

# BRANDWEEK

## Viva Takes on Eating Utensils

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- Elaine Wong



Viva, attempting to counter sales erosion from private label, is positioning its paper towels as a companion to food, not just a mechanism to clean up after it.

Central to the effort is a deal with Food Network celebrity cook Sunny Anderson that includes 30-second interstitials showing her using the paper towels as a way to enhance the experience of utensil-free eating. Those segments show Anderson, star of Food Network's *Cooking for Real* series, preparing her tomato and mozzarella bruschetta by using a Viva towel to squeeze moisture from basil leaves. In another segment, she suggests using coasters made from Viva towels to jazz up red pepper salami bites.

Longer versions of the ad segments promoting the Kimberly-Clark-owned brand are now running on [Getclosetoyourfood.com](http://Getclosetoyourfood.com), as well as the digital arm of such culinary titles as *Cooking Light*, *Gourmet*, *epicurious* and *Food & Wine*.

Viva is the first nonfood brand to have a fully integrated presence across Food Network's marketing channels, said Karen Grinthal, svp-ad sales at Food Network and Fine Living, another Scripps-owned network. Viva has advertised at food festivals and food-related sponsorship events in the past, but nothing to this extent, said Joe Kardel, brand manager on the Viva towel business.

With consumers staying at home more, however, the brand saw an opportunity to link casual, at-home dining with the "sensory" experience of eating with its product, Kardel said. "We like to say food is much more enjoyable when you eat it with your hands. A brownie doesn't taste the same when it's eaten with a spoon, [and neither do] nachos when they're served on a plate," he said.

Anderson, in particular, was picked because of her casual, fun-loving cooking attitude, he said, adding that the paper towels category contains too much "male testosterone," and Viva appeals to "vivacious" female shoppers. "It's that Brawny man everywhere when you step back and think of it," he said, referring to the mascot for Georgia-Pacific's line of towels. "We're the girl in the aisle." Kardel added that like Anderson, the "Viva diva likes to entertain, she is the hostess with the mostess and she values the little things in life."

(Viva, coincidentally, has a "Viva Diva Café" where consumers can share ideas, tips and news about the brand.)

The campaign also includes six removable recipe advertorial booklets that are dropping in the fall issues of Food Network magazine. The mini-binder-like cookbooks offer tips on how Viva towels can enhance the meal preparation process. Interactive agency Fullhouse and Mindshare, which handles media buying duties, assisted in the launch.

Sales of paper towels, a \$2.5 billion business, rose 2.9 percent in the 52 weeks ended Aug. 9, per IRI. (Figures do not include Walmart sales.) The category has posted modest gains as consumers pare back on discretionary household purchases in favor of basic life necessities. In Nielsen tracked channels, Viva is currently the No. 2 branded paper towel, with an 8.8 market share, according to K-C. P&G's Bounty is the category leader, with \$923 million in sales and a 38 percent share of the market, per IRI.

Kardel said the campaign hopes to thwart private label's stronghold in the category (dollar sales for the latter grew 8.57 percent during that same period, according to IRI), mainly by highlighting its key product attributes.

"We're a hidden gem of a paper towel until consumers experience it and say, 'Wow, I didn't know a paper towel could be this strong and soft and cloth-like,'" he said. Spending for the campaign was not disclosed. K-C spent \$2.5 million advertising its Viva line of towel products in 2008, more than double the amount it spent on the brand through June of this year (sans online ads), per Nielsen.