

Sweets make you popular, online ads tell kids

Date

01/08/2005

Article Text

Food manufacturers are using the internet to target their unhealthy products at young children with false claims, according to a new report.

Undertaken by campaign group Sustain for the publication 'Food Magazine', the report found that one of the chief benefits of online marketing for food companies is that they are not then bound by Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) guidelines.

Although the ASA's code of practice rules that children's "inexperience" and "natural credulity" should not be exploited through advertising, the body will not rule on internet complaints.

Websites were found to be targeting children as young as six using marketing techniques banned in print and broadcasting media.

The report argued that young people were being encouraged with numerous dubious claims that certain products would make them more popular or attractive.

Other websites offered free ringtones or opportunities to win prizes in return for children's consumer loyalty.

Jeanette Longfield, co-ordinator of the campaign, said: "Websites targeted at children often use some of the most insidious and manipulative marketing techniques, such as dubious health claims and marketing techniques that tell a child they will be more popular and attractive if they buy sweets."

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=1710212005>

Points system to rank foods for health

Date

01/08/2005

Article Text

The UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) has come close to arriving at a definition of "junk food" with the launch of a new consultation into a proposed food classifying system.

A simple guide will rank foods according to their saturated fat, salt and sugar content.

The guide is designed to be a tool to help the independent regulator Ofcom set limits on food advertising, for example with a watershed system.

Foods that have been reported to fall outside of the acceptable points range include certain popular cereals, hamburgers, lemonade, crisps and chicken nuggets.

A spokesman for the FSA commented: "The model utilises a simple scoring system that rates the overall balance of nutrients in the food."

"This means the model identifies foods that are high in fat, salt or sugar, but recognises the importance of fruit and vegetables, cereal, meat and dairy-based products in the diet."

However, food industry representatives have urged the government not to "demonise" certain foods in a quest to tackle childhood obesity.

A Public Health White Paper has set out a number of measures designed to curtail this worrying trend.

Jeremy Preston, director of the Food Advertising Unit (FAU), called for a "balance between business needs and consumer protection".

The deadline for responses to the consultation is September 26th.

Further information:

<http://www.mediaweek.co.uk/articles/folder2005/07/julydaily/FSA-FAU-scorecard>

Laser system aids food brand protection

Date

01/08/2005

Article Text

Companies Microtrace and Photoscribe Technologies have announced a partnership that will use the latter's laser technology to provide brand protection for food products coming off the production line.

The technology aims to help combat consumer piracy, which is a particular problem in the case of food imports.

The laser systems will be used in conjunction with Microtrace's 'Microtaggant' ink technology to create unique covert marks for a package, invisible to the naked eye but apparent at high magnification.

With a minimum size of around 30 microns, a variety of tagging formats are available to food producers, including logos, photo images, alphanumeric, serial numbers and 2D barcodes.

Furthermore, the 2D barcodes may be specially encrypted so that only certain software can gain access.

Microtrace also offers laser-markable compounded plastic resins, where a change of colour takes place when an image is made.

Brian Brogger, Microtrace vice president, said: "The addition of laser marking to a brand protection program allows unique and covert identification at the item level," according to website www.fibre2fashion.com.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61637-laser-system-provides>

Diet Coke more of a man's drink

Date

01/08/2005

Article Text

Diet Coke's increasing popularity among men lies behind Coca-Cola Enterprises' seven per cent increase in sales in the UK, the company has said.

Random surveys carried out have found that three fifths of men now say they drink Diet Coke on a weekly basis, compared to two fifths in January this year.

Overall, there has been an increase of 15 per cent in the number of people consuming the drink at least once a week.

The growth in sales also led to a 1.5 per cent increase in carbonated soft drink (CSD) volume share in the UK.

Coca-Cola Enterprises said that Diet Coke now had roughly 12 million regular consumers in the UK, accounting for approximately 39 per cent of the population and an increase of four per cent in the last two years.

Norman Brodie, marketing manager, said: "Diet Coke continues to lead through innovation in the CSD sector. Consumers' response to Diet Coke with Lime has been very positive, with the brand now worth almost £16 million in the 26 weeks since launch," according to just-drinks.com.

An ongoing marketing drive should see one in eight UK adults receiving a free can of the drink.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28022

If chocolate and crisps be the food of love...

Date

01/08/2005

Article Text

New research has revealed that the much talked about "obesity epidemic" in the UK could be partly attributable to an unfortunate national character of sadness.

The Priory Group, which specialises in eating disorders, interviewed 1,000 British 15-to-65 year olds about their eating habits, and the results paint a bleak picture of the nation's collective happiness.

Almost three quarters of the participants said they comforted themselves with junk food, such as chocolate and crisps, in times of trouble.

The group most affected were adolescents, with 61 per cent of 15-to-24 year olds turning to chocolate and 43 per cent resorting to junk food.

This is compared to national figures of 52 per cent for chocolate and 25 per cent for fast food across the generations.

A third of young people also said the main reason for their "comfort" eating was a relationship in trouble.

Consultant psychiatrist, Dr Peter Rowan, said: "There is a huge risk that by over-valuing food as a way of communicating our love, we diminish other ways of demonstrating it. Food then takes the place of love, rather than being a pleasurable way of reinforcing it.

"If current trends are continued, eating behaviour will become progressively more detached from food and health needs, and the number of young people with eating disorders will continue to rise."

Approximately 1.1 million people in the UK have been officially diagnosed with an eating disorder to date.

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/health.cfm?id=1710342005>

New icing sugar can be frozen and thawed

Date

01/08/2005

Article Text

British Sugar has launched a new icing sugar with freeze-thaw capability.

The company claims that it is the ideal solution for products that are frozen and then thawed along the supply chain, meeting variable demand with a fresher product.

Celebration FreezeThaw is an addition to the Celebration Icing Sugar range, according to just-food.com, and the manufacturers claim that the product keeps the shine on the icing, and the icing on the product.

The new icing is a blend of sugar, glucose and sorbitol. It works by minimising ice crystal formation and retaining moisture, which "ensures breakdown of the icing sugar is kept to a minimum".

Myra Hales, marketing operations manager, said: "It's so easy to use. As it's a dry powder there's no need to melt it. You just add water."

"The mixing takes less than half the time of traditional fondant", she added, and British Sugar says that at 11 microns, the particle sizes are the finest available.

Celebration FreezeThaw Icing can be used on a range of foods, including cream cakes and slices, iced buns, Belgian buns, Danish pastries, luxury products and gateaux.

The product remains stable in storage with a shelf-life of up to six months.

Further information: <http://www.just-food.com/news.asp>

Some minimum salt levels raised

Date

02/08/2005

Article Text

The permissible salt levels in certain foods are set to remain the same, after a group of manufacturers told the Food Standards Agency (FSA) that desired reductions could not be met.

The group, which included heavyweights such as Heinz, Sainsbury's and Tesco, said that the proposed targets were unrealistic owing to "technical feasibility" and "consumer acceptability".

Affecting products such as baked beans, processed pies and bacon, the turnaround actually saw the FSA increase the salt limit for a number of products, including butter and ketchup.

A target of 0.5g of salt per 100g of dried soup was raised to 0.7g.

Unsurprisingly, the FSA came under fire from health bodies for caving in to pressure from manufacturers.

Professor Graham McGregor, Chairman of the Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH), dismissed the companies' grounds as "rubbish".

He suggested that if salt levels decreased over time, people's salt receptors would adjust simultaneously, with the effect that preferences would change.

"The way we work is based on evidence. Where is the evidence that salt cannot be reduced further? The fact is that there's no technical reason why salt cannot be reduced further," he said.

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=1715832005>

Atkins company files for bankruptcy

Date

02/08/2005

Article Text

Atkins Nutritionals, the company behind the much-hyped low-carb Atkins diet, has filed for bankruptcy protection in the US.

The privately owned firm owes approximately \$300 million, and has received \$25 million in financing to function during the proceedings.

Following this, the company plans to focus on its nutrition bar and milkshake lines, widening its scope to target "more broadly...consumers who are concerned about health and wellness", according to president and chief executive, Mark Rodriguez.

The announcement has also led to a flurry of speculation that the low-carb dieting concept may have had its day.

Set up in 1989 by Dr Robert Atkins, the trend soared in the 1990s, bolstered by some very high profile celebrity advocates.

Followers of the regime were encouraged to cut carbohydrates, such as potatoes, bread and pasta, out of their diets completely, replacing them with as much protein and fats as were wanted.

Adverse publicity struck in April 2003, however, when a leaked post mortem examination after Dr Atkins's death suggested he may have had high blood pressure and he was reported to have been overweight.

Atkins Nutritionals said that it was claiming bankruptcy owing to a fall in demand and increased competition.

Mr Rodriguez said the organisation had been "adjusted...to accommodate a smaller business".

Further information:

http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/aug2005/nf2005081_3951_db016.htm

Charity gives juice drink wholehearted support

Date

02/08/2005

Article Text

The functional food company Provexis has won the backing of the registered charity Heart UK for its new juice drink.

Sirco is based on a tomato extract that has been found to reduce the risk of thrombosis by boosting circulation. It will be launched commercially in the UK later this year.

The drink's packaging is now set to include the Heart UK logo alongside the claim: "Helps to maintain a healthy heart and benefits the circulation".

Heart UK and Provexis will also jointly embark on a range of educational initiatives to draw attention to heart health issues in the family.

In a recent results announcement, the firm also reported it was investigating the possibility of developing drinks with a cancer-combating property, according to nutraingredients.com.

However, the results showed that its Altu cereal bar line was not performing well, with 2005 sales significantly lower than had been expected.

Losses had increased from £855,000 last year to £1.8 million.

This was said to be due to the highly competitive market for cereal bars at the present time.

Dr Stephen Franklin, Provexis chief executive, said that the Sirco launch fell into line with the company's aim of developing functional foods "that taste great, deliver proven health benefits, and carry credible health claims supported by strong scientific proof".

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61657-provexis-gets-heart>

Fructose sweetening linked to weight gain from soft drinks

Date

02/08/2005

Article Text

A new study carried out by the University of Cincinnati (UC) in the US has suggested a direct link between soft drink consumption and weight gain.

In particular, it raises questions about the use of the sweetener fructose, which appeared to increase body fat in spite of the fact that fewer calories were generally consumed.

In laboratory trials on mice, scientists observed their consumption of water, fructose sweetened water and soft drinks. The animals were given free access to all three as well as food.

Using magnetic resonance technology, the mice were then analysed for body composition.

The average weight before the testing began was 39g, but the mice consuming the fructose-sweetened water had gained an average 9g by the end, compared with the less than 5g gained by the other two groups.

The fructose mice had also acquired more than 90 per cent more body fat than the mice that only drank the water.

Author of the study, Matthias Tschop, said: "Our study shows how fat mass increases as a direct consequence of soft drink consumption.

"We were surprised to see that mice actually ate less when exposed to fructose-sweetened beverages, and therefore didn't consume more overall calories. Nevertheless, they gained significantly more body fat within a few weeks."

Based on this and previous research, the scientists concluded that fructose seemed to fail to trigger certain hormonal systems involved in controlling the body's metabolism.

The research is published in the July 2005 issue of "Obesity Research", which is the official publication of the North American Association for the Study of Obesity (NAASO).

Further information: <http://www.newsinferno.com/storypages/8-01-2005~002.html>

"Healthy" ice cream solution meets consumer demand

Date

02/08/2005

Article Text

Tate & Lyle has announced that it has developed a new ingredient that aims to tap into the ice cream market in the US.

The Ice Cream Rebalance 500 range is designed to lead to an ice cream that is lower in fat and sugar but with no sacrifice in "creaminess" of texture.

It accomplishes this by replacing bulk sweeteners with its own range of tailored ingredients, including Splenda Sucralose.

This results in an ice cream with 59 per cent fewer calories, 76 per cent less sugar and 89 per cent less fat than a full fat brand, according to Food&DrinkEurope.com.

The solution's launch coincided with Tate & Lyle's annual general meeting last week, where chairman, Sir David Lees, also outlined plans to triple sucralose production.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently ruled that sucralose could be reasonably advertised as "tooth-friendly", as unlike sugar it does not cause organic acid to be produced on contact with plaque bacteria.

Mike Augustine, global vice president of applications and technical services, explained: "We believe that these ice cream solutions meet consumer demand and can help facilitate increased choice in the marketplace."

Further information: <http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61645-tate-lyle-targets>

China agrees to British pork safety

Date

02/08/2005

Article Text

China has acknowledged that British pork is free from Classical Swine Fever (CSE), meaning that the Chinese market could soon be open to the UK's pork producers.

Following outbreaks of the disease in 2002, the Chinese ceased importing UK pork products, and once the outbreak had been contained, unlike other countries, would not accept that British pork was CSE free.

Today's announcement marks the culmination of efforts by the British Pig Executive (BPEX), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the British Embassy in Beijing.

It paves the way to negotiations on protocols and export health certificates for breeding pigs, genetics, and pork and pork products, including offal.

BPEX chairman, Stewart Houston, said: "This is excellent news. We will continue to work with Defra and the CBBC to ensure we get access to this huge and valuable market as soon as possible."

The Chinese pork market accounts for half of global output.

In some cases, British processors currently have to pay for the destruction of pork offal that could otherwise be exported to China.

Further information:

<http://www.thepigsite.com/LatestNews/Default.asp?AREA=LatestNews&Display=98>

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Defra report highlights UK's eating patterns

Date

03/08/2005

Article Text

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has revealed the findings of its Expenditure and Food Survey for the period from 2003 to 2004.

The results present a snapshot of the country's eating and drinking habits, drawing on records kept by 16,965 people in 7,048 households over the course of two weeks.

In general, soft drinks, alcohol, milk, cheese and yoghurt all seemed to be growing in popularity, but sales of fruit and vegetables were notably down, as well as butter, sugar, tea and bread.

Brits now spend an average of £22.67 on food and drink each week, of which £2.65 goes towards alcohol.

This is a 10 per cent increase over the course of the last year, and compares with the £1.80 and £1.60 a week spent on vegetables and fruit respectively, excluding potatoes.

The average person is now eating 3.7 of the five portions of fruit and vegetables a day that the government has introduced as a guideline.

Although money spent on eating out has doubled between 1995 and 2004, the traditional favourites of Indian, Chinese and Thai restaurants saw a 12 per cent drop in custom.

Andrew Lansley, conservative health spokesman, said that the government's "nanny state approach has not worked", according to The Times.

"Unfortunately we are a society that is using alcohol a lot more, but people need to do it moderately and sensibly. People must know the risks and consequences of excessive alcohol and poor diet," he added.

Further information:

http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/articles/PA_NEWA122086451122995111A00?source=PA%20Feed

Ipei - it sounds like Pepsi

Date

03/08/2005

Article Text

Coca-Cola is planning to launch a new "functional" soft drink in the UK to tap into the nation's growing appetite for health foods.

The recipe for Ipei, already available in the Netherlands and Germany, includes water, grape juice, various vitamins and herbal tea.

It is to be marketed with the tagline "Think what you drink", and has already gone through the preliminaries of securing a UK launch, including applying for a UK trademark.

However, competitor Pepsi appears to be unhappy that Ipsei sounds so similar to the Pepsi name, and may pursue a legal challenge to have it changed.

Coca-Cola has reportedly been asking employees at the Royal Courts of Justice for their views on the name, informing them PepsiCo had conducted research suggesting it made them think of Pepsi, according to Brand Republic.

Ipsei derives its name from the Latin word for self, "ipse".

Coca-Cola is currently also planning an umbrella advertising campaign, including all 19 of its brands enclosed by the classic, instantly recognisable outline of the coke bottle.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28041

New procedure to help prevent BSE spread in humans

Date

03/08/2005

Article Text

Scientists from the University of Edinburgh have developed a new sterilisation process designed to help prevent the transmission of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) in hospitals.

vCJD is the human form of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), "mad cow disease", which has claimed over 150 lives since first being linked to eating contaminated beef in the 1990s.

Doctors had expressed concern that the current sterilisation procedures were ineffective at killing the infectious abnormal prion proteins that trigger vCJD as well as other incurable diseases.

Prion proteins are especially resistant to high temperatures and adhere to metal with a strong bond that is hard to break.

However, the new technique uses a high-energy gas, known as plasma, to achieve what the previous procedures could not.

Hospital officials are particularly concerned about vCJD because the prion locates itself in the lymphoid tissue, and infections could therefore spread through operations conducted on the spleen or tonsils using contaminated surgical equipment.

The project was funded by the UK's Department of Health, and details of the technique have been published in the Journal of General Virology.

Professor Robert Baxter explained: "This new technique is significant because, unlike viral and bacterial pathogens, prions are proteins which are resistant to high temperatures and adhere very strongly to metal surfaces.

"Our integrated strategy aims to provide a new approach to decontamination of surgical instruments and to ensure that decontamination is effective."

