The Supplier View:

2017 Food Trends

Key suppliers offer their thoughts on key food industry trends to watch. What will be the key consumer trends driving the food industry forward in 2017 and how are they impacting supplier R&D development?

DR. SATYA JONNALAGADDA, KERRY
DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL NUTRITION

On flavor trends to watch and sugar reduction challenges...

“Taste is the number one consumer driver, but delivering taste takes a deep level of expertise from the application and formulation side. Consumers are not only looking for products that taste good, but also those made from trusted, authentic, and wholesome foods and flavors. In the nutritional beverage space, where consumers are seeking products with a feel good factor, we see a trend towards delivering invigorating, revitalizing and refreshing tastes. So for example, we use our fruit and vegetable crystals to deliver fruit flavors that are growing in popularity. Confusion around what clean label means to consumers can often leave product manufacturers scrambling to create or redefine their products in a way that meets consumer sentiment. Where Kerry can add value is by partnering with our customers to interpret what is important to their target consumer. We help our customers find solutions that are closer to nature in order to deliver on clean label initiatives. For consumers that want natural products with health benefits, that may mean replacing ingredients with clean label alternatives that still retain a product’s key functionality, taste or nutritional profile. Or it may mean using technologies that reduce specific ingredients and simplify a product’s ingredient deck. We also help our customers look for creative ways to reposition products in the marketplace, by aligning with innovative clean label market opportunities.

While we are not a producer of sweeteners, we do understand the implications that sugar & sweeteners can have within a formulation from a taste and nutrition perspective. For example, removing or reducing sugar can impact not only the sweetness level but also the mouthfeel, balance and overall taste of a food and/or beverage.

At Kerry, we have developed a portfolio of taste solutions to address these issues call TasteSense. Another challenge that TasteSense solves for is the masking of functional and better for you ingredients that tend to have off notes such as protein, wholegrains, fiber, vitamins, minerals etc. Our flavorists and applications scientists have the expertise to help our customers tailor the right solution to meet their consumer’s demands for reduced sugar and the addition of more functional ingredients.”

KÄTE DAVIS, CP KELCO
DIRECTOR AMERICAS MARKETING

On the demand for on-the-go and defining “natural”...

“We live in a fast-paced society. Consumers are looking for convenience now more than ever.

The market for “grab-and-go” options such as drinkable yogurts, milk drinks, and meal substitutes like veggie drinks and smoothies is growing quickly. Hydrocolloids provide flexible functionality to meet formulators’ needs for suspension, texture and mouthfeel in these categories.

In lieu of having a regulatory or legal definition of “natural,” our customers are creating their own definition of “natural” for their customers. While there’s no current alignment on the industry’s definition, we work to develop solutions to meet the needs of each of our customers. We use our broad range of products derived from nature, and mix and match functionality to support their labeling requirements.

CP Kelco is excited about the demand for alternative proteins. Our hydrocolloid products provide many functions in products containing alternative proteins and other vegetarian/flexitarian ingredients. For instance, pectin can protect proteins from aggregation and curdling in acidic environments. In beverages and other low viscosity applications, gellan gum can provide long term suspension to proteins and other insoluble ingredients, to ensure product uniformity. Our broad portfolio of products allows for flexibility in ingredients and customization to meet our customers’ needs.”
On 2017 trends to watch, including clean label...

“There are several trends that will continue through 2017 including clean label and the overall sensory experience. With the shift to clean label, formulators are removing ingredients which can also impact important textural attributes in their applications. Many find themselves unable to clearly define these textural changes and are challenged to understand the complete functionality of the ingredients they are replacing. When considering the textural needs of the consumer, manufacturers must look towards new technologies to balance clean label demands with their own formulation objectives. TIC Gums has developed a lexicon of terms called the Food Texture Terminology, as a way to standardize texture descriptions. This enables us to work closely with formulators, streamline the process and formulate accordingly. To help manufacturers navigate through the available clean label hydrocolloids, TIC Gums has developed a clean label chart to explain their source and status such as organic compliant, non-GMO and retailer-approved. Additionally, TIC Gums has also established an internal definition of ‘natural.’ However, we are finding that the term is often replaced with more specific terms such as ‘GMO-free,’ ‘100% organic’ and ‘made with organic.’ We can work with manufacturers’ exact specifications and help them determine the texture and stability solution that best fits their needs.”

On novel flavor solutions for sugar reduction success...

“While the health benefits of reduced sugar formulations are inarguable, decreased sugar content is detrimental to the overall taste experience. Reformulation results in a general lack of sweetness, reduced mouthfeel, and ‘flat’ aromatic expressions. IFF technologies optimize overall taste perception by not only addressing these three critical factors, but offering solutions that elevate overall product performance. Consumer expectations for a clean, pleasant taste are delivered with IFF technologies that can work in synergy with natural sweeteners to mask off-notes and suppress lingering sweetness.

