

Seafood

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Photo: Promolux



The Retail Issue

Everything you need to know to boost your seafood sales

5 tips for picking the best seafood case

Follow these tips to create a super fresh fish case in your stores.

John Fiorillo

Food shoppers buy with their eyes; the more appealing the appearance of your seafood, the better chance you have of making a sale.

Every good fresh seafood counter, whether it be in London or Los Angeles, is centered around the display case.

An attractive, properly stocked case is your best chance to hook customers as they walk past.

What are the key attributes of an effective, modern seafood case? Maybe you are in the market for a new case or are looking to add another to your department?

What should you consider as



PHOTO: WESCHO

EYE APPEAL: An attractive, properly stocked case is your best chance to hook customers as they stroll by.

you evaluate your purchase?

Chris Nussbaumer is president of Wescho, a Pennsylvania-based manufacturer of retail merchandising systems.

His firm has been selling seafood cases to retail chains, independent grocery operators and mom-and-pop fish stores for nearly three decades.

We asked Nussbaumer for his five keys to

selecting a top-performing, modern seafood case. Here's his advice.

1. Air Flow: "The worst enemy of seafood is high air velocity," said Nussbaumer. "It dries out the fish." Dry fish doesn't sell, increasing a retailer's shrink and cutting into his seafood profit.

It's imperative retailers seek out low air velocity cases, Nussbaumer said.

2. Product Visibility: Your customers won't buy what they can't see, so your case has to offer high visibility to shoppers as they walk past.

When it comes to visibility, said Nussbaumer, you have two options: an iceless case or a case that incorporates ice.

"I'm partial to iceless because I believe it is better for merchandising. You can do more with the

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appearance of the product.”

If your product is buried in ice, he said, visibility is low and customers are going to walk by.

If you still want to use ice to give your iceless case that on-the-dock merchandising feel, Nussbaumer says you can do so.

3. Single-level display: Unlike a deli case, with its multiple levels of shelves, your seafood case should be a single level, said Nussbaumer.

“Customers want to be able to pick out their fillet, see the crab cakes, see the shrimp. Single-level cases provide the best visibility.”

4. Construction: You want the interior of the case to be stainless steel, Nussbaumer said.

Retailers can buy cases with rubberized interiors or powder-coated steel, but both can be susceptible to degradation caused by the oils and acids inherent in seafood, he said. Stainless steel is not.

But all stainless steel is not equal, Nussbaumer said. He recommends 300-grade stainless, which unlike 400-grade stainless steel, will not pit.

5. Supplemental humidity:

Keeping a seafood case humid is critical to the shelf life of the product.

Nussbaumer recommends a supplemental humidity system if your case doesn't already maintain a high humidity level.

There are two primary options when it comes to supplemental humidity.

Water-injection systems, or misting systems, blow small particles of water over the fish through a fine mist. Ultrasonic, or fog systems, change the state of the water to a fog, which circulates throughout the case.

Nussbaumer said he is partial to the ultrasonic system because it maintains a high level of humidity – 95 percent.

One last tip: Consider the ergonomics of the case, said Nussbaumer, who favors cases that can be loaded from the front through lift-up glass windows. Your seafood counter staff should have easy access to product from the rear of the case when serving customers and from the front of the case when loading.

Let there be light

Lighting is key to any effective retail seafood display case. For tips on techniques for properly lighting your seafood case we turned to James Kemp, business development manager of the western and central U.S., for lighting firm Promolux Lighting International.

Kemp says there are five key considerations for selecting the right lighting for service seafood cases.

- 1. Proper color selection:** “Eye appeal is buy appeal,” said Kemp. It's critical to choose lighting, such as Promolux Balanced Spectrum technology, that presents food in its true color and provides customers the visual “wow.”
- 2. Product shelf life:** Reduced-radiation lamps protect sensitive seafood, reducing shrink and discoloration and increase profit through optimal merchandising and extended shelf life.
- 3. Consistent illumination:** Select a quality lighting product to ensure an even plane of light so every corner of the case is uniformly lit.
- 4. Long-life lamps:** Longer-life lamps help retailers reduce costs associated with re-lamping, said Kemp.
- 5. Food-specific lamps:** It important to select food-safe lighting designed and engineered specifically for perishable food retail display cases.

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John - The company recommended for aquaculture antifouling, Flexabar-Aquatech, they have their new website online - take a look!

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