Further information:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/thehealthnews.html?in_article_id=357980&in_page_id=1797

OFT rules favourably on supermarkets

Date

03/08/2005

Article Text

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has said that further regulation of supermarkets is unnecessary in a new report published today.

It advised that the Supermarkets Code of Practice should remain as it is, but should be used more effectively, as consumers were reaping the benefits of competition in the current grocery market.

No evidence has yet come to light that the code is being breached by the retailers who pledged they would adhere to it.

OFT chairman, Sir John Vickers, said: "Natural justice and common sense do not allow regulatory intervention in markets without proper evidence," according to just-food.com.

"Our review, including public consultation on the findings of the OFT audit of supermarket compliance, has not yielded substantive evidence to show that the code is being breached or that competition is being restricted," he added.

The OFT said that it did not have grounds to launch another review, nor to refer the matter to the competition Commission.

In 2000, the competition Commission suggested that all supermarket chains meeting the criterion of 8 per cent of groceries should provide undertakings that they would adhere to the code.

Asda, Safeway, Sainsbury and Tesco all obliged, as well as Morrisons, who volunteered this undertaking following its £3.3 billion purchase of Safeway last year.

Further information: http://www.sharecast.com/cgi-bin/sharecast/story.cgi?story_id=519481

New natural packaging product is eco-friendly

Date

03/08/2005

Article Text

A new type of biodegradable packaging has been US-approved, meaning that multinational companies can start to use it in Europe.

Grenidea Technologies' AgroResin product has already received EU approval, and makers hope it will be used by the fresh produce industry, according to FoodProductionDaily.com.

It can be used for packaging a variety of foods, including dried food, bakery products and frozen food.

Already available in Asia, it is made from natural substances such as palm-oil or wheat straw fibres, and is free of wood, pulp, emissions and chemicals.

One benefit is that it could help food producers to meet stricter recycling and pollution initiatives, such as the recently launched Waste & Resources Action Programme (Wrap).

The company has also said that manufacturers do not need to invest in new packing technology to accommodate the product. AgroResin can be used alongside a moulded pulp technique.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61680-biodegradable-pack-certified>

Dieters to benefit from power of suggestion

Date

03/08/2005

Article Text

A mind technique has been used in an experiment to see whether people can be "turned off" certain foods by triggering false memories of bad childhood experiences.

Elizabeth Loftus, professor of psychology at the University of California Irvine in the US, said the results "may have significant implications for dieting".

Approximately 200 volunteers, the majority of whom were students, were subjected to a process known as a false feedback technique.

The students filled out questionnaires about their likes and dislikes in terms of food, and received analysis back, including some false information.

For example, they were told they became ill after eating strawberry ice cream as a child.

In two separate techniques, 22 per cent and 41 per cent of the students were "persuaded" to avoid the food in future because of false associations.

However, similarly fattening and sweet chocolate chip cookies did not have the same effect, which backed up previous research suggesting the technique may only be successful with so-called "novel" foods that are not often eaten.

How recently the food had been consumed was not found to be relevant.

Published in the online "Proceedings of the National Academy of Science", Dr Loftus and her team now intend to investigate whether people could be persuaded that they had enjoyed eating certain vegetables as a child.

Further information:

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=28485>

FSA publishes salt consultation

Date

04/08/2005

Article Text

The UK's food standards agency (FSA) has published a consultation on proposals to set targets for salt levels in food sold in the UK.

The news comes after a number of similar targets were made less stringent earlier this week following industry complaints they were unrealistic and would impact on trade.

Commitments from a range of more than 50 food companies to reduce salt levels have now been updated.

Concern for the nation's salt intake intensified at the end of July, when a survey commissioned by Food Magazine found unexpectedly high levels in certain brands of cakes and desserts.

The saltiest product assessed was a strawberry sponge pudding from the Morrison's supermarket chain, found to contain 6g per single serving.

This is the equivalent of an adult's entire recommended daily intake according to the government's current targets. Children should consume significantly less, with the amount dependent on age.

Campaigners for salt reduction in foods have accused the industry of hiding salt levels, although this has been disputed by the deputy director general of the UK's Food and Drink Federation.

Martin Paterson commented: "Claims that the industry hides salt in food are inaccurate, misleading and unhelpful to consumers," according to Food-navigator.com.

The FSA has requested responses to the consultation by October 24th this year.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61679-fsa-targets-salt>

Organic farming attracts more wildlife

Date

04/08/2005

Article Text

A comprehensive study of the UK's farms has found that organic farming methods significantly improve biodiversity.

Scientists investigated the differences between pairs of organic and non-organic cereal-producing farms from Cornwall to Cumbria, and found that organic crops contained 85 per cent more species of plants.

Numbers of spiders, birds and bats were also counted, and were found to be 17 per cent, five per cent and 33 per cent more prevalent respectively.

Fields were generally smaller, hedges cut less frequently, and crops sown later, all of which served to encourage wildlife to stay on the land.

Dr Lisa Norton from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology said: "Organic farmers try to work with natural processes to increase productivity, using sustainable farming practices. Increased biodiversity is a happy by-product of this approach."

She pointed out that hedges on organic farms were often kept in stock-proof condition, as organic methods made substantial use of livestock.

This meant the hedges contained more berry-producing shrubs, which attracted birds, insects and bats.

The study of 160 farms was a collaboration between the British Trust for Ornithology, the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit of Oxford University.

The results were published in the Royal Society Journal.

Further information: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3367289a3600,00.html>

Modular wrapping machine with added extras

Date

04/08/2005

Article Text

A new modular shrink wrapping machine that can be taken apart for cleaning will be launched in Europe at this year's Processing and Packaging Machinery Association Exhibition in Birmingham.

The Shanklin Omni, from US firm Sealed Air, also allows further accessories to be attached, which is a particularly useful feature for the food processing industry.

Modular packaging units are in particular demand at a time when food contamination is coming under increasing scrutiny, as the parts can easily be accessed for washing.

The sealing area has a cover swing opening, and the electric motor can be accessed through a swing out open box.

The modules can also be switched in three minutes, enabling multiple food products to be processed at the same time.

Infeeds, conveyers and others accessories are available separately, including single belt infeed, flighted infeed and dual infeed conveyer machines.

New features of this machine are modular plug and play, advanced control and dual product flow configurations, and there is a touch-screen for device recognition and maintenance, allowing operators to program as many as 100 package types or recipes.

The company will also introduce the Pfankuch 450 sealing machine at the exhibition, which takes place from September 27th to 29th.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61697-wrap-machine-features>

Survey finds juice drinks as sugary as coke

Date

04/08/2005

Article Text

A survey of "juice drinks" targeted at children has revealed that some could contain more sugar than Coca-Cola but still be marketed as "healthy".

The website DailyDietTracker.co.uk analysed beverages sold in a range of supermarket chains, including Sainsbury's, Tesco and Asda.

The website found the prime offender to be an apple and blackcurrant juice drink from the Sainsbury's Blue Parrot Cafe range for children.

The drink was found to contain 14.4g of sugar per 100ml serving, which compares to the 10.7g per 100ml of Coca-Cola.

Dietician, Jacqueline Hewitt, told the Daily Mail: "By calling itself a juice drink it is suggestive of being the juice from a fruit, leading the parent to believe they are purchasing a healthy alternative to fizzy drinks such as Coke but in fact it only contains 10 per cent juice concentrate."

This was "far too much sugar in one serving", she added.

Children's favourites Ribena and Five Alive were found to contain 12.1g and 11.6g of sugar respectively.

Further information:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/thehealthnews.html?in_article_id=358085&in_page_id=1797

Suppliers angered by OFT statement

Date

04/08/2005

Article Text

Farmers' groups, organic associations and campaigners have reacted with anger to the Office of Fair Trading's (OFT) statement that the voluntary code of conduct governing the relationship between supermarkets and suppliers is sufficient.

The OFT said yesterday that consumers were benefiting from the current competitive climate, seeing no reason to establish an independent ombudsman to process suppliers' complaints.

Auditors found no evidence that the code was being breached by Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda or Morrisons, it said.

Furthermore, the OFT said that no complaints had proceeded to mediation since the voluntary Supermarkets Code of Practice came into effect in 2002, although suppliers insist this is because complaining would place their contracts in jeopardy.

Deputy president of the National Farmers Union (NFU), Peter Kendall, said: "A climate of fear still exists and the OFT's conclusions have by no means given supplier/retailer relationships a clean bill of health," according to Retail Week.

"There is little in this statement that will stop or reduce the bullying tactics that some companies apply to their suppliers. This is unlikely to be influenced other than by a tougher statutory code," he continued.

This was echoed by the consortium "Breaking the Armlock Alliance", who said that the statement "beggars belief" and branded the findings "a supermarket-friendly report".

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) observed that while supermarkets are adhering to the code, "suppliers are not making use of it".

Further information: <http://www.retail-week.com/nav?page=retailweek.news.detail&resource=2895924>

Ozone cleans without the chemicals

Date

04/08/2005

Article Text

UK distributor CIPProcess is bringing a new line of food cleaning equipment to food processors in the UK and Ireland.

Manufactured by US-based OzoneSafeFood, the equipment uses ozone instead of the more common sanitiser chlorine, because it is 51 times as powerful, 3,000 times as fast, and requires no chemicals, thereby reducing operating costs.

Chlorine has also been linked to potentially carcinogenic byproducts, trihalomethanes, formed when it reacts with organic matter in water.

OzoneSafeFood's new equipment can be used in the sterilising of produce against Listeria, E.coli and Salmonella, and owing to ozone's rate of decomposition, unlike chemicals it does not build up on food surfaces.

The method would typically be used to treat produce including beef, pork, poultry, seafood, dairy produce, drinks, fruit and vegetables.

The company explained: "Our patented vortex technology entrains ozone into the water until it is fully suspended; the natural process of reverting back to oxygen becomes delayed, allowing the water stream to exit the confines of a pipe with its natural micro organism killing power still in effect," according to FoodProductionDaily.

Further information:

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/productnews/news.asp?id=61732&k=ozone-eliminates-chemical>

New ale is a stinging sensation

Date

05/08/2005

Article Text

UK Brewer Hall & Woodhouse is set to launch a new premium bottled ale later this year, which includes nettles among its ingredients.

The nettles in question have been sourced from the River Cottage estate of celebrity chef, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, author of the best-selling "River Cottage Meat Book".

Hugh is renowned for championing traditional recipes, and said: "The links between real food and real beer are clear", according to the Publican.

"I think we have a delicious and refreshing beer with character and real depth; properly hoppy with that little tingle of stinger from the nettles. It's good summer drinking, and seems to be slipping down a treat with barbecued mackerel," he continued.

Nettle beer is an old English tradition, brewed as a remedy for gout and rheumatics.

"Stinger", as the beer is known, was launched at the Great British Beer Festival in London, running from August 2nd to 6th.

Some of the proceeds from sales will be presented to Rural Revival, an organisation that supports community projects.

Further information: http://www.drinks-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=D87EDA15-5B04-40D8-B06A-ADF0F401671A

Scientific link between alcohol and cancer strengthened

Date

05/08/2005

Article Text

Scientists have announced they have identified the biochemical basis for the link between alcohol and gastrointestinal cancer.

Acetaldehyde, suspected of having carcinogenic properties, is formed as the body breaks down alcohol, and research has found it to react with natural compounds known as polyamines.

Polyamines are usually associated with the protection of DNA from oxidative damage.

However, although essential to cell growth, the reaction of polyamines with acetaldehyde has been found to trigger further reactions that damage cell DNA, including the conversion of acetaldehyde into crotonaldehyde.

Although other studies have previously made the link, they have always focused on high concentrations of acetaldehyde.

The new study showed that the comparatively low level of acetaldehyde in saliva containing alcohol would be sufficient to trigger the reactions.

The report from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) was published in the journal "Nucleic Acids Research".

NIAAA director, Ting-Kai Li, commented: "We've long suspected acetaldehyde's role in the carcinogenicity of alcohol beverage consumption, but this study gives us important new clues about its involvement.

"This work provides an important framework for understanding the underlying chemical pathway that could explain the association between drinking and certain types of cancer."

Further information:

http://www.foodconsumer.org/777/8/Study_shows_how_alcohol_causes_cancers.shtml

Unilever profits hit by Atkins fallout

Date

05/08/2005

Article Text

Unilever has blamed a 20 per cent drop in second quarter profits on tough competition in the European market and a disappointing performance from its Slim-Fast dieting range, bought in 2000.

Profits fell to £777.4 million for the three months to June 30th, partly attributed to a £245 million write-down in the value of the Slim-Fast brand.

It is the second write-down this year, following a cut of €650 million made in February, the Guardian reports.

The 50 per cent fall in sales from the dieting drinks, bars and ready-meals has been partly attributed to the declining popularity of low-carb, high protein diets such as the Atkins.

Some solace may therefore be taken in Atkins's filing for bankruptcy protection in the US earlier this week, announcing debts of \$300 million.

However, Unilever chief executive, Patrick Cescau, said the effect of the demise of Atkins was that consumers were increasingly dropping dieting products from their shopping baskets altogether.

"The people who have left Atkins have left the category", he told the Guardian, adding that the Slim-Fast range would now be re-evaluated, including the possibility of cutting the amount of sugar in its products.

In general, however, Mr Cescau remained positive, saying: "Looking forward, we do not expect significant change in the market environment in the rest of the year.

"Input costs and investment behind our brands will increase the pressure on margins. Against this background, we remain focused on the job of improving our competitiveness and restoring top line growth."

The company, whose brands also include Hellmann's mayonnaise and Lipton Tea, said underlying quarterly sales had risen by 3.3 per cent.

Further information:

<http://www.busrep.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=2818377&fSectionId=613&fSetId=662>

Microwavable fish packaging developed

Date

05/08/2005

Article Text

Canada-based Graphic Packaging International has developed a new microwavable packaging product made of aluminium and polyester.

The product was re-designed at the request of US firm Raw Seafoods for its "Cape Cod Cuisine" gourmet line, having previously been supplied for lasagna meals in Europe.

It took five months to bring the dual paperboard tray to the point that it cooked the fish evenly and quickly without a loss of moisture.

Graphic Packaging explained: "They wanted a package that would work with the microwave to cook their products thoroughly and quickly, without making the food dry or tough," according to FoodProductionDaily.

"Historically, these results are only achieved in a conventional oven, which requires lengthy cooking times," the firm added.

According to a report from Datamonitor the global packaged food market increased by almost four per cent in 2002, with Eastern Europe identified to be a key area of future growth.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61748-microwavable-package-developed>

Project sees protein potential in bioinformatics

Date

05/08/2005

Article Text

A new research project could help food companies to meet EU regulations on allergens coming into force this November.

A team of UK scientists from the Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Centre (CCFRA) are embarking on a yearlong analysis of bioinformatics to determine whether it can be used to collect and collate detailed information about food proteins.

Bioinformatics is defined by the CCFRA as "the collection, classification, storage and analysis of biochemical and biological information using computers", according to FoodProductionDaily.

By creating a database of protein information, companies may be able to identify potentially allergenic protein structures, and replace or remove them to reduce the likelihood of a consumer developing an allergic reaction.

From November 25th this year, all companies working in the EU will be required to declare whether products could contain food allergens on their labels.

As well as identifying potentially allergenic proteins, the same technology could help tap into the burgeoning market for functional food, and pinpoint the sources of microbial infections.

However, the technology is still in its infancy because protein behaviour is hard to predict even if proteins seem to resemble one another.

Changing or removing proteins could also have unexpected side effects.

John Dooley, scientist at the CCFRA, said: "At this stage the information is not there, but the project will help the industry to know that they could have it in the future."

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61754-bioinformatics-may-isolate>

Students design new M&S sandwich packaging

Date

05/08/2005

Article Text

Academics from Sheffield Hallam University have invented a new sandwich wrapping design, now being used by Marks & Spencer.

Calling themselves the Packaging Partnership, they are part of the Design Futures Group at the university, and their creation is a cardboard pack that splits open to serve as a smart looking plate to catch the overspill from well-filled sandwiches.

The Packaging Partnership is one of three divisions that use experts to explore ideas related to packaging design, product design and field research.

Janet Shipton, packaging innovation and creative director, outlined what happened when Marks & Spencer commissioned the group for its "Food to Go" products.

"A challenge like this is our forte and we handpicked a team of our own design staff as well as postgraduate and undergraduate students," she said.

The group discussed the project at length before deciding that environmental packaging was high on the consumer's agenda.

Further information:

<http://www.yorkshiretoday.co.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?SectionID=56&ArticleID=1103163>

8th aug onwards

Omega-3 oil patent upheld by EPO

Date

08/08/2005

Article Text

Martek Biosciences Corporation has announced that its patent on docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) oil has been upheld by the opposition division of the European Patent Office (EPO).

