

# Automatic MERCHANTISER

Convenience services for vending, micro markets and workplace beverages

# YES, WE CAN!

**Texas' Executive Refreshments blazes a trail in workplace refreshments.**

page 48

**Creating new opportunities in pantry service**

page 34

**ROUTE DRIVER OF THE YEAR**

**Don Rasabout goes the extra mile for Evergreen Refreshments**

page 26

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### YES, WE CAN!

Texas' Executive Refreshments blazes a trail in workplace refreshments.



**On the cover:** Father-and-son duo, Lou and Louis Baresh, say the best is yet to come for Executive Refreshments.

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**OCS Operator**

## Exotic travel can teach you something about business



Bob Tullio

**THE CONCEPT OF “GOOD FOR YOU, GOOD FOR ME,”** is about communication and cooperation with clients who are pushing operators to the brink, demanding high-end service in workplace environments.

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### How technology is changing the vending and micro market landscape

As convenience continues to drive the behavior of on-the-move consumers, innovations have hit full stride. Using a digital model from Campbell's Foodservice, operators can visualize how brands could show up in their micro market.

[VendingMarketWatch.com/53027508](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/53027508)

▼ ▼ ▼  
**Micro Market**

## Amazon's Just Walk Out technology debuts at Marymount University



Located on Marymount's main campus in Arlington, Virginia, the new convenience shop – Saints 24 – implements Amazon's Just Walk Out technology designed to eliminate checkout lines and provide an effortless customer experience.

[VendingMarketWatch.com/53028960](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/53028960)



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# See you in Atlanta



**Molly Rogers**  
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Tell us about 2022 – share your data for our annual State of the Industry for Vending and Micro Market Report. Go to [VendingMarketWatch.com/53042663](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/53042663) to access the link to the State of the Industry survey. The deadline to complete is May 16.

**WELCOME TO AUTOMATIC MERCHANDISER'S APRIL ISSUE** – our 2023 NAMA Show issue. I know we are all busy getting ready to head to Atlanta, and I'm looking forward to meeting everyone there. Be sure to stop by our booth and say hello.

In this issue's OCS column, Bob Tullio chats with a few industry leaders in the Atlanta area about dining suggestions as well as advice for operators on how to get the most out of the NAMA show. Tullio will also be sharing more tips in Automatic Merchandiser's new Vending & OCS Nation podcast, which was launched in March. If you haven't tuned in already, go to [VendingMarketWatch.com/Podcasts/VendingOCSNation](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/Podcasts/VendingOCSNation) and check it out. You'll find two new episodes a month, each under 15 minutes – it's worth a listen. Subscribe to the podcast at [vendingandocsnation.podbean.com](http://vendingandocsnation.podbean.com), so you don't miss an episode.

We've also featured in this issue the 2023 Readers' Choice New Products of the Year Awards for vending, micro market and office coffee service. Last year, we opened up the nominations for new products, readers had a chance to cast their vote, and the leaders of the pack are honored starting on page 16. If you have a product being launched this year, be sure to send it to us for next year's awards program.

We are also excited to share the winner and runners-up for the Route Driver of the Year award, presented by Mondelez. Read how this year's winner, Don Rasabout with Evergreen Refreshments, goes the extra mile for his customers and fellow route drivers, as well as the two runners-up, Matthew Schram with Crave Fresh Markets, and Matt Rhoda with Bernick's. Please join me in congratulating them for their hard work.

Then, read how pantry service is creating new opportunities for operators and some emerging product trends on page 34. And, in the operation profile starting on page 48, we turn the spotlight on Executive Refreshments, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary, and the father-and-son duo Lou and Louis say the best is yet to come.

In our June/July issue of Automatic Merchandiser, we will release our annual State of the Industry for Vending and Micro Market Report, but we can't do it without your help. Please go to [VendingMarketWatch.com](http://VendingMarketWatch.com) to find the link to the State of the Industry survey. This is a chance for vending, micro market and office coffee service operators to anonymously share your data for 2022 that we will compile and analyze to measure the industry's overall performance and present the results to our readers. We appreciate you taking the time to fill out this survey.

As always, thanks for reading and see you in Atlanta!

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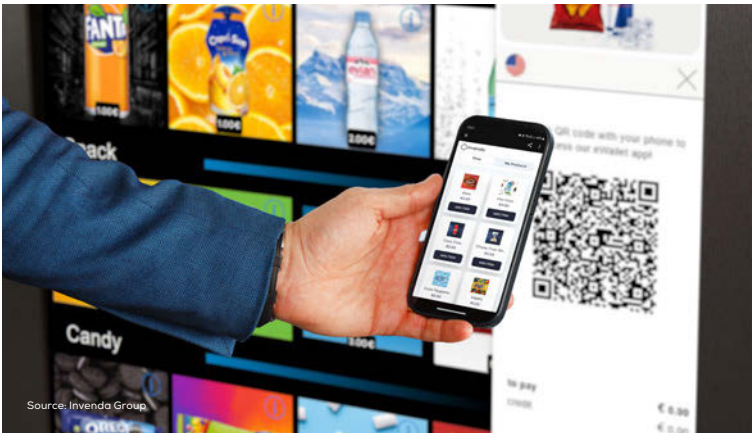


Reduce operational  
expenses



### Invenda Group raises \$19M in Series B funding

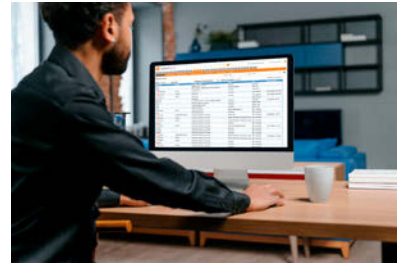
[ TECHNOLOGY ]



**INVENDA GROUP ANNOUNCED A \$19M SERIES B** financing round, led by global investor Point Break Capital Management LLC, with participation from existing investor, Mutschler Ventures AG. The new capital will support continued development of Invenda Platform’s cloud-based solutions for self-service point-of-sale (POS) devices, as well as commercial and geographic expansion in the U.S.

Invenda’s proprietary operating system, InvendaOS, leverages IoT, cloud technology and AI to maximize ROI for the automated retail industry, encompassing vending machines, smart fridges and micro market kiosks. The Invenda Platform’s full suite of software solutions include Invenda Cloud, InvendaOS and Invenda Wallet.

“Self-service POS devices are the retail industry’s sleeping giant and we’ve figured out how to wake them up,” Jon Brezinski, Invenda CEO and founder, said in the announcement. “Our end-to-end, digital solutions transform an underutilized, undervalued sales outlet into a channel with outsized ROI and advertising potential, while opening the door to immense opportunities for really engaging, fun consumer experiences. This new investment will help us continue our mission to push the boundaries of automated retail and advance its value for operators, brands, and their customers.”



### Essentially Organic adopts Cantaloupe’s Seed platform

Cantaloupe is working with Essentially Organic on the adoption of Cantaloupe’s Seed platform, which Essentially Organic plans to utilize to support its vending, micro market and office coffee service business. Based in Cleveland, Ohio, Essentially Organic is transitioning its entire operation onto the Cantaloupe Seed platform with the adoption of Seed Pro, Seed Office, Seed Markets and Seed Delivery. [VendingMarketWatch.com/53042848](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/53042848)

### Five Star Food Service acquires vending business from Biloxi’s Corso Inc.

Five Star Food Service, a franchise of Canteen, acquired vending routes from F.P. Corso Inc., an independent wholesale convenience store distributor and full-line vending operator in Biloxi, Mississippi. The acquisition grows the company’s base in the Mississippi Gulf Coast region.

[VendingMarketWatch.com/53028129](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/53028129)

### U-Select-It launches Scan & Go Market

U-Select-It (USI) announced the addition of Scan & Go Market to its family of products. Featuring a fast, easy self-checkout experience, USI’s Scan & Go Market allows operators to stock a variety of fresh food, beverages and snacks in one solution. USI’s Scan & Go Market provides product security for operators, as well as convenience for consumers who simply pay, scan and go.



[VendingMarketWatch.com/53027753](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/53027753)





**Danone North America to invest \$65M to expand production capabilities**

Danone North America announced it will invest up to \$65 million over the next two years to create a new bottle production line in Jacksonville, Florida. The capital investment helps expand production capabilities and scale key U.S. brands, including International Delight creamers, Silk plant-based creamers and Stok ready-to-drink coffee.

[VendingMarketWatch.com/53027012](https://www.vendingmarketwatch.com/53027012)

**365 Retail Markets announces licensing deal with Moblico**

365 Retail Markets (365) announced a long-term licensing deal with Kansas City-based mobile technology firm, Moblico. This agreement avails Moblico's feature-rich consumer engagement and product promotion platform technology to the 365 self-service platform.

