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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015



Pasta & Sauces

Shelf Stable

Pasta, whether it's traditional or a little more niche, still tops Western Canadian grocery lists

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The Omni-Channel Universe



I recently had the pleasure of speaking at the Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA) conference in Toronto on the subject of how to market to the next generation of consumers, namely the Millennials. The common thread that ran through the presentation was that we now live in the "Omni-Channel" universe where consumers, in particular Millennials, move effortlessly back and forth between on-line and traditional brick and mortar shopping. Indeed, many use their smartphones in store to do research on a product.

Over the last year, online shopping grew at +43 per cent and now represents a 1.9 per cent share of sales in all retail channels. In grocery, online sales are growing at close to 10 per cent annually... and could represent three per cent of sales in just the next few years.

To get some perspective on how seriously the grocery industry is now taking this, Loblaw has appointed a vice-president of Omni Channel. The company is currently experimenting with a "Click and Collect" model and has drive through pick up at 25 stores in Ontario now. Walmart too is experimenting with click and collect at 11 of its stores in the Ottawa area.

More than this, Loblaw and others are introducing mobile payment apps tied into their loyalty programs so that customers can conveniently pay with their smartphones. A recent Deloitte study says we have passed the critical threshold on mobile payments, and that five per cent will be used to make payments - a 1,000 per cent increase.

Retailers are increasingly realizing that they need to meet consumer needs at all points on path to purchase by integrating in-store and on-line shopping experiences. With the data available from on-line payment apps, retailers will be able to message customers on their smartphones as they enter the store, welcoming them and advising them of daily specials that might be of interest based on previous purchases. More advanced devices and software set the stage for apps that allow customers to scan items as they take them from store shelves and pay wirelessly from anywhere in the store.

While online sales will not replace brick and mortar anytime soon, failing to prepare for it could have negative consequences for the future of your business.

Frank Yeo,
Publisher & Editor

On Our Cover

12 Shelf Stable

Pasta, whether it's traditional or a little more niche, still tops Western Canadian grocery lists.

Cover Photography: courtesy of shutterstock.com



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market update



Neal Brothers Hires Brandseed Marketing

Neal Brothers is excited to announce they have hired the services of BrandSeed Marketing to help grow and improve their sales and marketing divisions. Jim Kavanagh, principal of BrandSeed, will be working with the Neal Brothers team to help grow the Neal Brothers brand nationally in Canada and improve their overall sales and marketing efforts. Neal Brothers is a Canadian leader in the distribution of natural, organic and specialty foods including their own line of more than 50 Neal Brothers branded products.



Jim Kavanagh

Wild West Seasonings Announces New Location



Wild West Seasonings has opened a new facility in the Headingly Business Park, according to Rod Schwartz, president of Wild West Seasonings. After 20 years in business, the family owned business made the decision to expand, gaining greater capacity for their packaging capabilities. This has also allowed them to increase their custom packaging volume and offer services many small businesses currently outsource. The new location offers room to expand in the future.

After 20 years in business, the family owned business made the decision to expand, gaining greater capacity for their packaging capabilities.

Munk Pack joins the Lloyd-James Natural Food Sales and Marketing Family

Munk Pack will now be represented by Lloyd James Sales and Marketing. With Canadians continually looking for healthy food choices in their local grocery stores, this opens up greater opportunities for passionate retailers to stock shelves with new and exciting products. Whether it is gluten free or raw food, consumers are demanding new healthy products!



Canadian produced, Munk Pack is the first portable, and ready-to-eat fruit and oatmeal squeezed geared towards both adults and families. Made with gluten-free whole grains, Munk Pack is high in Omega 3s and fibre, while being vegan, kosher, and non-GMO verified. Because Munk Pack is sweetened with sugar from fruit only, consumers can enjoy this healthy snack for breakfast, at the office, school, and after workouts or even camping.

Backed by strong promotional support, a competitive SRP and a 12-month shelf life, Munk Pack will be a category innovator in Canadian stores.

Chapman's Ice Cream Receives Award

Chapman's Ice Cream has been awarded the 2015 Most Innovative Ice Cream award for their Premium Canadian Collection Oatmeal Stickwich Cookie. The award was presented by Alex Balaguer, pictured above (centre), president of the International Ice Cream Consortium (IICC).

The IICC is an international association of independent Ice Cream Manufacturers, founded in 1986. The members are leaders in their respective markets, sharing in the common goal of creating a competitive edge for independent ice cream companies by strengthening individual knowledge, developing capabilities and by providing a global perspective through a structured, collective effort.

Chapman's has been a member of the IICC since 2013, and proudly hosted this year's conference on Canadian soil. Vice-President Ashley Chapman, and Vice-President of Finance Rob Minken (pictured on left) received the award at the Gala Dinner ceremony, which took place in Thornbury, Ontario.

A total of four awards were presented, including Most Innovative Ice Cream. The award for Best Technical Solution was presented to Grupo Kalise Menorquina (GKM) of Spain, Best Ice Cream was awarded to Unipex of United Arab Emirates, and Tip Top (Fonterra) of New Zealand took home the award for Best Commercial Solution, as voted by the participating members.

Save-On-Foods Makes First Official Vancouver Online Grocery Shopping Delivery To The Ronald McDonald House

Save-On-Foods launched its home delivery service in Vancouver with a special 'home' delivery to Ronald McDonald House BC by Save-On-Foods President, Darrell Jones.

The delivery to Ronald McDonald House is part of Save-On-Foods' commitment to serving, and helping B.C. families. "We're all about community - after all, we live here too", says Jones. "We see our customers as an extension of the Save-On-Foods family and helping BC families, who really need the support is something that we are passionate about", said Jones.

Save-On-Foods has committed to filling the shelves of the Ronald McDonald House pantry so that B.C. families from outside the lower mainland, who need the specialized care offered in Vancouver have one less thing to worry about. "The Pantry Program makes a huge difference to our families," says Richard Pass, CEO of Ronald McDonald House BC and Yukon. "Families come to the House from a long day at the hospital and can find fresh ingredients to make a snack, or a meal."



From left to right of photo: Rob Minken, vice-president of finance Chapman's Ice Cream; Alex Balaguer, president of the International Ice Cream Consortium; Ashley Chapman, vice-president Chapman's Ice Cream.



Country Grocer Announces Partnership with Localize

Local, regional, and hyper-local food suppliers and farmers are about to get a lot more attention at Country Grocer stores on Vancouver Island. Customers in six Country Grocer stores will now be able to identify 4,266 products from 111 producers that are made, grown, or raised closer to home with red Localize shelf labels.

"We're an Island-grown company so this program is a great fit for us. We especially appreciate how easy the program is to use. It's nice that we can make it easier for our customers to identify local products on our shelves. It's all about sustainability and helping each other in our community" says Country Grocer Director Peter Cavin.

Meghan Dear, Localize's CEO is very excited to partner with Country Grocer, "When grocery stores like Country Grocer support local food production, they are helping to sustain an entire community network of farmers, processors, and small businesses. We make it easy for customers to find these local products and assist Country Grocer in sourcing more."

Localize labels feature a quick-response (QR) code that allows customers to find out more about specific products with their smartphones.



These labels also highlight the place of production and business ownership, assigning a score between 0 and 10, with 10 being considered the most local. The labels can be found next to products in all food departments, highlighting both local and regional products.

Two local producers who are part of the Localize vendor community and can be found in Country Grocer stores are Hardbite Chips and HapiFoods Group.

"We greatly value the relationship that we have with local food retailers like Country Grocer, and the consumers they serve. By participating in the Localize program we are giving the consumer a strong and consistent tool to help them identify locally grown and produced foods in store," said Kirk Home-nick from Hardbite Chips in Maple Ridge.

Corin Mullins from HapiFoods (maker of Holy Crap cereal in Gibsons) agrees, "We're excited that more British Columbians will be able to easily identify B.C. made products in the grocery aisle with the Localize program's signage."

Localize labels can now be found in Country Grocer stores in Victoria, Cobble Hill, Nanaimo, or Lake Cowichan.

Agropur Cheeses Win Awards of Excellence

Agropur Cooperative picked up top awards at two major cheese competitions, winning two prizes at the Caséus awards in Quebec and eight prizes at the American Cheese Society Judging & Competition in July.

Caseus awards

Agropur products were the jury's first choice in two categories at the Caséus awards, which were handed out at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec on September 15. Agropur Grand Cheddar aged five years, made at Notre-Dame-de-Bon Conseil, Quebec, was the big winner in the "cheddar cheese" category, while OKA L'Artisan won first prize in the "firm or hard cheese" category.

The Sélection Caséus competition celebrates the finest Quebec cheeses. Each year, it rewards cheesemakers who produce unique products of outstanding quality.

American Cheese Society competition

The American Cheese Society (ACS) held the 32nd edition of its prestigious Judging & Competition in Providence, Rhode Island in July. ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for members of the cheese industry, while striving to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in North America. In all, 1,779 cheeses from the U.S. and Canada were entered in the competition. Agropur cheeses made in Oka, Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Damase and Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil won eight awards at the elite event.

'Back-to-School Essentials' Award Winner

EDEN Pocket Snack have been honoured by Taste for Life magazine with a 'Back-to-School Essentials' award in their 'Packables' category as announced in the September 2015 Taste for Life.

Taste for Life wrote, "Eden Pocket Snacks include a variety of satisfying treats in convenient, single serve packages." They are one ounce, easy to carry packages.

EDEN Pocket Snacks are the finest family farm and family orchard nuts, seeds, and dried fruits that can be found. There are nine varieties in single serve packets that easily go anywhere. Seven are certified organic, lowbush hand harvested - dried wild blueberries - dried cranberries - award winning wild berry mix - dry roasted and lightly salted pumpkin seeds - organic garlic and cayenne spicy pumpkin seeds - shelled pistachios and dry roasted tamar Almonds. The sweet tart, dried Montmorency cherries are transitional-to-organic, grown with zero chemicals - Quiet Moon mix is 88 per cent organic with 12 per cent Montmorency tart cherries.

EDEN Pocket Snacks contain no refined sugars or chemical additives whatsoever and are gluten-free with very low or low sodium.



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market update



Upcoming EVENTS

February 5-9, 2016

Europain

Paris-Nord Villepinte, France

For more info:

www.europain.com

April 4-5, 2016

Grocery & Specialty
Food West

Vancouver Convention Centre
Vancouver, BC

For more info: www.cfig.ca

April 13-15, 2016

SIAL Canada

Palais des congrès
Montreal, Quebec

For more info:

www.sialcanada.com

May 12-15, 2016

CHFA West

Vancouver Convention
Centre, West Building
Vancouver, BC

For more info: www.chfa.ca

May 24-26, 2016

Sweets & Snacks Expo

McCormick Place
Chicago, IL

For more info:

www.sweetandsnacks.com

June 5-7, 2016

Dairy-Deli-Bake Seminar
and Expo

Houston, Texas

For more info: www.iddba.org

October 16-20, 2016

SIAL

Parc de Expositions
de Paris-Nord Villepinte
Paris Nord Villepinte, France

For more info:

www.sialparis.com

Retail Council of Canada announces a new and improved Grand Prix New Product Awards program for 2015



Retail Council of Canada (RCC) has announced that - based on the recommendations of a newly established industry advisory group - major changes are in store for the 2015 Grand Prix New Product Awards. The awards are Canada's pre-eminent showcase for recognizing and rewarding the year's best in product innovation.

Earlier this year, RCC set up the Canadian Grand Prix Advisory Council (CGPAC) to help it review the listing strategy and product categories for the awards, and to provide real-world industry guidance to improve evaluation criteria. The CGPAC is an expert group comprised of food retailing merchants and representatives from the supplier and service provider communities.

Working with the Council, RCC both reviewed the overall program structure and created new food and non food categories for the 2015 Grand Prix New Product Awards program. 2015 categories have been updated to better represent how merchants and their vendors merchandise/market your product. In addition, all category descriptions now include Nielsen rating details.

The key changes for the 2015 awards program are:

Integrated private-label categories: The private-label product categories now correspond with the consumer packaged goods (CPG) food and non-food categories, creating better alignment for all category listings and a more holistic approach to the awards. In addition, all category descriptions now include Nielsen rating details.

Increased consumer marketing: RCC supported the award finalists last year with a flyer drop to 500,000 homes in Ontario and Quebec. This year the drop will be made to a million households.

Increased trade marketing: Last year the awards were highlighted in feature articles in Canadian Grocer, Grocery Business, Western Grocer, L'Alimentation and Canadian Retailer magazines. This year Canadian Retailer coverage will be expanded to include an RCC member exclusive feature on all new products submitted for evaluation.

"The Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards celebrate new product development and innovation, which are vital to the continued growth of Canada's consumer products industry," said Andrew Siegwart, RCC's senior vice-president of membership services. "Due to the expert guidance and input of the CGPAC, we are confident the improvements we are announcing today will heighten the value, prestige and visibility of the awards for years to come."

The deadline for entries for this year's program is November 27.

