



# US Foods puts its best food forward

**> You've heard the challenge "Put your money where your mouth is."** Now, one of the nation's largest foodservice distributors is putting its money where the consumer's mouth is.

US Foods, headquartered in Rosemont, Ill., already introduced 30 new products this spring. Behind the scenes, it's also making plans to renovate and upgrade research kitchens and training rooms at its customer support sites stretching from San Francisco to Tampa, Fla.

ESI Design Services has 20 years of R&D kitchen design experience with 25 projects completed nationwide.

ESI Design Services is involved with the initial round of eight projects—starting with a US Foods location in Indianapolis.

US Foods supplies food and related products to more than 250,000 customers, including independent and multi-unit restaurants, healthcare and hospital-ity entities, government and educational institutions. The company's "US Kitchens" project upgrades everything—from lighting and kitchen equipment to the kitchen's layout and client meeting rooms. That way, chefs, customers and personnel have state-of-the-art facilities to match their operational needs.

Why invest in the creative, culinary process? Although US Foods hasn't said much about the US Kitchens project, it's clear the company is stepping up to help customers. >



**Specializing in food plant and distribution center design and construction.**

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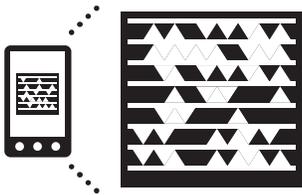
# Improve Food Safety

➤ **There's a change in the air.** New hygienic air handling technology and facility design strategies are improving processing plant food safety.

Food process facilities are implementing hygienic controls and ongoing sanitation to ensure safety and quality. One critical sanitation process control step involves air; its temperature, moisture and filtration, as well as related actions to maintain positive room pressure.

Meat, poultry and prepared food processors know that air comes into contact with food products, equipment and employees. Even a small amount of unconditioned air can adversely affect an area and possibly interrupt production—costing both time and money.

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ESI installed 20 hygienic air handling units at a new meat processing plant.

ESI Group recently designed and built a new meat processing facility that incorporated more than 20 new hygienic air units.

Here's a behind-the-scenes review of what's different about this new approach. A hygienic air handling system brings outside air into the production area for two primary purposes. First, the system conditions the air to the specifications of the room to maintain design temperature and humidity. Second, it pressurizes the room to help control and eliminate uncontrolled air infiltration from unconditioned areas (this aids in condensation control).

Hygienic air handling systems include exhaust fans, dampers, pre-filters, motor/drives, refrigeration coils and final filters. All these components are housed within an insulated metal cabinet with access doors and typically located above the process production rooms it serves.

Here's an interesting and important design change. Hygienic units are typically located on the roof. The air supply and return is transmitted by insulated ductwork down to the process space below and distributed via registers and grills.

All piping and major components that require service can be accessed on the roof without disturbing production areas. Likewise, the absence of evaporator units

hanging in the production room space (in typical applications) helps processors improve space allocation and service accessibility without disruption of the production areas.

ESI Group can retrofit hygienic systems into older buildings. It's an ideal approach for any food facility experiencing temperature, humidity, or condensation issues—and wanting to ensure optimum food safety at the same time. ■

ESI's **TIM NGUYEN** is a regional vice president with 20 years in the cold storage industry.

## US Foods cont'd from page 1

Pietro Satriano, US Foods' chief merchandising officer, talks about the spring new product launch.

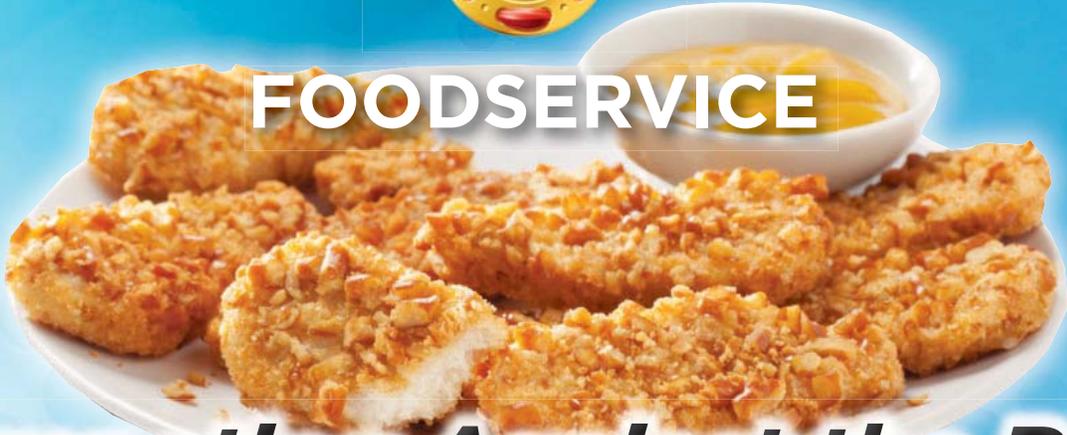
"Our 30 new products will help energize restaurants and foodservice operations around America by adding spark and spice to menus and giving diners strong reasons to keep coming back again and again," he says. ■