The patent covers the company's DHA line of microbial oils and methods for producing them. The product, which is an omega-3 fatty acid, is used in infant food formulas, as well as functional foods and dietary supplements.

The challenge was made by Aventis and Japanese company Nagese & Co, and follows Martek's suing of Germany's Celanese over patent infringement last year.

A competitor of Martek, Celanese's Nutrinova manufactures a similar product to DHA, also derived from microalgae.

Henry Linsert, Jr., Chairman and CEO, commented: "Today's favourable ruling confirms Martek's strong intellectual property position in Europe for DHA oil and the production of DHA oil and further strengthens our extensive patent portfolio for Martek's DHA and ARA oils that provides us with critical competitive advantages."

Martek says that its specialty nutritional oils are designed for formulas that assist in the development of the eyes and the central nervous system in newborn babies.

Its other nutritional supplements and food ingredients may be found to promote mental and cardiovascular health throughout life.

The opposing parties in the patent case are permitted to appeal the EPO's decision within two months of a written opinion being issued.

The company is also hoping to have the patent rights on arachidonic acid (ACA) confirmed, also used in infant formulas.

Further information:

http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=8785&fSite=AO545&next=2

Kerry Group buys into Asian chilled food sector

Date

08/08/2005

Article Text

The food group Kerry Food has acquired the Asian chilled ready meals business Noon Group for £124 million.

Noon produces meals and snacks from a factory in Southall, London, primarily for shipping to British retail chains.

The firm's Chief Executive, Hugh Friel, said that the UK chilled ready meals sector was now valued at approximately £1.4 billion, expanding at between five and seven per cent each year.

Mr Friel said that the purchase of Noon "significantly advances" Kerry's leading position in the sector, where it will join other brands such as Mattesons, Ballyfree, Denny and Dawn.

Based in Tralee, Ireland, Kerry Group supplies more than 10,000 foods, food ingredients and flavour products worldwide.

In June 2002, the group launched "Mastertaste", a new global flavour division following on from its acquisition of Dalgety in 1998.

In May 2004, following the purchase of what was formerly the Quest Food Ingredients Business, the company established a Bio-science division to lead research and innovation in bio-ingredients and pharma-ingredients.

Further information: <http://www.rte.ie/business/2005/0808/kerry.html>

Japan launches strawberry sausages

Date

08/08/2005

Article Text

A Japanese sausage company has made a bid to revive declining sales by offering fish sausages in a new unlikely flavour, strawberry milk.

Nippon Suisan Kaisha came up with the idea following a survey of children, which found strawberries to be their favourite fruit.

The firm's new fish meat sausages, enhanced with strawberry juice and milk, will therefore go on sale in Japan from September 1st this year.

The flavour has been designed so that the original flavour and texture are not masked, but that an aftertaste remains.

Japanese sausage sales totalled 46.5 billion yen in 2004, expected to rise to 47 billion in 2005.

A spokesperson for the company said: "It's an unexpected combination, but a taste that children will like," according to the Mainichi Daily News.

"Strawberries go well with minced fish," he added.

The news comes as the British Sausage Appreciation Society has decided to instigate British Sausage Week, running from October 24th to 30th this year. Britain alone has around 400 named varieties.

Further information: <http://mdn.mainichi-msn.co.jp/national/news/20050806p2a00m0na029000c.html>

Folate in food more effective than supplements

Date

08/08/2005

Article Text

Pregnant women who increase the amount of folate in their diet could give birth to heavier babies, new research has revealed.

Scientists have found that expectant mothers who had lower folate levels gave birth to lighter, less healthy children than those with more significant folate levels.

The research will reiterate the message that scientists have been giving for some time now, namely that high folate levels increases the chance of having a healthy baby, writes Nutraingredients.com.

Scientists have been campaigning for foods to be fortified with the nutrient and want the government to adapt its food policies to implement this.

The case study from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne looked at 1,000 pregnant women and will give further weight to the folate drive.

Babies most need folate in the early stages of pregnancy says Dr Caroline Relton, one of the scientists who worked on the research, and when folate is given at the first check-up, this is too late for many women.

"Fortifying a range of foods promises to be a more effective solution than a campaign to encourage women to take folic acid supplements," suggested Dr Relton.

Further information: <http://i-newswire.com/pr40480.html>

Soft drink sales fall over year

Date

08/08/2005

Article Text

A new report has provided further evidence that soft drinks are losing ground to healthier alternatives such as fruit juice and bottled water.

However, in spite of poor sales in 2004, the data provided by Zenith International still suggests that UK soft drink consumption is growing steadily in the long term.

The report found that consumption of soft drinks decreased by two per cent in 2004, down to 13.7 billion litres from 13.9 billion litres in the previous year.

Nevertheless, the total for 2004 was still almost double that in 1994, and 18 per cent higher than in 1999.

The popularity of bottled water also continues to increase, as the British public become increasingly aware of the importance of hydration.

In general, the report finds that notions of "no added sugar" and "added functionality" are increasing their grip on the market, according to Foodnavigator.com.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61769-health-concerns-seeb>

**Newspaper
uncovers
UK GM
loophole**

Date 08/08/2005

Article Text Farmers in the UK are able to grow genetically modified (GM) crops without notifying the ne for a sample pack of seeds, it has been claimed.

The Guardian newspaper tested the "loophole" by applying to biotech firm Monsanto for a sample of GM maize.

The only restrictions met with were that the farmer in question sent the test results back to the company and gave an undertaking not to breach patents, the newspaper reports.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) conceded that the current regulations did not prevent farmers from growing GM crops approved elsewhere in the EU, saying: "It seems unlikely that anyone would want to do".

The loophole arises from the fact that varieties of maize known as MON 810 gained EU approval in 1998, before widespread public concern led to later applications being refused.

Following protests where GM trials were sabotaged, the environment minister at the time, Michael Meacher, ordered trials to investigate claims that GM crops were harmful.

MON 810 was developed to be poisonous to the extremely invasive borer insect.

However, Monsanto spokesman, Tony Combes, said that no trial seeds would actually have been sent, as a mandatory research agreement had not been processed.

Further information:

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2005/08/08/88440/Legal+loophole+allows+growers+to+g>

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Further information:

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2005/08/08/88440/Legal+loophole+allows+growers+to+grow+GM+crops+in+secret.htm>

Soya sales soar in Europe

Date

09/08/2005

Article Text

The European market for soya-based alternatives to dairy and meat products increased by 10 per cent in 2004, a new survey has found.

Covering Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK, the report from Prosoy Research & Strategy found that over 100 new soya products were launched, representing an increase of more than 50 per cent compared with a year earlier.

Within the soya category, dairy products were seen to be experiencing a particular surge, with a 22 per cent increase in new milks, yoghurts and desserts.

Driving the trend is the increasing health consciousness of European consumers, with more turning away from a predominantly meat-based diet, and more awareness of food intolerances.

New customers are entering the soya market via the growing consumer demand for functional food and drinks, and existing players are fortifying their established brands.

Gerard Klein Essink, senior researcher at Prosoy, said: "We have tracked well over 130 new product introductions of soya-based drinks and desserts, meat-free including tofu product launches in 2004 in eight European countries," according to nutraingredients.com.

The European market for meat alternatives in 2004 continued to exhibit a steady growth rate of six per cent, with soya-based dairy and meat alternatives currently worth approximately €1.6 billion.

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61760-soyfood-sales-hit>

S&N brewing up optimism in a tough market

Date

09/08/2005

Article Text

The UK's largest brewer, Scottish and Newcastle (S&N), has announced an 8.7 per cent increase in half-year pre-tax profits, attributed to the continuing growth and popularity of its four key brands.

Foster's, Kronenbourg 1664, John Smith's and Strongbow achieved a combined total UK volumes growth of 5.5 per cent, leading a market that nevertheless remains in decline.

In general beer volumes in the UK decreased by 3.9 per cent in the period, as drinkers increasingly opt for wine or spirits for their refreshment.

S&N's UK operating profit gained 11 per cent, although internationally this figure was down by 10 per cent.

The profit rise from £150 million to £163 million was in line with the company's expectations, and kept it on track for meeting its full-year targets.

"The good performance in the first half of 2005 reinforces our expectation that we will meet our financial and commercial objectives for the full year," said chief executive, Tony Froggatt.

"We expect market volumes in the second half of the year to be broadly flat, while we continue to expect to outperform the market," he added.

Western European trading would remain challenging, he said, although "trading in July has shown some improvement" and the outlook for the second half looked bright compared with the poor weather factor in the summer of 2004.

Further information: http://www.sharecast.com/cgi-bin/sharecast/story.cgi?story_id=521947

Bacteria treatment to improve food safety

Date

09/08/2005

Article Text

US scientists have arrived at a new molecular-based technique for detecting live bacteria cells in food products.

The method draws on polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology to reproduce a strain of DNA, creating large amounts from small initial samples.

Although this can be used to detect small quantities of bacteria, PCR is unable to distinguish between living and dead bacterial cells, which is necessary for health purposes.

Two researchers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst therefore embarked on a project to test a batch of seafood for the DNA of the bacterium *Vibrio vulnificus*, from the same family as cholera.

However, they first treated samples with the chemical ethidium bromide monoazide (EMA), which is able to penetrate the membranes of damaged DNA cells.

They then exposed the samples to an intense light, which reacted with the EMA to cause strong bonds with the dead DNA that meant they could not be separated and copied in the PCR process.

Microbiologist Robert Levin explained: "Once you've determined the optimum concentrations of EMA you can completely inhibit amplification of DNA from dead cells," according to foodnavigator.com.

The results of the research were published in the *Journal of Microbiological Methods*.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61786-technique-detects-wide>

New code to regulate Basmati rice imports

Date

10/08/2005

Article Text

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) has come up with a new code of practice governing the import of Basmati rice into the UK from Pakistan and India.

The move follows a study carried out by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), which found that almost one in five packs of the rice sold in a wide range of retail outlets actually contained more than 20 per cent long-grain rice.

Moreover, in 10 per cent of cases, the packs were supplemented with as much as 60 per cent non-basmati rice, The Independent reported.

The new code comprises a list of all the varieties that have been approved by the Indian and Pakistani governments, together with minimum specifications.

BRC director general, Kevin Hawkins, remarked: "The UK is the largest user of Basmati rice in the EU and so retailers want their customers to know that what they are buying is quality, authentic Basmati rice," according to FoodProductionDaily.

An FSA spokesman said: "Basmati rice...is a premium product and therefore attracts higher prices than other long-grain rice. Telling the difference between them is difficult, and there is a profit to be made from mixing in a cheaper variety."

The code applies to pre-packed and loose rice, as well as rice that is included as an ingredient in other products.

The FSA studied some 300 samples in the course of its investigation.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61796-contamination-concerns-force>

Pie protection bid challenged

Date

10/08/2005

Article Text

Northern Foods, which manufactures pork pies under the Melton Mowbray name, has launched a legal challenge to stop it from being granted EU protected status.

In July this year an application from the Melton Mowbray Pork Pie Association was processed by the government's Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The application now passes to the European Commission, and if successful will prevent pies made more than 25 miles from the Leicestershire town from using the name.

The association says that protected geographical indication (PGI) status is essential to safeguard the traditional recipe, but lawyers for Northern Foods say the name is a hallmark of a certain quality rather than place of origin.

The firm has now won a High Court hearing, which could force the government to withdraw its backing, according to The Pig Site.

In July the UK's Country Land and Business Association (CLA) launched a campaign to encourage more UK foods to apply for protected status and boost the standing of local produce.

While Italy had 148 such foods registered, Britain has just 29, the CLA said, including Cornish clotted cream, Newcastle Brown Ale and Jersey Royal potatoes.

Further information:

Irish food plant saved with UK sale

Date

10/08/2005

Article Text

An Irish food processing plant that manufactures frozen chips looks to have been saved from closure with its sale to a larger UK processor.

Ballymoney Foods in County Antrim had a target of 300 tonnes per week, but weekly sales were closer to 200 tonnes when chip production was halted in June.

Competition from European imports also forced the plant to make 40 members of staff redundant.

A spokesman for the firm has now confirmed the sale has been agreed, although further details have not been disclosed.

The plant was saved from closure once before, when a consortium of 60 potato farmers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland came up with a reported £2.75 million to buy the business last year.

However, the farmers will only receive a third of their investment under the terms of the latest sale.

Further information: <http://www.4ni.co.uk/industrynews.asp?id=43121>

EU approves food contact chemicals

Date

10/08/2005

Article Text

A panel from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has approved four chemicals that it says can safely be used in food packaging or equipment that comes into contact with food.

The ACF panel is responsible for assessing the safety of food additives and flavourings, as well as food contact materials.

4,4'-diaminodiphenyl sulphone is used to manufacture the plastic packaging material polyetherimide.

It can be used in contact with all types of food at any temperature, although its use has been restricted to a maximum quantity of 5mg per kilogram of food, says FoodProductionDaily.

Meanwhile, Carbon black is approved as a pigment in polymers for food packaging, although the panel adds that its purity must be maintained to safeguard against associated impurities being released.

Its use was also restricted, but to a limit of 2.5 per cent of the total mass of the polymer in question.

The final two materials are polyetherimide and ammonium salt, with the latter being used to make fluoropolymers.

Fluoropolymers are in turn used to manufacture parts for processing equipment and coatings for cooking utensils.

The ACF has considered around 90 chemicals for use in food contact materials since the responsibility fell to the EU food safety regulator in October last year.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61806-eu-food-regulator>

Britain rivals France in food and wine, says Stein

Date

10/08/2005

Article Text

TV chef, Rick Stein, has claimed that British regional specialities are just as impressive as their French equivalents, and he has chosen a Lancashire favourite to illustrate his point.

"A well-cooked Lancashire hotpot or Welsh cawl...is every bit the equal of a French cassoulet or a poule au pot," he said, speaking after the filming of his latest programme, A French Odyssey.

While the French tended to "talk up their regional dishes", he complained that the British too often did theirs a disservice.

Among the things the British do better than the French, he included bacon, game and roast beef, but admitted "they have better food markets".

"A French Odyssey" sees Stein embark on a three month barge trip around south-west France where, surprisingly, he also found that many French wines left much to be desired.

"I have to say that there is a lot of vin very ordinaire out there," he said.

The British, on the other hand, had been more ready to welcome wines from other parts of the world, including Chile and Australia, he found.

In the year to May, while consumers in the UK spent 8.2 per cent more on Australian wine, French wine sales to Britain fell by 3.6 per cent.

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=1750152005>

A "malternative" to the after-work beer

Date

10/08/2005

Article Text

Following last month's arrival of Anheuser-Busch's B-to-the-E (BE) caffeinated beer in the UK, the company has announced another launch designed to tap into the functional food and drink market.

Tilt is a raspberry-flavoured, malt-based alternative to beer, targeting young males in need of an energy boost during after-work social drinking.

Infused with caffeine, guarana and ginseng, and still containing alcohol, it is being marketed by the Budweiser company as a "5pm after-work drink".

However, while BE was still very much a beer, Tilt seems to represent a move away from the sector that is known to be losing market share to wines and spirits.

The silver metallic, 16-ounce can reinforces this message, resembling energy and designer drinks more than other beer brands.

The drink is being rolled out across the US, with a full commercial launch slated for October.

BE, which stands for Beer with Extra, courted controversy with its appearance in the UK, with many saying it would fuel a binge drinking situation that is already getting out of control.

Campaigners argued that the 60.4mg caffeine hit would spur consumption, and that the fruit flavours were particularly calculated to attract young women.

Further information:

<http://www.datamonitor.com/~d46e2b5b26144571ac0a4b84bf6b1c0f~/industries/news/article/?pid=45F166AC-954C-47DF-B4E3-7B5653AF0E4E&type=CommentWire>

Tesco offers a taste of Thailand

Date

11/08/2005

Article Text

Five London Tesco outlets have held a weeklong "Taste of Thailand" event in association with subsidiary Tesco Lotus.

The promotion of Thai products at the Beckton, Lea Valley, Yeading, Hayes and Brent Park stores is also being organised by the Department of Export Promotion at the Thai Ministry of Commerce.

As the popularity of Thai cuisine grows in the UK, so too does the amount retailers are importing, and this year Tesco expects to purchase Bt5.7 billion worth.

Tesco hopes the initiative will raise awareness and stimulate sales, encouraging consumers to experiment with Thai foods in their home cooking as well as when visiting restaurants.

In addition to familiar products such as curry sauce, satay, wonton and noodles, shoppers will have the opportunity to sample lesser known fruits, including rambutan, mangosteen and custard apple.

Fresh vegetables on display will include bitter melon, yard long beans, galangal and flowering chives.

Thailand's deputy prime minister, Somkid Jatusripitak, met with Tesco Chief Executive, Sir Terry Leahy, in September 2003, where they discussed the promotion of Thai exports.

Tesco Lotus chairman, Sunthorn Arunanondchai, told The Nation: "There are still challenges, but the rewards for Thai producers who can meet the necessary international standards and deliver value is access to the largest retailer in the UK."

