

Focus On: Jams & Spreads, publishing 12 January

Rob Brown (rob_j_a_brown@hotmail.com) and Natalie Brown (natalie_brown@live.co.uk)

Submissions deadline: 10 December

Advertising deadline 3 January

Online Listicle to go live on 11 January: 5 Scandi ingredients that could reinvigorate the jam sector'

The Story

Jam better watch out - peanut butter sector is hot on its heels. That peanut butter achieved the fastest value and volume sales growth this year makes jam's position as the second highest grossing sector in the category even more precarious. What's driving the peanut butter trend forward? How has the growing perception of nut butters as healthy benefitted the peanut butter sector this year, and is jam's association with sugar holding it back?

Key themes:

Peanut butter: Both brands and own label enjoyed value growth in peanut butter this year, but one streamed ahead of the other. Private label SKUs are successfully closing the gap between themselves and their branded counterparts.

Jam: The sector may be (just) back in growth this year so where are the opportunities for the sector to turn itself around?

Honey: The highest grossing sector in the category was the only one to drop average prices this year. What were the factors behind honey's price dip? How have the main players in honey performed, and how was the sector affected by the fake Manuka scandal this year?

Sugar: Sweet spreads were one of the only categories to hit the PHE's 5% sugar reduction target this year. Which sectors have been reading the way in sugar slashing, and how could the reduction targets affect the category in the year ahead?

Prices, promotions and premiumisation: Shoppers continued to pay more for premium spreads this year, with all sectors bar honey bumping up average prices. The past year has also seen a rise in promotional activity for the category, flying against the wider market trend and failing to bring down average prices. Which premium lines are convincing shoppers to part with their cash, and which NPD tapping into demand for posher spreads this year?

Alternative nut butters: The nut butter sector has expanded far past peanuts this year, with NPD including almond, cashew and Brazil nut spreads. Some brands are offering additional benefits, e.g. adding seeds into the mix, but the UK market is yet to see the likes of US nut butter brand Wild Friends, who recently launched a range Collagen Nut Butters. What's powering the current nut butter trend and which brands are innovating in the sector? Could the UK make space on shelves for the likes of a collagen nut butter this year?

Retailers: It's been a mixed year in terms of retailer performance in jams and spreads. Aldi and Lidl have continued to boost sales and seize market share, but three of the big four lost value this year. What separated the winners from the losers this year? Why did Ocado enjoy double-digit growth, outstripping even the discounters, while Waitrose sales dropped 7.9%? What do the retailers attribute these gains/losses to, and what are their plans for their jams and spreads aisle in the year ahead?

Innovations:

We identify four new products that ideally have not appeared in The Grocer before. including launch date, image and RSP.