ESI's **TROY GOUGH** is an architect with 25+ years food industry experience.



➤ **Twenty years of experience with new construction, expansions and renovation of food facilities.**

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 FOODSERVICE

# Competing Against the Best

Foodservice manufacturers amp up the playing field to provide a winning team of refrigerated and frozen foods specifically geared toward today's restaurant menus.

MARINA MAYER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**W**hen sitting down at a restaurant, it's not too uncommon to find yourself skimming every last detail of each item. What are the ingredients? What are the sides? Is it a chef's choice?

From the taste and texture to the plate presentation, the detail is in the design of the product. It's what separates the amateurs from the professionals. Just ask famous chef Gordon Ramsay.

To ensure that each refrigerated and frozen food item becomes a hit, manufacturers continuously revamp their lineups, passing the torch from one formula to another.

End result—hopefully a winner.

Medals or no medals, today's food producers are certainly competing against the best to become the best in a segment that's really beginning to pick up the pace.

## Smooth operators

When the recession hit, restaurants suffered. In fact, more and more consumers ditched the diners to prepare meals at home.

What a difference a few years makes.

Today, restaurant sales and traffic results present a rather optimistic outlook, according to the National Restaurant Association's Restaurant Performance Index (RPI).

"Bolstered by improving sales and traffic results, restaurant operators' outlook for capital spending reached its highest level in more than four years," says Hudson Riehle, senior vice president of the research and knowledge group for the Washington, D.C.-based organization. "This will have positive implications throughout the supply chain of the restaurant industry."

Restaurant operators reported positive same-store sales for the 10th consecutive month in March, the study shows, whereas 65% reported a same-store sales gain between March 2011 and March 2012. Only 21% of operators reported lower same-store sales in March, compared to 18% from February.

Meanwhile, operators reported positive customer traffic results in March—55% experienced higher customer traffic levels between March 2011 and March 2012, while 24% saw a traffic decline.

This means that many of today's refrigerated and frozen foods produc-

ers have more reason to compete in the foodservice channel and provide restaurant goers winning menu options.

"This industry has a fantastic competitive set, and it serves as incredible fuel to our employees, who truly go for the gold every day," says Doug Knudsen, president of sales, consumer foods for ConAgra Foods, Omaha, Neb. "Triumphs are built in this category through hard work, attention to detail, innovative thinking and perseverance. We do not take shortcuts on the quality, taste or experience of our foods."

Plus, nothing tastes better than a freshly cooked meal. In fact, freshness will always be a key priority for diners, according to Howard Eiringer, president of Kronos Foods, Inc., Glendale Heights, Ill.

"The refrigerated and frozen categories are the best way to enjoy products as close to the natural flavors," he adds. "Variety is also key to consumers. The bulk of the flavor and new ingredient explosion are in the frozen food aisle. Consumers are allowed to try a wide variety of ethnic and fusion dishes with minimal risk or investment."

Let the games begin. **RFF**

## U.S. Restaurant Trends for 2012

1. Comfort foods with a twist.
2. Cheaper cuts that require more back-of-house prep to make homestyle food.
3. Local sourcing.
4. Social networking.
5. Disclosure of information on menus.
6. Resist discounting, but reward best customers.
7. Flexible formats.

Source: Technomic, Chicago, [www.technomic.com](http://www.technomic.com).



