

A Personal Connection

At FMI Connect, retailers can get up close and personal with the industry's leading suppliers.

By LINDSEY WOJCIK

THE TASTE OF ITALY—among other cuisines and competitive grocery items—will be celebrated at this year's FMI Connect show, which will converge at Chicago's McCormick Place June 8-11. Italy has been named the first-ever "host country" for FMI Connect, giving show goers the opportunity to meet with Italian food and beverage companies boasting traditional Italian fare, such as wine, seafood, mineral water, olive oil, pasta, riso, breads, cured meats and more.

"The Italian Trade Commission is bringing more than 50 authentic Italian suppliers to literally recreate the Italian supplier market at McCormick Place," says Margaret Core, vice president of industry events at FMI. "Italy is an ideal partner to elevate the importance of a key competitive strategy—providing authentic international options."

All of Italy's regions will be represented in the first-ever Italian trade pavilion on the show floor. Daily wine tastings and cooking demonstrations from Italian chefs will also be featured.

The Italian pavilion is just one of the new features retailers and wholesalers can experience at FMI Connect. Nearly 400 vendors will showcase their products and services across a broad selection of grocery categories. Special pavilions will focus on health and wellness, fresh and prepared food, private brands, food safety and technology.

That volume of exhibitors may seem intimidating to some, which is why FMI Connect offers a community and structure for its attendees, Core says. "We want our event attendees to feel productive and that they've

truly entered a solutions-based environment built around the efficiencies they need to be successful," she says.

The new Connect Business Exchange (CBX) feature aims to do just that. The CBX Scheduler tool matches retailers and wholesalers to appropriate suppliers, and it enables buyers to request 20-minute meetings with specific companies. The tool, which can be accessed through FMI Connect's website, www.fmiconnect.net, is designed to provide a systemized approach to maximize meeting time between food retailers and their supply chain partners, Core says. The show floor will feature a dedicated CBX meeting area for attendees to efficiently meet with multiple suppliers.

"CBX will create the forum to allow teams to conduct more meetings over the span of three days than they could manage in a single quarter through traditional meeting avenues," Core says.

Whether it is through personalized CBX meetings or meet-and-greets at an exhibitor's booth, buyers will likely find what they need at FMI Connect. Here is a sampling of what exhibiting suppliers will promote at the show:



BISSELL RENTAL

www.bissellrental.com

BOOTH #4212

"Our goal at FMI Connect is to introduce the Bissell Rental program to grocery retailers, by demonstrating that there is now a choice in rental programs for their stores with fresh and innovative options," says Todd Miles, key accounts manager at Bissell Rental, based in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Through its Rental program, Bissell offers an easy-to-use carpet cleaning machine that enhances the speed and effectiveness of the job, Miles adds. The company also offers additional rental options like the Little Green Pro portable

deep cleaner and an electric outdoor power washer. “Regular renters can now rent more often, and prospective renters now have new reasons and options to try the service,” Miles says.

Bissell also has exclusive partnerships with brands like Scotchgard, Febreze and the sanitization properties of Virox to offer more options in carpet cleaning formulas.

CHERRY CENTRAL COOPERATIVE

www.cherrycentral.com

BOOTH #504

Cherry Central Cooperative is an agricultural cooperative based in Traverse City, Mich., that began in 1975, when five independent cherry producers formed the cooperative to market and sell their fruit.

Tart and Sweet cherries were the main focus, however, the cooperative has since expanded to include apples and blueberries as items to be processed, marketed and sold into U.S. and world markets.

“Our main reason for exhibiting at FMI is to highlight our brands Indian



Summer and Traverse Bay, exhibit our items, meet with our customers to introduce or expand our brands to meet current and new opportunities with and expand into new markets and/or customers,” says Brent Tackett, national sales manager, branded. “Some of our items are new, some items have new labels or bottle redesigns and other products’ features have changed or been modified/improved in some manner.”

Everything that Cherry Central harvests is processed and packaged in Michigan or in its cooperative-owned member facilities in Utah or Washington. This allows Cherry Central to be in season all year long to serve retailers with premium, top-quality, finished products that are ready for their consumers to serve to their families, Tackett adds.

COCA-COLA NORTH AMERICA

www.coca-cola.com

BOOTH #1604

The Coca-Cola Co. will be touting beverage and food pairings, with a particular emphasis on the deli area. The company will showcase how it can help drive immediate beverage consumption via innovative coolers and deli-area availability through its new product innovations, says Kelly Iacobelli, director of trade communications for the Atlanta-based company. “We will present an upscale deli execution with Coca-Cola Freestyle, Gold Peak Tea Tower and our new digital rack,” she says.

