


meat & seafood

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MERCHANDISING

meat through the mail

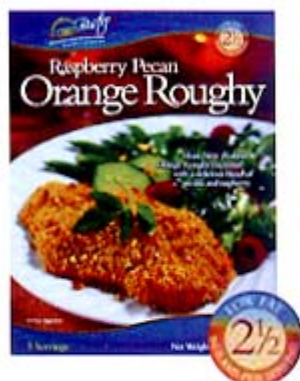
Alternative grocery formats cater to convenience.



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skinny seafood

FUNCTIONAL INGREDIENT REDUCES FAT
CONTENT IN DEEP-FRIED FISH BY CHRISTY PITNEY



PROTEUS INDUSTRIES, A PROTEIN-APPLICATIONS COMPANY BASED IN GLOUCESTER, MASS., HAS INTRODUCED A PROTEIN THAT'S BEEN PROVEN TO RETAIN MOISTURE, INCREASE SHELF LIFE AND PREVENT FAT FROM BEING ABSORBED WHEN SEAFOOD IS DEEP-FRIED.

Dieters have traditionally stayed away from deep-fried seafood. Now, they may have no reason to shy away from fish sticks and breaded fillets.

Proteus Industries, a protein-applications company based in Gloucester, Mass., has introduced a protein that's been proven to retain moisture, increase shelf life and

prevent fat from being absorbed when seafood is deep-fried. The technology has also been proven to work on chicken, although it's currently commercially available only for seafood.

The all-natural protein, which originates from animal-muscle tissue, is injected into thawed or fresh fish or used as a coating. The protein forms a film that acts as a barrier to keep the moisture in and the fat out. In Proteus' tests, this film has been shown to reduce the fat content by 50 percent, founder and chief scientist Stephen Kelleher says. The protein also functions at a low pH level, which creates a hostile environment for bacteria and increases the product's shelf life by about four days.

Proteus' licensees have marketed products containing the protein mainly to club stores and supermarkets. The retail packaging claims "increased protein, 50 percent less fat." Although that

attracts consumers' attention, Kelleher says the protein has been tricky to promote because some people view the term "low fat" and the injection of anything – even something with a positive connotation like protein – as negative.

"Do you try to put it out in retail in a fairly low-keyed manner and just hopefully the customers will return because it tastes better, or do you promote that you have protein-injected or low-fat fish?" he asks.

Good Harbor Fillet, one of two seafood companies using the protein, has tested it for about a year on its raw, breaded and par-fried portions. The technology has reduced the fat levels in the company's fried products by 40-60 percent and has enhanced the product by making it crispier and lighter, founder and chief executive Bill Stride says. Good Harbor currently offers one retail product that contains the protein – encrusted natural orange roughy fillet whose package identifies the product as a low-fat item with less than 3 grams of fat.

Overall price points are still being determined, but Kelleher says some of the products will probably command premiums.

Although he's been swamped with inquiries about the protein, Kelleher says he wants to take its introduction slowly.

The technology has been in development for four years, Kelleher says. He plans to expand the technology to chicken, pork and beef. ●