



APPEALING TO ALL

“It goes without saying that it’s hugely important to be aware of special diets and allergens, from a health and safety point of view,” explains Gordon Lauder, MD of frozen food distributor Central Foods. “But for commercial reasons too, it’s wise to offer a food and drink selection which will appeal to customers with special dietary requirements.

“A recent survey by Bookatable showed that 79% of senior restaurateurs in the UK see food allergies as a top influencer in where people choose to eat. Some 76% thought catering for people who are coeliac or have other medical conditions was influential in diners’ decisions on where to eat, while offering vegetarian and vegan options was also seen as very important. Often it will be the person with a dietary requirement who chooses where a group will eat, so building a reputation as a café that caters for free-from customers will guarantee return visits.

“At Central Foods, we have certainly seen a significant increase in demand for free-from items, and as a result we’ve continued to expand the range of gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian products that we offer our food service customers. There’s been huge development in the free-from market in recent years, which has led to the availability of some amazing free-from products – both sweet and savoury – that are perfect for cafés. And indeed, we are seeing more and more products that are suitable for not one dietary requirement but two or three – vegan and gluten free, for example. This is great news for café operators because it helps to avoid menu proliferation and also for free-from customers who can now eat the same type of products as their friends and family without being made to feel ‘different’.

Eating habits REVIEWED

One consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic has been renewed interest in health and the nature (both origin and sustainability) of what we consume, with trends that were already gathering pace – reduced sugar and plant-based eating, for example – now likely to be the focus of even greater attention.

“Gluten-free awareness has grown considerably over the past few years. According to Coeliac UK, around one in 100 people are believed to have Coeliac Disease, an autoimmune condition caused by a reaction to gluten. Alongside this, there are others who actively decide to avoid gluten, as a lifestyle choice or just because it makes them feel better. It’s been more than ten years now since Central Foods first began working with Coeliac UK as part of our drive to source and supply free-from foods for the foodservice market.

“One of our most stunning desserts is the Menuserve ruby chocolate and raspberry cheesecake (main picture) – and it just happens to also be gluten-free and suitable for vegetarians. With a gluten-free dark cocoa biscuit base, topped with a light and creamy, fruity ruby chocolate and raspberry cheesecake, and finished with a layer of dark chocolate ganache swirled with ruby chocolate, it’s part



of the growing free-from range offered by Central Foods, and is guaranteed to appeal to all diners – not just those looking for a gluten-free or vegetarian option. What's more, ruby chocolate is *the* on-trend dessert ingredient currently. Made from unfermented cocoa beans, with their natural red-pink colour, ruby chocolate has a creamy, light, fruity/ berry flavour that works perfectly with cheesecake. Its unusual pink colour offers instant visual appeal and ensures your menu stands out from the competition, as well as guaranteed 'likes' on Instagram!

"Pasta remains a popular and convenient staple on many menus, and Central Foods has a gluten-free and vegan option to ensure that coeliacs and others who avoid gluten or follow a plant-based diet don't miss out. It's available in individual portions and is ready-cooked, so the penne pasta couldn't be easier to use. Simply microwave to heat from frozen in around two minutes or defrost and serve cold, for example in a salad. The penne pasta is available in packs of 20 x 200g portions.

"When it comes to catering for free-from diners, frozen pre-prepared products can be a real bonus. It ensures that there is always something available for those with dietary requirements, especially if demand outstrips your already prepared supply. It will also help to avoid cross-contamination and wastage in the kitchen or if a dedicated free-from preparation and service area is an issue."



HEALTHY SNACKING

As consumers begin to emerge from total lockdown, many are likely to review their recent, and not-so-healthy grazing habits, - which means there will be some great opportunities out there for café operators to capitalise on the flourishing healthier snacking market, feel coffee sector supplier, Eat Real (www.eatreal.co.uk).

All-day snacking continues to push the traditional 'three meals a day' routine into the history books, they report, while the continued growth in demand for free from snacks now means that healthier snacks are no longer a nice to have option, but an essential and profitable part of a to go offering.

