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Ingredients

By Ronda Payne

Classic Inputs in a Modern World

While consumers are demanding better for you products (gluten-free, no added sugar, organic, things that don't sound like science projects), they do not want to compromise on taste or appearance.

In the last five years, says Doris Valade, president of Malabar Super Spice, consumers have amped up their push for food that is healthier and if there is any tradeoff, it's the willingness to pay a slightly higher price.

"It's very much consumer driven. They are looking at a cleaner label with fewer ingredients... but at the same time they want global flavours."

Katherine McSpadden, applications specialist, bakery and prepared foods with Quadra Ingredients says "Consumers are looking for ingredients they can easily recognize and pronounce and which have a higher nutritional value. A growing mindfulness around food intolerances such as wheat, dairy, eggs [and] nuts are also changing consumers' product choices."

To Valade's point, the demand for more unique and global flavours is pushing ingredient providers to be more creative and explore varying sources. "We're looking for the exotic," she notes. "In some countries they use it all the time... but they are not ready to go commercial."

Consumers want it all in terms of clean and healthy ingredients but won't give up any of the flavour.



In many cases the consumer demand created by micro-niche products, worldwide sharing through social media and nutritional/health discussions can't be met despite the growing interest. As a prime example, Valade points to moringa powder, which can't be accessed easily at the volumes required, and sumac, which she notes is very expensive.

While consumers may lead the interest, processors are steered by other factors when researching new products: price, benefits, scientific evidence and availability. She adds that talk about new ingredients is interesting, but often creates a headache for food pro-

ducers and their suppliers. Instead, processors are best served by sticking with what they know — and in turn what consumers know.

"Many of the new ingredients that we are seeing are an updated version of the conventional ingredient," McSpadden says. "Even work-horse ingredients

such as conventional starches are now readily available in non-gmo and organic versions."

Valade points to a return to traditional flavours. "We're getting back to the basics and just buying good quality food products," she notes. "What's old is new again. Good quality fruits, vegetables and meats. That's going back to 60, 80 years ago."

Potato chips illustrate Valade's point where the top-selling flavours are still salt & vinegar, barbecue and plain despite the onslaught of designer flavours.

It comes down to listening to consumers, but balancing it with what's possible. Fortunately, the move to cleaner, healthier ingredients is easier now than it was a decade ago according to McSpadden.

"Canada is changing the way our food labels and ingredients are listed and this is a good opportunity for food processors to use cleaner products."

"We are also seeing an improvement in ingredient technology which allows many ingredients to have a high function and tolerate various processing parameters but still be relatively unprocessed," she says, noting Quadra's KMC and Remy starches as examples of what she describes as high-functioning potato and rice starches respectively. With more than 60 certified organic ingredients, including colours, "just having the availability and traceability of these ingredients is a huge advantage to processors as they can get products to market much quicker."

On the topic of colours, Mintel reports that the use of natural

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Quadra Ingredients notes that consumers want ingredients that they can easily recognize and pronounce.

colours exceeded the use of artificial colours in food and drink products launched from September 2015 to August 2016. Continuing in that vein, another researcher, Nielsen, found in their 2015 study "We Are What We Eat" that 60 per cent of the 30,000 respondents from around the world are eating more natural, fresh foods to lose weight while 42 per cent of those respondents say an absence of artificial colours in their foods is very important.

"They want traceability and transparency," McSpadden says of consumers. "Canada is changing the way our food labels and ingredients are listed and this is a good opportunity for food processors to use cleaner products. For example, artificial colours will now be



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Consumer preferences are spurring increased innovation in the packaging sector

Packaging, along with price, is a key factor in consumers' purchasing decisions. But the boxes, wraps, and other packaging methods in the food sector are also increasingly being relied on to ensure that Canada lives up to its ever-evolving food safety standards.

Add to this the increasing consumer demand for packaging that is convenient as well as clearly informative, and you have a conglomeration of requirements that many in the packaging industry find challenging to stay on top of.

The resulting innovations of late have been remarkable. For example, the valve closure technology used by Kraft's MiO brand of liquid water enhancers is not new — it stems from pharmaceutical use — but it has been applied to a new category that didn't exist five years ago.

Another recent innovation is printing on threaded caps, made possible by in-mold labelling and whose graphic quality can be vastly superior to direct printing. This is ideal for larger diameter closures on food items such as whey protein powders, which in many cases are placed on the lower shelves at retail level due to their bulky nature.

All Wrapped Up

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Doris Valade, president, Malabar Super Spice

Malabar Super Spice notes that consumer demand for unique and global flavours is pushing ingredient providers to be more creative and explore varying sources.

ing for products to be minimally processed and still perform with taste great," McSpadden notes. "Ingredient technology continues to match consumers' changing priorities by making available more natural yet convenient food options."

"It's very much consumer driven. They are looking at a cleaner label with fewer ingredients... but at the same time they want global flavours."

required to be listed by their individual common name as opposed to just 'colour'."

She recommends natural source colours like beet root powder and turmeric which consumers know and are looking for. Malt, chlorophyll and beta-carotene are other choices making up the nearly

unlimited options.

Interestingly, it is science that is making natural, healthy ingredients possible despite consumer desires for less scientific-sounding ingredients.

"We are seeing great advances in microbiology and food chemistry that are allow-

The time is right for processors to look to natural, whole foods and spices to make consumer-appealing products. With the right mixture of real foods consumers will find exactly what they are looking for in terms of flavour, global options and healthy tastes. **WFP**





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