Further information:

http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2005/08/11/business/index.php?news=business_18316105.html

Europe losing its taste for ice cream

Date

11/08/2005

Article Text

The market for ice cream in Western Europe decreased by 0.4 per cent in 2004, with sales totalling US\$20.3 billion, new research has found.

This can be accounted for by an increase in concern for health, a demand for more sophisticated flavours, and an increase in the competition from private label manufacturers, says Euromonitor International.

Although preferences were found to vary by country, a general trend towards the "premiumisation of flavours" was noted, with manufacturers striving to meet increasing consumer demand for more unusual flavours, often involving a combination of ingredients.

However, although more exotic flavours are in demand, their popularity tends to be short-lived, quickly being replaced by more fashionable alternatives.

The report also found that preferences in some countries, particularly Italy, differed depending on whether the ice cream was artisanal or industrially produced.

In the UK, vanilla remained the outright favourite owing to its versatility, followed by chocolate and its variants with 26 per cent of the market share in 2004.

Fruit-based flavours also gained in popularity last year, particularly in the UK and France, where they were linked to a perception as being healthier than other flavours.

Further information: <http://www.euromonitor.com/article.asp?id=5359>

Australian farmer protest hits the capital

Date

11/08/2005

Article Text

The Australian capital city of Canberra was the setting for vociferous demonstration today, as a convoy of tractors arrived after a 2,400km trip with rallies held in key locations across the states of Victoria and New South Wales.

The initial 70 farmers from Tasmania have attracted the support of thousands of others across the states, sympathetic to the "Fair Dinkum Food Campaign".

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association is protesting at large food businesses importing cheap produce from Europe and Asia, and is hoping to take the grievance directly to prime minister John Howard.

The farmers are calling for a clearer produce labelling policy, so that consumers can clearly identify the country of origin and support Australian food growers.

The demonstrations have won the backing of politicians and consumers, as well as fellow farmers, and the organisers are confident that they will result in legislative change.

The Australian Vegetable and Potato Growers Federation (AusVeg) also held talks with Agriculture minister, Peter McGauran, earlier in the week.

It presented him with an industry paper that dealt with issues including imported food inspections and country of origin labelling.

The "Fair Dinkum" campaign was launched when McDonald's Australia switched its supply contract to McCain Foods, resulting in a loss of business for potato farmers.

Campaign director, Richard Bovill, said: "This isn't just about Tasmanian spuds, it's about Australian customers who want to be loyal to their farmers," according to Forbes.

Further information:

http://southernhighlands.yourguide.com.au/detail.asp?class=news&subclass=local&category=general%20news&story_id=415005&y=2005&m=8

"Five a day" licenses hit five hundred

Date

11/08/2005

Article Text

The UK's department of health has announced that it has issued its 500th license for the "five-a-day" logo, taking the total number of brands to qualify to more than 700.

Two years ago the government launched the scheme to increase consumption of fruit and vegetables and improve the general health of the nation.

Everyone is encouraged to eat or drink at least five "portions" of fruit or vegetables each day, and food companies can tell the consumer how much of a portion is contained in their products.

To qualify, products must contain no less than 80g of fruit or vegetable, and no added sugar, salt or fat.

However, the scheme extends beyond fresh produce, including chilled, frozen, canned and dried fruit and vegetables, as well as juices.

With the increase in consumer health consciousness, companies are effectively able to use the logo as an endorsement, making it an integral part of their marketing campaigns, reports Nutraingredients.com.

The retailer Iceland, for example, last year embarked on a campaign to raise awareness that frozen foods were also included.

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61848-fruit-vegetables-a-day>

Cott corners UK carbonate market

Date

11/08/2005

Article Text

The UK subsidiary of Canada-based Cott Corporation has acquired carbonated soft drinks manufacturer MaCaw for approximately £75.46 million.

Expected to add around £55 million to Cott's annual sales, a key factor in the decision to buy was Macaw's expansion into "still" or aseptic beverages, such as fruit-based and isotonic drinks that are preservative free.

The "significant investment" would enable the firm "to take advantage of a fast-growing, profitable business segment", said CEO, John Sheppard.

It has been noted that consumers are increasingly turning to beverages that they perceive as healthier than the standard "fizzy" drink.

Macaw's assets to transfer to Cott include six production lines in Lancashire.

Four of these are for carbonated soft drinks, one is for "dilute-to-taste", and the sixth produces "aseptic", or sterile, drinks.

Mr Sheppard said the sale would see Cott, the largest supplier of retailer-brand soft drinks in the world, controlling more than 60 per cent of the sector's UK market share.

Cott said that Macaw is the largest privately owned maker of retailer-brand carbonated soft drinks in the UK.

Further information:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20050810.wcott0910/BNStory/Business/>

Oat cuisine to combat obesity

Date

11/08/2005

Article Text

A new oat-based fat substitute could be a solution to the growing obesity epidemic in Europe.

The product, called Z-Trim, is a fine powder that replaces butter or oil in baked goods, and can reduce fat content by as much as 50 per cent.

It can also be used in desserts, meat products, and dressings.

Z-Trim is added in the preliminary stages of cooking, and the powder is then finely mixed with a beater or blender to ensure an even spread.

The product was first revealed last month at an Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) show in New Orleans, and it will now be marketed across Europe by Swiss firm DKSH.

The firm believes Z-Trim will be successful, but it is asking bakeries to experiment with the product before selling it to determine the right concentration for each recipe.

Z-Trim will primarily target major food manufacturers, who are currently under growing pressure to increase nutritional value and reduce fat.

Further information: <http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61817-z-trim-fat-substitute>

Energy drink sales boosted by long working hours

Date

12/08/2005

Article Text

Sales of energy drinks in the UK have risen by 75 per cent since 2000, and look set to top £1 billion before the end of 2005, according to a new report.

Market analysts Mintel interviewed 1,537 adults aged 15 and over, 615 of whom said they drank energy and stimulant beverages.

Of the three brands investigated, Lucozade was deemed the most popular, with some 64 per cent admitting they had drunk it in the past six months.

This is compared with the 46 per cent who had drunk Red Bull, and 27 per cent consuming Lucozade Energy, within the same timeframe.

However, 25 per cent of consumers thought the drinks were too expensive, and 16 per cent said the claims they made were dubious.

Only four per cent of those surveyed considered energy drinks to be bad for the health.

Mintel also linked its findings to the long-hours working culture prevalent in the UK.

"The UK has the longest working hours in the EU, and in order to get the most out of every day, consumers are increasingly looking at products with an extra kick, which is one reason why so many people are reaching for these kinds of drinks," said Ellen Shields, senior consumer analyst.

Further information:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/thehealthnews.html?in_article_id=358978&in_page_id=1797

Milk Link caters for the Brit abroad

Date

12/08/2005

Article Text

Milk Link is preparing to launch its recently developed "Moo" brand in Europe, aimed at the British ex-pat and tourist community.

The company says that this move will make it "the first farmer owned integrated dairy business to launch a whole range of dairy products under its own brand into Europe", according to just-food.com.

It already has a significant presence in Spain and Malta, with its range of long life milks and other dairy products such as custard and butter.

Moo milk was launched in the UK in January 2004, followed by Moo cream in June this year.

These have now been joined by Moo Organic milk, and a range of mini Moo flavoured milks, designed for children's school lunches.

It is hoped the European launch in October this year will meet a demand for convenient, trustworthy dairy products for the British consumer abroad.

Simon Mercer, export sales manager, said: "Provenance is important in our export markets and Moo is a great range of home grown quality dairy products that consumers can trust when they are abroad."

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61603

Packaging industry hit by price rises

Date

12/08/2005

Article Text

A new report has concluded that the higher cost of raw materials facing plastic, metal and glass packagers could soon be passed on to food producers.

The cost of certain plastic resins, notably polypropylene and polyethylene, has increased with rising oil and gas prices, according to Standard & Poor.

While flexible plastic packaging manufacturers are likely to bear the brunt of this, the rigid plastic sector is more robust as contractual terms mean companies can pass price fluctuations on to processors within a few months.

However, credit analyst, Liley Mehta, said: "End customers are also managing their inventory balances in anticipation...and smaller order patterns have affected volume growth," according to MeatProcess.com.

The US market seems set to feel the impact of this more than Europe.

In terms of glass, higher natural gas prices coupled with weaker beer demand, is hitting the US glass packaging industry.

As with rigid plastic, US glass producers will look to offset the higher costs by turning to the price adjustment formulas in their supply contracts.

However, European volume trends are more favourable, thanks to an increase in the consumption of wine and champagne.

Metal drink can demand also decreased in the US in the second quarter, while in Europe it has increased.

Further information: <http://www.meatprocess.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61852-packaging-plastic-resin>

What's in a Daim?

Date

12/08/2005

Article Text

The Dime bar, a crunchy slab of almond caramel, coated with chocolate, is being re-branded as "Daim" (pronounced "dame") in the UK after 20 years.

Manufacturer Kraft Foods said the move came to harmonise the brand name and trademark throughout Europe.

The bar will also receive a new packaging design, and two new products are being launched to coincide with the re-branding.

Daim Mini's are single, wrapped, bite-size pieces of the confectionery, which come in 140g bags.

Daim Nuggets are nugget-shaped chunks of caramel, which will also be coated in chocolate, and are packaged in 100g bags.

Both of the new products will be available in the shops from September.

Sarah Petts, Kraft's channel and communications manager, commented: "Dime Bar has enjoyed a loyal following since its launch more than twenty years ago.

"Daim Mini's and Daim Nuggets will excite existing customers and entice new ones."

The brand's main markets are Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden and the UK. It is already known as the "Daim" bar in all but the UK.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61614&lk=rss

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Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61614&lk=rss

US nuts voted best by Europe

Date

12/08/2005

Article Text

UK consumers prefer the taste of US imported peanuts to those from Argentina or China, a new survey has found.

The ARS market and research division of the US Department of Agriculture asked European consumers in London, Berlin and Amsterdam to pick their favourite tasting peanut from three major peanut suppliers.

"The data showed that there would be virtually no likelihood of consumer complaints about the flavour of US peanuts," said Timothy Sanders, research leader for the ARS Market Quality and Handling Research unit.

In contrast, 70 per cent of Chinese peanuts and 40 per cent of the Argentine product were labelled "problematic" by consumers, according to FoodProductionDaily.

Research shows that a growing number of peanut products are being used as food ingredients, and the University of Georgia has claimed that worldwide peanut production steadily increased over the past 30 years.

Assuring food importers of the quality of the American peanut, Mr Sanders added: "The reason we're presenting this data in Europe is to assure international buyers that although US peanuts come at a premium price, they also come as a premium product."

Further information: <http://southeastfarmpress.com/news/081105-European-peanuts/>

Fewer Indian exports being rejected

Date

15/08/2005

Article Text

Indian food companies encountered fewer barriers to exports in July, suggesting that more is being done to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards.

While 251 and 215 consignments of food from India were rejected by the US in May and June respectively, only 78 were rejected in July, on technical grounds, including SPS.

There was likewise a reduction in the number of exports refused entry into the EU: six in July, compared with 16 in May and 12 in June, reported the Indian Financial Express.

The main reason for rejection was the detection of aflatoxins and the red food dye Sudan, which has been found in chilli powder. The UK rejected two batches of chilli powder due to aflatoxins.

The Sudan dyes have been used to colour substances including oils, waxes and polish, and are banned from being added to foods in the UK and throughout the EU.

Since July 2003, dried, crushed and ground chilli cargoes being imported into the EU have had to be accompanied by a certificate to show they have not been found to contain traces of Sudan 1.

The dye was banned after experiments on rats found it had the potential to lead to the development of malignant tumours.

Seafood was also found to be an area of concern, the UK rejecting peeled black tiger prawns on the basis they contained nitrofurans.

Further information:

http://www.financialexpress.com/fe_full_story.php?content_id=99331

Bananas leading European organic growth

Date

15/08/2005

Article Text

The organic food market in Europe grew by 26 per cent between 2001 and 2004, largely driven by sales of fruit and vegetables, and particularly bananas.

Datamonitor's Research and Markets report found that the market for organic produce Europe-wide was €20.7 billion in 2004, of which €5.8 billion was generated by fruit and vegetable sales, according to Foodnavigator.com.

The report also found that the UK is one of the largest consumers of organic bananas in Europe, accounting for approximately half of the 80,000 tonnes sold in the EU each year.

Increased consumer interest in exotic and tropical species of fruit has contributed to sales of organic fruit reaching some €330 million a year.

Thus, while organic vegetables continue to have the highest sales, it is organic fruit that is experiencing the highest rate of growth.

The UK and Germany lead the market, representing more than half of all organic fruit and vegetable sales in Europe between them.

A general division between the North and South of Europe was also identified, the North showing greater interest in fresh organic produce than the Mediterranean region.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61874-organic>

Salmonella test kit certified for action

Date

15/08/2005

Article Text

With the FSA setting a target of 50 per cent reduction in Campylobacter-contaminated chicken by 2010, more accurate and thorough tracing of food products is in demand.

In line with this trend, UK-based company Oxoid has announced that its Salmonella Rapid Test Kit has been approved for use by the French international certification body AFNOR.

The UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) aims to cut incidences of Salmonella, along with other diseases in food, by 20 per cent by April next year.

The company says the testing process halves the usual time taken to 42 hours, and it joins the Microbact Listeria 12L Biochemical Identification System, which gained the approval of the UK's Chorleywood Food Research Association Group in June.

Both testing kits involve the incubation and growth of the species in question for the purposes of identification.

The Listeria kit comprises 12 tests, 10 for sugar, one aesculin hydrolysis and one rapid haemolysis test, reports FoodProductionDaily.

A series of colour changes on test strips allow the various species within the genus Listeria to be distinguished.

The EU's new hygiene regulations will come into effect in two parts in January 2006 and January 2007.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61882-salmonella-listeria-testing>

Own-brand confidence grows with time

Date

15/08/2005

Article Text

The perception of "private label" goods, or supermarket own-brands, is different in developed and developing countries, a report has found.

The ACNielsen online consumer opinion survey covers 38 markets worldwide on a twice yearly basis.

Of the 21,000 consumers who took part in the latest survey, 68 per cent thought that supermarket labels were a good alternative to international, well-known brands.

However, this attitude was much more widespread in the developed countries of Europe, the Pacific and North America, where 78 per cent, 78 per cent and 77 per cent of shoppers did not think that the value of own-brands came at the expense of quality.

Of the individual countries rating such brands highly, the top 10 are all in Europe, with the Netherlands, Portugal and Germany leading the way.

However, only just over half of Asian respondents thought that own-brands were as good, with a general perception that they are intended for people who cannot afford the "best" brands.

Over two thirds of consumers in Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines thought this was the case.

Moreover, eight of the 10 least enthusiastic countries were in Asia, most notably Japan and Malaysia, both with 35 per cent agreement that own-brands presented a good value alternative.

Frank Martell, ACNielsen Europe CEO, commented: "Thirty years ago in the UK - and today in less developed retail markets - private-label products were perceived as low quality and cheap," according to Fresh Plaza.

"Our survey clearly shows that the longer consumers have been exposed to private labels, the better they think of them."

Further information:

http://www.freshplaza.com/2005/12aug/rn2_eu_supermarketbands.htm

Tate & Lyle expands flavoured water range

Date

15/08/2005

Article Text

UK-based sweetener company, Tate & Lyle, has announced two additions to its "Rebalance" range of sweetener solutions, both for flavoured waters.

Containing the company's own sucralose sweetener, Splenda, as well as fructose, the "Water Rebalance" solutions will be used to produce strawberry, and strawberry and lemon, flavoured waters.

They join an orange and berry flavoured solution, containing added vitamins and Tate & Lyle Calcium Citrate.

One of the new solutions also contains polydextrose, which the London firm says will allow beverage manufacturers to "reduce the calorie-content of commercially available flavoured water by up to 66 per cent", according to Foodnavigator.com.

Global vice president of ingredient applications and technical services, Mike Augustine, said that three prototypes of the solutions were compared with 13 other available alternatives for flavour and texture.

They "produced excellent sensory test results," he said.

Tate & Lyle's Rebalance 601 range of solutions is compatible with calcium citrate and additional vitamins, allowing the company to tap into the growing market for so-called "functional" food and drinks, with added health benefits.

A similar trend has seen consumers turning from carbonated drinks to juice and water-based alternatives.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61899-tate-and-lyle>

BSE test deemed a success

Date

15/08/2005

Article Text

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has confirmed that the new BSE testing system has been successful in its trial, and is now ready to be applied across the UK.

If ministers accept the advice of the FSA, the new system will be implemented in the UK, and will replace the current Over Thirty Months Scheme (OTMS).

The current regulations governing cattle prohibits older cattle meat from entering the food chain, but the new legislation would re-introduce older beef for sale.

