

What's NEXT

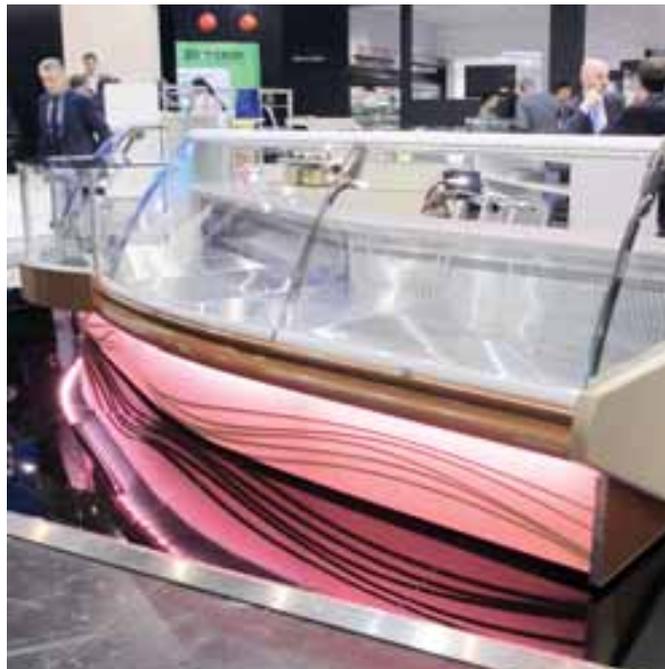
By Ken Nisch

EuroShop is always a delight for foodies of all types, especially those that love innovative design

Called the "World's leading retail trade fair," EuroShop takes place in Düsseldorf, Germany every three years. Staged in 17 pavilions, 109,000 trade visitors from 110 nations attended the event, with over 3,000 registered from India. It seems that three years between shows provides enough time for innovators to create and fabricate design elements for those seeking "What's Next."

Go Big or Get Edgy

Three of the 17 exhibit halls were devoted to the grocery trade, but all the categories in the show were filled with things inspirational, with the three halls offering the largest





focus of grocery retailer suppliers and equipment. Some of the vendor displays were shows unto themselves with major manufacturers cutting across all aspects of food retailing, from specialty (wine, cheese, baked goods), to hard lines and commodities – each with an equal focus and sensibility of great design, function and presentation.

Likewise, there were a number of smaller but quite leading edge vendors, looking at new ways to integrate interesting technologies, interactivity, environment and experience, with security and logistics on an integrated basis into the design of the store. Both perspectives provide a consumer-centric focus, making it easier for the customer to shop, while at the same time, allowing the retailer to understand, calibrate and provoke the consumer.

Vendors such as Costa Group, with their sophisticated integration of the modern and the traditional, exhibited their work with stores such as Eataly in places like New York and Chicago. This mix of the found and the modern is particularly applicable to the Indian market where shopping is part of the social and neighbourhood life. They have only recently become “modern” and sensible (although from what I hear from my Indian friends, this adaptation might be a bit reluctant). The combination of the old and the new, the local and the international, and the visual and physical sensibility that supports this position may be just the right blend for the Indian market; particularly for the premium customer who is looking for what is new, but also wishes to maintain the years of tradition, as they understand that the locals recognise that food is related to the heart of every conversation, meeting and occasion within the Indian lifestyle.

A Futuristic Approach

Some of the highlighted displays would be at home in the 22nd century with

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their aerodynamic, space-aged design. Utilising materials such as stainless steel, custom curved and configured glass, and integrated LED lighting, often-changing and mood-appropriate (blue for cold merchandise, warm tones for baked goods) was also highly evident. The fixtures often drew their inspiration from the high-tech world of automotive in the most sophisticated pieces of entertainment technology.

Mixing high-touch and high-tech, almost a combination of rustic and futuristic; of bringing the farm to the city and the city to the farm, with integration of state-of-the-art LED lighting (whether on the ceiling, in the fixture, under the fixture) was another prominent innovation throughout the show. Smart store technology was evident everywhere, from interactive shelf-edge signing, and self-and-assisted checkout technologies.

Creating the Third Place

Another EuroShop trend was the generation of social spaces (areas where the consumer is intended to eat in the store, not just shop), and various executions of it -- primarily on a conceptual basis. Trending was the creation of in-store "social stadiums," ad hoc coffee and sampling shops, along with a development of zones and "soft rooms" to facilitate in-store dining. The formatting of grocery, not just for supplies, but for "Eat In, Eat Now," and "Almost Ready-to-Eat" could be seen throughout, whether it be in categories such as specialty foods, desserts, coffee and even full meals; communicating a very direct connection between the food stores as a source of ingredients, but as well, the source of the ultimate meal.

Playing well with the Indian consumer's demand for fresh food, a history and culture of roadside dining, and a high priority placed on variety and choice, makes this multi-faceted concept one that should be considered by the Indian grocery industry, particularly where they have high traffic and are in high visibility locations as a way to create consumer frequency, extract a bigger share of wallet from the consumer, and to create retail theater within the shopping environment.



Expanded Merchandise Offerings

Flexibility in fixturing that would allow integrated product categories, integrated display of related soft goods, home furnishings, and decorative merchandising, and, as well, the possibility for other types of other directly-related products (utensils, products for preparation), were highly visible. The degree of modularity from the integration of signage and graphics were seen, including video and interactive opportunities, in conjunction with more straight forward mass-merchandising. This departs significantly from the traditional approach of a gift department, food department separated, to today where one is more integrated and much more focussed on themes. These themes ranged from colour to cuisine, lifestyle to classification; all heightening the excitement of shopping, and (as well) encouraging impulse and basket size.

A Winning Approach

EuroShop also honoured their annual Global Design Competition winners, and again focused on outstanding food and grocery concepts. Of the top three winners of the EuroShop Design Awards, one award went to Coop.fi Novoli of Florence, Italy. The store offers a food-shopping experience inspired by the idea of the local market, and is also the prototype for a new generation of food markets according to the values of the Coop Cooperation Movement. The winner of the 2014 JapanShop/EuroShop Award was Hagiwara Meat Shop in Kamakura, Japan.

The EuroShop Awards also recognised JGA-designed Whole Foods Market Urban Kitchen in Detroit, a store that reflects Whole Foods Market's mission values and its goals as an organisation, with a voice that is directed and inspired by its specific location and the unique needs and wants of its community and customers.

In short, the Dusseldorf Expo once again, and particularly within the grocery category, inspired, raised the bar; and possibly provided a bit of worry and second thought to the grocer whose current comfort with their status quo may be a bit less comforting after this "virtual" EuroShop visit. ■

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