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Dempster's campaign aims to counter demonization of bread

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Humorous online ads hope to convince moms – and dieters – that bread is not the bad guy

A little girl in pigtails was giving comedian Gerry Dee a look of disgust.

During *Candid Camera*-style filming for a new commercial, Mr. Dee posed as a camp counsellor, handing out "grilled-cheese sandwiches" made with two globs of wilted spinach standing in for the bread. When he asked what she would prefer to eat, the little girl replied, "A peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich with real bread." In an adjoining room, monitoring the video feed, the team behind Dempster's newest campaign erupted in cheers.

The campaign, which launches Wednesday, is a significant digital investment by Canada Bread, the subsidiary of Maple Leaf Foods Inc. that oversees the Dempster's line. Its goal is to convert consumers to that little girl's way of thinking: that bread is a desirable part of their meals.

It is not a good time to be a purveyor of bread. The bestseller *Wheat Belly*, and a good slice of the larger dieting brain trust have all declared that bread – even whole wheat bread, depending on whom you believe – is tantamount to a drug that breeds dependence, and ruins our health and waistslines.

"As a brand, it's our responsibility to mention why bread is good for you. While there's a lot of attention in the media around the demonizing of bread and carbs, bread is part of a healthy diet and there are a lot of nutrients," said Maple Leaf's director of digital and social marketing, Jerry Sen.

Dempster's has already launched this effort with its TV advertising: A current commercial by agency JWT Canada pushes a wholesome image, with a "bread farmer" pulling a bagged whole-grain loaf from the ground. The ad talks about bread's vitamin content, saying that it can help you to "maintain your weight and eat well."

The online campaign, by Toronto agency Cundari, is Maple Leaf's first major foray into video in social media, Mr. Sen said. The kids video will launch in the spring, but the campaign will kick off with another candid video featuring Mr. Dee working the counter at a juice bar,¹ offering people vitamin additives and then stuffing bread slices into the smoothies of those who accept. The 90-second videos featuring Mr. Dee will be posted on a new Dempster's website and Facebook page, and will run as preroll ads that play before videos on YouTube. They will use the site's "TrueView" ad format, which allows viewers to skip after five seconds if they are not entertained.

A major purchase of ad space online, on Facebook, in mobile display and through search engine results will all direct consumers to a new website Cundari has created, which will also feature the videos, recipes, and a quiz about bread's nutritional value.

This is not the first time such a marketing push has been required. A decade ago, the rise in popularity of diets such as Atkins, South Beach and the Zone convinced dieters that the key to weight loss was a high-protein, low-carbohydrate food regimen. That sparked a marketing response:

A number of bread makers, including Dempster's, released "low-carb" breads. Now, sales of *Wheat Belly* and wider concerns about gluten intolerance are reinvigorating the anti-bread sentiment.

Last May, at a meeting of the Baking Association of Canada, departing chairman Pete Plaizier spoke² of the major shift in consumer perceptions of food – and the unprecedented view that bread makers are no longer seen as "good guys."

The Dempster's ad spend will spike this month, a key post-new-year period when people are thinking about their diets. Advertising spending on this initiative will continue throughout the year, with at least one more heavy-spending period yet to be decided. Like many marketers, Maple Leaf will be spending more on digital marketing this year.

"Our target market, moms, they're online," Mr. Sen said. "They're spending a lot of time in social networking and we know it's a place where we have a captive audience."

To capture that audience, many of the online ads will be placed on lifestyle websites and other content associated with the target market.

Cundari won the tender for the digital campaign last fall, and continues to work with the brand on future digital projects. "We're really psyched that Dempster's was brave enough to do something like this. We didn't expect them to. They wanted to do something different," group creative director Cory Eisentraut said, adding that the use of humour is key in digital marketing. Online viewers are more demanding, and need a reason to sit through a company's video.

Mr. Eisentraut is hoping that the antics will make the audience receptive to the ads' main message: "Maybe bread is not the devil."

Media & Marketing

PERSUASION

Kneading in some feel-good

Processed food makers are adding vegetables and fruit to a variety of products as consumers trend to healthier eating



MAPLE LEAF FOODS

SUSAN KRASHINSKY
MARKETING REPORTER

Wheat fields, kitchen tables, and moms gazing approvingly at their sandwich-eating children: the conventions of bread advertising are well entrenched. But figure-conscious fashion models and bread products, usually, do not mix.

Nevertheless, that's the scenario offered up in the newest ad from Dempster's bread, which features models on set approvingly munching on formerly forbidden carbs. The ad was started to promote a new product development that is part of a major marketing program at Dempster's, designed to make people think differently about the much-maligned wheat product.