The NFU Scotland has welcomed the "excellent news" from the FSA.

"The Scottish beef industry has been hindered by domestic and export trade restrictions for nine years," said NFUS vice president, David Mitchell.

"There is now light at the end of the tunnel and hope that the industry can finally enjoy a normal trading environment," he added.

Exports of British beef have also been restricted since 1996, but following an EU inspection of UK controls in June 2005, Brussels is now expected to lift the ban.

Further information:

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2005/08/15/88527/End+of+the+Over+Thirty+Month+scheme+inches+closer.htm>

Chicken scare prompts calls for monitoring

Date

16/08/2005

Article Text

An investigation carried out by the BBC has found that over a third of chicken samples bought from British suppliers are contaminated with E.coli. that is resistant to antibiotics.

The disease was found in 53 out of 147 portions of chicken bought in the UK and abroad, prompting campaigners to call for a government monitoring programme to be introduced.

Over half of the UK's chickens examined by the Health Protection Agency also tested positive for E.coli., with 12 found to contain antibiotic-resistant Campylobacter.

The E.coli. was able to withstand the antibiotic Trimethaprim, and 25 of the chicken meat samples contained Vancomycin resistant Enterocci.

Richard Young, policy advisor at the Soil Association, said that it was "appalling" no monitoring of antibiotic resistance had previously been carried out on chickens.

The government had already embarked on similar tests for cattle, sheep and pigs, he said, but "chicken is the biggest source of foodborne infections in the UK".

However, the British Poultry Council (BPC) said the survey wasn't detailed enough, and could therefore be "misleading and worrying for consumers".

Further information:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/thehealthnews.html?in_article_id=359357&in_page_id=1797

East Anglian brewery up for sale

Date

16/08/2005

Article Text

An East Anglia-based brewery has been put up for sale owing to the increased demand for its beers, according to its owner.

Founded in 1996, St Peter's brewery produces organic and spiced ales and bottled beers, 75 per cent of which are shipped to 15 foreign countries, including, Russia, Canada and the US.

However, demand is now so great, particularly from overseas, that a buyer is being sought who can develop the business's obvious potential.

Valued at £20 million, a sale would include the brewery's site at the 13th century manor house in St Peter, as well as the adjoining bar and restaurant.

The location is integral to the brand, as the brewery makes use of the local water supply, as well as the malting barley grown in the vicinity.

The brewery was set up by millionaire John Murphy, who recently also sold the Plymouth Gin brand.

Managing director, Colin Cordy, told the East Anglian Daily Times: "We are brewing full to capacity and simply cannot meet demand. We are looking to be sold to a company that can take the business to its next stage."

Further information: <http://www.thepublican.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=18214&d=32&h=24&f=23&dateformat=%25o%20%25B%20%25Y>

Tesco says no to NFU charter

Date

16/08/2005

Article Text

The supermarket chain Tesco has rejected the National Farmers Union (NFU) proposal of a "Buyers' Charter" for supermarkets to agree to, thereby re-igniting the row over the power the chains are able to wield over suppliers.

Tesco said that the charter was redundant, as the company had already signed up to the 2002 Supermarket Code of Practice, according to the Western Mail.

The NFU decided to continue with its plans for a charter, after it deemed last week's Office of Fair Trading (OFT) report unsatisfactory.

The OFT said that there was need to change the code of practice, as it was serving consumers well. Suppliers, it said, should be making better use of the existing code.

Outgoing head of the NFU's food chain unit, Terry Jones, had said he thought processors and retailers, including the main supermarkets, would be happy to give their backing to a new agreement.

"Why would you not want to sign up to a voluntary code that promotes a sustainable business future for you and your suppliers?" he asked, according to Farmers Weekly.

The Country Land & Business Association (CLA) said it had no objection to the Buyers' Charter, but that an ombudsman was still preferable.

This suggestion was rejected by the OFT in its report.

Further information:

http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/1000farming/tm_objectid=15862072&method=full&siteid=50082&headline=supermarket-accused-of-showing-contempt-for-farmers-name_page.html

Cake company offers calorie-controlled Christmas

Date

16/08/2005

Article Text

Cake manufacturer, Anthony Alan Foods, has announced that it will be launching a range of Weight Watchers branded cakes, designed for the dieter at Christmas time.

The move comes at a time when consumers are increasingly looking for healthier, less fatty alternatives to commonly perceived "bad" foods.

The range includes slices of traditional Christmas cake, with 136 calories and 0.4g of saturated fat, and individual servings of Christmas pudding, which contain 233 calories and 0.8g of saturated fat.

There are also mini festive yule logs, with 89 calories apiece, and mince pies, with 148 calories, and these contain 1.8g and 2g of saturated fat respectively.

Marketing director, Sarah Morgan, said: "Christmas may be a time of indulgence but many consumers are still on the look-out for healthier options," according to just-food.com.

"Retailers who ignore them are turning business away," she added.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61625

Salad bowl wins top packaging prize

Date

16/08/2005

Article Text

The first prize in this year's DuPont Awards for Innovation in Food Processing and Packaging has been awarded to a single-serving steel bowl with a peelable lid, aimed at businesspeople that are pushed for time.

The design by Crown Food Europe was created for a French producer of ready-meals launching a new range of meat-based luxury salads.

The Peel Seam lid technology involves a peelable flexible aluminium lid, which is sealed onto a 99mm polymer-coated ring.

This is seamed to the 314ml polymer-coated steel bowl with a tab for easy removal, and a white internal polymer coating reinforces an image of freshness and hygiene.

Crown's success, winning a DuPont "Diamond" Award, suggests that "food to go" and an emphasis on healthy freshness are areas driving the packaging sector at the present time.

Saurin's product manager, Laurence Masce, said of the bowl: "It protects product taste, fits neatly into handbags, briefcases or lunchboxes without spilling and allows consumers to enjoy their salads straight from the bowl.

"The lightweight and durable package truly offers a new level of simplicity and meets demands for modern 'on-the-go' lifestyles and healthy meals."

Sponsored by DuPont in collaboration with the National Food Processors Association, the awards recognise innovation in the plastic packaging industry.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61922-packaging-portable-prize>

Pomegranate juice increasing in popularity

Date

16/08/2005

Article Text

Tesco has reported that pomegranate juice is the fruit drink experiencing the fastest growth in popularity in the UK.

Sales of pomegranate juice have rocketed by 300 per cent, according to retail analysts Taylor Nelson AC Nielsen, and now reach some 500,000 litres a week.

Experts are predicting that the juice will soon overtake the popularity of more traditional fruit juices such as tomato and grapefruit, to join orange, apple, pineapple and cranberry as Britain's favourite fruit juice drinks.

Pomegranate juice boasts a range of holistic properties, and it is said to have more polyphenol antioxidants than any other drink, including red wine, green tea, blueberry juice, cranberry juice and orange juice.

It is also believed to be a good source of folic acid, which is essential for the healthy development of babies.

The health benefits of pomegranates are beginning to be explored by scientists, and a team at the Lipid Research Laboratory in Haifa, Israel, have shown that the juice is effective at fighting heart disease.

The UK pomegranate market is currently worth £921 million.

Further information: <http://paktribune.com/news/index.php?id=113617>

London restaurants show dramatic price rise

Date

17/08/2005

Article Text

A guide to London's restaurants has found that the cost of a slap-up meal in the capital has risen at three times the speed of inflation, approximately 5.7 per cent in the last year alone.

The Harden's annual guidebook, compiled from a survey of approximately 8,000 members of the public, found that the average cost of a dinner for one, with the cheapest wine, is now £36.82.

This compares with £35.79 for the previous year, and reflects a price rise across all tiers of four per cent.

Furthermore, the authors found that four restaurants in the London area were now charging £100 for a three-course meal with a half-bottle of house wine, coffee and a tip.

The conclusion drawn is that the restaurant business in London is reaching a new peak, further evidenced by the number of new restaurants that are opening.

There are 142 new restaurants due to enter the market this year, a seven per cent rise on last year, and only 67 closures, compared to 82 listed in the previous edition of the guide.

Co-editor, Richard Harden, told the Independent: "Overall, the London restaurant scene has enjoyed something of a boom over the past 12 months, having seen record levels of openings, and the top end of the market, in particular, is flourishing."

Further information: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1738441,00.html>

Britons cooking up a storm

Date

17/08/2005

Article Text

The British are growing increasingly confident in the kitchen, with one in three considering themselves "adventurous" as chefs.

This is one of the findings of a survey into cooking trends in UK households, conducted by the cruise company Ocean Village, and it should be heartening to those concerned for the health of a nation described as in the grip of an obesity crisis.

The average person in the UK now spends 69 minutes cooking a meal, a time that soars to one hour and 47 minutes if attempting to impress friends with a dinner party.

More men described themselves as innovative home cooks than women, and another influence on habits was the increase in foreign travel.

Almost three in five of the 1,000 questioned said they were inspired to cook by the foods they had tasted while abroad, with Mediterranean-style food emerging as the outright favourite.

Traditional British food came second, with Asian in third place.

Amanda Johnson of the British Dietetic Association, said the findings were "welcome news", and indicated that habits were changing, according to the Scotsman.

"There's been a huge growth in the number of programmes and information in the media from celebrity chefs about cooking," she said.

Further information: http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article306417.ece

Heinz completes HP acquisition

Date

17/08/2005

Article Text

Heinz has completed its acquisition of HP Foods from Group Danone, first announced in June, for a cash sum of \$820 million.

The transferred portfolio of products include the leading Worcestershire Sauce brand Lea & Perrins, the HP range of sauces, and a license to market the range of Amoy stir-fry sauces in the European market.

Also included in the deal are three factories, two in Birmingham and Worcester in the UK, and one in New Jersey in the US, which together with the Head Office in London employ 400 people in total.

HP had sales of \$300 million last year, and Heinz expects the acquisition to be accretive to earnings for the 2007 fiscal year, which begins on May 4th next year.

Heinz has said it will not be making any decisions concerning the future of the four sites until a comprehensive review has been undertaken.

William R. Johnson, chairman and chief executive officer, commented: "The addition of Lea & Perrins, HP sauces and Amoy Asian sauces complements Heinz's leadership in our core condiments and sauces businesses, especially in Europe and North America."

Further information:

<http://pittsburgh.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/stories/2005/08/15/daily12.html>

New bottle design for Mumm

Date

17/08/2005

Article Text

Mumm champagne is to be relaunched with a new packaging design, in spite of a previous packaging initiative having been undertaken in 2000.

The brand's owner, Allied Domecq, feels that it lacks heritage status as it stands, according to Brand Republic.

In particular, the new image will place greater emphasis on the trademark red sash, which represents the French "Cordon Rouge", the symbol of the Legion of Honour.

The neck foils will also be revamped with a matt finish, and will come in different colours to make it easier to distinguish between varieties, including demi-sec and rose.

In spite of being the brand famously shaken and sprayed at the end of the Grand Prix, Mumm has seen a decline in sales over the past year.

According to an ACNielsen report it has slipped from fourth to ninth place among the UK's leading champagne brands.

Further information:

<http://www.brandrepublic.com/bulletins/design/article/491204/mumm-champagne-overhauls-emphasise-heritage/>

Children short on food role models, say parents

Date

17/08/2005

Article Text

A survey of parents carried out on behalf of the supermarket chain Somerfield last month has suggested a widely held belief that the fight to improve children's health is hampered by popular TV programmes.

More than half of the 1,949 parents interviewed, 59 per cent, singled out the cartoon character Homer Simpson, with his love of beer and doughnuts, as a negative influence.

At the same time, one in ten felt that the housemates in the summer-long "Big Brother" series should not be glamorised for their unhealthy lifestyles, particularly excessive drinking.

Meanwhile, TV campaigns to raise nutrition standards were generally considered a disappointment.

Jamie Oliver's efforts to raise the standard of school meals were branded "naff" by 21 per cent of parents, and Dr Gillian McKeith, of Channel 4's "You Are What You Eat" fame, was deemed "uncool" by a sixth.

As for the parents themselves, 54 per cent said their children were successful at making them buy the foods they wanted, while 57 per cent avoided confrontation on the subject of healthy eating.

Somerfield spokeswoman, Lisa Webster, said: "the research suggests that we need some new and credible role models that can help in the campaign to make healthy eating cool amongst kids."

Further information: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/3797.html>

Sunday roast the toast of the table

Date

17/08/2005

Article Text

The traditional Sunday roast dinner is the nation's favourite meal, according to a new study.

A survey of 1,000 individuals by Avenance found the dish to be the number one meal for 40 per cent of the population.

Chicken Tikka Masala and Sweet and Sour Chicken were the two runners-up, with the traditional take-away fish and chips slipping to fourth place.

However, other traditional British meals fared poorly in the study. Only three per cent of respondents named Stew and Dumplings as their favourite food, with even fewer voting for Sausages and Mash, reports Caterer Search.

"The advent of fast food and the popularity of international cuisine mean people's tastes have moved away from traditional British dishes," said Mark Parfait of Avenance, commenting on the findings.

Further information:

<http://www.caterersearch.com/Articles/2005/08/15/302141/Sunday+roast+voted+nation's+favourite+meal.htm>

Yorkshire vending machines sell "lassi"

Date

18/08/2005

Article Text

A yoghurt-based Indian fruit drink that has proved popular in the food hall at Harrods, as well as throughout Asia, is to be sold from vending machines in the UK for the first time.

Three flavours of "lassi", strawberry, mango and "sweet", are being placed in dispensers in a range of locations in Yorkshire this week.

If the "not-for-profit" pilot takes off, the idea may spread to the rest of the UK.

Following government concern at the health value of products served from vending machines nationwide, Bradford-based Mumtaz Foods are installing their machines in schools, hospitals and workplaces.

Mumtaz are paying for the installation, operation and restocking costs, in return for a free space to locate the machine.

Sold for £1, all profits are being donated to the Yorkshire Air Ambulance (YAA) service.

Rab Nawaz, a spokesman for the company, said: "All we need is the space to site the machine and the opportunity for people to see and buy a lassi drink," according to the Hindustan Times.

He added that the drink was beginning to become as well-known and popular in the UK as the samosa.

Further information:

http://www.hindustantimes.com/news/181_1464261,001100020009.htm

New water heater steams ahead

Date

18/08/2005

Article Text

A new steam-based water heating system claims to be able to solve problems of plugging and fouling that currently plague food processors who use heat exchangers.

As heat exchangers work by conducting heat between fluids through a wall, rust is also a commonly experienced problem, explains FoodProductionDaily.

Hydro-Thermal's EZ Heater also claims to be cheaper than the heat exchangers currently in use in the food industry.

The saving stems from the fact that the direct injection of the steam from the boiler into the water stream means all the energy is absorbed.

Water enters at one inlet, and steam at another, before travelling down a diffuser where it is injected into the water via small holes.

Water can flow through the heater at speeds of up to 600 gallons per minute, heating the water to 121 degrees C, and has the added advantage of being self-cleaning.

Gary Zaiser, CEO of Hydro-Thermal, said: "The company has spent the last 12 months perfecting the EZ Heater and testing it in industrial, food, chemical, pulp and paper and concrete manufacturing facilities across the country."

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61942-ez-heater-water-steam>

Green Party calls for organic school meals

Date

18/08/2005

Article Text

The London Assembly Green Party has criticised the amount of organic food that is included in children's school meals in London.

Following celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's campaign to increase the amount of money spent on ensuring fresh, nutritional school meals, the group is now calling on boroughs to meet Soil Association recommendations as well.

A recent survey found that only three London boroughs serve any organic food at all in their school meals, led by Kensington & Chelsea with 50 per cent.

Greenwich is also faring well, with 97 per cent fresh ingredients and 50 per cent locally produced food.

The Soil Association recommends that 75 per cent of food should be unprocessed, 50 per cent locally produced, and 30 per cent organic.

Green Party member, Jenny Jones, said: "It is a scandal organic food is not currently available in school meals and the council needs to act urgently to provide safe and healthy food for children," according to The Mercury.

Further information:

http://icsouthlondon.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0250greenwich/tm_objectid=15864733&method=full&siteid=50100&headline=organic-school-food--scandal--name_page.html

PepsiCo offers oats to the UK

Date

18/08/2005

Article Text

PepsiCo is adding three new products to its Quaker hot cereal range in the UK, aiming to capitalise on current consumer health trends.

Organic Oats, Oatso Simple Raspberry and Take Heart will all go on sale in supermarkets in September, supported by a £2.5 million TV advertising drive, according to the Grocer.

Take Heart, already launched in the US, has added Vitamins C, B, E and potassium, and is targeted at the over-45s.

Although fast-paced modern lifestyles are leading more people to dispense with breakfast, research also shows that oats are emerging as a new favourite as they are low on the Glycaemic Index.

Furthermore, research undertaken by Datamonitor has revealed that the hot breakfast cereal market in the UK has increased by an average 3.2 per cent for each year between 1999 and 2004.

