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merchandising focus | chris crawford

FIRE IT UP!

SUMMER GRILLING SEASON HEATS UP



It's time to dust off the picnic-print tablecloths, fire up a sturdy grill and showcase your best grilling vegetables. With grilling at home due to financial constraints, customers are ready to grill. Offer great fruit side dishes and meats to throw on the fire along with grilling veggies. Include new products to capitalize on the movement.

Resources

San Jose-based Florida Sweet Corn Exchange offers retailers information on how to best grill corn, says Jason Stemm, associate vice president based Lewis & Neale Inc., the marketing and public relations firm.

Best cross-promotions with grilling items: charcoal, corn cobs, spray butters, etc.," he says. Corn is best held in refrigerated cases. Suggest they set up a second-end-of-aisle meat department. In case grilling doesn't hit them until the summer, display the produce section with grilling items.

One tip for retailers is to have olive oil displayed with corn and other grilling items. Sprinkle herb and oil spread, says Stemm.

The Mushroom Council, San Jose, Calif., offers a tip sheet on how to grill mushrooms and other vegetables and grilled mushroom recipes, says Lexie Alcon, spokesperson for the Mushroom Council's public relations firm Edelman in Chicago.

Mushroom grilling techniques include "straight on the grill" for Portabellas, "in a basket" for smaller, more delicate mushrooms, and "sautéed" directly on the grill in a disposable pan with small amounts of olive oil and butter, according to the Mushroom Council's "How to grill mushrooms and other vegetables."

The Idaho Potato Commission, Eagle, sends monthly e-mails to its customers, which include summer grilling recipes and tips, says Krista Paglisotti, account executive at the commission's public relations firm Evans, Hardy & Young, Santa Barbara, Calif.

The commission also offers a "Watching Waistlines & Wallets" recipe database on its www.idahopotato.com Web site. Grilling recipes include an Idaho potato breakfast scramble, Paglisotti says.

Hot promotions

At the single Market Place Foodstore in Chicago, the store will feature summer grilling promotions around July, every week or two, says Tony Mai, produce manager.

The store will build a 5-foot-wide display featuring corn, zucchini, onions, peppers and mushrooms. Corn is the store's best-seller during summer grilling promotions. On sale for 25 cents each, Mai will go through 30 to 40 cases per week. At corn's normal price of 55 cents each, the store goes through 10 cases per week.

Green onions, on sale at 29 cents each, can move 15 cases per week, he says. Green peppers, on sale for 89 cents per pound, can lead to 20 cases sold per week.

At the single Seamart Quality Foods in Sitka, Alaska, summer grilling displays are built around the Fourth of July, says Joel Chandler, produce manager and buyer. July and August are the only months that get up to 60 degrees and are warm enough to encourage grilling, he says.

Chandler will build a four-tier, 4-foot-wide rack featuring all bulk items in baskets. Red and white peeled onions; red, yellow and green peppers; squash and potatoes are offered. The display also features roasting corn with some cobs foil-wrapped to give customers the idea to grill them.

A side display features fruit that would be good sides to grilled meals including pineapple, soft fruit and cherries, he says.

Portabella mushrooms are the store's best-selling grilling display item. Regularly priced at \$8.99 per pound, during the sale they are \$6.99 per pound. Portabellas are very popular because there are many vegetarians in the area who use them as a meat substitute, Chandler says. Sales for the grill-

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLORIDA SWEET CORN EXCHANGE

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ing display items increase about 25 percent during the promotion.

Seamart Quality Foods also cross-promotes grilling vegetables in the meat department during the summer. Shish kabobs are created and sampled featuring red peppers, white onions and mushrooms mixed with shrimp, crab, goeey duck and scallops, he says.

Chandler has tried tent sales before, grilling vegetables for customers in the parking lot. But he says the biggest problem with tent sales in Sitka, Alaska, is that Kodiak bears eat all the food at night. ♦

To find links to resources mentioned in this story visit www.ProducesightMarketing.com.



The Maitland-based Florida Sweet Corn Exchange suggests cross-promotions with charcoal, corn holders, BBQ sauce, and spray butters.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLORIDA SWEET CORN EXCHANGE



BOTH IMAGES COURTESY OF THE SHALL GROUP II

PATIO GRILLERS

Eden Prairie, Minn.-based The Shall Group II, which markets the Green Giant Fresh label for fresh produce, has introduced its new Patio Grillers vegetable grilling kits. Each kit includes a 22.5-ounce aluminum tray that can be used on the grill or in an oven.

The four varieties available are baby red potatoes with rosemary herb sauce; BBQ blend with garlic herb sauce, carrots, red potatoes, broccoli florets and yellow squash; California blend with chive butter sauce, carrots, broccoli florets, cauliflower florets, yellow squash and zucchini; and a green bean and carrot blend with chive butter sauce.

The suggested retail price for the grilling kits is \$5.99, says Sarah Wangler, senior marketing manager.