What is growing fastest in your store?

Russell Adams
Manager of Family Nutrition Center in Cleburne, Texas

The Dr. Oz category. What seems to impact us the most is when he talks about diet-related items, but every once in a while if he talks about something like quinoa we'll see those sales spike too. We don't watch the show and base our orders only on what Dr. Oz says, but we do try to ask customers where they heard about a product and pay special attention to whether it's something that will drive sustainable sales in the long term.

Elin Meade
Owner of Food for Thought in Marathon, Fla.

Prepared vegan and raw foods are growing the fastest in our store. Our in-store cafe prepares items like taco salad with vegan chili, wraps with walnut meatballs and spiraled zucchini noodles and kale breakfast pancakes with tomatoes and vegan cheese. Smoothies and juices are our number-one sellers. We also offer a soup of the day and other daily specials.

Ramona Billingslea
Marketing Manager at Bevco's Health Foods in Houston

Our private label, which we brought into the store a little over a year ago, is our fastest-growing brand. We have been in business since 1993, growing our reputation as a customer-service and product knowledge-oriented store. So, when we finally took the plunge to put out a private label product, the dividends are the result of the hard work we put into building a strong reputation for our store.

Joan McDougall
Grocery Manager at Moscow Food Coop in Moscow, Idaho

Our deli. People are running out of time, so instead of cooking they're buying premade items. The kitchen makes three kinds of huskes, pasta dishes, pizza and pot pies to bake at home. We also produce great dips including green gatherings, spinach artichoke and ranch, when it's in season. We are using increasing amounts of local food in our deli and I think the combination of convenience and local is drawing the crowds.

By the Numbers

Hemp gets its due

Hemp just might be having its day. It has become a top functional ingredient, and packaged products are selling like, well, weeds. Even the U.S. government has taken notice and loosened hemp-growing policies for the crop that's become known as an environmentally friendly, sustainable and nutritious superseed. As retailers and industry supporters prepare for the 15th annual Hemp History Week June 2-8, know the numbers below.

$184 million
Sales of hemp food and body care products in 2013

22.4%
Rate of natural-channel sales growth last year

8
Position hemp held in the top 10 functional ingredients by sales volume in the 52 weeks ending Feb. 23; coconut oil ranked 10th

1957
Last year hemp was legally harvested in the United States

1998
Year the U.S. began importing food-grade hemp seed and oil

2014
Year the Farm Bill allowed industrial hemp growth for research

10
Number of states that have defined industrial hemp as distinct from marijuana

How is today's herbal landscape different from when you first published HerbalGram?

Mark Blumenthal: Huge changes over the past 30-plus years include a proliferation of products, more mainstream awareness and acceptance of herbs, more professional acknowledgement, increased U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulation, and so much more. But possibly the most important change is how much access today's consumers have to information. When we started HerbalGram, there was no Internet or email. Now people can access all kinds of information on almost every subject imaginable.

What does this mean for retailers?

MB: ABC believes in the adage that self-medication requires self-education. Indeed, many herbal products shoppers are quite knowledgeable. Many have been gathering information on herbs and health conditions for a while, so they may know more about certain herbs and their applications than retailers do.

What is the biggest challenge in the herbal arena today?

MB: The FDA requires that manufacturers test for all "known adulterants." Hopefully, however, some companies are more concerned with low prices than ensuring the authenticity of the botanical raw materials and extracts they source. Adulteration can happen by accident when people do not follow appropriate quality-control measures (or are not adequately trained to do so). Or, as is too often the case, the manufacturers, and sometimes the ingredient suppliers, intentionally sell adulterated material. This is fraud, and one of the only ways to combat it—outside of robust testing and enforcement by the FDA—is with proper education.

How can retailers fight adulteration?

MB: Retailers should go to ABC's Botanical Adulterants Program website (herbalgram.org/adulterants) and read the five articles that we've made available for free. Then they should push back on their suppliers by asking questions like: How do I know the black cohosh in these capsules is not adulterated? I read the HerbalGram article about black cohosh adulteration, and I want appropriate assurances from your company that this product contains real North American black cohosh—not the cheaper, Chinese adulterant.*

-Melissa Kildahl

Visit newhope360.com/adulteration to read more about Mark Blumenthal's compliance concerns.

Sources: Hemp History Week, Hemp Industries Association, SPNHS

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