Research has also indicated that "health" and "indulgence" alternate as consumer concerns as the day goes on.

Most consumers seem to be in their "healthy" frame of mind in the morning, before slipping into indulgence later in the day, either as a reward or in frustration.

Manufacturers are therefore looking to foods associated with the morning when designing their healthy offerings.

Further information: http://www.food-business-review.com/article_feature.asp?guid=27BE45DB-1B49-4AB2-B078-410689EEFFC1

Vegetarians lower in Omega-3

Date

18/08/2005

Article Text

Vegetarians and vegans have less omega-3 essential fatty acids (EFAs) at their disposal than meat eaters, according to a study.

The Oxford University research, published in the August edition of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, also finds that the duration of a vegetarian diet has no bearing on Omega-3 concentration.

Omega-3 has been found to lower the chance of developing heart disease and cancer, reports FoodNavigator.com.

There is also growing proof of its brain-boosting properties, as tests suggest it can prevent the onset of Alzheimer's and improve brain development in young children.

The research adds weight to the idea that non-meat eaters should consider supplementing their diets with Omega-3, which would boost sales in an already strong market.

Industry analysts Frost & Sullivan forecast an average growth rate in sales of eight per cent in the run up to 2010, claiming that the European market in 2004 was worth \$194 million.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61926-omega-three-vegetarians>

Seafish offers awards for sustainable development

Date

18/08/2005

Article Text

The Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish) has introduced ten financial bursaries for the aquaculture and inshore fisheries sectors.

As part of Seafish's Technology and Innovation Primer Awards, the awards will be used to develop technologies to lead to the sustainable development of the fishing industry.

The maximum value of an award will be £3,000, with successful applicants providing match funding of £3,000 (in cash or in kind), and the deadline for applications is September 12th 2005.

Through its membership of the Scottish Aquaculture Research Forum (SARF), Seafish has also announced the financial backing of a number of other aquaculture projects, including establishing welfare indices for farmed cod.

Other aims are to improve the understanding of cod broodstock nutrition and assess the performance of some non-standard shellfish depuration facilities.

Further information:

http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/2948/Research_funding_boost_for_aquaculture_sector.html

Fish link to stroke comes as surprise

Date

19/08/2005

Article Text

A historical investigation of UK consumer dietary data between 1937 and 1939 has found a surprising correlation between the consumption of fish as a child and death from stroke.

Scientists at the University of Bristol examined records held at 16 centres across England and Scotland, which were part of the Boyd Orr survey carried out in the 30s.

In particular, they noted the intake of fruit, vegetables, fish, oily fish, fat, carotene and vitamin E, by 4,028 children up to the age of 19, says Foodnavigator.com.

As well as finding an expected link between vegetable consumption and a lower risk of stroke, the children seemed to increase this risk the more fish they ate.

In general, the UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) believes we do not eat enough fish, and recommends two portions of fish every week, one of which should be an Omega-3 rich oily variety.

The health benefits of the Omega-3 fatty acid are well documented, and include the enhancement of concentration levels in young children, and improved behaviour in children with ADHD.

A Seafish spokesman commented: "There are thousands of other scientific studies which testify the health benefits of seafood, so we would continue to support the official government recommendations from the Food Standards Agency that we should actually be increasing the amount of seafood in the diet."

The results of the study were published in the medical journal Heart.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61962-fish-stroke-omega>

Hayman Distillers invests in image

Date

19/08/2005

Article Text

Following the opening of a new office in Hong Kong, the specialist spirit firm Hayman Distillers has contracted a PR firm to help raise its UK profile.

Proven PR's previous consultancy for the drinks sector includes such brands as Mumm Champagne, Malibu, Teacher's Whisky and Courvoisier Cognac.

Hayman Distillers, first established in 1820, produces the world's first gin liqueur, Haymans 1820.

The company's other brands include premium products such as Scorpion Tequila and Kerenski Chocolate Vodka.

Marketing manager, James Hayman, told just-drinks.com of "exciting plans and brand developments in the pipeline".

"In particular, we are looking to increase the profile and distribution of Hayman's 1820 Gin Liqueur in the UK and abroad," he added.

The company's main markets outside the UK include the US, Canada and Scandinavia, as well as expansion into the Asia Pacific region.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28229

Obesity connected to living environment

Date

19/08/2005

Article Text

A study of obesity levels across Europe has identified a correlation between weight and activity levels, and place of residence.

Those living in the city are at greater risk of developing the condition than country-dwellers, the British Medical Journal has found.

In particular, obesity in the city was connected to areas where "incivilities" prevailed, such as the dropping of litter or spraying graffiti.

In areas where this tendency was high, the report found that people were around 50 per cent less likely to be physically active and 50 per cent more likely to be obese.

A living environment surrounded by the natural world, on the other hand, appeared to make people there three times as likely to take exercise and 40 per cent less likely to be obese.

The data for the study was drawn from a housing and health survey carried out in eight European cities in 2002 and 2003.

Questionnaires took personal data such as weight, height, gender and social status, and surveyors analysed conditions in the vicinity.

The authors concluded that efforts to combat the so-called "obesity crisis" in Europe should take environmental considerations into account.

The study is published on the British Medical Journal's website.

Further information: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/513859/>

Former Safeway stores to convert to Sainsbury's by Christmas

Date

19/08/2005

Article Text

The supermarket chain Morrisons has sold another nine of its former Safeway stores to Sainsbury's in a deal that remains subject to approval from the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

The nine stores include two in London, in Hammersmith and Morden, and others in Andover, Bath, Slough, Hampshire, Bitterne, Acocks Green in the West Midlands and East Kilbride in Scotland.

Worth an estimated £16.8 million, the branches are primarily located in urban centres, with a combined 175,000 sq ft of retail space.

Chief executive, Justin King, said: "They will provide an opportunity to strengthen our market position in town centre locations and deliver future growth."

If the OFT approval is forthcoming, the deal should be completed this Autumn, and the refurbished shops will re-open as Sainsbury's outlets in time for the traditionally busy Christmas period.

Last year Sainsbury's acquired 14 stores from Morrisons, 13 under the Safeway brand, and last week the company sold five shops to Waitrose.

Having had trouble integrating the Safeway stores, and issuing a profit warning of £50 million compared to a previously estimated £250 million, Morrisons has continued to sell or close stores since it bought Safeway for £3 billion in March last year.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61649

Colourful fruit linked to reduced arthritis risk

Date

19/08/2005

Article Text

A group of scientists at the University of Manchester have determined that diets high in brightly coloured fruit and vegetables could lead to a reduction in the risk of developing inflammatory disorders later in life.

Colourful foods such as oranges, carrots and sweetcorn contain significant amounts of the pigment beta-cryptoxanthin, as well as Vitamin C.

The scientists tracked 25,000 people aged from 45 to 74 over a nine-year period, while analysing health questionnaires and diaries outlining the participants' daily diets.

In particular, they checked for new cases of arthritis, and found that daily beta-cryptoxanthin intake was an average 40 per cent lower among those 88 people who had developed the condition.

Moreover, those in the top third for beta-cryptoxanthin intake were only half as likely as those in the lowest third to show signs of the inflammatory disease.

Dr Dorothy Pattison, leader of the team noted that "Vitamin C was also found to be an important factor".

A glass of fresh orange juice a day would be enough to make a difference, she added.

Further information:

<http://www.gg2.net/viewnews.asp?nid=184&tid=health&catid=Health%20News>

US organic chain to open in London

Date

19/08/2005

Article Text

The US natural and organic foods supermarket, Whole Foods Market, expects to open a branch in Central London on Kensington High Street in early 2007.

The 75,000 sq ft store will seek to replicate the firm's success in the metropolitan cities of the US, including New York, and expects to employ between 400 and 500 members of staff.

It will focus on maximising the use of local suppliers and artisans, and will disperse cookery demonstrations, tasting sessions and dining areas with the various products on sale.

The company is looking to expand its presence beyond Europe and Canada, and the UK "is an obvious first choice due to the advanced acceptance of organic foods", said chairman and CEO, John Mackey.

It acquired the UK-based seven-outlet natural and organic chain, Fresh & Wild, in January 2004, enjoying a degree of success that spurred it to identify a larger site in London.

As it has done in the US, Whole Foods Market will also seek to become involved in the wider community, donating to local causes and providing volunteering opportunities to employees.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61670

Organic claims found fraudulent

Date

22/08/2005

Article Text

Trading standards officers have revealed details of the first major investigation into fraud in the organic food sector.

An inquiry in Richmond in south-west London has led to the prosecution of two traders for the false labelling of produce as organic, it has been revealed.

The labelling in question failed to meet the requirements of the EU's Organic Products Regulations.

In the first case, a butcher from Richmond was fined £6,000 for incorrectly labelling food as organic after an unannounced hygiene check was carried out.

He claimed that he had not intended to mislead the public.

The second incident concerned a farmer from Somerset, who was also convicted of falsely labelling produce, including cheese and sausages.

He was also found to have displayed incorrectly accredited organic certificates, and was fined approximately £3,000 as a result.

The latest figures indicate that the organic food industry is worth some £1.12 billion a year, which is a tenfold increase in the last eight years.

David Picketing of the Trading Standards Institute commented: "As organic food increases in popularity people will take advantage."

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=1821682005>

Europe sees increased demand for fewer additives

Date

22/08/2005

Article Text

Latest research has revealed that the European market for food without added preservatives or additive has increased by 28 per cent in the last year.

There have been 564 products described as either "all natural" or free of preservatives and additives released in Europe in the first half of 2005, compared with 438 in the same period last year.

The statistics are based on data collected by the Mintel Global New Products Database, said FoodProductionDaily.

The UK was found to be the European leader in the "natural" and preservative-free category, with 752 new products having been released since the start of 2004.

The UK is followed by Germany, with 418 products, and Spain, with 308.

Chilled foods accounted for 36 per cent of the 2005 launches, compared with 39 per cent for the same period a year ago.

The consumer demand in the chilled sector, in particular, is leading food processors to invest in researching alternative methods of food preservation.

In general, the sector is understood to have reached a peak in the second half of 2004, when 598 new products were introduced to the market.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61984-preservative-additive-natural>

Smooth PET bottle allows for hot-filling

Date

22/08/2005

Article Text

A new poly ethylene terephthalate (PET) bottle developed by Amcor can be hot-filled with products even though it has smooth sides.

The "PowerFlex" bottle can also be filled on the same production line as glass bottles, with little necessary modification, the company stated, according to FoodProductionDaily.

It was designed with a special base, containing a cone-shaped diaphragm for absorbing the vacuum that results as liquids cool.

The diaphragm deflects upwards as the vacuum is created, containing any distortion that occurs from the cooling of the contents from the high temperatures of 182 to 192 degrees F.

Most plastic bottles used in hot-filling operations require either a ribbed or a panelled surface to contain this distortion.

Tradewinds Tea was the first company to adopt the new bottle in March this year, overcoming a reluctance to switch to PET packaging.

The firm needed a bottle with smooth sides so that trademark pressure-sensitive labelling could be applied, but that could also be filled with tea at a temperature of up to 185 degrees F.

Marketing manager for Tradewinds, Christy Lichtendahl, explained: "We've been waiting for a PET bottle to come along that would give us the ability to maintain the same look and feel of our current glass container."

A spokesperson for Amcor commented: "PowerFlex is the first-ever, true panel-less, ribless, hot-fill PET bottle. It provides the aesthetics, performance and feel of glass - which is what beverage marketers, such as Tradewinds, have long been anticipating."

Further information:

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/productnews/news.asp?id=61996&k=pet-bottle-hot>

Brewer Belhaven goes to Greene King

Date

22/08/2005

Article Text

The brewer Greene King has agreed a deal to acquire Scotland's leading independent brewer, Belhaven, for approximately £187 million.

The move comes as the brewing industry is undergoing a period of consolidation, with Greene King also acquiring Essex-based TD Ridley for £46 million around a month ago.

Greene King's chief executive, Rooney Anand, said that the purchase was a "unique opportunity" that would give the firm "immediate scale in the important Scottish market".

Belhaven's some 270 pubs will now join Greene King's 2,064-strong estate, although it will retain its name, brands and brewery site in East Lothian, Mr Anand confirmed.

The takeover is expected to result in cost savings of £3 million in the first year, upping to £5 million over the two years to follow.

However, Mr Anand added that the forthcoming ban on smoking in Scottish pubs could have a "significant" impact on the brewer's short-term profitability.

Belhaven's brands, including Scottish favourite Belhaven Best, will join some of the UK's best-known beers, including Abbott Ale and Old Speckled Hen.

Belhaven's other brands include 80 Shilling and St Andrews Ale.

Earlier in the year, Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries (W&DB) took over Lake District brewer Jennings in spite of opposition from the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA).

Further information: < <http://www.thepublican.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=18250&d=32&h=24&f=23&dateformat=%25o%20%25B%20%25Y>

Blavod in Diamante deal

Date

22/08/2005

Article Text

Blavod Extreme Spirits, whose flagship product is black vodka, has formed a joint venture with the US subsidiary of Japanese alcoholic drinks company Suntory International.

The new company, Diamante Spirits, will be a 50:50 partnership, with Blavod focusing on the creation and marketing of new products and Suntory providing the necessary financing as well as extensive experience.

With beer sales falling in traditional markets, Diamante will concentrate on the high growth areas of vodka, tequila, rum and gin, with the introduction of its first new product expected later in the year.

Chief executive of Blavod, Jeff Hopmayer, told the Publican that "Suntory's global experience" would combine with "Blavod's success in creating new, exciting products" to create an "instant presence in the spirits industry".

The black colour of Blavod's vodka is achieved by the addition of catechu, which is a herb found in southern Asia and parts of Africa. It is rich in tannin, but does not affect the vodka's taste.

If added after ice and a mixer, the black vodka floats on the top of a cocktail.

Further information: http://www.sharecast.com/cgi-bin/sharecast/story.cgi?story_id=527813

Unilever's frozen sales falling

Date

22/08/2005

Article Text

Consumer goods giant Unilever has announced it is reviewing its frozen-food arm following a drop in sales last year.

The Anglo-Dutch group responsible for Ben and Jerry's ice cream and Birds Eye fish fingers may well end up selling some, if not all of its brands.

Sales for its frozen foods unit fell 3.4 per cent last year, partly as a result of customers shunning frozen products in favour of chilled foods.

According to reports in the Sunday Times, Unilever have asked Goldman Sachs to explore the different options available to them.

A sale of some brands could bring in several million pounds.

Unilever has so far refused to make any further comments on the speculation.

Further information: <http://business.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=1821372005>

Interest waning in Whittard

Date

23/08/2005

Article Text

Interest in the high street tea and coffee chain Whittard has fallen off prompting a drop in the company's share price.

The firm saw its share price rise 30 per cent in the middle of July, when it confirmed that it had had takeover approaches from un-named overseas companies.

Whittard said: "The disclosure of talks has, however, prompted other parties to express their interest."

However, the London terrorist attacks and a slowdown in the retail sector generally has affected the company and shares have slumped by 14 per cent to an eight week low.

The firm predicted that the sales slowdown could continue for some time, and might "even adversely affect sales during the important Christmas period".

<http://www.whittard.co.uk>

"Unbreakable" wine bottles developed

Date

23/08/2005

Article Text

Californian wine-maker Beringer has unveiled its new "unbreakable" bottles.

The vintner, based in Napa, California, announced that Stone Cellars by Beringer is the first premium wine to be offered nationally in unbreakable single-serve bottles. The single-serve bottles are one-fourth the size of a traditional 750 ml bottle and hold 187ml of wine.

Beringer claims that the new bottles make wine "even more approachable and convenient" and enables people to take the single-serve helpings to places that glass is not allowed or practical, such as sporting events, the beach, picnics and camping.

"To date, wine packaging hasn't really adapted to accommodate people's active lifestyles," said Tom Slone, Stone Cellars by Beringer brand manager.

"Our focus groups confirmed that people want the benefits of an innovative shatterproof bottle and the portability of the single-serving size. Stone Cellars is responding to that need, and most importantly the packaging does not compromise the award-winning taste of the wine."

The unbreakable bottles are priced at around \$8.00 for the four-pack and \$14.00 for the eight-pack and will be available in US stores nationwide by the autumn. Wine recently replaced beer as America's number one alcoholic beverage, according to a recent Gallup poll.

<http://www.beringer.com/beringer/index.jsp>

New spirits to be developed

Date

23/08/2005

Article Text

Blavod Extreme Spirits has announced that it has signed a partnership agreement with Suntory International.

The new agreement will result on a 50-50 joint venture called Diamante Spirits, which will concentrate on developing new premium spirits brands.

Suntory International is the US subsidiary of Japanese food and drinks producer Suntory, which owns a number of Scottish distilleries, while Blavod is a drinks company best known for its black vodka, whose products include the Players Extreme range of flavoured vodkas.

