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## More than Meets the Eye

*A new approach to co-branding with functional ingredients benefits both manufacturers and suppliers while adding health benefits for consumers.*

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by Donna Berry



Cookies become extraordinary when dotted with authentic M&M's. Consumers know what to expect, unlike with generic candy-coated chocolate drops. The latter simply does not have the same effect as the "melts in your mouth, not in your hands" candies.

The concept of formulating baked foods and snacks with branded ingredients, and marketing their inclusion, is not new. Beyond chocolate candies, there's Nabisco Cheese Nips "made with real Kraft cheese" and Mrs. Smith's Cinnabon Cinnamon Coffee Cake "with authentic Cinnabon Makara cinnamon and Cinnabon cream cheese frosting."

In this traditional approach to co-branding, two big-name brands combine to form an even bigger concept in the eyes of consumers. The right co-brand provides instant name recognition and allows a company to capitalize on its partner's marketing expenditures. In addition, co-branding provides products and packages with pizzazz — something generic ingredients often lack.

An up-and-coming approach to co-branding is less about pizzazz and more about validation. In fact, the co-branded ingredient's inclusion is invisible to the consumer. This trend is all about including branded functional ingredients — from fiber to whole-grain flour. As with traditional co-branding, marketers of functional foods are able to capitalize on the promotion and education investments that the branded functional ingredient supplier has made. Further, the burden of proof of the "functional benefit" is placed on the ingredient supplier, making the functional food marketer more of the middle man and the delivery vehicle for the beneficial ingredient.

**HOW SWEET IT IS.** Alternative sweeteners have long been promoted on packages when used in product

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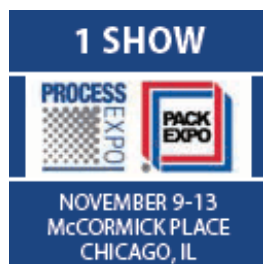
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formulations. While NutraSweet was the forerunner, Splenda is the most popular today.

"For Splenda sucralose, there are specific criteria spelled out that customers must meet to use the logo," said Dave Tuchler, vice-president, brands, Tate & Lyle, Decatur, IL. "Most importantly, it is critical that all products displaying the 'Sweetened with Splenda Brand' logo reliably deliver the great sweet taste that consumers expect. For this reason, Splenda sucralose has to contribute 50% or more of all the sweetness generated by high-intensity sweeteners in that product. Similarly, all sucralose in the product must be Splenda sucralose.

"There are restrictions against use of the 'Sweetened with Splenda Brand' logo on products that include aspartame (because of the associated required warning statement) or on products judged not consistent with an all-family food and beverage image (such as alcoholic beverages)," Mr. Tuchler added. However, there is no financial commitment to using the logo.

"The 'Sweetened with Splenda Brand' logo is increasingly being embraced by the bakery and snack food industry because of the positive consumer messaging it conveys about great taste and healthier choices," he said. "These products carry a range of claims, including both specific sugar-free or reduced-sugar, as well as more general mainstream healthy positioning."

Research conducted by Tate & Lyle consistently demonstrates the added value of the "Sweetened with Splenda Brand" logo on retail products. "Specifically, 41% of US consumers agree that presence of this logo on a package makes them more likely to choose that product," Mr. Tuchler said. "In addition, a similar or greater proportion of consumers agree that the logo conveys attributes about the host product such as 'suggests it's a healthy choice' and 'provides a taste reassurance.'"

**QUALITY PROMISES.** Unlike the obvious M&M or Cinnabon swirl, co-branding with alternative sweeteners is transparent to consumers. However, the only promise being made is reduction of sugar calories, and thus, it is not as complex as co-branding with functional ingredients, where oftentimes various health claims are made.

For example, The Solae Co., St. Louis, MO, created Solae brand soy protein ingredients. From the Solae Web site, consumers learn that Solae soy protein is a healthful, plant-based protein equal to other protein sources such as meat, eggs and milk. Compared with animal proteins, Solae soy protein is cholesterol-free, low in saturated fat and lactose-free. In addition, Solae soy protein contains all of the essential amino acids and substantial amounts of arginine and glutamine, both of which help to support immune system health.

Solae soy protein ingredients can be found in more than 3,000 products, with many packages displaying the Solae logo as a "trust mark" of proven nutrition and exceptional taste, according to the company.

For example, Tumaro's Gourmet Tortillas, Los Angeles, CA, sports the Solae logo on its Soy-full Heart flatbreads, which come in three varieties: Wheat, Soy & Flax, 8 Grain 'N Soy, and Apple 'N Cinnamon. One Soy-full Heart flatbread contains 6 g of protein. "Solae soy protein gives our flatbreads a nutritional punch that is unmatched in the industry," said Brian Jacobs, vice-president, Tumaro's Gourmet Tortillas. Tumaro's tells its customers that, "Not all soy proteins are equal in quality. The Solae brand soy protein used to make Soy-full Heart Flatbreads is the result of more than 30 years of research. Because of its unparalleled quality, researchers from around the world have used the company's soy protein products in some 400 health

studies." With this, Tumaró's has transferred the responsibility of demonstrating the efficacy of soy protein to Solae.

