

The Grocer

Focus On: Frozen

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Publishing: 26 February 2022

Advertising deadline: 14 February 2022

Submissions deadline: 9 February 2022

‘Straight to wok’ tofu. Beer snacks. Non-HFSS pizza. There’s been a lot happening in the frozen aisle recently. New launches are targeting everything from plant-based diets to premium meals, via finger food and much besides. It’s a sign that – despite sales dipping slightly on last year’s highs – the frozen market remains a hotbed of innovation and investment. What was once a failsafe for shoppers is now answering a variety of pressing consumer needs, providing fare that is fresher than in the ambient aisles, less liable to create food waste, and helping people save money at a time of economic fragility. So who is driving innovation in this space? How much are they investing? Which products are landing with consumers, and why? And what does this say about perceptions of the wider category?

NPD: Princes, Birds Eye, Linda McCartney, Quorn, and Froneri are among the brands that have been innovating in frozen, with the likes of Spar pitching in from own label. Why is the category seeing so many launches, and what are brands hoping to achieve in frozen?

Food waste: Frozen food is often thought less liable to end up in the bin than its counterparts in other parts of the supermarket. Is this proving a draw for consumers who are ever more concerned about sustainability? And what are brands and retailers doing to market such benefits?

Freshness: Suppliers claim that frozen food is much fresher and healthier than its rivals in the ambient section, with the freezing process eliminating the need to add preservatives. Are such claims true? And are they enabling frozen to steal market share from ambient and chilled aisles?

Plant-based: Vegan-friendly products are quickly spreading across the frozen category, with established plant-based brands and newcomers launching new lines. Why is frozen seen as a good prospect for such products? And will the launches succeed?

Ready meals: Tapping into frozen’s reputation for convenience, ready meals have been a mainstay of the category and flourished through lockdown as a stand-in for a takeaway. With foodservice open again, can suppliers compete with more premium frozen options? And how is the sector addressing perceptions that frozen ready meals are unhealthy?

Fridgeable: Last year Iceland launched new labels to tell shoppers which frozen food products can be put straight in the fridge and how long they can be kept. For a retailer specialising in frozen it’s an interesting move to bring in shoppers who don’t own a freezer. How successful has this approach been, and it could it be copied more widely?

Logistics: Supply chains that have adapted to Brexit and the early pandemic are still facing problems, with the British Frozen Food Federation stating in January that there is “potential for massive delays and food supply issues” in Britain as the new border regime is imposed. How can the industry respond?

Innovations: Profile of four new products or ranges that have not appeared in The Grocer before. We need launch date, rsp, and a hi-res picture of each.