



A SIMPLE INGREDIENT: A MYRIAD OF FROZEN FOOD OPTIONS

The study of a single ingredient such as the potato enables a quick look around of the new innovative offer on the frozen food market. This offer is structured around some general trends meeting consumer expectations and stimulating very specific ways to innovate. How do frozen food manufacturers innovate to respond to their customers' needs with the launch of mass-market products?



Beyond the need to feed oneself, food is, above all, a responsible enjoyment which is our customers' primary expectation and which integrates various facets.

THE MORE SOPHISTICATED, THE BETTER

Sophistication is the first facet of enjoyment. It is a sign that consumers are searching for high value-added products at all the levels of the product "mix": sophisticated recipes, use of rare or valuable ingredients, traditional methods of manufacture and of a less industrial character, and even products with more elaborate packaging.

As food ingredients, potatoes can bring innovation despite being a rather common food: in Norway, the manufacturer Findus launches, with its "Findus Farm" range, a premium purée made of selected potatoes and vegetables (such as turnips and rutabagas).

Similarly, Picard, in France, focuses on a special manufacturing process for turning potatoes to account with its "Inédits" product range: potatoes are cut in thin slices, delicately cooked to retain the crispness and creaminess of the ingredient and then presented in the shape of rosettes. The product image is entirely qualitative.

Finally, packaging also has a major influence on the decision to buy and Picard in France is once again an example which shall demonstrate this: the latter proposes a potato gratin in a terracotta ramekin, a more elaborate packaging than the average of potato dishes, which gives the product a touch of authenticity.

LET'S ENJOY OUR FOOD!

Enjoyment is also an issue of novelty and variety. Variety is the second enjoyment-related trend consumers are looking for, in their search of new sensations. The added value of these innovations consists of offering new tastes, shapes and textures with the aim of bringing diversity in the proposed food offer.

For example, Findus will propose a duo of diced sweet potatoes and potatoes to vary the classic recipe of diced potatoes. Through its "Food Service Quality" product range, Lutosa makes skin-on French fries in order to give them a boost texture. Greenland Seafood uses the crispy texture of the potato rösti and it combines it with its fish dish in sauce in order to provide the customer with a



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new sensation. Enjoyment is also related to the "letting go" notion, to indulge in a gourmet and regressive enjoyment, without paying attention to the nutritional profile or to the composition of the product.

Manufacturers will thus use fast-food and street food concepts. In Italy, Findus, with its "Capitan Findus" product range, renews frozen fish with a Fish & Chips Burger reference. Its Alaska pollock is coated with potato breadcrumbs to obtain a dressing similar to this fast food concept that originates in the United Kingdom.

The same goes for Iglo France which launches a special pollock fillet burger with crispy potato breadcrumbs. "Potatoes Burger" is another example which takes the fast-food concept, offered by Auchan Production for the French market. The French distri-

butor doesn't hesitate to reinvent the gourmet concept by wrapping it up in two potato pancakes.

Another way to invite consumers to gourmandize is to innovate by taking inspiration from a defined product category or concept, strongly associated with the consumer-focused enjoyment. The innovation therefore is to apply the potato ingredient to this gourmet concept. This way the manufacturer Cité Gourmande launches a churro with potatoes, vegetables and cheese. The gourmet and sweet concept of the churros is in this way diverted to new salty moments of consumption (breakfast, appetizer, dinner) and it is automatically associated with moments of enjoyment for our consumers.

BECAUSE SHARING IS CARING...

Finally, sharing is the last upward trend in agri-food, which touches the world of frozen food. Due to the current economic crisis, food becomes an easy source of enjoyment to daily offer to oneself and to others through sharing. To innovate in order to facilitate sharing requires both product formulation work (towards new shapes and concepts easier to share) and use of new packaging (more practical for achieving this sharing). In the United

Kingdom, Bannister's Farm launches mini-shaped potatoes halved, filled and easily shared.





ches vegetable nuggets with gluten-free potato flour coating.

Similarly, the potato is a gourmet food commonly used as a meat substitute in vegetarian recipes. Manufacturers understood that enjoyment must accompany any 100% plant innovation, which is no longer aimed only at vegetarians. The consumer can be a flexitarian, who reduces his/her meat intake and expects gourmet vegetarian recipes.

Asda in the United Kingdom understood this and launches the “beet bourguignon” recipe (inspired from the beef bourguignon associated with great enjoyment) which combines a crispy pancake of potatoes on a bed of baby beet root leaves and other cooked vegetables.

The consumer wishes to eat any product whenever he/she wants any product, according to his/her immediate desires, and this also concerns the potato.

Manufacturers try to turn potatoes into a snack like the others, to be eaten quickly at breakfast or to be easily prepared at home at night.

Therefore, Youinon launches in France its “Pom’Four”: a potato stuffed with smoked salmon, fresh cream and diced courgettes to be quickly and easily heated in a wood tray. Practicality must not affect the gourmandise of the recipe, just as enjoyment mustn’t affect consumption, but, on the contrary, facilitate the accessibility of this enjoyment for the consumer.

To conclude this innovation review, we will integrate the digital revolution in our food trends. Nowadays digital has invaded the vast majority of our cultural spheres and in particular it transforms our daily use of language.

While distributors such as Carrefour in France or Albert Heijn offer the classic frozen potatoes in the form of letters, the manufacturer Birds Eye sees even further, by integrating the new digital language into frozen potato specialties in the form of computer characters: hashtag, at-sign, asterisk and emoticons. This latest innovation reminds us, above all, that food innovation must be directed towards the consumer by considering the cultural environment in which he/she develops and which is digitizing all the time. ■

Even if enjoyment is central when it comes to food, guarantees have to be provided in order to keep this enjoyment with consumers: health guarantees, thinness guarantees, naturalness guarantees, but also practicality or ethics guarantees. Gluten-free products are no longer considered a fad, but a trend seen by consumers as a guarantor for good health. For this very reason, Earth’s Best through its Gluten Free Baked Nuggets brand laun-

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