

The Grocer

Dairymen 2020

Submissions deadline: 21-28 September, refer to individual feature

Advertising deadline: 7 October for space | 17 October for copy

Focus On: British Cheese, by Patrick McGuigan (pat_mcguigan@yahoo.co.uk)

Submissions deadline: 28 September

Cheese sales have been soaring. The major brands were at the forefront of a renaissance in the category, with sales up 28% in lockdown. But how did other British cheese types fare during the pandemic? How did smaller UK suppliers cope with demand? Who were the unlikely stars of British cheese? And with consumption riding high, will booming sales continue?

- **Highs and lows:** who were the winners and losers of the pandemic in both brand and own-label over the past year? What were the driving forces beyond Covid?
- **Cheese types:** how did non-cheddar varieties perform? What was their appeal to shoppers? Which smaller brands stood out? How? Did any fall by the wayside? Why?
- **Cheddar stranglehold:** some challengers have moved to weaken the dominance of cheddar in recent years. Which brands and varieties could follow suit?
- **Stilton:** producers were warning of huge losses that could even threaten their long-term future at the height of lockdown, with the closure of the foodservice sector hitting the small number of producers that make the cheese particularly hard. How has the sector fared since, and what does the future hold?
- **Convenience:** With shoppers swerving long queues in the mults, did cheese sales rise in in C-stores, and who benefitted the most?
- **Plant-based:** How did the main plant-based cheese alternatives fare over this period?
- **Packaging innovation:** cheese wrapping is notoriously difficult to recycle but at least one big supplier has launched a recycling service, and others look set to follow. Are we on the brink of a packaging revolution for cheese?

Focus On: Dairy Drinks by Henry Sandercock (henry.sandercock@wrbm.com)

Submissions deadline: 28 September

How much longer until dairy drinks are hit by the sugar tax? They have so far avoided the levy – in spite of being considered for it last year by the government – but there remain calls for a change. In May, the Association for the Study of Obesity’s Dr Maria Bryant insisted the soft drinks levy should “absolutely” be applied to sugary dairy drinks. And with the government pushing its new anti-obesity plan, could milky soft drinks be about to be taxed?

- **Sugar tax:** how likely is it that the levy will expand to dairy drinks? Why are they being considered for the tax? Which brands would be hardest hit under the current rules? How are suppliers preparing for such an eventuality? How would the tax affect prices for shoppers? What reformulation work have they done so far to reduce sugar? And what issues have they faced?
- **Plant-based:** it’s the hot area of innovation in dairy drinks right now. Who’s being doing what? And why? How are sales? Is the vegan trend a threat or an opportunity for traditional dairy businesses?
- **Covid:** how did dairy drinks cope during lockdown? What factors helped drive sales? Or did the sector under-perform? If so, why? In either case, what obstacles did suppliers face?

- **Flavours:** coffee has been a smash hit this year, while the likes of vanilla and banana have struggled. What are the factors behind their relative fortunes, and what's the next trendy flavour going to be?
- **Brands:** Which are the best and worst performing brands of the year and why? What trends (health, indulgence, convenience, etc) are impacting sales? What are the strugglers doing to turn things around?
- **Innovation:** four new products or ranges including image, rsp, launch date, pack weight etc

Focus On: Yoghurt & Potted Dessert by Nick Hughes (nick@nickhugheswriting.com)

Submissions deadline: 28 September

Could yoghurt be the next frontier of the plant-based trend? Leading brands have launched – or are planning – dairy-free yoghurts to tap the veganism boom. Who's doing what? And how much of a threat are such innovations, which are already enjoying fast-rising sales, to standard yoghurt, many areas of which is going great guns.

- **Plant-based:** which plant-based suppliers are taking the fight to dairy in yoghurt? And which traditional dairy companies are expanding into vegan yoghurt options? What's driving sales? And what sort of shoppers are buying into the sector?
- **Health:** is healthier yoghurt over and done with? Diet options are down 15.1% in value, while luxury lines are up 11%. What's the story? Can diet yoghurt regain its mojo?
- **Kids' yoghurt:** how are suppliers innovating for children – and what health issues (including but not limited to sugar) are they bearing in mind, as they strive to return value to a sector slipping in value and volumes? How big an impact did months of home-schooling have on sales this year?
- **Covid:** yoghurt was swept of shelves during the pandemic, with many shoppers believing it would boost their immunity against the virus. Is this still helping sales, or have things died down?
- **Own label:** How have the retailers' own label lines changed in the past year in terms of the products on offer and how they're being promoted and merchandised?
- **Brands:** Which are the best and worst performing brands of the year and why? What trends (health, indulgence, convenience, etc) are impacting sales? What are the strugglers doing to turn things around?
- **Potted desserts:** volumes sales are slipping, with value growing only due to higher prices. What's the problem? Who's suffering? And what's to be done?

Focus On: Ice Cream by Abbie Dawson (abbie.dawson@wrbm.com)

Submissions deadline: 28 September

Lollies are making lots of lolly. Handheld ice creams have enjoyed huge sales, especially in chocolate-covered and adult refreshment sectors. The success of the format – popular for on-the-go occasions – is in spite of lockdown. So what drove the rise in value and volumes? More multipacks? A lust for indulgent snacks? Good weather? All of the above?

