can limit their carbs."

Labels that only have easily understood ingredients are the future in pizzas, including the crust.

"Overall, we see a shift to a cleaner label product that is more natural," says Pocino Foods' Pierson. "This is moving slower than we thought, but as the Millennials gain in financial strength, we'll see the shift move faster."

Spices to add flavor are increasing in appetizer items, including pizza, according to *What's In Store* 2017, and higher-end cheeses are also making an appearance.

"Pizza isn't immune to the desires of health-conscious shoppers," according to the IDDBA report. "The crust is the basis of innovation for those interested in better health, clean ingredients and uniqueness. Ancient grains, ground rye and sprouted wheat also offer a boost in nutrition and unique flavors."

There are even vegetable crust options that are nutritious as well as being free of

## Labels that only have easily understood ingredients are the future in pizzas, including the crust.

grains, gluten and GMOs.

"You've got cauliflower crust, which is low calorie and gluten free," says Kaaz. "There is a desire for cleaner products, which includes GMO free. The growth is in offering supermarket deli customers the choices they need."

The question of how many healthier crust options to offer can be a matter of how much space is available for the pizza program within the department.

"While gluten free has experienced a large increase in menu offerings at restaurants, it hasn't really penetrated fresh deli departments," says Leonardo. "Retailers with limited space are typically offering more mainstream crusts. However, as technological improvements in gluten free crust production continue, this is something we believe will start to make its way into deli departments."

Other options can enhance the experience

by offering crusts that bring added flavor to the pizza, in addition to carrying the toppings.

"While the majority of retailers offer traditional crusts, we're seeing some retailers adding crust types to appeal to varying consumer preferences," says Leonardo. "Some are offering crusts that are similar to those available in pizza restaurants — like cheese-stuffed crusts, live/rising dough and protein-enriched crusts."

A tricky taste tendency to navigate is that, even for health-minded consumers, pizza may be among a handful of forbidden pleasures to be enjoyed in small portions.

"Consumers understand that pizza is an indulgence and, like everything in life, should be enjoyed in moderation," says Fallucca. "They won't give up their pizza, but might balance it with a salad or by eating a lighter lunch when they know they're having pizza that evening."

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# FROM JEWELS TO CRACKERS



*Bill Ammerman displays the company's new packaging and a traditional wafer.*

**W**hen Napoleon Barmakian immigrated to the United States, he was a jeweler by trade. He settled in Boston to work as a diamond cutter, and when his wife, brothers and their wives joined him in America, he and his brothers opened Barmakian Brothers Jewelry Store. That wasn't enough for Napoleon, however. He wanted to do something more, so he turned the jewelry business over to his brothers. It was in 1931 that he opened Venus Wafers and began making lavasch crackers, selling them door-to-door in Watertown, Belmont and other suburbs of Boston.

In 1948, Napoleon's sons Aram and Ed took over the business. At first, most of the company's business was restaurants and institutions, but in 1960, Venus Wafers took on Hickory Farms as a customer, and the company has grown by leaps and bounds ever since.

After multiple moves around the Boston area to make room for the expanding business, the bakery now resides in Hingham, MA, in a 30,000-square-foot space that Venus Wafers moved into in 1981. Seven years ago, the company had to move its offices and warehouse into a separate building up the road to make room for the growing operation. The business has expanded from four to five items at its founding to 30 SKUs in branded products and more than 100 private label products. And the company still sells to some foodservice customers, as well.

Today, Venus Wafers operates under the same principles Napoleon's son Aram established: natural, nutritious crackers and flatbread that tastes good.

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