Keeping the Label Simple

While clean labels may still defy simple description, three major indicators point to a strengthening of the global push for cleaner labels—consumer research, Internet petitions and shifting demographics.

First research demonstrates clean labels are rising in importance on consumers’ shopping lists and this is widespread on a global level. According to a 2013 Datamonitor report, 88% of global consumers admit “natural” claims have at least a medium impact on their purchasing decision. “Natural” is the leading label indicator of a cleaner label, with recent studies showing in the U.S. 67% of consumers prefer natural ingredients. What is more, 60% also say they are willing to pay more for natural foods.

At a clean label conference in China earlier this year, food ingredient supplier Ingredion presented research that revealed 86% of consumers surveyed in that country prefer ingredient labels that are simple and easy to understand. MMR Research Worldwide conducted a study in 2011 showing 76% of global consumers see a short and simple ingredient list as important.

Closer to home, the recently published results from the 2013 International Food Information Council “Health and Wellness” annual consumer survey showed some dramatic changes for 2013 compared to 2012. While the majority of Americans (89%) say taste reigns supreme when purchasing a food or beverage, 81% say they agree with the statement that minimally processed foods can be healthful, up from 67% for 2012.

Furthermore, 93% of those surveyed said they would prefer to see common names, rather than scientific names, for ingredients on their labels. However, they do still want to know what is contained in their food. More than six in 10 look for protein on the Back to Basics:

Touting the Inclusion of Simple, Clean-Label Ingredients

Real, simple, minimally processed…these are all attributes that consumers continue to increasingly seek in the packaged foods they purchase at the supermarket. Egg products complement this movement. In fact, egg products function as well, if not better than many chemically sounding ingredients, in particular, those designed to aerate, emulsify and bind water. These are three of eggs’ most important functionalities.

Indeed, a growing number of formulators are turning to egg products for these functionalities, as well as their complete protein profile.

(Continued inside)
Egg Product Innovations

Intelligent Protein Snacks, which goes by the shortened brand name of “ips,” is a new snacking concept that complements today’s trend in protein-enhanced diets. Carrying the tagline of “The Original Egg White Ch(ips),” the snack is based on corn and egg whites. Using a patent-pending, pressure-puffing process followed by toasting in an oven, the resulting crispy, gluten-free chips are loaded with 7 grams of high-quality protein per 1-ounce serving. Varieties are: Aged White Cheddar, Barbecue, Cinnamon Sugar and Sea Salt & Black Pepper.

New Bob Evans Breakfast Bakes bring the simple goodness of a hot breakfast to a hand-held hash brown. Ready in the microwave in three minutes, these convenient, all-in-one meals come in three varieties. Sausage, Egg & Cheese combines Bob Evans premium sausage with scrambled eggs, melted cheese and hash browns. The Bacon, Egg & Cheese variety brings together three breakfast favorites in one baked-to-perfection, hand-held hash brown. Looking for a meatless option? A blend of red and green peppers, fluffy scrambled eggs, hash browns and cheese make up the Southwest Breakfast Bake.

The Weight Watchers brand continues to grow its frozen breakfast offerings, a.k.a. its Smart Beginnings line, with pancakes and French toast, both including turkey sausage. Whole egg ingredients contribute to the color, texture and indulgent flavor of the pancakes and French toast. When enjoyed with the sausage, each single-serve package provides 11 grams or 14 grams, respectively, of protein.

Haagen-Dazs Gelato comes in seven Italian-inspired flavors, all of which start with an egg yolk-rich dairy base. Egg yolks provide unprecedented richness and emulsification to frozen desserts and are a necessary ingredient in gelato, a very dense version of ice cream. Flavors are: Black Cherry Amaretto, Cappuccino, Dark Chocolate Chip, Limoncello, Sea Salt Caramel, Stracciatella and Vanilla Bean.

Here’s a great protein option for vegetarians: Frankly Fresh Handmade Zucchini Cakes. Whole eggs are the second ingredient, right after zucchini. Each 43-gram round contains a mere 60 calories, yet provides 3 grams of high-quality protein and only 1.5 grams of fat. The eggs not only contribute protein, they hold the ingredients together while also keeping the cakes moist and allowing for a desirable golden brown appearance through Maillard browning.

