

The Grocer

Focus On: Cheese

By Thomas Woolman thwoolman@gmail.com

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Things are looking up for cheese – at least according to the top line figures, which show an increase in volume sales over the last 12 months. And for the two largest brands in the category, volume sales are going strong. But while there appears to be a recovery in sight after soaring inflation of the last couple years, a look into the details shows a more mixed picture, with smaller and regional UK brands still struggling to recover from high milk prices. So how have top brands cemented their dominance? What’s holding back the others? And what challenges do smaller, British cheese makers have to surmount?

Top dogs: Among cheese brands, the two largest brands are still at the front of the pack. One has unleashed a flurry of innovation in the last 12 months, while the other has invested in an ad campaign highlighting its emotional appeal. How have they managed to grow sales and put mileage between themselves and the next largest competitors? What’s next in the pipeline?

Challenges and challengers: Among British regional brands making cheeses such as red Leicester and cheshire, inflation continues to have an outsize impact. Are they continuing to feel the effects of higher milk prices from months ago – can they do anything to mitigate this or will they continue to slip behind the category leaders? With milk prices expected to creep up again, how are they preparing for the squeeze? There’s also pressure to get salt out of cheese – how is this affecting cheese makers?

Branded vs own label: Six years ago or so, some retailers reduced the bigger cheese brands they stocked, plus a couple of regional ones, leaving little room for challenger brands. Where does the balance between brands and own label sit today? How do companies adapt to such changes?

Innovation: There are heaps of new cheeses and cheese products on the market, with squeazy cheddar and extra creamy brie just two recent innovations. What else is out there? What are the trendy cheese flavours and formats? What are consumers most excited about?

Plant-based cheeses: Many of the big brands have now launched plant-based versions, but are these cheeses any good? Is their taste improving? Particularly for standard block cheeses, how are the plant-based versions performing?

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