

OUT OF BEDROCK

Pork rind producers are coming out of their caves to deliver an assortment of modern-day products that fulfill the consumer demands of tomorrow.

By Marina Mayer

In the old days, the lack of innovation was so rampant that even a caveman could compete in the pork rind category.

However, gone are the days of the big three profiles of original, hot and barbecue, says Brad Boothe, sales manager for Evans Food Group.

“The consumer over the past few years has become more demanding in regard to flavor diversity,” Boothe says. “We are experiencing success with new flavor profiles reaching these new customers who have a desire for new and exciting flavors.

Along with the greater demand for diverse offerings, the general consumer is also looking for healthy choices without giving up taste.”

That’s why a handful of pork rind manufacturers are hopping off their foot-powered vehicles with higher-powered products to allow them to steer their way into a more modern-day, consumer-friendly future.

For example, Chicago-based Evans Food Group has always offered a diverse selection of pork skins and crackling using more than seven different flavor profiles, Boothe adds.



Pork Rinds

(For the latest 52 weeks ending Mar. 21, 2010)

Rank	Brands	Dollar Sales (in millions)	% Chge vs. Previous Yr.	Dollar Share	Unit Sales (in millions)	Unit Sales % Previous Yr.
1.	Baken-Ets	\$63.6	-7.9	27.2	42.5	-13.1
2.	Tom's	\$20.7	+5.5	8.9	19.1	+0.4
3.	Turkey Creek Snacks	\$20.1	+13.9	8.6	18.6	+11.3
4.	Golden Flake	\$17.4	-10.4	7.4	11.4	-11.4
5.	Private Label	\$13.7	+5.5	5.9	8.9	+1.5
6.	Carolina Country Snacks	\$7.1	+8.5	3.1	4.6	+9.3
7.	Mac's	\$6.9	+8.4	3.0	4.5	+11.5
8.	Wallace's	\$6.3	-7.3	2.7	5.4	-4.7
9.	Utz	\$5.1	-4.7	2.2	4.7	-9.1
10.	Guerrero	\$5.0	-28.6	2.2	1.9	-28.9
Total*:		\$233.6	-2.6	100.0	168.0	-4.3

*Includes brands not shown
 Source: SymphonyIRI Group, a Chicago-based market research firm, www.symphonyiri.com
 Total U.S. - Supermarkets, drug stores and mass merchandisers (excluding Wal-Mart)

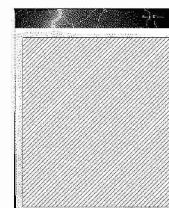
“We must continue to capitalize on our ability to offer the consumer the latest flavors available while understanding the value of the product to the consumer in these challenging economic times,” Boothe says.

Meanwhile, Rudolph Foods Co., based in Lima, Ohio, scrapped its dinosaur-like flavors for more contemporary ones that make consumers’ tastebuds go yabba-dabba-do.

Rudolph’s *Southern Recipe* brand, for instance, now includes Red Pepper Cracklin Dipper, which is a scoop-shaped crackling designed to hold a large amount of dip. Each serving delivers zero carbs and provides more protein than a serving of peanuts.

New to the company’s *Pepe’s El Origi-*

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nal lineup of pork rinds are Original Gigante Cracklins with a Hot Sauce Packet. Overall, these products come in all shape and sizes.

“Our tender cracklins are a great example of that ‘hybrid’ product due to the bacon taste they used as a protein substitute in many Hispanic and Caribbean recipes,” says Mark Singleton, vice president of sales. “Pork Cracklins, in the form of cracklin strips, tender cracklin curls and other forms have captured significant market share and consumer loyalty. In many markets, these items are Top 10 SKUs [stock-keeping units] and 20-30% of the channel category.”

While pork rinds are popular, some consumers stay away from them because of their so-called unhealthy stigma.

“Pork skins and crackling have always carried the stigma of the unhealthy snack,” Boothe says. “We must continue to educate

the consumer as to the advantages of pork skins versus the more traditional snacks such as potato chips and so on.”

But recent health reports recommend pork rinds over other snacks due to its protein levels, Singleton says.

“Pork rinds have zero carbs and are trans-fat free,” he adds.

“We still see a tremendous amount of interest from the ‘low carb’ nation and the public in general in finding snack alternatives to meet their dietary goals. Our low glycemic level also appeals to a large percentage of snackers.”



That's a contemporary message almost any Neanderthal can understand. **SF&WB**

Editor's Note: Go to www.snackandbakery.com to read more about these and other pork rind products.