

KEEP IT SIMPLE, SHOPPER-FRIENDLY

Harried shoppers want deli packaging that is attractive, ensures food safety, and won't leak on the trip home. By Bryan Salvage, Editor

Consumer demands for deli packaging are straight and simple, relays the International Dairy•Deli•Bakery Association's *What's in Store 2004* report. Features desired include:

- Easy-to-ready labels
- Easy-to-open (and reseal) packages
- Insulated packages
- Spill-proof designs
- Earth-friendly materials

White butcher-wrap deli packaging has gone by the wayside, but one new-generation package has been quite popular for more than a year: the stand-up pouch used for rotisserie chicken, says Huston Keith, packaging expert and principal for Marietta, GA-based Keymark Associates.

"Robbie Manufacturing Inc., Lenexa, KS, is one of the leaders of this type of packaging," he adds. "This has put quite a dent into the tray-and-dome packaging for that type of product. You'll find this at Kroger, Publix, and other supermarkets."

What's driving the deli packaging evolution is meeting consumer demand for more convenience.

"Look on the retail shelf and you'll see stand-up pouches everywhere because they're more convenient, recloseable, have better merchandising capabilities, and they allow for better graphics," says Irv Robinson, president of Robbie Manufacturing Inc.

Robbie demonstrated its zippered, leak-resistant *Hot 'n Handy* flexible package for hot and cold deli foods at the recent Food Marketing Institute show in Chicago. Features include a built-in handle for portability and protection against burns; withstands the rigors of heated and cold display cases, and reheats easily in microwave oven; allows preprinted branding, preparation notes, and nutritional information in up to 10 colors of process printing; a built-in gusset that expands for standability in the display case; stores easily in a refrigerator; a large window frame

and anti-fog technology for full, clear view of the product; and proprietary venting techniques to maximize crispness for fried foods or to lock in moisture and juices for meats, ribs, and rotisserie chicken.

"The *Hot 'n Handy* film is co-extruded versus laminated," Robinson says. "The added flexibility makes it easier to load products."

Retailers want excellent print and graphics for packages of whole pieces of deli meat, says Jay Wilson, director of marketing for smoked and processed meats, Cryovac/Sealed Air Corp., Duncan, SC.

"They want outstanding gloss on the packages and a good, tight fit so you can minimize ears and wrinkles," he adds.

Cryovac's post-pasteurization business has grown tremendously over the last five years, particularly for turkey products, Wilson adds. Its post-pasteurization bag improves the appearance of full-service deli products.

Last year, another new package entered the scene. Wild Oats' Portland, OR, stores replaced some of their petroleum-based plastic deli-product packaging with packaging made from a corn-based resin called NatureWorks™ PLA, from Cargill Dow LLC, Minneapolis, MN. **MDR**