Covid-19 has forced all sorts of lifestyle changes on everyone in recent months but as cafés gradually reopen - albeit with social distancing in place - now's the time for operators to review their snack offering to attract the healthier snackers, feel the company.

"Around 87% of consumers now choose free from snacks as a lifestyle option rather than a medical necessity so it's crucial that cafés and coffee shops offer a broad range of healthier snacks. Fast-paced lifestyles and the fast-growing interest in health and wellbeing mean people now want ready to eat, healthier, and portable food at all times of the day - not just at traditional mealtimes," says Debbie King, director of commercial sales and marketing at healthier snacking brand Eat Real.

"Consumers increasingly have health at the top of their agendas and are seeking out free from options - and they're willing to pay a premium for them. That means there are significant opportunities to maximise profits if you offer the right range.

"Multiple snacking occasions every day, and the rise in snacks replacing meals, now mean that consumer expectation has expanded far beyond a simple hunger fix. The dramatic rise in demand from consumers for free from foods combined with a general move towards a plant-based diet is a major factor in the rise of healthier snacking. When the snack attack hits, people want to feel good about their choices and so select the healthier option."

Eat Real's range of 'good for you' snacks includes Hummus Chips, Lentil Chips, Quinoa Chips and Veggie Straws – all of which are free from all 14 major allergens and suitable for Vegan, Kosher and Halal diets, they point out. They come in a wide range of flavours with best-sellers in the café sector currently Chilli & Lemon Lentil Chips, Sea Salt Hummus Chips and Sour Cream & Chive Quinoa Chips, they observe. The Hummus and Lentil Chips also contain up to 40% less fat than traditional potato crisps and all are available in 30-45g 'Impulse' packs - perfect for eat-in, lunch on the go or as part of a meal deal, they suggest.

Kate Percy's Go Bites energy balls snack range (www.katepercys.com) also cater to the free-from market, made from 100% natural ingredients with no added sugar. They are also Coeliac UK certified gluten-free, wheat-free and dairy-free.

Available in five tempting flavours - Strawberry & Cashew, Blackcurrant & Blueberry, Raspberry & Cacao, Coconut & Date and Hazelnut & Cacao - they're a healthy and natural pick-me-up or 'to go' snack, made with dried fruit, oats and nuts, and hand-rolled in zingy freeze-dried fruit or chopped nuts. They are also suitable for vegans and are high in fibre with only 81-83 kcals per pack.

The Blackcurrant & Blueberry and Hazelnut & Cacao Go Bites also contain added rice protein to help muscles recover post-exercise, point out the company, and are the perfect pre- or post-workout boost, while both the Coconut + Date and Hazelnut + Cacao flavours are previous Great Taste winners.

"These handy on-the-go snacks deliver a quick and enduring energy shot and are the perfect addition to meal deals or to go options," says founder, Kate Percy. "They're a great mid-morning or mid-afternoon pick me up as well as a healthy snack for children, but we're also seeing a growing trend in Europe to have them with a cup of coffee."





LAUNCHED IN LOCKDOWN

Launching a new brand and introducing an entirely unprecedented product to the UK drinks market is a risky, logistically fraught project at the best of times, which it certainly hasn't been in recent times.

However, start-up brand, Bright Barley (www.brightbarley.com), has launched what it claims is the UK's first range of alternative, plant-based milk drinks made from barley, and at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, with Britain in complete lockdown and the company's founder, Jiali Jiang, and her team, geographically marooned.

"No one could have predicted, when we were planning our launch, that this would become a global crisis," says Jiali Jiang.

"In a way, being unprepared for the pandemic and its impact was a help. We just carried on. And thanks to our fabulous production and distribution partners, lifeline conference platforms such as Zoom to keep us all in contact - and some unexpected added benefits to our commitment to sourcing locally and independently - Bright Barley has been launched on time, at the peak of a global crisis."

