

# FROZEN DESSERTS DELIVER CONVENIENCE

Sales are down slightly. Could clean-label minis drive big gains?

BY DENISE LEATHERS

**A**lthough sales of frozen desserts/toppings and frozen pies were down 1.1% and 3.5%, respectively, during the 12 weeks ended Aug. 12, according to Chicago-based market research firm IRI (iriworldwide.com), desserts have been a spot bright in the casual dining sector recently. In 2017, reports one supplier, restaurants served 3.5% more servings of desserts — about 12.5 million — than the year before, including cakes (+13%), cheesecakes (+4%) and pies (+2%). Manufacturers also report strong sales of desserts sold through in-store bakeries, which are perceived as “fresher” and “store-made” by many shoppers. Those findings suggest that consumers haven’t lost their sweet tooth — but they are satisfying it with products from outside the frozen section.

To win back those shoppers, manufacturers are responding with a variety of items that meet needs fresh desserts can’t, namely convenience. For example, Battleboro, N.C.-based Delizza (delizza.us) just rolled out imported frozen Mini Chocolate Mousses that check off many consumers’ boxes: premium quality, portion control and responsible sourcing (they’re made with UTZ-certified cocoa). But unlike similar refrigerated products,

the bite-size treats can safely sit in the freezer for months, ready to eat whenever consumers need them, without any fear of spoilage. Eco-conscious millennials in particular are loathe to waste food, giving smart frozen dessert purveyors another weapon in their marketing arsenal.

Millennials are also keen on real, simple ingredients, prompting Delizza to begin transitioning its flagship Cream Puffs and Mini Eclairs from high fructose corn syrup to real sugar, reports senior vp of marketing Josh Helling. “We think cleaner label offerings and smaller, portion control formats are what’s currently driving the frozen desserts category,” he explains.

Minis are also making a big splash in the frozen pastry shells segment where Cleveland-based Athens Foods (athensfoods.com) is building on the success of its traditional phyllo shells with a pair

of flavored varieties. Like the original, now in redesigned packaging, both Chocolate and Graham shells allow consumers to create their own unique bite-size desserts, says sales and marketing vp Chase Ames, citing the popularity of customization. One of the best ways to sell the fully baked shells, he adds, is to take advantage of the company’s shipper program during peak selling seasons and then cross-promote with private label fillings. “The great thing about our shells is that the consumer has to fill them with something,” he explains. “So not only does the retailer sell more shells, but more fillings, too.”

## MASH-UPS, DAIRY-FREE POPULAR

Beyond bite-size, manufacturers say hybrid desserts (remember cronuts?) continue to gain traction. One such fusion dessert, torte cakes, saw its sales grow 3.7 times faster (+7.7%) than the category as a whole, reports Susan Allen, senior vp of marketing at St. Paul, Minn.-based Dessert Holdings (dessertholdings.com), which includes Lawler’s, Atlanta Cheesecake Co. and The Original Cakerie.

The company offers several new tortes and tortas under its Biltmore label, including Italian Mascarpone (mascarpone cheesecake and Italian cream cake), Mocha Fantasy Torte (coffee mascarpone cheesecake with a chocolate crust and chocolate ganache) and Wild Blueberry Torte (mascarpone cheesecake with Italian cream cake), and they’ve all enjoyed strong acceptance.

Other hot category trends include seasonally relevant desserts that leverage flavor trends, nostalgic desserts, single-serves/desserts for me and new occasions for cheesecake, says Allen. ■



**Delizza introduces premium Mini Chocolate Mousses made with Belgian chocolate.**



**For consumers that want to create their own bite-size desserts, Athens adds fully baked Chocolate and Graham flavored Phyllo Shells to its lineup.**

# Our Desserts Got Even Better

*Inside and Out*



**Our signature treats are now made with real sugar,  
and our cartons got a refreshed look to match!**

**IN STORES Q4, 2018**



*Delizza is the leading brand for frozen cream puffs and eclairs, and the largest U.S. producer of premium European desserts. We bring delight to every table, supported by frequent coupon marketing and promotions.*

For samples and sales information, contact [info@delizza.us](mailto:info@delizza.us).

**Delizza**  
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