

Emergent Case Study

Brand Reinvention in a Commodity Category: Sargento®



In a highly-commoditized category where a lack of distinct offerings exists, it's no wonder consumers often default to the frequently lower priced store brand.

In the case of the packaged cheese category, 'buying up' led to another default response: paying more and selecting the most recognized brand in the category — which is great if you're the category leader, but not so great when you're sitting number two.

The challenge: What can a brand do to make the packaged dairy aisle cheese category new and interesting to consumers?

Sargento needed a new game plan. And it needed to be a good one.

OUR GOAL

Sargento Foods, the number two national retail cheese brand, suffered from static share performance and constant pricing challenges. Unrelenting commoditization of the packaged cheese business diluted differentiation.

Could Sargento step beyond conventional go-to-market category practices to reinvent the brand and in doing so capture increased sales and category share?

Can we compel consumers to reappraise what the brand is all about?

OUR SOLUTION

Disruption of this commoditized category was in order. Small moves would result in only temporary wins. A bigger, bolder brand strategy was needed to provide a solid foothold among emerging consumer segments and create a new story for the future of the category.

We developed a premium concept as a rallying point for the company to guide new product development, and set the stage for reinvented brand communications.

It was the antidote to commoditization and the path to uniqueness in a category dominated by sameness.



The Work

New Strategic Vision for Sargento Foods Drives Sales Growth and Brand Equity

Brand Mission & Strategy

Through our strategic category, brand and consumer trend analyses, we identified a **creative path to growth** and developed a **new strategic platform called Mass Artisanal** — a premium offering for a growing, highly-engaged consumer segment. This new platform reenergized and provided a premium focus for the brand, inspired innovation, and created pathways to engage consumers in new and compelling ways.

Product Innovation

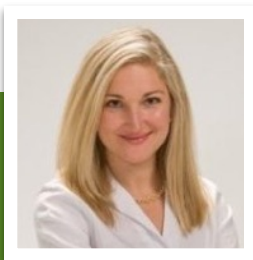
Our Mass Artisanal **strategy laid the foundation** for exciting Sargento product development focused on a new packaged cheese line called Artisan Blends. This premium line of artisan-inspired cheeses offered unique flavors and importantly, improved margins.



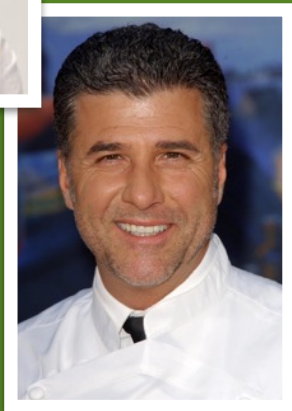
MarComm & Influencer Strategy

Our messaging and communications approach targeted the more discerning consumer who cares about flavor, quality, and food experiences and is interested in culinary adventure. Leveraging insights for this growing consumer segment, we engaged the **voices of respected chefs and influencers**, borrowing their equity to attract cheese loving cooking enthusiasts.

Packaging also carried the real-life stories of the **artisans behind the Blends**, their care in craftsmanship, and use of quality ingredients – providing additional texture and validity to the premium positioning.



Kirsten Jaeckle
Cheese Expert



Chef Michael Chiarello

Brand Engagement

The focus on this new consumer segment required a fresh look at Sargento's communications infrastructure. We developed **new media tools and engagement strategies** that humanized the brand and increased Sargento's relevance among food lovers. We created Sargento's online Artisan Cheese Center with chefs offering recipes, tips and use suggestions and the brand's first appearance at the upscale South Beach Wine & Food Festival.



Chef Michelle Berstein demonstrates Artisan Blends
with the Today Show's Al Roker

OUTCOMES

Brand differentiation in this commodity category was achieved. Consumers seeking higher-quality options responded to our premium, added value approach; and once again confirmed their willingness to pay a little bit more when bolstered with a salient, distinct backstory.

- We helped Sargento redefine quality in the category, secured the premium position and took share from Kraft. First-year results include:
 - Sargento's Natural cheese share increased 2.6% to 11.7% in overall category
 - Brand relevance to Food Adventurer target increased 13.4%
 - Dollar buying rate for Food Adventurer target surpassed Kraft
- As a part of this program, the new two-tiered pricing strategy elevated margins while new, unique items gained added dairy aisle space.
 - Over 3 years, Sargento's dollar share growth in value-added products was 2.5 times that of Kraft
- We burnished the brand reputation and generated unique storytelling opportunities by borrowing equity from Artisan producers. Over 3 years, the initiative achieved:
 - 20% increase in unaided brand awareness
 - 19% increase in Sargento brand "recommendations" from target

Source: Synovate, Nielsen



"If we were on trial for being passionate about cheese would there be enough evidence to convict us? As Bob Wheatley has expressed, creating the Mass Artisanal market gets right to the point and I firmly believe nobody but Sargento is currently in place to do it. We are missing the ultimate proof of passion and we have the opportunity to seize the role that, to date, no one has stepped forward to grab."

Lou Gentine

Chairman of the Board, Sargento





Emergent would be happy to design and implement a comprehensive business- and brand-building strategy to differentiate your products.

For more information, please contact Bob Wheatley at
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