

Nostalgia and global food trends: key influences on new product development

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fter a period when childhood obesity appeared to plateau we have been told this month that the average British child leaving primary school is half a stone heavier than a generation ago. The study, by Imperial College London and published in The Lancet, has prompted renewed calls for a curb on the advertising of 'junk' food, something the Government has so far shied away from in favour of introducing a tax on sugary drinks and issuing a challenge to food companies to do more to make their products healthier. We have seen considerable activity already in this area, with many of the big brands offering low salt and sugar lines, and much work behind the scenes by the major retailers to make their own label ranges healthier. The problem is, that as a nation we just love our snacks and we all know that in times of hardship, it is all too tempting to reach for the comfort food for a quick and relatively cheap fix. We regularly see this, with many of top scoring products in recent years being sweet or savoury treats, often made to look less sinful through the addition of a healthier ingredient such as nuts or whole grain, or oven baked rather than fried.

Food trends are often cyclical, increasingly inspired by global food trends and pressures to eat healthily, like trendy superfoods, wrapped up in a need to be convenient and readily available – think the current trend of protein with everything. Just this month Nigella Lawson has been promoting a new ingredient, an Asian leaf called Pandan that has already swept through America and shows signs of finding favour amongst foodies in the UK. Another food trend she predicts will hit our shores is food from the Philippines, another big hit in the US. But we can never disregard the familiar; comfort food that underpins day to day eating. We've frequently observed that consumers retreat to the familiar during times of economic downturn. This is in part a financial response. Low-risk choices minimise waste. At least that is the theory. So perhaps we shouldn't be surprised to see a returning trend for retro food, highlighted again in a recent BBC Good Food Guide survey, as a 1970's food revival, with trifle, scotch eggs, Kiev's and even Vol au Vents becoming more popular. For the industry, refreshed updates of familiar tastes are a safe, low cost, investment, particularly in a context when the flow of new ideas has slowed and the emphasis – prompted by limited range Discounters – in on good value, frequently purchased, lines, not New Product Innovation.

Check out some of this month's exciting new products inspired by food from around the globe:

SHOWCASE PRODUCT OF THE MONTH



Asian Nasi Goreng, Scoring 45/50. Waitrose brings innovation to the Asian food aisle with a new spicy Indonesian rice dish. (Review 170907).



A fresh meal kit from Aldi : **Thai Chicken Stir Fry Meal Kit**: quick and easy to use, with "plenty of chicken" and a very competitive price. (Review 170930)



A traditional Peruvian recipe: **Chilli & Lemon**, this cooking sauce from Capsicana was light and "well balanced" (Review 170929)



Dell'UGO's Fresh Pumpkin Gnocchi: Launched in time for Halloween, this mix of potato, pumpkin and free-range egg was an acquired taste. (Review 170917)

Patak's Paste Pots Tikka Masala: a twist on a stock cube and every bit as tasty as the traditional presentation. (Review 170928)



Sainsbury's Indian Pea & Mint Kachori A "delicious" alternative to a samosa and great value at £1.82 (Review 170918)



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