Solutions that can be labeled as natural flavoring or flavoring to meet the market demand for transparency can also be developed. Increased formulation costs resulting from a rise in sugar pricing and increased sugar taxes can be mitigated with alternative technologies. Taste differentiation is possible with the inclusion of a sensory signature that goes beyond traditional flavor profile attributes and can be utilized across an entire product range. Propelling performance of low calorie and low sugar products is a key strategic priority for IFF and is supported with proprietary R&D activities that combine both natural product research and taste receptor research. Resulting solutions offer a range of tools to optimize the taste of low sugar or low calorie products: from ready-to-use flexible solutions, to “whole recipe” approaches.”

On addressing clean label and sugar reduction demands...

“Despite the significant market potential, reformulating foods to achieve a clean label claim can present technical and formulation challenges. To overcome these challenges, formulators should partner with experienced suppliers and used thoroughly-tested ingredients, such as gelatin or hydrolyzed gelatin, proven to offer multiple functional and nutritional benefits while complying to the requirements of clean label claims.

The majority of consumers are actively making healthier eating choices whenever possible. However, when it comes to manufacturing healthy products, it is not as simple as it sounds. For example, reducing fat and sugar contents in products can affect texture, mouthfeel and flavor, making it critically important for manufacturers to use alternatives that provide some, or if not all, of the key functional properties without affecting the taste. At Rousselot, our teams can help customers decrease sugar levels. The addition of ProTake (hydrolyzed gelatin) can act as a replacement to improve texture and flavor, while serving as a bulking agent due to its excellent water retention properties. In our applications lab, we have developed several prototype recipes using ProTake. For example, Fruit Pulp Gummies that have 12 percent less sugar than traditional gummies and an increased protein content. Fruit pulp has been used as the sole source of flavor and color.”
On the rise of snacking and “natural” opportunities...

“We continue to see innovation in the snacking category with new formats, flavors and textures. In a recent exploration of consumer trends, New York based trends analysis expert Anna Klainbaum explored what’s really driving the industry forward as we enter a new year. Some key drivers noted are home-style character, rough-cut, and uneven shapes - trends which lend themselves to chopped nut toppings or under-styled concepts that expose ingredients like sliced, slivered or roughly chopped natural almonds, rather than applying a smooth coating. We expect to see a wider variety of options, and interplay of textures within singular products. Bold textures, like crispy/crunchy and smooth/creamy, are top claims when it comes to snacks. Chefs and manufacturers will continue examining consumer preferences beyond just flavor.

Even without a definition of ‘natural,’ there is a distinct opportunity for products that communicate purity of their ingredients. In fact, trends research by Innova Market Insights identified the rise in clean/clear labels, as well as a new focus on agricultural claims and labeling that specifies where ingredients are grown.

For this reason, product developers can feel good about labeling a product with ingredients like ‘almonds from California,’ or ‘almonds from California’s Central Valley,’ or even a more specific location, and the added value of their visual appeal.”

On meeting sugar reduction and flexitarian demands...

“The role of sugar is multiple: a role on taste of course (sweetness and perception of aromas) but also a role on texture and sometimes on color (Maillard reaction). When reducing or replacing sugars completely, you need to compensate all of these functionalities. This is why in many cases simply adding an intense sweetener is not enough. Inulin and oligofructose (chicory root fiber), are very helpful ingredients for this. For instance, combining intense sweeteners (e.g. sucralose or acesulfame-K), or polyols, and Fibrulose liquid oligofructose in no added sugar biscuits or cakes enables you to provide a texture and a color similar to a reference product, as well as a nice sweet taste.

There is a trend towards more vegetarian/flexitarian options and in parallel the rise of alternative proteins. People are slowly becoming aware of the importance of reducing meat consumption, for ethical, environmental or health reasons. This is matched with increasing innovation in the areas of meat and dairy alternatives, both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. At the same time, the sales of alternative proteins, in particular pea proteins, have increased dramatically in the last 5 years. That is why Cosucra is expanding its pea protein production capacity. Our Innovation Lab has also developed several vegan or vegetarian recipes that include Pisane pea protein isolate in order to assist our partners in their innovation process.”

On defining “natural” and a GMO-free strategy...

“Consumers are more and more careful, conscious and aware of what they decide to buy. R&D shall take this fact into account, developing and proposing clear and transparent solutions to give answers to all potential questions raising among consumers.

‘Natural’ is often a vague definition of what should be considered good and healthy. We think consumers should better focus on ‘quality.’ ‘Natural’ and ‘quality’ may be synonyms sometimes, but not always. ‘Quality’ has to do with the whole production chain and even with packaging and handling of the goods, not only with a natural origin of some ingredients. Quality ingredients and transparent production methods should be clearly reported in labels. Consumers’ growing education and awareness, will lead consumers to better understand what is written on the labels and not to check only if there is a ‘natural’ sticker on the package.

GMO ingredients are currently banned from or R&D centers and production facilities: all our products are certified GMO-free. As we work according a single global Quality System, we decided to supply certified GMO-free products even in territories in which genetically modified products are allowed to be on the market. We have only one high standard Quality Policy and we will stay on the GMO-free side until it will be clearly stated by all authorities that is safe to move on the GMO side.”