Ready Pac Foods Evolves Brand Visual Identity



For the first time in more than a decade, Ready Pac Foods introduces a new official corporate visual identity. The new logo is the first step in the brand's company-wide transformation and alignment with its brand values of being the most innovative fresh food company. Customers will begin seeing the new brand identity immediately in Ready Pac's online presence with product packaging, vehicles and other assets rebranding in the coming months.

New notable characteristics include a new font for the brand, a more defined green leaf and the addition of the word, "foods." The use of white space, creative use of black and a clearer leaf logo denote crisp freshness and more taste appeal.

The new visual identity reflects the brand's focus on innovative, fresh and forward-thinking offerings as it continues to meet growing consumer demand for healthier and indulgent on-the-go produce and snack options. More than simply a redesign, the new logo highlights an evolution for the 46-year-old company as it continues to grow and expand its affordable fresh food offerings.



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Canada's premier grocery show and conference featured more sessions and products for attendees.

Over the two-day event, held at the Toronto Congress Centre September 28 and 29, there were plenty of thought-provoking keynotes to inspire and provide food for thought. John Herdman, the head coach of the Canadian Women's Soccer Team kicked things off on Monday, with his presentation about overcoming adversity and role of leaders to inspire trust and success whether it's on the field or workplace.

The retail panel featuring Ken Schley (Quality Foods), Frank Coleman (Colemans), and Frank Lovsin (Freson Bros.), shared their best practices and how to overcome sector challenges. From morning workshops to trade floor educational sessions, attendees were able to get plenty of takeaways to bring back to their business.

What retailers were Canada's favourite grocers this year? In the first survey of its kind, Field Agent's Jeff Doucette shared that Farm Boy was the winner, followed



More Innovations, More Insights and More Interaction!

by: 2) Longo's, 3) Loblaws, 4) Save-On-Foods, 5) Your Independent Grocer.

Google Canada's Mohit Grover had the crowd rethinking the business with his presentation highlighting the four moments redefining the shop: I want to know moments; I want to go moments; I want to do moments; and I want to buy moments.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois' keynote also had attendees enthralled as he looked at

Grocery Innovations Canada's annual conference and trade show was jam packed with networking and learning



Curtis Frank, Maple Leaf Foods with Summerhill Market's Christy McMullen, Brad McMullen and Candra Reynolds, winners of the Specialty Gold Award.



Darrell Jones, OWFG; James Inglis, Save-On-Foods (Seton); Jamie Nelson, OWFG accept award for National Large Surface Gold from Michel Manseau, Kruger.



National Medium Surface Gold Award winners, Freson Bros.- Barrhead's Sena Lovsin, Ken Lovsin, Stephen Kouri(Smucker Foods), Aaron Couatts, Jenell Couatts.



Post Show Q&A with Tom Barlow

President & CEO of Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers



GIC 2015 included many new innovative features. What were some of these features and how do you feel they resonated with exhibitors and attendees?

The new location was a hit with retailers and exhibitors. We also received positive feedback regarding the establishment of 'pavilions', which allowed us to group like categories together. The insights and innovations stage provided information that retailers felt they could use in their stores.

Part of the change from previous years was the re-location to the Toronto Congress Centre...do you feel this was a positive move and will it be part of future plans?

We have renewed for next year already and are working on 2017 and 2018.

In terms of the conference, what do you feel were the principal take-aways for your members?

John Herdman started day one off by asking the audience if they 'were good' at what they did. John's positive message resonated with the crowd. The 'Frank Conversation' panel discussion, which was moderated by Ken Schley and included Frank Lovsin and Frank Coleman shared many years of grocery experience with the attendees, you can't buy that type of insight. Dr. Sylvain Charlebois shared with us recent research regarding the state of the Canadian grocery business, which by all indicators appears to be healthy and growing. Mohit Grover closed the conference with an overview of how technology is and will impact the grocery channel. And as always Harold Lloyd captivated the audience with his common sense approach to grocery retail.

Numerous presenters at the conference indicated that independents will be well positioned moving forward in today's competitive environment... why do you think that is?

The data certainly supports this belief. Retailers, especially independents, who take time to understand their customers' needs will continue to have a place in the Canadian grocery channel. Those retailers who lose sight of that do so at their own peril.

the future for grocers and the pressures they're facing.

On the floor, from tandoori lasagna, to beverages that promised nutritional benefits and convenience, these were some of the winners in this year's Top 10 Most Innovative Products Contest.

From the opening reception overlooking the trade floor, to the Art of Food at Sketch evening, there were plenty of opportunities for networking and catching up with colleagues.

On Tuesday night, over 500 gathered for the gala night, the Independent Grocers of the Year Awards. *CityLine* host

Tracy Moore, along with Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers' (CFG) President and CEO, Tom Barlow, acted as hosts, to the annual event that celebrates Canada's top grocers.

Next year's event will take place **October 17 and 18, 2016** at the Toronto Congress Centre-North building.

www.GroceryInnovations.com

Don't miss **Grocery & Specialty Food West, April 4 and 5, 2016**, at the Vancouver Convention Centre (East). www.GSFShow.com



Arnold Rands Heritage Award winners Jim Hamilton and Peggy Hamilton, Hamilton's IGA with Lance Wade, Pepsico Foods; Tom Barlow, CFGI.



Jim Leish, P&G; Anthony Greco, Joe Greco, Rina Virgilio and Mike Abballe of Concord Food Centre, winners of National Small Surface Gold Award.

Pasta, whether it's traditional or a little more niche, still tops Western Canadian grocery lists.



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ON OUR COVER

By Carly Peters



Stable

Pasta and
Sauces

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For further information contact Prairie Harvest Canada Ltd: info@phcanadaltd.com • 780-454-4004



Pasta manufacturers will challenge you to find a more versatile product in the grocery aisle.

From a homemade mac n' cheese, to a suave seafood linguini, pasta can be dressed up or dressed down to meet any everyday or special occasion. Looking to fill up on fibre? There's a noodle for that. Need an easy, yet nutritional, gluten-free dish? Pasta is your answer. This broad category is ever expanding, adding new skus with new ingredients to match the multitude of today's nutritional needs.

"That's the beauty of pasta," chimes Frank DeMichino, chief operating officer for Italpasta, who adds pasta has been a part of his life since he was old enough to eat it. "It's a base for local vegetables, or local protein. It's perfect for merchandising with specialty cheese. There's no other product that can do as much as pasta."

With roughly 30 to 32 various long and short cuts of Italpasta in both boxes and cello bags the company certainly showcases the variety traditional pasta offers. While DeMichino admits consumption of traditional pasta may be down (according to Nielsen data, sales of traditional dry pasta are down one per cent in dollars, but up two per cent in volume), he still feels there's a place for it on grocery shelves.

"There still is a place for real Italian pasta. There's just that romantic feel that

comes with it. There's historical value since cuts come from certain regions," he states.

However, along with traditional cuts, the company offers vegetable-based, whole grain, fibre-based, and gluten free varieties as well to stay current with

category trends. DeMichino adds they are looking at launching a "super" pasta that's high in fibre, protein, and Omegas, as well as utilizing pulses as a main ingredient, since more functional, health-based varieties are making inroads in to the category.

Certainly one of the segments that has seen steady growth is gluten free pasta. Removal of gluten, a protein found in wheat which is traditionally used to make pasta, has prompted manufacturers to pursue other ingredient sources, mainly rice and corn, to make pasta. As this trends has continued, companies are branching out.

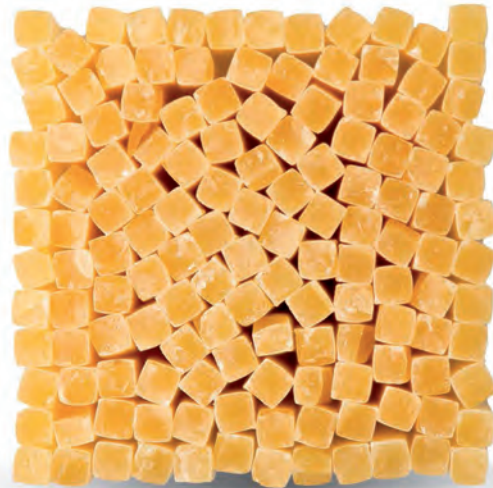
Prairie Harvest, one of the most comprehensive line up of organic pasta in the Canadian market under the brands Prairie Harvest Organic, Artesian Acres Organic Ancient Grain Kamut pasta, and San Zenone Organic Gluten Free pasta, are launching a new and innovative gluten free pasta under the San Zenone brand, which contains four Organic Ancient grains (corn, rice, buckwheat, and quinoa).

"This pasta contains the highly nutritious and very digestible buckwheat grain along with the ever popular quinoa," states Carlo Facchin, chief executive officer of Prairie Harvest Canada Ltd., adding the brand's 11 retail skus (manufactured in a dedicated certified gluten free facility) are also available in organic corn pasta, and organic brown rice pasta. "The consumer along with the retailer is always looking for innovation in the category."

He points to another new offering - a first of its kind dry pasta, which contains organic coconut flour - under the Prairie Harvest brand. The product is produced



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with a proprietary blend of organic durum semolina and the “on trend” super fruit organic coconut flour.

“The product offers the consumer the same delicious taste, flavour, and texture as our original organic durum semolina pasta but with double the fibre,” explains Facchin.

High fibre is just one of the benefits to NuPasta Inc.’s unique low-calorie, high-fibre, gluten-free alternative to traditional pasta made from konjac flour which contains glucomannan fibres. Glucomannan fibres can hold a large amount of water in a gel form, which is then shaped into pasta. As a result, NuPasta contains 95 per cent water and five per cent fibre in its final pasta-like form so there is no need for the calorie-rich starch found in traditional pasta. While a traditional serving of starch-based pasta would run 300 calories, the same size serving of NuPasta is 23 calories - allowing for more room for toppings such as vegetables, or protein to create a healthier, satisfying meal. Along with

being low calorie, one serving of the pasta contains zero net carbs, making it an appealing option for those follows a low-carb diet, or require low-GI foods.

“Konjac-based foods are relatively unknown in North America, but the Japanese have eaten it for hundreds of years,” explains Stephen Cheung of NuPasta, stating the variety of konjac-based foods in Japanese grocery stores is bigger than a North American pasta aisle. “It deserves to be as well know for high fibre as quinoa is for high protein.”

He states since it’s such a unique item (the brand only launched two years ago) its best if retailers demo the product for consumers.

“You can provide consumers with all the information about the benefits of konjac but they won’t understand it fully until they taste it,” says Cheung, adding the brand, which includes spaghetti, fettuccine, and angel hair cuts, was just listed in Western Canada in Whole Foods.

Ingredients included for nutritional value have made in road but there has also been significant growth in the

Product Spotlight

Italpasta offers roughly 30-32 various long and short cuts of pasta.



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Winner of the Retail Council of Canada New Product Award and SIAL Innovation Award.



artisanal pasta category, particularly the specialty and flavoured cuts of pasta, says Chris MacDonald of Bosa Foods.

"These cuts of pasta are very unique and provide the consumer with a much wider range of choices than the traditional wheat, whole wheat, spelt, or gluten-free pasta options typically sold in many stores," he states. "For example, we sell porcini mushroom-infused pasta, squid ink-infused pasta, a range of cuts of egg pasta and tri-colour pasta (egg, spinach, and sundried tomato), as well as a variety of five-colour and even eight-colour pasta options."

The most recent line Bosa Foods has added to their product list, which already includes imported pasta brands from Italy, specifically Italissima brand pasta, and Preferisco brand pasta, is the Dal Sole pasta brand. This brand of pasta is unique in that all the cuts of are bronze-die extruded, meaning the pasta is extruded through a bronze die, which has rougher edges and is not as smooth as the traditional steel dies. The rougher die results in a pasta which has rougher

outer edges, which allows the pasta to hold its sauce much better than other traditional cuts.

"When looking at good pasta you want to make sure there's no cracking, and the pasta has an amber, golden colour," explains John Porco, COO of Unico Inc., adding it should also have a good "bite", meaning it's al dente when cooked.

Providing a high-quality, consistent tasting product has been the main focus of Unico Inc. which acquired the Primo Foods brand in 2006. Porco states since they brought the brand on board, Primo Foods' market share has doubled, and it's mainly to do with the company's choice to use innovative technology and high-quality Canadian hard durum. The climate and growing conditions in the Canadian prairies are ideal for growing high-protein, low-starch wheat that delivers top-quality flavour, texture, and a golden yellow colour.

The way the company actually makes the pasta also stands out - machines, which come directly from Italy, are the biggest in the country, with the highest

Product Spotlight

Preferisco is one of the pasta brands that Bosa Foods carries.



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output of product, properly mixes the semolina and delivers a consistent product. They are also the only Canadian manufacturer to have their own mill onsite in order to grind the durum.

"This ensures we have very good quality control," states Porco, adding the company's GrainWise brand, which recently added a high-fibre variety of spaghetti and penne noodles, follows the same process.

Unico also boasts one of the largest tomato processing facilities in Canada (based in Leamington, Ontario, the tomato capital of Canada) where the create Primo's canned sauces. Customers conscious of quality have somewhat avoided canned pasta sauces, but Porco states the only difference is the package it's coming in.

