

The Mix in the Melting Pot

American mealtime options are as diverse as ever. While Chinese, Italian and Mexican foods remain the "Big Three," other ethnic cuisines are entering the mix. As food varieties expand, manufacturers are awakening to the vast opportunities.

William A. Roberts, Jr., Business Editor

While Hispanic flavors and foods may have mainstream appeal, the Hispanic demographic is powerful and growing. The group is the largest minority in the U.S. and is expected to account for 24% of the country by 2050. Present-day Hispanics hold a sizable degree of purchasing power (see sidebar "La Energia"), estimated at \$700 billion by *Hispanic Business* magazine (Santa Barbara, Calif.). As such, it may be surprising to some that many categories have yet to tap the potential of this group.

Jim Corcoran, vice president of the National Confectioners Association (Vienna, Va.), believes, "There is no bigger opportunity for confectionery manufacturers today (than the Hispanic population)," and certain manufacturers are responding. While Atkinson Candy Co. (Lufkin, Texas) and Pop Rocks Inc. (Falls Church, Va.) have made tentative moves into Hispanic candies, Hershey Foods Corp. (Hershey, Pa.) has introduced a line of sweets targeting the demographic. "With over 40 million Hispanics influencing all areas of American culture—from food to music to fashion—and with purchasing power of \$630 billion, the U.S. Hispanic market represents a tremendous growth opportunity," explains Thomas K. Hernquist, senior vice president and chief marketing officer with Hershey.

To appeal to the group, aside from a multi-year marketing agreement with Latina entertainer Thalía Sodi, Hershey



The primary focus of Nueva Cocina's (Miami) line is the mainstream consumer, but an important secondary target is second- and third-generation Hispanics who grew up eating this cuisine but do not have the time or know-how to cook.

has developed a line of products tailored to Hispanic tastes. Expanding its Jolly Rancher line, La Dulceria Thalia features Frutas Enchiladas Spicy Fruit & Chili Lollipops in three flavors: lime, mango and tamarind. La Dulceria Thalia Hershey's Kisses are made with white chocolate and filled with *dulce de leche*, while the Cajeta Elegancita Candy Bar consists of wafer sticks layered with *cajeta*-flavored creme and drizzled with milk chocolate.