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Bite into better

Innovative ingredients improve sweet selections



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Better-for-you baked goods **transform** from **dry to divine**



I remember like it was yesterday the first time I popped a piece of a vegan, gluten-free brownie in my mouth. It was dry and crumbly, and I could not wash it down fast enough with water.

That was about 15 years ago, so thankfully this category has vastly improved. Food developers are much more knowledgeable about the best ingredients to use for their better-for-you products, so vegan and/or gluten-free brownies are nice and moist, sugar-free cookies and doughnuts taste just as good as the real things, and so on.

For example, Mightylicious is a relatively new cookie brand that made me an instant fan at first bite. Owned by Carolyn Haeler, the line offers all gluten-free treats that come in flavors like Oatmeal Coconut, Brown Butter Chocolate Chip, Oatmeal Raisin and Salted Peanut Butter. They're chewy, moist and crumbly the way cookies should be. She also produces gluten-free all-purpose flours and cookie mixes.

"The flour is our secret ingredient," Haeler said. "It was really important to me that I create a completely neutral flour base using only rice flour and then starch.

"So, potato starch, tapioca starch and corn starch, all of which are neutral flavored … you can't even taste them. They create texture, they don't create taste. We also work directly with the mills to mill our rice flour to a speck that is appropriately sized for baking. And that is the difference."

The September digital magazine covers some of the best ways to achieve delicious baked goods and confections that are also often considered better for you. First, veteran food writer Cindy Hazen writes about how to finesse alternative sweeteners in the sweets — without the bitter aftertaste. One expert explains that to achieve this, you'll need a "system" of sweeteners and ingredients.

Another one of our star writers, Kim Decker focuses on how more prebiotics and probiotics are being used in baked goods. "The classic challenge with probiotics in bakery has involved ensuring the bacteria's survival," she writes, then provides solutions.

And vegan, dairy-free "milk" chocolate is getting a lot of ink lately. In my opinion, it's quite tasty and can be as pleasant on the tongue as traditional milk chocolate. Nick Collias writes about two of my favorite varieties, oat milk and coconut milk, their functionalities and how they're best used in baking. My mouth is watering just thinking about it.

Be well. Eat well.



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Sweet success:
Craft delicious baked goods with alternative sweeteners

by Cindy Hazen



Nonnutritive sweeteners like allulose and monk fruit provide sweetness without added calories or a sugar spike; however, using them correctly in baked goods requires a little finesse.

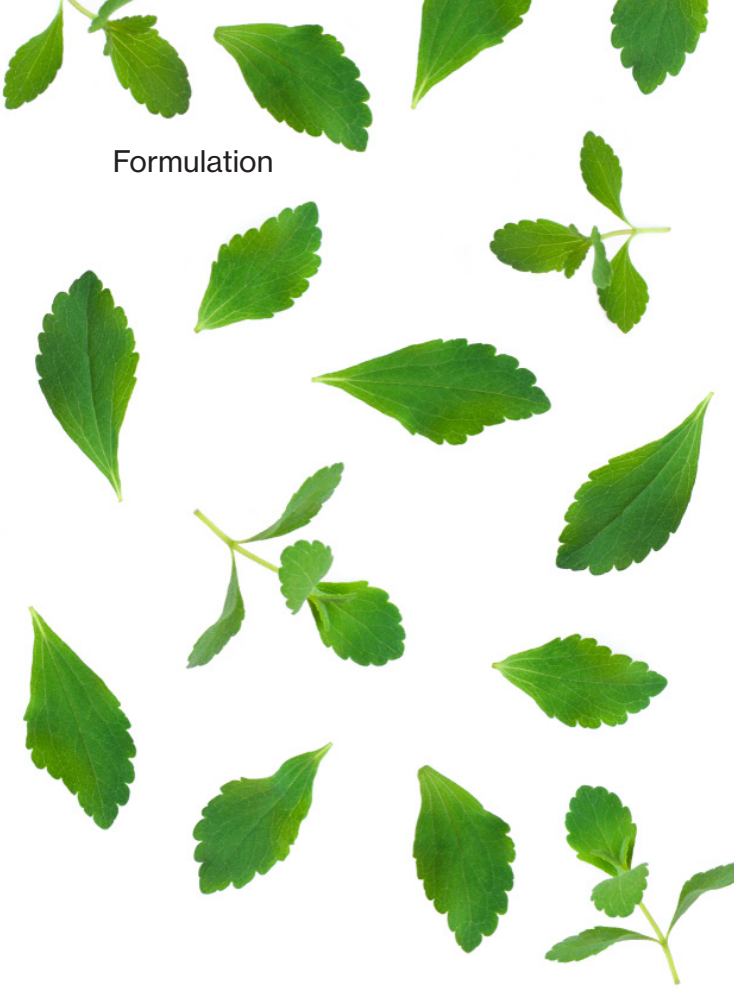
Higher-intensity sweeteners like stevia or monk fruit solely replace the sweetness and not the bulk. Replacing the lost volume of sugar is a huge challenge — and additional functionalities must be considered.