**FIBER OPPORTUNITIES.** When it comes to fiber, a variety of branded fiber-providing ingredients are available to food manufacturers. The Promitor Dietary Fiber line, for example, has two products that are excellent tools for adding fiber to a wide range of bakery products, according to Jim Miller, director of product management at Tate & Lyle. "Promitor Resistant Starch 60 is a dietary fiber that has excellent heat and process tolerance making it ideal for snacks and ready-to-eat cereals. It has the additional benefit of reducing fat pickup in fried snacks. At only 1.7 Cal per g, Promitor Resistant Starch can also help customers achieve low-calorie positions.

"Promitor Soluble Corn Fiber 70 is a dietary fiber that is water soluble and can be used anywhere corn syrup or other sweeteners are used," Mr. Miller continued. "It is well suited for bakery applications such as bakery fillings, cookies, cakes, crackers, breads and coatings for cereal or snacks." It contributes only 2 Cal per g.

Promitor dietary fibers have specific criteria to ensure consistent usage of the Promitor logo. "There is a logo usage guide available to our customers to assist them with meeting graphic standards," Mr. Miller said. "For our customers around the globe, we have several translated Promitor logos for use in key markets." To support the brand, Tate & Lyle's [www.promitorfiber.com](http://www.promitorfiber.com) Web site contains useful information about the benefits of fiber in general as well as the benefits of Promitor dietary fibers.

As consumer awareness in the benefits associated with a high-fiber diet increases, consumer interest in fiber perseveres. One of the benefits consumers are becoming increasingly aware of is the prebiotic benefits of dietary fibers.

"Most people consume far below the recommended daily amount of fiber," said Joe O'Neill, executive vice-president of sales and marketing, BENE0-Orafti, Morris Plains, NJ. "By incorporating Orafti [brand prebiotics] into formulations, manufacturers can create products that help consumers boost their fiber intake."

BENE0-Orafti works with its food industry partners to ensure that the optimal form of Orafti ingredient is used to suit a given application and formulation. Official rules about the use of the logo and exact wording of these claims vary from country to country.

Over the past 10 years, BENE0-Orafti has gained experience within the prebiotic market, not only by funding impartial research to explore the benefits of inulin and oligofructose, but also by providing its manufacturing partners with a comprehensive "product to market" package. To assist its partners with promoting the science behind the Orafti ingredients, the company offers the Beneo Program and the Beneo label.

"The key benefits of this international branding initiative include recognition that BENE0-Orafti ingredients offer great opportunities to meet the continuing demand for wellness products that are low in sugar and fat," Mr. O'Neill said. "Further, BENE0-Orafti has dedicated a vast amount of time and resources to scientifically substantiate the benefits of its prebiotics."

**HEART-HEALTHY INGREDIENTS.** Plant sterols are another functional ingredient gaining widespread consumer acceptance. "They have been clinically shown to lower bad cholesterol, are backed by an FDA

heart health claim and are recommended by the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) of the National Heart, Lung and Blood

Institute of the National Institutes of Health," said Pam Stauffer, global marketing programs and communications manager, Cargill Health and Nutrition, Minneapolis, MN. "CoroWise Naturally Sourced Cholesterol Reducer brand plant sterols are now a co-branded ingredient in a growing number of foods, beverages and supplements."

Cargill's CoroWise logo is present on numerous foods in the marketplace. "One requirement to use the CoroWise logo is to meet the FDA health claim of 0.4 g per serving of plant sterols," Ms. Stauffer said. "There are other considerations for co-branding that are managed on a case-by-case basis."

Vitalicious, Inc., New York, NY, rolled out Dark Chocolate Pomegranate VitaTops. These heart-healthy muffin tops contain CoroWise and sport the CoroWise logo. Each 2-oz, 100-Cal muffin top contains 0.4 g plant sterols. The company's Web site provides information about plant sterols and the FDA-approved health claim. Further, Cargill has its own education program in place regarding the benefits of plant sterols.

"Cargill has implemented a comprehensive health care professional outreach program to not only educate key influencers but also to reach their clients through specific recommendation of our co-brand partners' products," Ms. Stauffer explained. "There are many direct-to-consumer programs in place to support the CoroWise brand as well such as public relations efforts, Web sites and work through the American Heart Association sponsorships. Cargill also works with co-brand partners to develop co-funded programs.

"The CoroWise marketing programs provide value to our co-brand customer partners in many ways. For example, the financial commitment CoroWise makes to our health care and direct-to-consumer outreach programs allows our partners to focus their resources in other places to avoid duplication of effort and maximize reach," Ms. Stauffer added. "As our co-brand partner family grows, it raises awareness of the CoroWise brand, which in turn benefits each of our customer partners."

