

2017 proved all too predictable. Time to start looking ahead.

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t the end of the year, it's time to reflect on what has been a very turbulent year for retailers and food manufacturers who have had to adapt to changes in the global market, a falling £ and respond to evolving consumer lifestyles. The following key trends emerged in this shifting landscape:

The culture for instant gratification: time is of the essence: Convenience was certainly key this year. We saw this in the number of convenience foods in this year's Grocer Own Label Awards and in our own Foodfax evaluations. There have been more chilled component meals and kits (such as Aldi's popular Beef Stroganoff Meal Kit tested this month (Ref 171119) and a growing number of hand-held foods aimed at eating on the hoof. Our Festive Food Survey¹ also reveals that one of the most important considerations when buying Party Food is that it is quick and easy to prepare to maximise socialising time. **Everyday health as more consumers make food choices about what they think will make them feel better:** As well as an expanding Free From market aimed at the growing number of food excluders, we have seen other key 'health' trends in 2017. This year has been all about Protein. Of the products shortlisted in this year's Grocer New Product Awards 5% claimed added Protein in the title, many of them snacks. Muscle Foods ticked all the boxes this month with its high protein, gluten free Margherita Pizza (Ref 171117). The problem was the quality did not match the £3.50 price point. **A focus on reducing food waste:** The Co-op has just announced it will sell food beyond its 'best before' date. Aldi meanwhile is donating any non-sold Christmas food to local Charities this Christmas. It seems this topic is just opening up. **Seeking comfort in traditional foods:** A perennial feature, this was true for many of the new food and drink products in 2017, not least the growing sector of retro 70's classics and the extension of some of our favourite and longstanding brands, but when it comes to the most traditional time of all – the Christmas dinner - it seems some of us are bucking this trend. And it's not just the youngsters that are driving this change. Many of us are making small tweaks to the traditional menu – adding a Yorkshire Pud to the Christmas meal, leaving out the bread sauce, ignoring the need for home-made gravy – others are going the whole hog and choosing their favourite meal to serve up on the big day. Even if that's a Curry, a gluten free chip sandwich, or a vegan nut roast.

Look out for our NEW Fast Foodfax Awards and Predictions for 2018 that will be announced in the New Year.

Meanwhile check out some of this month's exciting new products:

SHOWCASE PRODUCT OF THE MONTH



Iceland's Soughdough Crumpets bought a touch of luxury to the bakery aisle. The flavour and texture were enhanced by the inclusion of seeds to generate a top quartile rating.



This healthy **Beetroot Borsch Soup** from Lithuanian company **Auga** held niche appeal. (Review 171129)



Muller White Velvet Plain Greek Style Yogurt hit the top spot, combining the creaminess of Greek style yogurt with a slightly sweeter taste. (Review 171113)



Gu Pots of Chocolate with a Twist of Amaretto, a touch of indulgence that would be "great for Christmas". (Review 171111)



Sarson's 1794, an extra strength vinegar with longstanding roots. (Review 171130)



Tesco Halloumi & Tomato Rolls an interesting and on-trend twist to a Spring Roll (Review 171116)



Did you always miss out? **Nestle's Orange Smarties** are expected to appeal to grown-ups and kids. Pink Smarties are the most recent release. (Review 171133)

¹ Cambridge Market Research Festive Food Survey 2017, Sample size: 296