"Some alternative sweeteners cannot withstand high temperatures and break down during baking, losing their sweetness, while other alternative sweeteners have negative impacts on digestion and can cause issues when consumed in high levels," Becky Regan, Ph.D., principal scientist of sweet goods applications at IFF, shared. "In addition, some alternative sweeteners do not participate in Maillard browning, which affects crust color and flavor generation. Moreover, select alternative sweeteners have different hygroscopic (water-binding) properties than nutritive sweeteners, which can affect texture. Alternative sweeteners that are not crystalline will impact processing steps such as creaming used for some types of cakes and cookies. This, in turn, will negatively alter the structure, texture and appearance of the baked good."

Because a single sweetener cannot contribute all the attributes needed in a baked good, a system of sweeteners and ingredients may be required. Julie DesRochers, senior principal scientist at Tate & Lyle, pointed out that high-intensity sweeteners do not contribute to browning, so formulators "will want to make the addition of protein and/or reducing sugar such as a low level of dextrose, corn syrup solids, fructose, allulose or fructooligosaccharides (FOS)." Soluble fibers (such as FOS) simulate the bulk in the dough — just as sugar does — as it's soluble in the aqueous phase of the dough or batter.

"Sugar is known to tenderize the crumb of a cake or bread," she continued. "Baked volume can be positively or negatively affected,

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Formulation

depending on the type of sugar and level and its effect on starch gelatinization, which (in part) sets the baked product structure. When sugar is removed or partially replaced, the formulator may need to compensate for changes in batter viscosity. Thinner, lower-sugar batters can leverage use of a clean-label instant starch such as CLARIA that will build back the desired batter viscosity. In this case, choosing a starch also helps retain moisture. Other ingredients like various enzymes can be used as clean-label ways to soften crumb, increase loaf volume and extend shelf life."

Stevia

All sweetening agents — even among the same class — have differences. For instance, stevia consists of many sweetening components (steviol glycosides) that are inherent in the *Stevia rebaudiana* plant. The flavors of these components vary depending on the growing location, growing conditions, means of extraction and selection of glycosides in the final sweetening product. Crossbreeding, identifying and isolating specific concentrations and/or combinations of glycosides have improved the flavors of stevia. Today's offerings have less of the bitter aftertastes that early stevia products suffered, which also means food developers now have a wider variety of attractive products to choose from. "The selection of stevia is largely determined primarily by the flavor sensitivity of the baked good," DesRochers explained. For example, a more cost-effective stevia can be used in a chocolate cake with partial sugar replacement, whereas a no-sugar-added vanilla product will require a premium stevia. Similarly, a milk chocolate cake will require a more subtle-flavored stevia than a dark chocolate cake.

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A **milk chocolate cake** will require a more subtle-flavored stevia than a **dark chocolate cake.**



Monk fruit

Like stevia, monk fruit is also plant derived — in this case, from the fruit of *Siraitia grosvenorii*. Because of its high temperature tolerance, the ingredient can be used in baked goods. Since it also has high sweetening ability, it requires a bulking agent.

Erythritol

Erythritol is a zero-calorie bulk sweetener often used with high-intensity sweeteners. Icon Foods' IconiSweet is a blend of allulose, erythritol, stevia and monk fruit. This one-for-one replacement with sugar is recommended for use in baked goods.

