

commissary INSIDER

NURTURING GROWTH FOR PERISHABLE FOOD PROCESSORS

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Insight Insider:

The FreshOne Advantage

By John Unrein

Cutting-edge industry research reveals that a fresh food program will increase the number of store visits per customer each month by 37 percent, and dollar amount spent per visit by 23 percent. With such mounting evidence supporting this blossoming trend across America's retail food stores, it's no wonder that seven in 10 retailers are now optimistic about food sales in the upcoming quarter, according to the National Association of Convenience Stores.

Retail foodservice is welcoming a major shift toward fresh foods such as hot and cold sandwiches, salads and fresh-cut produce, and Dallas-based FreshOne, an innovative fresh food partner and nationwide provider of ready-to-eat fresh food programs, is poised to help lead the way. One crucial challenge ahead, says Matt Yost, vice president, sales and marketing at FreshOne, lies in the fact that offering a strong fresh foods program is just the beginning.

"I hate to make this sound simple, but

freshness with on-trend flavors and ingredients will grab the attention of today's consumers," says Yost, who joined FreshOne this year with 25 years of experience in a variety of roles in CPG sales leadership and marketing services. "There was a recent industry publication written that talked about how consumers love sandwiches...and it's true. But ham and cheese is boring. Sriracha chicken sandwiches, chipotle chicken wraps, Greek

salads, etc., speak to the diverse cultures that we need to appeal to."

As a result, Yost says, FreshOne is doing an "outstanding job of working with our chefs within our kitchens" to develop new items that can support a national or regional approach. Additionally, it is important to have seasonal items as Limited Time Only (LTOs) that embrace a flavor appeal based on the calendar. For example, FreshOne offers a Turkey Cranberry Apple wrap that is poised to become a customer favorite during the fall months. "Consumers love new products, so it's important that we have a slew of new ideas within our R&D pipeline."

When developing new products, FreshOne will go the extra mile with re-

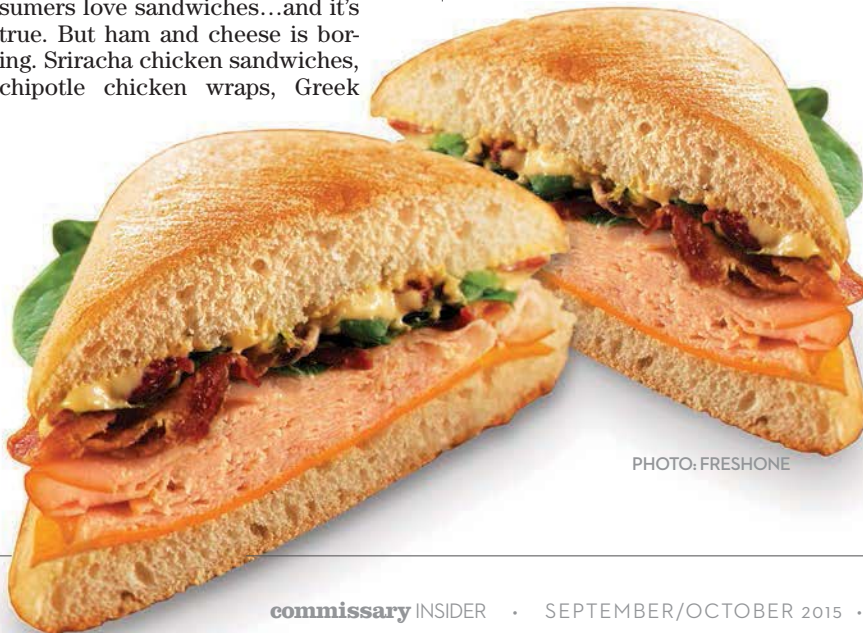


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tailer partners to ensure that effective measuring tools are in place to monitor progress of each item from the testing phase through the distribution pipeline. New products bring excitement to the category. And FreshOne is proactive with their approach.

"Existing and new items are still about freshness," Yost says. "Unless we are completely confident (after testing) that a new item or LTO (Limited Time Only) will stick, we work with our retailer partners on limiting the distribution until we can monitor each new item's success. If we have an item that appears to have slower movement than expected, we live by the "fail fast" mantra, and just move on. New items keep our menus fresh, and help support our ability to reduce waste for our retailers."

