

The Grocer

Focus On: Ready meals and soups by Jimmy Nicholls

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There are few foods as trustworthy as a tin of soup, as lockdown shortages proved. But branded stalwarts are not where the excitement is happening. Grab-and-go soup brand Re:Nourish recently secured a £2m investment, backing a range that includes what is claimed to be the first microwaveable bottled soup. Soupologie is hoping to give Brits a vitamin boost with a new range of vitamin D-enriched soups. And Heinz itself is ploughing £2.5m into its new Plant Proteinz brand. So are convenience and function going to drive the category from now on? Will we see more interest in the chilled aisle or ambient? In short, are we about to see the next generation of soup?

Convenient soups: Re:Nourish is pioneering in soups with a new microwaveable bottled soup. It's a twist on soup's longstanding presence in the chilled aisle aimed at people who can only access a microwave. But with working lunches coming home, how will such formats fare? And can convenience challenge the dominance of ambient?

Health: Ready meals have not enjoyed a reputation as the healthiest of meal options, with canned soup sometimes lacking the freshness common in healthier fare. So how will these categories cater to shoppers' new-found health kicks? What role will plant-based play? And what functional benefits will prove decisive?

Ready meals: Ready meals have picked up since the end of the pandemic as people's busy lives made convenient options more attractive, with some of us also treating ourselves when working at home. So how can the category cater to new habits and the resumption of old ones?

Frozen: Frozen meals have often been reserved for lazy dinners, or as a stockpile bought as part of a big shop. Now that more people are working or entertaining from home, are they finding a broader use for lunch or evening meals? And are fears about supply chains likely to incentivise further stockpiling?

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