[VendingMarketWatch.com/53042209](https://www.vendingmarketwatch.com/53042209)

**Tomer Horovitz joins ansā's board of advisors**

ansā, a pioneer in coffee-roasting technologies, announced that Tomer Horovitz has joined its advisory board. Horovitz is the former VP of Nespresso's commercial division, and VP and founder of Nespresso Professional (Israel).

[VendingMarketWatch.com/53027600](https://www.vendingmarketwatch.com/53027600)

**PayRange launches new in-app age and identity verification solution**

PayRange Inc.'s new in-app age verification solution, immi, and its accompanying hardware component,



BluCheck, extend the capabilities of existing vending machines to improve compliance and minimize underage access of 21+ products. The new device is built upon the company's BluKey mobile payment hardware. The BluCheck device has been deployed on customers' machines, available since fall 2022, and is now being readied for wider release.

[VendingMarketWatch.com/53042652](https://www.vendingmarketwatch.com/53042652)

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## *How to succeed at NAMA 2023:* **Business and culinary advice from the experts**

*By Bob Tullio, Contributing Editor*

### **THE ADVICE IN THIS COLUMN CAN BE QUITE USEFUL**

– whether you’re reading this prior to heading to Atlanta or you’re at the show itself – I’ve provided some valuable food for thought. And, speaking of food, I also asked a few Atlanta industry peeps for their best advice on what not to miss and where to eat in Atlanta. That second part, where to eat, was totally an act of selfishness.

### **GUARANTEED SUCCESS – CHECK OUT THE VENDING & OCS NATION PODCASTS**

One more important note: I am also sharing two bits of personal advice – in Automatic Merchandiser’s Vending & OCS Nation podcasts – that will guarantee operator success at the 2023 NAMA Show. I know this advice works, because for years, it worked for me. You can learn more by tuning in

to the April podcast episodes at [www.vendingmarketwatch.com/podcasts/VendingOCSNation](http://www.vendingmarketwatch.com/podcasts/VendingOCSNation). It is worth a listen.

For now, consider what some industry leaders suggest to help operators make the most of the 2023 NAMA Show, as well as dining suggestions from those in the Atlanta area (this article will make you hungry).



Arthur Siller, SVP of operations and business development at Evergreen Refreshments, Seattle area:

“I think it’s important to sit down ahead of time and look at a few things. Who is showing on the floor, what education sessions are happening and then which ones do you feel matter most to your company? I would bring people from different departments in your organization. You get those

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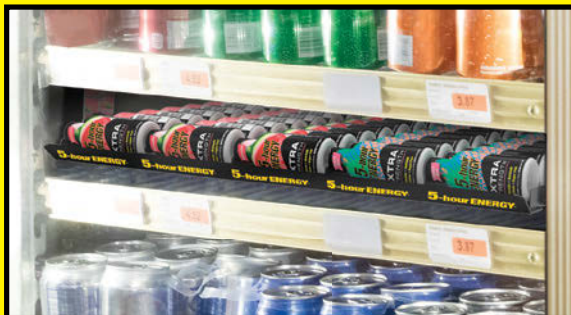


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different perspectives, and it also makes it a lot easier and simpler in terms of dividing and conquering when it comes to education sessions at the show. My approach has always been deciding which team members make the most sense to attend specific sessions, but also allowing them to choose one or two they feel passionate about.”

... **C.J. Recher, vice president of marketing for Five Star Food Service, Chattanooga:**

“Create some goals of what you want to accomplish at the show. For us, I look at the education session agenda and pick out as many as I can go to if I don’t already have set meetings. Pick up things that apply in areas that you want to learn more about. Take a look at the education agenda, pick some and make sure you attend those sessions. There’s lots of value in that. Then, check out the supplier trade show. See who’s going to be there displaying at the trade show and make sure to create a plan, who do I want to go see? Set meetings if you can.”

... **Linda Saldana, CEO of Seventh Wave Refreshments, Atlanta area:**

“I always do three things when I go to NAMA: Number one, I always try to bring in a new piece of equipment, whether it’s coffee or whether it’s technology. I want to find something new.

Number two, I try to bring in one new food item, and it doesn’t necessarily have to be a new item that I don’t know about, even though I love that. A new snack with the current

suppliers that we have is fine. Bring something in from the show. Be intentional.

The third strategy, connect with someone that I didn’t connect with before, whether it’s a supplier or an operator. I’ve gained so much mentorship from people who have been in business for 30 to 40 years.”

**Linda’s dining suggestion in Atlanta:** “The Ponce City Market area ([www.poncecitymarket.com](http://www.poncecitymarket.com)) has beautiful rooftops. They have delicious, amazing restaurants, and the views and the feel, that vibe of Ponce City Market – it’s a younger destination. Anywhere between west Atlanta and Ponce City Market, if you put it on Yelp, Ponce City Market, you’ll have a plethora of fun restaurants and activities to do.”

... **Paul Tullio, Atlanta region, coffee and pantry specialist at Five Star Food Service:**

“The first thing operators should do is get the temperature of their customers and make sure that they can accommodate their requests when they’re at the NAMA Show. There are so many different new items, but if you go in there knowing that your customer is looking for this specific type of dietary restriction or this specific size pack, you can be more targeted.”

**Paul’s dining suggestions in Atlanta:** “There’s a little place that I love called Mary Macs Tea Room – I highly recommend it ([www.marymacs.com](http://www.marymacs.com)). Very authentic and amazing Southern cuisine, with many ways to eat it. You can get a family-style if you’ve got four or five people together; they can give you these big plates of fried chicken and grits and all kinds of delicious Southern options.”

... **Evan Jarecki, co-founder of Gimme, Atlanta:**

“I think it is beneficial for sure to be there and to be able to see the new technologies. It’s the place you can bundle your educational experiences into one week but supplementing that in all of the in-between times – and I think that’s where the serendipity happens. That’s where you get a lot of what you can take back as actionable steps in your business, and usually, that happens from a conversation with a peer who’s already taking those steps.”

**Evan’s dining suggestions in Atlanta:** “One of my favorite places, and I am thinking of this in relation to where the show is physically taking place as well, is Alma Cocina ([www.alma-atlanta.com](http://www.alma-atlanta.com)). It’s a great spot. I love it.



Ponce City Market

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Another recommendation would be the Optimist for incredible seafood, cold seafood ([www.theoptimistrestaurant.com/atlanta](http://www.theoptimistrestaurant.com/atlanta)).

My choice for excellent local steakhouse: Kevin Rathbun.” ([www.kevinrathbunsteak.com](http://www.kevinrathbunsteak.com)).

 **Debbie McGaw, director of sales and OCS services at**

**Five Star Food Service, Atlanta:**

“To me, the trade shows are all about education and networking, so I would like to make sure we are all spread out. Everybody is getting a little piece of

something, and we come back together and collaborate on what we’ve learned, who we’ve met, so to me, that’s the number-one step. Meet with your team, look over the lists, look over who’s going to be there, and just have a game plan for who’s going to tackle either vendors or breakout sessions.”

**Debbie’s dining suggestions in Atlanta:** “When somebody is new to Atlanta, I like to bring them to one of the more fusion-type restaurants, which we have so many of. I’m looking for the ones that are going to have the fried chicken, fried green tomatoes, pimento cheese, all that Southern food that we’re used to, and give it a spin or a flare with other cultures.”

Her favorites: Empire State South, Rising Son ([www.risingsonavondale.com](http://www.risingsonavondale.com)), Kimball House ([www.kimball-house.com](http://www.kimball-house.com)) and The Consulate ([www.theconsulateatlanta.com](http://www.theconsulateatlanta.com)).

Debbie has one more recommendation: “The Beautiful Restaurant, if you really want to experience Atlanta Southern style. ([www.beautifulrestaurant-atlanta.com](http://www.beautifulrestaurant-atlanta.com)). It is cafeteria-style, but it is up there.” ■



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**  
Bob Tullio is a content specialist, speaker, sales trainer, consultant and contributing editor for Automatic Merchandiser and

VendingMarketWatch. He advises entrepreneurs on how to build a successful business from the ground up and specializes in helping suppliers connect with operators in the convenience services industry – coffee service, vending, micro markets and pantry service specifically. Tullio is the host of Automatic Merchandiser’s Vending & OCS Nation podcast. Tullio’s YouTube channel, b2b Perspective Channel, has also developed a loyal following. Visit [www.tullio2b.com](http://www.tullio2b.com) or email [bob@tullio2b.com](mailto:bob@tullio2b.com).

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Products of the Year

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AWARDS  
2023**

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# 2023 LEADERS OF THE PACK

Automatic Merchandiser announces  
this year's winners and honorees  
in 12 product categories.

**C**ONGRATULATIONS TO THE READERS' CHOICE AWARD WINNERS AND RUNNERS-UP in 12 categories – cold beverage, salted snack, healthy snack, protein and meat snack, equipment, cookie and pastry, candy, OCS products, food, OCS equipment, technology, and a new category introduced this year, micro market solutions.