"Ham and cheese is boring. Sriracha chicken sandwiches, chipotle chicken wraps, Greek salads, etc., speak to the diverse cultures that we need to appeal to."

Matt Yost, vice president, sales and marketing at FreshOne

So where does food safety fit into the equation? Yost points out that this issue is vital to customer and consumer trust. "For us, our cold chain is extremely critical," he says. "Items are produced in our climate controlled kitchens, delivered on our climate controlled trucks and merchandised in a climate controlled cooler. Any variance from the process breaks the cold chain and can cause product quality issues. The technology equipped on our trucks provides us minute-by-minute monitoring of the temperature of our items. We strive to generate a repeatable process, both on the production of our items, and our direct store delivery model. Consistency drives comfort and confidence for our retailers, and therefore their customers."

Founded in 2006, FreshOne embraces a strong commitment to delivering consistency and high quality in every facet of the business. So, working together with suppliers and retailer partners is crucial to long-term success. Everything revolves around the mission to provide the highest level of efficiency throughout the process.

"Depending on the channel, we have several different business partners that we coordinate products with,"

Yost explains. "Since FreshOne is both a product producer and distributor, we have several items that "ride along" on our trucks and get delivered with our core sandwich, salad, and wraps program. This consolidated approach helps retailers (convenience stores, in this example) streamline the number of vendors they deal with and reduce the number of deliveries they need to receive each day. Probably the biggest opportunity for our retailer partners to take advantage of is our ability to distribute their breakfast programs, croissants, burritos, donuts, muffins, etc. Again, this reduces the number of vendors and deliveries received each day."

Innovations in technology play another key role in how FreshOne answers today's marketplace needs. Yost points out that they have a terrific "Order Management System" approach. "By tracking our customers' daily sales, we can understand movement by item, trends, important days of the week, etc.," he says. "We use this information to enhance our marketing approach. For example, for customers that have a terrific Monday-Friday business, we'll implement a "2 For" or "BOGO" strategy on Fridays to help deplete inventory going into the weekend. Then come Monday, we have a "fresh" order arriving, with limited product left over from the weekend. This approach helps eliminate waste, and supports a larger basket ring."

In his current role, Yost is responsible for implementing FreshOne's strategic vision, driving thought-leadership for current and new business partners,



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and implementing fresh solutions to appeal to the ever-changing consumer.

Prior to joining the FreshOne executive team, Yost worked in a variety of roles in CPG sales leadership and marketing services. He began his career in California

with the Gallo Sales Company and was previously a strategic business leader with CROSSMARK, Catalina Marketing, and Dr Pepper/Seven Up. FreshOne utilizes Yost's expertise and experience to further mature its service to the fresh food retailing industry. "As we continue to grow with the convenience, grocery and college and university channels, Matt will be an outstanding resource for our customer partners. His skills match well with our growth and results oriented culture," says Don Janacek, president for FreshOne.

On the production front, Yost says that FreshOne continues to follow the most stringent standards to ensure they deliver results and provide a turnkey solutions approach for customers.

"When we discuss freshness with senior-level personnel at retailers today (all channels), they all have a very consistent theme – their need to reduce in-store labor costs, provide consistent and quality products to their customers, and make sure they stay in-stock," he says. "QA testing and Department of Agriculture testing at store-level have increased the scrutiny of products produced in-store. Fresh cut fruit and vegetables and pre-packaged salads and sandwiches are becoming more difficult to handle at store level. Cost of labor, turnover, time constraints and proper labeling hampers freshness, consistency, and availability," he says. "Having a DSD model, like FreshOne, can take those production needs out of the store, and help assure that freshness, consistency and availability is returned to the shopper."



