The Grocer

Focus On: Jam, Preserves and Honey by Robyn Vinter (robynvinter@gmail.com)

Publishing: 14 January
Advertising deadline: 3 January
Submissions deadline: 23 December

The Story

Chocolate spread and nut butters are driving growth in jams, spreads & honey category, adding a combined £14.6m to sales as Brits buy more and at higher prices. Why are some sectors doing so well while others falter? How much does health have to do with nut butters' growth? Has the war on sugar finally hit jams? And what can be done to drive value back into it going forward?

Key themes:

Nut butters: The market is in huge growth. And it's no longer just about peanut butter. Several established players and new entrants have launched almond and cashew butters, among others. They're also benefitting from the high-protein trend sweeping grocery. Which ones have been successful? And, what's next? How is the trend towards natural products affecting it?

Marmitegate: It's one of the biggest grocery stories of 2016. Unilever proposed a price hike across many of its products, most notably Marmite. Uproar ensued with some consumers stocking up on their beloved yeast spread, while some switched to own label. So far, only Morrisons has put up the price of Marmite. So, will/have other followed? How did the brand perform last year? What are Unilever's plans post-Marmitegate?

Health: Health is big business in grocery. Has the sugar debate finally hit the jams, spreads and honey category? Or are these sub-categories in decline for a different reason? Which health trends are affecting this market? How are suppliers and retailers adapting their strategies to tap into this? What about savoury brands, which avoid the sugar debate. Are they utilising their position? How are peanut butters tapping into the protein trend?

Honey: After enjoying growth a year ago the sub-category is now back in value decline with slight growth in volumes. Why is value being eroded?

Brands vs own label: Branded is growing ahead of own label. How come? How have retailers changed their own label ranges to compete with branded over the past year? Are there any sub-categories where own label is out-performing branded? How come?

Prices/promotions: This feature will explore how the promotional strategies of retailers and brands looking have changed over the past year. How has this affected average prices? Brits are paying considerably more for peanut butter and chocolate spread this year, why? How are they adding value to the category?

New opportunities: With bread in severe decline, how are jams, spreads & honey being targeted at new occasions? Is there any NPD targeted specifically at baking or breakfast, for example?

Innovation: This will be key to this feature. We will be investigating how NPD has shaped the category over the past year and what is in store for shoppers in 2017. We will be profiling four of the most interesting launches in a separate innovation panel. Has there been any key NPD in chocolate spreads and nut butters that have helped drive growth? And what about jam and honey?

Advertising and marketing: This feature will also investigate how the marketing and advertising strategies of the category's biggest players have evolved over the past year and how they will develop in the coming year to sustain growth or return brands to growth.

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers' strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What's next for the category?