

Food

AND HOME ENTERTAINING

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GROCERY STORE NEWS

Products designed to please 'new demographics'

— CHICAGO.

Going to the grocery store is no longer a simple Grape Nuts and cream of mushroom soup experience. Now you're likely to find in the supermarket white chocolate chip and macadamia nut cookies, for goodness' sake, and chicken breasts — already marinated and cooked.

If, indeed, you are what you eat, this speaks volumes.

In fact, the change in products designed to quicken the pulse of American consumers is a study in psychological, sociological and demographic trends. Nowhere was this more clear than at the recent Food Marketing Institute convention at Chicago's McCormick Place, where hundreds of manufacturers blanketed miles of floor space with thousands of products designed to tempt grocery owners — and eventually customers.

Having been seduced by more than one gourmet ice cream nibble at this four-day extravaganza, I'd like to report that the shift in preferences is toward the overpoweringly appealing and marvelously unusual. Obviously, food companies

are after consumers who could be described as increasingly sophisticated, independent and protective. Many of them live in smaller households and are beginning to creep into middle age.

This is the same population that has more education and reads and travels more than any before. It's also a group where well more than a majority of the women work away from home.

Combined, these influences have turned into identifiable patterns.

Today's shopper

To begin with, today's sophisticated shopper wants premium quality and is willing to pay for it. After the downplayed and down-home decades of the '50s, '60s and '70s, it now seems appropriate to indulge in stylish imported items and other perceived luxuries.

No wonder Haagen-Dazs "gourmet" ice cream is such a runaway success.

And because consumers today have a broader frame of reference and limited contact with the

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COMING SOON...

The following is the Marketplace column that appears weekly in the Gazette.

The Food Marketing Institute's convention, held recently in Chicago's McCormick Place, is a study in what's "hot" in the grocery store business.

Some of these items aren't even in national distribution yet, so they may not be on your grocer's shelves. But for those who like to think ahead, here's a partial list of some of the newer and tastier items experienced at that four-day eat-a-thon.

The Ice Cream Man Cometh

If you thought you'd seen it all in novelty ice creams, think again. This year's show produced a plethora of new and exciting ice cream treats.

■ **Sweet Victory's Trufflets** — My absolute favorite came from a company tucked all the way in the back on the bottom floor. Sweet Victory, a New York City company, makes a delightful product — slightly changing the familiar concept of small cubes of ice cream coated with chocolate. To make these different — and extra special — Sweet Victory uses a really good-tasting, low-fat dairy dessert combined with a lower-fat imported dark chocolate. The result is that each Trufflet has only 30 calories. More important, however, the company adds chocolate-coated "crispiers" to the ice cream. So when you bite into one of these nuggets you get a wonderful crinkly sound.

■ **Shamitoff's Chocolate Coconut Sundae Bars** — These are like eating a frozen Mounds bar on a stick. Creamed and shredded coconut is the main ingredient here — held together by a milk-sugar mixture and a chocolate coating.

■ **Ben and Jerry's Brownie Bar** — It's the best of both worlds. Coming from Ben and Jerry at Waterbury, Vt., two thin layers of walnut-topped brownies sandwich rich but straightforward vanilla ice cream. The two guys



also make wonderful ice cream that sells by the pint.

■ **Nestle Alpine White with Almonds Premium Ice Cream Bar** — I tried this twice, just to make sure I liked it. Coming from the Nestle candy people, it's an ice cream creation patterned after the successful white chocolate almond bar introduced a couple of years ago.

Now this same coating surrounds vanilla ice cream.

■ **Good Humor's Viennetta** — Here's the updated version of that old-fashioned classic, the layered chocolate wafer-ice cream dessert. Not particularly dense ice cream combines with thin chocolate-flavored sheets to create an airy, elegant-looking dessert. It even comes as an individual serving.

■ **Smucker's Special Recipe Butterscotch and Caramel Topping** — This product is for people who'd rather make their own ice cream creations. Two great flavors blend to make a sundae yummy. Oh my, but this is good.

Want a Cookie, Cookie?

If cookies warm from the oven are your undoing, hold on to your hat. The frozen, ready-to-bake cookie dough that has been popular for



several years with bakeries is about to hit the grocery in a big way. The ultimate Mom food now only needs to be popped in the oven before reaching your mouth.

