

Saucing up the seafood counter

Despite the heightened attention surrounding the compelling health benefits of eating fresh fish, "The big problem is folks still don't know what to do with it when they get it home," declares Dale Barth.

A self-taught chef, epicurean, and founder of Florence, S.C.-based Redbone Alley Aiolis—now available at the seafood counter in many major grocery chains—Barth is seeking to demystify the process of selling, buying, and preparing seafood.

Selected as an "Editor's Pick" by *Family Circle* in its May 17, 2005 issue, his five ethnic-inspired sauces, designed for cooking, grilling, and/or as a post-preparation condiment, are certified organic and made from all-natural ingredients.

"Trends vary," says Barth, who has spent half his life developing foods, "but organic and natural foods are growing like crazy. Seafood is also growing, as is the public's willingness to try new and exciting flavors. And convenience is still gigantic. Most folks don't have time to prepare great meals, yet they still want to, so they're always looking for new ideas to help."

Redbone Foods, an offshoot of Redbone Alley Restaurants, launched a line of beef, pork, and poultry rubs sold in its restaurants, online, and at a variety of major supermarkets in the Southeast. In 2004 the company launched its five flavors of aioli (Lemon Peppercorn, Sun Dried Tomato, Roasted Garlic, Wasabi, and Smokey Chipotle) under the Redbone name, which are currently available in Lowes Foods, Shoppers Food Warehouse, Harris Teeter, Food Lion, Piggly Wiggly, Whole Foods, SuperTarget, Hen House, and Hannaford Bros., among others.

"With a product called 'aioli,' there's the natural need to first educate the folks behind the seafood counter to the attributes of our brand," says Barth. "If we can convince the fishmonger how to teach consumers what to do with fish, they can then sell more of it" while also reducing shrink. Once the department's staff understands that "aioli" and "Fish Cooking 101" are interchangeable terms, adds Barth, "They become natural champions for both our and their own brands."

Over the past decade "the science of processing fresh fish has improved dramatically. Therefore, you can now find wonderful seafood selections in areas that traditionally one couldn't, such as the Midwest." Referencing Redbone's promotional materials, Barth points to several POS tools that suggest easy seafood preparation with the use of its aiolis.

"We also place DVD players on top of the seafood counters, showing examples of preparing grilled fish or seafood pasta, for instance, in addition to recipe cards and instant redeemable coupons that partner the sauces with a protein for a discount. And we work closely with the fish guys as we demo freshly prepared seafood with our sauces."

Barth says his firm is also considering adding samples with tray-packed, portion-controlled seafood, such as tuna with Redbone Alley Wasabi Aioli, to increase trial.



erencing the organization's continuing "a can a week" consumer campaign and a new bold flavor line that features Wasabi & Soy Sauce, Maui Onion & Garlic, Jalapeño Smokehouse, and Lime 'n Chili flavors.

Breaking free of the snack aisle

Describing Stockton, Calif.-based Diamond of California's retail promotions lineup for its Emerald line of snack nuts, public relations manager Vicki Zeigler points to a variety of high-profile activities centering on giving the products "great visibility on store shelves."

The Emerald line, launched nationally in August 2004, features emerald-green canisters with lids that measure out the recommended 1.5-ounce daily serving of nuts. According to Emerald's creative Web site, the company's growing number of snack and glazed nut products are "packaged into various grabbable shapes and sizes designed for maximum mobility."

The entire line of the 93-year-old cooperative includes walnuts, pine nuts, pecans, peanuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, cashews, Brazil nuts, and almonds. Last month an overwhelming majority of the co-op's 1,735 member growers approved a conversion to become a publicly traded company.

Among Emerald's retail activities are eye-catching in-store displays for secondary placement, says Zeigler, "in addition to plastic tray shelf organizers for Emerald canisters and pouches, which help keep store shelves neat and well organized. Partner promotions with elaborate in-store displays give Emerald snack nuts great visibility in grocery stores." Zeigler further notes that wine and beer promotions do especially well as "natural partners for Emerald snack nuts."

Emerald also places extensive regional FSI drops in major markets nationwide, with coupons to drive traffic into stores, says Zeigler, adding that this month "we will resume our television advertising campaign in major and key markets nationwide. We will be showing our popular 15-second television commercials, plus the 30-second 'Exaggerating Dad' spot we aired during the Super Bowl last February.

"We keep things lively for retailers by introducing new products," she continues. "Two new products will be introduced nationwide over the next two months: Emerald Chocolate Brownie Glazed Walnuts—which were a real hit with consumers in test markets over the winter holiday—and Emerald Dry Roasted Walnuts," the first dry-roasted walnuts to hit the U.S. snack market.

"Walnuts, which are usually thought of as culinary nuts, have proved to be extremely popular with snackers as a featured ingredient in our Emerald Deluxe Mixed Nuts and Emerald Mixed Nuts. We

often receive feedback from consumers who say it was a pleasant surprise to find walnuts in our mixed nuts," says Zeigler.

Zeigler predicts that the forthcoming dry-roasted product "will propel walnuts into the mainstream of salty snacking. They're crunchy, with great flavor and texture. They will especially appeal to health-minded snackers seeking to incorporate more omega-3s into their diets."

All-natural healthy snacks are also enjoying additional notoriety as a result of the new nutritional

guidelines—
great news
for Kings-
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based Sun-Maid Growers of California, which continues to advance its leadership in the dried fruit category with new products and a wider array of prepacked displays.

Says Rob Muller, Sun-Maid's director of marketing, "Eighty-three percent of heavy users consume raisins for snacks, so we know there's a lot of heavy snack usage with our product. Obviously the new nutritional guidelines' increased emphasis on fruits and vegetables is a real positive for us, and we're certainly in a position to capitalize on that with our 100 percent natural product, which is very consistent, not only with the recommendations of the USDA, but also with the advice of many nutritionists, who continue talking about the importance of whole grains, unprocessed fruits and vegetables, and more natural-lifestyle foods.

"The demise of the low-carb fad is also an important development for our growers," adds Muller, who notes "that moderation and a balanced diet is a far better overall nutritional approach."

While respectful of retailers' own points of view regarding product placement, Muller says team Sun-Maid prefers to see its products merchandised either in or adjacent to the produce department. "The close proximity reminds consumers our product is made from fresh fruit," he says, adding that the visual appeal of Sun-Maid's vibrant, recognizable packaging is another factor that produce managers can rely on to enliven the department.

"We're very pleased to see produce managers merchandise our products in the produce sections in over half of our accounts, which, according to

Diamond of California's Emerald line of snack nuts can be merchandised in plastic tray shelf organizers, which keep store shelves in good order.