

expect that you'll provide them with somewhat healthier food alternatives.

Is cause marketing the way to go with this group?

Millennial affinity toward causes is vastly overstated. They care about causes to the extent they're intrinsic to who you are and reflect your values. Simply bolting yourself on to someone else's cause returns feel-good, but does little else. So, if you have something unique and engaging, go for it. But otherwise, focus

your dollars elsewhere.

How important are celebrity endorsements to Millennials?

If you go down this road, above all else choose a celebrity that is "everyday relatable." Don't waste your money on a celeb for star power, unless he/she is a natural fit with your brand and highly relatable. Otherwise, Millennials will just tune you out.

It's been said that Millennials are real cynics about marketing.

They understand the nuance and language of marketing more than you might think. They know when it's B.S. They want to love the brands they grew up with, but feel they've outgrown you. They love new products, but if you try too hard they'll deem you disingenuous and walk away. Or worse, they'll tell their "friends" on digital media. Finally, Millennials despise products overtly designed for them by old people. They want them to be rooted in a truth about who they are. ■

CHICKEN WILL FLY

Beef and pork prices are soaring, but poultry is poised to fill the protein gap.

BY MONICA GELINAS & DENNIS COLLINS



photo: Canstock Photo: DigiFuture

While the Chinese Year of the Rooster isn't until 2017, here in the United States the 2014 grilling season will likely be the year of the chicken.

The reason: Beef and pork prices are at record highs relative to poultry. A sharp reduction in beef supply, due to a multi-year drought that forced ranchers to reduce herd numbers to a 60-year low, has driven beef prices up.

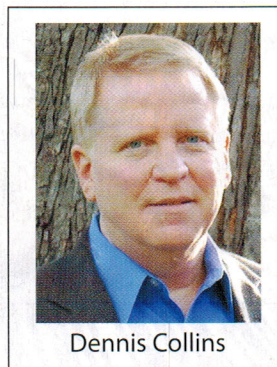
Summer pork supplies also will be sharply lower because of a virus that killed several million baby pigs earlier this year. That impact will be felt this summer when those pigs would have gone to market. Meanwhile, strong export demand for both beef and pork is pushing prices even higher. So, poultry is poised to fill the protein gap, and can do so on short notice as reproduction and feeding periods are minimal. But so far poultry producers have not responded as one might expect.

USDA estimates first quarter broiler meat production will be only 1.4% higher than a year ago and that total production for 2014 will be 125 million pounds less than original forecast—only 1.8% higher than in 2013.

Surprisingly, partial blame may be unattractive prices for whole birds. The USDA estimates first quarter whole-bird wholesale prices will be down 4.9% from a year ago and, after peaking in the second quarter, will decline



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slightly in the second half of the year but remain above 2013 price levels.

What about consumers' willingness to spend more on meat and poultry? The biggest opportunity is exploring different cuts of poultry to expand product offering. Fast-casual restaurants have started to use dark meat options in stew-like menu items to provide better flavor, which may be a good indicator for retailers if accepted into mainstream. Additionally, ethnic flavors such as Peruvian lend themselves to dark meat options driving menu planning.

However, there is still hesitation from operators on true consumer interest and additional operational concerns navigating tendons and ligaments. Chicken thigh and whole chicken leg are good options to provide a range beyond boneless, skinless breasts. ■

Dennis Collins, director at Trilateral Inc. (www.trilateralinc.com), provides purchasing and risk management advisory services and training for the food industry. He works in partnership with Monica Gelinas, founder of Grit Work, (www.gritwork.com), building sustainable supply chain strategies in natural and specialty food.