The new Coca-Cola Freestyle 7000 is an ice-cooled countertop beverage dispenser for foodservice and retailers with foodservice offerings. It provides the benefits of the original Coca-Cola Freestyle—including consumer engagement, variety and choice—but on a smaller scale. It offers more than 60 beverages, including more than 30 low- and no-calorie options, in addition to more than 40 caffeine-free choices.

“This unit is designed to meet the needs of those buying 350 to 850 gallons per dispenser annually who want to grow their beverage business and offer more than six-to-eight options per dispenser with limited space,” Iacobelli adds.



ELKAY PLASTICS

www.elkayplastics.com

BOOTH #2212

Elkay Plastics, the Commerce, Calif.-based bag distributor, has partnered with U.K.-based Sirane Products as the exclusive distributor of its Ready, Chef, Go! line of cooking bags, which are designed to help grocers increase fresh seafood, meat and produce sales. The Ready, Chef, Go! Line is a complete program that offers grocers a selection of seasoned butters and sauces to pair with the customer’s choice of fish, meat or produce.

“Early test results in large U.S. chains are already showing a measur-



able increase in over-the-counter and grab-and-go sales," says Kevin Gallahan, director of Sirane Products. "The bags promote convenient, healthy, in-home eating which make them especially appealing to Millennials."

Retailers can order the bags in either a dual ovenable version, or an oven and grilling bag. They will also have access to a full line of point of sale materials, social media marketing and advertising support.

GOLD MEDAL PRODUCTS CO.

www.gmpopcorn.com

BOOTH #3645

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn how to capitalize on the concept of freshly made, gourmet popcorn prepared in the grocery store setting from the Gold Medal Product Co.



"Gourmet popcorn is such a hot item right now because it satisfies so many characteristics that the grocery store industry is looking to capture," says John Evans, Jr., vice president for the Cincinnati-based company. "It is a low cost/high profit margin product that enhances the in-store experience for the customer. This also gives stores an opportunity to private label."

Gold Medal Products will feature a sampling of its high production popcorn machines, caramel corn cookers, as well as cheese mixers and warming cabinets. The company's products are simple to make, easy to sell and use minimal manpower, Evans adds.

KELLOGG CO.

www.kelloggcompany.com

BOOTH # 4229

Show goers are welcome to join the Kellogg Co.

for brunch on June 6 at 11 a.m., where they can experience the company's cereal mixology bar. "The 'Mix for More' cereal mixology bar demonstrates the versatility of cereal and how mixing up cereal in three new and exciting ways can provide more delight, more variety and more opportunity for cross-promotion," says Dave Jones, vice president, industry initiatives for the Battle Creek, Mich.-based company.

Three recipes will be available to assemble, including savory, sweet and "out of the bowl" options. Savory Kickin' Crunch will be comprised of

the company's Special K Protein Flakes, yogurt, avocado and cayenne pepper. The sweet Just Peachy option will feature Frosted Mini Wheats, milk, peaches and ground ginger. The Out of the Bowl Raisin Bran Trail Mix variety will include Raisin Bran with Cranberries, dark chocolate chips, almonds and pepitas.

Kellogg's will also be sampling its newest foods items, which includes Special K Protein Brown Sugar Crunch, Special K Gluten Free, Raisin Bran with Cranberries and its new line of Origins products. **GHQ**



A One-on-One Connection

FMI CONNECT'S CONNECT BUSINESS EXCHANGE (CBX) FEATURE will make it easy for buyers to meet with small and large suppliers. CBX enables show attendees to schedule intimate meetings with the companies they want to meet. Suppliers like Mondelez International are taking advantage of this personalized meeting space on the show floor. The East Hanover, N.J.-based maker of brands like Oreo, Ritz, Trident, Honey Maid and Sour Patch Kids, has dedicated much of its resources to the customer-focused meetings that CBX will provide.

"We have a private suite with two meeting rooms to schedule time dedicated to our customer's agenda," says Diane Striegel, senior manager, industry development at Mondelez International. "We believe this more personal setting will allow us to provide a more valuable experience for our retailers."



During the CBX meetings, the company will highlight its products and services to meet the individual needs of its retailer partners, says Striegel. The company will discuss several new products, which include the new belVita Cranberry Orange Crunchy flavor, and new Trident Layers and Stride gum flavors.

In addition to the belVita Cranberry Orange Crunchy flavor, the company will feature new multi-pack belVita items; Trident Layers with Swedish Fish Berry + Lemon, which features layers of Swedish Fish berry flavored gum surrounding a Swedish Fish lemon candy layer, creating a blend of berry and hints of lemon as consumers chew; and the Stride Sour Patch Watermelon Gum flavor.