

Value-added seafood products have emerged which exemplify both the national popularity of Asian and Mexican dishes and the national reluctance to spend time in the kitchen. Some value-added seafood products recently introduced to the market include surimi products like seafood spring rolls with surimi and cream cheese. Many of these products are appropriately packaged for retail and foodservice, frozen and ready to fry or steam. These types of value-added seafood are not just appetizers, but provide interesting and novel additions to salads, used as side dishes, or teamed with rice for entrées. Caterers, hospitals, restaurants and bars all use these products, and demand appears to be increasing rapidly.

Another company is manufacturing meal kits with fresh frozen pasta, prepared sauce, and marinated shrimp in Entrée and Alfredo flavours. The pasta is ready to boil, and the shrimp ready to sauté. The same company has also developed a breaded minced shrimp product, ready to bake or fry, that has become very popular with bars, schools, hospitals. The product is also recommended for all-you-can-eat restaurant formats because of its good taste and low cost. These "shrimp poppers" are also popular with warehouse clubs as well as prepacks of seafood-stuffed mushrooms, in shrimp and cheddar, and blue crab/surimi flavours.

Salmon is growing in reputation as a value-added seafood product, offered in many varieties, such as vac-pacs with brown sugar glaze; peppered with black peppercorns; cajun spiced; and dill. The fully-cooked, boned and ready-to-eat portions are priced "each piece", an easier sell than "per-pound" pricing. Each unit is UPC coded and has a hole for pegging the package, allowing more display flexibility. Tear-off recipe pads are available for salads, omelets and spreads incorporating the product.

Health consciousness has also influenced value-added seafood products over the past few years. Some gourmet breadcrumb seafood is now pre-browned in canola oil. Other appetizers to hit the "health circuit" include seafood chili, cheese crab cakes, oriental shrimp bites, and fish nuggets. One particularly successful product to enter the U.S. market is a 9 pound deli-style tuna loaf for retail and foodservice, is made with yellowfin and seasonings, in regular or naturally smoked flavours. The tuna loaf is fully cooked and ready to slice for sandwiches or for appetizers with crackers or toast points. Made from fresh-frozen tuna, the product is virtually fat free, very low in cholesterol, and provides a health option to fat-laden snack alternatives.

One U.S. retailer sells chef-prepared, ready-to-heat entrées. They carry orange roughy Francaise, an egg-washed fillet dredged in seasoned flour; blackened catfish; swordfish Francaise; and calamari salad with vegetables and olives, dressed in vinaigrette. Stuffed clams and seafood-stuffed mushroom appetizers are very popular with consumers. The stores buy basic upscale value-added seafoods and tailor them to the demographics of individual stores, which range from blue collar, to ethnic, to gourmet. The company looks closely at quality, convenience, perceived value and affordability, because price point still attracts customers.

In conclusion, value-added fish and seafood products have a large growth potential in the domestic U.S. market. Consumers are seeking out top-quality entrées, at a reasonable price, with little preparation time required. Potential sectors for value-added seafood products include foodservice, retail, institutions, restaurants, schools, wholesalers and distributors.