



Image courtesy of Maria Mrlova, Pexels

# Deli & HMR 2022

## Flavour and ingredient innovation, a touch of nostalgia, quality and catering for your customer base are key to your success

**D**eli and HMR offerings are a delight for the senses. They are visual merchandisers for your store and have the potential to create a much-loved destination shop for repeat and loyal customers. Globally, research suggests that despite restaurants and eateries reopening their doors, people are eating at home more often and more consumers are cooking meals from scratch at home too.

The question is whether this trend is here to stay. By ensuring that the quality and variety of your deli and HMR options meets the expectations of your shoppers, while also providing convenience and time savings, you can maintain and grow your HMR and deli sales.

### Restaurant-quality food for discerning shoppers

One trend coming out of certainly the US and the UK is the demand for restaurant-quality food from the HMR and deli offer. These consumers expect a high-quality offering that is packed with flavour and nutrient dense. They want a tasty experience that also caters to their family's nutritional needs, and they want it fast and as fuss-free as possible.

In SA, quality is key – but so is quantity, with portion sizes remaining much larger than our European counterparts.

“ The balance between quality and quantity will shift depending on your target market and whether you are catering for blue-collar workers who need to refuel after burning up energy with labour-intensive work, for young professionals looking for a nutritious, convenient, and innovative dinner alternative, or families having a treat night off from cooking. ”

### Meal kits and 'special' requirements

Meal delivery kits have gained traction in the SA market, but these are targeted at the higher end consumer.

The ease of having either a meal or a curated box of ingredients (with an easy-to-follow recipe) delivered to your door on a regular basis has plenty of appeal. From single-person households to busy families, this is an offering that is in demand, and







**Kiddies Fun Bar**



**Grab-And-Go Solutions**



**Pizza**



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Image courtesy of Ucook



meal solutions are varied, flavourful, interesting, and often of a very high quality.

Special – and in some instances becoming mainstream – diet needs include vegan or vegetarian, lactose-, egg- or gluten-free, diabetic, keto, and low carb, and should be easy to access and provide a range of options.

Whether you add this option to your HMR range, or compete on cost, will be a decision based on your customer profiles. Pre-packaged frozen, chilled, or hot meals that are made or prepared on-site in bulk can often be a cheaper option than those offered by specialist meal kit delivery companies.

“ Stores also do not require any sort of subscription – a plus for commitment-phobic consumers.

By cross-merchandising with make-at-home ingredients you can use your HMR offering as an area for recipe inspiration as well. ”

**Let us entertain you**

HMR for up-scaled at-home entertaining is a niche but valuable category. Providing a range of size and price options that is immediately available may not always be financially viable but offering a bespoke pre-ordered service such as platters or 3-course dining with customised selections could add spark to your offer.



Image courtesy of Milan, Pexels

Allowing customers to place orders for platters, dishes, or entire meals is a good way of capitalising on the at-home exclusive dining experience consumers are looking to recreate. In this area, product development and innovation are key.

In an article for Provisioner Online, Chris DuBois, senior vice president of the protein practice for Information Resources Inc. (IRI) notes that introducing new recipes, changing things up, and adding excitement for consumers can help bolster both deli and HMR offerings. Unique recipes and frequent recipe rotation are also important when it comes to attracting and retaining customers.



Spinach-chickpea curry, mykitchen.co.za

**Innovation in product development**

Comfort foods, mindful eating, and bold flavours With consumers turning to international taste experiences to replace travel during lockdown, their palates have broadened along with their expectations.

“ Bold flavours, interesting recipes, and exotic ingredients are key to innovative product development. At the same time shoppers are more conscious of how what they eat affects their bodies and their health. ”

Mindful eating, and food that is good for you, is a growing concern as people look for nutrient dense foods that are packed with a variety of health-boosting and beneficial properties.

Organic, locally produced foods and ingredients are gaining even more popularity. Less sugar, fewer trans fats and saturated fats and lower salt options are important for health-minded





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consumers. And comfort food saw many of us through the pandemic and stressful lockdown situations. Cooking hearty and wholesome meals means consumers are looking for good quality ingredients as well as recipe inspiration and time-saving options that still result in the desired levels of home-cooked comfort.



Image: Purple Carrot Za'atar Tofu.