Automatic Merchandiser would like to thank everyone who submitted a nomination for our Readers' Choice New Products of the Year Awards for vending, micro market and office coffee service, as well as to those who took the time to cast their vote for their most successful or most requested products, solutions and equipment.

The following winners and runners-up received the most reader votes as the best-selling new offerings in 2022.

## COLD BEVERAGE

### Winner: Mtn Dew Spark and Mtn Dew Spark Zero Sugar

PepsiCo's Mtn Dew launched the next huge thing in flavors: Mtn Dew Spark and Spark Zero Sugar. This innovation takes the highly popular flavor of raspberry lemonade and gives it a bold and refreshing twist. A perfect balance of tart and sweet, the new addition to the permanent flavor lineup enables Mtn Dew to continue to lead in flavored carbonated soft drinks (CSD). It shows strong appeal across demographics, especially among younger CSD drinkers, and Mtn Dew Spark specifically demonstrated strong brand and flavor connection in consumer testing.

### Runner-up: Cult Artisan Beverage Co. Plant-Based Botanical Infusions RTDs

Today's consumers are seeking healthier, better-for-you beverages, and Cult Botanical Infusions meets this growing demand. Cult's Botanical Infusions are sugar-free, caffeine-free, made with 100% all-natural ingredients with zero to 10 calories, only 1 gram of carbohydrates per 14-ounce bottle, vegan and keto friendly, no cholesterol, no preservatives, natural electrolytes and natural antioxidants. Botanical Infusions currently come in three flavors: Strawberry-Lemon Honeybush, Pomegranate Hibiscus-Rooibos and Blackberry Acai Elderberry.



Mtn Dew



Cult Artisan Beverage Co.



# SALTED SNACK

## Winner: Doritos Flamin' Hot Cool Ranch

This latest edition in the Doritos Flamin' Hot lineup from Frito-Lay, a division of PepsiCo, brings iconic heat to an all-time classic. Doritos Cool Ranch, one of the most popular Doritos flavors and a staple snack for chips fans around the world, is now stepping into the fire. Perfect for hot and spicy seekers in the salty snack category, Doritos Flamin' Hot Cool Ranch combines the classic Cool Ranch flavor with a spicy, bold crunch.

## Runner-up: Kellogg's Cheez-It Puff'd Double Cheese

This snack satisfies the senses with an irresistible crunch followed by melt-in-your-mouth cheesiness. The puffy and airy bite-sized squares are baked with 100% real cheese into every puffy cracker – double cheese means double flavor.



Doritos



Kellogg's

# HEALTHY SNACK

## Winner: OH SNAP! Spiced Pineapple Bites

Category-leading brand OH SNAP! launched more healthy goodness with new pickled fruit in a convenient single-serve pouch – gluten-free, fat-free, non-GMO – delivering more shelf life than fresh fruit. Spiced Pineapple Bites pack sweet and savory flavor in every bite with the perfect touch of heat. Over half of Americans choose to snack on the run and are looking for healthy, convenient and great-tasting options – OH SNAP! Spiced Pineapple Bites is right on point with evolving snacking behavior and delivers the tasty better-for-you snack that consumers are looking for.

## Runner-up: Del Monte Fruit Infusions

Del Monte Fruit Infusions come in three refreshing flavors to support different nutritional needs like healthy digestion, hydration and energy. Each flavor has a full serving of fruit infused with antioxidant vitamin C and delicious ingredients. With no added sugar, these fruit cup snacks make smart snacking easy.



OH SNAP!



Del Monte

# PROTEIN & MEAT SNACK

## Winner: Jack Link's Cold Crafted Mozzarella & Uncured Pepperoni Combo

Leading snack brand, Jack Link's, launched its pizzeria-inspired meat and cheese snack. The latest innovation in its successful cold-crafted refrigerated product line contains real old-world uncured pepperoni alongside a mozzarella stick made with Wisconsin cheese. Packed with 12 grams of protein and containing no added nitrates or nitrites, it is the perfect portable combo that consumers are looking for. Jack Link's is a family-owned business that grew from hard work, high-quality products, a sense of community and a little fun.

## Runner-up: Olli Salumeria Pepperoni & Mozzarella Snack Pack

New single-serve, 2-ounce Olli Salumeria Snack Pack features sliced, slow-cured pepperoni and mozzarella cheese with la panzanella crackers. It joins the line of four salami and cheese pairings including genoa and fontina; sopressata and cheddar; calabrese and asiago and prosciutto and mozzarella – all of which have 13 grams of protein.



Jack Link's



Olli

# EQUIPMENT

## Winner: Quik Pick by PepsiCo

Quik Pick's frictionless technology makes it fast and easy to grab drinks on the go. Consumers just tap, swipe or insert their card to unlock the door, then pick out (or put back) as many drinks as they like. After they shut the door, their card is charged, and they're ready to go. The ease of use and broad product assortment brings consumers back again and again. The reliable, automatic product recognition technology features 99% accuracy, limited shrink and industry-standard cashless payment. Consumers enjoy the smart tech and intuitive experience.



PepsiCo

## Runner-up: ICEBLU Freezer

The ICEBLU Freezer from Premium Product Group is a high-quality appliance perfect for those looking for maximum storage capacity and energy efficiency. Its drum spiral condenser maximizes air flow and reduces energy consumption, while its variable speed compressors offer longer life and lower cost. It has a spacious interior and durable design. The ICEBLU Freezer is ISO9001:2015 certified and manufactured in North America.



Premium Product Group

# COOKIE & PASTRY

## Winner: Tate's Bake Shop 2-count Chocolate Chip

Tate's Bake Shop's signature thin, crispy and buttery chocolate chip cookies in single-serve 2-count packages make the perfect anytime snack. Consumers can tuck a package of these scrumptious 2-count cookies into a briefcase for a great on-the-go snack. What makes Tate's Bake Shop cookies so deeply delicious? "The Bake Shop Way" started when 11-year-old Kathleen King began baking cookies to sell at her parents' farm stand. Her love of baking and dedication to quality soon made her crisp, buttery cookies legendary in Southampton and were the inspiration for what eventually became Tate's Bake Shop.



Tate's Bake Shop

## Runner-up: Kellogg's Pop-Tarts Eggo Waffle Flavor

Kellogg's debuted a new product that brings together two of the company's greatest breakfast snacks: Pop-Tarts and Eggo join forces for one delicious breakfast mashup. A flaky, buttery crust is paired with sweet, iconic maple-flavored filling with yellow icing. This toaster pastry combines all the best elements of Eggo and Pop-Tarts.



Kellogg's

# CANDY

## Winner: Haribo Twin Snakes

Sweet and sour Twin Snakes are closely coiled together in a pack of delicious gummies with flavors like Cherry & Orange, Apple & Lemon, and Blueberry & Blackcurrant. Consumers can eat them together or pull them apart for double the fun. Kids and grown-ups alike enjoy this new product from Haribo, a family business in its third generation. Haribo produces at 16 locations worldwide, providing consumers with gummies in a fun variety of shapes and flavors.



Haribo

## Runner-up: Solely Mango Passion Fruit Whole Fruit Gummies

Solely's snack-sized gummies are made from whole organic fruit, picked fresh from Solely organic farms, and crafted into gummie bites, with no added sugars, no preservatives, no added gelatins or gums and no added flavors. The 2.5-oz. stand-up pouch has a resealable closure, and hole-punched bags are perfect for micro markets.



Solely

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PAIR SO PERFECTLY WITH  
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YOUR SNACK JUST BECAME  
A MOMENT OF BLISS?



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PLATES

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16g  
PROTEIN



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## OCS PRODUCT

### Winner: Death Wish Coffee Espresso Roast

With deep notes of cocoa, caramelized sugar plus cherries, this blend is perfect for intense cups of coffee and espresso drinks. Made with carefully curated Fair Trade Sumatran and Peruvian arabica and Indian Cherry Robusta beans, Espresso Roast is a brew of otherworldly strength, brimming with espresso-like texture and depth. “Exorcise the demons of blah beans and boring routines by sipping on the next dimension of darkness.” Death Wish Coffee was founded by Mike Brown in Saratoga Springs, New York, and introduced in 2012.

### Runner-up: The J.M. Smucker Co. 1850 Liquid Coffee Horizon Blend

Flavor meets ultimate convenience with 1850 Horizon Blend, a dark-roasted, liquid-exclusive blend with unique depth and body and a smooth finish that appeals to all kinds of coffee connoisseurs. 1850 Coffee is Rainforest Alliance-certified, produced to meet the highest environmental, social and economic standards.