■ **Grandma Gebhard's White Chocolate Chip with Macadamia Nuts Gourmet Frozen Cookie Dough** — It's sinfully good and honestly better. This Edina, Minn., company produces a one-pound roll of cookie dough that only needs to be sliced and baked. Real ingredients, like butter and pure vanilla extract, make up this product, which also comes in more pedestrian flavors like oatmeal butterscotch walnut.

■ **Nestle Toll House Frozen Ready to Bake Double Chocolate Cookies** — I went out of my way to sample these the second and third time. Would that they were available nationally now. The double chocolate cookies and three other varieties don't even need to be sliced before baking since they already come shaped as individual cookies.

■ **Neal's Chocolate Walnut Chocolate Chunk Cookie** — When bigger is better. This frozen cookie dough is available only to bakeries and similar establishments — unfortunately. Big chunks of chocolate in big cookies make these special. Neal's, out of Houston, also makes muffin mixes.

■ **Angela Marie's Marshmallow Munchie** — When you don't even have the energy to bake. A toasted rice cereal is teamed with marshmallow goo in the packaged version of a favorite childhood treat. The Kaysville, Utah, company contends people actually think these are a healthy, light alternative to a midmorning Danish.

■ **Fudge-covered Oreos** — First it was a double dose of filling, then came Big Stuff (a bigger version of everything) and now it's back to the original product — only this time dipped in chocolate. No grass grows under the Nabisco people when it comes to Oreos. Though these may not be for the purist, they certainly are for the chocoholic.

For a Yuppie Puppy

This category speaks for itself.

■ **Purina ONE (Optimum Nutritional Effectiveness)** — When you insist on the best for your pooch, you should be prepared to pay through the nose. However, with ONE you also get a marvelously elegant package and a "highly nourishing meal with chicken and other quality ingredients." It's also free of any artificial colors or flavors. Truly for a bowser at it's best.



Fruity Takes on New Meaning

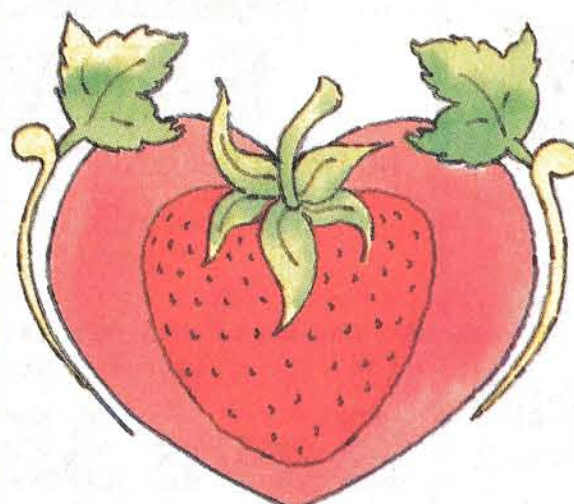
Fruit, nature's sugar source, is fast becoming the ingredient for the health-conscious consumer with a sweet tooth. Now indulgence can be good for you.

■ **Vitari Creamy Frozen Fruit Dessert** — The United States Patent Office designated a new food category for this unique soft-serve dessert that comes from a machine. Containing 99 per cent fruit and fruit juices and no added sugar, the Vitari ice cream look-alike contains no milk, fat, lactose or cholesterol and can be shipped around the country in aseptic packages so it doesn't need refrigeration. It's the soft serve machine that turns this juice-pulp into an airy, frozen creation.

■ **Just Pik't Orange Juice** — It's a product true to the name. No concentrate here (and no pasteurization either), only the frozen juice from freshly picked, mature Florida oranges goes into this product. You simply thaw and drink an orange juice that tastes like you did the squeezing yourself.

■ **Robertson's No Sugar Added Raspberry Pure Fruit Conserve** — Another British breakthrough on the raspberry front. This is from the same people who long ago marketed a superb seedless raspberry jam. One hundred per cent pure fruit conserves are becoming increasingly popular with the no-extra-sugar set. Sorrell Ridge (located at Port Reading, N. J.) manufacturers a similarly good product on this side of the Atlantic.

