

PICK A PACK OF PICKLED VEGGIES



Cherith Valley Gardens (800/610-9813 or www.cherithvalley.com) finds many consumers are using all kinds of pickled veggies, not just olives, to garnish their cocktails. Available varieties include pickled baby corn and green beans. **Circle No. 175**

Fresh flavors and new marketing liven up sales for classics like pickles, vegetables and olives.

By Lori Murray

Few food items uphold as much tradition as pickled vegetables. For some, the category conjures up memories of Grandma or Mom in the kitchen, preserving the harvest for a long winter. It's a return to roots, perhaps even a childhood pastime.

"Pickling in one form or another is part of culture everywhere," says Rick Field, founder of Rick's Picks (212/358-0428) in New York City. "The idea of handcrafted food is something that works hand-in-hand with another trend of using quality ingredients and local ingredients. These trends make it an exciting time to be in the pickle business."

The category is further propelled

by the popularity of olives — for snacking, to garnish cocktails and as healthy appetizers. Together specialty olives and pickled vegetables present retailers with some great marketing opportunities, a far cry from ordinary pickles and olives seen in mass market stores. Here are some ideas to consider when adding these products to your store, and reasons to expand your offerings if you've already tapped into this hot flavor trend.

COCKTAIL HOUR COMPANIONS

Pickled vegetables and olives may be most at home when used as garnishes for cocktails. At Sandstone Farms (866/203-2844 or www.sandstonefarms.com) in Kuna, Idaho, restaurants and bars make up some of the company's biggest customers. Sandstone's pickled asparagus spears and other pickled

vegetables are served with Bloody Mary drinks in numerous venues across the country. They even suggest replacing the traditional martini olive with their pickled garlic clove, renaming the time-honored drink — The Gartini. Because of their crispness, pickled vegetables such as carrots and sugar snap peas also make great swizzle sticks for drinks. Interest in entertaining will spike when you offer pickled veggie cocktail garnishes for an in-store demo. Be sure to pair it with suggestions for using many of the same ingredients as appetizers.

This year Sandstone Farms swept the category for pickled snacks at the National Fiery Foods Challenge in Fort Worth, Texas. The company's Hot Tequila Tips (pickled asparagus spear tips) won first place, while Sandstone Hot Tequila Corn (pickled baby corn) took second, and

Sandstone Hot Tequila Beans (pickled baby green beans) came in third. The family-owned company, which started in 1997, grows all of its own vegetables.

Phillip Bryant, vice president of Alma, Arkansas-based Bryant Preserving Company (800/634-2413), promotes the company's Old South Tomolive, a pickled green tomato most frequently used as a garnish with vodka.

"A lot of pickled vegetables are being used as drink garnishes," says Bryant. "That's why we came up with the Tomolive."

At Cherith Valley Gardens (800/610-9813) in Fort Worth, Co-owner Terri Werner believes that olives are in great demand because martinis are so popular. But it doesn't end with olives. Pickled baby corn and green beans are being used in martinis as well. The company