

HEALTHY SNACKING

Can snacking be healthy for you and the planet?

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Today's health-conscious consumers are increasingly demanding that ingredients are Better for Me and Better for the Planet. This paper describes how delivering sustainable and nutrient-dense, functional products in the bakery sector is becoming the way we do business.

As the world learns to live with Covid, focus intensifies on boosting and maintaining health. Consumers have become "Mindful Nutritionists", educating themselves on what they need for health and what the nutrient density and functionality of their food

needs to be. Immunity health has become a fundamental requirement for the considered health-conscious consumer, to enable the prevention of disease or to assist with recovery; consider the research that has linked hypertension, which is exacerbated by high sodium chloride intake, as a risk factor for severe Covid outcomes¹. Self-care in all its guises, from supporting mental health through to improving the way we look and, therefore, feel have gained more importance for the health-conscious consumer and will continue to guide purchasing choices.

Clean labels are essential in providing the health-conscious consumer with information and, therefore confidence in their chosen products. 'Front-of-Pack' labelling is well established throughout Europe, although less so in the Middle East and Africa. The concept of "Clean Conscience" is beginning to supersede clean labelling, as it goes beyond what is good for the body and reflects what is good for the planet, the provenance of ingredients and their environmental sustainability.

Formulating your recipes in the bakery sector for this new generation

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of health-conscious consumers sounds challenging, you may ask Well, the following might just help.

The healthy bread basket

According to Mintel's 2022 report on Healthy Eating¹, healthy products in the next two years will focus on solutions that support consumers' self-care practices and boost nutrient density, whilst reducing fat, sugar and sodium.

Europe's bakery product market is expected to grow at a compound

annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.12% in the period 2020-2025². Forecasts for the EMEA bread and bread products in Western European areas show this market as mature, with the exception of Italy and Switzerland which will in the future, show steady growth. Strong growth, however, is forecast in the South African packaged bread market.

The pandemic has brought health and wellness products to the fore, with preferences in Western Europe moving towards reduced-fat and

sugar as well as a desire for more natural and "free-from" products³.

Consumers have not until recently, typically looked to the bakery market for healthy sustenance, but the pandemic has resulted in a more hands-on approach to baking (not just banana bread) and, therefore a renewed interest in to what goes into our food and our body.

Consequently, the industrial baker has opportunities to fulfil the increased demands for healthy in-home and

on-the-go baked goods and their inherent challenges on how to deliver them.

Enriched dough

For the Mindful Nutritionist, the definition of 'enriched' has broadened to encompass not only some of the wonderful enriched doughs that produce brioche, poffert and cinnamon buns, but also to include ingredients that enrich the body and mind.

More is being discovered about the significant effects of the gut microbiome on holistic health. "Gut microbiota plays a significant role in maintaining host health, which could supply various nutrients, regulate energy balance, modulate the immune response and defence against pathogens."⁴ Offering consumers easy ways to boost fibre intake by its inclusion in baked goods is one way to attract the Mindful Nutritionist who is looking to improve their immunity health.

In terms of formulation for bakery, this can be achieved with functional ingredients such as oligofructose,

prebiotic dietary fibres derived from sugar beet and cane sugar; or, fibres from potato or pulses.

"The improper and inadequate nutrition intake through diet have put the elderly at a marked risk of PEM (Protein Energy Malnutrition), affecting about 23-60% of the elderly."⁵ Opportunities exist to deliver protein enriched baked goods, that would benefit the health and wellbeing of specific customer groups, including growing children and the elderly, as well as having a wider appeal for the Mindful Nutritionists and their self-care agenda. This could be achieved using whey protein powders, or, if the emphasis is on plant-based ingredients, then pulse, oat and wheat proteins offer versatile ways to increase protein content.

In terms of product formulation, the increasing dominance of the plant-based market means that the ingredient list must show the product's plant credentials, but whilst 'taste remains king', the product still must exceed organoleptic expectations.

Tools to aid the self-care agenda

Across Europe, consumers are being given more information about the health components of the food that they are purchasing. Many European markets are adopting the Nutri-Score, front-of-pack label that provides user-friendly information on the nutritional quality of food and beverages, using five different colours to classify food products into their respective categories. A recent study on the UK's voluntary traffic light system front-of-pack label, supports the making of these labels mandatory. In addition, promotions on food and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) in medium to large UK retailers will be restricted from October 2022.

Every ingredient in every product will need to earn its place on the ingredient list and corresponding front-of-pack labels, contributing to the nutritional component of the product or replacing fat, salt, sugar, or indeed, any specified allergen. Formulating baked goods within this increasingly stringent framework is the challenge of the day, but numerous innovative ingredients now exist to ensure that the products can be successfully formulated to be everything that they need to be. Product developers have a range of functional 'replacers' at their fingertips. In terms of fat reduction, starch-based ingredients, from potato or tapioca, offer water and fat-binding properties, whilst maltodextrins from waxy maize mimic the texture and melt-away of soft fats. Salt-reduction can be achieved using potassium-based or calcium-based leavening agents in place of salt, or flavour modulation systems or alternatively, stevia extracts to enhance the savoury flavour profile. Natural stevia flavour has become a mainstay of sugar-reduction strategies along with sugar alcohols, polyols and fructo-



oligosaccharides (FOS) that offer a prebiotic, lower calorie alternative to sugar. There is a wide range of sweeteners available to replace sugar and, therefore, reduce short sugars with longer sugars. For bakery applications, cereal and dried fruit extracts may provide not only natural sugar reduction, but also additional desirable properties such as natural colour, depth of flavour and crispness.


Sustainable health

Mintel's 2022 report on Healthy Eating¹ suggests that the focus for the next five years will concentrate on a sustainable food supply chain whilst developing ingredients that act on food waste and loss to help mitigate global hunger and food insecurity. A tall, but necessary, order and one that will resonate with the Clean Conscience mindset; requiring clean labels and a minimal environmental footprint. For example, enriching baked goods with proteins derived from pea and bean sources, which offer the least amount of greenhouse gas emissions per gram of protein, is both "better for me" and "better for the planet".

For the baked goods market, consideration must be given to the sourcing and provenance of key ingredients and the impact on social equity and conditions of the growers. This, along with information relating to regenerative, agricultural practices, will in time become part of the

consumers' evaluation of the way we do business.

Right now, innovative baked goods' manufacturers have at their disposal solutions for creating sustainable and healthier products. Take the example of naturally occurring and sustainable enzymes which are healthy alternatives for industrial baking. Such enzymes can extend the shelf-life of baked goods, result in improved condition and product quality and improve appearance. Furthermore, since enzymes are typically classified as a processing aid, it is not required to include them in the ingredient declaration, keeping that all important label clean.

Innovative and natural methods to reduce food waste without the need for additional or undesirable preservatives is something that the Mindful Nutritionist will be pleased to hear. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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