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# Indulgent Delights

*Strategic Planning Maximizes the Opportunities for Frozen Novelties and Ice Cream*

Ice cream, popsicles and frozen treats have come a long way from the traditional Neopolitan. Today, frozen novelties are available in a variety of flavours and experiences responding to the diverse Canadian consumer.

“Canadians are seeking variety including dairy-free alternatives, low calorie, ethnic inspired products, and a focus on higher quality ingredients,” says Marco Felicella, director of sales, TransCold Distribution Ltd.

However, this increased selection poses new challenges for grocers as they need to be able to forecast which of these items they will add to their limited freezer space.

“The fundamentals of ice cream have not changed,” says Joel Gregoire, associate director of food and drink, Mintel. “Canadians are focusing on quality ingredients that are used in making ice cream, which is translating to increased interest in artisan varieties and premium flavours.” However, the industry has seen some disruption including the expansion of low caloric frozen treats and plant-based alternatives.

“This is a category that is driven by assortment, including having different types of products for different needs states,” says Paul McMahon, category sales development leader, ice cream, Nestlé. Selecting the items to add to this section requires a delicate balance between favourite staples and frozen novelties.



photo courtesy shutterstock.com



Desi-licious Kulfi responds to consumers seeking ethnic options.

Mike Rogiani, president, The Ice Cream Depot, suggests to “Try new items, get creative with your shelf space and listen to customer feedback.” This includes stocking the mainstay ice cream brands that are the bulk of sales and then filling the remaining area with products that respond to their interests and needs. Products like Desi-licious Kulfi will respond to those consumers seeking ethnic offerings while Blueberry based Sorbatta is a great alternative for those looking for healthier dairy-free alternatives. The Ice Cream Depot strives to supplement their foundational lineup of Chapman’s ice cream, which remains one of the highest-selling items in Western Canada, with niche products and brands including those crafted by local manufacturers.

Nestlé’s new launches include Häagen-Dazs Ruby Bar, Häagen-Dazs Exträaz and a non-dairy vegan drumstick.



## Planning Shelf Space in Partnership with Manufacturers

Co-ordinating the retail planogram shortly after manufacturers launch their new innovations, shares McMahon, will help to drive a successful balance of innovative products and brand staples. This includes using secondary display space and including a large variety to help capture that impulsivity, including adding in the right mix of innovative products. Nestlé’s new launches include a Häagen-Dazs Ruby bar, dialing up the levels of indulgence in the popular Häagen-Dazs Exträaz and a non-dairy vegan Drumstick responding to consumers desire for an indulgent plant-based frozen indulgent.

When planning the freezer space, retailers should look at ways that they



TransCold Distribution Ltd. guarantees a frozen cold chain from start to finish.

could increase the overall efficiency in this limited shelf space. “Premium 500mls are dominating sales and support a wider, innovative assortment per shelf,” says Mike McGregor, director of sales, Fiasco



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## Retailers need to understand the core drivers of their consumers' purchase decisions and then follow up with the products that respond to these needs and buying habits.

Gelato (Righteous). “Even though these lines offer comparable margins to the classic tubs, they do it from less shelf space per sku, and at a higher ring.”

When partnering with suppliers, retailers would benefit from investigating the entire process from their warehouse to how the product is delivered to the store. “All we do is frozen, with ice cream making up a significant portion of our business, guaranteeing a frozen cold chain from start to finish,” says Melissa Leung, president, TransCold Distribution.



All Canadian Moose is one of Foothills Creamery's most popular flavours.



photo courtesy shutterstock.com

“Since we are not working with multi-temperature trucks, the product is fully protected from start to finish. It is not just about ordering the right product but

ensuring that the frozen novelty can be delivered efficiently.”

However, not just any product will do. Retailers need to understand the

Happy Pops provides bold and authentic flavours.



core drivers of their consumers' purchase decisions and then follow up with the products that respond to these needs and buying habits. “It’s about having a balance of products bringing together those that you know will sell with those that might pique their interest,” says Alex Kubinski, brand manager, Foothills Creamery Ltd. “Local is huge when it comes to ice cream. “Foothill Creamery’s locally produced premium ice cream is known for its

## Embracing the Plant-Based Phenomena

The non-dairy frozen alternatives is a category that is changing so rapidly, shares Laila Keshavjee, founder, Happy Pops, with the plant-based phenomena driving momentum in this category. Founder Keshavjee entered the category to offer an family-centric ice pop focused on clean labels

and bold and authentic flavours. Mango remains one of the most popular options, while innovative options like lemon mint and guava are also appealing to consumers.