■ **Mama Tish's Lemon Sorbetto** — What a delicious palate cleanser! Fresh, clean flavors



make this Italian ice a sparkling treat. Following a family recipe, the Rosemont, Ill., company uses only fresh fruit and no additives or gums. Other flavors include exotica like honeydew melon, pineapple coconut and boysenberry.

■ **Artesia Lemon Sparkling Mineral Water** — Adding fruit flavor to bubbly water is supposed to make it taste even fresher, more

alive. Normally, however, I've found that addition only succeeds in ruining what started out as a perfectly fine product. Not so the case with Artesia, a San Antonio company that uses amazingly clean and true flavors to enhance a bottled water that comes from the Edwards Aquifer.

Faster than a Speeding Bullet

Delayed gratification is a concept of the past. So, too, is simple and pedestrian. Now we can have meals in minutes with considerable flair and style, thanks to the frozen and packaged foods industry.

■ **Lean Cuisine's Herbed Lamb with Rice** — Look out! Lamb has just entered the frozen entree market. Can kidneys be far behind? This is a major breakthrough for the sophisticated shopper, and, of course, it's less than 300 calories and can be heated either conventionally or in the microwave oven.

■ **Top Shelf** — Hormel heads the pack with entrees — such as breast of chicken in cheese sauce with Spanish rice — that can be stored on the shelf without refrigeration for 18 months. These vacuum-packed and precooked foods simply need heating for two minutes in a microwave oven before eating. I have no idea what this tastes like, but the concept certainly is avant garde.

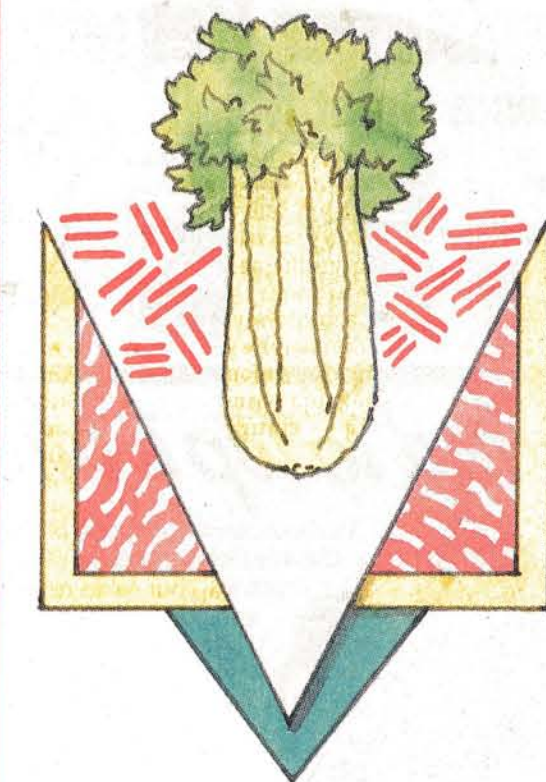
■ **Tyson Chicken Originals** — Fresh, boneless, skinless, marinated chicken breast fillets come in sealed pouches for three-minute microwave cooking. All you need to do is add a vegetable to make the plate picture perfect.

■ **Tonight's Choice** — Ember Brands lets the customer mix and match refrigerated dinner items from a choice of entrees, vegetable and side dishes and desserts. Clear plastic lids attractively show toney foods such as chicken cordon bleu, carrots in orange glaze and linguini with basil sauce — all ready for speedy microwaving.

Where Have All the People Gone

The automated computer age had made significant inroads at the grocery. Beyond 1984 takes on new meaning.

■ **CheckRobot Inc.** — The ultimate do-it-yourself experience is now at selected groceries. A Deerfield Beach, Fla., company has figured out a way to eliminate the checkers involved in



running up your total bill. Now the customer can do the work. And amazingly enough, many accept the challenge when given the opportunity.

Someone still bags the items, and two or three lanes feed to one person who takes your money, but other than that, you're on your own. The only drawback to this latest technological advance — besides the cost of installing the system — is making all store items scannable. No small task that, fortunately.

■ **Hubert's KES Produce Mist System** — "You'll mist me when I'm gone" might be this Cincinnati, O., company's claim to fame. Automatically, day and night, this sprinkling device coats the displayed produce at the grocery with a fine spray from nozzles installed

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