Death Wish  
Coffee



J.M. Smucker

## FOOD

### Winner: Jimmy Dean Omelet Minis

Jimmy Dean Omelet Minis are a protein-packed, bite-sized breakfast for a warm, convenient, on-the-go meal. The Omelet Minis come in single-serve cups and are ready in under a minute. Each cup contains two omelet bites and are made with seasoned Jimmy Dean breakfast meats, eggs and cheese. Jimmy Dean Omelet Minis come in Sausage & Cheddar and Gouda & Bacon varieties. The Sausage & Cheddar variety features pork sausage crumble, cheddar cheese, cream cheese and eggs. The Omelet Minis join Jimmy Dean's growing portfolio of delicious, satisfying bite-size breakfast options.

### Runner-up: Blue Bunny Twist Cones

New Twist Cones from Blue Bunny feature classic flavors of soft frozen dairy dessert twisted all the way to the bottom with a bonus chocolaty bite at the bottom of a crunchy cone. Flavors include Chocolate Vanilla, Strawberry Cheesecake and Chocolate Peanut Butter.



Jimmy Dean



Blue Bunny

## OCS EQUIPMENT

### Winner: The J.M. Smucker Co. Select Brew Excellence Compact Touch

Featuring a sleek, modern design with a 7-inch user-friendly screen, Excellence Compact Touch allows users to easily customize coffee drinks prepared with real milk and decadent chocolate. The state-of-the-art Select Brew dosing mechanism delivers consistent, reliable flavor that makes self-serve specialty beverages a cinch. Simplify coffee service and save counter space with the Excellence Compact Touch.

### Runner-up: Bevi The Standup 2.0

The Standup 2.0 is Bevi's internet-connected smart water cooler designed for commercial spaces. The Standup 2.0 enables users to set water temperature, mix 14 different flavors, select carbonation levels and add enhancements to create personalized beverages. The Standup 2.0 is also able to remotely monitor inventory and automatically notify a technician when the machine needs to be serviced or is running low on flavors. It also enables users to control the machine via their phone with no app required.



J.M.  
Smucker



Bevi

# TECHNOLOGY

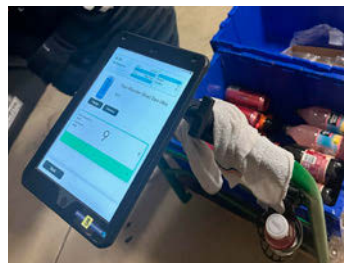
**Winner: 365Dining's MM6 Dining Kiosk**

365Dining's MM6 Dining Kiosk is a frictionless, unattended dining solution that offers customers a seamless ordering journey. The MM6, available as a countertop or freestanding kiosk, equips operators with improved tools that capture the most out of each transaction. It boasts a 22-inch display for easy menu selections and customizations, front-open maintenance access, an optional expansion unit for cash-funding accounts, plus 365Pay, Connected Campus and ADM backend compatibility. The user interface guides customers through the ordering process with product imagery, animations, transitions and suggestive selling at the right point in the ordering journey.



**365 Retail Markets**

You can find all of these products in the Product Guide at [VendingMarketWatch.com/directory](http://VendingMarketWatch.com/directory).



Gimme

**Runner-up: Gimme Mobile Picking**

Gimme Mobile Picking is a cloud-based, warehouse pre-kitting tool for tablets, allowing operators to box all product types at their warehouse before loading trucks. The tool makes it easier for warehouse staff to look at a product or image and pick the number of products they need and pre-kit on their mobile device.

Products of the Year  
**READERS' CHOICE AWARDS 2023**  
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# MICRO MARKET SOLUTIONS

## Winner: Easy Ice Subscription

An Easy Ice subscription relieves vending operators of the cost and responsibility associated with ice machines. Perfect for micro markets, an Easy Ice subscription is an ice machine rental solution that includes preventive maintenance, repairs and backup ice for an affordable monthly rate. Easy Ice makes sure every ice machine in its fleet is deep-cleaned and inspected by expertly trained technicians and repaired promptly when breakdowns occur. Easy Ice experts can help customers with choosing an ice machine model that fits their needs, preparing sites for ice machine installation, and successfully installing ice machines for maximum performance.

## Runner-up: 365's Stockwell 2.0

365 Retail Markets' Stockwell 2.0 features spacious, dual-environment and scan-less market technology that houses refrigerated and ambient products while offering consumers a frictionless micro market shopping experience. Stockwell 2.0 offers AI product recognition, eliminating product scanning, as well as PicoMarket compatibility, enabling versatile payment options including tap-to-pay, 365Pay app and traditional credit card payments.



Easy Ice



365 Retail Markets

UNIQUELY  
**CRISPY, DEEPLY  
DELICIOUS**

Products of the Year  
**READERS' CHOICE AWARDS  
2023**

Automatic Merchandiser  
Vending MarketWatch

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CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

NET WT. 1 OZ. (28 G)

2 COOKIES

**2024 Readers' Choice  
New Products  
of the Year awards**

If you are launching a new vending, OCS or micro market product in 2023 and would like to enter your product(s) for next year's awards, watch for our announcement in October on [VendingMarketWatch.com](https://www.vendingmarketwatch.com) for details on how to submit a product for the awards program. Once nominations are received, readers will have a chance to cast their vote.

Please note that all products considered for the award must be launched in 2023.

**Categories include:** Salted snack, healthy snack, protein or meat snack, cold beverage, equipment, cookie & pastry, candy, food, technology, OCS products, OCS equipment & systems, and micro market solutions.



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Whether your focus is experiences or expansion, 365 Retail Markets makes your accounts more successful. From the space-saving PicoMarket POS systems to the controlled-access PicoCooler systems, 365 has devices to address any environment and population. Small space yet wide variety? Computer-vision empowered Stockwell 2.0 offers dual climate stocking and frictionless checkout, while PayPlus cashless devices elevate vending experiences with on-screen nutritional information, promotions and versatile connectivity.



### Warehouse Management

Warehouse picking solutions that provide the tools needed to enhance warehouse operations and help control inventory. Fully integrated with Vending Management Software (VMS), on-screen product imagery and employee productivity reporting, 365's warehousing solutions maintain accurate inventory levels across systems, reduce route times and maximize warehouse space.



### Dining & Catering

The 365Dining platform offers a refreshed approach to dining experiences. By integrating end-to-end elements of the dining journey from preparation to plate, FSOs can deliver both cuisine and convenience. The 365Dining package includes point-of-sale (POS) systems, self-service kiosks loaded with consumer engagement features, kitchen order management systems, mobile ordering, food lockers, catering software, and one back-of-house management system for all your business management needs.



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# Flavia's new C300 gives operators a competitive advantage

As one of the first single-cup solutions, Flavia has emerged as a frontrunner on the strength of multiple beverage choices, including cold drink options.

By Bob Tullio

Amazingly, as a major operator in greater Los Angeles for 37 years, I never operated a Flavia unit. The more I have learned about Flavia, the more I realize that Flavia would have made my business even more valuable. As an operator today, there is no way I would operate an OCS business without Flavia. With the April launch of the new Flavia C300, Flavia is clearly an essential product for any serious operator.

## Meeting evolving needs

As one of the leading single-cup beverage solutions, Flavia has always been centered around convenience, reliability and variety. Introduced in the 1980s, Flavia elevated its game to the next level in 2020, adding cold drinks to

the Flavia product line, with the launch of the Flavia C600 + CHILL. "This was a game-changer not just because it enabled us to meet more consumer needs throughout the workday, but also because we know that, even when it comes to coffee, consumer preferences are evolving," said Nathan Route, senior associate brand manager for Flavia. "Iced coffee and cold brew are growing trends, even in the cooler months, especially with millennial and Gen Z consumers."

The new C300 expands the opportunity for operators to add cold drinks as part of the Flavia platform. "We felt the shift in consumption preferences was so important that we expanded access to Flavia cold drinks by adding Chill

Refresh technology to the new Flavia C300, which is a more compact, affordable and easy-to-use workplace brewer, perfect for medium- to large-size offices," Route said. "Now, cold drinks will be accessible, with a Chill module, across the majority of the Flavia machine portfolio. This means more variety, in even more workplaces."

## Big innovation - cold drinks

Route believes that the addition of cold drinks has been one of Flavia's biggest innovations in recent years, and the infused waters have been especially popular. Flavia currently offers Strawberry Basil and Cucumber Lime Mint infused waters in its everyday portfolio, and this month, it is launching a Yuzu Lemon infused water as a limited-edition item. "All of the infused waters are made with all-natural ingredients, no artificial colors or sweeteners, and under 15 calories," he added.

## Flavia's cold brew solution

"The Lavazza Cold Brew is also a popular item in our new cold drinks range. The technology is very unique, in order to be able to produce a cold brew coffee using ground coffee, not liquid, right from a Freshpack. It's a great option for offices looking to keep up with the cold brew coffee trend without investing in a lot of other equipment," Route noted.

The cold brew coffee market grew by 7.23% year-over-year from 2022 to 2023, according to Technavio's Global Cold Brew Coffee Market 2023-2027. This accelerated growth is largely driven by millennials and Gen Z, which make up a large portion of the workforce. The Lavazza Cold Brew Freshpack is a key product addition for operators to easily offer a cold brew option.