Cognis Nutrition and Health, La Grange, IL, markets natural plant sterols and sterol esters under the brand names Vegapure and Heart Choice, both which have logos that can be used on products containing the sterols. The mark must be used in a manner outlined in the Trademark Use Agreement and the licensor must purchase 100% of the specific ingredient from Cognis Nutrition and Health.

Aristo Health, Inc., Morristown, NJ, markets Aristo Wellness Bars. The bars proprietary recipes contain Cognis' Heart Choice phytosterols and omega-3 fatty acids from Ocean Nutrition Canada, Dartmouth, NS. Front labels of the bars carry the Heart Choice logo and Ocean Nutrition's MEG-3 encapsulated fish oil logo. Each of these bars contains 0.65 g of plant sterols and 100 mg of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)/docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) omega-3 fatty acids per serving.

Indeed, in addition to plant sterols, another heart-healthy functional ingredient making its way into mainstream America is omega-3 fatty acids. Studies have shown that EPA and DHA are important for good overall health and the maintenance of healthy cardiovascular function.

Gursh Bindra, Ph.D., c.e.o. of Aristo Health, said, "As a premier functional food company, we insist on superior nutritional ingredients that are safe, pure and readily incorporated into our healthy product offerings,

without compromising excellent taste. We also look for strong strategic partnerships with leading functional nutrient suppliers. We have clearly met both these criteria with MEG-3 Omega-3."

MEG-3 Omega-3s are derived from fish oil. If a vegetarian form of omega-3 is desired, there's life'sDHA from Martek Biosciences Corp., Columbia, MD. "life'sDHA, a vegetarian form of DHA omega-3 for brain, eye and heart health, is Martek's flagship ingredient," said Tony Martin, public relations specialist at Martek. "Martek's life'sDHA can be found in a range of products. Consumers can find life'sDHA easily because the brand is featured on all packaging and promotional materials of partner products. Partners using life'sDHA must commit to fortifying their product with a meaningful amount of DHA," he said.

"Martek has comprehensive marketing, public relations and scientific affairs programs designed to raise awareness of the health benefits of life'sDHA among consumers, industry leaders, media and health professionals," Mr. Martin added. "We employ a number of tools from public service announcements and broadcast advertising to print advertising and media outreach, to trade and medical show participation and new media tactics to support our brand. Of course, one of the most valuable tools we employ is the usage of our life'sDHA logo on partner products, which include some of the most known and loved food brands in the US."

Toronto, ON-based Canada Bread Co. Ltd., recently introduced Dempster's Smart 100% Whole Grain Wheat. All Dempster's Smart 100% Whole Grain Wheat packaging and promotional materials feature life'sDHA branding. "We're proud to bring Canadians Dempster's Smart 100% Whole Grain Wheat. It is the only whole-grain bread designed especially for kids, delivering both great taste and nutrition. It is also the first bread product in Canada to contain a vegetarian source of omega-3 DHA," said Andrew Pollock, vice-president of marketing for Canada Bread.

And speaking of whole grains, ConAgra Mills, a division of ConAgra Foods, Inc., Omaha, NE, markets Ultragrain brand flour, which is whole-wheat flour that combines the nutritional benefits of whole wheat with the taste, texture and appearance of white flour. ConAgra Mills developed a patent-pending milling process that delivers whole-grain flour with the same particle size as traditional refined white flour. The Ultragrain milling process retains the fiber, protein, vitamins, minerals and other phytonutrients concentrated within the bran and germ, while yielding whole-grain wheat flour with a taste, ultra-smooth texture and appearance more similar to traditional refined white flour.

Ultragrain is used in many retail and food service items, including buns, rolls, tortillas, muffins, noodles, pizza, waffles, French toast sticks, cookies, pretzels, and snack and cereal bars. Many food service items include the Ultragrain brand in the product name. For example, Azteca Foods, Chicago, IL, markets Ultragrain Tortillas to school food service operators.

According to ConAgra Mills, the Ultragrain logo and message significantly increased purchase intent for bread (48%) and for pizza (32%) in a consumer test. And although not all companies have evaluated the power of their branded functional ingredients, all evidence indicates that this branding trend will continue to grow.

"In an environment with increasing consumer interest in making healthy choices, most manufacturers are seeking to drive sales by making healthier products and including appealing health-related claims on their packaging," Mr. Tuchler said. "While this is a very positive development, it also can lead to confusion as

consumers need to understand an increasingly complicated array of ingredients, claims and benefits. A branded ingredient, when successful, is a recognizable symbol that is able to instantly telegraph a collection of elements including product attributes and the associated benefits. In the best case, the branded ingredient symbol is also able to convey characteristics such as taste as well as higher-order benefits such as trust, reliability, safety and relevance. This benefits both manufacturer and consumer in simplifying messaging and driving greater brand acceptance by the endorsement of the ingredient."

END

This article can also be found in the digital edition of *Baking & Snack*, July 1, 2008, starting on Page 79. Click [here](#) to search that archive.