

Focus On: Free from by Rob Brown (rob_j_a_brown@hotmail.com) Natalie Brown (natalie_brown@live.co.uk)

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Online Listicle to go live on 5 July: What are the main innovations & how are they shaping the market

The Story

Free from might want to think about changing its name. For in the era of the lifestyle shopper, it's not just about what products don't contain. There is a growing emphasis on what they do contain. As a host of brands and retailers offer gluten-free and dairy-free options, ingredients have become a key point of difference. Whether unusual or all natural, they need to offer something that makes them stand out from the crowd. And most importantly, they need to communicate the same taste credentials as standard lines. Who is rising to the challenge? And who is being left behind?

Main themes

Start-ups: Plenty of new brands are coming up through the ranks challenging the traditional image of free-from. Which brands are doing this best and how are customers responding?

Big brands: It's not just the small brands shaking things up. Major operations are also looking to revamp the category with innovations. What are the most significant pieces of NPD and what are they bringing to such a highly competitive category?

Consumer perceptions: To what extent are free-from shoppers looking for all-natural options? And what are they looking for in taste? What claims are most important to these consumers?

Plant-based vs dairy-free: Are consumers favouring items described as plant-based or dairy free? Why? Is there more trust in one term than the other from an allergen perspective? Is plant-based seen as more 'on trend'?

Retailers: How are retailers adapting to this shift in free-from buying habits? To what extent are they making aisles more attractive/inviting?

Retailer lines: Retailers are rapidly gaining share in this category. Which own-brand ranges are leading the way and what are they doing?

The rules around free-from: What are the regulations around free-from labelling? Gluten free is regulated, but dairy-free came under fire for a lack of controls earlier this year

Dairy-free coffee: What is the secret to making the perfect dairy-free coffee? Which milks go with which coffee blends? Is this becoming a growing point of competitive advantage?

Innovations: We identify eight new products or product ranges that ideally have not appeared in The Grocer before including launch date, image and RSP.

Kantar data: Using Kantar commentary, we explain the reasons behind the rise and fall of certain sub-categories.

Nielsen data: Using Nielsen commentary, we explain the reasons behind the rise and fall of the top 10 brands.