## Flavia's competitive advantage

Flavia has been delivering a competitive advantage for operators since it was introduced back in the 1980s.



FLAVIA



Route pointed to some of the clear benefits for operators and end users:

- **Variety** – Every workplace has one thing in common; they all need a wide variety of beverages to keep today’s employees happy. Flavia offers a variety of coffee roasts from top coffee brands including Starbucks, Peet’s and Lavazza. In addition to coffee, Flavia also offers froth and fresh in-cup milk frothing to create authentic, barista-quality lattes and cappuccinos, hot tea, hot chocolate, iced teas, iced coffee, cold brew and infused water. It’s an incredible selection.
- **Direct Brewing** – Flavia has eliminated the problem of cross-contamination, a typical issue with popular single-cup brewers. The Freshpack acts as its own brewing chamber and dispenses directly from the pack to the cup. So, every drink brews without taste, allergen or contaminant transfer.
- **Quality** – Flavia’s high-quality beverage selections are maintained by precise flavor extraction. The nozzle diffuses water, completely within the Freshpack, at exactly the right pressure and temperature, which means less water and ingredients needed, without sacrificing taste, flavor or brew strength.
- **Strong ROI** – Historically, the ROI on equipment is less than one year. The increasing use of multiple Freshpacks to make specialty drinks and the addition of cold beverages will only accelerate that trend.
- **Multiple solutions from a single source** – There are beverage options for everyone and not just coffee drinkers. Having an all-in-one beverage system saves on costs and counterspace.
- **Reliability** – Typically, when you place a Flavia system, you set it and forget. With an average time of 3+ years between service calls, Flavia brewers require less maintenance, which means less chance of germ exposure in these self-contained machines.



- **No theft issues** – Flavia is a system dedicated to the workplace. This means there are no Freshpacks leaving the office and being taken home for consumption. Plus, operators will not be facing price competition from big box stores, unlike other single-cup brewers.

### Commitment to sustainability

While sustainability is not always relevant in the world of single-serve office refreshment solutions, according to Route, Flavia is committed to being a sustainable solution, a strong selling point in today’s workplace.

“We start at the source and take care of our farming communities. Lavazza associates work yearly with our coffee or tea farming communities on a project to better their livelihoods and increase their capabilities,” Route said. “Additionally, the Lavazza family, Flavia’s owner, has a mission to fight waste, care for communities, and protect the planet. That’s why Freshpacks are 100% recyclable through TerraCycle.”

“In 2019, Flavia celebrated 10 years of the ‘Recycle Your Freshpacks Program,’ which has recycled over 156 million Freshpacks and turned the recycled materials into park benches, railroad ties, bike racks and more. The recycling program is growing

quickly because of strong customer support,” he added.

### Seeking like-minded partners

Route said that Flavia is on pace to have a huge growth year. “Our strategy is to work with operators that have a similar vision and strategy, as true partners, and extensions of our brand. We want operators who seek to offer a wide variety of beverages and high-quality brands; operators who are committed to providing exceptional beverage solutions to their clients,” he said.

### Technology as a cornerstone

“Flavia is always looking for new, creative ways to meet the changing preferences of office consumers while continuing to offer a convenient, hassle-free system. Since the introduction of the IoT system with the Flavia C600 and now the Flavia C300, technology will also continue to be a cornerstone of our innovation. This is largely because there is so much value to be leveraged by both consumers as well as our operators including consumption trends, automatic service alerts to technicians that reduces machine downtime, and restock notifications of the most popular drinks.”

**To order the Flavia C300 and Chill Refresh, contact your beverage distributor or complete a quick form on [Flavia.com](https://www.flavia.com).**

# Going the extra mile

Mondelēz and Automatic Merchandiser are pleased to recognize this year's Route Driver of the Year winner and runners-up. The program honors hardworking, innovative field personnel who remain the backbone of the vending, micro market and office coffee service industry.

*By Nick Montano, Contributing Editor*

**I**N ADDITION TO THE 500 WEEKLY ROUTE miles clocked on Seattle's notoriously congested freeways, Automatic Merchandiser's 2022 Route Driver of the Year, Don Rasabout, goes plenty of extra miles for his customers, his company, Evergreen Refreshments, and fellow route drivers.

The key to success for Evergreen, or any other vending and foodservice organization, is recruiting and retaining capable route drivers. Rasabout joined the locally owned operation just six years ago, cutting his teeth as a relief driver for vending, micro market and coffee routes. Demonstrating a knack for sales and service, he was assigned his own route after 13 months as a reliever.

Based out of Evergreen's Tukwila, Washington, branch, Rasabout quickly earned the trust and admiration of his coworkers. Evergreen is a full-line vending and breakroom refreshments provider founded more than 40 years ago by industry pioneer Jim Brinton. Brinton would later launch Avanti Markets, a separate entity, that would become a leading micro market technology company.

To prove the self-service market concept, long before Rasabout joined the operation, Evergreen deployed its first Avanti Market at a local Seattle news station. That micro market was an instant success, and the starting point for the independent vending operation's expansion that now

## Route Driver OF THE YEAR

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Don Rasabout, Evergreen Refreshments

exceeds 800 self-checkout markets serving the Seattle and Portland regions, as well as the Olympic Peninsula. The company's service standards are high, and Rasabout, a Seattle native, spends his days striving to exceed those values in the workplaces he serves.

"Don is an amazing driver who brings positive energy to the office, his fellow drivers and our customers," said Kimberly Graves, Evergreen's purchasing manager. "Don has built a rapport with his accounts where customers see him as a friend. During a recent ride-along with Don, I observed that almost every account praised him as the 'coolest guy.' Customers greet him by name. He's able to chat with them but doesn't miss a beat filling and maintaining his markets."

Among his customers he may be known as the "coolest guy," but his fellow Evergreen drivers consider him a warrior and have dubbed his itinerary the "worst route." Graves explained, "Don travels farthest through the worst traffic congestion to take care of our most demanding markets."

This winter was unusually cold and snowy for the typically mild Seattle region. Rasabout encountered snow and ice almost daily.

Rasabout's days begin before 4 a.m. with a drive on Interstate 405 to Evergreen's Tukwila office, where he prepares his RAM ProMaster 3500 cargo van for deliveries. He feeds hungry customers in a variety of industries, including aerospace, engineering, health care and technology.

Rasabout looks for new ways to please customers, thus improving sales. "He goes out of his way to make sure the markets look great, and he will go back if the service visit doesn't meet his standards," Graves said. "The job is not done until every stop meets his expectations. At the end of the day, he's the guy who jumps in to help unload a freight truck or assist a fellow driver who might be behind on their route."

In only six years, Automatic Merchandiser's Route Driver of the Year winner has worked his way up from relief driver, servicing all types of vending machines, to becoming one of Evergreen's best micro market experts. He can



Don Rasabout goes the extra mile for Evergreen Refreshments' hungry customers.

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maintain and troubleshoot Avanti kiosks and Pico smart coolers, among other unattended retail systems.

“Don is not the best because his sales are high, but rather the best because he has relationships with his accounts, he cares about them and he makes sure all of their needs are met,” Graves said. “He works fast and with purpose but still takes the time to do the job right.”

For his part, Rasabout advises other drivers to be alert, listen and engage with customers. “I always carry extra cleaning supplies, keep high-contact points like kiosk screens clean, and I use a professional-looking toolbox when repairs are needed,” he said.

When it came to nominating an Evergreen Refreshments driver for Automatic Merchandiser’s award, Graves said that all the company’s drivers deserve to be recognized. But Don Rasabout stood out most because he most exemplifies Evergreen’s values of personalized and quality service.

## Route Driver OF THE YEAR RUNNERS-UP

### MATTHEW SCHRAM, CRAVE FRESH MARKETS

Matthew Schram goes above and beyond in the workplace. Whether it is upselling his accounts on Crave Fresh Markets’ coffee service or expanding a pantry market, Schram is always looking for ways to help the customer and help the business. He creates the ultimate breakroom experience for his customers by ensuring they have adequate pars, great and rotating product selection and that they feel welcomed when shopping from his markets. Schram runs one of Crave Fresh Markets’ largest micro market routes and is always coming back to the team with ways to improve.

“Matt is passionate about the industry and has shown outstanding effort in learning what it takes to become the preferred vendor in our territory,” said his nominator. “He has built relationships and gives his customers the experience they deserve. Matt is well-deserving of this award as he continues to go above and beyond. Matt is the driver all companies need when they experience hard times or good times. His passion to excel in the industry is hard to come by.”

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**MATT RHODA,  
BERNICK'S**

Matt Rhoda has been with Bernick's for about 7.5 years. He started in October 2017 at the Waite Park Minnesota location and eventually transferred up to the Brainerd, Minnesota, area shortly after.