- **Handheld:** what's driven the big gains for ice cream lollies? Who's been eating them all? What pack formats, flavours and brands have benefited the most? What innovations and reformulations have driven shopper interest? And are Brits turning their backs on tubs of ice cream?
- **Ranging:** how have retailers ranged handheld ice cream over the past year? Have they chosen to focus on lollies over tubs? To focus on adult options? What?
- **Promotions:** how has the lockdown lack of retailer promotions affected the overall ice cream category – which is famously one of the most heavily promoted areas of grocery?
- **Health:** has the lower-cal/higher protein fad disappeared? Or were Brits slurping down lots of healthier ice cream during lockdown? Or have they switched their attentions to other variants perceived as better-for-you, such as dairy-free?

Focus On: Dairy Snacking by Daniel Woolfson (daniel.woolfson@wrbm.com)

Submissions deadline: 28 September

Where does dairy snacking go from here? After 18 months of uninterrupted shopper growth, Covid-19 resulted in the category's first penetration decline in May 2020. With the number of out of home and carried out occasions declining through lockdown and post-lockdown, shoppers have moved their spend into the more regular cheeses, with blocks being key drivers. So, what are snack suppliers doing to revive their sector?

- **On-the-go:** how was dairy snacking affected during lockdown, and by how much have its fortunes changed since people began returning to work and school? How are suppliers and retailers persuading shoppers to return to on-the-go formats? What marketing, ranging and innovation is involved?
- **Kids:** they're the main consumers of dairy snacks. Do suppliers expect to see a sales uplift now schools are back in session, or are they resigned to weaker sales (for a while, at least)? How are manufacturers addressing not only 'the new normal' but also health issues such as childhood obesity?
- **Adults:** how are suppliers persuading grown-ups to choose dairy snacks? What's the appeal of them? Which formats, products and brands are doing best – and which are struggling?
- **Health:** dairy snacks' healthy appeal covers vitamins, calcium and no sugar. But there's also fat. And Brits are being encouraged to lose weight. Where does that leave the category? How are suppliers addressing matters through formulation, portion size, etc?
- **Brands:** Which are the best and worst performing brands of the year and why? What trends (health, indulgence, convenience, etc) are impacting sales? What are the strugglers doing to turn things around?
- **Own-label:** private label options are way down in value and volume. What's the story? And what are retailers doing to return to the black?
- **Innovation:** four new products or ranges including an image, rsp, launch date, pack weight and salient details.

Focus On: Butter, Spreads & Margarine by Nick Hughes (nick@nickhugheswriting.com)

Submissions deadline: 28 September

What's happened to healthier spreads? After a resurgence last year, the BSM category has continued its upward trajectory – buoyed, in part, by increased cooking, baking and sandwich occasions in the home. Overall volume sales are up 12%, with indulgence winning out. But healthier alternatives have faltered. Low fat and olive-based spreads have suffering declines. What's their problem? And what does their future hold?

- **Healthier options:** why have these products struggled, and how might they reverse their fortunes? Which names are bucking the downward trend?
- **Winners and losers:** who stood out as the big winners in both branded and own-label? How? Who lost out? Why? Which formats and variants have soared?
- **Plant-based:** there's been big investment in plant-based spreads. What's new? Can they ever challenge butter and dairy spreads as marge once did?
- **Convenience:** with shoppers swerving long queues in the mults, how did BSM perform in c-stores?
- **Innovations:** four innovations from the sector over the past six months

Focus On: Continental Cheese, by Patrick McGuigan (pat_mcguigan@yahoo.co.uk)

Submissions deadline: 28 September

Locked down Brits have been gorging themselves on cheese this year, and while cheddar sales hit the headlines, shoppers have also been snapping up continental cheese by the truckload. Total continental volume sales are up almost 13% year on year, with products such as mozzarella and parmesan buoyed by an increase in cooking at home. But with Brexit looming, can they keep up that performance post-lockdown? What challenges are posed by the UK's departure from the EU?

- **Brexit:** by how much does the UK's exit from Europe threaten sales of continental cheese? What difficulties lie ahead for UK suppliers, and for retailers that stock cheese from abroad? And what are the opportunities? How are businesses preparing in terms of logistics, stockpiling, etc?
- **Home-grown continentals:** how have British takes on continental cheese fared? With uncertainty over a post-Brexit trade deal with the EU still hanging over the food industry, could UK suppliers capitalise?
- **Cheese types:** during lockdown – and over 2020 – which varieties and suppliers performed the best, and why? Which struggled? Stilton certainly had a torrid time, with some producers under threat of going out of business during the pandemic. How did they cope in the end?
- **Imports:** how did key suppliers overcome the challenges of the pandemic to keep supplies running? And with average prices up 2.4% for the category, did Covid add cost?
- **Retailers:** how did supermarkets and other key grocers help suppliers keep their products on shelf? And how did c-stores benefit from increased custom?
- **Home-grown continentals:** how have British takes on continental cheese fared? With uncertainty over a post-Brexit trade deal with the EU still hanging over the food industry, could UK suppliers capitalise?
- **Innovation:** four standout innovations from the sector over the past six months.