All things personal – customisation

As consumers seek to create customised experiences, the confectionery industry is considering how best to deliver more personalised products. Lucy Beverley of Leatherhead Food Research reports

Personalisation means very different things to different people – at one end of the spectrum it could be tailoring existing products, for example by adding an individual's name or message to packaging. At the other end of the spectrum, personalisation could relate to individuals having a better understanding of their DNA and the bacteria in their stomach and choosing products which match their medical and health needs.

Whilst the food and drink industry is at the early stages of offering personalised nutrition, a variety of products have been launched recently which could meet the needs of consumers currently looking to support their health, whilst also satisfying their sweet tooth.

In the UK, Nestlé recently offered consumers the chance to win a personalised, four finger KitKat. Throughout the campaign, a total of 56,000 lucky people who found a winning code in their KitKat pack could go online, upload a photograph and message and receive a KitKat with their very own design, complete with a gift box doubling as a display frame.

Japanese company Fujiya has recently repackaged a number of its product range to include space for writing personal messages. Fujiya Look 18 Chocolate, which now comprises rich Venezuela chocolate, aromatic Ecuador chocolate and deep Ghana chocolate, has been re-launched, bearing a heart to allow consumers to write a personal message.

Meanwhile, for Valentine's Day, Mars USA launched this newly designed packing for My M&M's Chocolate Candies. Featuring a cut-out heart for writing personal messages, the pack also directs people to the brand's website where they can create their own custom-printed candies.

Whilst the food and drink industry is in the early stages of offering personalised nutrition, products such as Blue Planet Chocolate's recently launched range of Superfood Chocolate Squares offer choices to consumers looking to support their health needs, whilst indulging in something sweet. Containing the probiotic Ganeden BC30, claimed by the manufacturer to be a friendly bacteria that helps support digestive and immune health, the product packaging features the Ganeden BC30 Probiotic logo. Available in the US, the 72% dark chocolate range features individually wrapped chocolate squares in four flavours – blueberry chia, cinnamon chia, cocoa nib and expresso.

Also in the US, Theo Chocolate Clusters feature a combination of crispy quinoa, toasted coconut, dark chocolate and cocoa flavanols in three flavours – salted almond, turmeric coconut and lemon hemp. A source of fibre and iron, the product also contains 50 mg of cocoa flavanols per serving – these are unique phytonutrients found naturally in the cocoa bean that according to the manufacturer can contribute to heart health by supporting healthy blood flow.

Over in Ireland, Dr. Coy's Positive Eating Nutritional Chocolate Egg Collection offered choices at Easter to people watching their blood sugars. High in fibre and vitamin E, each pack features four new flavours – crisp, orange, mint crisp and raspberry crisp. Made with isomaltulose, the product's brightly illustrated packaging carries the health benefit: eating foods with isomaltulose instead of other sugars induces a lower blood glucose versus sugar containing foods.

Whilst some brands make health claims about particular ingredients on pack, others like Vosges Haut Chocolat Turmeric Ginger Dark Milk Chocolate tap into the naturally functional trend and use the health halo of foods such as turmeric to help drive sales. Available in the US, this premium sweet 45% cacao dark milk chocolate bar contains Sri Lankan coconut, coupled with the aromas of turmeric, fenugreek, cardamom, ginger and nutmeg. The manufacturer states that a bite of black pepper is added, increasing the bioavailability of the turmeric potency, curcumin.