

PALATE PLEASERS

SEASONINGS, RUBS AND SAUCES CAN SPICE UP THE BOTTOM LINE

BLAND IS BORING!

WITH COOL WEATHER HERE IN MANY PARTS OF

the country and heartier dishes beginning to appear on dinner tables – including more gamey meats like venison and duck, savory stews and chilies, and those grilled and deep fried turkeys that continue to become popular holiday fare – now is the time for the products that dress up the food to take center stage.

For retailers who want to know more, there is plenty to consider when it comes to rubs, sauces, spices and other food enhancers. Above all, it is an ideal opportunity to roll out ancillary items to increase grill business and give consumers a chance to return multiple times throughout the fall and winter.

Seasonings are not only great flavor boosters but double as tenderizers on foods like wild game. Those turkeys that leave the trussing and the dressing in the kitchen are often flavored with a bold seasoning such as Cajun. A rub crusting on meats helps lock in the juices. Additionally, these products give meat a more visually appealing finishing touch.

“Charcoal grilling tends to ramp up in the fall,” said championship barbecue cook Dan Hathaway, who manages The Kansas City BBQ Store in Olathe, Kan. Featuring hundreds of sauces and seasonings from America’s traditional barbecue regions – the Carolinas, Texas, Memphis, the Deep South and, of course, Kansas City – the store also carries an extensive range of barbecue and cooking accessories like cutlery, cookware, thermom-



Oakridge BBQ's Black Ops Brisket Rub was cloaked in secrecy for two years before its release.

eters and grates. Smokers and grills are also on the floor and include those from Big Green Egg, Cookshack, Traeger, Weber, Horizon and American Barbecue Systems.

“There are a lot of grilling competitions in the area so we do quite well in sales,” Hathaway said. “Also, we get a lot of customers coming in early in the season buying turkey brines to practice for the holiday.” He noted the store’s most popular selling brand for that is Fire & Flavor’s Apple Sage Turkey Brine.

“As we head into the fall and winter as well as the holidays, the spices, rubs and seasonings that traditionally do well are those for poultry – especially turkey,” said Greig McCully, owner of Augusta, Ga.-based Fireside Outdoor Kitchens & Grills, which is known as a solid resource for outdoor

kitchens and the items that go in them. “Tools and accessories for smokers are also popular this time of year.”

The store stocks a healthy range of items like grill covers, grill grates, Maverick cooking tools and a variety of charcoal and fire starters. There is no shortage of grills either with major brands represented including Alfresco Home, Big Green Egg, Broil King, Kamado Joe, Memphis Wood Fire Grills, Primo, Summerset and Weber.

Along with that, seasonings and sauces include Willie’s Hog Dust, Cimarron Doc’s, Dizzy Pig (all flavors) and Slap Ya Mamma Seasonings.

With such a broad range of interesting items, these cooking accessories and products are a portal to flavor and a path to profits for store owners. It can be tough to achieve a

pleased palate without them because certain cuts of meats and veggies lack that burst of flavor, pinch of panache, eye-popping visual appeal or enticing aroma that makes a dish unforgettable.

Here are a few items to consider:

SASSY SAUCE

Black Swan products, named for the famous vessel that sailed during the great trade days at sea, launched a decade ago out of Dundee, Ill. With a global reach in Canada, Europe and South America, the company reformulated its sauce last year to include a “clean” line which eliminated high fructose corn syrup from its sauces that now include a Sweet Cognac variety.

“We reformulated our products because consumers are very label conscious,” said

Continued

Suzanne Mui-Good, president of Black Swan, “and are looking for products that are more naturally derived, especially the European markets.” Both the company’s “clean gourmet” and “original” recipes are made from real vegetables.

www.blackswancompany.com

A GOOD RUB DOWN

Oakridge BBQ, based in Kearney, Mo., credits its 2014 Rib World Championship last May and the Grand Championship victory at Roc City RibFest in Rochester, N.Y., to the newest secret weapon in its arsenal – the Dominator Sweet Rib Rub (made from raw cane sugar, which allows perfection during both low- and high-temperature grilling). The company’s Black Ops Brisket Rub (a phrase that sounds more Homeland than home cooking), cloaked in secrecy for two years before its release, is also a headliner among the extensive line of seasonings. It is handmade in micro-batches and offers a spicy, peppery finish.

“Rubs provide so much to a cut of meat, adding taste, locking in flavor and tenderizing meat,” said Michael Trump, owner and CEO of Oakridge BBQ, whose products are certified gluten-free by the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness.

www.oakridgebbq.com

GETTING SALTY

Mark Bitterman owner of The Meadow, a Portland, Ore.-based three-store gourmet boutique specializing in chocolates, bitters and salt blocks believes salt blocks are the essential food enhancing agent for grilled meats. “They create a direct food-to-fire

contact and deliver the best natural food flavoring,” Bitterman said. “And, nothing can even come close to the natural searing formation.”