"Consumers have the wrong idea about canned products. The quality is the same in glass or a can. We use natural tomatoes, and can them fresh," he says, adding harvest runs from August to October. "What is different is the price. Canned is just as good and provides great value."

The company offers 10 skus in their canned varieties ranging from traditional to ramano cheese and basil, to caramelized onion to create a quick, easy, yet tasty, twist on a pasta dish.

Top it off

To use another food comparison, a great sauce on a plate of pasta is like the icing on the cake. Just as different cut of noodles create different experiences, so to does the sauce. And, much like pasta, consumers are looking for healthier options and authentic recipes.

Ocean's World Cuisine Italian Pasta Sauces are authentically produced in small batches in the heart of Italy from authentic regional recipes handed down from one generation to the next. The company recently launched a Grana Padano cheese variety - a sauce which origins date back to ancient Rome, but became a Sicilian specialty in the early 13th century - as well as a Pomodoro & Ricotta Sauce.

"Red sauces (tomato-based) and cheese-based

Product Spotlight

Prairie Harvest provides one of the most comprehensive line-up of organic pasta in the Canadian market.



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*Taste
the Preferisco
Difference*

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sauses, such as four cheese sauce or our Pomodoro & Ricotta Sauce are showing good growth. It seems that cheese sauces are growing at the expense of white sauces," explains Hannes Koller, vice-president of Ocean Brands.

He adds consumers are willing to use these rich, flavourful pasta sauces for use in dishes other than pasta as well, pointing to the company's website, www.oceanbrands.com, which features recipes such as slow roasted pot roast puttanesca, and spice risotto with butternut squash.

In the very short time Mia's Kitchen

has been in Canada (the brand launched earlier this year) Tomato Basil is by far the market leader, states Jim Kavanagh BrandSeed Marketing Inc. on behalf of Mia's Kitchen, followed by Sriracha and Portobello.

"Sriracha is one of our faster sellers as there is no other brand right now in the market at this time. And our Portobello is the only one on the market that has the sizes and pieces of mushrooms," he states, adding Mia's Kitchen sauces use only the best fresh, high-quality ingredients using no powders or dehydrated ingredients.

Make it merchandising

Sauces while traditionally placed in the same aisle as the dry pasta, certainly lends itself to off-shelf displays, especially when introducing new brands states Kavanagh.

"Retailers should also make use of secondary placements such as by the meat departments when ground beef or chicken is on sale," he says.

Having Italian-themed days or flyers is a

great way for retailers to group pasta perfect products, adds Italpasta's DeMichino.

"There's so many opportunities to cross merchandise with proteins, cheeses, and vegetables," he states. "There's great seasonal opportunities there as well. As fall and winter approaches feature a display for baked pastas that would use a seasonal vegetable."

Great for any season, any dinner occasion, or any diet, there's a pasta option. And, customers seem to be eating it all up. ●

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Product Spotlight

Ocean's World Cuisine Italian Pasta Sauces are produced in the heart of Italy.



By Ken Kwong

Social Media

MARKETING INSIGHTS

What **Social Media** is really about...



Social media is about sharing, not selling. If you want to sell, then try advertising. For businesses, social media should be a forum where you would be sharing your expertise by positioning yourself as the expert. And as the expert, would you not want to share your expertise?

As an example, let's assume you are in the business of manufacturing organic food products. You shouldn't be trying to sell your products through social media. You would be selling your products through advertising. However, you would use social media, as a platform, to share the importance and benefit of consuming organic food products. Your purpose on social media should be to teach people about the benefits of organic food and to respond to their questions or comments about your company and its products. You strive to make connections with the people through your products and to create active conversations.

What sort of conversations? Your line of products may span a number of categories or you may offer a wide selection of assortments. So, use social media to discuss that. Talk about your inspirations. Talk about your experiences or reasons why you offer what you have. Conversation can, and will, evolve into unique associations about other conversational subjects, all through your products. The list of topics can be endless. You'll need to think creatively, but keep in mind that social media is a forum for sharing conversations and information that will enlighten people or to benefit them in some way. In other words, provide some sort of value to your audience. Making people think and talk about your products is a surefire way of giving them a reason to visit your business or website regularly.

What else can you share? Content. Use pictures, video, recipes, tips and tricks. Come up with new and interesting ways to present your products and share information about your company. Since you are the expert, what sort of "insider" information can you share that may be of value to your audience? Social media is your forum to "show and tell". Be original and creative in your content. Maybe consider showing people enjoying or having fun with your

products? People are emotional creatures; and evoking sentiments of happiness and joy creates a positive feeling about your products. Be funny! Show that you have a sense of humour. You, too, can be a fun brand!

The greatest aspect of social media is that it creates an equal playing field amongst businesses or brands. Social media is accessible and affordable to everyone. It is not governed by borders or finances. Most importantly, you must identify your niche and secure your expertise in this area. Create your following and extend your reach. Focus on building brand loyalty. Provide valuable content that is varied, interesting and engaging. Share, Give, Respond, Authentically.

Twitter – Redux

Twitter will be turning 10 years old next year. Since its inception, this social media platform has gone through a roller coaster of evolutionary development. Its user base had somewhat plateaued in the last couple years. It was slowly becoming just a source for news feeds and celebrity gloating. However, in recent news, there have been some very interesting developments at Twitter, and I believe there will be a revamp of the vision and purpose of Twitter in the coming years.

On Oct 5, 2015, Jack Dorsey (@jack), the original co-founder of Twitter and CEO of Square, Inc. was recently brought back to Twitter as their permanent CEO. A week later, he culled Twitter of eight per cent of its staff, which was 336 employees and the following week, he donated 1/3 of his shares in Twitter to the company's equity pool – with a statement that he wanted to invest in the company and it's people.

On Oct 15, 2015, Steve Ballmer (@Steve_Ballmer), the ex-CEO of Microsoft, tweeted his boost of confidence in Jack and the company, and revealed that he bought four per cent of twitter over the past few months. This makes Ballmer the third largest shareholder of Twitter, with a larger stake than Dorsey.

So in light of these recent developments, I feel that this would be a great opportunity to take a fresh look at where twitter is today and what you can do to better manage your twitter engagement. The learning curve for new Twitter users is very high now, with all of the new developments to the technology and network. But for those who have been active or semi-active users of twitter over the last 10 years, I would like to share a list of some tools and apps that will help elevate your engagement beyond simple RTs, favourites or 140 character conversations¹.



Ken is the executive vice-president at New Age Marketing & Brand Management Inc., (NAM&BMT) a National brokerage company specializing in brand management of CPG brands and products in all channels and markets in Canada. His opinions expressed in this column are solely his own and do not necessarily represent those of this publication. Ken can be contacted via email (ken@newagemarketing.ca), Twitter (@kenkwong) or LinkedIn.

¹ <http://socialfanz.com/14-apps-tools-to-transform-your-twitter-engagement/>

Tools & Apps...

that will help elevate your engagement beyond simple RTs.

- Tweetdeck**
One of my favourite twitter dashboards. Active and real-time. Allows management of multiple twitter accounts.
- Buffer**
Lots of functions built into app. Allows scheduling tweets, RSS feed management, content and engagement analytics.
- Hootsuite**
Another one of my favourite twitter dashboards. Management of RSS feeds, social listening feeds and team collaboration.
- Canva**
Used to create custom graphics to share on Twitter
- Periscope / Meerkat**
Live streaming video apps, leverages twitter connections, allows posts of live stream links to Twitter feeds
- Twitter Lists**
Organize and filter your Twitter followers into organized feeds, subscribe and follow others lists.
- ManageFlitter**
Manage your followers, clear inactive followers, compare your followers to others, find new people to follow.
- Mention**
Social listening with alerts for each time your name, Twitter handle or other words.
- Klear (formerly Twtrland)**
Dashboard view of your account, influencers accounts and content being shared by your followers and followers of topics you follow
- Twitter Video**
30 second video's embedded into Twitter, take videos saying thank you or storytelling beyond 140 characters.
- TweetBot or Twitter Mobile App**
Leverage downtime with mobile Twitter apps, customize notifications to understand when you're mentioned so you can engage in real-time.
- Topsy**
Search hashtags, compare hashtags and trends to better understand hashtags being used and which hashtags are best.
- TweetChat / Nurph**
Sites dedicated to Twitter chats, enables users to follow only chat hashtag to organize conversation. Read more on Twitter chats here!
- Meshfire**
Twitter dashboard organized for team and campaign engagement, leverages artificial intelligence to give unique view of twitter conversations.



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Gluten Free Brings In Customers

Retail managers constantly juggle consumer demand for variety, shelf space, and profits. Gluten free products can seem like another demand. Instead, it is a growing segment. When managed properly, a gluten free section can build consumer loyalty and profits.

Excluding non-medical shoppers, seven of 100 shoppers are looking for gluten free. Industry growth is consistently 10 to 12 per cent in Canada and has 43 per cent household penetration in the United States. That is big business.

Jerry Bigam, co-owner of Kinnikinnick Foods Inc. says. "Consumers of gluten free are no longer just diagnosed celiacs. Many are gluten intolerant and mainstream buyers." This can increase incremental sales.

"Shoppers who eat gluten free eat out much less frequently, so the average bill is likely to be higher," says Sue Newell of the Canadian Celiac Association. "People with celiac and gluten sensitivity shop for themselves and their families. Serving gluten free options leads to a full-family shopper."

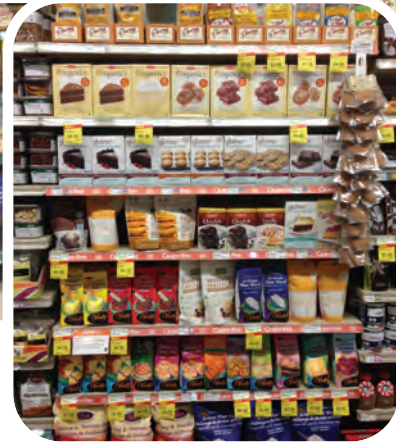
According to The Gluten Free Agency 71 per cent of shoppers prefer to purchase gluten free items at the same store as they shop for family groceries. "Time runs short for most shoppers. A store with a good gluten free section and good groceries will win over shopping at two stores." Newell said.

Innovation Leads the Way

New products account for about one quarter of all sales. The Gluten Free Agency indicates almost 60 per cent of gluten free consumers have tried ten or more new products in the past year. Snack categories dominate. "Our goal is to provide the



Digestible Profits



Gluten free products are a growing segment for retailers.

same range of products as available in conventional products. Brands have to grow.” agrees Bigam.

“Consumers and retailers are constantly looking for added innovation in the category,” added Carlo Facchin, CEO of Prairie Harvest Canada Ltd.

Another driver of sales is the quality of gluten free offerings. Consumers are pushing for improvements. “The quality is so much better with new soft quality of some goods. In a blind taste test it is becoming difficult to tell which is conventional and which is gluten free,” Bigam noted.

products. We have focused all of our gluten free products in the organic category,” Facchin indicated.

Addressing the challenges of the gluten free segment is the difference between profits walking in and lost customers walking out. Planning is essential to success.

“I would suggest taking guidance from a reliable source so there is a defensible set of decisions that indicate where something should be shelved,” said Newell. “The other thing is to take grocery sorting seriously.”

As the products move closer to conventional products in taste, texture and selection, the temptation is to merchandise them throughout the store. This can be dangerous for the gluten free consumer because of unintentional cross contamination. If consumers feel unsafe, they won’t trust the store and that will cost sales.

“Identifying which products are safe can be very frustrating,” says Newell. “If there is any chance of contamination through cross contact, many consumers will not buy a product rather than take the risk.”

Lee adds that cross presentation can be done effectively. “A dedicated display of buns with the meat section, for example,

or a free standing pasta display in the pasta section.” she suggests.

Easy to Find, Easy to Buy

Retailers should point people to the section and make it

easy to find. “If it is clearly labeled and easy to find, shoppers will pick it up. Clear labels and sections make it easier to buy,” says Lee.

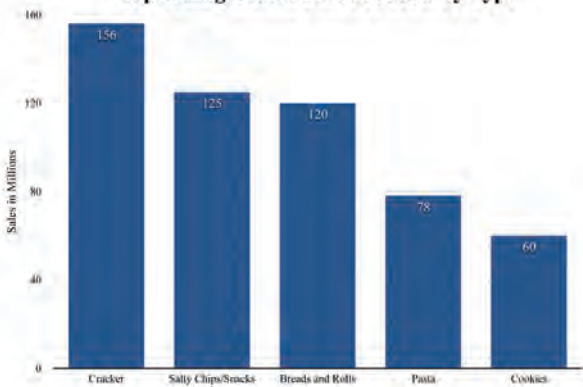
Keeping the shelves stocked is of paramount concern. Newell indicates that consumers switch stores because of frequent out of stock situations. Yet turnover rates can be tough to get a handle on.

“Empty shelves are a real problem. There is a scooping phenomenon that happens with gluten free because of availability. The only way to avoid it is to stock consistently.” advises Bigam. “Stores are trying to give good service, but it is hard to manage. Electronic sales records might help.”

