Mushroom Council

The Blend: Retail Case Study

FOR RETAIL
A Midwestern regional grocer with less than 20 stores was the first to launch a pilot program of The Blend in all three departments (deli, meat and produce) at all of their retail stores. The launch period was designed to last between four and six weeks in length. How it all started:

The Mushroom Council met with the retailer and explained The Blend concept. From a business perspective, the retailer wanted to utilize The Blend to distinguish themselves from their competition. They felt their shoppers would embrace The Blend as a way to extend meat portions, add a serving of produce to beef patties and meatloaf, and give them something new that they could make at home. Mushroom Mania began:
Background

First stop: A Mushroom Farm

The retailer’s senior leadership met with the Council and took a tour of a local mushroom farm. The retailer promoted locally grown mushrooms with their Blend pilot program.
Background

Next order of business: Strategic Planning

The Council met with senior staff to strategize the launch and promotion of The Blend in their stores. It was important for the Council to understand the needs of the retailer and to customize the program to ensure success. During planning it was determined that the retailer would prepare fresh Blend items daily in each store (freshly blended hamburger patties and meatloaf). The retailer’s corporate chef utilized an existing recipe for the patties and meatloaf and “just added mushrooms.” “The time spent was worth it.”
The Blend Pilot Program – Overview

• To launch The Blend, the retailer roasted and chopped fresh mushrooms to make the Blend burger patties (meat department) and Blend meatloaf (deli department).

• To grab shoppers’ attention, customized, large-scale POS materials were displayed.

• To encourage Blend trial, samples of Blend products were shared with shoppers.

• To motivate home usage, Blend recipe cards were distributed to customers.

• To influence purchase and awareness, Best Food Day ads were used to communicate fresh Blend meatloaf and fresh Blend meat patties. Instructions on how to make items at home were also included in their ads.

• To publicize the program, the Council developed a retail trade and consumer PR campaigns to generate awareness.

• To ensure success, store managers and employees met to review the Blend concept, sales materials as well as experience a tasting of The Blend.
Preparation
The Blend – Before the Launch

Before the launch of the pilot program, The Council toured several stores, met with the employees and store managers. Later, the retailer invited the Council to present the program during an all-store Manager’s Meeting at their headquarters. During the meeting all managers (and later all their employees) sampled The Blend. All stores received information and point-of-sale display materials for The Blend.

The retailer and Council implemented a sales contest component. The departments (deli, meat, produce) with the greatest sales increase (as the percentage of store size and shopper count) received cash prizes. The retailer provided additional prizes for the best overall sales performance.
Mushroom Mania: Blend In-store POS Materials

The Council created attention-getting point-of-sale material for the retailer to launch The Blend and kick-off the promotion. The material was also used to support Blend sales after the initial promotion.

Large-scale 25.5” x 33” Infographic on foam core with stand-up easel for tabletop display
Mushroom Mania: Blend In-store POS Materials

12” x 24” In-Store Posters drew attention to The Blend

QR Code throughout the stores and on POS material helped link shoppers to additional Blend information.
The Launch
The Blend Launch

The Blend launches in the retailer’s meat, deli and produce departments

The retailer cross-promoted The Blend across all three departments. Fresh mushrooms and The Blend were promoted in the produce department; Blend hamburger patties were promoted in the meat department; and Blend meatloaf was promoted in the deli department. Both recipes were made with fresh, roasted mushrooms.

Large-scale POS materials created a strong impression on shoppers during the launch.
The Blend Launch: Sampling

The Blend launches in the retailer’s meat, deli and produce departments.

To launch the program, the retailer’s customers sampled fresh Blend burgers, Blend turkey tacos and Blend chili. Separately, Blend meatloaf was promoted in their deli as the “Meal of the Week.”
Four Blend recipe cards were distributed to shoppers at point-of-purchase and during sampling events. These encouraged shoppers to make The Blend at home.
The Blend Launch

Blend Burgers made fresh throughout the day in the meat department.

Consumers purchased Blend burgers in the meat department. Once local P.R. was initiated, consumers came into the stores asking specifically for Blend patties.
Building Awareness
The Blend Launch

Throughout the pilot program the retailer advertised fresh Blend Mushroom Burgers and Blend Meatballs in their Weekly Summertime Savings circular. Information on “How to Prepare The Blend at Home” was also featured.
Building Interest

Shoppers came to the stores looking specifically for The Blend

The Council’s consumer and retail trade impressions assisted the retailer in building their program.
Creating Excitement

The retailer sampled and promoted The Blend at a local food/restaurant event that was attended by over 5,000 consumers. The retailer’s Blend recipe won Best of Show!

*Other Retailers Take Notice:* Produce managers from competing stores contacted the retailer’s personnel asking, “What is all this excitement we are hearing and reading about you launching The Blend?”
Results
Results* of The Blend Pilot Program

**PRODUCE**
A 60% sales increase of fresh mushrooms in the produce department.

**MEAT**
Nearly a 12% increase of hamburger patty sales. Blended burgers represented over 8% of all patties sold.

**DELI**
A 10% increase in meatloaf lunch and dinner sales after switching over to Blend meatloaf.

*During promotions, the Blended patties and meatloaf sold at the same price point as the regular non-blend patties and meatloaf.*

*Self Reported by the Retailer*
Results after the Pilot Program

**PRODUCE**
Today, their produce department continues promoting The Blend and using the Council's POS materials.

**MEAT**
The meat department continues to promote and sell Blend patties.

**DELI**
The deli department continues to offer and run promotions of The Blend.

*Self Reported by the Retailer*
After the Pilot Program

The Retailer recently promoted their own Anniversary and helped celebrate the event by promoting The Blend in their meat and deli departments.
Comments from the Retailer
The Blend Pilot Program

“We are excited to have the privilege to team with the Mushroom Council to promote The Blend. If you have any other promotions, we are willing to participate.” Retailer Senior Management

“Calls from other local retailers are asking what has caused all this excitement at the store.” Retailer Senior Management

“Working with the Council to promote The Blend was exceptional. The promotional material, pre-launch meetings and publicity generated for our launch exceeded our expectations.” Retailer Senior Management
“We realized how influential The Blend was for our customers when they started coming into the store asking for it by name. At first, even after our store personnel taste-tested The Blend, we were still a little skeptical whether it would drive sales. Boy, were we surprised at the impact!” Retail Senior Management

Three months after the launch the retailer wrote: “We continually put Blended products in our ad and still have great success with it.”
We are Here To Assist You

Please call us for any assistance or information you may require to introduce, build or execute The Blend program with your retailers.

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