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Showing Their True Colors: Natural vs. Conventional Food color

As health conscious consumers demand cleaner labels and the removal of artificial colors, the food color industry has been redefined. Food manufacturers all over the country are starting to notice the shift in their business, "It was really an 'aha moment' when we realized it was a complete contradiction to our philosophy about food. We don't eat non-organic, gmo-filled, artificially flavored and colored food and we didn't want to serve it to our customers either. It just aligned our business practice with our personal practice." – Jeanne Forrest, Chef/Owner of Layers Bakery Café in Henderson and Las Vegas, NV. To understand this market shift we sat down with Aaron Byrnes, CEO of the 100 year old color producer Chefmaster, to learn more about natural color products, the obstacles that are yet to come and the benefits these new products provide.



What are some of the biggest differences between conventional food color and natural food color?

The biggest difference between conventional colors and naturals is what they're made from. Conventional color is manufactured while natural food color comes from earth's natural resources. For instance, our orange products are made up of paprika and beta carotene (carrots).

Another difference is that natural colors are a little muted compared to conventional colors, which is a result of working with what nature provided. Since each color uses different ingredients, there is a learning curve for producers to determine how to get the best hue for each color. We are continuously improving our naturals and are making them more vivid.

What do food manufacturers need to know about natural colors?

Because they are natural, they aren't as shelf stable as conventional food colors. While it isn't required, we recommend refrigerating or storing them in a cool dark place so they last longer and don't fade.

More importantly though, natural food colors don't mix the way primary colors do. For example, if you mix blue and red naturals, you won't necessarily get purple because the ingredients won't blend seamlessly. For this reason we work very closely with our clients to create the custom colors that they desire. We also can provide a color creation mix list when they order. The mix list will also be added to our website, www.chefmaster.la, in 2016.

Natural ingredients usually cost more, why should food manufacturers choose to purchase natural color?

We believe that every business wants to please their customers by providing the best product possible. Customers want clean labels and are willing to pay more for them because they are viewed as quality. A bakery, restaurant, store or central food producer can charge a premium for products that are made from better ingredients.

Making sure your natural products are successful will be a direct result of communication. Letting consumers know they can choose products made from natural food color will help them make a premium purchase. You can do this by placing "No artificial food color" on your packaging, or noting natural food color options

on your menus, putting up point of sale signage on your counters and educating your sales associates on natural food coloring. Chefmaster can provide point of sale signage for Natural Color products and also has information to help train your sales teams.

If people view artificial colors as negative why should manufacturers use color at all?

Color enhances the consumer experience on multiple levels. First, it helps them understand the flavor they are about to enjoy. Imagine having a red velvet cake on your menu that comes out brown, a customer most likely would send it back despite the flavor being unchanged. Second, having colorful products is fun. A mom ordering cupcake's for her child's birthday is going to want something colorful to help make that child feel special and make life's moments more memorable. Helping your customers create memories while meeting their health conscious needs is exciting to us. We want to help food manufacturers meet customers' demands because we believe life is colorful!



Aaron Byrnes
CEO, Chefmaster

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Research and Development:

Culinary-Inspired Convenience Foods

By Donna Berry

Earlier this year, Pizza Hut introduced mainstream America to a whole new world of pizza combinations. The beloved pizza pie, which not too long ago pushed borders with pineapple topping, now comes with flavorful twists such as curry crust, honey sriracha sauce and Mediterranean black olive topping.

Such bold, often ethnic flavors are exactly what today's consumers crave, even from the convenience channel. No longer is the grab-and-go diner satisfied with a ham and cheese hoagie and a bag of chips, especially when the nearby Arby's drive thru offers options such as the Loaded Italian, which is a toasted Italian roll loaded with layers of thinly

sliced ham, salami and pepperoni. This gets topped with banana peppers, lettuce, tomato, red onion and melted Swiss cheese, followed by a drizzle of red wine vinaigrette and a smear of garlic aioli. Now that's a sandwich!

Research from Packaged Facts, Rockville, Maryland, suggests that 53 percent of consumers seek bolder flavors in everyday foods. This number is even higher for millennials who crave adventure and expect their foods to satisfy more than just their appetite.

Millennials view food as a form of entertainment and self-expression. While they might be more spontaneous and adventurous than previous generations



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

in food selection, they will not make compromises. They are very willing to pay a premium for quality food, even grab-and-go convenience foods.