Miracle Whip is adding some kick to dipping occasions with sauces that offer a creamy blend of unexpected flavors: Kickin’ Onion Blossom, Smokin’ Bacon Ranch and Sassy Sweet Tomato. Like all quality cream-style dressings, these products rely on eggs for their superior emulsification properties and rich flavor profile.

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AEB Update:
Teaching the Importance of Egg Products in Baked Goods

The American Egg Board has a long-standing relationship with the American Institute of Baking (AIB), as egg products are a critical ingredient for bakers. During AIB’s 16-week Baking Science & Technology resident course that began in January 2013, AEB presented egg product functional advantages and basic application formulations during one of the sessions. Upon completion of the course, each participant earns recognition as a baking technologist and is eligible to earn 14 college credit hours through Kansas State University. The next AIB resident course begins in August 2013 and AEB will again present the egg product portion of the curriculum. For more information about AIB’s courses, visit AIBonline.org.

label of packaged foods. Also, those surveyed trust domestic food sources more than imports, with 53% saying imported foods are less safe than foods produced or grown in the U.S.

Among the top 10 trends in market researcher Mintel’s 2012 consumer trends report was that consumers look to clean labels as expressions of natural goodness. The Hartman Group’s “Health and Wellness Deep Dive 2011” report revealed that 57% of consumers say they are in favor of simple, real ingredients, and 60% said they are in favor of “ingredients I recognize.”

Keeping the label simple doesn’t translate into simplistic, however. The Internet provides consumers with a tool to easily research food ingredients and labels. This instant accessibility to information has fueled growing consumer activism, which has become the “push” behind change of all sorts. These changes include requests or controversy over ingredient inclusions and labeling, with one recent debate centered on the definition of beverages containing artificial sweeteners.

Third, shifting demographics reveal the up-and-coming Millennial, generation’s influence, which is gradually replacing that of the Baby Boomers’. Millennials are much more aware of the food they consume and often want the “back story” behind ingredients’ sourcing and/or harvesting, are more likely to purchase organic or natural foods and when they shop, according to one market research consultant, “the less ingredients, the better.”

Food companies need to decide if they are going to lead the pack or get pushed reluctantly into a clean label situation by consumer pressure—because other research shows nearly 40% of consumers are willing to switch brands over a “no additives” or “minimally processed” claim.

If a formulation already uses easy-to-pronounce ingredients, the best option is to stay on course and highlight product benefits for the majority of consumers who do read labels, and particularly for those looking for certain ingredients or nutritional benefits. For example, egg ingredients help supply protein, which the majority of consumers seek on a product label.

Eggs target multiple keywords in the “clean label” definition, including kitchen-friendly, not chemical sounding, and a natural source of vitamins and minerals. Add to that list a keyword that doesn’t necessarily appeal to consumers, but is vital to formulators—functional. A great-tasting yet functional ingredient like eggs helps keep labels short and simple, while offering complex functional properties to create foods with proper mouthfeel, texture and appearance.
Marketers are emphasizing these simple formulations based on everyday ingredients, ingredients consumers would find in their own kitchen.

For example, the primary display panel of boxes of the new Aunt Jemima Lil’ Griddles line includes the phrase: Made with Real Eggs & Milk. These bite-sized frozen breakfast foods are designed for young consumers. The use of simple ingredients appeals to parents looking for only the best for their children. A single serving of the mini pancakes, approximately 10, provides 7 grams of protein.

Another example comes from Whole Foods Markets, which has introduced a line of private-label pints of ice cream that emphasize the fact that the product is made with only “6” ingredients. One of those ingredients happens to be eggs, which should be no surprise. In ice cream, eggs help control density, hardness and texture by encouraging the growth of small ice crystals, resulting in a smooth and creamy mouthfeel.

Egg Ingredient Spotlight:

Dried Egg White

Egg whites, also called albumen, are increasingly sought out by food formulators who are trying to boost the protein content of all types of foods. This is because egg whites are almost all protein and water. Thus, when dried, egg whites are a concentrated source of high-quality protein.

Many food manufacturers find that when a formulation calls for egg white, it is easiest to work with whites that have been already separated from the whole egg and dried into a powder form. With most of the moisture removed, dried egg whites have a long shelf life and are shelf stable.

Dried egg whites readily reconstitute and easily blend with other dry ingredients. One pound of dried egg white reconstitutes with water to yield 8 pounds of liquid egg whites.

