

The future of fruit

KRISTEN BORSARI, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER, OCEAN SPRAY REVEALS HOW INNOVATIVE INGREDIENTS CAN HELP MANUFACTURERS REAP THE FULL BENEFITS OF FRUIT



+ Fruit consumption is experiencing a distinct upturn. The worldwide consumer fascination with health and wellness has spurred us all into eating more fruit. The UK alone has seen a 10 per cent rise in the purchase of fresh and processed fruit. Simultaneously, the healthy snacks market is escalating, predicted to be worth almost US\$310 billion by 2010. The bakery sector, too, is undergoing a healthy transformation, with a marked shift towards ‘better for you’ products. These demands – stemming from overriding consumer trends such as health and convenience – present exciting opportunities for food manufacturers to stake their claim in these lucrative markets.

One of the unique selling points of fruit is its variety in terms of taste, texture and format. But the ultimate attraction is that it can deliver whole body health benefits, such as fiber and antioxidants. So for snack and bakery manufacturers, surely fruit should be the immediate solution for injecting elusive health appeal into their products? However, as many food manufacturers have learned from experience, it’s not so simple.

In essence, most fruits are delicate – a quality that has traditionally hindered the success of many fruit-based snacks and

baked goods. In their raw state, many fruits are unable to withstand the rigors of processing, from extreme heat, freezing and thawing to kneading, mixing and handling. Until now, manufacturers have been compelled to compromise, because of quality, texture, shelf-life, fluctuating costs – or discount fruit altogether. Ocean Spray’s Ingredient Technology Group recognized that the true potential of fruit was being compromised by its limitations as an ingredient for prepared foods, baked goods and snacks. Identifying the needs of both consumers and manufacturers, resulted in the development of BerryFusions® Fruits.

These highly process tolerant, dried fruit pieces enable manufacturers to include fruits that are traditionally difficult to work with – such as strawberry, blueberry, mango and orange – in almost any application. BerryFusions Fruits can offer significant cost savings and are not subject to the fluctuating availability, quality and, critically, price associated with other fruits. Offering process tolerance, simplicity of use and versatility, they are ideal for baked goods, cereal bars, confectionery and as a fruit snack in their own right.

Consumers today are savvy when it comes to reading labels. We’ve all started to read the small print, and are on red alert

for additives, artificial flavors and colors. With processing issues ruling many fruits out of the equation, manufacturers need to add fruit naturally if they want to win – and retain – their market share. Unlike fruit mimics such as artificial fruit pieces, extruded gums and jellies, BerryFusions Fruits are real fruit pieces with the taste, texture and health benefits of fruit.

In the consumer conscience, fruit and health go hand in hand, so fruit solutions need to deliver nutrients known to consumers, such as fiber and antioxidants. Credible research supports antioxidants as a valuable health and well-being booster – and, thanks to the mass media reporting on the potential benefits of antioxidants to fight ageing and promote heart health, the buzz has hit the mainstream.

With convenience high on the consumer agenda, manufacturers cannot afford to ignore the trend towards healthy snacking. In recent years, food processors have been grappling to fortify their snacks with nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, fiber and probiotics. Rapid advances in functional ingredients have enabled manufacturers to add nutrients to a wide range of snack foods.

For the baking industry, the task of creating healthier products is yet more challenging. Many baked goods are tainted with an unhealthy banner because of high fat content and artificial ingredients. By removing or reducing these components, however, problems relating to taste, texture and functionality can arise. In addition to reformulating, bakers also

rely on adding value to their products with healthy ingredients to appeal to the health conscious.

Fortifying with fiber, nuts and seeds can enhance the healthy image of baked goods and snacks. Fruit is also a popular choice because it can improve the appearance and taste of a product. However, fresh and frozen fruits lose piece identity and moisture during processing, which negatively impacts the appearance of a baked good. BerryFusions Fruits do not migrate or absorb moisture over time and, unlike other dried fruits, can be incorporated directly into batters and doughs. This avoids the process of pre-soaking, which can leach out sugars and flavors, negating a fruit's positive attributes. Furthermore, the robust nature of these ingredients makes them particularly suitable for cookies and bagels, since dough or batter is usually heavy and cannot tolerate a delicate fruit.

For healthy snacks, such as cereal bars and fruit and nut mixes, fruit processing challenges such as moisture migration, piece degradation and colour bleed have posed frustrating challenges. Cereal bars can become unappealing and soggy when certain dried fruits lose moisture over time. Freeze dried fruits have an unpleasant texture and bitter, concentrated taste that some consumers find off-putting. With BerryFusions Fruits, manufacturers can add fruit – with its taste, colour and natural appeal – without the problems. This is where these real fruit solutions truly prove their worth. +++

