

The Importance of Quality Benchmarking

In the 35 years that Fast Foodfax has been testing new food and drink products we have not seen any dramatic short-term changes in consumer preferences, but there have been gradual shifts. By reviewing new lines with a representative sample of GB shoppers, the service aims to provide a snapshot into the market potential of new products. We look for glimmers of interest amongst early adopters, products that maintain or build on initial concept appeal and those that show potential amongst particular types of consumer.

What we have seen over the years are gradual changes in scoring for certain categories, ingredients and convenience foods. For example, in the area of packaging, 25 years ago consumers were scathing about 'foreign' packs and unknown brand names, now these can both be positive features and they are far more concerned about sustainability and convenience. When it comes to food and drink, we've seen improving scores for dark chocolate, speciality teas, pulses and 'exotic' fruit and vegetables. Where once the idea of buying ready made roast potatoes or mash was met with derision, this type of time-saver is now welcomed as a handy way of cutting down preparation time. As are breakfast biscuit bars, instant porridge pots and pouch rice. New products must be at least as good as competitor brands. We are all shopping across more stores and are exposed to a wider range of brands and this makes us pickier, quick to criticise if we think we can buy better elsewhere. After all, it's the food that disappoints that can colour entire perceptions of a range or retailer. A cheaper product at comparable or near comparable quality may be fine for certain food types, but for others we may be prepared to pay a bit more for better quality and better tasting products, particularly if that product is our treat after a long hard week. All of this signals the importance of quality benchmarking particularly in this climate of re-engineering products for the purpose of price optimisation.

Meanwhile two Vegan products were amongst our strongest scorers this month. Check out our website for further details in our insightful Vegan Blog.

Highlights of the month:



McCoy's Muchos Smoky Chilli Chicken 43/50

A new lighter Tortilla snack from the McCoy's brand. Crunchy with a strong tangy flavour. 94% gave this a 4 or 5 * Star Rating.

Franklin & Sons Pomegranate, Hibiscus & Rose 41/50

'Lovely floral flavour - ideal as a mixer on its own'. This unusual flavour was seen as an affordable weekend treat.



Asda Extra Special Vegan Torte 42/50

The *"great chocolate taste"* and *"nutty base"* resulted in over two thirds considering this Torte a tempting *"weekend treat"*.

Iceland No Cheese Houmous Pizza 44/50

This was a hit after tasting due to the *"delicious"* topping and *"crisp"* base. Seen as healthy while retaining the *"feeling like comfort food"*.