In the United States, dried egg whites are usually produced by spraying atomized liquid egg white into a heated drier chamber. A continuous flow of accelerated heated air removes most of the moisture. The resulting ingredient is referred to as spray-dried egg white, spray-dried egg white solids or spray-dried egg albumen. Egg white can also be dried on trays or pans to create a flake or granular form.

Glucose, a reducing sugar, is removed from egg whites before drying to produce a product with excellent storage stability. Whipping aids such as sodium lauryl sulfate may be added to dried egg white products at less than 0.1% by weight of the liquid prior to drying. The sodium lauryl sulfate functions as an emulsifier and a thickener to help build volume and to stabilize the foam when beating or whipping the end product. Dried egg white with sodium lauryl sulfate is often referred to as high-whip dried egg white.

Specifications for any of these forms vary by supplier; however, in general, spray-dried egg white with glucose removed has a moisture content of 8.5%, a protein content of about 82%, and no significant fat or carbohydrates. The rest is water and ash. This product, if kept dry, has almost an infinite shelf life.

Food manufacturers use dried egg whites in a variety of applications including frozen desserts, bakery mixes, meringues, coatings and batters. Recent innovative applications include high-protein snack chips and par-cooked pasta used in heat-and-eat soups and entrees.
**Q: I know eggs are an allergen and must be declared on ingredient statements, but I heard that baked eggs may improve tolerance. Is this true? Can I claim this on my baked muffins?**

**A:** You are right about baked eggs improving tolerance. According to a study published in the August 2012 issue of the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, research indicates that some egg-allergic individuals can tolerate baked egg (as in a muffin), as heating decreases allergenicity by altering the protein structure responsible for triggering an allergic reaction. In fact, in certain individuals, long-term ingestion of baked egg is not only well tolerated, it accelerates the development of tolerance to regular egg. These findings present an important shift in the treatment paradigm for egg allergy, as clinical management can improve the quality of life of egg-allergic children and, ideally, promote earlier tolerance development. It remains very important to inform consumers that a food product contains eggs. It is best that you not make any allergenicity claims on the package. Rather, use your website to direct viewers to the study and suggest they consult their physician before making any dietary changes regarding consumption of allergens.

**Q: With more food trucks preparing food onboard, we have been getting requests for wraps that can withstand the rigors of on-truck food preparation. Can the inclusion of eggs improve their durability?**

**A:** You bet egg products can help! Depending on the type of wrap, you may want to use whole eggs or egg whites only. Egg protein is responsible for binding moisture and keeping the wrap intact. Eggs prevent drying, which reduces breakage and tears. For unleavened wraps, such as spring roll and egg roll wrappers, egg whites often work best. For heartier wraps, such as naan and pita, whole egg is often used. In addition to protein, whole egg contributes some fat, which provides richness and a desirable color.

**Q: Retailers and foodservice operators are asking for increased creativity in heat-and-eat soups. We are thinking of including dumplings and different pasta shapes. Will egg yolks help these ingredients withstand long holding times under temperature?**

**A:** Yes, but actually both the whites and the yolks can help. Egg proteins assist with maintaining pasta integrity while the pasta sits for long periods of time in the liquid base. However, even before the pasta is cooked and added to the soup, egg proteins assist during the pasta forming/extrusion stage, as the proteins assist with dough binding. This is very important when pasta shape is an integral part of the product, such as alphabet shapes for a kids’ soup. The whites are primarily all protein, which is why they are useful in pasta making. The yolk, which also contains healthful fatty acids and carotenoid pigments, contribute to the color and richness of the pasta.
Chicago Is Hosting IFT13. Visit AEB at Booth #2408

Thousands of food scientists, suppliers, marketers and others from around the world will gather in Chicago this July 13 to 16 at the IFT 13 Annual Meeting + Food Expo®. As the largest annual food science forum and exposition in the world, attendees and exhibitors have the opportunity to exchange thoughts, ideas and recent innovations. Plan to stop by the American Egg Board booth (2408) to obtain a copy of “Egg Product Buyers' Guide,” a comprehensive source of contact information for egg product suppliers, as well as an overview of the many forms and varieties of egg product ingredients. Experts will be on hand to answer your egg product formulating questions.

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About the American Egg Board (AEB)
The AEB connects America’s egg farmers with those interested about The incredible edible egg™. For more information, visit AEB.org.