In the culinary world, millennials are known as "Generation Yum," as they grew up with the Food Network and Top Chef. Chicago-based research firm Mintel states that nearly half of all US consumers consider themselves foodies, with these foodies changing the foodservice landscape with their cravings for flavorful adventure, while at the same time they are demanding healthy, natural and local ingredients.

The biggest flavor trend with millennials is spicy, but not just ordinary spicy heat. Today's adventurous consumers want complex flavor profiles suggestive of ethnic cuisines, where chilies are blended with fresh herbs and spices indigenous to a region. These seasoning blends can give new life to side dishes such as pasta and potato salad. They can be used to infuse flavor into sandwich and wrap components, elevating the popular hand-held meal into a gourmet experience.

According to a January 2015 online survey of 1,300 US adults conducted by Kalsec, Kalamazoo, Michigan, more than half (56 percent) of consumers eat spicy



PHOTO: DEREK RICHMOND

foods at least once a week, with one out of four eating spicy foods more often than a year ago. The study showed that two out of five consumers think foods taste better with some level of heat, with two-thirds of survey respondents preferring a medium or higher heat level in foods.

Chili peppers are typically the source of heat and they can be delivered through all types of foods. Think ghost pepper cheddar cheese, chipotle-infused chicken breast and even jalapeno encrusted bread. Condiments are also an ideal delivery vehicle for chili peppers, from mustard to mayonnaise. Actually make that aioli, the Mediterranean term for flavored mayo, and a foodie favorite.

Grown around the world, chilies vary in flavor profile, from earthy to fruity to smoky. For example, aji amarillo comes from Peru and has fruity notes, while the guajillo, which is harvested from Mexico, has more sweet and smoky notes. Research indicates that jalapeno remains the preferred chili, but it is closely followed by cayenne and chipotle, with habanero, poblano, serrano and ancho all growing in popularity.

Beyond chilies, formulators can use seasoning blends to provide cues such as barbecued, fried or grilled to proteins prepared using commercial cooking methods. Hardwood smoke seasonings add a layer of complexity. Calling out the wood provides an additional culi-

nary spin. For example, applewood is lightly fruity while maplewood is slightly sweet. Mesquite is popular as a stand-alone smoke flavor, supplying a hearty, savory taste.

Increasingly popular ethnic spice blends include za'atar. This Middle Eastern specialty contains sesame seeds, thyme, sumac, marjoram and oregano, and can be used to add zest to beef burgers, meatballs and meatloaf. For more authentic Middle Eastern cuisine, ground lamb is either all or part of the protein mix. An emerging ethnic seasoning is ras el hanout. This Moroccan spice blend has no definitive recipe and often includes as many as 25 different spices. Recipes generally include cardamom, chilies, cinnamon, clove, coriander, cumin, ginger, paprika, peppercorn and turmeric. Pork and poultry are common applications.

An emerging approach to livening up foods is to add spirited spin through the use of flavors and seasonings designed to simulate libations, from beer to wine to top-shelf spirits. Bourbon barbecue sauce, ale-infused brats and hard-cider marinated chicken breast, these products are designed to appeal to today's upscale consumer.

Flavor fusions add an element of fun to everyday foods. It's the culinary adventure consumers crave, at home, at a restaurant and on the go.



PHOTO: INLINE PLASTICS CORP



- Chili peppers and ethnic seasonings, alone or combined, provide flavorful twists to prepared foods. They can be delivered via condiments, flavored cheese, marinated meat or seasoned bread.



- Work with local manufacturers to source ingredients, including breads, cheeses, meats and produce. Call the source out on the label. Tell the producer's story, i.e., made using grandma's secret recipe.



- Use foodie terms such as artisan, chef-inspired and hand-crafted to suggest a culinary touch. Describe ingredients with as much detail as possible to communicate the depth of the product.



Sandwich Spotlight:

Veg-centric Sandwiches

By John Unrein

Vegetables are taking over the American sandwich as a dominant ingredient rather than a side note. “Veg-centric” – not vegetarian – is a macro trend influencing menus across all segments of the retail foodservice industry, according to new research by Culinary Visions Panel. Vegetables are moving from side dish to center of the plate with new and interesting techniques. Most of these new menu items use protein sparingly to provide layers of craveable flavor. The next great sandwich concept could incorporate a unique mix of vegetables, with a protein garnish.