### Meat-free alternatives

Research presented by companies from Knorr and ProVeg International to Nielsen, Forbes Africa, and Fry's shows that meat-free and flexitarian diets are becoming more mainstream. Vegans and vegetarians aren't the only target market for meat alternatives as consumers adopt reduced meat diets for cost and health reasons. And as demand drives innovation, tasty, nutritious, and high-quality meat alternatives are easier to find. The South African Mushroom Farmer's Association (SAMFA) is an excellent resource for providing exciting recipes and meat alternative ideas that are healthy, nutritious, and a cost-effective way of reducing meat in any diet. This presents retailers with excellent cross-merchandising opportunities, as well as value-add for customers and a valuable point of communication too.



Image: provisioneronline.com

### Health and hygiene for consumer comfort

“ The deli space is possibly one of the most 'interactive' parts of the shopping experience, and being generally self-service, the one that could cause shoppers the most discomfort in a world focused on hygiene and sanitation. ”

Prepared food that is on display needs to look attractive and be easily identifiable; it also needs to be easily accessible, but in a safe and healthy way.

In an article for The National Provisioner by Richard Mitchell on [www.provisioneronline.com](http://www.provisioneronline.com) Kaitlin Kamp, consumer insights analyst in U.S. research for food and drink at Mintel Group, says, "Deli operators can help ease shoppers' Covid-19 concerns by implementing and spotlighting safety procedures." She goes on to add that "this may include having staffers wear the proper personal protective equipment, while enforcing social-distancing measures and sanitation schedules."

Displaying prepared food behind glass counters is a basic safety measure and ensuring that pre-packaged foods are properly sealed is vital.



Image: Meruyert Gonullu. Pexels

Health and safety challenges during Covid-19 mean consumers have become leery of unpackaged products. Pre-packaged items including deli meats, cheeses, and even ready-made food is seen as being less 'risky'.

Supermarket Perimeter ([www.supermarket-perimeter.com](http://www.supermarket-perimeter.com)) recently published an article by Andy Nelson that quotes Shelly Venenga, Hormel Deli Solutions brand manager. Venenga highlights the importance of helping shoppers feel safer by limiting their time in-store and reducing the need to interact with people.

Of course, this will fluctuate depending on the pandemic and will most likely gradually wane as the threat of Covid-19 lifts. Venenga increased their focus on pre-sliced and packaged meats, added to their base pre-sliced product portfolio, and invested in new packaging. Venenga says, "We are constantly



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listening to our customers and consumers and enhancing and innovating our offerings to ensure we are where consumer preferences and trends are heading. The full-service deli case acts as a place of discovery for many shoppers, so keeping the offerings fresh and exciting with new flavours or seasonal offerings is key.”

Self-service counters are back to some extent but are still eyed with suspicion by many consumers. In an article called Ramping up Food Safety for Deli Business online, journalist Carol M. Bareuther notes that food bars will most certainly be reimagined using additional safety features such as glass or plexiglass shields and doors, as well as high-quality compostable or recyclable servers, utensils, and containers.

**Sustainable packaging –  
Is supply meeting demand?**

South Africa is in a strange middle land when it comes to sustainability and recyclable packaging.

Supermarket chains such as Spar, Checkers, Pick n Pay and

Woolworths have all recognised the need to move away from single use plastics and provide more sustainable and recyclable packaging options – and are driving change in the industry together with forward-thinking manufacturers. This is, however,



Image courtesy of Sappi

a slow and often expensive process, with some stores, chains and suppliers resisting change.

With truly recyclable packaging options increasing and prices decreasing as demand rises, this particular stumbling block could soon be a thing of the past. That said, there is still a long way to go, and consumers can sometimes be put off by an array of packaging that still needs to be sorted into what can and cannot be recycled.



Image: PnP Constantia Village

**Deli design for cross merchandising**

Your deli area presents a prime opportunity for cross promotional activity. Shoppers are looking for meal solutions as well as inspiration, so non-deli sides, accompaniments, and condiments are a natural fit. Meal suggestions that use a deli item and several other non-deli products are a great way of introducing cross merchandising while also providing a value-add to your consumers’ shopping experience.

Your displays are key to successful sales. A clean, hygienic, and safe shopping environment is a must in Covid times, and this includes sparkling glass cases that show off your deli offerings to their best effect. The right display cases will also optimise food preservation levels, while also ensuring an efficient use of energy.

