



SPOTLIGHT ON CLEAN LABEL PRODUCTS

The naturalness is the first demand of the worldwide consumer, whether he is Chinese, Brazilian or German, with, of course, different understandings of the

term, according to each country. Therefore, clean label food and allergen-free products are some of the most trending topics in the industry today.

A French consumer will never conceive naturalness as the English consumer does, regardless of how close their countries and cultures are. The demand is the same, but the recognition of a product's naturalness is a heterogeneous decision-making process, which includes the launch of the same innovative product based on a natural benefit in several countries. This naturalness acts as a reinsurance pledge for the consumer, and will be particularly sought out in the case of products deemed risky (ready meals, meat dish, fish dish) or during the eating times, when the constraint is strong, often preventing the modern consumer to eat correctly: the breakfast, the lunch (when the snacks tend to compete to be the most "nutritionally incorrect") or the home-snacking (evening meal taken at home and prepared quickly due to the lack of time).

TOP TRENDS IMPACTING THE INDUSTRY

Nevertheless, the naturalness of a product is compatible with a few strong innovation levers, recognized by all consumers and

activated by the industry throughout the world: the clean label, the gluten - free, the lactose - free or the bio certification. A first trend that XTC has noticed since 2014 on the market for frozen foods is that the allergen-free innovative offer (the gluten-free, the lactose-free...) diversifies strongly by borrowing new marketing codes. Before 2014, these products were characterized by a strong medical positioning: blue, white or purple packaging, accompanied by an explanatory medical speech, with explicit product names. Released from this medical, unattractive slang, the allergen-free products borrow the marketing codes of pleasure, work on the aesthetics of their packaging, offer tasty and bold recipes and are no longer directed only to the sick and stigmatized consumer, but to those searching for a healthier lifestyle. In France, Rolph & Rolph has launched a range of Belgian traditional desserts to be heated in the microwave and guaranteed gluten-free. In Germany, producer Pure Food has launched its range of vegan ice Lycka, guaranteed lactose-free and gluten-free, positioned as declared pleasure: minimalist and offbeat packaging, with strong

colours, specific format and raspberry recipe, a lot of elements that invite us to indulge. Mention may also be made of the Daiya Foods in Canada with its vegan, lactose-free, gluten-free cheesecake, containing coconut, tapioca and peas protein, which is meant to be strongly gourmet, according to the recipe and its packaging. To conclude on this first trend concerning the allergen-free products, it must be borne in mind that these products become commonplace, turn into references of extended ranges and concern a consumer searching for healthier and more natural products. Henceforth, one finds "free" products which are intended to be authentic, exotic, nomadic and adapted to all eating times. They are shared at the aperitif, and are especially intended to be as gourmand as the references containing these allergens.

SNACKS AND SNACKING

The second trend noticed by XTC regards the snacks. These practical, quick to prepare products, can be eaten not only at midday, at home or in the office, but also in the evening, as a new habit which is becoming more popular: the home-snacking.

The consumer who returns home late does not have much time to devote to the preparation of his dinner and is under the same time constraints as during his midday meal. As a result, he is going to prepare his dinner with snacks, except when he is at home (with a kitchen often better equipped).

These eating times are critical for the consumer who seeks to combine the healthy, nutritionally correct meal and the little time available to him. The manufacturers have understood this need to eat healthy but practically and have brought many guarantees in respect of their snacks. So, the new innovative offer is focused on the natural factors. There are cooked, frozen, gluten - free dishes, based on gourmet recipes. Gluten - free pastries and other cakes that one offers itself as a reward at the end of the day are now available. In France, the company Zen and gluten - free offers a full range of gluten - free pastries: caramel éclair with salted butter, cheesecake, tarte tatin or chocolate fondant. In Canada, Maple Leaf Consumer Foods has launched the buns filled with a pizza topping (mozzarella, tomato sauce, pepperoni, onions and bacon) and guarantees that all its ingredients are 100% natural, preservative - free, with an explicit green packaging. Therefore, snacking is no longer an excuse to eat junk food, as the consumer searches for more natural products, while retaining the convenience required for this eating time.

HOW CLEAN IS YOUR LABEL?

Clean Label is a trend of substance, started around 2008, which changes and will continue to change the innovative food offer. The Clean Label invites manufacturers to have a clear, proper and understandable statement regarding the ingredients used in their products, by excluding the potentially harmful, artificial ingredients, as well as the technical and medical terms (deemed anxiogenic by the consumer). The dynamic of innovation is simple when it comes to Clean Label. Each category of products contains ingredients deemed potentially harmful, with a harmful action on the environment (palm oil) or on human health (additive, preservative, coloring or artificial flavor). But also, Clean Label has evolved and now encompasses ethically manufactured products, respecting people (working conditions, economic solidarity), animals (animal welfare certification, minimum rearing conditions) or the biodiversity (respecting the resources of the planet, according to the sustainable fishing or rearing practices). As such, Clean Label becomes a "total" way to innovate, which takes into account not only the consumer, but also the society and the planet in its entirety. Thus, one can see that the MSC Certification appears systematically on frozen fish products, while brands are engaging in the fight against global warming. Ben & Jerry's is a flagship example: its new ice cream intrigues by its packaging, both humorous and engaged. One can see the famous Ben & Jerry cow in balance on a drifting block of ice, holding a panel with an evocative message (if it's melted, it's ruined, in relations the products it sells) while the black lid is adorned with SOS signs. ■



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