Jiali Jiang was a 25-year-old, recent Cambridge graduate in 2016 when she first had the idea of harnessing the healthiness and history of one of the first cultivated crops - the forgotten super-grain, barley. Having studied environmental policy, she was keen to bring together her interests in organic ingredients, sustainability and ancient grains in a new food or drink product, and realised that the answer had been on her doorstep all her life.

Jiali Jiang was brought up in a region of China close to the Tibetan Plateaus, where barley has been a mainstay for millennia, for both its nutritional value and hardiness at such altitudes. "For Tibetans," she explains, "barley is a staple foodstuff, particularly *tsampa*, which is a type of bread made from roasted barley, but is also used variously in cakes, porridges, soups and the alcoholic drink *chhaang*. So when I came to the UK, I was amazed to discover that this delicious little grain, full of fibre and heart-healthy beta-glucans, had been cultivated here since the Iron Age, but was now largely relegated to animal fodder. Bright Barley is all about changing that."

After four intensive years of product development, Jiali Jiang and her team have perfected a range of vegan barley shakes in Salted Caramel, Chocolate and Coffee flavours, filling a gap in the UK market for a grain-based 'mylk', and tapping into a booming category that a quarter

of Britons now claim to buy into, and bringing impressive sustainability credentials to the party too.

Bright Barley's attributes include all-natural ingredients, the ability to help lower cholesterol, control blood sugar levels and improve digestive health, as well as offer a fibre boost that is low in fat and full of slow release energy. It's high in calcium too, providing 50% of the recommended daily intake with added vitamins D and B12. It's also dairy-free and suitable for vegetarians. Packaged in recyclable, paperboard Tetra Pak cartons made from renewable FSC material, each 330ml carton has an RRP of £1.69 and an ambient shelf life of 273 days.

"Provenance and sustainability are important to both me and our target consumer, and discovering high quality barley flour grown in the UK was central to my decision to develop a barley drink," Jiali Jiang adds, having been particularly meticulous in sourcing her ingredients, including using grain from selected UK organic farms, which is ground at Shipton Mill in the Cotswolds, where flour has been produced since Medieval times. "So many plant-based milks have hidden environmental impacts on land and water usage, or in food miles. Ours was going to be different in every way."

That commitment to reducing food miles by UK sourcing would prove vital to ensuring that ingredients were available and delivered on time for the first production run in April 2020. It was a date that the team was committed to, irrespective of the corona crisis, with ingredients ordered, factory booked, packaging on its way and distributors already eagerly signed up to list the trailblazing range.

"We have been lucky," admits Jiali Jiang. "Because few of our ingredients are bespoke and all are natural, our supplies were relatively straightforward and largely unaffected. And our decision to support independents has also helped, with our family-owned, Somerset-based processors remaining open - safely, but defiantly - as they have done since 1898."

"We did have to safeguard our routes to market, however, and the first thing we did when lockdown was announced was expand our retail plans and build an ecommerce side to our website. In just two weeks."

In fact, the team report that they were having to adapt to a new set of changed circumstances every week. From shelving plans to launch at cancelled trade shows to targeting online retailers to scouting for a photographer who had a home studio for the product photoshoots.

"This may be something of a baptism of fire, but it has certainly made us resourceful. Ultimately, the product will do the talking, however, and I'm confident that we have developed a range that is unique, delicious, healthy and timely," concludes Jiali Jiang.

As you might expect, Bright Barley has continuing ambitious plans for barley, with new product lines already in development in their mission to "Bring Barley Back". As one of the first cultivated crops going back as far as 10,000 BC and that sustained such great civilisations as the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians, the return of the original super-grain is long overdue, the company feel.





VEGAN-ISED

"The popularity of meat-free lifestyles in the UK is on the increase. Food retailers and manufacturers have been quick to supply additional demand and café operators must increase the number of vegan choices on menus to further their appeal," says Frances Booth, category marketing manager at Lotus Bakeries (www.lotusbiscoff.com/en-gb).