"Bernick's has been a great company to work for, and I'm very excited to see how I can continue to learn, grow, and teach others about what Bernick's offers," Rhoda said.

Rhoda met his wife, Kaitlyn, in Brainerd, and they wanted to place roots there. It also happens to be Rhoda's hometown, so he already knew the area well. For the Brainerd area route, Rhoda usually puts in a total of 200-300 miles per week.



Route Driver of the Year runner-up, Matt Rhoda, Bernick's

"Matt focuses on every customer... from the smallest to the largest," said his nominator. "He watches to see what they are purchasing and what they are not purchasing. If there is a product that spoils out, Matt will

look for a replacement to try for that customer. If there is an account where they like energy drinks, Matt will look at putting in more or greater variety of energy drinks to satisfy the needs of the customer at that account.

"I am always getting positive comments from customers on what a great job Matt does. It is a pleasure to nominate Matt for Route Driver of the Year, and even if he doesn't win the award for route driver of the year, he is still the route driver of the year in my books," added his nominator.

Rhoda currently serves on the local Brainerd Jaycees board of directors and the State Junior Chamber International board of directors.

"Bernick's has been extremely supportive of my work in our community," Rhoda added. ■



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# Innovation leader Mick Ebeling to keynote The NAMA Show 2023

Mick Ebeling, founder and CEO of Not Impossible, will be the opening keynote during the general session at The NAMA Show 2023. The annual event will be held in Atlanta, GA, May 10-12, and is expected to draw more than 3,500 operators, suppliers, exhibitors and industry professionals from around the country.

Recently named by Fortune magazine as one of the Top 50 World's Greatest Leaders, a recipient of the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian of the Year Award and listed as one of the world's most influential creative people by The Creativity 50's, Mick Ebeling has sparked a movement of pragmatic, inspirational innovation. As a career producer and filmmaker and now founder and CEO of Not Impossible, Ebeling harvests the power of technology and story to change the world.

Ebeling founded Not Impossible, a multiple award-winning social innovation lab and production company, on the premise that nothing is impossible. His mantra of "commit, then figure it out" allows him to convene a

disparate team of hackers, doers, makers and thinkers to create devices that better the world by bringing accessibility for all. Working with a wide array of Fortune 500 companies, Ebeling not only pushes the bar on innovation, he also shares the emotionally resonating story of doing so.

Join NAMA as Ebeling speaks about Industrial Revolution 2.0 – it's the next turning point in human history and we're right in the middle of it. Industrial Revolution 2.0 has been about the birth, adolescence, and young adulthood of the Internet. It's been about communicating, relating, evaluating, and buying. From social media to the Maker Movement, this "revolution" has shifted the way we live, work, and interact with one another.

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# Is pantry service still your golden goose?

After the concept emerged from the Silicon Valley over 20 years ago, pantry service is evolving, creating new opportunities and some interesting challenges for operators.

By Bob Tullio, Contributing Editor



**A**ROUND THE YEAR 2000 DURING THE DOT-COM boom, I recall being amazed when I first heard about the concept of a full-blown pantry service. While operators were seeing corporate dining rooms, special-occasion beverage deliveries, and maybe some free crackers delivered usually for executive consumption only – the idea of free snacks and beverages for the rank-and-file employees was a rarity.

Pantry service was seen as the golden goose. Thanks to this incredible concept from the Silicon Valley, we were suddenly generating five-figure monthly invoices for beverage and snack delivery, with limited competition. Over 20 years later, now in the post-pandemic era, operators are still attracted to pantry service, despite several challenges that have emerged, including endless product requests, an extreme variety of dietary concerns, stressed-out budgets, predatory pricing, competition from

big box stores and the mystery of how to service locations on a hybrid work schedule.

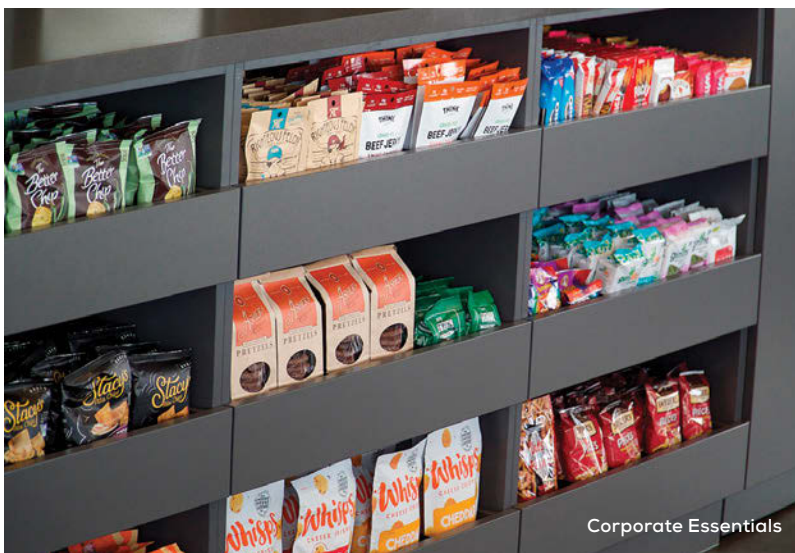
Despite these challenges, pantry service business is still coveted by operators and is increasingly important to their clients.

William Mandile, director of customer experience at Marché in the New York metropolitan area, said that there is an increasing flow of employees coming back to the office in 2023, as many companies are upping the number of mandatory in-office days. “Every company is different, but a lot of companies we work with are looking to create a mindset to get people to want to come back to the office,” he said. “Pantry service and creating a communal setting in the breakroom is one way to do that.”

## PANTRY SERVICE AESTHETICS AND DECOR

To create that communal feeling, free product alone is not enough, said David Carroll, president/owner of Seventh Wave Refreshments in the Atlanta area. According to Carroll, his company has put an increased focus on breakroom aesthetics, something that was not always a consideration when setting up a pantry service.

“We used to put in some racks and some plastic containers, and we thought we were good to go,” Carroll said, as he compared what operators spend on micro markets, as opposed to what they spend on pantry service locations. He pointed out that it does not make sense for an operator to spend thousands on fixtures for a micro market account that does



Corporate Essentials

\$1,000 a week and then be reluctant to spend money on the aesthetics of a pantry service account that does \$50,000 a month.

Carroll said that Seventh Wave Refreshments has taken a different approach from the beginning, adding high-end fixtures and furniture to enhance the look of the pantry service breakroom.

Mandile has seen his company’s approach to pantry service move in the same direction. “We’re buying specialized bowls and specialized racks,” he said. “We’re shopping at Crate and Barrel for displays because these clients are spending tons of money on aesthetics, and the last thing you really want is for a driver to open a box, rip the top off and leave it on a counter. It happens, we see it out there when we are visiting a potential new account.”

**PANTRY SERVICE AND CORPORATE CULTURE**

“What hasn’t changed in pantry service is the need for niche items or specific products that align with the company’s values or their culture – that’s stronger than ever,” said Arthur Siller, SVP of operations and



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business development at Evergreen Refreshments in the greater Seattle area. “So, just like we focused on before the pandemic, we still have to put a lot of attention to making sure we can bring in the right items for the right customers and satisfy their needs quickly.”

One encouraging development in corporate culture is a move by some blue-collar locations toward pantry service. C.J. Recher, vice president of marketing for Five Star Food Service in Chattanooga, sees multiple reasons for this shift. “We’ve had manufacturing facilities that



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have taken on some pantry-style programming to help recruit people to come work for them,” said Recher. “They are using our services to be creative, to get people in and keep them in – to stop turnover.”

### EMERGING PRODUCT TRENDS

Debbie McGaw, director of sales and OCS services at Five Star Food Service, is seeing several pantry service product trends in the greater Atlanta area, such as a rising

concern for sustainability, including ingredients and packaging and how that’s affecting the environment.

“Healthier snack choices, going beyond the calorie count ...

Customers are talking about low or no added sugar, no artificial ingredients. They are taking the time to seek out healthier, higher-quality snacks and beverages,” said McGaw.

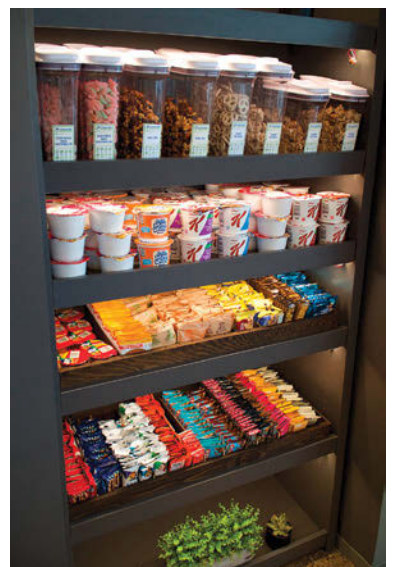
“The biggest trend I’m seeing right now in the pantry world is in beverage choices,” McGaw continued. “There is strong interest in healthy, alternative energy drinks and functional waters –

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### BULK IS BACK

When the pandemic hit, bulk sales disappeared and were replaced by packaged products. Judson Kleinman's operation, at Corporate Essentials in New York, was committed to bulk snack products and had the concept down to a science. For Kleinman and other operators who sell bulk snacks, that portion of their business is up and running again.