Lighting is crucial as it enhances your display as well as being sensibly functional. For foods that the public has access to, health and hygiene considerations must be taken into account and appropriate steps for browsing, dishing, and serving must be implemented, not only from a health and safety perspective, but for your customer’s peace of mind.

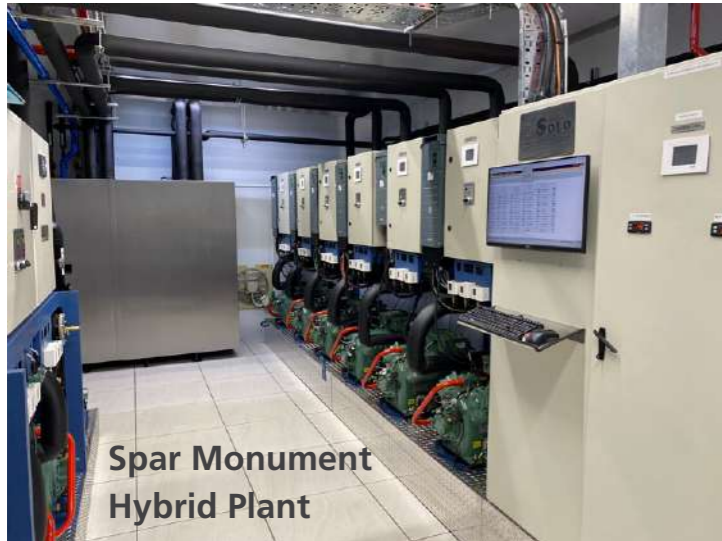
**The HMR and deli experience**

It is important to maintain contact with your customer base and stay up to date with the fluid trends and changing demands of this highly competitive space. Constant, targeted communication with your consumers is vital to allow store managers to stay abreast of what shoppers want and expect. Flexibility and agility are necessary as the pace of change increases and the home-work-school dynamic fluctuates. Creating a memorable brand experience is key to retaining customers as both categories continue to grow. Competition is fierce and innovation mandatory for success. Luckily, the deli and HMR categories in South African supermarkets are up for the challenge and provide fertile ground for innovative and exciting developments.