Extraordinary space is not needed for a successful gluten free section. “It doesn’t need to be enormous. Focus on the clean ingredient, quality products and stock a couple of kinds of each item like grain, breads, crackers and cookies in addition to the frozen products.” Lee suggests. Hosting store tours or offering meeting space for groups builds consumer confidence in stores as partners.

Gluten free sections have challenges. However, at 10 to 12 per cent growth, ignoring this demographic could cost retailers a bundle. Dedicated sections that are readily identified and well stocked will ensure that retailers not only capture, but retain, the business of a growing segment of the population. ●

Top Selling Gluten Free Products by Type



Dr. Anne Lee, professional manager with Dr. Schar USA, agreed stating that “Consumers expect not only gluten free, but good gluten free.” And they expect organic offerings as well.

“We listened to feedback from our customers over the years that there was a growing demand for quality gluten free

Why **Category Management** is the Answer to Collaboration, Shopper-Centricity, and Big Data.

Most retail and manufacturing organizations have at least one of the following pillars in their corporate strategic plans in 2015/2016:

1. **Collaboration.**

Organizations see the opportunity to partner with their retailer or Vendor partners but aren't getting very far in their approach.

2. **Shopper-centricity.**

To win with shoppers, retailers and vendors need to collaborate to be truly shopper-centric. Limited collaborative efforts currently prevent this from happening.

3. **Big Data.**

The opportunity is to become more precise and sophisticated in accessing and leveraging big data for both retailers and vendors. Once again, limited collaborative efforts currently prevent this from happening.

can create discrepancies across the team and organization, or it can represent an opportunity.

The opportunity?

Harness the knowledge and experience of the team by creating category management foundations that will provide clarity, alignment and focus through training. Start with the immediate category management team, followed by the same training for the larger multi-functional team (marketing, sales, logistics, retail operations). This training will plant the roots from which an aligned approach can evolve across the organization. The second step in the training is to create training programs based on skill development areas that tie in with different roles and responsibilities and individual personal development plans. Because of the great certified, online training options available, you are able to create a sustainable training solution across your organization.

If funding for your professional development endeavours is a challenge, you're not alone. Many organizations see the importance of training, but it's the first thing that is cut when budgets get tight. Think about the dollars that your organization spends in data, software, training on the data and software, and market research in your organization. Category Management training costs are a fraction of the cost of these investments, and will help you get ROI in all of these areas by creating a strategic and aligned foundational underpinning that helps your organization move forward in the areas of collaboration, shopper and big data. Without that aligned and foundational approach, you will limit yourself across each of these areas.

Creating these foundations - and maintaining them - will give your team and organization the basis from which successful collaboration, big data understanding and ultimately shopper satisfaction will evolve. It starts with creating a training solution that will help you move to and continue to develop your team from these foundations. Your solution should be sustainable and maintainable and needs to help you attain both your short- and long-term goals. ●

The reality is that a gap exists internally in many organizations (both retailer and manufacturer) that limits the ability to move forward with long-term solutions across any of these pillars. There tends to be a lack of an aligned, internal approach to category management across the organization, which creates the foundation from which each of these pillars can be successful.

For retailers, it starts with having well-defined strategies that create the rules, principles and guidelines for how decisions are made. Once defined, they need to communicate these strategies both internally (so that their organization understands what they are trying to accomplish and how to make more aligned decisions) and externally (so that their vendor partners can help them to create solutions that win with their shoppers). The strategy needs to include consideration for store formats and banners, the shopper, the tactics and competition.

For vendors, similar to retailers, they need well defined strategies with rules, principles and guidelines for how decisions are made. They also need to inject both "category" and "brand" perspective into innovation, and understand the differ-

ence between their brand consumer and each of their retailer's unique shoppers. Many vendors still have geographically-dispersed category management teams that report in through their account or region's sales team with no central category management "think tank". Or the central category management team has little influence over the work completed by their analysts on different account teams (their work is driven by requests by the sales team and/or retailer). The result? A very tactical and limited approach to category management that will never help vendors move to more strategic, collaborative, shopper-based solutions.

Over the past few years, these same retail and vendor organizations have experienced consolidation or restructuring. The tendency that goes along with a restructure is to cut back on training, with limited investment in the newly formed team. Once the team is formed, there's an assumption that everyone thinks the same way, has the same level of knowledge, and understands the internal strategies and processes of the organization. Think of all of the different levels of experience, training, data access, analytics, retail/shopper/consumer understanding, etc. that each team member has. Based on this, imagine the different perspectives, processes and approaches that the team brings. These differences



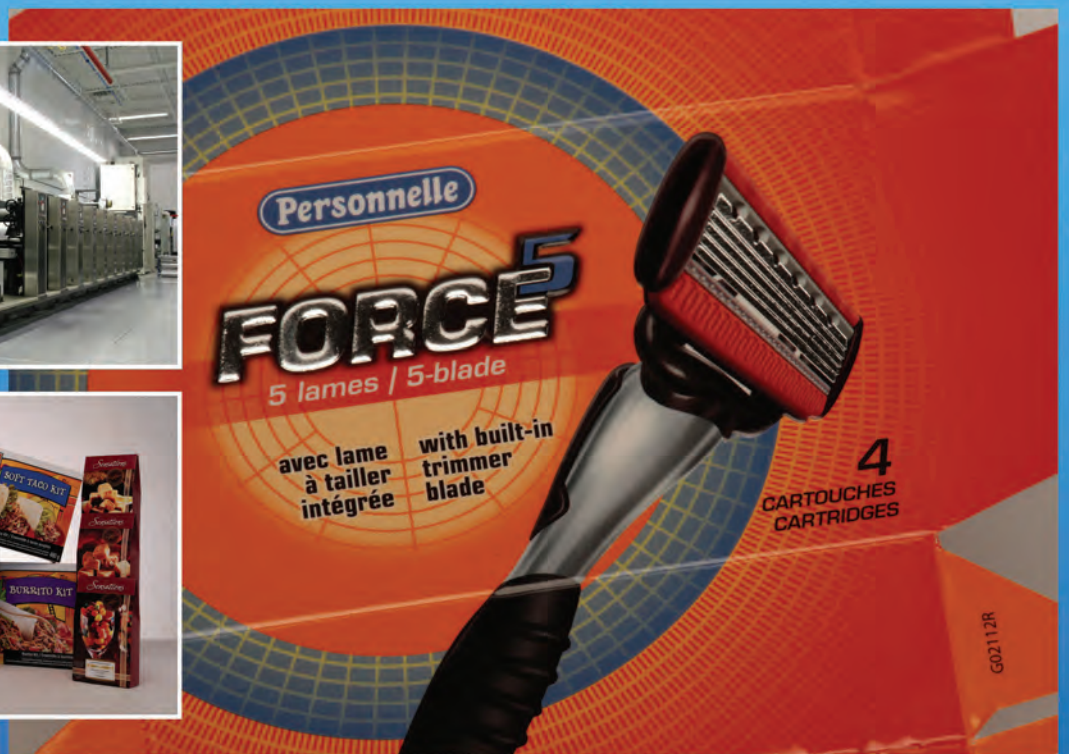
Sue Nicholls is the founder of "Category Management Knowledge Group", an online, accredited category management training company. She can be reached at sue@cmkg.org.



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Innovation in Product Packaging

Manufacturers and suppliers are thinking outside the box to meet - and start - trends.

While packaging is key to how consumers react to products and how retailers display them on shelves, there is far more to packaging than meets the eye. These days, the theme that consistently comes out ahead is sustainability.

Well, sustainability, along with everything else that sells a well-packaged product.

"Trends for paperboard packaging are really all about being sustainable," says Cathie Ellis of Ellis Packaging. "Today's consumers expect packaging to protect, preserve, and transport their purchase. They also want to feel enticed, inspired, and educated on what they are purchasing."

Marc St-Laurent from Norampac concurs. "Consumers are looking for environmentally friendly packaging," he says. "The packaging has to be tamper-proof, but at the same time easy to open, which is not easy to achieve, but it is achievable."

Note that when Ellis and St-Laurent are talking about packaging, they mean paper - a clear indication of future direction. Sustainable options are all about innovation in paper products, reducing or eliminating plastic.

"Most of the items we produce are used on high-speed machine-fill lines," says Ellis. "It is very important the we produce a consistent product that will enable them to fill their product with as few issues as possible."



Ellis says their customers want packaging that is compact, lightweight yet durable, and transportable. Eliminating extra materials like plastic is an added bonus.

"Paperboard packaging is a very environmentally sustainable way to package products and is easily recycled," says Ellis. "Folding cartons do the job of protecting the products and can serve many different needs whether the product needs to go into a freezer, refrigerator, or present itself on store-level shelves."

Among the greatest challenges has been finding suitable replacements for plastic bags and polystyrene trays. It hasn't been legislated yet, but future bans are predicted.

"That's the major transition that the grocers will have to face," says St-Laurent.

He points to California, where over 40 cities have passed legislation banning plastic bags and polystyrene.



"If Californians are thinking about legislating against that, other countries will follow suit for sure. We may as well start right now," says St-Laurent.

He discusses efforts to find alternatives to polystyrene and polyaminates — the material that lines cardboard to make it greaseproof, water resistant, and, in some cases, microwaveable. Plain cardboard won't work and liners must be FDA and CFIA approved.

Norampac has developed a material that fits those requirements.

"Basically, it is a coating we apply on the inside or wherever we need to apply it. It's a water-based coating and it's greaseproof, water resistant, and approved," says St-Laurent. "The

alternative for polystyrene is out there."

But there's a cost attached to it.

"A tray of polystyrene is less expensive than a tray made out of cardboard, but you may need to go with the extra cost and be environmental friendly," says St-Laurent.

With millennial consumer trends around ready-made and partly prepared foods, packaging that food appropriately is more important than ever.

While sustainable packaging is critical for branding because millennials want products that fit their values, retailers also want to meet sustainability goals. Fortunately, the packaging industry is helping. According to the Paper and Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC) website, most boxes and cartons manufactured in Canada are now 100 per cent recycled content and are recyclable.

But what about boxes coming from across the border?

David Andrews, executive director at Canadian Corrugated and Containerboard Association (CCCA), says they work closely with the American Fibre Box Association (FBA) on common issues, such as encouraging the use of recyclable paper, especially corrugated products.

Rachel Kenyon, FBA vice-president, says they look at it from a North American perspective, versus just a Canadian or U.S. perspective.

"Certainly, the products move back and forth, and the wonderful properties of corrugated exist whether the product is made in Canada or whether it is made in the United States," says Kenyon. "To us it is the ultimate reusable. It goes into the recovery stream, it's collected, and it's made into new packaging."

For corrugated cardboard, the entire tree can be used — although, packaging is usually made from remains. Every fibre can be recycled seven to eight times before it becomes too short to make another package, she says.

One of its most valued qualities is that it protects what it packages.



Norampac knows that grocers may have to face the major transition away from plastic bags and polystyrene trays.

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“Those two smooth pieces of paper with the fluted layer between - what that does is provide some cushioning,” says Kenyon, adding that it is especially good for transport packaging and produce.

Moreover, concerns about cleanliness of reusable plastic containers don't apply to corrugated because is a single-use product - a fresh, clean box every time.

St-Laurent cautions against waxed corrugated, “It has to go into landfills, which is not good.”

Kenyon also comments on wax.

“Wax is a by-product of making oil. It's a very cheap product,” she says. “It was a challenge to find something that could replace wax. What we have discovered is that there is no one silver bullet remedy to wax.”

Instead, there are 47 viable alternatives.

“The protocol was introduced in 2005 and, this year, for the first time, there are more commercialized wax-alternative boxes being made than there are wax boxes,” says Kenyon. “Today, you might see a box that looks like a plain box, but it may have a protective coating that provides that moisture barrier and that can go into the regular recycling stream.”

Kenyon says grocery retailers play an important role in the recovery process.

“That's where a significant amount of corrugated comes back to our industry,” she says. “As manufacturers of corrugated, our industry is happy to partner with grocers and to help them put revenue back to their bottom line by purchasing bailed corrugated from them.”

Materials aside, another consideration is critical.

“Retailing and branding the brand owner's message through creative graphics,” says Ellis.

Ensuring shelf appeal is generally the realm of marketers who work with manufacturers - and technology is having an influence.

St-Laurent says the latest trend is “intelligent” packaging that interacts with the consumer and with other packaging.

“It would either light up just by touching it or using bluetooth technology — near-field technology with little antennas,” says St-Laurent. “It's part of a big thing going on right now called printable electronics.”