Kleinman said that even though no one is talking about touchless anymore,



Corporate Essentials

bulk snacks in pantry service are experiencing a slow recovery, but he is optimistic, because bulk snacks make sense for all the right reasons. "I just think it's a matter of time before the bulk snacks come back," he said. "There's a huge sustainability factor

in it. You're not using all that extra packaging and there is the convenience of it and the cost. I do think it's going to come back strong. We still are very hopeful that we see much more of a comeback during 2023."

### THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Seattle-based Siller believes there is more competitive pressure on margins than ever before, largely because it is becoming easier for clients to source pantry service products from big box stores and the internet. He said operators need to differentiate themselves in the variety of products they carry and the variety of products that they actually have access to. "It doesn't do you any good to say you can bring in an item if it's really difficult for you to source," Siller noted.

"What is most important is demonstrating the level of service you can provide – that they just can't get if they're sourcing the products themselves, online or through a third party," Siller said. "People still care about service. When it comes to pantry service, that's where we get a competitive advantage. If it was easier and better to do it themselves, they all would do it that way, but most have figured it out. They realize it is a lot easier to rely on a company with staff, equipment, expertise and the resources to manage their pantry service." ■

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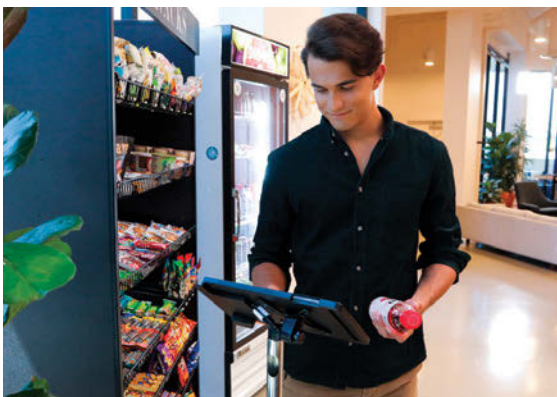


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## OPERATION PROFILE



Father-and-son duo, Lou and Louis Baresh, say the best is yet to come for automatic retailing as they celebrate Executive Refreshments' 20th anniversary.

All photos courtesy of Executive Refreshments

# YES, WE CAN!

Texas' Executive Refreshments blazes a trail in workplace refreshments.

By Emily Cambriello, Contributing Editor

### EXECUTIVE REFRESHMENTS IS CELEBRATING ITS

20th year with the wisdom gleaned through the test of time and relentless pursuit of the ever-advancing possibilities ahead. The father-and-son duo who lead the business credit their decades of success to their versatility, personality and an emphasis on respect and integrity.

In 2003, Lou Baresh had recently retired from a 30-year career as a regional sales director with General Mills. "But I had a few days left in my life," he quipped. "So, I decided to open up a business. I didn't know exactly what it would be. I had been doing some research on various businesses and, quite honestly, not anything to do with vending, just

different industries, because I knew I was going to do something afterwards."

Like many, Lou didn't seek out vending – vending found him. A friend introduced him to a San Antonio-based vending operator, and Lou was immediately hooked. "I said 'yes, this kind of sounds interesting,'" he recalled. "It was a fit. I had been in the food industry. I didn't understand vending per se, or the actual equipment side of it, but it didn't sound like it would be foreign."

Then, by chance, Lou ran into someone who happened to be in the industry. The conversation led Lou to an operator with a small OCS route who was willing to sell.



Despite having almost no industry knowledge, Lou jumped on the opportunity.

“I said, what the heck? I don’t even understand OCS; I don’t understand vending. So what? Let’s see what happens.” Lou bought out the operator’s handful of customers and then found himself swimming solo in the deep end of his new venture.

“The previous owner worked with me for about three weeks and said, ‘You’re on your own.’ And I said, ‘Well, how do you find new customers? How do you do this?’” So, Lou bought a box truck, rented a storage unit and got to work.

Aside from building his business with a handful of referrals, Lou spent the bulk of his time making cold calls. He was a one-man show, driving his

box truck, making deliveries, and meeting with potential customers. “I would run the route. If I had an appointment, I’d have my dress clothes with me,” he reminisced. “I’d stop somewhere, change clothes and go to the appointment.”

After four months, Lou hired his first employee, who handled the bookkeeping so the fledgling operator could focus on sales, while both continued to run their respective routes.

Lou credits much of Executive Refreshments’ success to slow, steady growth. The company never leveraged credit or went into debt and, to this day, has remained debt-free. “I must have some angels watching out for me, but the growth was at a level where I could afford to pay for things as I went,” Lou commented.

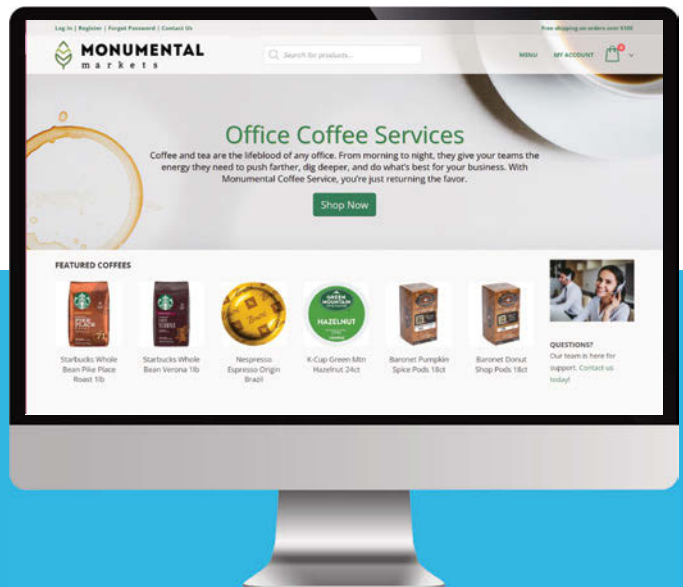


Delivery driver Isiah restocks an Executive Refreshments micro market.



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## OPERATION PROFILE

### Executive Refreshments

**Founded:** 2003

**Headquarters:** Dallas

**Website:**  
executiverefreshments.com

**Number of routes:** 7

**Number of vending machines:** 150+

**Number of micro markets:** 50

**Vending machine suppliers:**  
AVS

**Micro market equipment suppliers:** Fixturelite, Frameworks Displays, CoolBlu Coolers, 365 Retail Markets

**Technology providers:** 365 Retail Markets, Panoptyc, Cantaloupe, Tech 2 Success, OptConnect

**Distributors:** Ben E. Keith Foods, Vistar, Coke, Pepsi, Keurig Dr Pepper, Lavazza, Massimo Zanetti

For nearly a decade, Executive Refreshments continued as a two-man show. With a solid foundation, Lou decided to bring on a few salespeople to handle cold call and referral volume.

Lou says that his biggest hurdle entering the convenience service space was learning to service and repair the myriad of machinery and equipment on the fly. "I had no knowledge about vending in particular and had no expertise in coffee brewers. But I took on anything," he recalled.

Until 2014, micro markets were not even on Lou's radar, and vending represented only a fraction of Executive Refreshments' business; OCS accounted for the lion's share. Being adaptable and open to the growing trends, Lou began expanding and diversifying his convenience services. By 2015, Executive Refreshments' breakdown was approximately 60% OCS, 30% micro markets and 10% vending. Incorporating micro markets into the company's offerings only set the stage for what was yet to come ... and what's ahead.



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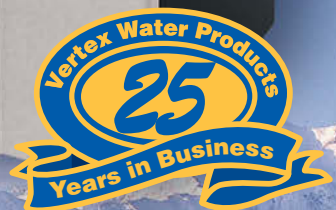
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Crowd lines up for lunch at Executive Refreshments customer appreciation event, featuring catered food, ice cream trucks and barista bars.

### LOUIS JOINS THE TEAM

In April 2020, Lou brought on his now 26-year-old son, Louis, as his right-hand man. Although they share the same name, the father-son duo settled on a distinction between the two. “My father’s real name is Louis, but

he prefers to go by Lou. My parents named me Louis, and I liked the name, so I go by Louis,” the younger operator joked.

The plan was always to bring Louis into the business, but his father insisted he first get experience so he

could “bring something to the table” and be certain that joining Executive Refreshments truly aligned with his career goals.

Upon graduating from Oklahoma State University with a degree in business management, Louis began a career with Ben E. Keith, a regional food and beverage distributor based in the Dallas/Fort Worth area in Texas. Working as a sales representative and then as a supply chain analyst, Louis developed a thorough understanding of food and beverage sales and distribution. Laid off at the beginning of the pandemic, Louis was armed with the skillset and passion to join his father’s business.

