

# A spoonful of sugar

*How is the ingredients sector reacting to the ever-changing demands of the consumer palate? FDI investigates.*

Never before has there been so much demand for knowledge and detailed information of a product's content. In the wake of health concerns, ranging from wheat intolerance to e-numbers, it is essential manufacturers abide to strict guidelines and produce ingredient visibility to allow the consumer to have an informed and balanced judgement on point of purchase.

There is a current labelling debate between EU member states, the food industry and regulatory bodies over the way nutritional information is presented to the consumer.

The Foods Standards Agency is supporting the 'traffic light' scheme, which shows whether a food is high, medium, or low in fat, sugar and sale content by way of red, yellow or green stickers. There is also the GDA method, which informs the consumer of their recommended daily allowance of a certain ingredient.

Food and drink manufacturers worldwide are now being forced to react to the demands of the health-conscious consumer and adapt their products accordingly.

Naturis provides natural food ingredients for manufacturing healthier foods and supplements, and is a recent addition in the ingredients world. The company supplies functional ingredients such as insoluble fibres, probiotics, vitamins and minerals to address key health topics such as heart health, oral health and shape management. Naturis experts work closely with clients, using 'innovation workshops' to develop products

to fit in with the needs of customers and consumers.

Head of Marketing and Strategy for Naturis, Marcus Smet, explained the company is hoping to fill a gap in the market by offering more than just ingredients solutions to manufacturers "It also offers solutions to many other challenges they face by giving sound advice on regulations and strong technical support from qualified food technologists," he said.

Many manufacturers in the indulgence sector have recently come under attack, as obesity levels start to rise throughout Europe. Two approaches have been used to try and combat this problem, from creating smaller portions through to using ingredients that will produce lower calorie and fat content. According to findings from Euromonitor International, chocolate manufacturers are trying to straddle the two approaches. By hyping the health benefits of cocoa flavanols, to the cardiovascular system and brain to name but two, chocolatiers can present calorie-controlled products that are both indulgent and nutritious.

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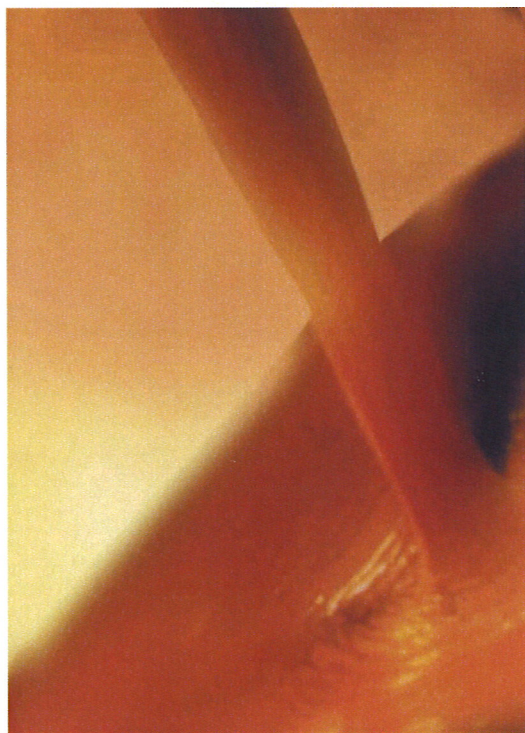


PHOTO COURTESY OF FOOD DESIGN

A chocolate brand to react to the pressure of 'healthier' ingredients is Roquette, who were promoting their sugar-free chocolate at the recent HIE in Frankfurt. The ingredient Maltitol is used as a sugar substitute, and combines luxury with health, reflecting the growing shift in what consumers desire from their products.

There is now a general recognition that product ingredient declarations need to be 'cleaned up', an aspect sweet ingredient provider Food Design are currently responding to. One of the company's recent launches is a range of pouring sweet syrups that can be spread on, injected in, or poured over a range of chilled and frozen desserts. The company was one of the first to announce that it was changing its specification to use only non-hydrogenated fats, in addition to all ingredients being completely natural and additive-free.

Manufacturers must now react quickly, as consumers become more discerning about their choices. The palate of the consumer not only demands a luxury taste, but there is huge demand for products rich in health benefits. Ingredients need to be adapted accordingly, an essential factor within the competitive market of indulgence goods in particular.