Veg-centric sandwich concepts especially take center stage with younger consumers, according to Culinary Visions Panel, which developed 10 next generation sandwich concepts exclusively for this study to find out how adventurous consumers are when it comes to trying new sandwich ingredient combinations. Four of the top five sandwich concepts preferred by millennials were veg-centric in nature.

Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel, says her group's study reveals there is real potential to delight a wide range of customers because some concepts may be vegetarian and yet many include meat as well. “I think consumers are telling us they are ready for delicious, flavorful and craveable veg-centric sandwiches,” she says.

Millennials may be a good target, as more than one-third of these consumers would try the vegetable sandwich, while only a quarter of those ages 35-54 would choose the meat-free option. The vegetable sandwich, which ranked second overall with millennial consumers, included ingredients like arugula, tomato, avocado, caramelized onion and melted cheese between crispy plantains.

The veg-centric theme continues, with a third of respondents interested in the

omelet sandwich, which was rated third among the 10 concepts tested. This combines spinach, pepper jack cheese, roasted red peppers, and a sprinkling of bacon in an egg wrap.

Also highly rated with millennials was the “salad cone,” a salad-as-a-sandwich concept that combines grilled chicken, romaine lettuce, onion, tomato and ranch dressing in cone-shaped brioche. And rounding out the top 5 was the Paleo sandwich with avocado spread, romaine lettuce, peppers, fresh herbs and accents of garlic marinated shrimp, enrobed in an almond flour wrap.

A More Prominent Role

Sandwiches continue to be featured more prominently on retail foodservice menus than similar handheld fare, such as burgers, hot dogs and pizza, according to Packaged Facts, a Rockville, Maryland-based research firm. Many operators reinvent the lunchtime staple with gourmet and healthy twists, as well as global flavors.

“Leveraging progressive food sourcing and food preparation practices, restaurants and food manufacturers are increasingly focused on providing sandwiches that are fresh, naturally produced, locally sourced, and either culturally authentic or genuinely creative in culinary concept,” says David Sprinkle, research director of Packaged Facts. Packaged Facts identified eight sandwich types trending in retail outlets, driven by international or regional influences and demand for bold flavors and healthy options.

Garden tartines

Fresh produce piles high on a single slice of bread to create an enticing and vegetarian-friendly “still life of a sandwich,” Packaged Facts said.

Tortas and cemitas

A growing interest in international sand-

wiches and street foods has given rise to two Mexican mainstays. Typically served on a long crusty roll, tortas may be eaten cold, hot, grilled or toasted with such fillings as avocado, poblano, jalapeño, ham or adobo meat. Cemitas commonly are served on an egg roll topped with a sprinkling of sesame seeds.

Croque monsieur and madame

The rise of global cuisine gives way to the resurgence of two familiar French favorites with modern-day tweaks. Conventional croque monsieurs are grilled ham and cheese sandwiches with béchamel sauce. The croque madame comes topped with a poached or fried egg.

Brisket sandwich

Rooted in the comfort food trend, brisket is hot even on non-barbecue menus, Packaged Facts says. This versatile meat may be served in a number of different ways, from classic to distinctly contemporary.

Cuban sandwich

Featuring layers of ham, roast pork, Swiss cheese and pickles, the panini-style Cuban sandwich is in the midst of a revival, as chefs experiment with new ingredients and upgrades.

Sweet and savory sandwiches

Sweet and savory combine to create a sophisticated twist on traditional sandwiches. Usage of jam in sandwiches served in restaurants rose to 11% in 2014, with use in hot sandwiches nearly doubling during that time, Packaged Facts says.

Protein-based salad sandwiches

Classic tuna, chicken and salad sandwiches have gone gourmet in recent years with fancier fillings, condiments, breads and sides, Packaged Facts says.

Breakfast sandwiches

Handhelds are a hit in the morning, when many consumers are grabbing breakfast on the go. Operators may appeal to more consumers by leveraging such descriptors as “natural,” “local,” “seasonal” or “sustainable,” which are four times more likely to appear on non-breakfast items, according to Packaged Facts.

