

Five strategies for harnessing the Good Carbs, Bad Carbs trend

Consumers' quest for better carbohydrates and fewer carbohydrates is creating a wealth of large and growing opportunities, even in the mass market, according to *10 Key Trends in Food, Nutrition and Health 2018*, the annual trends report from New Nutrition Business (available at www.new-nutrition.com).

The trend is fuelled by emerging science – discussed in the media and online – that's associating carbs with health issues such as weight gain and blood sugar response.

"Consumers are increasingly experimenting with lowering their carb intakes, or improving the carbs they eat, in the hopes of benefiting their health and/or their waistlines," says Julian Mellentin, author of the report.

In Spain, as many as 63% of consumers are regularly trying to eat fewer carbs, according to an NNB survey; in the UK, that figure is 48% and in Australia 47%.

And in North America, 36% of consumers believe they should eat less bread, pasta, potatoes and rice.

In Japan, food service operators are cutting carbs, with one restaurant chain kneading spinach and chlorella into noodles to lower their carb content by 25%.

"Companies are responding to these opportunities by adopting one or more of five strategies," says Mellentin. "The biggest of these strategies is Reformulation – not only substituting whole grains for refined wheat, for example, but offering gluten-free variants to take away a big digestive health issue that many consumers have with carbohydrates."

One area that is moving quickly is the re-formulation of pasta. Explore Cuisine is one of several companies offering pastas and noodles made not from wheat but from dried peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas.

Even the potato industry is experimenting with new low-carb varieties such as Lotatoes, successfully marketed in New Zealand by one of the country's biggest fruit and vegetable companies.

Some companies are going yet further in changing "bad" carbs into "good" carbs. Hamburg-based milling giant Good Mills has launched a new type of wheat that directly addresses consumer concerns about gluten and difficult-to-digest carbs. Called 2ab Wheat, it is free from gluten and addresses concerns about FODMAPs, a rapidly-emerging consumer concern.

Another powerful strategy that many companies are following is Greener Carbs.

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Convenient vegetables, and vegetables in forms that can be substituted for traditional carbohydrates, are the fruit of creative NPD and skilful food technology.

For the first time, vegetables can be as convenient as traditional carbs. For example:

- Green Giant in the US markets riced cauliflower (for use instead of rice) as well as spiralised vegetables and has massively expanded its range in 2017.
- Fazer, the Nordic bakery group, successfully markets bread with a 30% vegetable content.

The Good Carbs Bad Carbs trend shows that Key Trends often overlap with, and fuel, one another. Digestive Health, Plant-Based and Snackification are all connected to this trend.

Another trend that's a powerful driver of Good Carbs is Personalisation. Increasingly, people are going online, doing their own research and crafting their own eating style that they believe matches their needs as individuals. The belief that diet cannot be "one size fits all" is gaining ground.

For about 50% of the population, according to a survey by *New Nutrition Business*, the idea that each of us has unique nutritional and metabolic needs is becoming an accepted fact. These people, no matter what official dietary guidelines say, look upon carbs as a menu from which they feel free to select some as "good" and reject others as "bad".

This creates opportunities for companies willing to respond creatively to this much greater variety of needs and beliefs.

The 10 Key Trends for 2018 are:

- 1. Digestive Wellness – a long-term driver of growth**
- 2. Good Carbs Bad Carbs – five strategies for growth**
- 3. Plant-based – NPD and convenience transforms plants**
- 4. Protein – a growing market for plant, dairy and meat sources**
- 5. Personalisation and Fragmentation – where's the opportunity?**
- 6. Beverages Redefined – sugar concerns drive opportunity**
- 7. Sugar – four strategies for this new dietary demon**
- 8. Fat – consumers' emerging embrace of fat gives the green light to taste**
- 9. Snackification – a route to success that's central to strategy**
- 10. Inflammation – an outlier trend that's rapidly gaining ground**

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Editors can request review copies, or arrange an interview with Julian Mellentin, by contacting Marta Matvijeve at marta@new-nutrition.com.
2. Julian Mellentin is one of the world's few international specialists in the business of food, nutrition and health. He is director of New Nutrition Business which provides case studies and analysis of success and failure in the global nutrition business and is used by more than 1,700 corporate subscribers in 42 countries. New Nutrition Business is a research and consultancy company with an expert focus on the business of food and health since 1995. It has offices in the United States, Europe, and New Zealand and affiliates in Japan and South Korea.
3. *10 Key Trends in Food, Nutrition and Health 2018* is available to buy at www.new-nutrition.com.