Acme introduces smoked salmon to poke

By Christine Blank
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While smoked fish is popular on crackers and bagels, it has traditionally not been considered an ingredient in ready-to-eat meals.

However, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.-based Acme Smoked Fish Corp. is aiming to change that with its new Blue Hill Bay Smoked Fish Poke Bowls. The new bowls come in two varieties: smoked salmon and smoked ahi tuna.

Adam Caslow, co-CEO of Acme, told SeafoodSource the bowls are intended to bring a new type of consumer into trying smoked fish.

“I look at it as a different introduction into the category for people unfamiliar with smoked fish. Rice bowls are more approachable for some people, and smoked fish allows the bowls to have a longer shelf-life,” Caslow said. “The category has been around for decades, but there hasn’t been a ton of innovation. And, while there are meal kits and ready-to-eat bowls, those do not include smoked fish.”

The poke bowls will be new to many buyers at Seafood Expo North America in Boston, Massachusetts, 11 to 13 March, but the bowls are already sold in the refrigerated aisles at Whole Foods Market, Aldi, Kroger, Winn-Dixie, and Stew Leonard’s, along with other United States retailers, Caslow said.

The microwaveable bowls, which include cooked rice, smoked fish, Acme’s signature poke sauce, and a seasoning packet, appeal to new trends in consumption, Caslow said.

“People are consuming food differently now,” he said. “They are responding favorably to these composed dishes that can be thrown in the bag and brought to work and school. I think of it when I want a complete meal on the go.”

Acme is gearing the bowls, which retail between USD 8.99 (EUR 7.25) and USD 9.99 (EUR 8.05), on average, towards millennials, which include young working parents and healthy eaters, Caslow said. Supermarkets are typically placing the bowls in their prepared foods, deli grab-and-go, and fresh sushi departments.

The idea for the poke bowls came about when a chef at the supplier’s retail outlet in Brooklyn experimented with a smoked, cubed fish and avocado salsa recipe. The dish was well-received, so “we tried to figure out how could we do a salsa-avocado smoked salmon in a commercial way, that coincided with the popularity of poke,” Caslow said.

“It took off, and has far exceeded our expectations,” he said.

The supplier’s new website is geared towards educating consumers about poke and providing suggestions for creative garnishes for poke bowls, following Hawaiian tradition. Found in the ‘Recipes’ section of the site, ideas include adding avocados, mangoes, peaches, lime and jalapeno, pickled onions, or sliced cucumber and edamame.

In addition to the poke bowls, Acme recently rolled out sashimi-style smoked salmon with a soy sauce packet. It is now sold at Wegmans, Whole Foods, and some Fairway Foods stores.

“It is a thicker loin cut of smoked salmon in a five-ounce package,” Caslow said. “Again, we are approaching a different market, for people who think of salmon as just a topping for your bagel.”

Acme also sells dolphin-safe sashimi-grade ahi tuna. The supplier’s products are sold in both retail and foodservice outlets supermarkets under the Acme, Blue Hill Bay, Ruby Bay, and Great American brands. The company is exhibiting at booth #2806 at SENA.