Louis is now pursuing his MBA at Southern Methodist University, and he is an Automatic Merchandiser 40 Under 40 Award recipient, which recognizes young professionals who are making a difference in the convenience services industry.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many operators were concerned for the future of the vending industry – and rightfully so. But Louis only saw huge potential. “I always tell people that it was the best time to join the industry when everything shut down,” he said.

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Delivery driver Tyrone restocks a vending machine on one of Executive Refreshments’ seven routes.

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, the OCS industry was in a state of disarray, as workers were sent home and office doors were closed. While others panicked, Lou doubled-down in pursuit of new opportunities. “We didn’t put our head in the sand and get afraid,” he commented. “Whenever there are things that are upsetting, or uncertain, there are opportunities.”

While many of the large players in the industry scaled back their operations, Executive Refreshments dove into the fire head-first and sought to fill the gaps that were created in the market. “We could turn and be very nimble and offer things that our competitors weren’t doing,” according to Lou.

That opportunity was micro markets and pantries. “With COVID, micro markets and pantries really began to gain steam,” Louis reflected. “That’s where our business has grown. It has sustained us through COVID, and since then, our business has taken off.”

Lou and Louis channeled all their focus on expanding deeper into the micro market sector and proved to be a powerful team. “When Louis came to work for me, he made a tremendous difference. My sales organization is much stronger,” the senior operator declared. “On the marketing side, it’s the same thing.”

By taking over the day-to-day of sales and marketing operations, while bringing on new-school methods and practices, Louis freed up his father to focus on the big-picture and long-term growth of the company.

One of their first micro markets installed as a direct result of the pandemic was in an office space that previously had a cafeteria. After COVID, the office downsized from 1,000 to 700 staff members, and only 15% of staff were participating in the cafeteria. Executive Refreshments stepped in and pitched its micro



Executive Refreshments customizes each micro market to individual locations with the help of proven suppliers, including CoolBlu Coolers, Fixturelite shelving and 365’s PicoMarket self-checkout kiosk, shown above.

market model, which proved to be a great success.

#### **FOLLOW THE MONEY**

To continue growing through 2020 and beyond, Lou knew that he had to

identify which sectors of the economy were still alive. He pitched his services to essential businesses and secured substantial new locations in that segment. The operators also worked to integrate an online ordering system,



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Operations manager David readies equipment for installation in new market.

which brought in significant leads and website traffic.

As workers returned to the office, Executive Refreshments heavily targeted the tech sector, which boomed throughout the duration of the pandemic. “There were a lot of tech firms that were so flushed with cash that they were spending beaucoup money to keep their employees happy,” Louis recalled.

Executive Refreshments prides itself on offering a huge variety of products to meet customers’ exact wants and needs. “It’s a big differentiator. We’re willing to go out of our way to make sure that we’re getting the products that our customers will want,” Louis said. “And I always tell a potential customer, if there’s something that’s not on there

that you want, let me know what it is and let me see what I can do. If I can’t find it, I’ll send them an Amazon link or something. I want to make sure that they’re able to get what they want.”

### CORE VALUES

Executive Refreshments’ exemplary customer service speaks to its core values. From their customers to their employees, the operators place respect above all else. “We always want to have honesty and integrity, and treat everybody with respect,” Louis proclaimed. “And everything else follows behind that. Of course, we want to be profitable and successful; but if we do all those things, it will happen.”

This translates into how they run their business. The operators entrust each of their seven route drivers to



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“We tell each driver to run their route like it’s your own company,” Lou remarked. “So they take a lot of pride in what they’re doing and make sure they’re offering good service, even if it’s just as simple as dropping off an order.”

Louis sees a tremendous benefit in each of Executive Refreshments’ drivers covering all facets of the business at each of their stops: office coffee service, micro markets, vending and pantry service.

“It’s a huge advantage, especially in the selling process. Everybody else in this market area, including the really big guys, has all these different drivers,” he pointed out. “And I tell our potential

customers, ‘Hey, you’re going to have one driver who’s going to do your micro market, your coffee and your vending.’ They love that because they know that they’re going to be there servicing everything so they’re not waiting around for another person.”

### RISING COSTS

With today’s rapid inflation, the rising cost of goods, food and shipping has created severe challenges for the vending industry. Lou knows the only way to continue thriving in this rapidly changing world is to – as Executive Refreshments has always done – adapt.

“We try to give very fair pricing,” Louis said. “And my big concern is at what point would the sticker be so high that the consumer stopped buying? I don’t know what’s coming down the

road; but the surprising thing is, knock on wood, we’ve been able to pass on those advances in our pricing to our customers and the consumers.”

He attributes customers’ willingness to absorb their share of price hikes passed down through the supply chain to its simple yet enticing offering: Executive Refreshments offers high-quality, ready-made food and beverages at a reasonable price, competitive with supermarket and convenience store prices, with products delivered right to the customer’s doorstep and customized and merchandised to their specific tastes.

### THE NITTY GRITTY

Executive Refreshments has grown swiftly and steadily since its conception, with a team today of 20 employees

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and seven routes with a full suite of services including vending, coolers, fresh food, pantry service, water and filtration, ice, coffee service, and janitorial services.

Still, OCS remains the bread and butter for Executive Refreshments. The operators place a large emphasis on providing first-rate coffee, which is reflected in their customers' rave reviews. They work with Distant Lands Coffee, a roaster based in Tyler, Texas, to provide coffee to their customers' specifications. "We let the customer make that decision. A lot of operators want to push their coffee, but whatever the customers want, we're going to get for them," Louis said.

Their go-to bean-to-cup coffee machine is the Zia by De Jong DUKE, which is easy to clean, has a sleek design and a user-friendly interface. For espresso, they use the fully automatic Sego-12 by Bravor, which has a small footprint, intuitive touchscreen and easy maintenance.

Executive Refreshments' point-of-sale software of choice for its micro markets is 365 Retail Markets' solution. On the backend, the operators use Seed by Cantaloupe, and Cantaloupe credit card readers have proven top-rate for transactions.



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## 'SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE SMARTER THAN YOU'

Louis will be the first one to admit if he lacks knowledge on a particular subject. For this reason, he surrounds himself with experts to achieve his goals, including working with a restaurant consultant to implement cutting-edge hot food technology and menu items in Executive Refreshments' offerings.

"I'm not an expert in that field," Louis said. "But you partner with these people who are experts, and you form very close relationships, and they're going to help you because you're going to help them be successful at the end of the day."

The same holds true for partnering with brokers. "The brokers, and the manufacturers that they represent, carry a lot of knowledge. We should be listening to the information they're bringing to us," Lou emphasized. "We should be partnering with them to help us as operators grow our business, and they can provide a lot of dollars and resources if you reach out to them."

By fostering relationships with large distributors, brokers and suppliers, Executive Refreshments takes advantages of rebates and special promotions to pass along to its customers as well as provide a diverse and innovative product offering. "And they'll give you a lot of free sporting event tickets and stuff," Louis added. "Why not enjoy that?"

Lou believes the vending industry could benefit tremendously by following the lead of the innovative tactics, products and technologies used by other retail sectors.

"This industry is probably 20 years behind on understanding category management, shelf management, new product opportunities, and how to market," Lou stressed.

He attends trade shows such as the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) Show; NACS (National Association of Convenience



Louis, Lou and customer service director Betty attend NAMA events to keep up with industry trends.



Stores) and the National Retail Federation Big Show, which brings together retail technology innovators, industry experts, brands and retailers. These shows adjacent to the industry put cutting-edge technology on display, much of which could be applicable to the vending space.

**MOVING FORWARD**

Louis has a grand vision for the future of Executive Refreshments. He views the ever-evolving family business as an all-encompassing unattended retail company and is working to grab space in any market where the model can be applied. As the cost of goods and labor skyrockets, Louis sees the demand for unattended retail burgeoning.

Executive Refreshments is looking to move past its traditional customer base of offices and warehouses. Its visionary leaders see opportunities for micro markets in apartments, universities and hospitals, where the biggest challenge is security. They are constantly researching



Warehouse pro Obuke prekits orders to streamline deliveries for Executive Refreshments' seven routes.

advanced technological solutions to make these markets less vulnerable to pilferage in public sites.

Looking at the next 20 years on the horizon, Lou will continue to do what he has always done: find what the customer wants, and find a way to provide it. "Whenever we go into a location, I'll sell anything. You want this? Why not? We can find it." ■

# Marketplace

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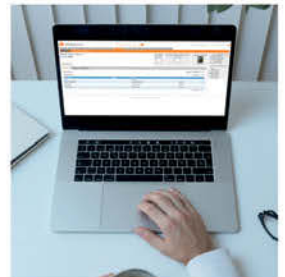
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