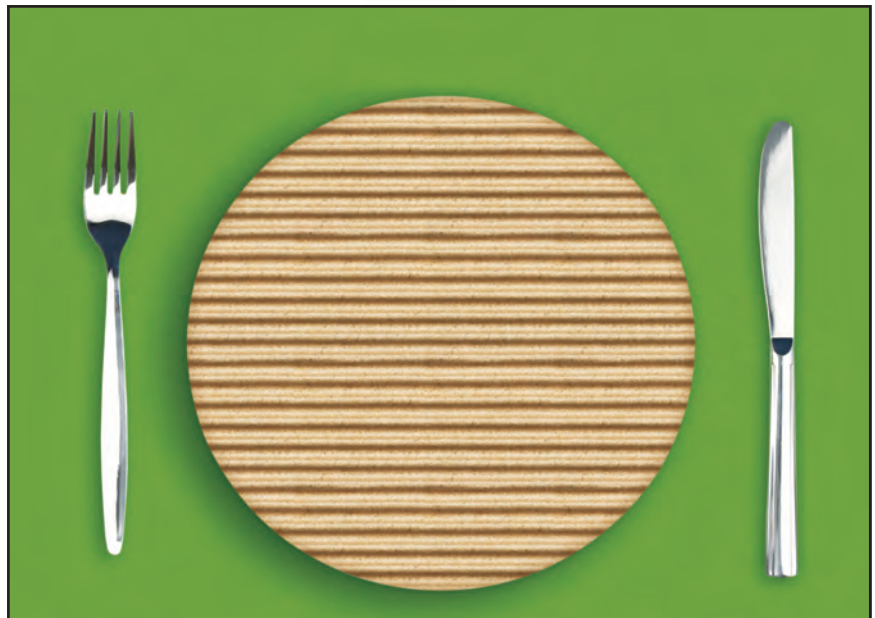
What can it do? Attract the attention of passing shoppers and perhaps

Ellis Packaging notes that consumers are looking for packaging that is compact and lightweight yet durable.

continue to interact with consumers after purchase.

“This is a future trend in packaging for sure, and it'll be coming very, very soon,” says St-Laurent.

While being environmentally conscious has moved from being a trend to being the norm, the future of packaging is not only sustainable, it is also intelligent.



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By Robin Brunet

The versatility of dips is a windfall for grocers.

What could be more versatile – and perennially popular – than dips? They fit into the snacking category but can also be a spread or condiment. They're great as summer fare or winter comfort food, and they can be indulgent or healthful.

Anne Marie Damjanovic, bakery and deli merchandising manager for Buy-Low Foods, calls dips "One of our main deli categories. I break them down into three types: salsas, hummuses, and fresh dips, the latter including yogurt-based dips

along with the popular choices of spinach and artichoke."

According to the most recent figures available from Statista, during the 52 weeks ending October 18, 2014, unit sales of refrigerated deli dips in Canada grew by 11.1 per cent, while sales of dips in the produce section grew by 6.4 per cent. The only sales decline in the category was in dairy, which dropped by 1.6 per cent.

Nielsen Scan Data for the 52 weeks ending August 22, 2015, shows that sales for the total category were up six per cent

over last year, and in Western Canada vegetable dips sales were up 12 per cent.

Lighthouse Foods Brand Manager Camille Balfanz notes that because of its location in the store perimeter within the produce section, "The dip category is perfectly positioned to take advantage of consumer

continued on page 38

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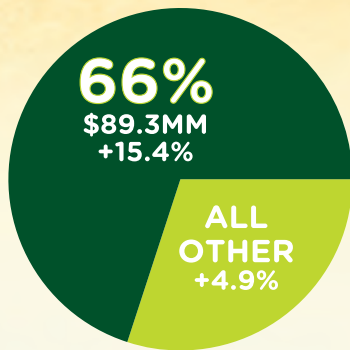
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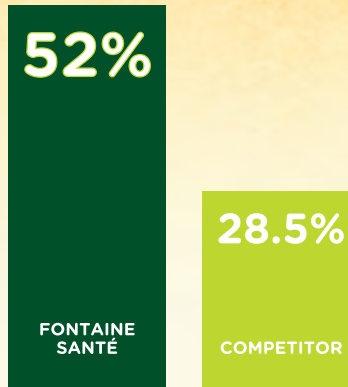
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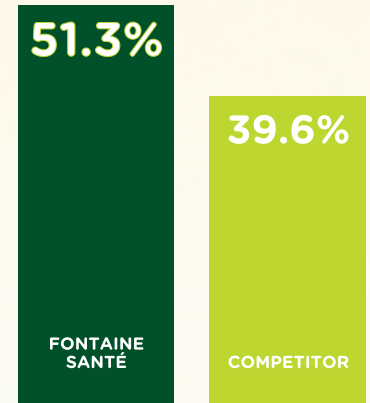
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1) Nielsen Market Track Refrigerated Dips/Spreads (ex dry chip dips) National Grocery 52 weeks Oct 18, 2014
2) Nielsen Homescan Refrigerated Dips/Spreads (ex dry chip dips) National All Channels 52 weeks Nov 1, 2014
3) Nielsen Homescan Refrigerated Dips/Spreads (ex dry chip dips) National All Channels 52 weeks Nov 1, 2014

continued from page 35

trends focused on fresh and healthy eating and increased snacking throughout the day." The company has capitalized on these trends with the 2014 launch of Opadipity, its line of Greek yogurt dips.

Lakeview Farms, the manufacturer of high-quality traditional dips such as sour cream, French onion, and spinach, has struck an enviable balance in pleasing the health-conscious consumer as well as retaining their products' flavour appeal. "That was no easy task, everyone wants to see more natural ingredients, and less sodium, but maintain the current shelf life and still taste as good as the originals," says Ernie Williams, Lakeview's business development manager - Canada.

Lakeview's skill in product development is such that it has been able to introduce unique layered dips to the competitive Canadian market, "Our brand of layered dips, which we first introduced in a "Club Size Format", are the perfect party or event dips, and our Black Bean Taco Layered Fiesta Dip is a great line extension to our Luisa's Mild and Medium dips. They also contain vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron — so it appeals to a

wide range of shoppers," says Williams.

Given the versatility of the category, merchandising opportunities abound. "The key is placement near fresh cut fruits and vegetables," says Balfanz. "This makes it easy for the consumer to add a dip or two when they are already in the perimeter of the store focused on fresh, good-for-you foods. This is especially true around the holidays, when consumers are looking for easy hosting options."

Damjanovic says Buy-Low merchandises the category in two main ways, "We place



Dips are versatile, indulgent and healthful and can be great for sales and merchandising.

them in our grab and go areas of the deli, and because there's such a wide variety of types we can do flyer promotions almost weekly." She adds that the growing popularity of snack-sized dip portions is an ideal grab and go offering.

In the future, merchandising strategies will likely focus increasingly on the Middle Eastern concoction of mashed chickpeas better known as hummus.

"Hummus is definitely the segment driving the dips growth," says Sami Demnati, sales director for Fontaine Sante, whose hummus sales are the largest in Canada. "It's also more than just a dip. It's used as a spread and replaces mayonnaise in sandwiches."

Demnati estimates hummus household penetration in Canada to be around 28 per cent, with Quebec hovering at 30 per cent

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Product Showcase

Don't Forget Salads

Litehouse Foods' top-selling Opadipity Greek Yogurt Dip line has been augmented with three new flavour-packed options: Spicy Asiago Artichoke, Greek Olive, and Cinnamon Swirl. "Dips can be a win near the



refrigerated salad dressing set," says Camille Balfanz, Litehouse Foods. "Here, brands such as Opadipity can leverage their brand recognition in the salad dressing to the dip categories."

A Breed Apart



Fontaine Sante's new hummus is made the Greek way and contains two times more fibre and 20 per cent more protein than other brands. Sami Demnati says that in terms of merchandising, "The most successful retailers in Canada are those who merchandise hummus apart from rest of veggie dips."

Hard to Top

Sabra Dipping Company's best-selling Roasted Red Pepper Hummus is considered the perfect hummus for picnics and cookouts. Kelly Freeman suggests Sabra dips should be "placed in wells so that consumers can see the transparent caps and the large amount of toppings we provide compared to other manufacturers."



Sophisticated Spread



New from Sabra Dipping Company is the Caramelized Onion and Smoked Paprika Hummus, which provides a complex and sophisticated eating experience. Kelly Freeman urges retailers to "Stage demos whenever possible; this is a merchandising strategy that we'll be increasingly focusing on in 2016."

Let Them Eat Dip

Lakeview Farms' Mild, Medium and Black Bean Taco Layered Fiesta Dip are nutritious and appeals to party-goers and health conscious consumers alike. Ernie Williams says, "No merchandising strategy is more effective than demos. It's the only way consumers can really appreciate the multi-layered dips that Lakeview specializes in."



and western provinces sitting at about 27 per cent: "The opportunities for growth are in Ontario and the west," he says.

Kelly Freeman, Canada marketing manager for the country's second biggest hummus provider, Sabra Dipping Company, agrees. She thinks Sabra's rapid growth (the company was founded in 1986 and is now owned by PepsiCo and Strauss Group) is an obvious indication that mainstream consumer preferences are fundamentally changing. "In this regard, this explains the growth of refrigerated dips overall: refrigerated has the freshness advantage

over shelf-stable dips, and more and more consumers are shying away from the types of artificial ingredients and additives necessary to make shelf stable products stable," she says.

As for upcoming trends, Statista echoes industry experts in predicting that Muhammara may, like hummus, capture the imagination of North American consumers. Chances are, this Middle Eastern dip made with peppers, walnuts and pomegranate molasses will become yet another mainstream addition to the massive portfolio that is the dip category. ●

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MANITOBA FOOD INDUSTRY SEES BIG CHANGES



MOVING MANITOBA FORWARD

By Doreen Pendgras

Manitoba's food processing and retail grocery industries are changing in ways not seen for some time in a province noted for its economic stability.

With Sobey's purchase of Canada Safeway and the subsequent closure of some stores, an opportunity was opened up for new entrants to the market. One of the first to make a move was Red River Co-op, who took up several of the prime

locations. But just this past September, Overwaitea Foods announced a major expansion in Manitoba with a planned 12 stores in Winnipeg. The first store to open in Winnipeg will be at the Northgate Shopping Centre. President Daryll Jones emphasised Overwaitea's policy of tailoring each store's assortments to the local demographic and as such the first location will be a Save-On International to cater to the wide

ethnic diversity of the area. This store and two others — one on St. James Street in a former Future shop location and a new build in the Bridgewater Forest townsite — should open before the end of the year. A total of 12 stores are being considered for Winnipeg. More stores will open in other urban centers such as Brandon, Steinbach and Portage la Prairie. Online grocery shopping and home delivery will be part of the mix.

“Food processing is a strategic priority for Manitoba, with a goal to grow the food processing sector to \$5.5 billion by 2022.”

Dave Shambrock, executive director of the Manitoba Food Processors Association, says that food retailing in Canada is very competitive, and that there is tremendous opportunity for small and medium sized processors having unique products that are being marketed via less traditional channels such as the Internet and specialty retailers. “There is a trend toward old-style, traditional, handmade, organic, less processed, fewer ingredients, and fewer preservatives,” says Shambrock. “These are what we call clean label products and they’re becoming popular across all food lines. In fact, research



Hemp Oil Canada manufactures, and supplies hemp food products and ingredients from their facility in Ste. Agathe, Manitoba.

shows that consumers will pay 10 per cent more for clean label products and that eight per cent of consumers are passionately seeking out local food.”

Consumers Caring More About Buying Local

Shambrock says that the Buy Manitoba program highlights products that are grown, produced, and processed in Manitoba, and that an annual average increase of three to five per cent over the past five years is proving that consumers are caring more about buying local. “We’ve had tremendous support from some retailers — specifically Red River Co-Op, Canada Safeway, and Vita Health — are retailers that come to mind who have been strong supporters of the program,” he says.

Manitoba’s food processing scene is very diversified, ranging from the bottling of pure and simple water, to

sophisticated products requiring many processing steps and everything in between. “We have large grain processors and the Diageo (formerly Seagram’s) plant that are very significant contributors to the sector,” says Shambrock. “But we also have very successful small processors such as the Notre Dame Creamery, Bothwell Cheese, and Cornell Crème — that are making high-end, gourmet, old-style products that are becoming increasingly popular.”

Leo Prince, director of Food Commercialization and Marketing with Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development confirms that the province of Manitoba has made a deliberate effort to welcome new retailers. “In the past year, the marketplace in Manitoba has welcomed the expansion of existing grocers and has welcomed new companies to our retail landscape. The province is dedicated to business growth and Manitoba’s low business costs and taxes have made Winnipeg and Brandon among the most competitive cities for conducting business in the North American Midwest,” says Prince.

Goal to Grow Food Processing Sector

The rate of growth in the Manitoba food processing sector is higher than the Canadian average over the past 10 years. “Food processing is a strategic priority for Manitoba, with a goal to grow the food processing sector to \$5.5 billion by 2022,” says Prince, who confirmed that there are currently 463 food processors with provincial permits and 117 food processors with federal licenses in the province of Manitoba employing a total of approximately 10,088 people.

How does that break down by sector? Manitoba is home to more than 20 meat processors, most of Canada’s hemp processing operations, four potato processing plants, three canola crushing facilities, two egg processors, one flax fibre production



Products that are grown, produced and processed in Manitoba are highlighted in the province’s Buy Manitoba program.

plant, and a significant number of flour mills, bakeries, vegetable processing plants, and dairy and cheese producers.

