The Grocer

Focus On: Cheese

By Kevin White Kevin.White@thegrocer.co.uk

Publishing: 27 November 2021
Advertising deadline: 12 November 2021
Submissions deadline: 5 November 2021

Lockdown was good to take-home sales of cheese, as Brits bought blocks for home cooking and comfort eating. While cheddar is still delivering in absolute value sales, continental cheese's impressive growth shows that we have been willing to experiment. But the return of hospitality and a greater emphasis on out-of-home occasions could reverse many of these gains. Will posh cheese revert to being a special occasion in a restaurant? Will we be tempted by smaller impulse portions? And can suppliers fight back by targeting working from home lunches and with offline promotions?

Pricing: Cheese prices crept up by £0.02 in the last year, although branded saw a much more dramatic boost of £0.16. At the same time sales moved away from promotions. With shoppers going to physical stores more frequently, will competitive pricing keep them buying cheese?

Branded vs own label: Own label cheese further entrenched itself with growth of £138.2m or 6.7%, compared to £20.8m or 1.7% growth in branded cheese. How are private labels continuing to dominate the category?

Innovation: The last year has not seen a great deal of innovation in cheese, with Kantar noting that brands had pulled back on new ideas and even optimised their ranges to deal with supply chain problems. Could 2022 see a reversal?

DTC: The collapse of the foodservice industry during the pandemic prompted many cheesemakers to focus more on DTC channels. How are these faring now that lockdown is over?

Beyond block cheese: Cheese brands have been experimenting beyond the usual blocks. Cathedral City has teamed up with Iceland for a range of frozen sides, including mac and cheese and cheesy flatbread, while Bel UK has launched its Boursin brand into the hot cheese segment. How are these experiments working out?

4 x Innovations: Four new products or product ranges that have not appeared in The Grocer, including launch date, rsp, a hi-res picture