By itself, erythritol has a noticeable cooling effect, but that doesn't preclude its use in bakery items. DesRochers noted, "Erythritol has some functional properties that are very compatible with baked goods, and at lower levels, the cooling effect is not a pitfall."

Complementary combos

When choosing a formulation strategy, combining well-matched sweeteners can bring out the best of each. "In terms of combinations, there are known synergies among stevia and allulose, so the increased sweetness impact can help to reduce cost-in-use," DesRochers said. Among alternative sweeteners, she finds allulose is the most unique because its temporal profile is similar to sucrose.

Thom King, chief innovation officer and food scientist at Icon Foods, commented that while stevia and monk fruit have distinct flavors, they tend to mask each other's off-notes. Their masking abilities also extend to other



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Millennials and Gen Z drive better-for-you bakery boom amid health consciousness surge – article

The health-conscious trend is booming with innovation, but consumers still demand delectability and clean ingredients in baked goods, according to industry experts.



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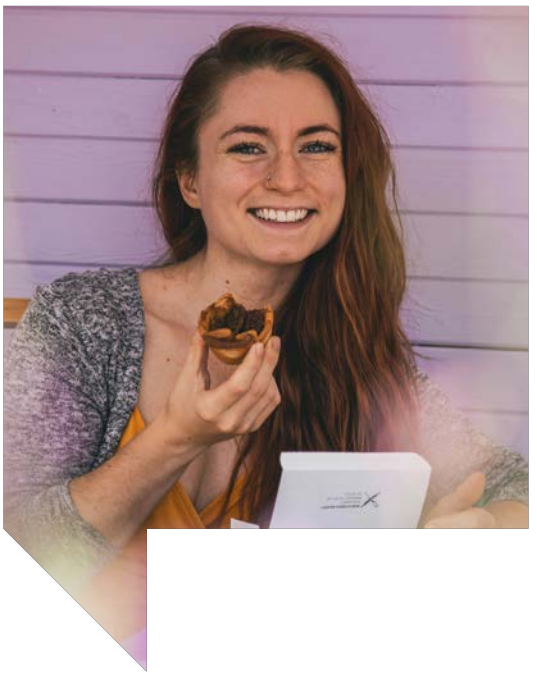
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ingredients in the formula, so he suggested that flavor levels might need to be increased.

IFF offers a line of sweet modulators that can be used to boost sweet flavors, in addition to a variety of maskers which can mask off-flavors that may result from the use of alternative sweeteners or the reduction of sugar.

Allulose

Allulose is a viable choice in most baked goods. Since it's 70% as sweet as sugar, it contributes bulk and sweetness. Browning is another benefit. But King cautioned that allulose is currently not approved for use in products sold to Whole Foods or Canada. "In that case, I would use a combination of soluble tapioca fiber with a short-chain inulin and a high-intensity sweetener like stevia or monk fruit." Fibers like chicory or agave inulin metabolize at different rates, allowing higher usage. "You can go as high as 6% with a stacked fiber like that without people getting gas and having a GI [gastrointestinal] issue," King added. "Allulose metabolizes into a GLP-1 agonist, which is a glucagon-like peptide, so it suppresses blood sugar slightly." He mentioned that the drug Ozempic, used for diabetes and weight control, is also a GLP-1 agonist.



A downside of allulose is it tends to burn at a lower temperature than sugar. King recommends reducing the baking temperature to between 315 and 320 and adding a 15% longer bake time if using allulose. He said he has successfully done this with cereal and baked good applications.

Leavening is another issue when using allulose because it doesn't activate yeast as well as sugar. "Using baking powder or even egg whites will help give your baked goods a little more fluffiness and less density," King suggested. "It will definitely brown because allulose participates in Maillard and it has a mouthfeel that's very similar to sucrose. You might lose some humectancy with allulose, where it might get a little dry. With those types of formulas, I'll backfill with some soluble tapioca fiber, which is a digestive-resistant maltodextrin. And that works well as a humectant."

