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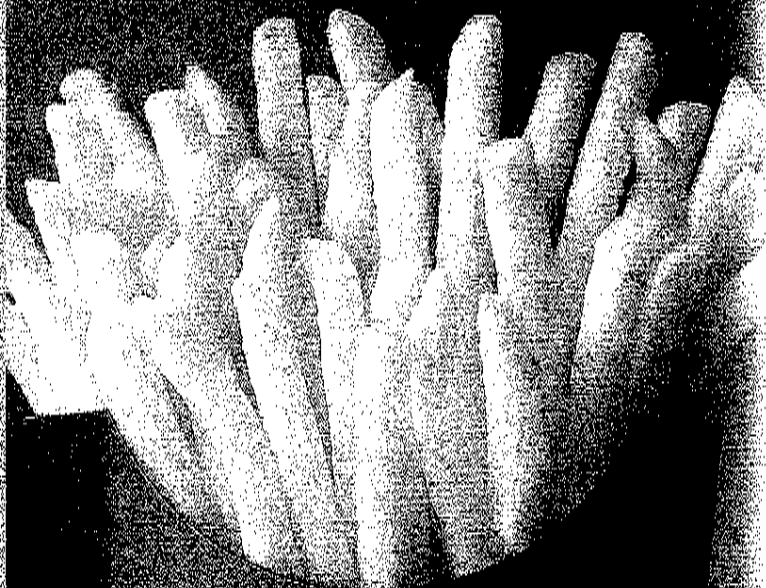
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Frozen Foods in North America

New Authentic Hispanic Frozen Foods: They're Not Your Ordinary Tortillas!

Familiar products such as Waffles sold under unfamiliar (to Anglos!) brand names share freezer space with Mexican Tamales and crossover items like Buffalo Chicken Taquitos.

By SHARON J. WISHNOW
QFFI Correspondent

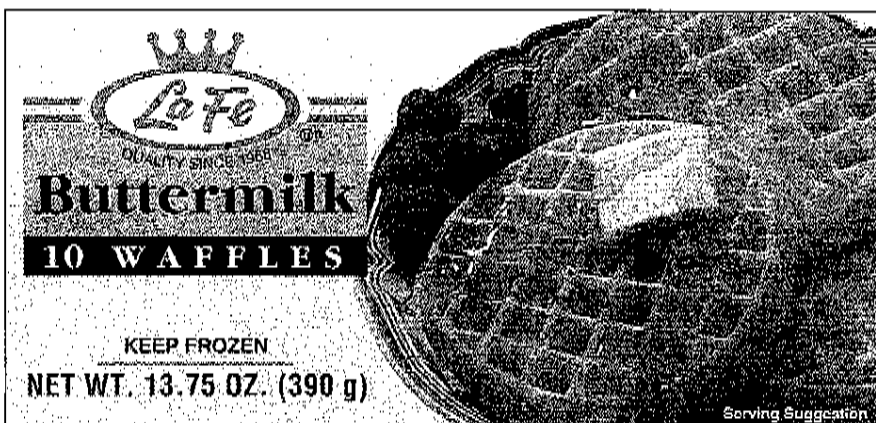
Frozen buttermilk waffles, four cheese ravioli and french fries. Welcome to the next wave of frozen Latino foods.

If you're wondering what the difference is between Moonachie, New Jersey-based La Fe Foods' frozen Buttermilk Waffles and Battle Creek, Michigan-headquartered Kellogg's Eggo Waffles, the answer is not much when you compare ingredients. The difference is the brand.

These new products represent an interesting maturation process in Hispanic foods offered in North America, and the types of foods Hispanic shoppers are seeking. According to Packaged Facts, fare referred to as Authentic Hispanic encompasses foods and beverages imported into the United States from Latin American countries. These items may or may not be Hispanic, but they were made across the border. For example, this segment includes something as basic as canned corned beef, but when made in Brazil, it is classified as Hispanic.

The Authentic Hispanic segment also includes items produced in the United States and Canada, but made using traditional recipes, as well as basic staples that are made by US Hispanic manufacturers, such as La Fe Foods and Secaucus, New Jersey-based Goya Foods.

Juan Guillermo Tornoe, a senior strategic partner with LatinWorks Marketing, Inc., Austin, Texas explains that these products are gaining market share because they provide "a sense of nostalgia and a feeling of home." When immigrants from Mexico, Honduras, El Sal-



Waffles? What's Hispanic about waffles? Only the La Fe brand, which appeals to ethnic consumers. The 390-gram, ten-pack is made in Canada.

vador or Cuba, for example, shop and find products made from familiar recipes, they tend to snap them up. And while this makes sense for authentic recipes and ingredients, it still leaves the unanswered question: "What is the difference between packages of waffles or french fries?"

Tornoe explains that the answer lies in the power of branding. There is a misconception, he said, that poor immigrants come to the United States unaware of American consumer brands, pointing out that

even in the poorest village there is cable television advertising American products.

