

New Cases, New Benefits

Today's energy-efficient display cases offer better packout and new solutions to the meal solutions dilemma.

| By Denise Leathers

It's just expected that new frozen and refrigerated display cases will be energy efficient. But today's cases must also offer more packout in a smaller footprint, and merchandise meal solutions in a more appealing and efficient way.

According to Brad Schwichtenberg, vp of business development at Hill PHOENIX (770-285-3100), the Conyers, Ga.-based company's business has traditionally been split almost equally between new stores and remodels. But thanks in part to a weak economy combined with years of retailer consolidation, "A shift has occurred recently, tipping the scale toward remodels of existing stores." He says there has been particular emphasis on meal solutions areas.

"Restaurant sales are down," explains product manager Matthew Rose of Bridgeton, Mo.-based Hussmann Corp. (314-291-2000). He notes this is driving more traffic to supermarket meal solutions areas. To



AHT's 6.9-foot Paris multi-temp wide island display can be added to other units or used individually for spot merchandising.

succeed, these areas must merchandise frozen and chilled meal components together, and this is prompting companies such as Hussmann to introduce more multi-temp cases.

New Multi-Temp Coming

AHT Cooling Systems, Hanahan, S.C. (866-248-8721) plans to launch a multi-temp called the Barcelona by mid-2009. "It's a cross between a coffin and an upright with two chambers – upper and lower – that can be set at different temperatures," explains director of sales Howell Feig. "The top could be frozen and the bottom refrigerated or vice versa. It will be great for meal deals or in the frozen aisle to cross-merchandise items that complement each other."

Alternately, Schwichtenberg notes a trend toward "combining medium- and low-temperature units in the same area...and cross-merchandising refrigerated offerings within (dry grocery) gondolas." This puts complementary

products together without much additional expense, and adds visual interest. Visual interest is also added by Hill PHOENIX "finger" cases that jut out into the aisle at a 90-degree angle. The company also recently introduced frozen food/ice cream door cases featuring curved bump-outs.

Many supermarkets are switching from open multi-decks to glass door cases for merchandising dairy, deli and beverages, reports David Morrow, president and CEO of Zero Zone, Inc., North Prairie, Wis. (800-247-4496). Despite

fears of doors acting as barriers to shoppers, C-stores have proven their success for chilled basics such as milk, and the 44% savings in energy costs makes the decision to switch that much easier. Another benefit: Customers are likely to spend more time (and money) in aisles that aren't as chilly as they were with open multi-decks. One company – Anthony International, Sylmar, Calif.



The curved bump-out on this Hill PHOENIX case, used for ice cream here, adds visual interest to any aisle.



Systems such as this from Trion add rows and facings to a display, automatically feeding and facing the product.

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(800-772-0900) — offers a service whereby open-front cases are retrofitted with doors.

More Packout

Morrow adds, “Our customers also appreciate the benefits of ‘vertical merchandising’ in 30-inch doors, which allow greater facings and increased packout compared to the horizontal, narrow-depth merchandising of open multi-decks.”

Continued demand for maximum facings and packout has also led to the development of not just high wall cases, but high cases with extra low fronts, reports Schwichtenberg, who says demand is strong in urban supermarkets with limited floor space.

To make best use of space, more



Hussmann's ultra-low-front dairy case is in increasing demand because of its ability to offer more facings and packout.

retailers are installing merchandising systems like those offered by Trion Industries, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. (800-444-4665). “Cooler-capable bar merchandiser systems add both rows and facings to a display,” reports marketing communications manager Tony Kadysewski. “Plus, they automatically feed and face the product, reducing the amount of labor required to maintain an 8-foot section by seven to 10 hours per week.” Further, the billboard effect they create can increase sales up to 20%, while allowing customers to browse without opening freezer doors, saving energy.

Flexibility, particularly in meal

solutions areas, is vital. AHT cases, for example, require only two three-pronged 110-volt outlets and a 20-amp breaker. Cases can be added or subtracted from a display, moved to other areas of the store, or switched to different temperatures in multi-temp units.

The company recently introduced a smaller version of its Malta unit, a narrow island ideal for spot merchandising. Available in low-temp (a multi-temp version is coming), the 4.5-by-3-foot case can fit between checkouts for impulse items. It can also be combined with another mini- or full-size Malta to create a larger display — perhaps of frozen cakes in the bakery or frozen shrimp near the fresh seafood counter.

Zero Zone's Hybrid combines the flexibility of a self-contained case with the look of a traditional supermarket case, only with a smaller footprint and more facings and packout. Morrow says the Hybrid has a separate, top-mounted refrigeration unit that eliminates the need to connect to the existing rack system. Because it uses a condensate collection pan with built-in evaporator, there's no need to install floor drains.

A new specialty island merchandiser from Columbus, Ga.-based Kysor//Warren (800-866-5596) is round, enabling many products to be featured at once in a small area, according to sales and marketing vp Jim Knudsen.

Zero Zone's Morrow notes that sustainability is top of mind for retailers and consumers alike, and that today's efforts actually result in energy savings, cost savings or both. Indeed, new and old ideas alike are picking up steam in the efforts to curb energy use.

Distributed refrigeration systems located closer to cases — so refrigerant doesn't have to travel as far — are gaining popularity, reports Morrow, pointing to Zero Zone's Edge system. Night curtains, which can reduce energy use by 12% and have been



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popular in Europe for years, are suddenly more in demand here, says Denise Jacobsen, marketing communications manager at Kysor//Warren. New curtains can be hidden beneath the canopy during the day, she adds.

LED Lighting Grows

Energy-efficient LED lighting is getting perhaps the most attention and is starting to turn up in new places. “It's been available on Hussmann's reach-in cases for the past year and a half,” explains Rose. “But we're one of the first suppliers to offer it for the shelves of open medium-temp multi-deck display cases as well.” Look for them in service cases next, he adds.

Since LEDs introduce less heat into the case than fluorescents, energy savings can be up to 50%, says Rose. Further, LEDs have nearly three times the lifespan of fluorescents, cutting maintenance costs tied to replacement.

Morrow says more subdued LED lighting fits better with the upscale look many retailers want. “We see a trend toward a clean, open look for food display cases, where the products take center stage and the equipment virtually disappears. The industry isn't quite there yet,” he adds, “but that is the direction we are headed.”