

locks in nutritional value." Through its "Fresh Look Initiative" campaign, AFFI has spread the word that freezing at the peak of freshness means the nutrients are locked into frozen fruits and vegetables, whereas fresh produce loses nutritional value and quality over time.

A Case for Kids

While childhood obesity has made headlines in the United States for some time, initiatives that promote better health and nutrition for American children are gaining much-needed momentum. Whether it's First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign, school lunch reform or healthier kids' meals at fast-food establishments, the talk of the town, from D.C. to L.A., is about creating better choices for kids.

As a result, time-strapped families are turning to the freezer cases of their local supermarkets for solutions. From organic frozen baby food to healthy toddler treats, the freezer has become a hotbed of better nutrition for kids.

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young children in feeding their children products that are marketed as 'all-natural' or 'organic,' or appear to otherwise be healthier than products not marketed as such," says Cortina of AFFI.

Consider HappyBaby, a maker of frozen organic baby foods, whose founder and CEO, Shazi Visram, is featured in recent American Express OPEN/Gold Card television ads. In just a few years, the New York-based company has gone from startup to the leading premium brand of baby and toddler meals in the United States.

Then there's the Bay Area-based Peas of Mind, whose all-natural Veggie Wedgies — baked "French fries" made from real fruits and veggies like broccoli, carrots, cauliflower and apples — are taking the toddler scene by storm. "We find that while parents are concerned about their own health, they are even more concerned about the health of their kids, and so they feed them more natural and organic foods than they eat themselves," asserts Tina

Downey, Peas of Mind sales and marketing assistant. The company's newest introduction is Peas of Pie, a cheese pizza with broccoli and carrots surreptitiously blended into the crust.

According to Packaged Facts, frozen baby food sales surged dramatically last year. The report cited mass-market sales tracking data from SymphonyIRI that put frozen baby food sales at \$3.6 million for the 52 weeks ending July 17, 2010. That number is more than triple the sales from the prior period.

While Packaged Facts notes that frozen baby food has yet to become a heavyweight of total center-of-the-plate frozen food sales, it believes that the category "has a great deal of potential for increased sales," particularly among those options that are organic, or at least all natural.

Frozen Foods on the Move

One of the biggest challenges to sales in the frozen baby food category is promoting such products, notes Packaged Facts. As a result, many consumers are still unaware of its availability. Packaged Facts suggests cross-merchandising might be the key to category awareness, pointing to Austin, Texas-based Whole Foods, which has had success with smaller freezers of HappyBaby and Yummy Spoonfuls in its otherwise shelf-stable baby food aisle.

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