"Consumers are primarily adopting a vegan diet for ethical reasons but there are also those who are simply curious about it and interested in trying vegan products or looking to reduce their meat or dairy intake."

What's more, offering vegan alternatives is easier than ever with the increasing number of products available on the market, feel Lotus, and as this trend becomes ever more prevalent within the industry, operators must consider which ingredients are suitable to use, whilst also offering the maximum versatility, great taste and ease of use, they advise.

Suitable for vegans, Lotus Biscoff Smooth Spread is suitable to use within a whole host of delicious vegan desserts or baked goods which are so crucial to a café's offering, suggest the Belgium company. Lotus Biscoff Smooth Spread, for example, is made from exactly the same Lotus Biscoff biscuits that customers have grown to love with their cappuccinos or lattes when out of the home and can be used in a whole host of vegan recipes.

Lotus Biscoff Smooth Spread is also a great substitute for butter or sugar as it melts easily but once cooled regains its sticky texture which is why it is a versatile ingredient for anyone who is creative in the kitchen, the company point out. Why not try making rich vegan brownies with Lotus

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TEA ACCOMPANIMENT

Free from is also making its presence known when it comes to the evolving tea market. As consumers embrace the speciality nature and theatre of tea, cafés also need to review the offering of tea accompaniments, feel oat milk company, Glebe Farm Foods (www.glebefarmfoods.co.uk).

“The plant-based trend impacts all areas of foodservice and retail, and plant-based milks, cakes and breakfasts are just as important when a café is building its menu and aiming to attract these customers,” says Rebecca Rayner, director of Glebe Farm Foods.

According to a recent Mintel report, almost a quarter of Brits are now consuming plant-based alternatives to milk, observe the company. Add to this the fact that dairy is the most commonly avoided food and ingredient in the UK, Mintel data has also shown, and it is clear that cafés must adapt their dairy-free offerings accordingly to cater to the ever-increasing consumer demand for plant-based alternatives, advise Glebe Farm.

“Oat drinks (milks) are an ideal dairy alternative and can be used in tea as well as in baking. They’re the perfect accompaniment to a good cuppa,” adds Rebecca Rayner.

“When choosing an oat drink, consider the other key trend of ‘clean eating’ - food and drink that doesn’t contain any artificial colours, flavours or preservatives. This can be tricky when choosing a plant-based milk alternative, as many of them are made from a concentrate and use stabilisers and thickeners to ensure the product performs.

“Our PureOaty oat drink, however, is made using only four natural ingredients - British gluten free oats, water, sunflower oil and salt. It contains no added sugar and never, ever comes from concentrate. Gluten free and suitable for vegans, it’s also the only oat drink on the market that is made from British Gluten Free Oats.”

Biscoff Smooth Spread swirls, they suggest, or how about a classic coffee cake with a Lotus Biscoff frosting complete with a drizzle of their new Lotus Biscoff Topping Sauce? This is the same as the Lotus Biscoff spread, but is supplied in the form of a pourable sauce.

Lotus Biscoff Smooth Spread is available in quantities of 8kg, 1.6kg, 380/400g and the new Lotus Biscoff Topping Sauce is available in 1kg bottles.

Loryma (www.loryma.de/en), a manufacturer of wheat raw materials, has unveiled a basic functional mix for muffins and sponge cakes as part of its Lory® Bake line. This added value blend not only ensures sensory appeal in finished products, claim the company, but also responds to current market trends, thanks to several additional health benefits.

Perfect for the coffee to go segment with its street food character, suggest the company, recipes can boast reduced sugar and increased protein content, and therefore help to meet consumer demand for nutritious free-from products.

Younger consumers in particular prefer products that are not only sensorily attractive but, moreover, reflect an international lifestyle, report Loryma, and the growing trend towards low carb/high protein products, currently still dominant in the bread and rolls segment, is now spilling over into the pastry category. While fine baked goods usually have too high sugar and fat content, which determines their typical taste, Loryma’s functional blend has been created to preserve texture and flavour while optimising nutritional values can now be met, say the company.

