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Future of Convenience Foods

Supplier

Food 70's

The services a spice supplier sees in the future of convenience food services.

John D. Oxley
Regional Sales Manager
McCormick & Company

I would like to tell you a little bit about the company, how we have gone into convenience food markets and how we have assisted other people in the market. We started back in the late 1880's in insecticides and family medicine and went from there to spices and extracts. The bulk and institutional division in the company started in 1947. From that point, we have progressed, expanding our lines from the spices, teas, and extracts that you will find on the retail shelf into salad products, dehydrated potatoes of all sizes and shapes, dehydrated onion and garlic, flavor bases, dehydrated milk, dehydrated vegetables, sauce and gravy mixes, and gelatin; a pretty broad base for an institutional service.

We have expanded these one at a time, trying to do all things for all people. With food service industry today as dynamic as it is, it is almost impossible for a single manufacturer to meet all these needs. You have many manufacturers moving into convenience foods trying to capitalize on one facet of the menu. What the frozen or pre-prepared entree is to the main course today is what we hope McCormick will be to the salad course tomorrow. We picked this area because we do have a background in it. We picked it also because it's not one that's overexposed today in the light of convenience foods. We may have at sometime in the future coast to coast produce stands. This is a long way away, but it is a concept that really leaves a lot to the imagination. The new plant that was referred to previously is currently under construction to be completed sometime in April or May 1970. There are some areas we are planning to get into that I'm just not at liberty to go into here. There's a lot of room in the food service industry today for the convenience food salad course. I think you all are probably wondering what we have done and what we are going to do. I wonder too at times.

We have made other contributions to the convenience foods field. Basically, we think of convenience foods today as frozen products pre-prepared prior to going to the Food Service Unit. When manufacturers started getting into frozen foods, they inherited a number of problems in flavoring. Because we

are the house of flavor, they turned to us, to see what aid we could give them in this area. This led to the development of what we call today "soluble seasoning". This is where we take the volatile oil from a natural spice by extraction; either by steam distillation or a solvent. We take a carrier such as dextrose or salt which blends easily in other products. We saturate this carrier with this volatile oil derived from natural spice, then we spray dry it and incapsulate it so that it is somewhat like the pill that we all take. The advantages of this for manufacturers of convenience foods or frozen foods is that you get immediate 100 percent release of the flavor. This differs from let's say a baker who bakes an apple pie and uses natural cinnamon in that apple pie will change flavor from hour to hour, from day to day, as more and more volatile oil is released. This is not true for soluble seasoning. You get immediate 100 percent flavor. We have also developed other carriers. These will give release when they're immersed in liquid. We have also developed carriers which do not release their flavor until they come in contact with the enzymes inside your mouth. This is for extremely long storage of the product.

We have emulso seasonings that are liquid seasonings where needed. The convenience foods field is so broad, so complex. What is convenience foods? It's not necessarily a frozen entree. A long time ago the people who moved west canned peaches. These were convenience foods. Today the field has grown and grown. I hope we can get further discussion in the panel. This is the type of thing where questions can produce more concrete answers than someone sitting up here trying to talk.