Keeping in touch with consumer preferences continues to pay for all dayparts.

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Assembling Foods:

Safety First

By Donna Berry

From food trucks to fine-dining kitchens, wherever food preparation takes place, food safety is the number-one priority. An operator must never forget that food is perishable, requiring it to be properly handled before, during and after preparation. And because menus change, the production process parameters change. Diligence is paramount.

According to a recent food safety survey by Hahn Public Communications, Austin, Texas, seafood ranks highest in consumer concern. Meat comes in second, with prepared/take-out foods, fresh produce and dairy following in order on the concern scale. The study also found that once the public decides a food product is unsafe, winning back confidence is tough.

The reality is that most consumers do not think about foodborne illness until

someone unknowingly consumes contaminated food and gets ill, or at worse, dies. While the US food supply is one of the safest in the world, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, estimates that roughly one in six Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die of foodborne disease annually. A commissary operator never wants to be one of these statistics.

“Two of the greatest potential foodborne microbiological threats are *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Staphylococcus aureus*,” says Don Schaffner, PhD, spokesperson for the Institute of Food Technologists, Chicago, and professor of food microbiology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. “Both can occur in the food handling environment, which is why good sanitary practices and time-temperature control must be properly managed.”

These are the foundation for the four rules to follow to ensure safe food preparation and handling. They are: clean, separate, cook and chill. (See sidebar on page 13.)

Keeping Microbes Away

Microbes are everywhere, which is why clean, separate, cook and chill are so fundamental in commissary operations. For example, *Staphylococcus* is carried on the human body, with workers' hands the most direct mode of transfer to food.

“*Staphylococcus* thrives in food environments where most other microorganisms cannot survive, such as high-sodium, low-moisture,” says Dr. Schaffner. “The *S. aureus* species produces a toxin that is heat stable. The toxin can make you sick for a day or two. Death is rare but can occur in the elderly, infants or severely debilitated persons.”

Consumption of *L. monocytogenes* can result in Listeriosis, another potentially fatal foodborne-related disease. *Listeria* is readily transmitted through ready-to-eat meat and poultry products, such as those used in salads, sandwiches and wraps. Similar to *Staphylococcus*, *Listeria* resists historical microbial growth inhibitors such as salt and acidity. It also readily grows at refrigerated temperatures; and although freezing temperatures will stop its growth, this hearty bacterium remains viable.

Proper cooking and reheating effectively controls *Listeria*; however, ready-to-eat meats do not require further cooking prior to consumption. Further, with *Listeria* omnipresent in the environment, ready-to-eat meats are very susceptible to contamination, as they are repeatedly exposed to microorganisms during slicing, dicing and meal assembly.

Because the presence of *Listeria* does not change the taste or smell of the food, it goes undetected. This makes it imperative that manufacturers of these products take all possible precautions to ensure food safety.

Commissary operators should consider sourcing ready-to-eat meats formulated with food safety ingredients. This in-



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

cludes US Department of Agriculture-Food Safety and Inspection Service-approved antimicrobials, such as organic acids and bacteriocins, as well as vinegar-based ingredients and citrus oils (e.g., lemon or lime juice).

Eliminating Risk

Back to the four rules for safe food preparation and handling, commissary operators can go down to three when they only allow fully cooked meat, poultry and fish into the facility. Risks are further reduced when fruits and vegetables come already cleaned and sanitized.

Simply, the ingredients—the meal components—should be ready for assembly, with no processing involved. This reduces the presence of unwanted spoilage and pathogenic microorganisms in the facility, and thus, improves food safety.

With more involved centralized production facilities, cooking, baking and washing should take place at a nearby commercial kitchen or manufacturing facility designed for the preparation of that specific product. Proximity is important as these are fresh foods with limited shelf life.

For example, chicken breast intended for topping a Caesar salad can be procured in various ways. From a food safety perspective, the riskiest approach is to bring raw chicken into the kitchen, cook it and then dice it. Even bringing in fully cooked chicken breasts and dicing them on site increases exposure to the environment and potential for contamination. Ideally fully cooked chicken breast cubes are delivered in a package size that is easy and quick to work with. You don't want too large of a package sitting out for an excessive length of time, which warms the product and exposes it to environment contaminants.