Each year, Manitoba produces more than \$4.5 billion in processed foods and agri-products that represent more than 20 per cent of the province’s total manufacturing output.

Shambrock also believes that Manitoba’s food processing industry is in good shape.



Dave Shambrock, executive director, Manitoba Food Processors Association

“The industry is strong,” he says. “Some companies are getting bigger. We know that economics of scale need to be maximized to keep production costs low. But we’re also seeing small producers offering very unique products at higher price points. Consumers are voting for these products at the cash registers by purchasing them.”

It’s clean and simple. The winners in the current food game seem to be the products with the clean label style of processing and packaging. The middle class has spoken: give them pure and simple, and they are willing to pay more for less.

Western Canada's Favourite Grocer is...

First of its kind survey measures shopper perception of Canadian supermarkets.



The supermarket industry is very competitive and always changing to meet the wants and needs of Canada's dynamic population. It is hard to believe that until now there has not been an in-depth study in Canada of how shoppers feel about their supermarkets performance.

Field Agent Canada conducted a mobile survey about the grocery shopping habits of Canadians from coast to coast between September 15 and September 23, 2015. We wanted to find out which retailers are Canada's Favourite Supermarkets 2015.

The purpose of the study is to provide some benchmarking information to the grocery industry on a range of touch points in their stores from specific departments (produce, meat, seafood) to customer service to pricing.

The survey engaged 974 Canadians and looked at overall perceptions on both a National and Regional basis given that the grocery landscape is so unique from one region of the country to the other.

When we asked respondents to provide an overall score for the two retailers that they shop at most for

groceries; the retailer with the highest score is Farm Boy, an independent grocery chain based in Ottawa with 19 stores across Ontario. Farm Boy is an up and coming retailer that you will want to visit on your next trip to Ontario.

Rounding out the Top Five scores were Longo's (Ontario), Loblaws (Ontario / Quebec), Save on Foods (BC / Alberta) and Your Independent Grocer (National excl. Quebec). Interestingly, three of the five are independent chains, while Your Independent Grocer is a franchise chain from Loblaw; which also counts its namesake banner in the Top Five.

It is interesting to note that all retailers in the Top Five are 'full-service' supermarkets and all of the banners have been growing their number of stores in the past couple of years. Finding the right recipe that delights customers while they shop fuels the success of these retailers.

However, the average grade for the overall score of all retailers is only a "B" - it is clear that Canadians want their supermarkets to do more and be better.

Looking specifically at Western Canada the top five retailers were:

- Save On Foods(B+)**
- Costco(B+)**
- Quality Foods(B+)**
- Sobeys(B+)**
- Thrifty FoodsB+**

As we saw in the National results, the majority of the retailers in the top five are full-service supermarkets, although strong results in the study does not necessarily translate to market share.

In fact, there is a stronger correlation with market share and the retailers that rated best on pricing.

Shoppers want to shop in a great in-store environment but are willing to make sacrifices in order to get the lowest possible price.

In Western Canada the price leaders were Walmart and Real Canadian Superstore. Shoppers want to shop in a great in-store environment but are willing to make sacrifices in order to get the lowest possible price.

It is also very interesting to see the strong performance of Costco, which scored second overall. Despite Costco's classification as a "Warehouse Club" it is an important part of grocery shopping for Western Canadians. We must consider Costco a significant player in grocery, especially in categories such as Meat and Seafood where they scored very well compared to traditional supermarkets.

National and regional results can be obtained at: <http://fieldagentcanada.com/final-report/>

Whether you made the list of Canada's Favourite Supermarkets or not, we hope that you use this info to help you better serve your shoppers. We look forward to seeing you on the list in 2016! ●

Jeff Doucette is the founder of "Field Agent Canada" an iPhone-driven audit service that is revolutionizing how retail audits and mystery shops are completed in Canada. He can be reached at jeff.doucette@fieldagentcanada.com



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WHITE HOT-IN-THE-MAKING

Fair trade may not yet be the revenue-generating powerhouse that organics have become, but nonetheless it's a movement that has transitioned from niche to mainstream.

According to GlobeScan, over 7,000 free trade products are now available to Canadian retailers, a 40 per cent increase over 2012. Retail sales in Canada for 2014 amounted to \$332-million, and the global supply base ensures that the movement is sustainable, with 1.2 million fair trade producers in 63 countries.

Better still, new products are constantly being made available. "Newer items include grapefruit, avocados, oil seeds, flowers and wine," says Julie Sage, Fair Trade Certification and marketing director for Discovery Organics, whose array of fair trade wholesale produce comprises as much as 30 per cent of its total inventory depending on the season, and which Sage anticipates will grow to as much as 50 per cent in the foreseeable future.

While produce and coffee are the most common items to be fair trade certified, the range is expanding. "Our new Heirloom rices are sourced from indigenous tribes in the Northern Philippines, and the quality is outstanding," says Stacey Toews, co-founder and communications catalyst for Level Ground Trading Ltd. "Also new this year are eight different skus of spices, which were originally blended in our fair trade teas."

Fair trade producers are often able to match

Fair trade has the potential to achieve organics-level success.

Courtesy of Shutterstock



Fair Trade growers at a Choices Market event this past May 2015.

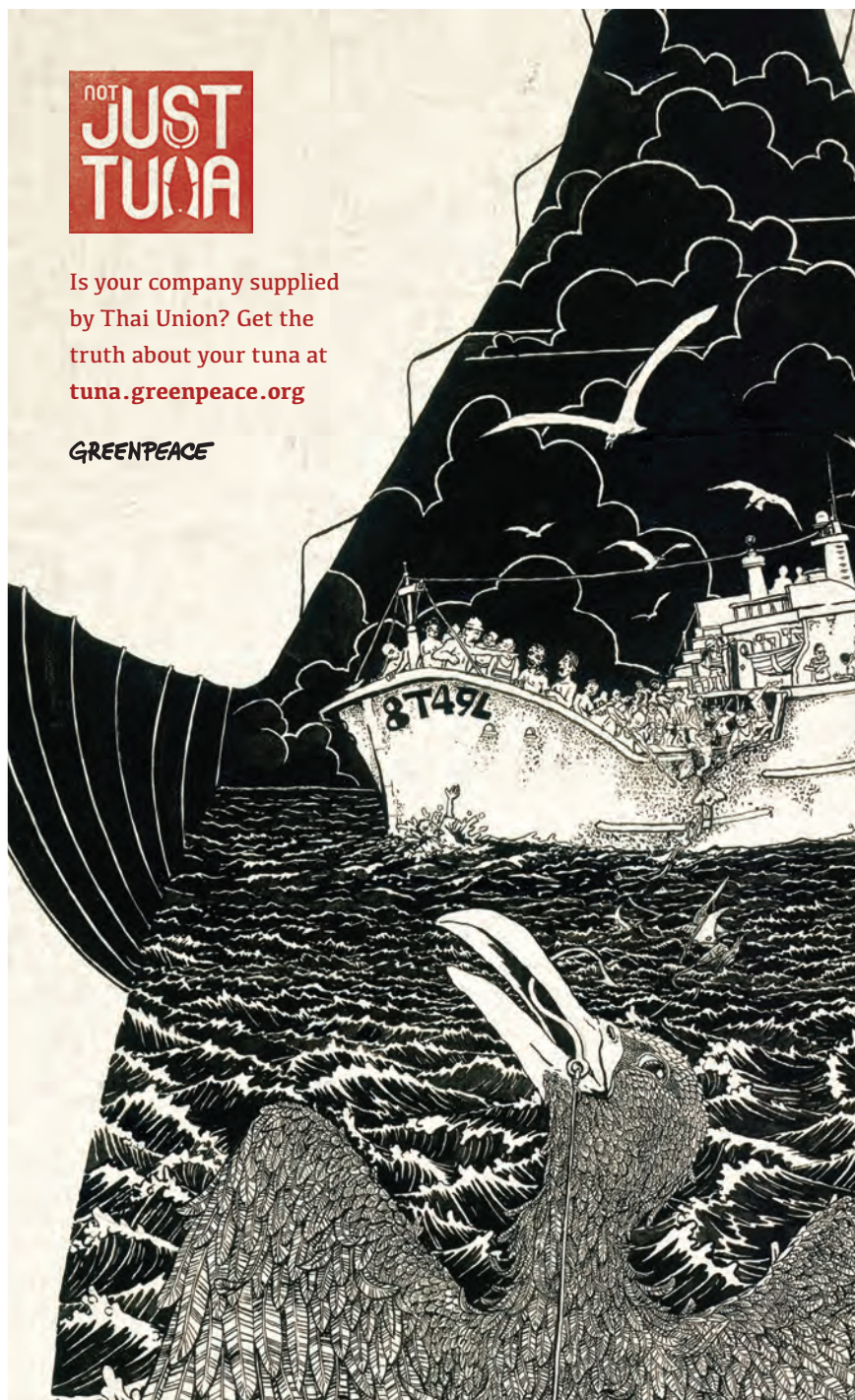
popular innovations made by traditional manufacturers. "Our new 90 per cent biodegradable Aroma Cups come in 12- and 72-cups packages and are our answer to K-Cups," says John Darch, president and CEO of Doi Chaang Coffee Company.

But for all the gains made by fair trade, there are still challenges. "Many consumers who want to save the world also want products to be as cheap as possible, which is understandable, but fair trade by nature means that the price will always be slightly more expensive," says Flavia Aarden-Kilger, managing



director for Fair Trade Brokers Ltd., which imports everything from chocolate to cereal under the Belvas and Oxfam brands.

As such, fair trade products are susceptible to sales fluctuations. "Our company is growing 20 per cent yearly but that's because we also sell to Europe, whose fair trade market is far more advanced than North America's," says Darch. "Frankly, I think fair trade's presence in the coffee aisles is decreasing in the big Canadian retail stores."



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GREENPEACE



In the past, farmers cut their sugar cane from the fields, collected together and transported to nearby private mills where pricing was negotiated. Today, the farmers - owners of Manduvira Co-op celebrate the one year milestone of their own processing plant, which secures more revenue for the farmers and the co-op.

Therefore, a focus on merchandising is crucial, and fair trade proponents say it can be done relatively easily. "Focus on millennial consumers, who seek out ethical standards more than other demographics," advises Sage. "Displays grouping different items together along with educational material are a good way



Discovery Organics array of fair trade wholesale produce comprises up to 30 per cent of its total inventory - depending on the season.



to draw attention to the category.”

Jennifer Alldred, marketing & communications manager for La Siembra Co-operative, suggests a different tack. “We think fair trade items should be merchandised alongside conventional items in order to open up the category to as many shoppers as possible,” she says.

Allred believes it’s also useful to draw attention to the unique characteristics of each fair trade company. “For example, La Siembra distinguishes itself by sourcing directly and exclusively from small scale family farmers who really need market access,” she says. “Another point of interest for shoppers is that we are transitioning our Camino brand coffees and sugars to be SPP Certified, the first and only fair trade certification system created, governed, and owned by small producers.”

Susan Hooper, senior brand manager at Tree of Life who manages the Green & Black’s Organic chocolate (a brand that pioneered free trade in the the United Kingdom) credits London Drugs for “effective merchandising strategies: good shelf and POS presence, cross merchandising, and heavy promotion of new products.”

Hooper cites Federated Co-operatives Limited as another retailer that presents fair trade items in their best light. Co-op has won four awards from Fairtrade Canada, the latest being Retailer of the Year in September. Co-op has sourced over 60 fair



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Produce Operations Manager David Wilson, who spearheaded Choices Market's involvement in the fair trade movement.

trade products in six categories and also sells organic coffee and chocolate under its Co-op Gold store-brand label.

The reason for such dedication is simple, according to Co-op associate vice-president of food Ron Welke: "Working together, Co-op and fair trade businesses are supporting local economies, helping communities here at home and abroad."



Level Ground Trading Ltd. are seeing new skus for their fair trade items.

Fairtrade Canada has also named Choices Markets Retailer of the Year for four consecutive years (the latest being 2015), and Choices Communications Specialist Sara Yuristy says

her company supports free trade "Because we've seen the benefits to farmers first-hand. Although fair trade doesn't comprise a huge percentage of our total inventory, we dedicate a flyer every May to the category, promote it via social media, and regularly stage cooking demos."

The question is, do shoppers zero in specifically on fair trade, or is the category merely an addition to the cart? Yuristy replies, "If not now, we hope shoppers will soon zero in."

Fair trade has the potential to become as successful to grocers as organics, and if the example of key progressive retailers is any indication, consumer education and vigorous promotion is all it will take to transform a growing success into something white hot.



A technician at Co-op Naranjillo in Peru, examining cocoa beans during the drying process

Courtesy of Shutterstock



Meat Department Evolves with the Times

The growing demand for grass-fed, hormone-free, antibiotic-free, all natural, organic and ethically raised meat is changing the look of the meat department. Add to that the rise in demand for Halal meats and for more convenience with marinated and prepared meats and today's meat managers must perform a delicate balancing act to ensure the right assortment.