Lory Bake High Protein is a functional base compound, free of added sugars and rich in proteins. The use of wheat proteins and specially modified starches makes it possible to achieve a pleasing texture with significantly reduced carbohydrate content. A blueberry muffin made with Lory Bake High Protein, for example, has around 30% fewer calories, 25% less fat, 50% less carbohydrates, over 80% less sugar and three times as much protein than its classic counterpart.

Lory Bake High Protein can also be freely customised with additional components, and therefore used in a multitude of ways, point out the company. Manufactured products are particularly suitable for the frozen food sector, they add, and are ideal for the food service industry (Lory Bake High Protein is also halal, kosher and vegetarian-friendly).

“Health-conscious consumers are specifically looking for products that provide added value in terms of nutritional physiology - low carb and high protein are important keywords,” says Henrik Hetzer, managing director of Loryma.

“With the Lory Bake High Protein mix, healthier versions of popular baked goods can be produced, and ones which are in no way inferior to the classic varieties in terms of taste. Blueberry muffins are just one of many possible applications.”

Loryma is member of the Crespel & Deiters group, a producer of globally distributed wheat proteins, wheat



starches and functional blends with an expertise of more than 40 years. The company is located in Zwingenberg (Germany) where it works on developing future-proof solutions to meet the needs of the food industry as well as the rising requirement for healthy nutrition in a growing world population, with responsibly and regionally sourced ingredients helping to optimise stability, texture and flavour of meat and fish, vegetarian and vegan applications, baked goods, convenience products and confectionery.



“Pure maple syrup is a great natural and animal-free sweetener for use in vegan recipes. It’s also becoming a popular substitute for refined sugar generally across all kinds of sweet and savoury dishes as consumers opt for naturally derived ingredients,” says David Colcombe, chef ambassador for Maple from Canada UK (www.maplefromcanada.co.uk).

“A little goes a long way with maple syrup so for coffee shop operators it’s a cost-effective store cupboard ingredient with a good shelf life. Maple syrup can also be used to ‘vegan-ise’ a whole range of menu staples from breakfast dishes, to sweet bakes, hot dishes to coffee. The secret is to use pure maple syrup sparingly rather than opting for the cheaper maple syrup that’s usually available to caterers, which is often blended with sugar syrup and gives an inferior taste.

“With its earthy taste, maple syrup goes well in a range of vegan dishes, adding a slightly sweet edge to recipes such as Vegan Mac n Cheese or Vegan BBQ Jackfruit Pizza, for example. Maple also helps to balance robust and spicy flavours too such as in Vegan Maple Dahl Soup or Vegan Maple & Aubergine Hot pot.

“A tablespoon or so of the lightest Golden, Delicate Taste maple syrup can lift a salad while the richer Dark, Robust Taste maple syrup can add a subtle sweetness to vegan desserts and bakes”.

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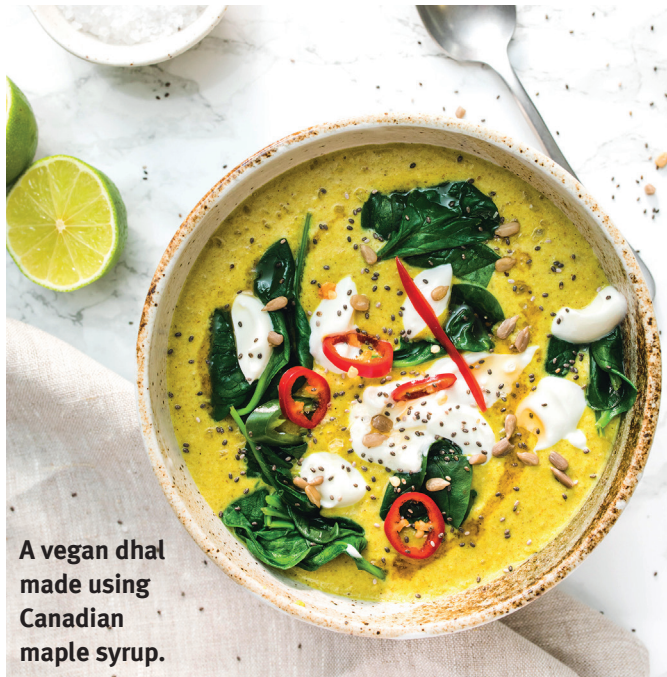
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David Colcombe and his team have developed a range of vegan recipes using pure Canadian maple syrup including a Thai-inspired zesty lentil-based soup, packed with fresh flavours and vibrant colours. Creamy coconut, fiery chillies and sweet pure maple syrup are combined with the lentils to create a filling dish that appeals to everyone, with the soup making a tasty addition to a coffee shop lunch menu.