The deal between the two companies will see Blavod responsible for the creation of products, marketing and distribution and Suntory providing the funding and any new brands will be owned entirely by Diamante Spirits.

Jeff Hopmayer, Blavod's chief executive, said: "Suntory's global reach, production expertise and years of market experience, combined with Blavod's success in creating new, exciting products, will give the joint venture the tools to create an instant presence in the spirits industry."

BFREPA reassures egg producers

Date

23/08/2005

Summary Text

Free range egg producers in the UK should not be panicked into keeping their birds confined to the house.

Article Text

This is the advice of the British Free Range Egg Producers Association (BFREPA).

The advice is a reaction to news that Dutch authorities have ordered all poultry to be kept inside in light of the threat from Avian Influenza (AI), commonly known as bird flu.

The disease appears to be spreading westwards through Russia and there are fears that migrating birds could further spread the disease.

"The risk of AI needs taking very seriously but we do not believe the current threat to the UK justifies a similar move," says BFREPA chairman Tom Vesey.

He explained that the decision to restrict birds to the house could not be "taken lightly", as it was likely that the threat would remain for several months.

He added that the hens welfare could also be affected by the move, and consumers may not consider the eggs as totally free range.

Mr Vesey said that the spread of Avian Influenza would be closely monitored and BFREPA would advise its members accordingly.

Two years ago Holland suffered an outbreak of bird flu that devastated its poultry industry.

<http://www.bfrepa.co.uk/>

New poultry processing cleaning product launched

Date

23/08/2005

Summary Text

A new cleaning solution has been launched that could help kill bacteria in poultry processing.

Article Text

Makers claim that the antimicrobial solution also eliminates the need for chlorine and could help raise food safety standards when processing poultry.

Bromitize, made by Solution BioSciences can be used instead of other chemical disinfectants in processing units, including chlorine, reports Foodproductiondaily.

"Besides being safe and easy to use, the Bromitize technology allows for more flexible plant use without the environmental air and waste water issues encountered with the currently available products," the company told the website.

The solution significantly lowers bacteria count, and has no ill side effects on the food product, claims the manufacturers.

It does not need much space, causes a third less corrosion to equipment and is available for use on all processing lines, in washing machines and in the chill tank.

The company also says that the system will reduce water bills as it has been given approval to re-use the water utilised in the cleaning process.

New yoghurt solutions on the market

Date

23/08/2005

Summary Text

Tate & Lyle has announced the launch of solution sets Yoghurt Rebalance 006 and 007.

Article Text

These are new solution sets for food industry customers created to fulfil European consumer-demand for fat-free, reduced energy, reduced sugars yoghurts.

Yoghurt Rebalance 006 and 007 is a unique service which builds "healthier profiles for food and beverage brands without compromising on taste", according to Tate & Lyle.

A recent Incepta Marketing Intelligence study shows that when tested, 72 per cent of yoghurt buyers would be inclined to buy a lower fat, lower sugar yoghurt for themselves and 65 per cent for their children.

Yoghurt Rebalance 006 delivers 63 per cent less sugars and 56 per cent fewer calories when compared to a full-fat yoghurt. By using this Tate & Lyle Solution Set, manufacturers can create a gelatin-free product and reduce glycaemic carbohydrate content by 50 per cent.

A related version, containing Splenda Sucralose has also been launched and is marketed as Yoghurt Rebalance 007.

Salmonella speedier than thought

Date

24/08/2005

Article Text

Scientists from the UK's Institute of Food Research (IFR) and Uppsala University in Sweden have estimated the rate of gene loss for Salmonella bacteria, finding it to be much faster than previously thought.

This is a breakthrough in studies of the pathogen responsible for many cases of food poisoning, as it is able to discard its genes in order to acquire new ones from other bacteria.

The scientists used DNA microarrays to track the evolution of Salmonella throughout 6750 generations, and discovered that almost a quarter of its genes could be discarded in 50,000 years.

"It had been thought this process would take millions of years," said Professor Dan Andersson, the project's leader.

A second finding concerned the relationship between Salmonella and body temperature, identifying the protein that acts as the "thermal switch", which is activated once contaminated food is inside a body.

H-NS, as it is known, enables the activation of 532 genes in a matter of minutes, leading to an "efficient" spreading of infection to the gut.

Professor Jay Hinton of the IFR explained: "We found that at low temperatures salmonella switches off genes required for infection and switches them on once inside a warm animal body.

"It does not want to expend energy needlessly when waiting to be eaten on a lettuce leaf."

Further information:

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=29552>

Costa to open in India

Date

24/08/2005

Article Text

The UK's Costa Coffee is preparing to open 300 outlets in India, even though it is a traditional tea-drinking nation.

However, the chain is confident the move will pay off thanks to the country's growing young middle class, keen to add the acquisition of a taste for coffee to the cars and TV sets they are increasingly able to afford.

Managing director, Mark Phillips, told the Financial Times that the company had found younger Indians were also looking "to differentiate themselves from the older generation".

He estimated that there were therefore some 40 million potential customers for Costa in the Indian market.

The first shop is to open in the capital Delhi in September, with the first Pakistani store following shortly after.

Although the coffee sold will initially be imported from Venezuela and Kenya, and shipped to India via London, in time more will be sourced locally, Mr Phillips said.

The shops will also offer traditional Indian food, such as sandwiches with chicken tikka fillings, alongside the firm's usual offerings.

Further information: <http://news.ft.com/cms/s/399c4aea-143c-11da-af53-00000e2511c8.html>

W&DB acquires pubs with food focus

Date

24/08/2005

Article Text

Following Monday's acquisition of Scottish brewer Belhaven by Greene King, the pub sector today sees further consolidation with two sales.

Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries (W&DB) has bought English County Inns (ECI), which was formed in 2001 and focuses on its food offering.

The £13.7 million deal involves the acquisition of the smaller operator's 14-strong unbranded pub estate located in central and southern England.

W&DB said they would make an "excellent fit" with the 537 managed pubs it operates under the Pathfinder Pubs business.

At the same time, the UK's second largest pub group, Punch Taverns, announced it has sold 45 of its outlets to Admiral Taverns for a sum of £14.8 million.

W&DB previously bought Wizard Inns and Burtonwood, as well as the Cumbrian brewer Jennings earlier this year.

The campaign for real ale (CAMRA) opposed this acquisition, fearing traditional brands would be compromised, and specifically that the Cockermouth brewery's operations might be wound down.

Further information: <http://www.breakingnews.ie/2005/08/24/story217564.html>

Health drink to toast the New Year

Date

24/08/2005

Article Text

The chairman of the UK's Provexis, Dawson Buck, has told the company's AGM that the widely anticipated health drink Sirco, will benefit from a larger than expected initial distribution base owing to high interest from retailers.

The beverage will capitalise on the current trend for "functional" foods and drinks that promise tangible health benefits.

Created in Liverpool, the tomato-based juice will be available in most of the main supermarket chains in early 2006, alongside a nationwide marketing drive timed to coincide with consumer "New Year" resolutions to improve health.

Sirco contains Fruitflow, which is a patented bioactive extract derived from tomatoes, and will come in orange, blueberry and apple flavours.

The tomato extract is equivalent to drinking a litre of tomato juice.

Research has indicated that Fruitflow reduces the risk of thrombosis by inhibiting blood clotting, which is a major cause of heart attacks and stroke.

The firm is currently also working on a cancer-combating extract from broccoli, and says the project is proceeding as hoped.

Mr Buck told the Independent: "Maximum impact will be made by a launch in the post-Christmas period, when health and well-being is at its highest on the consumer's personal agenda."

Further information: http://www.sharecast.com/cgi-bin/sharecast/story.cgi?story_id=528407

Aseptic packaging costs to be considered

Date

24/08/2005

Article Text

New research has suggested that the method of aseptic packaging is becoming increasingly popular with food producers, but warns that high upfront equipment costs are inevitable.

The report from Frost & Sullivan reveals that revenue generated by the aseptic packaging industry in the US amounted to US\$4.61 billion in 2004, with the potential to reach US\$5.31 billion by 2011.

The aseptic process provides a means of increasing the shelf life of chilled products without the need for preservatives or refrigeration, filling a sterilised package with sterile contents instead.

Analysts Ravi S. Sankar and Anupama Ramaswamy, explained: "To boost revenues, manufacturers of aseptic packaging equipment should highlight benefits such as extended shelf life and lower distribution costs and attempt to decrease the overall production costs."

Distribution costs are reduced, as the packages can be folded so as to take up less space when being transported around.

The report also stressed the importance of safeguarding against contamination in the operation of the equipment.

A US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulation only permits hydrogen peroxide to be used for the sterilisation of filling equipment, which is the reason linear equipment has been widely used in the past.

However, now it has become clear that rotary equipment is far more efficient, and manufacturers have found that a cleaning product combining peracetic acid and hydrogen peroxide is better suited to rotary fillers' more turbulent airflow.

Efforts must therefore be made to adapt hydrogen peroxide to high-speed rotary machines, the report said.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62064-frost-sullivan-aseptic-packaging>

EU targets aquaculture sector

Date

24/08/2005

Article Text

The European Commission has proposed new EU legislation concerning the health of farmed fish and shellfish, as well as the prevention of certain diseases in the aquaculture sector.

The regulations aim to update the general health situation across Europe; to facilitate safe trade in aquaculture animals and their byproducts; and to boost the competitiveness of the sector within the EU.

The proposed directive brings the rules for placing aquaculture animals and products on the market into line with the standards of the world organisation for animal health (OIE).

It also states that national authorities should draw up control and eradication programmes and contingency plans for outbreaks of emerging or exotic diseases.

"Having healthy animals is fundamental to Europe's aquaculture sector, which generates millions of euros annually," said Markos Kyprianou, commissioner for health and consumer protection.

"Disease outbreaks undermine consumers' confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of farmed fish and shellfish.

"They can also devastate the stocks of farms affected by them. Prevention is the best cure, and that is what our legislation aims at."

Further information: <http://www.eupolitix.com/EN/News/200508/9d0dc4e4-11b3-4e32-a658-7bbb379b98de.htm>

Wine leads growth in UK alcohol market

Date

25/08/2005

Article Text

Alcohol consumption in the UK rose by five per cent between 1999 and 2004, with wine leading the way, according to a new report.

The "Drinking Habits in Europe" study from market research firm Mintel said that while French wine sales to the domestic market fell by four cent over the period, wine sales in the UK soared by 23 per cent.

As well as the growing 'reputation' of wine as a healthier alternative to beer, Mintel suggested that a greater degree of affluence was driving the trend, along with a more "aspirational" attitude to drinking, and particularly the increasing popularity of wine among women.

In general, UK alcohol sales have risen by 15 per cent, with total spending reaching €56 billion in 2004.

However, the beer market showed no movement in the UK and volume sales decreased by 10 per cent in both Germany and France.

Total volume sales of alcohol in Germany and France both decreased between 1999 and 2004, down by eight per cent and six per cent respectively.

Senior consumer analyst, Hanna Kivimaki, commented: "In France and Germany the cultural zeitgeist seems to be moving towards healthier lifestyles and away from alcohol consumption."

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28285

Whale staple hailed as "superfood"

Date

25/08/2005

Article Text

A new health food has gone on sale in the UK, derived from the staple food eaten by whales that allows them to live for up to 100 years.

Phytoplankton is now available in liquid form as a product called Ocean FarmaSea, which is manufactured by US company ForeverGreen.

Natural health practitioner, Carl Munson, said: "I've been waiting for a super food like this, which contains some of the finest health-enhancing ingredients known to man such as aloe vera, noni juice and mangosteen.

"It also features the added benefits of frankincense and the powerful sea algae Astaxanthin."

The innovation was conceived in the US, when American sea farmer Tom Harper developed a rare form of cancer.

He decided to take a daily dose of phytoplankton paste, made from feed regularly given to his livestock, and shocked surgeons when his tumours subsequently proved benign.

In addition to his recovery, he also believes that the paste helped him to lose weight and improved his blood sugar levels.

"In six months, I no longer required insulin and can now eat just about what I want," he explained.

Mr Munson added: "It makes sense that having depleted the quality of our soils with intensive farming, we are now turning our attention to the oceans."

Further information:

http://www.pressbox.co.uk/detailed/Health/Moby_Dick_health_secret_now_available_in_UK_34562.html

New recipe book has Fairtrade focus

Date

25/08/2005

Article Text

A new cookery book promoting the virtues of Fairtrade ingredients is scheduled for launch on September 6th.

Author, Vicky Bhogal, travelled to Ghana as part of her research for the book, where she met with growers of cocoa, bananas, coconuts and pineapple.

Workers spoke to her about working conditions as a producer in Ghana, and explained how the Fairtrade system had benefited them.

To increase sales, the book has also attracted contributions from a host of celebrities, including chefs Delia Smith and Jamie Oliver, but also Elton John, Minnie Driver and daytime TV duo Richard and Judy.

Ms Bhogal said: "What I am aiming for is a beautiful cookery book with all the biggest names between its covers that gives the reader more than one reason to be proud to place it on the bookshelf," according to Community Newswire.

"The recipes in this book are not only recipes for delicious meals but also recipes for change. Change has never tasted so good," she added.

Supporting the 'Make Poverty History' campaign, "A Fair Feast" is being launched in association with the Fairtrade Foundation and Oxfam, both of whom will receive half of the proceeds.

Further information:

http://services.press.net/pressnet/communitynewswire/index.jsp?story_id=1140981&se tStyle=mlStory&returnStyle=heading.cnw

School meals get first cash injection

Date

25/08/2005

Article Text

Schools in the UK are to increase the amount spent on meals provided to children by an average 10p a head from next term.

Following on from celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver's campaign to increase the nutritional value of school dinners, the government has pledged to increase spending to 50p per meal at primary schools and 60p for secondary schools.

At the time the campaign was launched, some schools were found to be serving up dinners costing as little as 37p per child, leading the popular chef to take his campaign to the doors of Downing Street.

The 10p rise is the first step along the path to improving the situation, the result of the first £30 million instalment to go to local education bodies as part of the government's undertaking.

The total amount pledged by the government, including for revamping school kitchens, is £220 million over a period of three years, £130 million for 2005 and 2006.

The grants being offered to local authorities have been calculated based on the number of pupils each sustains, according to Caterer and Hotelkeeper magazine.

Kent will receive the largest amount, £804,396, followed by Essex and Birmingham.

Further information:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/08/25/ndinner25.xml &sSheet=/news/2005/08/25/ixhome.html>

Tesco increases grocery lead

Date

25/08/2005

Article Text

Tesco has increased its lead over its competitors in terms of grocery market share once again, a report has shown.

The Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) report indicates that the chain accounted for a record high of 30.5 per cent of all UK food and grocery spending in the 12 weeks to August 14th.

However, Tesco's gains proved Morrison's loss, as the group's market share decreased further, reaching an all-time low of 11.3 per cent.

In second place, Asda made a marginal gain of 0.1 per cent, to claim 16.7 per cent of the market.

Among the other main contenders, Sainsbury lost 0.2 per cent to its rivals to claim a 15.7 per cent slice, while Somerfield gained 0.1 per cent.

Further information: http://www.sharecast.com/cgi-bin/sharecast/story.cgi?story_id=529608

A little fish is good for the heart

Date

25/08/2005

Article Text

Adding a small amount of fish to the diet could significantly decrease the risk of acute coronary syndromes (ACS), including chest pains and heart attack, a study has found.

However, moderate and high levels of consumption meant the benefits were lost, it seemed.

Dr Demosthnes B. Panagiotakos, from Harokopio University in Athens, studied fish consumption patterns among 848 middle-aged people who had suffered from ACS, and 1078 with no experience of the condition.

In general, the risk of ACS was found to be cut by 38 per cent in the case of fish eaters, and was even reduced by 11 per cent if the subjects also happened to be smokers.

If they were diabetic, the risk was still observed to have reduced by as much as 24 per cent.

Interestingly, however, the link was found to disappear if fish consumption exceeded 150g a week.

Admitting these results were "unexpected", the researchers said: "This observation could possibly suggest a threshold regarding the beneficial effect of fish consumption on cardiovascular risk."

The results of the study were published in the July issue of the International Journal of Cardiology.

Further information:

http://www.foodconsumer.org/777/8/Eating_fish_may_cut_risk_of_heart_problems.shtml

Trans fat-free margarines lessen CHD risk

Date

26/08/2005

Article Text

A new research paper has confirmed that increasing consumption of polyunsaturated fats can assist in reducing the risk of coronary heart disease (CHD).

In particular, the researchers involved found that increasing intake of soft, trans fat-free margarines based on soybean and canola, had a greater impact on the risk of CHD than increasing the amount of fruit eaten or reducing smoking.

Focusing on Poland, the study was judged to be "consistent with epidemiological and clinical evidence indicating that mortality due to coronary heart disease can be reduced by partly replacing dietary saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats while maintaining a low intake of trans fatty acids."