The salt blocks serve double-duty as both a cooking and serving surface. Bitterman suggests selling two blocks: one for cooking and the other to keep in pristine condition for

servicing. Folks who aren’t sure how to put a salt block to use? “Bitter-



Oakridge BBQ’s full lineup includes a beef and pork rub.

man’s Salt Block Cooking: 70 Recipes for Grilling, Chilling, Searing and Serving on Himalayan Salt Blocks” comes in a set that features the book and salt block.

www.atthemeadow.com

GAME CHANGER

Who better than a family of hunters to come up with seasonings to enhance the flavor of wild game? Bolner’s Fiesta Extra Fancy Wild Game Rub (a blend of garlic, salt, jalapeno powder and tenderizer) is at the ready. “The spice complements the flavor while enhancing



Bolner’s Wild Game Rub

the subtle differences between various meats,” Michael J. Bolnar said. “The jalapeno accents wild game in a mild way.”

www.fiestaspices.com

BRINE TIME

There’s only one way to infuse moisture into slow-cooked items such as chicken and yes, that holiday bird, and that’s brining, which locks in natural moisture. According to Spice Hunter, brining is a culinary technique that is regaining popularity. It locks in natural moisture while infusing mild flavors as well as reducing cooking time. The company’s Turkey Brine is a blend of fruit, herbs and savory spices.

www.spicehunter.com

IT’S A WRAP

The grill shouldn’t be left a mess until the next time a cook is ready to fire it up to make a meal. Cookina’s PFOA-free grill cover sheets take the hassle out of the cleanup. The heat-resistant sheets are non-stick and don’t take anything away from the cooking process or taste – not even the grill marks.

“Cookina grilling sheets have become the most indispensable tool for my grill,” said Chef George Duran, who has become an ambassador for the product.

“I finally have a non-stick surface where I can cook the stickiest foods (veggies, tilapia and pancakes) and still get awesome grill marks. It’s a game changer.”

www.cookina.com

FIRE STARTER

Innovative products like Insta-Fire Charcoal Starter make the task of grilling simple and stress-free – especially on chillier days when no one wants



Spice Hunter’s Turkey Brine means a moist meat.

to stand outside fussing with firing up the grill. Here’s how it works: just light the charcoal pack in the bottom of grill, place briquettes on rack above fire and – voila. A single-use pouch can heat up to 75 briquettes in 15 minutes. The product is a safe fast-burning, all-natural fire-starting agent that lights

quickly and is eco-friendly and odorless. Two bonuses: the pouch is made from corn syrup, which adds a molasses flavor, and the product has a 30-year shelf life.

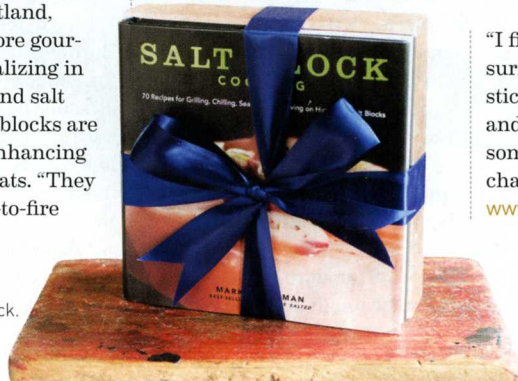
www.instafire.com

CHIPS AND WINE

Expect the unexpected from Pottstown, Pa.-based Alfresco Home with its Fornetto European Smoking Chips and Fornetto Premium Hard Lump Coal. Alfresco Home’s products are upscale, organic gourmet offerings. The wood chips, for example, are made in Spain from aged red wine barrels and are then steeped in wine. “It’s all about the flavor,” said Joseph Cilio, CEO of Alfresco Home. “The Cognac red wine soaked chips made from the barrels that housed the wine are organic and give the meat an incredible aromatic essence.” The company also introduced hard lump coal that is made from Quebracho hardwood trees found in Paraguay. “The hard lump coal burns longer and slower than charcoal allowing food to cook more evenly,” Cilio said.

www.alfrescohome.com

A sweet gift is a salt block.



