

## Category Outlook

# MEXICAN FOOD PRODUCTS

From breakfast burritos to authentic burritos ... tortados to soft tacos ... even tamales ... the popularity of Mexican food continues to experience double-digit growth, becoming more and more a mainstream food preference.

In fact, total Mexican food sales are projected to increase 33% in the next five years from \$8.3 billion in sales for 2003 to \$11.2 billion by 2008. The frozen Mexican category, without dinners and entrees, is a \$124.1 million category and is projected to stay strong in the future as well, growing over 4.3% vya (IRI, 13 weeks, September 12, 2004).

The c-store industry continues to have a tremendous opportunity and Ruiz Foods' signature El Monterey brand is an integral part of this opportunity. It is the top frozen Mexican food brand in the total U.S. according to IRI, 13-weeks, September 12, 2004.

As the nation's only full-line manufacturer of frozen Mexican food, Kim Ruiz Beck, vice chairman of Ruiz Foods explains, "Our success is tied to the fact that we stay in step with what the consumer wants—frozen foods that are high in quality and great tasting—hand-held meal solutions that are convenient, available hot and ready-to-eat, or microwaveable in just 2 minutes."

And, while understanding the consumer is important, Ruiz Foods' partnership with customers is essential. Several years ago, for example, 7-Eleven expressed the need for a product that could utilize the familiar "roller grill." Ruiz's ideas and resources developed a batter-dipped and lightly fried taquito resulting in the 7-Eleven "Go-Go-Taquito." "We understand the c-store consumers can look to the hot-case, roller grill, microwave, even tamale steamer for their Mexican

breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack," adds Beck. "It is our commitment to provide them with a choice that reflects the knowledge of our rich Mexican heritage offering flavor profiles and textures that will keep customers coming back for more."

These commitments are as important today as they were in 1964 when Kim's father and grandfather, co-founders Fred and Louis Ruiz, decided to manufacture frozen enchiladas. Now, 40 years later, according to the same IRI report, El Monterey is the largest growth brand, has the highest sales per point of distribution among leading brands and ... El Monterey has the biggest share of growth among the top 10 brands.

Each El Monterey product uses quality meats and cheeses, flavorful spices and ingredients all rolled in freshly baked tortillas. "It is this dedication to making products with a rich Mexican heritage that keeps the consumer coming back for more. It is also our dedication to innovation which serves to enhance our role as the category leader," says Beck.

No wonder Ruiz Foods is optimistic about its latest introductions: three new El Monterey Breakfast Burrito flavors—answering the c-store consumer's taste for more breakfast choices; and three new Authentic Burrito flavors—made with very traditional ingredients and spices for an eating experience very similar to homemade.

Adds Beck, "As long as we continue to deliver this to each of our customers, we will continue to be successful—we will continue to be known as the innovator—we will continue to be the category leader."

