

SPECIALTY SEAFOODS

Specialty seafoods essentially represent new seafood format, as opposed to value-added seafoods which consist of established seafood items that have been modified in cut, shape, coating and packaging to improve handling, presentation, profitability and value to end-users and consumers. Traditionally, sturgeon caviars and smoked salmon have been the core of the specialty seafood category, practically staples of gourmet food.

Today, these delicacies maintain dominance, but, have recently been joined by an array of seafoods previously unknown to the American market. New specialty seafoods include pâtés, terrines, galantines and mousses for the up-scale markets; salmon ham, hot dogs and sausages for the daily fare; seafood soups and sauces to grace the meal; and a variety of other smoked seafoods in large demand by the U.S. consumer market.

Seafood pâtés, mousses, terrines and galantines are gaining a larger presence in the U.S. seafood market, again as evidenced at the Boston International Seafood Show and Seafare International in Long Beach, California. Mouth-watering pâtés can be found featuring shrimp with baby carrots, parfait lobster with Grand Marnier, scallops with fresh mushrooms, and mousseline of smoked salmon. Galantines appeared highlighting trout stuffed with whitefish, cream cheese and spinach; salmon stuffed with whitefish, cream cheese and vegetables; and a wide variety of other species including shrimp, crab, and lobster tastefully prepared with various herbs and spices.

Another example of a successful specialty seafood product in the massive U.S. market is salmon ham, and salmon sausage. With vastly reduced fat content (1-5%), salmon ham is as convenient as regular ham and can be used in all the same applications. Other salmon products making headway in the U.S. consumer market are salmon pepperoni and hot sticks, salmon hot dogs, mild and hot salmon breakfast sausage, and salmon patties in a variety of flavours.

"Seafood as an ingredient", is also expanding usage across the U.S. market, with various seafood species being put to imaginative uses by small companies willing to experiment with new taste combinations. Seafood is used as a flavouring for a number of products including soups, sauces, dips, pasta, seasonings and salad dressings.

Specialty seafoods add excitement to menus and retail counters. Consumers are offered a wide range of products that are out of the ordinary, as a personal treat or for entertaining. American consumers are generally receptive to brand name products which are backed by quality.

Canadian specialty seafoods exporters considering the U.S. market should be creative, consistent, and quality-conscious when developing new products. However, successful research, development, and marketing of specialty seafoods can increase sales to the massive United States fish and seafood market and lead to an enhanced network of buyers.