



Game On

Tailgating and other fall seasonal events inspire programs across the store.

By Bridget Goldschmidt

With the onset of autumn comes football season, as well as such fall celebrations as Halloween and Thanksgiving, with consumers looking ahead to the winter holidays. To capture sales this time of year, suppliers across the store are bringing their A game by updating their playbooks to include online components and cross-departmental merchandising.

With recent research from Jacksonville, Fla.-based Acosta showing that 42 percent of shoppers surveyed grill at home before watching a game on TV and 31 percent grill at tailgating events, it's a no-brainer to feature grill-ready meat items during the season. (For one grocer's distinctive approach to this, see the sidebar below.)

"Tailgating centers on steaks and burgers," affirms Christy Johnson, director of advertising and marketing strategy for the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) brand, in Wooster, Ohio. "They only take minutes to prepare, so there's more time to enjoy the big game. ... For busier weeknights, retailers may also want to feature roast recipes for the slow cooker. They're quick to prepare in the morning so that a delicious and nutritious dinner is ready when the family returns home."

The brand helps its retail partners incorporate easy tailgating and holiday recipes into videos, social media posts, advertising, newspaper circulars, customer emails and in-store signage, according to



Johnson. "With promotions built around recipes, retailers have more opportunities to bring meal components from produce, bakery and center store to the meat case, providing easy meal solutions for customers to pick up for dinner tonight," she says.

Despite CAB's emphasis on tech-savvy programs, supermarkets and their employees still have a crucial role to play, stresses Johnson. "We have evolved our toolkits to be more digitally focused, but retailers will still need physical promotions in stores and traditional formats," she observes. "Into the fall season, as comfort food and roasts regain popularity, it's important



BRING THE BURGERS
Certified Angus Beef provides easy recipes for consumers to use while tailgating.

Cross-cultural Touchdown

During fall tailgating season, Cardenas Markets LLC gives the occasion its own unique cultural spin.

According to John Gomez, CEO of the Ontario, Calif.-based grocer, many of whose customers are first-generation emigrants from Spanish-speaking countries: "Some of the special occasions and holidays celebrated during the fall are new traditions for our consumers, particularly the recent immigrants; so, it is incumbent upon us to educate consumers on these celebrations. We do so through an integrated approach. We leverage weekly ads to promote items relevant to the holiday, we work with key vendors to host in-store demos and offer ideas for cooking and



entertaining, and we update our POS to reflect flavors of the season and inspire new creations."

Continues Gomez: "Tailgating and certain holidays are great opportunities for grilling; therefore, we focus our promotions on the carnicería (meat department), offering special discounts on thin-cut steaks like beef flap meat (ranchera), pork ribs, beef flanken ribs, beef tri tip, beef chuck steak, (diezmillo) or beef clod steak (españilla)."

He goes on to explain: "Tailgating is strongly related to American football, a growing sport among Hispanics, and holidays such as Thanksgiving are celebrated with a Latino flair. Our role in that acculturation process is to provide them with new ideas for cooking, such as barbecuing with hot links and sausages, or experimenting with American-cut steaks such as New York, T-bone or even pork chops, in an effort to immerse our customers in American culture, without losing the flavors and dishes that are part of their heritage."

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for meat staff to be prepared to answer customers’ questions and point them to helpful resources such as our Roast Perfect app. We are actively engaged in helping our retailers bring this personal level of service to customers through their meat teams.”

“The seasonal promotions for Star Ranch Angus beef focus on Mealtime Matters, celebrating the special moments around the dinner table,” says Rick Janke, senior brand manager at Dakota Dunes, S.D.-based Tyson Fresh Meats. “Our fall promotion kicks off this September and features the American tradition of tailgating. Elements in the promotion include signage, coupons and recipes, and are intended to create awareness and loyalty to help drive incremental sales at the meat case.”

Tyson also looks beyond the store in its promotions. “As more and more consumers are getting their information online, it’s essential to engage with our Star Ranch Angus beef shoppers digitally,” notes Janke. “We recently refreshed our consumer website, and we incorporate digital media advertising and contests into all of our promotions. It’s important to us that our retail partners have the marketing tools — both online and in-store —



needed to increase sales of Star Ranch Angus beef and improve their bottom line.”

Party on a Platter

Of course, seasonal opportunities abound beyond the fresh meat department. “During the tailgating/holiday time frame, we offer an in/out opportunity for our retailers with the Tailgate Tray,” consisting of pre-cut meat and cheese with crackers, notes Emily Klotz, party tray brand manager at Austin, Minn.-based Hormel Foods.

“With our key seasonality taking place during the holiday time frame, we see the greatest lift when our products are ... featured by retailers,” says Klotz. “This type of promotion puts us top of



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Heineken USA

mind for consumers and helps them understand how they can use our product in their upcoming events.”

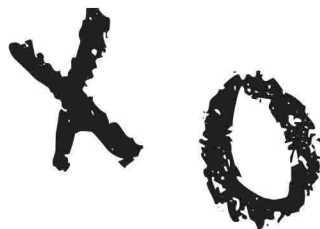
She adds that Hormel also teams with retailers on “co-marketing opportunities such as coupons and retailer-specific apps to help drive trial. We have seen a lot of success with these types of promotions.”

Cohesive Experiences

Meanwhile, in center store and the refrigerated section, Chicago-based Conagra is teeing up tailgating and other seasonal promotions and products for its various brands.

“Hebrew National’s targeted seasonal merchandising and focused promotional activity extends [into] early fall, as we look to engage consumers [during] tailgating season,” notes Amanda Perry, brand director, as an example of some of the company’s activities in this regard. “We’re working with our customers on omnichannel shopper marketing programs that include seasonal merchandising. ... We also execute cross-promotions with other Conagra brands.”

Further, since many fans enjoy a cold one while



watching a game or tailgating, Dos Equis, a brand of White Plains, N.Y.-based Heineken USA, “is giving fans a chance to win a VIP experience at the National Championship game in Atlanta, as well as numerous other exciting football-themed and tailgating-appropriate prizes,” says Edith Llerena, shopper marketing manager for the imported Mexican beer.

She adds that “the program provides cross-merchandising opportunities with Avocados from Mexico and On the Border chips and dips, a perfect fit with game-day tailgating.”

Llerena believes that such team-ups will only deepen going forward, noting that “cross-promotion with relevant food partners that enhances the [tailgating] occasion will ... become increasingly integrated with the overall brand and promotion proposition.”

Another strategy that’s here to stay, according to Hormel’s Klotz, is “[t]he combination of both online and in-store merchandising, [which] will continue to be a powerful duo, allowing both vendors and retailers to incorporate integrated go-to-market strategies that provide a cohesive experience for consumers.” **PG**