“When it comes to plant-based products, there are a lot of different audiences that the retailers need to connect with,” says Darcey Howard, global marketing director,



Raspberry Lime Sorbretto from Fiasco Gelato will be relaunched under the Righteous brand name.



photo courtesy shutterstock.com

Screamin Brother is a premium dairy-free alternative made from organic coconut milk.

creamy flavour and texture with All Canadian Moose and mint chocolate chip remaining two of their most popular favourites. Screamin Brothers is their premium dairy-free alternative, made from organic coconut milk with no artificial flavours.

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Coconut Bliss. “This includes exploring the core drivers for these shoppers and then delivering the products that will respond to their needs.” Leung agrees, emphasizing that retailers need to move away from the term vegan, as it can feel

**The reality is that although Canadians are more health-conscious, the prime motivator for ice cream and frozen novelties is indulgence.**

extremely exclusive. “Vegan is more about a lifestyle, while plant-based focuses on the food itself, including vegans, lactose intolerant, dairy allergies, or simply those who want to add more plant-based products to their diet,” says Leung.

When stocking plant-based products, retailers should look at clean labels, taste, and a variety of bases to appeal to a variety of consumer preferences and allergen concerns. “For us, our biggest differentiator to the other non-dairy frozen desserts is that we use

*Coconut Bliss notes that plant-based products connect with a lot of different audiences.*



photo courtesy shutterstock.com

organic banana as our base,” says Andrew Kinnear, cofounder, Yellofruit. Available in three taste profiles, chocolate, mango and strawberry, the Yellofruit frozen banana desserts are crafted in Canada appealing to those consumers who are actively seeking local products.

“Local remains popular, but quality still matters most, and artisan producers are known for both of these,” says McGregor. Fiasco Gelato’s signature product, Raspberry Lime Sorbretto, is currently undergoing a rebranding and will be relaunched under the Righteous brand name. Righteous brand is excited to launch four non-dairy nut

options to the category including peanut butter and jam and roasted pistachio.

The reality is that although Canadians are more health-conscious, the prime motivator for ice cream and frozen novelties is indulgence. “At the end of the day, this is a dessert. And a dessert needs to be satisfying and taste good,” says Keshavjee.

These customers want to ensure that the products deliver on both texture and taste. Coconut Bliss’s new flavour Banana Brownie Swirl is one product that responds to these needs bringing together the perfect flavour of banana, gluten-free brownie chunks, a swirl of fudge with a hint of the superfood turmeric. Nestlé’s continuing to extend into both the plant-



*Nestlé’s new launches include a non-dairy vegan drumstick.*

based and permissible indulgences categories, offering mini versions of their preferred frozen bars.

Stocking and merchandizing the ice cream and novelty section is a delicate balance between the perennial favourites and the new novelties. With limited shelf space, retailers need to understand what motivates their consumers and provide the products that deliver on these needs. ●

*The Food Centre is the first stop for processors looking to start or scale up food processing ventures.*



# FROM FIELD TO TABLE

## SASKATCHEWAN FOOD INDUSTRY GROWING STRONG

Today more than 300 food processors operate in Saskatchewan, a number that is growing as research, investment and the entrepreneurial spirit of the province work together to meet consumer demands at home and in global markets.

Ag-West Bio, a not-for-profit, membership-based company, plays a large part in this expansion. Karen Churchill, president and CEO, explains that Ag-West Bio operates as a connector in the food industry, bringing innovation into commercialization. “We provide mentoring, assistance with business plans, and have a small commercialization fund for perhaps a new start-up not ready to get a bank loan or investors.”

Churchill explains how the “Protein Highway” initiative was launched by researchers, small businesses and government entities in Canadian Prairie and U.S. Midwest/Great Plains regions — collaborating through innovation and technology to meet the demand for new products and plant proteins.

“With the recent expansion of the Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre in Saskatoon (Food Centre), we’re seeing a lot more activity across the board

— research, development and a lot more investment from non-traditional funding.”

The Food Centre is often the first stop for food producers looking to start or scale up food processing ventures with more than 53,000 sq ft of processing development space. “Saskatchewan food processors are stepping up to the plate, offering options for plant-based proteins—although meat proteins are definitely in the mix,” says President Dan Prefontaine. “We are seeing so many more products coming to market — fermented drinks, protein sources from beyond the traditional soy- or gluten-based products, ethnic foods. We’re also starting to see alternatives like protein from crickets.”

The market is wide open for retailers as consumers become more accepting of alternatives and excited to see products they feel are better for them and attuned to being part of their daily diet.

Prefontaine adds, “Retailers play a huge part in developing new products by encouraging local producers to enter the market, giving consumers local selection. They are doing an excellent job supporting these companies and aren’t demanding huge volumes to fit

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