Each year, the National Restaurant Association, Washington, D.C., surveys professional chefs and members of the American Culinary Federation, St. Augustine, Fla., on which foods, beverages, cuisines and culinary themes will be the hot trends on restaurant menus come 2012. The study interviewed nearly 1,800 in the fall of 2011. Here's what the "What's Hot in 2012" chef's survey revealed:

### Top 5 Trends Trends

1. Locally sourced meats, seafood
2. Locally grown produce
3. Healthful kids' meals
4. Hyper-local sourcing
5. Sustainability

Source: National Restaurant Association's "What's Hot in 2012" survey. [www.restaurant.org/foodtrends](http://www.restaurant.org/foodtrends)

### Top 5 Trends in Other Food Items & Ingredients

1. Artisan/specialty bacon
2. Artisan cheeses
3. Ancient grains
4. Greek yogurt
5. Ethnic cuisine cheeses

Source: National Restaurant Association's "What's Hot in 2012" survey. [www.restaurant.org/foodtrends](http://www.restaurant.org/foodtrends)

The "What's Hot in 2012" survey ranked 223 items by "hot" responses. Here are the results pertaining to the refrigerated and frozen food market:

Rank	"Hot" Trend	Yesterday's News	Perennial Favorite	Rank	"Hot" Trend	Yesterday's News	Perennial Favorite		
1.	Locally sourced meats and seafood	83%	5%	12%	7.	Gluten-free/food-allergy conscious	75%	10%	15%
2.	Locally grown produce	81%	4%	15%	9.	Sustainable seafood	73%	10%	16%
3.	Healthful kids' meals	78%	7%	16%	11.	Newly fabricated cuts of meat	72%	20%	8%
4.	Hyper-local sourcing	77%	12%	11%	12.	Farm/estate-branded ingredients	72%	15%	14%
5.	Sustainability	76%	12%	11%					
6.	Children's nutrition	75%	6%	19%					

Source: National Restaurant Association's "What's Hot in 2012" survey. [www.restaurant.org/foodtrends](http://www.restaurant.org/foodtrends)

# Foodservice Meals & Entrees

Photo courtesy of Maristella's Fine Foods

## Passing the Torch

As consumers hang up their aprons to dine out instead, food makers design meals and entrees that deliver that home-cooked feel.

MARINA MAYER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**W**hen it comes to food, mom knows best. From the meal options to the side dishes, mom's touch tends to add a bit of tender, love and care.

However, to compete in today's stringent restaurant world, meals and entrees need more than tenderness; they need innovation, authenticity, and okay, some TLC.

Today, more and more moms are passing the torch over to the professionals to sink their teeth into a home-cooked meal.

"We know that consumers are looking for more original or classic foods, foods that they grew up with, that mom used to make in the kitchen," says Robby Brandano, president and CEO of Maristella's Fine Foods.

That's why the Boston-

based company created a line of authentic Sicilian Arborio Rice Seafood Arancini's.

"Our Arancini's are sized to fit multiple menu price points, which makes them ideal for menu applications like small plates or on bar menus," Brandano adds. "They provide foodservice operators with a low-cost, high-profit margin product."

As the economy shows signs of recovery, convenience, quality, fresh-

ness and value remain top competing qualities in the foodservice channel, says Kim Ruiz Beck, chairman of Ruiz Foods, Inc.

To keep up with these ever-changing trends, the Dinuba, Calif., company introduced *El Monterey Hearty & Delicious Burritos*. Made with whole grain tortillas, they feature 12-14 grams protein each, high fiber, reduced sodium, low calories and preferred nutritional. Varieties include Chicken with Fire Roasted Veggies, Steak with Fire Roasted Veggies, Egg, Turkey Sausage and Cheese and Huevos Rancheros.

"As with any Olympic athlete committed to their sport and to winning, our brands display a commitment to both their customers and the consumer," says Ruiz Beck. "Our brands excel because the Ruiz team members behind the scenes (R&D, marketing, sales, etc.) are perfectionists with

*continued on page 21*

### Top 5 Trends in Main Dishes

1. **Locally sourced meats, seafood**
2. **Sustainable seafood**
3. **Newly fabricated cuts of meat**
4. **Non-traditional fish**
5. **Half-portions/smaller portion sizes**

*Source: National Restaurant Association's "What's Hot in 2012" survey.  
www.restaurant.org/foodtrends*