However, when it comes to food, Hispanics from all countries want spice and flavor. If they try a North American-made product and don't like it, that manufacturer has lost a customer. Immigrant shoppers then reach to companies such as Goya that make authentic recipes and sell authentic products.

"There is the belief that a Hispanic manufacturer will make food that

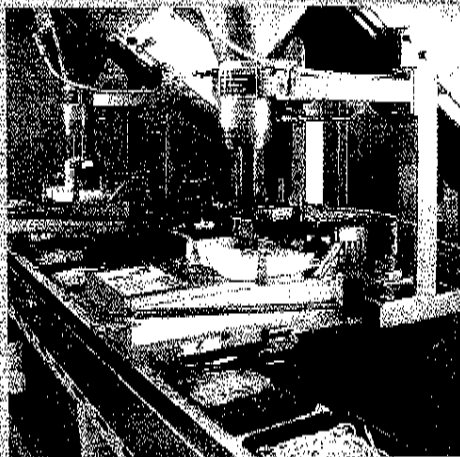
Diversion of Corn to Ethanol Blamed for Pizza Price Hike

Corn used to make ethanol is getting a bigger piece of the action at American farms, and that means higher costs for making pizza and other products, according to Schwan Consumer Brands, Bloomington, Minnesota, which hiked its prices five percent Aug. 26.

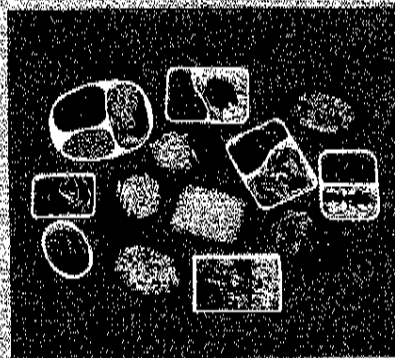
Affected brands include Red

Baron, Freschetta, Tony's and Wolfgang Puck All Natural pizzas; Asian Sensations snacks and appetizers, and Larry's potatoes. Schwan President Greg Flack said that raw material prices for food have been driven up as more crops are grown for the ethanol market. He also cited increased costs of health care and transportation.

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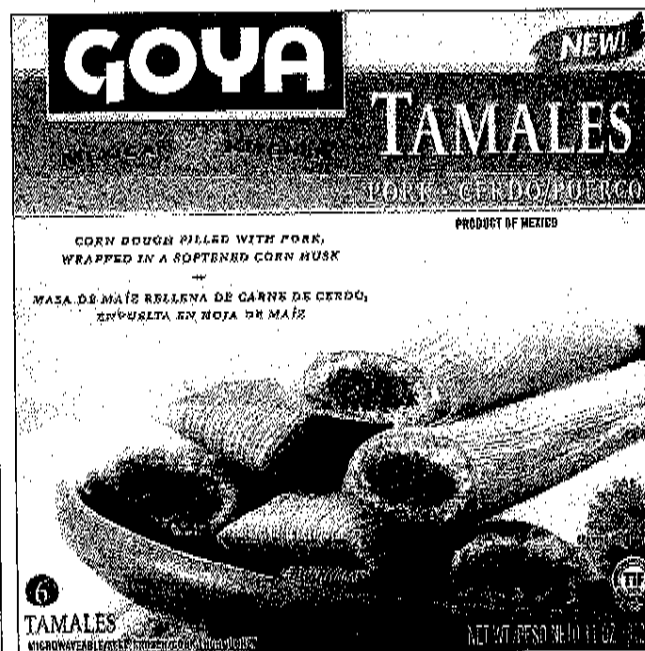
is less bland. It may only be a perception, but it's real in the mind of the consumer. This is true even for foods such as french fries," said Tornoe. Goya attracts consumers with its line of Mexican recipe products, but it will then capture this consumer group's loyalty. Consumers will then buy staple products such as beans, rice, oil, frozen vegetables and frozen tropical fruits.

Large grocery stores such as H.E.B with locations throughout Texas and Mexico, Fiesta Mart in Texas, ethnic grocers across the country, and traditional bodegas [local Hispanic convenience stores] are all catering to their local clientele. Tornoe said that such outlets should work to be better connected to the communities they serve. That means providing foods from the residents of the neighborhood's home country.

Frozen foods are an easy way to "import" this important food and home connection. Shopper's Food Warehouse, a 62-store chain of low-priced grocery stores in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, which is part of the SuperValu Inc. group, is especially catering to this need with one of its stores, el Primero Mercado in Manassas, Virginia. This former Shopper's Food Warehouse location has been reborn into a mainstream market with a Hispanic focus. The center of the store features an entire aisle of frozen Hispanic foods. These products are displayed by brand and run the gamut from potatoes to pupusas.

When asked about this growing trend in Authentic Hispanic foods, a Goya spokesperson told *Quick Frozen Foods International* magazine, "We recognize the huge potential Hispanics play in the current US economy. This warrants catering to the vast diversity within the community with a wide assortment of Hispanic foods. We have the lines needed, and are working and partnering with all supermarket chains to capture and satisfy that market."

