

"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"

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Late Edition

Today, some sun, an afternoon and evening shower or thunderstorm, high 81. Tonight, partly cloudy, low 63. Tomorrow, partly sunny skies, high 82. Weather map, Page A26.

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## ADVERTISING

### Purveyor of Hummus Seeks to Conquer Larger Market Share

By ANDREW ADAM NEWMAN

**H**UMMUS, the dip made with chickpeas, is believed to have been eaten for millenniums, but it has flown off deli section shelves in recent years as if it were a novelty. Sales in the United States of refrigerated flavored spreads, a category dominated by hummus, grew 21 percent, to \$695.5 million, for the 52 weeks ending May 18, according to IRI, a market data firm.

Sabra, the brand owned by PepsiCo and the Israel-based Strauss Group, dominates the category, with a share of 63 percent, but now the No. 2 brand, Tribe, with 7 percent of the market, is hoping to narrow that gap with an advertising campaign.

The campaign introduces a tagline, "Tribe: You're either a member or you're not," in television commercials that will be introduced in the Boston market on Sunday and in New York on July 4.

The commercials are shot in the style of a National Geographic documentary, complete with British-accented voice-over. The twist: rather than remote hunter-gatherer cultures or wildebeests, the footage is of modern couples in prosaic situations.

One new commercial, called "Mating," opens with the sound of tribal drumming and a woman smiling amorously as she enters a bedroom, where her husband uses his laptop in bed. She climbs into the bed and closes his laptop. "Mating between married tribe members is a joyous but

rare occurrence — so rare, in fact, that the male may be puzzled by the female's advances," the voice-over begins. "But, much like riding a bicycle, his instincts soon take over."

He peels off his shirt, they begin to kiss and the screen briefly goes dark. The next scene shows him entering the bedroom with a tray of hummus and pita chips.

"When mating is complete, hunger ensues, so the male and female share hummus and pita chips in bed," the voice-over, by Gary Milner, continues. "It is not unusual for the snacking to take longer than the mating itself."

Another spot, "Courtship," follows a couple on a picnic. "This occurs largely at the urging of the female," the voice-over explains. "The male, although fond of grasslands, prefers those with fairways and greens." A third, "Gathering," shows two couples visiting a third couple at their home. ("When visited by tribes from neighboring villages, the females perform a ritual greeting known as an 'air kiss.'")

The commercials are by DeVito/Verdi in New York, with the agency's Wayne Winfield serving as writer and creative director. Nick Losq directed, and production is by Bully Pictures.

Print ads on the subways in New York and Boston also feature the tagline about being a Tribe member or not, but take a different direction from the National Geographic documentary spoof. Instead, the ads feature tongue-in-cheek block-letter headlines about the quality of the dip, like "The caviar of hummus"

**WE SAW THIS  
HEALTH CRAZE  
COMING 1,000  
YEARS AGO.**

Tribe Hummus  
You're either a member  
or you're not.



**SO GOOD,  
IT EVEN MAKES  
YOUR FINGER  
TASTE BETTER.**

Tribe Hummus  
You're either a member  
or you're not.



**IF YOU LIKE  
TO SHARE,  
BUY SALSA.**

Tribe Hummus  
You're either a member  
or you're not.



**THE CAVIAR  
OF HUMMUS.**

Tribe Hummus  
You're either a member  
or you're not.



and, "So good, it even makes your finger taste better."

Barbara Lippert, a longtime advertising critic at Adweek and now a columnist for MediaPost.com, said she was impressed with the print ads.

"The print is very snappy and smart and funny, and has a sort of New York attitude," she said.

She said she was less impressed with the commercials, pointing out that DSW and Play-

Station have both spoofed such documentaries in recent years.

"The idea of observing humans like they were gazelles on the savanna in a documentary has just been done to death," said Ms. Lippert, who also found the depictions of women in the picnic and bedroom spots problematic. "It's kind of like dirty-uncle humor that's making fun of women for being too bossy and never wanting to have sex," she said.

Tribe Mediterranean Foods, which is based in Taunton, Mass., is owned by the Israel-based Osem Company, in which Nestlé holds a majority ownership stake.

Adam Carr, the chief executive of Tribe, said that hummus was consumed in about 23 percent of United States households, about half the penetration rate of salsa. When he joined the brand two years ago, he set out to gauge

Tribe, the No. 2 hummus brand, is hoping to make a bigger dent in sales of refrigerated flavored spreads. Print ads on the subways in New York and Boston feature tongue-in-cheek headlines about the dip.

how consumers were engaged both by Tribe and the broader hummus category.

"Notwithstanding the growth of the category, we heard from consumers that they found the category boring to shop," said Mr. Carr, adding that many consumers who regularly bought Tribe and other brands could not even recall their names.

"They talked about the brands they bought based on the color of the lid — 'I buy the green one' or 'I buy the red one,'" he said. "But they had a hard time talking about the attributes, the personality, and about what those brands mean to them."

Ellis Verdi, president of DeVito/Verdi, said incorporating the name of the brand into the tagline would help build recognition among shoppers.

"Advertising that ties itself to a brand name is absolutely ahead of the other things you can be doing," Mr. Verdi said.

Because Tribe research suggests that even consumers who enjoy hummus find its marketing bland, Mr. Verdi said that it was all the more important for the commercials to be memorable.

"As an underdog, it's a pretty good thing to have a differentiating voice," he said.

The brand will be monitoring the response to the campaign in New York and Boston, with the possibility of expanding it to other markets, and Mr. Verdi said he would certainly not object to it reaching a broader audience.

"For a hummus campaign," he said, "it's not chopped liver."