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The Timing Is Right For Foodservice



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Upscale Pâtés Are Easy To Serve

The holidays are a busy time for pâté sales. “Our business is very seasonal, and customers think about pâté when it comes to the holiday season,” says Sébastien Espinasse, vice president sales and marketing, Fabrique Délices, Hayward, CA. “Everybody is in party mode. The pâté holiday sales are huge from October to December.”

Pâté is popular for holiday entertaining because it is perceived as an exotic and luxury item, like caviar, explains Laurie Cummins, president of Alexian Pâtés and Specialty Meats, Neptune, NJ. “Newcomers to pâté always enjoy the experience of trying it,” Cummins says.

Not surprisingly, Europeans have always thought that pâté is perfect for entertaining. “In France, everybody serves pâté and foie gras for the holiday meals,” says Elodie Jouannel, marketing manager, Les Trois Petits Cochons, Brooklyn, NY. “It’s high-end—great quality, great flavor—and so easy to serve.”

Pâtés are wonderful as instant appetizers, and Alexian’s Cummins suggests filling puff pastry shells or hollowed hard-

boiled eggs with any variety of spreadable mousse. Top with a sprig of green for the finishing touch.

Increasingly, pâtés are being used as an ingredient in making special dishes. “Pâté is now being used by restaurants in a variety of dishes, such as Wellingtons, and to give richness to sauces and gravies,” says Yvette Etchepare, director of marketing, Marcel et Henri Charcuterie Française, South San Francisco, CA. “We even have customers who use pâté in their egg rolls and rice dishes. Our coarse pâtés are fabulous for giving stuffing that extra burst of flavor.”

Pâtés have a way of elevating the mood of any social gathering, and the unique flavor combinations from The Patchwork Traditional Food Co. are sure to spark some lively conversation. The company’s lineup includes such spirited combinations as Chicken Liver, Tequila & Cranberry Pâté; Chicken Liver, Triple Sec & Orange Pâté; Chicken Liver, Bourbon & Blueberry Pâté; and Welsh Dragon’s Pâté (venison liver with chili).

Based in Wales, United Kingdom,

Patchwork makes its pâtés for the U.S. market in Selinsgrove, PA. “Our pâtés are semi-coarse; what we call Welch country style,” says Margaret Carter, founder of the 25-year-old company. “They are all organic and contain no additives or preservatives.”

A number of new pâtés will become available in time for Thanksgiving this year. Fabrique Délices is introducing its Pheasant Terrine with figs and pistachios. Les Trois Petits Cochons will offer Wild Boar Pâté with Chestnuts and Raisins and Venison Pâté with Cranberries and Pistachio Nuts. Alexian Pâtés will offer Herbs De Provence Pâté, a country-style pâté made with chicken, rum and herbs de Provence, as well as a tofu-based vegan pâté called Curry with Bell Pepper.

Alexian’s Cummins believes that consumers’ interest in exotic and exciting flavors continues to grow. “I think this is a reflection of a much more adventurous population,” she says. “For many years our most popular pâtés were the French classics. Now, we are reporting very healthy sales of pâtés, such as Spiced Apple

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According to Patchwork’s Carter, the key to increasing sales and consumer awareness is to offer samples. “Sixty percent to 70 percent of pâté sales depend on tasting it,” she asserts. “Once someone tastes it, they are likely to purchase it.”

Meanwhile, sales of classic flavors continue to grow. “Definitely the Mousse Truffée—chicken liver and black truffle mousse—has been gaining in popularity throughout the years,” says Les Trois Petits Cochons’ Jouannel.

Fabrique Délices’ Espinasse notes that all the mousses are very popular now in the United States. “We can see a great move on to this new category, which is Rillettes du Périgord, or duck rillettes—shredded duck meat cooked in duck fat for a couple of hours confit-style,” he says.

Espinasse has found that it is important to offer American consumers some pork-free products. “Pâté is a very difficult category and a very seasonal product,” he explains. “By having pork-free product, we can reach customers, such as

Jewish, Muslim and the rest of the population that does not eat pork.”

Natural products are also increasingly important to the category. “Our products are made by using meat and poultry raised without added hormones or antibiotics, never fed animal by-products and raised by farmers and ranchers who care about animals and the environment in which they live,” Fabrique Délices’ Espinasse says. “People are very cautious about what’s in their product.”