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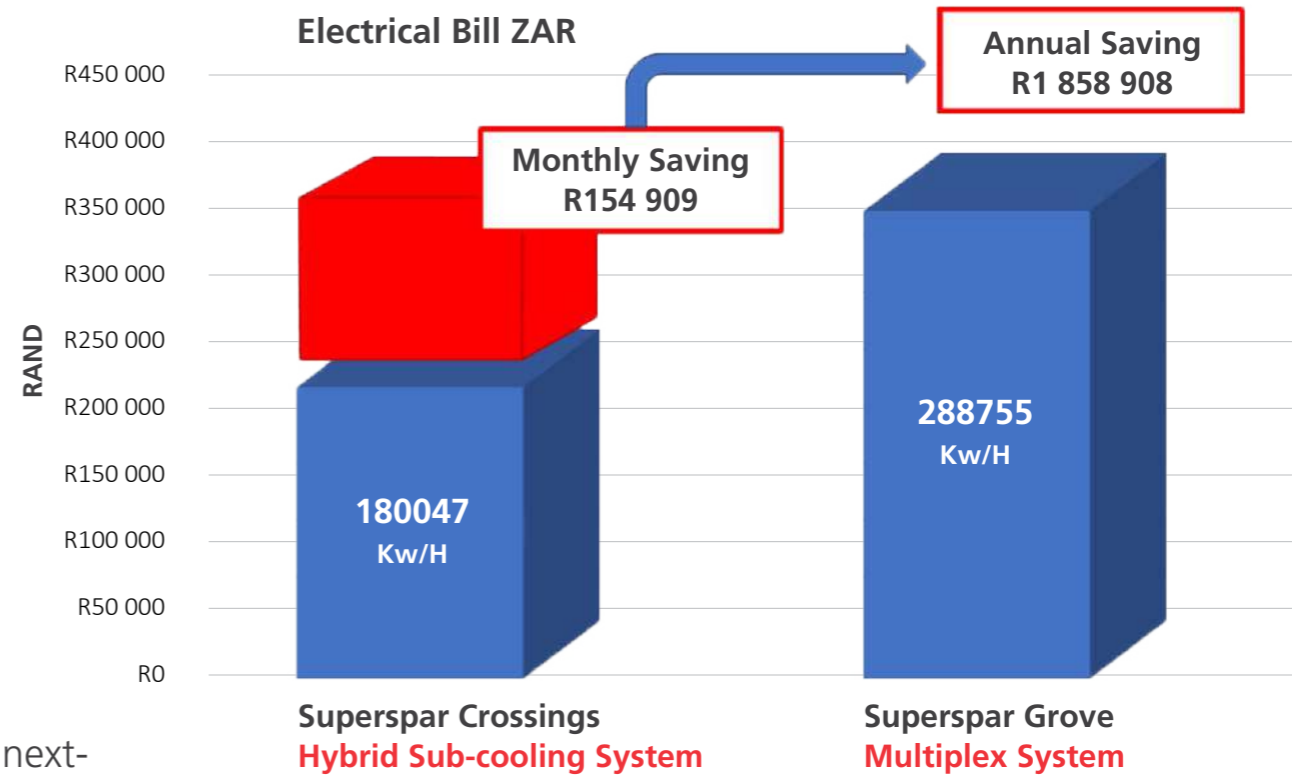
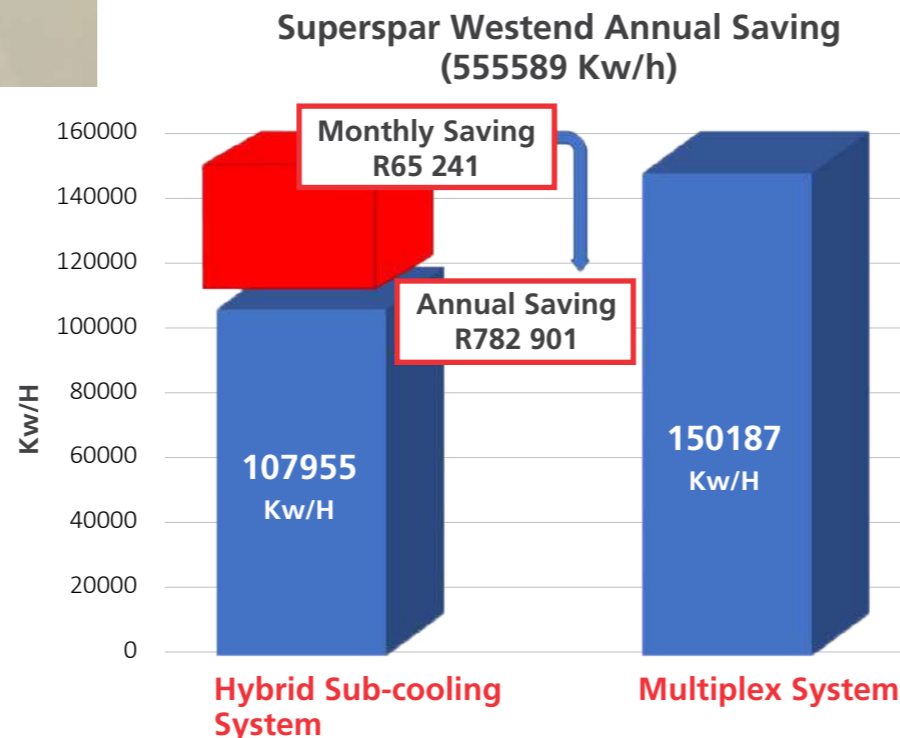


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## HMR and Deli trends 2022

- According to [www.delibusiness.com](http://www.delibusiness.com), consumers are looking for cleanliness and safe, fresh food, with sustainable, humanely raised and organic options forming part of the new 'mindful dining' generation.
- Plant-based is growing quickly too, so don't overlook this when considering your Deli range. Vegan and vegetarian options also need to be part of the offer.
- Grab-and-go single serve items such as salads, sandwiches, wraps, and sushi are as popular as ever, but new flavour and inventive ingredient combinations are a must to keep your customers interested.



Image courtesy of Marta Branco, Pexels

- Fruit, botanical and fresh flavours, ginger, and turmeric (immune-boosting ingredients) and citrus have gained traction.
- Shoppers love and want nostalgic desserts and traditional 'home-cooked' meals – South African

favourites like Malva pudding or bobotie always have a market.

- There is still a healthy interest in spicy foods – the amazing array of Indian cuisines, Moroccan, Thai – with chilli, barbeque and curry flavours adding heat to the mix. **SR**



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