

AHEAD OF WHAT'S NEXT
PROGRESSIVE GROCER

Producing Results
 By Jennifer Strailey



Take a look at the latest product introductions, packaging and news in the world of produce, and it's soon clear that this industry isn't following the latest food trends – it's setting them.

Indeed, from berries to bagged salads and beyond, national and international brands have made a name for themselves in just about every fresh category imaginable as more consumers eschew nutritionally challenged foods in favor of convenient, healthful snacks, a segment in which baby carrots have long played a starring role.

As the migration continues, baby carrots have begun extending their healthy, portable cred with another rising star of the produce department: hummus.

"Hummus has had a steady growth curve with consumers," says Greg Wilson, VP of sales and marketing for Rochester, Minn.-based Reichel Foods, citing hummus sales trends that are up nationally over 10 percent for the 52 weeks ending Dec. 2, 2012.



Reichel's newest product combination is Baby Carrots and Original Hummus. The single-serve package contains only 60 calories and is gluten-free.



Other trendsetters, like Sunsweet Growers Inc. – the San Diego-based marketer of prunes, dried fruit products and fruit juices – has partnered with LC Marketing Corp., also based in San Diego, to develop the Sunsweet Bakery and Ingredient Division, which is expanding into the bakery department with a line of breads, cookies and pastries infused with plums, purple wheat and corn.

The alliance between Sunsweet, a cooperative of grower/members and a leader in prunes and related products, and LC Marketing – whose team is the driving force behind Milton's bread and also instrumental in making Nonni's Biscotti the No. 1-selling biscotti in the country – is a natural extension for both companies.

PURPLE REIGN

Sunsweet Growers Inc. and LC Marketing Corp. have teamed on a line of breads featuring Sunsweet's Plum Amazins diced dried plums, among other similarly hued ingredients.

Offering a variety of new products, including Purple Country Bread, Purple Swirl Bread, Oatmeal Plum Walnut Cookies, Plum Walnut Breakfast Bites and Purple Dinner Rolls, Sunsweet Bakery's new bread line is baked with signature ingredients such as Plum Amazins diced dried plums, purple wheat and purple corn.

Royal Rose's 'Super' Certification

Royal Rose Radicchio of Salinas, Calif., has officially been certified as an antioxidant-rich superfood by Emeryville, Calif.-based SCS Global Services. Joining the ranks of other superfoods such as spinach, blueberries, broccoli, green tea and pomegranates, Royal Rose brand radicchio has been recognized for its abilities to meet or exceed exceptional levels of the bioflavonoids, also known as anthocyanidins.



An independent lab tested and evaluated Royal Rose Radicchio from several ranches and seed variations. Royal Rose's signature red vegetable exceeded all USDA flavonoid averages for anthocyanidins (cyanidin) and met 20 percent of the daily requirement in just one serving. The radicchio variety is also high in vitamins A, B, C and K.

With the certification under its belt, Dennis Donohue, Royal Rose president, notes, "Our focus now will shift to helping more health-conscious consumers access this delicious, unique, and versatile vegetable."

Traceable Strawberries

With more consumers wanting to know how and where their food is grown, traceability is one of the timeliest topics of the day. Recently, FoodLink, the Los Gatos, Calif.-based commerce and traceability platform that connects fresh food retailers and wholesalers to a network of more than 2,000 growers, packers and shippers, revealed that California Giant Berry Farms, in Watsonville, will use the company's item-specific tracking solution on all strawberries grown in the United States.

FoodLink is creating QR coded labels for California Giant clamshell strawberry containers. The code will contain information about the specific growing location of the packaged berries, allowing trading partners and consumers to trace the berries back to the source, using a smartphone.

"The FoodLink Item solution really is a game changer for California Giant and their customers," says FoodLink CEO Eric Peters. "Shoppers are increasingly demanding more and better information about the food they eat, and California Giant is among the first to cost-effectively align a complex supply chain moving millions of items to embed traceability data all the way from the field to the consumer."

FoodLink's recent acquisition of TrueTrac united that company's advanced case- and item-level tracking solutions with FoodLink's network of buyers and sellers. The result is a Web-based network directly linking information from a field where food is grown and harvested, through packing, shipping and purchasing by retail category managers, to bring full visibility to consumers.



Stand-up Packaging

Apples and pears are just some of the fruits that have registered big rings when packaged in stand-up see-through bags. Now Meyer lemons are joining the mix, as Los Alamitos, Calif.-based specialty produce supplier Frieda's introduces Frieda's Meyer and Seedless Lemons in distinctive new packaging for easy and attractive display.

Designed with input from Frieda's retail partners, the new citrus bags stand out with bright graphics and a large clear panel that showcases the fruit inside. The flat-bottom design keeps the bags upright for easy, eye-catching merchandising on citrus tables. The bags also feature convenient handles and recipe recommendations on the label.

Frieda's popular Meyer Lemons are grown in California during the winter and early spring, and sourced from New Zealand during the off-season.

Social Media Sensations

Grimmway Farms continues to expand its partnership with NBC's "The Biggest Loser." On the heels of Grimmway's new packages featuring the program brand that debuted in late 2012, the Bakersfield, Calif.-based carrot company continues to expand its relationship with the brand through a variety of online promotional efforts and Twitter.

The partnership has increased online conversation about Grimmway and created measurable growth in the company's social media community on Facebook and Twitter.

To connect with show fans, Grimmway is working with Season 11 contestant Courtney Crozier to host weekly Twitter parties during both the East Coast and



CARROTS FOR HEALTH

Grimmway has grown its partnership with "The Biggest Loser" to include online promos and Twitter activity.

West Coast airings of "The Biggest Loser" on Monday evenings. The weekly Twitter parties provide viewers an opportunity to chat about the show, get healthy recipe tips and win prizes.

To date, Grimmway has interacted with thousands of fans, gained millions of online impressions and found a weekly top-trend spot on Twitter with #justcrunchem.

"There's nothing better than bringing a brand alive with interactive promotions and fan engagement, especially when it includes helping them make healthier lifestyle choices," says Bob Borda, Grimmway's VP of marketing.

On Jan. 14, an on-air product placement during an episode of 'The Biggest Loser' featured Grimmway's carrots, Sage Fruit apples, and Duda Farm Fresh Foods fruits and vegetables. Viewers were reminded of the importance of healthful foods and the "Fruits & Vegetables-More Matters" message from the Hockessin, Del.-based Produce for Better Health Foundation.

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