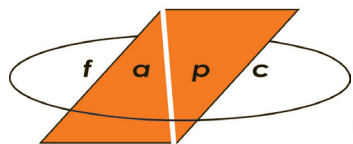


Food & Agricultural Products Center



FLASH!!

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY™

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More Protein, Low Carb Trends are Helping the Meat Snack Market

STILLWATER, Okla. – The popularity of the Atkins Diet and health experts' push for Americans to consume more protein has helped expand the meat snack market. Consumers now include moms seeking healthy snacks for their kids and others searching for a healthy and nutritious snack alternative.

According to an issue of *Meat Marketing and Technology*, the Atkins Diet may be hurting some areas of the food industry, but the dried meat snack market is not complaining with an annual growth of 20 to 30 percent.

“While I believe the Atkins Diet itself may be just a phase, the trend towards low-carb snacks represents a much more permanent market shift,” said Corey Stone, business planning and marketing specialist for the Food & Agricultural Products Center.

Jerky comprises 75 percent to 80 percent of the meat snack market. Top jerky brands like Oberto, Slim Jim, Jack Links, Pemmican and Bridgford have more than \$20 million in sales annually.

Stone said several Oklahoma jerky and meat snack processors have gained market share over the past couple of years.

Jerky producers are developing new flavors and packaging styles to appeal to the new consumers entering the meat snack market. Jack Link recently introduced Jalapeno Beef Jerky Carne Seca in 2-ounce and 1-ounce packages.

According to the *Meat Marketing and Technology*, Cathy Sturm, Jack Link senior marketing manager, said “As a whole, the meat snack industry grew 147 percent from 1997 to 2002. In addition to spicy flavors, we’ve also seen a trend toward sweeter flavors as beef jerky consumption increases among women.”

According to the Mintel International Group, hot and spicy products gained a 39 percent market share. Some of the dominant flavors for this market are peppered, smoked, teriyaki and brown sugar/honey.

Jack Link has adapted to the changes over the years. In 1995, they introduced the recloseable jerky bag and recently introduced jerky nuggets to the market.

Other manufacturers have also been updating and upsizing jerky packaging to target consumers looking for convenience, according to the *Meat Marketing and Technology*. Three sizes have become popular among producers: 1-ounce, 2-ounce and 4-ounce jerky bags.

Besides new packaging and flavors, the jerky market is expanding to include upscale products produced from game meat, turkey and high-end beef. Turkey meat snacks grew by 22 percent from 2000 to 2002, according to the Mintel International Group of Chicago. Pork, chicken, ostrich and buffalo also experienced growth during this time period.

Other producers are taking advantage of this gourmet snack market by using high-end ingredients and special packaging, like foil, to create an upscale appearance.

Many chains and convenience stores are increasing their jerky sections and adding more variety. This means producers have become more aggressive in their price promotions. As the market for jerky widens, so does the competition.

“The low-carb trend certainly helped boost sales in a market that had previously seemed pretty mature,” Stone said. “I am sure that soon we will be seeing

further innovations in beef snack foods and other high protein snacks. This should be an exciting time for many Oklahoma processors.”

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