"Staging assembly is critical to keeping these perishable foods at safe temperatures," Dr. Schaffner says. "Colder is always better, and this is true through the entire supply chain."

In addition to positively improving food safety, sourcing ready-for-assembly meal components, as compared to cooking

and preparing the components in nearby facilities, improves quality control, as incoming foods will have been produced and inspected by the supplier. These products must meet established standards in terms of appearance, color, taste and texture. This in turn enables the commissary operator to produce consistent meals.

For example, when pasta used in Asian noodle salads arrives cooked and ready for assembly, the operator should be assured by the supplier that the noodles are the ideal consistency for the specified shelf life.

"Water activity is also a consideration, and suppliers can acidify cooked pastas and rice to inhibit or slow pathogen growth," Dr. Schaffner says.

In an ideal commissary environment, the tomatoes come sliced, the sandwich lettuce leaves are perfectly sized and the parsley garnish is sprigged. But, sometimes knife and cutting board is required.

Even though these ingredients should be cleaned and sanitized before handling, therefore posing minimal microbial concerns, best practices include using different cutting boards and knives for each food item.

Color-coded boards and utensils help eliminate the risk of cross-contamination. They also allow for traceability in case a food safety concern arises. Boards should be durable with smooth finishes to prevent dirt and microorganisms from hiding in cuts and grooves. Knives should have durable handles that do not chip, crack or peel.

"Breakdown the slicer and clean it out a couple of times a day," Dr. Schaffner says. "Wear gloves and change your gloves when you change the food you are handling."

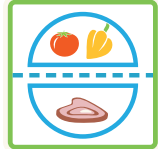
Source high-quality foods from a reputable supplier. And never, ever forget good sanitary practices and time-temperature control.

Four Rules to Ensure Food Safety

There are four basic rules to safe food preparation and handling.



Clean. Microorganisms spread quickly, from hands to counters to conveyors to foods. Frequent hand washing with warm water and soap—before and after food handling—and using proven sanitizing agents to clean work surfaces and utensils, such as knives and measuring cups, reduces the chance of microbial contamination.



Separate. Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood, and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. The same goes for unwashed produce. Also, keep known allergens separated and labeled.



Cook. Properly cooking or pasteurizing animal proteins, as well as animal products such as eggs and milk, destroys dangerous microorganisms. Use a food thermometer or approved time-temperature measuring device to ensure adequate heating.



Chill. Most microorganisms grow fastest at temperatures between 40° and 140°F. Chilling food properly and ensuring that refrigerators maintain a constant temperature below 40°F is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Remember, this is proper refrigeration through the entire supply chain.

Feature Profile:

Dunford Bakers

By John Unrein

As John Stevens, president/owner, discusses the future of Dunford Bakers, a large independently owned commissary based in West Jordan, Utah, he shares details of recent success stories, including a \$2 million expansion of their bread and bun production lines this year and the purchase of 2½ acres for an additional 50,000-square-foot facility. “Our bread shop is running 24 hours a day,” says the president of Dunford, founded in 1931. “We’re sending bread to the East Coast and the West Coast – hamburger and hot dog buns, sourdough, white, wheat, multigrain, a full line of breads. We do a lot of private label donuts, breads, buns, muffins and cookies for supermarkets, convenience stores and other retailers. It’s really been fantastic.”

Dunford Bakers and sister company Rocky Mountain Bread tally a combined \$25-30 million in annual sales, supplying grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores like 7-Eleven. They make up to 30 kinds of breads, ranging from cracked wheat/sprouted bread to mega multigrain, as well as numerous sweet goods (cookies, donuts, cupcakes, brownies and muffins) that include their most famous product, the Double Fudge Chocolate Cake Donut. “We use a proprietary mix and make our own chocolate icing with a superior fudge base,” Stevens says. “The donut is totally enrobed in fudge icing. It’s something we are very well known for, for years and years.”

