

# Guiding shoppers, building communities

*When it comes to supporting shoppers who follow specialty diets, simplicity and visibility are keys to building loyalty and repeat sales.*

By Jenny Kosek

In January 2014, Roundy's Supermarkets launched an in-store shelf-labeling system called "Health Keys." Products that fell under one or more of 18 different specialty food classifications—including gluten-free, heart healthy, low sodium, and no lactose—are now designated as such with clear signage at shelf. The effort is designed to allow shoppers to quickly identify foods that meet their increasingly intricate dietary demands, without requiring them to scrutinize complex nutritional labels.

Roundy's program capitalizes on consumers' growing interest in knowing what is in their food, while addressing a glaring problem: Globally, 59% of consumers admit that they are unable to interpret the numbers and symbols found on nutritional panels. Despite this challenge, more than half of U.S. consumers continue to rely on these labels to determine what products are suitable for their health needs.

The oft-maligned nutritional panels are on the cusp of a major makeover. While the FDA, manufacturers and other agencies review the proposed changes, shoppers remain dependent on labels that have vexed them since their inception and hinder them from quickly making appropriate choices at shelf. In response, grocers are increasingly taking innovative steps to make shopping easier and more positive for

health-conscious consumers.

For instance, Wegmans Food Markets uses "Wellness Keys," a series of easy-to-see reference dots on its store brand products. The intuitive keys contain letters against brightly colored backgrounds designed to summarize the products' key features as they re-

tention and allow them to immediately draw conclusions about the product's contents, thus making purchasing decisions within seconds.

In addition to saving time at shelf with clear-cut signage, many retailers are offering educational opportunities online, in-store or a combination of the two.

Stop & Shop publishes a free in-store magazine full of recipes, coupons and ideas for healthy living. The appropriately titled *healthy ideas* Spring 2014 issue includes 40 gluten-free recipes, each clearly labeled with a gluten-free icon, as well as a Q&A with a registered dietitian that explains gluten-free diet myths and truths. Publications such as these assure shoppers that grocers are their partners in the quest for better health and appreciate their circumstances, while valuing their time.

As changes to current nutritional panels are not expected to be implemented for several years, steering shoppers with special dietary needs to the products that are appropriate for them is a challenge grocers are rising to meet. Simple, abundant signage, exciting and engaging online resources and empathy with and enthusiasm for accommodating these shoppers will solidify shopper loyalty as they repeatedly turn to your store for approachable, reliable shopping solutions.



late to shoppers' individual health concerns. Shoppers with diabetes, for example, can readily recognize the SF on sugar-free items, rather than reviewing the complicated nutritional panel to analyze the sugar content.

Similarly, Trader Joe's relies on shelf signage using iconic, instantly recognizable images to help shoppers make choices that benefit their health. Vegetarian products, for example, are marked with a green leaf while low-sodium products are identified with an empty saltshaker. The eye-catching, evocative designs capture shoppers' at-

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