MAJOR BBQ COMPETITIONS TO COME

World Champion Barbecue Championship

at the World Food Championships
Nov. 14-15, 2014, Las Vegas
worldfoodchampionships.com

2015

Houston Livestock and Rodeo

World's Championship Bar-B-Que
Feb. 26-28, Houston
rodeohouston.com/events/worldschampionshipbarbque.aspx

Memphis in May International Festival

World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest
May 14-16, Memphis, Tenn.
memphisinmay.org

Westmont Lions Club Red, White and Bar-B-Q Festival and Contest

(Illinois State Championship Competition)
May 23-25, Westmont, Ill.
westmontbbq.com

South Carolina Festival of Discovery

State Championship
July 9-11, Greenwood, S.C.
www.festivalofdiscovery.com

Jim Beam BBQ Classic State Championship

Oct. 2-3, Springfield, Ky.
jimbeambbqclassic.wordpress.com

Jack Daniels World Championship Invitational Barbecue

October, Lynchburg, Tenn.
jackdaniels.com/bbq

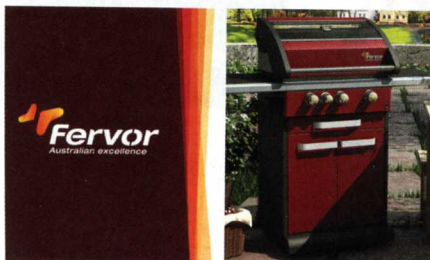
Annual American Royal World Series of Barbecue Open and Invitational

October, Kansas City, Mo.
americanroyal.com



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ATLANTA
AmericasMart
Building 2 West Wing
The Gardens Showroom 10-C-119

SPICE AND SMOKY WOOD

COMBINE AT BBQ COMPETITIONS TO ATTRACT CHEFS AND CROWDS

COMPETITIVE BARBECUING, A PASTIME THAT

began as a grassroots activity, has snowballed into a big business, catching the eye of sponsors such as KC Masterpiece, Jack Daniels, Jim Beam and Kingsford, with winners taking home purses as much as \$50,000.

"I like the barbecue competition movement to that of NASCAR racing," said Michael Trump, of Missouri-based Oakridge BBQ, whose barbecue teams won two big competitions this year.

Chicago's Windy City BBQ Classic in October provided an opportunity for me to see up close what all the hoopla is about, providing a chance to look in on the pit masters at work as they pulled out all the stops to take home a collective purse of \$11,000.

"You'll find 95% of the meat is cooked the same way during these competitions - low and slow," said Jason Szmurlo, owner of BBQ King Smokehouse and Catering, who has been working the competitive circuit off-and-on for 10 years.

Szmurlo traveled from Woodstock, Ill., with his family to participate in the competitive cook-off. His decked-out smoker and flame emblazoned logo-designed trailer were easy to spot among the crowd. Szmurlo said winning a competition boils down to one thing.

"It's the rubs, sauce and secret ingredients that separate a winner from a loser," said Szmurlo, whose restaurant was featured on a segment of the Food Network's "Good Eats," with Anthony Anderson.

Matt Laviolette, a Chicago-



The line was long to sample Sun Wah BBQ's roasted baby pig.



Stephen Dunn of Volo Restaurant served up plated mini grilled shrimp po' boy.

based futures trader, played pit master for his crew of family and friends under the Billy Ray BBQ banner. The team is fairly new to the competitive barbecue circuit, having competed for about four years. While using only apple wood (not chips) to cook his meats, Laviolette said, "The smoky scented wood balances the taste and offsets sweetness of glazes and rubs."

Gary Wiviott, famed pit mas-

ter and co-founder of the event, revealed what judges are looking for during a competition.

"Wood smoke and meat form a partnership," Wiviott said. "Smoke as accent and enhancement, dry rub as supporting cast with barbecue sauce as the finishing touch. Every aspect works together, nothing dominates, although at the end of the day it is mainly about wood smoke and meat."

Wiviott definitely practices what he preaches by using only his house-made rubs and sauces as chef at Chicago's Barn & Company restaurant.

The competitive heat wasn't the only attraction. Chicago is becoming a mecca of barbecue events with long-time standing events such as the Green Market City Chef BBQ fundraiser and Common Threads' Chefs on the Grill well-attended.

Among the chefs showing off their talent was Stephen Dunn, chef/partner of Volo Restaurant, who created a stunning plated mini grilled shrimp po' boy accented with cinnamon and other spices.

"Smelling and seeing the spice is big-time important," Dunn said. "It serves a dual purpose attracting both the sense of taste and smell."

Bryan Jordan, sous chef of Park Grill, presented habanero chicken in a peach glaze. The chef explained the necessity for brining when slow cooking items such as chicken. "Brining has a chemical interaction with the meat that provides moisture helping slow-cooked items like chicken from drying out," Jordan said.

Not to be outdone, Willie Wagner of neighborhood rib house Honky Tonk BBQ served up rib tips smoked with apple and oak woods. "The combination gives the meat a rich sweetness," Wagner said.

Definitely worth mentioning was the Sun Wah BBQ team's roasted baby pig, whose line was so long it was like waiting to get on the most popular ride at an amusement park. **CL**