Dawn Food Products is a key vendor that supplies donut mix to Dunford, which in turn makes donuts and distributes to 7-Eleven stores’ fresh program 365 days a year. “7-Eleven is so good for fresh foods,” Stevens says. “We are a member of the Fresh Bakery Opera-

tor Team that supplies to 7-Elevens in the US, Canada and Mexico.” Adds Dunford’s sales manager Laura DeLeeuw: “They hold us to a very high standard.”

As consumer attitudes toward health gain importance within the food industry, this movement creates more urgency for innovative bakeries like Dunford to respond to customer needs. For example, Dunford uses a specific donut frying shortening from Bunge that is trans fat free. “We are seeing a trend toward trans fat free and healthier products,” Stevens says. “You’ve got to look at people’s attitudes toward health.”

Food safety “is such a huge issue” today, he adds, putting additional pressure on them to ensure every baked



PHOTOS: DUNFORD BAKERS

product is safe and secure. “The food industry has changed so much over the years,” Stevens says, “with the need for temperature control, specific mix times, metal detection and other factors. There are some people out there who are not inspected like we are and they can go out there and sell for lower prices. But more and more customers are looking for a higher standard to provide the level of products and services that we have.”

Investment in the most advanced equipment is vital to Dunford staying ahead of

the curve. The bakery recently installed a 6-pocket volumetric bun divider from AMF Bakery Systems, as it continues to automate. Their 100,000-square-foot facility in West Jordan features two fully automated bread lines with overhead conveying systems. Bread is baked in a pair of massive Baker Perkins ovens.

Product innovation is another requirement to maintaining an edge in today’s marketplace. Stevens explains that they are always pushing the envelope with new ideas to create products that the market demands. One success sto-

ry is the individually wrapped hot dog bun, which Stevens says is a big enough bun to hold a third of a pound hot dog. The fact that it is individually wrapped brings added convenience for use at c-stores and other retailers that sell hot dogs and also ensures food safety for the ultimate consumer.

Another product success story is the Triangle Bavarian Cream, which is the result of experimenting with a croissant cutter on a Moline machine to find the right shape to make a convenient and delicious filled donut, which is iced in chocolate. “We’re always coming up with a lot of neat ideas,” Stevens says.

Their famous Double Fudge Chocolate Cake Donut remains a top seller and is so popular throughout Utah. Many Utahns come directly to the Dunford retail store to purchase fresh product. It has become a staple for many, and families ship to other relatives in other states and countries. Stevens says there are c-stores that routinely sell two dozen or more Double Fudge Chocolate Cake Donuts per day, well above the norm for daily sales of a single variety of donut.

DeLeeuw points out that this decadent donut is a mainstay no matter how the economy is doing. “Everyone will still eat a donut when times are tight. People still need a treat.” Adds Stevens, “When you have a history like we do, people keep coming back for more.”

Dunford Bakers traces its roots to the Great Depression in the late 1920s as a way to help a widow make ends meet for her and her three sons. Hazel Love Dunford, having lost her husband to sudden heart failure, and her job as a home economics teacher at a financially failed school, took on the challenge. With the help of her sons, who made deliveries on their bicycles, Hazel began baking and selling bread in her own kitchen. She quickly developed a customer base that preferred home-style bread. Before long, the family was so successful they could not keep up with the increasing demand. As the boys grew, so did the business. Steve, Clayton and Burns opened Dunford Bakers in 1931, and they were joined in



Feature Profile

the mid-1940s by Paul Stevens, John's father.

"As Dunford grew, they hired my father, who was at Royal Baking at the time," John Stevens says. "The business grew and got involved in more products including cakes, pies, rolls, donuts and muffins. In the 1950s, Dunford was one of the largest independent wholesale bakeries in the West."

By 1980, the business was sold to Metz Baking Co. in Sioux City, Iowa, which wound up being sold to Earthgrains in 1999. But before that time, John Stevens had bought out the company that had taken over the sweet bakery side for Metz and brought back the Dunford name and business in 1991. Today, he owns Dunford Bakers and co-owns Rocky



Mountain Bread with his brother, Ron Stevens.

"When we look back at everything our father accomplished, we want to see the third generation carry on the busi-

ness," says John Stevens, who has five children working in the family business. "We have a lot of family working here, which makes us very proud. We want to see this continue on another 100 years."

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