For operators baking cakes from scratch, a chocolate cake delicious enough to appeal to vegans and non-vegans alike will cut down on multi-stocking and extra work in the kitchen, and Maple from Canada have developed an easy to bake gooey vegan chocolate cake, enriched with maple syrup, with an avocado and dairy free chocolate topping.



A vegan dhal made using Canadian maple syrup.

OPPORTUNITY AWAITS

“Free from is now fairly well established in retail but in the away from home sector, there are still plenty of opportunities for caterers to maximise sales,” says Jacqui Passmore, marketing manager UK and Ireland for Dawn Foods (www.dawnfoods.com).

“Recent growth in the popularity of vegan foods is certainly here to stay. But as coffee shops return to business this summer, operators may be tempted to concentrate on their traditional offerings rather than free from dishes to manage resources. It is more important than ever to maximise sales and this means targeting all kinds of customers, including those opting for a free from diet for health or as a lifestyle choice.

“For coffee shops baking on the premises, our advice is to consider a quality vegan mix for cakes and bakes. Using one mix to create a variety of sweet products that will appeal to different kinds of consumers – vegetarians, vegans and flexitarians – can be a real cost and time saver as there’s no need to buy in separate ingredients. A classic recipe can be easily transformed into a delicious vegan friendly cake or dessert, suitable for various diets. In the current climate, easy to use solutions, which help

you to build your business back up again, are going to be particularly important.”

Dawn offers a range of vegan ingredients, with more new products in this free from category including frozen vegan products planned for later in 2020, and their easy to use vegan crème cake mixes is one of the few on the market recognised by the European Vegetarian Union carry the V-Label (the internationally recognised symbol for labelling vegan and vegetarian products and ingredients).

Dawn’s Vegan Creme Cake mixes are available in chocolate and plain flavours and require just the addition of water and oil, or margarine to make a moist cake that compares well with cakes made with Dawn’s regular crème cake mix, claim the company.

The mixes can be used to create a range of products, including muffins, loaf cakes and traybakes, such as vegan Chocolate Cherry Cupcakes featuring a hidden core of Dawn Delifruit Cherry fruit filling, suggest Dawn. The mix tolerates inclusions well too – Dawn’s Vegan Matcha Cupcake recipe for example incorporates sweet potato and Matcha tea into the Plain Vegan Crème Cake mix – to give consistent results.

As well as their vegan credentials, Dawn’s mixes feature sustainable ingredients targeting consumers who are concerned about where their food products are sourced. For example, the chocolate vegan mix is made with UTZ certified cocoa and the mixes do not contain palm oil.

Dawn also recommends ingredients from its product range which can be used with the mixes to ‘veganise’ finished baked goods. Many of Dawn’s compounds - concentrated pastes for adding flavour and colour to icings and toppings - are naturally vegan such as new Lime & Mint Compound. With its fresh, on trend flavour combination, and a nod to the popular Mojito cocktail, this new compound is made with real lime juice concentrate and a hint of spearmint and can be added to mousses, non-dairy creams, ice creams, fillings and frostings to give a summery flavour.