It also suggested that an increase in the amount of polyunsaturated fats included in the diet was behind a trend of declining coronary mortalities in the US, UK and Australia over a number of decades.

The findings from the research were published in the British Medical Journal.

Earlier this year, the US's 2005 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Report increased its focus on liquid oils and margarine spreads, finding them to "help meet essential fatty acid needs and also contribute toward Vitamin E needs".

Further information: http://www.food-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=6B5967BD-308C-43D7-955B-95BDA3187810

Slow Food takes to Skye

Date

26/08/2005

Article Text

The Slow Food UK Foundling Congress begins today on the Scottish Isle of Skye

It marks the birth of Slow Food UK as a National Association, and a new dedicated UK office is planned for 2006.

There are currently approximately 35 Slow Food Conviva across Britain, which have attracted as many as 2,000 members who are concerned about the production and quality of the food they eat, as well as sustainable agriculture and the environment.

Some 150 delegates will make the journey to Scotland's only Gaelic college, Sabhal Mor Ostaig, this weekend, including the Slow Food movement's founder, Carlo Petrini.

Slow Food began as a movement in the Italian town of Bra in 1986, as a protest against the increasing dominance of fast-food in the marketplace, particularly the opening of a branch of McDonald's.

This was perceived as a threat to traditional cooking and locally sourced produce, and the movement has now expanded to encompass more than 83,000 members in 107 countries worldwide.

Particular achievements in the UK have included the establishment of a Slow Food Market in Bristol and the naming of the first CittaSlow "slow city" in Ludlow.

HRH The Prince of Wales is to send the meeting a goodwill message.

Further information: http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/sedotcom_home/news-se/news-fullarticle.htm?articleid=122953

Scottish farmers protest at Brazilian beef

Date

26/08/2005

Article Text

Scottish farmers are stationed outside selected Tesco and Asda outlets today, where they will be hoping to persuade shoppers to buy Scotch beef.

In particular, they will be comparing the meat to the imported Brazilian beef sold in the two chains, which a new report suggests is of poorer quality, coming as it does from a tropical cattle breed.

The NFU Scotland (NFUS) is challenging the supermarket chains' assertions that their meat meets the same production standards as Scottish beef, after fresh beef products from both were submitted for independent testing.

The report published by Quality Meat Scotland finds that the samples taken from Tesco, Asda, and also Co-op, all tested positive for Zebu genetics, confirmation that they came from the Bos Indicus cattle species.

Following similar NFUS protests last week, the Co-op chain removed Brazilian beef from sale at its Scottish stores.

NFUS president, John Kinnaird, explained: "Since our protests began last week over cheap Brazilian beef imports, the major supermarkets have been quick to claim they are not sourcing sub-standard imports.

"Now it is revealed that Scotland's beef producers are being undermined by supermarkets buying meat which has a reputation for poorer eating quality, presumably just because it is cheaper."

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/scotland.cfm?id=1844292005>

New microcapsules optimise flavour release

Date

26/08/2005

Article Text

Scientists have developed a mechanism that prevents the release of flavour from frozen baked products until fully cooked.

In delaying the release of flavour, the convenience frozen goods are at their best at the point of consumption, says the report, published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.

US researchers have developed the new system by encapsulating flavoured oil in complex microcapsules made from gelatin and gum arabic, writes BakeryandSnacks.com.

The new design of the microcapsules means that flavour is released more efficiently than by univesicular microcapsules, the flavouring system currently used, the scientists claim.

The researchers added that the new system did not have an effect on the frozen shelf-life of the baked food, and the basic production method did not have to be changed when implementing the new mechanism.

The UK's frozen food market is currently worth around £3.4 billion according to Mintel, and food producers are increasingly searching for more sophisticated ways to keep food succulent and flavoursome once it has been reheated.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62087-flavour-frozen-food-mechanism>

Californian chips in cancer case

Date

30/08/2005

Article Text

A California Attorney-General is taking legal action in Los Angeles against a host of fast-food restaurants and shops, including McDonald's and Burger King.

His lawsuit, filed at the weekend, accuses a total of nine companies of failing to inform the public adequately about potentially dangerous levels of toxins in food served to customers.

In doing so, they are breaching Californian law under Proposition 65, which requires companies to provide warnings of potentially carcinogenic chemicals, Bill Lockyer said.

In particular, the claim concerns the level of the chemical acrylamide contained in potato-based products.

In 2002, it was found that potatoes cooked at high temperatures formed low amounts of this chemical, also used industrially to treat sewage.

Tests conducted by the US Food and Drug Administration subsequently found that high doses of acrylamide could lead to cancer developing in animals, although this finding has not been extended to humans as yet.

In accordance with Californian law, Mr Lockyer wants to see warning labels on products such as French fries and crisps, or at least on outlets' walls where these are served.

"I am not telling people to stop eating potato chips and french fries," Mr Lockyer said.

"But I and all consumers should have the information we need to make informed decisions about the food we eat."

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/international.cfm?id=1862472005>

Coffee tops US antioxidant consumption

Date

30/08/2005

Article Text

A new study carried out in the US has revealed coffee, both caffeinated and decaf, to be the top source of health-boosting antioxidants.

Antioxidants occur naturally in a number of foods and drinks, and aid the fight against diseases such as cancer and heart disease by acting against the free radicals that damage cells.

Researchers from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania have calculated America's top 10 sources of the chemicals based on the antioxidant content per average serving and the frequency of consumption among consumers.

Coffee came first out of 100 different foodstuffs, beating the well-documented richest source, fruit and vegetables, as well as chocolate and tea.

While dates have the greatest density of antioxidants, unsurprisingly they are not consumed at anywhere near the rate of coffee.

Coffee was followed in the rankings by black tea, bananas, dried beans, corn, red wine, lager, apples, tomatoes and potatoes.

Chemistry professor and leader of the study, Joe Vinson, remarked: "Americans get more of their antioxidants from coffee than any other dietary source. Nothing else comes close."

Funded by the American Cocoa Research Institute, the results were presented at a meeting of the American Chemical Society in Washington.

Further information: <http://www.news-medical.net/?id=12784>

Wal-Mart calls for Tesco check

Date

30/08/2005

Article Text

The president and chief executive of the US supermarket chain Wal-Mart, has called on the UK government to assess the sector's dominance by Tesco in the interests of healthy competition.

Lee Scott's remarks in an interview with the Sunday Times yesterday come in the wake of the announcement that Tesco's share in the grocery market has risen to the all-time high of 30.5 per cent within three months, up from 28.1 per cent a year ago.

The figures, published as the Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) report last week, found that Wal-Mart-owned Asda's market share also rose by 0.1 per cent, reaching 16.7 per cent for the 12 weeks to August 14th.

This makes Asda Britain's number two ranking supermarket, whereas Sainsbury's share slipped from 15.9 per cent to 15.7 per cent in the last three months, but had still increased its grip from 15.4 per cent last year.

Mr Lee Scott told the Times: "As you get over 30 per cent and higher I am sure there is a point where government is compelled to intervene, particularly in the UK, where you have the planning laws that make it difficult to compete.

"At some point the government has to look at it."

His comments also follow Tesco's complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) concerning Adsa's campaign labelling itself as the UK's cheapest store.

The ASA said that the claim, based on a poll of 33 products by the magazine, *The Grocer*, was unrepresentative.

Further information: <http://www.abcmoney.co.uk/news/292005788.htm>

Kerry profits from healthy convenience foods

Date

30/08/2005

Article Text

Ireland-based Kerry Group has seen its first half sales rise by 8.3 per cent to €2.1 billion, three weeks after it bought the Indian ready meals firm, Noon Group, for £124 million.

This rise took profits to €160 million for the six months to June 30th, an increase of 6.2 per cent.

Food ingredients accounted for 69 per cent of the sales, with consumer foods making up the rest, including the key brands Mattesons and Walls.

The success was mainly attributed to UK consumers' demand for healthier convenience foods, including premium ready meals, as well as the popularity of the "food on the go" concept.

For example, the launch of the cheese-based snack "Brunchettas" at the end of 2004 had contributed, and "Cheesestrings" continued to grow in popularity and market share.

Company chairman, Denis Buckley, said: "Our Irish and UK foods brands and customer-branded offerings are well positioned in industry growth segments.

"The group expects further business improvement in the second half, with an outcome for the full year in line with market expectations."

In spite of the post-Atkins challenging trading environment in Europe and the US, Mr Buckley said ongoing consolidation would provide opportunities for further acquisitions in the future.

Further information: <http://u.tv/newsroom/indepth.asp?pt=n&id=64363#comments>

Cobra launches Belgium brewed brand

Date

30/08/2005

Article Text

Cobra beer has launched a new bottle-conditioned lager, brewed in Rodenbach, Belgium.

Packaged in 750 ml champagne-style bottles, King Cobra targets "the discerning lager drinker", says business development director, Chris Rendle, according to the *Publican*.

Priced at approximately £6 in the on-trade and at Indian restaurants, it is designed for sharing, similar to a bottle of wine, and is targeted at the clients of the emerging generation of gastropubs.

Mr Rendle explained: "Our first entry point into the on-trade will be gastropubs and some style bars.

We definitely see it as being drunk with food and being shareable - you could even put the bottle in an ice bucket."

Initially intended to be packaged in a black bottle, Cobra settled for dark brown glass when Spanish cava Freixenet objected, claiming rights to the black champagne-style bottle.

With an ABV of eight per cent, it is refermented in the bottle for two weeks as with speciality Belgian Trappist beers.

The bottle is also available in retail outlets priced at £3.99.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28326

Asda store launches chicken probe

Date

30/08/2005

Article Text

The supermarket chain Asda is in the process of investigating a claim that out-of-date chicken was cooked and prepared for sale at a branch in the Greater Manchester area.

Four workers, including two managers, have been temporarily suspended, and the chain has confirmed that portions of cooked chicken quarters were found to be out of date last week.

However, these products were removed from sale at the Trafford Park store immediately, a company spokesman said.

Asda also rejected the claim of former rotisserie operator, Simon Daw, who said that workers were ordered to cook out-of-date chicken when a stock rotation system failed.

Mr Daw suggested that "chicken kept for roasting must have been left in the fridge too long, sometimes more than a week", according to the Manchester Evening News.

The Asda spokesman insisted: "This is something we take very seriously.

"We pride ourselves on hygiene. All staff are fully trained in health and safety.

"If any customers have any concerns about chicken they have bought, they can contact the store or visit the customer service desk."

Further information:

http://www.manchesteronline.co.uk/men/news/s/171/171750_poultry_probe_at_asda_store.html

Software enables mobile microbe alerts

Date

31/08/2005

Article Text

New software has been developed that enables food safety authorities to be alerted by phone if testing equipment registers microbial contamination on the production line or in the lab.

Centrus International's Soleris Connectivity software is designed to compliment the company's rapid optical system, and can be configured to send alarms to managers through fixed or mobile phones for remote analysis.

Featuring automated system control, data analysis capability and automatic detection, the information can also be securely delivered to multiple viewers inside or outside the laboratory if desired.

Managing director of business operations at Centrus, Dominique Sorgeloos, explained that the technology would enable decision-makers in the food processing industry to act faster concerning the safety of batches of meat, dairy or beverage products.

"Soleris Connectivity software speeds the flow of vital test results from the laboratory to key decision makers, allowing them to make fast choices in real time that ensure product safety and quality," he said, according to FoodProductionDaily.

The system can be integrated with laboratories' own existing data systems, with additional capabilities including a manual backup function and a hardware security device.

Further information:

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/productnews/news.asp?id=62128&k=software-sends-out>

BRC calls for GM-free soya from Brazil

Date

31/08/2005

Article Text

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) has called on the Brazilian soya industry to stop using genetically modified organisms (GMOs), thereby winning the approval of a group of food companies in the UK.

The BRC is looking to establish a sense of trust in the supply of non-GM soybean from Brazil as the nation's farmers begin to make arrangements for next year's crop.

A large amount of soya is imported into the UK for use in animal feed, but the labelling regulations concerning GM content do not extend to products for animal consumption.

Peter Riley of the alliance GM Freeze welcomed the move, saying: "It is important that the BRC ensures that its message is heard loud and clear in Brazil - by farmers and other players along the soya supply chain," according to the Green Consumer Guide.

However, he also accused some food companies of "resting on their laurels" over the issue of GM-free soya for animal feed.

"If food companies act now, the costs of such action can be kept to a minimum and they will help guarantee GM-free food for the future," he said.

Further information: <http://www.greenconsumerguide.com/index.php?news=2748>

Food firm fined for re-labelling

Date

31/08/2005

Article Text

The UK's food labelling practices have come under the spotlight again, after a food company was fined over £20,000 for illegally altering the "best before" date on 85,710 packs of biscuits and over 1,500 bottles of Baileys Irish Cream.

Trading standards officers found that the original dates were replaced with new laser-printed labels without securing the permission of the food manufacturers.

The "best before" date on multi-packs of Jacob's Club Orange biscuits was changed from July 31st 2004 to July 20th 2005, and the "best tasted before" date on the Baileys bottles was amended by over four years, brought forward to May 2005 from March 2001.

Truman Advance Group, including two directors, pleaded guilty to six counts of breaching trade description and food labelling laws before Nottingham Magistrates Court.

Managing director, John Truman, 58, was fined £750, with court costs amounting to £1,500, while works manager, Andrew Marshall, was ordered to pay £1,500 in both penalties and court costs.

The total paid out by the company was £9,000 in fines and £6,000 in costs.

Although it is illegal to sell food after its "use by" date, a "best before" date can be changed by a product's original manufacturer.

The practice of changing labels is becoming more widespread in the food industry, as it continues to face an estimated £3 billion yearly surplus.

Julie Lennard, food researcher with consumer group Which?, told the Telegraph: "Problems arise when use by and best before dates are changed and proper records are not kept of what has been done."

Further information:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/main.jhtml?view=DETAILS&grid=P8&xml=/health/2005/08/30/nfood28.xml>

Wine company enters trademark top ten

Date

31/08/2005

Article Text

The proportion of UK trademark registrations that were made for food and drink products increased by 3.5 per cent to 4,227 in 2004, with a wine retailer entering the top 10 for the first time.

There were 49,193 new UK trademark registrations for the year in total, a figure itself up five per cent compared to 2003.

A further 1,697 food and drink trademarks were registered in the UK by foreign companies under the Madrid protocol, representing a 5.1 per cent increase on the number for 2003.

By sector, meats, meat extracts, fish, poultry and game trademarks rose by 3.7 per cent, and coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, rice and others by 4.7 per cent.

While beer ale, porter and mineral and aerated waters rose by 3.7 per cent, wines spirits and liqueurs lost share, declining by two per cent.

Nevertheless, Canada-based Western Wines entered the patent office's top 10, with 42 registered trademarks for wines being imported into the UK.

At the same time, Unilever maintained its second place position in spite of its number of registrations dropping from 104 in 2003 to 93 last year.

Trademark registrations can be taken as an indication of a sector's business confidence, says FoodProductionDaily.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62200-unilever-patents-trade-mark>

BRC packaging standard translated into Chinese

Date

31/08/2005

Article Text

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) has announced that it will be translating its Food and Global Standard - Food Packaging and other Packaging Materials - into a Chinese Simplified version.

The news should be welcome to the UK's food companies, as the guide will enable them to buy in the confidence that products meet packaging standards across the industry.

The translation should also be useful to food companies that do business with speakers of Cantonese, Mandarin or Taiwanese, enabling them to work more effectively with their suppliers.

"As the global reach of the BRC Standards increases, we have recognised the need to publish appropriate Global Standards in languages that will assist suppliers outside the UK," said the BRC's head of technical services, Kevin Swoffer.

"The publishing of the Simplified Chinese version is a significant development as it extends best practice into the growing Far East market," he added.

The standard is most applicable to manufacturers of food packaging for retailers' own labelled products and branded products.

High-speed camera finds faults with produce

Date

31/08/2005

Article Text

A new camera has been developed to help food producers detect misshapen or wrongly coloured produce on the production line.

Sick says that its IVC-3D Vision Sensor camera is able to pick up on any irregular food items as they pass along the production chain, regardless of variations in the speed, reports FoodProductionDaily.com.

With more emphasis on faster production, it is hoped that the camera will enable more automated food production, which will in turn reduce human error and improve quality.

The camera can scan 5,000 products a second, and its sensors can measure products' shape and positioning, as well as the amount being produced.

The IVC-3D uses three-dimensional technology, which gives the camera greater versatility and enables it to scan a wider range of objects than the two-dimensional detectors currently used in the industry.

The equipment can also be used to perform dual tasks along the food production line, as it can be used as a quality control device but also record the volume of food produced with its laser detection system.

Further information:

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/productnews/news.asp?id=62137&k=smart-camera-detects>