On Monday, Dempster's launched its new Garden Vegetable Bread, flecked with pieces of carrot and pumpkin. It is the latest move in a trend of food marketers promoting products with nutritional extras hidden inside. Mott's line of apple sauce and other blended fruit cups has added Fruitsations + Veggies, which it advertises as an "undercover" source of vegetables for kids. Kraft Foods Group Inc. has KD Smart, which promotes the cauliflower blended into its macaroni and cheese.

As consumers become more pressed for time, food companies are seeing the power of advertising easy ways to sneak nutritional benefits into their day.

"It's definitely a trend. All of us don't have enough time to plan, to manage, to prepare foods that give us the full range of benefits," said Connie Morrison, senior vice-president of marketing for Fresh Bakery at Canada Bread, a subsidiary of Maple Leaf Foods Inc., which markets the Dempster's line.

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Canada Bread

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The campaign, however, targets a wider consumer group as well. Unlike Kraft or Mott's, which emphasize that hidden vegetables can fool picky kids into eating healthy, the Dempster's ad tackles a bigger problem: weight-conscious adults who have negative perceptions about bread.

In the TV spot, a woman at a fashion show asks another model, incredulously, "Are you eating a sandwich?" Once the product is explained, the two women enthusiastically partake together.

"Seeing the disconnect of models together with sandwiches creates a visual tension and makes you look and think twice," said Brent Choi, chief creative and innovation officer at Dempster's ad agency, JWT Canada.

In fact, because the ad is such a sharp departure from the wheat field imagery and other conventions of the category (which JWT has also used in Dempster's ads in the past), the team was hesitant to pitch it to the client.

But it fits into a strategy the company has been pushing for roughly a year now to counter bread's bad rap.

For example, earlier this year, Canada Bread's digital ad agency, Cundari, launched a campaign featuring comedian Gerry Dee emphasizing bread's nutritional benefits. The company's consumer tracking studies have shown an improvement in sentiment toward bread in the past six months, Ms. Morrison said, and sales in the commercial bread category as a whole in Canada are seeing slower declines.

The new ad concludes with a male crew member eating a salad and marvelling at his colleague's sandwich as well — a sign of just how widespread the suspicion over bread has become. Canada Bread is hoping that tapping into the wider trend of built-in nutritional extras will help in its efforts to combat that suspicion.

"We still see a lot of consumers talking about gluten free, 'carbs are bad,' 'bread makes you fat,'" Ms. Morrison said. "We're trying to turn it on its head."

Indeed, many marketers are attempting to fortify their products as scores of dieting books, nutrition advice on television and online, and the implicitly judgmental missives of celebrity lifestyle guru Gwyneth Paltrow make consumers wary of a wider array of foods. While carbs from bread used to be the biggest evil, many dieters have turned their attentions to sugar as well, lending a sinister air to that wholesome glass of orange juice.

PepsiCo Inc., which owns Tropicana, launched the Tropicana Essentials line of juices that advertise extra calcium and vitamin D, in 2002. It also launched the Tropso line of juices with less sugar and calories, and has recently launched a version with the same nutritional extras.

"Our research suggested that consumers are looking for foods that deliver more nutrition," said Meghan Savage, senior marketing manager for Tropicana. "Innovation is a proven driver in helping us to grow the Tropicana brand. Tropicana Essentials is a great example of a successful innovation that meets the needs of consumers that has helped to grow our business."

It's a popular tactic to market to parents as well. Since KD

Smart launched three years ago in Canada, it has seen growth in household penetration among families with younger kids, said Kathy Murphy, director of corporate affairs at Kraft Canada.

"Parents have long told us that mealtime can be challenging," she said. "They want their kids to eat nutritious meals and they want those meals to be convenient. The whole idea behind KD Smart is to offer products that make it easier for those parents to deliver on both."

However, obesity expert and professor in the department of medicine at the University of Ottawa, Dr. Yoni Freedhoff, is skeptical of foods that claim to have nutritional extras.

"It's playing into society's desire for convenience, and it's also playing into the naturalistic fallacy, that if you write that it has a vegetable in it, suddenly it makes it healthful," Dr. Freedhoff said.

His upcoming book, *The Diet Fix*, explores the problems of a dieting culture.

He has a problem with products such as KD Smart — "anything but smart" — and Mott's cups, which have so little of the nutrients from the vegetables they claim to include as to make them almost negligible.

"When you process things, you lose a huge amount of nutrients that came with them in the first place. Simply because they were once of carrot or pumpkin origin, does not mean that's what you're getting in that bread. You're getting a faint shadow of what those vegetables once were."

Bread has its own legitimate merits, but he suggested consumers should take this kind of hidden-nutrition advertising with an extra grain — of salt. "The inconvenient truth of healthy living is that it does require effort."

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