Accounting for roughly eight to 13 per cent of a retail store's overall sales, the meat department plays a critical role in a store's overall competitive positioning strategy. The Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency commissioned a study of consumer meat buying patterns and found that seven-in-ten shoppers are influenced to select stores based on specials they see in their flyers and, among this group, 78 per cent indicate that attractive meat specials directly impact their grocery store choice. A large portion of shoppers - 75 per cent - highly value an in-store butcher and meat counter. Stores without butcher counters may be at a competitive disadvantage.

While a well displayed counter is key to attracting customers today, so too is

having a wide range of options. Kristin Collins, marketing & communication relations manager for Red River Co-op in Winnipeg, explains the significance of this growing demand for more options by a well-informed public.

"Options such as grass-fed, hormone-free and RWA beef organic and ethical meats have impacted the meat industry in several ways, firstly, in providing the customer with a larger choice when it comes to their shopping experience. Many customers are becoming more shop conscious and aware when it comes to their purchases. In a world where social media, global issues, and health conscious customers are a growing part of the demographic, many people choose to know more about what they consume; not only when it comes to meat but in general. This being said, these are pricier options than the standard, and some customers still shy away from these options and lean towards convenience or

tradition. When it comes to supplying these options to consumers, the larger the market and the more diverse the shopping demographic, the better."

The Red River Co-op Beef is 100 per cent Western Canadian AA aged for 14 days and AAA is aged for 21 days. "At Co-op our butchers cut and prepare all our fresh beef and pork daily. Our ground beef is prepared several times a day for optimum freshness. Raised at Home, all of our fresh proteins such as beef, pork and chicken are 100 per cent Western Canadian and come from the communities we serve."

The price of meat has risen dramatically in the last few years but smart managers cope by adding more varieties that consumers can choose from. "We offer our consumer a wide selection of fresh and processed meat options to meet different consumer budgets. Depending on their preference we have a large selection of meat products that will fit their meal preparation needs," shares Collins.



Shifting Consumption Patterns

The Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency's recent study of meat consumption patterns found dramatic changes in protein consumption away from red meat and toward white meat / fish. According to the study, 44 per cent are eating less beef compared to five years ago, while a huge 63 per cent say they are eating more fish, and 45 per cent are eating more chicken. Overall, red meat consumption is down 19 per cent since 1999, while pork is down over 30 per cent. Chicken consumption has risen 11 per cent in the same period.

In Victoria, B.C., Dave Hubscher, meat operations manager at Country Grocer, says ethnic meats such as Halal have not made a big impact on his operations. "I don't think that Halal, grass-fed, hormone-free etc. are changing the meat industry much. I think it's just giving consumers more choices. Halal seems to be a trend, but not so much on Vancouver Island. We've tried a few Halal items, but the pickup was very marginal."

Hubscher admits that their focus has

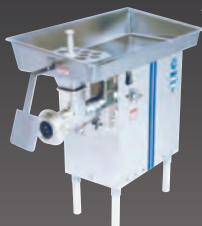
been more on supporting Vancouver Island Agriculture by keeping the meat supply local. "As an option to the mainstream meat items, we carry grass-fed grass-finished beef. It's important to have the grass-finished beef, the flavour profile might be a little different than a grain-finished product, but it's a healthier choice. Consumers that haven't been eating beef in 10 plus years are eating beef again. We also carry from the Island, fresh pork, fresh chicken, frozen bison

and fresh lamb (lamb is seasonal). Even though we carry a little bit of this and a little bit of that, it's hard to be everything Halal, all natural, organic, etc., so our focus in the meat department, has been on keeping it local as much as possible."

As far as how he is coping with the rising price of meat, it's still necessary to be competitive so margins have been squeezed. "The Island is a very competitive market, so we have to be right. Our company is just taking more of a hit on profit dollars and I don't think we're alone here, that's just the way it is. Really the mixture hasn't changed much for us, just the ad specials are up which means consumers are definitely taking advantage of the deals."

Whether it's a co-operative chain of stores or an independent grocery store the demand for local produce, needs of the demographic, and quality are three important factors. Some parts of Canada are more ethnically populated than other areas so the request for specific ethnic meat like Halal will be higher. For certain, the demand for grass-fed, hormone-free antibiotic-free, all natural, organic and ethically raised meat isn't slowing down any time soon. ●

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are meeting the needs of a now wider market.

Health food, organic produce, and other specialty foods are no longer the exclusive domain of hippies and the counterculture, states a recent article by Inc. magazine. More consumers are seeking out products that are better for them, both in nutritional value, and to their more sophisticated, knowledgeable palette, and it's creating a lot more demand and a need for specialty food products and stores. So much so the long-standing business publication touted specialty foods as a top industry for starting a company in 2014.

And, there is certainly money to be made in specialty foods. According the

Specialty Food Association in the U.S. retail sales of specialty food, a category that includes items from imported cheese to top-quality coffee beans, rose to \$51.23 billion in 2014 bringing its share of retail U.S. food sales to 15 per cent. Specialty food products, which the association defines as high quality, in limited supply, or of exotic origin, in 2013 accounted for 13.7 per cent of the \$343.62 billion in retail food sales, and 12.7 per cent of \$337.49 billion in 2012.

Specialty food stores are invariably stocked with hundred of skus made by small companies, in small batches,

often from premium-sourced, natural ingredients. Products can range from bread, cheese, and chocolates, to vitamin supplements. The Specialty Foods Association has 3,200 members, the majority of which are small. Most of the companies interviewed for Inc.'s story reported at least double-digit growth rates for their annual sales.

According to the Wall Street Journal shifting consumer tastes toward foods that are perceived as more natural, less processed, or locally produced has encouraged grocery store chains to seek out new, smaller specialty brands as well.



Aurora Importing and Distributing Limited carries key heritage brands such as Baci/Perugina and Aurora and will carry Basso Olive Oils in 2016.

"I think the average consumer still views specialty foods as expensive and only available at boutique grocers, but that is changing," states Tony Morello of Aurora Importing and Distributing Limited, which carry key heritage brands such as Baci/Perugina, Aurora, and, coming in 2016, Basso Olive Oils, one of the most reputable known olive oil companies in Italy. "As most conventional grocers attempt to differentiate themselves from discount stores I see specialty foods playing a significant role opportunity for them."

Depending on the retailers go to market strategy they need to decide between integration of specialty foods in to the mainstream sets as to promote a more extensive breadth of offer in some categories, or segregation by creating a store within a store specialty boutique zone.

"I don't think there is a right or wrong but either way it needs to fit with the way the retailer goes to business and how they

intend to win over the consumer," he states, pointing to strategies such as tell a story about the brand or product to engage the consumer like Eataly (rumoured to be setting up shop in Toronto soon with the help of the Weston family), has done so well.

Morello states demoing is an ideal way to create an experience/telling a story around an specialty brand and is a key merchandising strategy with their company. They offer retailers various types of demos like sampling, interactive consumer demos, all the way to chef demos where they actually bring a chef in store to make fresh BACI chocolate. They also feature numerous promotional materials, such as storyboards, and merchandising vehicles

Specialty brands and offerings also make a store a destination; a place that stand out amongst the mass market, explains Gary Hoskins, vice-president of sales & marketing for Terra International Food Inc. which oversees brands such as Rao's Homemade gourmet pasta sauces, Sable & Rosenfeld, and Brickstone, which includes a popular line called Cheese Pleasers, the perfect product to merchandise with premium deli cheeses.

"It's about scaling back on the old and bringing in the new. Bring some excitement back to the industry," he states, pointing to the idea of a condiment aisle that's traditionally stacked with numerous bottles of similar, big-brand ketchups or mayos, and taking some of that space and devoting it to an innovative ethnic variety, or a premium option. "Review space given for traditional products and products that are declining in sales as a new wave of younger or well-travelled consumers are looking for points of difference."

These customers are also looking for ways to use specialty items, which he states gives stores ample opportunity to create one-stop-shopping displays.

"Provide a complete meal solution. Retailers are then able to offer their consumers a meal or entertaining solution while benefitting from the related sales of other products in their stores," says Hoskins.

The desire for different can certainly be seen in the trend toward ethnic specialty food, states Philip Issenman, president of I-D Foods Corporation, pointing to their top brands such as Nando's South African-based PERi PERi sauce, and Haiku, the number one rice noodle brand ranked by Nielsen.

"There has been great demand for Asian products, which we've had a profile of for over six years, and we're seeing a steady growth towards South-Asian products," he explains, adding even big chains such as Sobey's, which opened Chalo FreshCo, a South-Asian dedicated grocery store this year, are noting this important segment.

Hot sauces as well have hit the mark — bringing in unique flavours from all over the world, but keeping with premium, natural ingredients, that offer bold taste with less calories, states Issenman.

There's a touch of irony when looking at the current specialty foods market - what was once more niche products, meant for a few customers, are now making their way on to traditional store shelves to meet the masses need for new and innovative; natural, and good for you. The niche is becoming the norm. ●



Nando's South African-based PERi PERi sauce is one of I-D Foods Corporation's top brands.

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Canadian consumers use approximately 12 billion plastic bags each year, enough to circle the Earth about 55 times.

While the vast majority of grocery stores now offer alternatives to plastic bags, many are concerned with how successful these alternatives have been in reducing the use of plastic and whether they are, in fact, more environmentally sound.

"The mindset of consumers in western Canada is that single use plastic bags not welcome. From the retailers' point of view, alternatives are something they have to offer," says Tony Towers, sales and marketing manager of Eco-Durable Products at Colnuck. "Practically all grocery stores in western Canada offer reusable bags now. Very few – mostly only independent, small stores – don't."

A major incentive to retailers is marketing. "Our clients want their customers to take their bags when they do other things – go to soccer or camping. That kind of marketing is priceless. It's one thing to offer reusable bags but the most important thing is that reusable bags

actually get reused. Everybody has 10 or 20 at home but only three of four that actually get reused," says Towers. So how do you ensure your bag is one of the chosen few? Towers explains that smaller, independent stores are often best at this. "They put more into the design. They're more particular about the materials that make up the bag and its functionality. It stands out. They often have tremendous success with bag programs even though they cannot compete cost wise." Getting this right it is one of the biggest challenges retailers face when moving from plastic to reusable bags.

Many stores also offer incentives to consumers to avoid single use plastic bags. This is often attached to loyalty programs, with discounts or pennies off for customers with reusable bags. Some stores also give bags away to customers spending a certain amount of money or partner with a charity and, with a donation, customers receive a bag. "These incentives are often very successful," says Towers.

Reusable bags do, however, come with their own set of concerns. There is a slow, growing concern amongst consumers about just how green their reusable bags are. "Retailers need to consider – it's one thing to get a nice bag that looks good and has a utilitarian size, but it's just important to consider how it was made, where was it made and what it was made with," explains Towers. "Everything is made off shore and it's critical that customers feel comfortable with labour practices and environmental practices, including toxic levels in the materials. A few years ago, there was a lot of controversy with a couple of large multinational corporations who had to pull their bags because they contained elements they didn't want in there." Namely, high levels of lead.

There is also concern about health risks involved with reusable bags. "You have to be extremely careful when reusing them with food material, washing them frequently. The Canadian plastic industry funded a study that found that more than 30 per cent of used bags had unsafe levels of bacterial contamination and 40 per cent had yeast or mould. Re-use is not always 'environmentally friendlier' when you take all factors into account," comments John Mullinder, executive director at the Paper & Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC). In addition, reusable bags are not always recyclable or biodegradable.

Instead, the PPEC promotes the use of paper bags as an alternative to plastic, citing their environmental positives as the main incentive. "We are fielding a lot of requests from retailers,"

Alternatives to Plastic Bags

Bag It!

By Korina Miller



Colnuck notes that practically all grocery stores including Pepper's and The Market Stores offer reusable bags.



says Mullinder. "What's drawing them? Paper bags are made from a renewable resource and with 85 per cent renewable energy. The few trees used to make them are from sustainably managed forests and replaced, as required by provincial law. They're often high in recycled content, widely recycled, less expensive to recycle and compostable." Many grocery stores, as well as liquor stores, now offer paper bags to customers without reusable bags. "There has been a huge amount of misinformation spread about paper bags, mainly by plastic interests facing plastic bag bans," says Mullinder.

Bans on plastic bags have been put in place in a handful of smaller communities in Manitoba and Quebec but the ban put in place in Toronto in 2012 failed due to protests and the threat of legal action. Toronto had also imposed a five-cent fee on plastic bags, leading to a 53 per cent reduction between 2008 and 2012. In 2013, both the ban and the fee were abandoned.

Montreal is currently considering a ban or partial ban. Those opposed to the ban argue that replacing one material with another is not necessarily a remedy. They point out that voluntary reduction strategies have been more successful by reducing the number of plastic bags used in Canada by over 50 per cent. Last year, Hilex Poly, one of the largest producers and recyclers of Canadian plastic bags, bought Duro Bag, the world's largest paper bag company. The implication is a move away from the desirability of plastic bags and towards alternative choices.