Pre-packaged slices have become a must-have for delis. “I see a very strong trend toward retailers favoring the pre-packaged pâté in place of cut-to-order pâté,” Alexian’s Cummins says. “There is a lingering belief that pâté packaged at the ‘factory’ is perceived to be less fresh than the pâté cut personally. This is seldom true, and I believe today’s shopper prefers the convenience and speed that the grab-and-go package offers. And, in the case of re-packaging or cutting and re-wrapping, the retailer is spared the cost of labor and carrying the risk of bacterial contamination in environment and handling.”

Les Trois Petits Cochons’Jouannel also believes in the merits of pre-packaged pâté slices. “The creative packaging makes it easy to be displayed, hung in the deli case or just stacked against each other,” she says.

Consumers get an extra benefit from packaged pâté because it stays fresher longer. “With the excellent shelf life of our slices, they can keep it in their refrigerator for unexpected guests,” Marcel et Henri’s Etchepare says.

No matter how it is offered, pâté needs to be cross-merchandised with cheeses, olives, cornichons, crackers, baguettes and wine. “When serving pâté, we suggest using a neutral-flavored cracker, such as Melba toast or a similar cracker,” Patchwork’s Carter says.

And pâtés need not be limited to one area of the store. “While visiting a store in Canada, I was amazed to see pre-packaged pâté of all sorts and brands merchandised in several locations in an IGA store,” Cummins says. “They were in cheese, deli and meat departments, and near prepared food offerings.” **DB**



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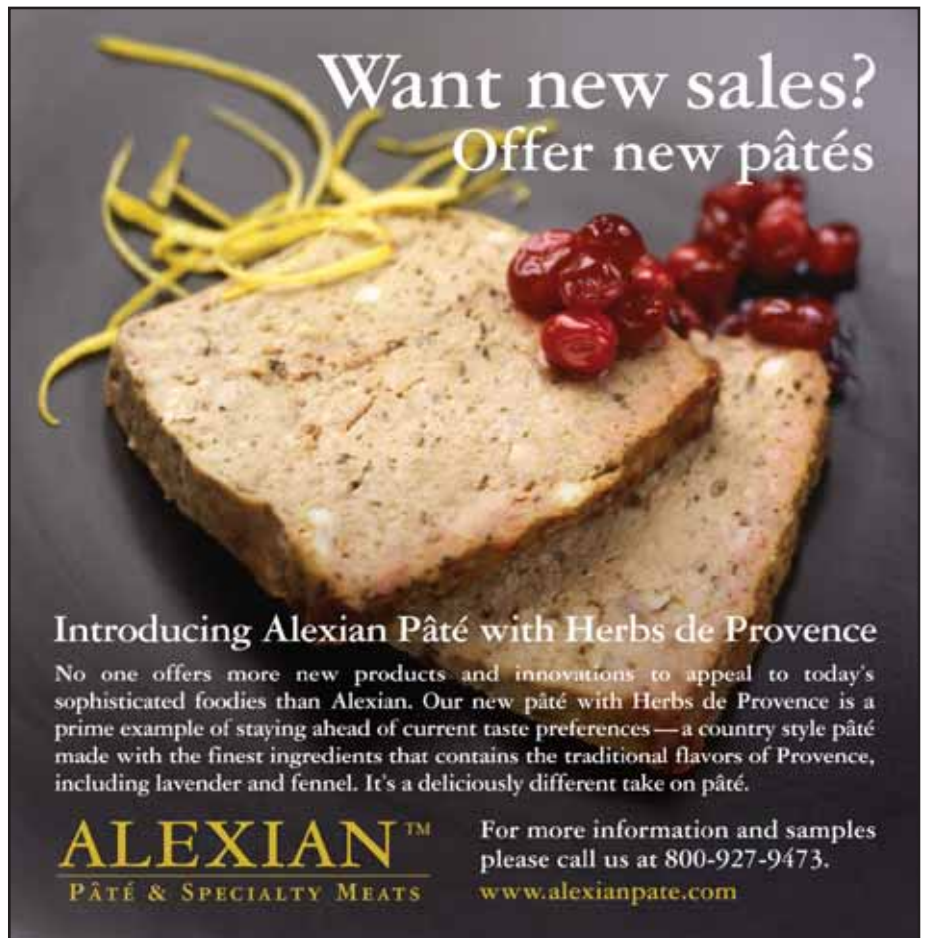
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