

Lemon Squeeze

Experiences Sales Boost

The little plastic lemon bottle may be the ultimate in value-added packaging. It takes all that juice from several lemons and puts it in one easy plastic squeezable bottle. There is no doubt that the concept clearly addresses the consumer trend toward wanting products that are more convenient. But in today's economic climate that value-added trend in the produce department is taking a bit of a backseat to the "value" trend. Consumers need to stretch their food dollars and they are doing so often by eschewing value added and moving toward bulk purchases which are usually bargain priced.

Not so in the lemon business.

At least that is the experience of Adriana Kahane, president and founder of Dream Foods International, LLC, the Santa Monica, Calif.-based company that developed and markets the Volcano brand plastic bottles of lemon and lime juice. "Because of the economy, we were expecting sales to decrease or at the best be flat for the last quarter of '08," she said recently. "But instead we had a significant increase over the last quarter of '07."

She said there was a huge increase in both volume of sales including new outlets, and in same store sales when measuring the same store in the two different years. Kahane believes there are a number of factors that can explain the increase. In the first place, she believes it is proof that Volcano Lemon Burst has been accepted by the consumer as a replacement for a fresh lemon.

The little yellow lemon bottle has been around for a long time, but Kahane said most brands offer a poor substitute in flavor and smell for a real lemon. They offer convenience but not much else. She believes Volcano Lemon Burst has captured the essence of a fresh lemon, and the company includes that essence in the cap so that every use provides that strong lemony flavor and smell the consumer expects. She said repeat sales show that the consumer believes that also.

Secondly, Kahane said lemon squeeze sales have received a boost because of the world-wide shortage of fresh lemons that existed in 2008. For most of 2008, fresh lemons retailed at about \$1 a piece with \$1.49 not out of the ordinary. Volcano's lemon squeeze bottles come in two sizes: 100 ml and 200 ml. The smaller bottle holds about four lemons worth of juice with the larger bottle having twice the capacity. Typically the smaller bottle retails for \$1.39 to \$1.49 while the large bottle comes in at \$2.49. For the savvy shopper – or even the not so savvy shopper – the savings are obvious.

Based on this fourth quarter performance in 2008, Kahane expects big growth in 2009. She is anticipating a 15 percent growth in existing markets, and expects entry into new markets to bring total



sales growth above the 50 percent mark. Dream Foods offers point of purchase material, including recipes, price cards and promotional banners to retailers. It also has a display shipper that is gaining favor among retailers. It is a 36 inch display-ready bin that comes decorated with a seasonal motif.

The lemon product is produced in Sicily using Sicilian lemons. Volcano Lime Burst is also processed in Sicily, but Mexico provides the bulk of the limes that are used.