

How to Set a Store to Appeal to Natural/Specialty Shoppers

In today's retail marketplace, we are increasingly seeing that natural and specialty foods are driving sales, excitements and profits. To maximize your sales of these items, retailers are following three key paths (1) Integrating with mainstream grocery, (2) driving consistent off shelf displays and end caps (3) and create excitement and trial through cross merchandising and demos.

The evolution of specialty food merchandising has gone from segregated "gourmet" section to fully integrated adjacent displays. In every aisle, the product needs to stand out and be emphasized. This begins with merchandising specialty and natural foods at eye level. Retailers are distinguishing the products with different color or different shaped shelving, utilizing dividers and fencing to keep shelves organized, and educating customers with shelf talkers and shelf signs. We consistently see attention paid to high dollar sale categories including olive oils/vinegars, pasta sauce, condiments and candy.

To create excitement retailers are featuring consistent displays and promotions. This starts with the retailer ad and is promoted with sale tags and in-store advertisements. Retailers have established with their customers consistent locations for weekly sales on specialty and natural foods. They feature new items in case stacks and off shelf metro racks. The products change though the locations such as the entrance way, register, and perimeter end caps are a visible part of the merchandising strategy.

Finally, cross merchandising and demos are a key element of driving sales and consumer trail. There is an opportunity in every department: produce, deli/ prepared foods, seafood, meat and cheese. Olive oils, beverages, salad dressings, croutons are perfect in produce. Crackers, olives, preserves and honey drive sales in cheese. Healthy snacks, nuts and spreads are popular in salad bars and prepared foods. Cross merchandising is an evolving, creative process. The most successful retailers involve all associates and departments in developing suggestions, strategies and ideas.