

Rachael Ray Tries Different Branding Tactic

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- [Elaine Wong](#)



Since its inception in 2004, nearly every issue of Every Day with Rachael Ray has prominently featured its founder and celebrity chef, Rachael Ray, on the cover. Not the August issue, however.

In a move that signals the magazine's growing popularity and the strength of Ray herself as a brand, the Reader's Digest Association-owned publication has swapped Ray for a summer rib recipe. (Ray appears on the cover too, but discreetly in the upper right hand corner.)

The August issue switch-up was done to spice things up, said editor-in-chief Silvana Nardone. "As a food lifestyle magazine, we're always thinking about ways to extend that on the cover," Nardone said. And with newsstand and advertising sales holding up relatively well in a recession, the magazine decided to take a chance. (The magazine's ad pages dropped 11.2 percent to 66, compared to the same year-ago period through August, per the Mediaweek Monitor.)

Every Day with Rachael Ray launched with six issues in late fall 2005 and quickly increased to 10 issues by 2007. The publication currently has a circulation of approximately 1.8 million. Ray's popularity also has soared through her Food Network show, 30 Minute Meals, various product endorsements, including one for Kraft's Nabisco, and a collection of cookbooks.

August's cover change is also the latest in a series of editorial moves to contemporize the magazine. In April, Every Day with Rachael Ray launched "Supermarket 101," a monthly section aimed at helping consumers shop smart in tough times. It also recently went through a site redesign to better align its print and web content, Nardone said.

Denise Lee Yohn, a brand strategist based in San Diego, Calif., compared the move to what happened when Martha Stewart was trying to expand beyond being just a TV and magazine personality. Stewart became a "lifestyle brand" in part because her marketing team shifted the focus beyond "Martha Stewart the person."

“While Rachael doesn’t have the baggage that Martha does (or used to) have, my understanding is that she does indeed want to grow her business beyond its current footprint, so less emphasis on her as a person and more on her brand seems a smart move,” Yohn said.

The magazine is putting Ray back on the cover in the September and October issues. According to the title’s publisher and vp Anne Balaban, there are no plans to permanently remove or feature her less prominently going forward.

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