Packaged Facts reports that "Hispanic shoppers

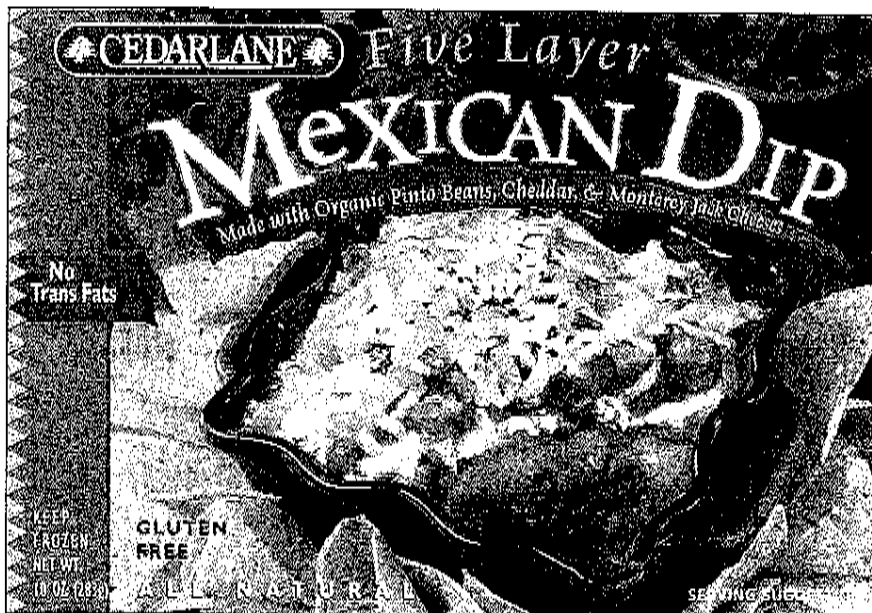


Mexican-Americans can trust Goya Mexican Kitchen Tamales because they're made in Mexico. The product features corn dough filled with pork, wrapped in a softened corn husk.

spend nearly 25% more than members of other ethnic groups on food consumed at home, due largely to the importance of family mealtime and large family units." Tornoe says that he can easily see a change in Hispanic grocery shopping from purchases of primarily fresh ingredients to more frozen components and value-added convenience foods.

"When immigrants come to the United States and begin working they suddenly realize that they no longer have the free time that they once had," he explained. "Frozen single ingredient foods such as vegetables and fruits, hand-held snacks, and meals fill the same need for taste and convenience for busy Hispanic families as they do for all families. If a frozen meal tastes as good as one prepared from scratch, busy families will buy more frozen products."

The ability to capture this vibrant consumer group is indeed a prize. Standard & Poor's Global Insight, along with the Selling Center for Economic Growth, project that Hispanic buying power will reach the \$1 trillion mark in the United States by 2008.



Yes, Mexican food fans too are interested in organic and healthy products, as witness this Cedarlane organic dip with zero grams of trans fats.

Mainstream Mexican

Along with the emergence of Authentic Hispanic frozen foods is the continuing growth of mainstream Mexican food and Nuevo Latino foods that take the form of frozen Mexican pizzas. American consumers are always eager for new flavors and food that they can eat on the go.

Mainstream also means mainstream trends in health. Packages are clearly labeled "real cheese" and "zero grams trans fats." Hispanic-inspired flavors walk an interesting line between health food and snack food. Health-conscious food producers such as Carson, California-based Cedarlane Natural Foods offer a variety of certified organic frozen foods such as bean, rice, and cheese-filled burritos, enchilada pie, and garden vegetable enchilada.

Petaluma, California-based Amy's Kitchen also offers a growing line of Hispanic-inspired frozen foods such as Enchilada with Spanish Rice and Beans, and Santa Fe Enchilada Bowl as well as six burritos. You can start your day with an Amy's Breakfast Burrito, sample the new Southwestern Burrito for lunch, and try a Tortilla Casserole and Black Beans Bowl for dinner.

The other side of the line is the hand-held entrée and snack food Mexican segment, paced by industry leader Ruiz Foods and its El Monterey brand. New products include Grilled Quesadillas with Shredded Steak and Cheese, and Taquitos with Shredded Steak and Cheese.

El Monterey also has an extensive line of microwaveable burritos sold in bags of 10 for \$3.99. They run the gamut from beef and bean with red chili, chicken, beef and bean, beef and bean with green chili, bean and cheese, and chimichangas.

In time, as citizens of all ethnicities in the USA find more and more retail outlets catering to the growing Hispanic community, foods deemed exotic will filter into the diets of most consumers. Recent examples include dulce de leche and chipotle peppers. This trend will prompt smart frozen food manufacturers to raise the burrito bar yet again to keep customers interested, and in the case of the Hispanic consumer, keep them feeling as if they have found a bit of home in the freezer aisle.

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