



Trend Watch

FOOD PACKAGING SAFETY

Keep it safe

Food packaging innovations could help retailers excel on the food safety front.

Consumers want to know that the food they are buying is safe for them and their families. With food recalls and illness outbreaks regularly in the headlines, though, trust can be a hard thing to come by.

According to research data from Stamford, Conn.-based Daymon Worldwide, twice as many shoppers are concerned about food safety and quality today than were five years ago.

Fortunately, retailers can take advantage of packaging innovations to keep food safer.

"Retailers are closest to the consumer and as the trend toward natural foods continues to grow, they will need to put pressure on suppliers to use different and innovative packaging solutions to meet consumer demands," says Bob Sabdo, commercial director for North American food and beverage packaging with Buffalo, N.Y.-based Multisorb Technologies, which creates active packaging technologies and works with both retailers and food processors to help protect food products from the harmful effects of moisture and oxygen.

better control of hygiene and food safety handling practices while offering full product traceability to the store retailer," Sabdo says.

In addition to increasing food safety, case-ready meats also allow stores to more easily customize their meat offerings and stock the cuts that sell the best.

Trends on the horizon

With the World Health Organization recently placing processed meat in the same cancer-causing category as smoking and asbestos, shoppers are going to be looking at the safety of meat more than ever, no matter what the actual risks are. That means retailers must be on top of trends that address their concerns.

"The need to reduce nitrates and nitrites in processed meats is a critical concern based on recent reports. Though some level is required, the goal will be to reduce to the lowest levels possible," Sabdo says, adding that retailers should have their packaging focus on clean-label oxygen-absorbing technology.

Sorbent technology both removes oxygen, reducing the need for preservatives such as nitrates, and maintains the equilibrium relative humidity, keeping foods at their desired moisture. In addition, it helps prevent the oxidation of fats, vitamins, natural antioxidants, flavor and color.

"Creating cleaner, more consumer-friendly labels through the use of sorbent technology is a trend we anticipate will continue to increase as food manufacturers and processors look for innovative methods to reduce preservatives while maintaining quality and extending shelf life," Sabdo notes.

The move toward smarter packaging also will be seen in other areas of the grocery store. According to the Cleveland-based market research firm Freedonia Group, the market for active and intelligent packaging products will grow 8 percent through 2017. The company's "Active & Intelligent Packaging" report, released in January 2014, notes beverages as one area poised for growth. "Consumers want to know the origin of their food, what ingredients have been added, and how it was raised and processed," Sabdo says. "Retailers need to be prepared to answer these questions and deliver products to meet these expectations." — M. Hogan



Trends with traction

One growing trend that is better for both retailers and consumers is case-ready meat, which sees meat processed and packaged at a central facility instead of in-store.

"From a safety perspective, this provides for