The voluntary reduction of plastic bag use shows a consumer desire to have alternative choices and one that retailers are increasingly paying attention to. Ultimately, the choice for reducing and reusing is with the customers. It's the retailers who can make that choice desirable. ●

The voluntary reduction of plastic bag use shows a consumer desire to have alternative choices.

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One Retailer's Experience with the Buy Local Movement.

By Karen Barr



Courtesy of Shutterstock

Customers are willing to pay more for local. This hasn't always been the case. Garth Green, assistant store manager at Country Grocer's Royal Oak location, a family owned and operated retail grocery chain on Vancouver Island and Salt Spring Island, remembers when price was the definitive factor for what went into the grocery cart. Starting out as a produce clerk, with the company 10 years ago, Green has watched both the products and shopping trends change.

The B.C. Government has invested over six million dollars to help promote the Buy Local Movement showcasing B.C. farmers and food processors. So, it's not surprising the trend is gaining traction. The goal is to turn the agrifoods sector into a \$14-billion-a-year thriving industry by 2017.

The Buy Local Movement from the islander's perspective can be categorized in three ways. Regional refers to the province. Local is anything from the island or lower mainland. Hyper-local is anything from within a 100-mile radius, as popularized by the J.B MacKinnon and Alisa Smith book *The 100-Mile Diet*.

Green believes the top reason customers have embraced the Buy Local Movement is to support the local economy. In fact, a 2013 survey from Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) found 97 per cent of consumers chose the economy as their top response. Supporting local farmers was chosen by 96 per cent, while 93 per cent noted it created more jobs in local communities.

In the same survey 87 per cent of those polled cited environmental factors in their decision to shop local. A 1980 study by John Hendrickson concluded that conventional produce travels 1,500 miles before it ends up in the supermarket. Less travel time reduces air pollution emissions.

A quicker transit from farm to plate also guarantees a fresher better tasting product. Green enthuses over local honeys that arrive bottled and



Gaining Traction



Country Grocer identifies its local products in the store.

floral department continually ask for local fresh-cut bouquets. The same is true for Christmas trees. Simply put local lasts longer.

Alcohol and beverages have room for growth in the Buy Local Movement. Mark Guthrie, one of the buyers for Country

The Buy Local Movement is really about food and product sustainability through people, animals, land, community and the environment.

still warm when placed on the sales floor. He also sees a healthy turnover of local produce. Island Hothouse grows peppers exclusively. Waiting until they are ripe before picking, the peppers are on produce

shelves within 24 hours. Other popular local produce items include potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers and seasonal berries.

But it isn't just in food products where freshness is in demand. Customers in the

Grocer sees the next big trend to be local wine, beer and spirits. Green mentions that customers love the locally roasted coffees. "They won't buy anything else," he concludes.

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Michael Williams, company chef and recipe developer is particularly keen on using local products in his recipes, store demos and other off-site special events. Customers always ask the chef about Island Pastures grass-fed beef once they taste a sample. Williams is also a fan of Tannadice Farms that raises certified "High Health" pigs. When it comes to dairy the chef says, "I love local cheeses such as Natural Pastures and Little Qualicum Cheeseworks." Both companies are known for their handmade specialty cheeses.

So why does Williams think the Buy Local Movement continues to gain traction? "People are a little more comfortable with locally produced items. Knowing something was made or grown close to home also leads us to believe it was produced with more care."

Customers are more conscious about what they are putting in their bodies as the trend of everything health-related continues. Food safety has been a topic in the news with reports of bacteria, viruses, parasite and chemical substances. A shorter chain from production to distribution and preparation decreases these risks. In 2031, 25 per cent of the Canadian population, or over nine million people, will be 65 years of age or over, compounding health concerns.

British Columbian are avid label readers and have become quite selective with grocery items wanting to know not only where a product was made, but where the ingredients were sourced. Companies like the local Hardbite Chips, owned by a local fourth B.C potato farmer have gained a following.

To help customers identify local items Country Grocer has partnered with Localize. Using red Localize labels that are Smartphone-enabled, customers can find details on the store's 4,266 products from over 111 producers such as where the product was made, the ingredients that went into it, who made it and how it was made.



Country Grocer carries many local products.

The Buy Local Movement is really about food and product sustainability through people, animals, land, community and the environment. And because of it related attributes many customers believe local to be as good as, if not better than organic. Green has in fact noticed the organic produce section shrinking in size over the years

Retailers need to take note of customer shopping trends as the Buy Local Movement continues to grow. Offering sustainable food and products that are unique to the community will give a broader and better selection to the customer, increasing loyalty and encouraging more units per transaction in shopping carts. ●

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Contact your local Tree of Life sales representative for more information.



New Suncoast Gold Macadamia Delight

Suncoast Gold's new Macadamia Delight is made from the finest slow roasted Australian macadamias and is a tasty and healthy alternative to dairy, soy, oat and almond beverages. Available in two variants, Original and Unsweetened, macadamia delight is rich, smooth and creamy. It tastes great on its own or in smoothies and as an ingredient in various recipes and cocktail.

Macadamia Delight is naturally lactose, cholesterol and gluten free and they do not use ingredients that were genetically engineered to produce their delicious Macadamia Delight.

Contact your local Tree of Life sales representative for more information.

Harvest Acres Organic Canned Vegetables

Harvest Acres Certified Organic Sweet Corn, Peas and Green Beans are grown and processed without using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides or preservatives. These delicious vegetables are packed at the peak of freshness to maintain their nutrition and flavour in BPA non intent cans. Grown and processed in the USA, GMO free, Certified QAI Organic and OU Kosher. Consumers will love the versatility and convenience of these delicious, organically grown vegetables whether used as a side dish or in casseroles, soups or salads.

Contact your local Tree of Life sales representative for more information.



New Flavours of honibe Lozenges

Island Abbey Foods has announced that their two newest lozenge product innovations, honibe honey lozenges with cherry and honibe honey lozenges with Immune Boost, will now be available at Shoppers Drug Mart across the country. Cherry is one of the top selling flavours for throat lozenges. Now, consumers can enjoy their favourite flavour in honibe's natural honey lozenge with menthol and eucalyptus.

honibe honey lozenges with Immune Boost has added echinacea, vitamin C, Zinc and citrus. This is a natural and effective product consumers can take at the first sign of a cold to help relieve symptoms before they worsen.

Left Coast Naturals: "Walking the Talk"

Left Coast Naturals, a B.C.-based organic and natural food manufacturer and distributor, is demonstrating its devotion to "walking the talk" when it comes to ensuring that its products - including the popular Hippie Foods line - are organic, non-GMO and sustainable. The company adheres to a strict non-GMO policy and is one of the founding members for B Corp certification in Canada - having met rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.



Ocean's Specialty Products: Entertaining has never been this easy!

The holiday season is upon us! That means lots of gatherings and celebrations. Entertaining has never been this easy, thanks to Ocean's specialty products. Their wild cocktail shrimp, crabmeat, baby clams, smoked oysters and smoked mussels can be added to any favourite appetizers.

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A New Generation of Elan: Better, Bolder, Brighter

From its start in 2011, Elan has set out to deliver the best in certified organic nuts, dried fruits, seeds, and grains. Fast-forward to today, the brand continues to strive for excellence and has established itself in high-esteem at both the store level and at the consumer level. From healthy, energizing snacks to cooking products, Elan provides highly nutritious foods. In addition, Elan products are vegan-friendly, non-GMO, gluten-free, and contain minimal allergens. Newly packaged in transparent, resealable pouches, Elan is now both a functional product in terms of nutrition, as well as in terms of convenience. Visit www.elanbio.com to learn more.

Prairie Harvest Expands Pasta Categories

Prairie Harvest Canada Ltd. launched two innovative products. San Zenone Brand: Gluten Free Organic Ancient 4 Grain Quinoa Blend Pasta, contains the highly nutritious and very digestible buckwheat grain. This grain is gaining huge popularity in Europe and will soon be trending in North America. This certified gluten free pasta also contains quinoa, corn and rice. Prairie Harvest Brand: Organic Coconut Blend Pasta comes with double the fibre without compromising taste or cook quality. This pasta has been developed to ensure that the pasta matches the current delicious taste profile of original organic semolina pasta products (no taste or quality differences) but with double the fibre. Packaging for these new products is also new. Prairie Harvest has been in business producing pasta at the same location in Edmonton, Alberta for more than 30 years and we have been 1st to market many times before. We launched our Organic Semolina Pasta into the market 19 years ago when organic products were sparsely found. Over eight years ago we were the 1st to bring affordably priced Organic Gluten Free Corn Pasta to the Canadian market. Contact iLevel Management @ info@ilevelmanagement.ca or 416-342-0213



Percy's Old Fashioned Lemonade and Percy's Punch Now Available



Percy's Old Fashioned Lemonade is made from a family recipe passed down by Great Grandfather Percy who made it regularly to quench the thirst of his friends while sitting in the hot English sun. Crafted with fresh squeezed all-natural lemon and honey, it's then brought to a rolling boil and steeped to extract all the natural oils of the lemon. Percy's Punch is crafted with the same great recipe with the addition fresh local grown mint, blueberries and a splash of ginger for added zing! The XFour handcrafted finest premium vodka adds a snap to the potions, but unfortunately disqualifies these cans from sale at your children's neighbourhood lemonade stand.

Contact Marcus Von Albrecht marcus@vonalbrecht.com or 778 233 4626

Level Ground Trading – Pioneers in Fair Trade and Zero Waste Practices – Launch Compostable Coffee Package

Level Ground Trading, has introduced a 100 per cent compostable coffee package that doesn't compromise freshness. "Our business has been land-fill free since 2005," says Hugo Ciro, president, Level Ground Trading. "It is in our DNA to continue to do better for our farmers, their families and for the planet. Our customers have been asking us for an environmentally friendly coffee package and we've spent years searching for a solution that doesn't compromise the quality of our Level Ground coffee and meets certification standards. This has been a challenging and exciting undertaking. It's a proud day for us and for our customers who also want to do the right thing."



Amerlux Introduces Curvano Linear LED Luminaires



Created in a soft curved profile that works well with most architectural spaces, Amerlux introduces Curvano Linear Direct LED with a minimalist styled form factor for a wide range of commercial, retail and supermarket environments. Utilizing an integral driver, the Amerlux Curvano is engineered with an innovative LED board to increase overall efficiencies including superior performance, efficacies and symmetrical and asymmetrical optics. "Raising the aesthetic and illumination levels of traditional commercial areas to new heights, the attractive Curvano offers high output, controlled optics and legendary efficiency," said Amerlux CEO and President Chuck Campagna. "It delivers exactly the right light for any commercial space." Curvano is a direct ambient lighting fixture that provides optimal performance in a slim, soft edged profile for all design applications. The LED luminaire is available in five-watt or 10-watt per foot models that deliver up to 100 lumens per watt in standard individual units of four-foot or eight-foot lengths, or in linear run lengths.

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Canadians want Canadian Chicken

There are growing demands from consumers to know where their food comes from. Recent Leger Marketing studies revealed that Canadian primary shoppers believe it is important that chicken be labelled with its country of origin. More significantly, over 87 per cent think it is important that the chicken they buy is raised in Canada. The vast majority (88 per cent) of Canadians would be likely to buy chicken if it had a label showing it is from Canada rather than elsewhere — and the majority want that message to come from the farmers themselves, rather than from processors or retailers.

In response, Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC) has introduced the “Raised by a Canadian Farmer” brand for chicken at retail and foodservice in Canada. The branding program, whose logo has begun appearing on the packages of chicken and on menus, showcases farmers’ commitment to provide consumers with chicken raised to the highest standards of animal care, quality and safety.

With on-farm food safety and animal care programs, chicken farmers offer consistency from coast to coast. The programs are mandatory, ensuring accountability, participation and compliance from all farmers. Strict enforcement measures offer additional assurances, as does support for the implementation of the programs



from animal care organizations, veterinarians, and industry partners from throughout the food stream.

The program is being supported by a fully integrated, national, English and French marketing program, featuring television, print and digital formats. In addition to this traditional marketing program, the organization also offers a grocery shopping app, digital marketing programs, and an extremely robust social media presence (the average Twitter party garners about 30 million impressions).

Processors, retailers, and food-service providers are coming onto the ‘Raised by a Canadian Farmer’ program (it is free of charge) with enthusiasm, and have begun using

it in their advertising and on their packaging.

However, there are still a variety of different ‘Canadian’ logos and claims that Canadians are encountering when they purchase chicken products. Chicken Farmers of Canada, in its research, has heard that this may be causing consumer confusion.

The “Raised by a Canadian Farmer” mark lets Canadians know that their chicken is home-grown. Having one mark ensures that people know, from those they trust, that the entire industry is dedicated to producing unmatched quality chicken that meets the highest nutrient, food safety and animal care standards. This is what consumers want. They trust us all to deliver on their expectations. ●

The branding program, whose logo has begun appearing on the packages of chicken and on menus, showcases farmers’ commitment to provide consumers with chicken raised to the highest standards of animal care, quality and safety.

Lisa Bishop-Spencer, manager of communications, Chicken Farmers of Canada





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