To ensure a bake is using the right ingredient or ingredient system, Regan said it is best to work with ingredient suppliers. For good measure, collaborate with a partner that has experience in baked goods, along with a wide portfolio of ingredients to complement the success of the sweetening system. ■



Cindy Hazen is a food industry professional with decades of experience in food formulation and food safety. She is PCQI, HACCP and ISO 22000 trained.







Consumers knead a healthier treat.

Biotic baked goods fit the bill

by Kimberly J. Decker

Baked goods + prebiotics: The pairing just makes sense, right? Baked goods have long been go-to vehicles for delivering dietary fiber — and in a lucky coincidence, many of the dietary fibers they deliver also happen to be prebiotic.

But baked goods + probiotics? The concept doesn't quite roll off the tongue as intuitively — and for good reason: Probiotics are living creatures. Whipping them into a dough, popping them in the oven and then letting them sit on a bread shelf for weeks in a finished product literally threatens their lives.

Or at least it used to. But now that suppliers are increasingly offering bacterial strains that can hold up against baking's threats, the bakery aisle is becoming a more hospitable environment not just for biotic-boosted products, but for the health-conscious consumers craving them, too.

Feel-good baked goods

Make no mistake: Consumers *are* craving baked goods they can feel good about.

"Better-for-you bakery products are increasingly popular as part of the broader trend toward healthier food options," Joana Carneiro-Wakefield, Ph.D., CEO at NutriLeads BV, maintained.

Kara Landau, co-founder of The Prebiotic Dietitian Fiber Blends — a B2B platform offering dietitian-developed prebiotic blends to food and beverage brands — concurred. "Baked goods like breads, wraps, English muffins and bagels have often been items that health-conscious consumers already review for dietary fiber," she noted.

Gut responses

Industry experts are fairly certain that consumers who read labels will pay attention

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to biotics in baked goods — hoping to derive potential gut health benefits and beyond.

Camille Binachon, product manager at Lallemand Health Solutions, pointed to supportive data from a proprietary 2023 FMCG Gurus report on health and wellness. She noted, "49% of consumers like to see claims around actively improving digestive health in the bread category."

She added, 41% also consider the claim "contains probiotics" appealing, leading her to conclude consumers must be making a connection between the friendly bacteria and support of digestive health and overall well-being.

As for prebiotics' role in those outcomes, Landau suggested, "Formulating baked goods with prebiotic fiber can build a bridge to a trending gut-health focus using a nutrient that's already top of mind with the consumers choosing products in the category."



Perfect fit

Formulating baked goods with prebiotics is relatively easy at this stage of the game. "Prebiotics are very versatile ingredients," Landau affirmed. "Many that come in the form of dietary fibers are heat stable, soluble and neutral in flavor and color; as such, they're quite straightforward ingredients to bring to a new baked-product formulation."

And though their health halo story may resonate best in baked goods like multigrain breads, hearty bars and even oatmeal cookies, she continued, "That's not to say that a health-focused sweet baked good couldn't be a vehicle for prebiotics' nutritional benefits, or that the right target audience wouldn't appreciate their added gut-health functionality."

In fact, with bakery brands slashing sugar levels left and right, prebiotics might look even more attractive to formulators, given the capacity of some — think chicory root inulin — to help replicate sugar's sweetness. "This provides a strong case for tapping into the gut-health market by adding prebiotic fibers to sweet baked goods," Landau said.

On the level

Brands will also have little trouble packing effective prebiotic doses into baked goods — although doing so still involves formulation savvy.

Landau explained, "Prebiotic levels will vary based on the ingredient choice and final product serving size." For example, formulations can handle higher levels of type-4 resistant starch not just as a prebiotic but as a replacement for wheat flour, too.

On the other hand, Landau continued, some type-2 resistant starches, such as green banana flour and resistant potato starch, aren't heat-stable and thus may lose their prebiotic value in a baked good.

Ingredient amount is also a consideration. Landau noted prebiotic galactooligosaccharides (GOS) and xylooligosaccharides (XOS) demonstrate efficacy at doses of roughly 2.75 grams and 1 gram per serving, respectively; whereas 3

> Formulating baked goods with prebiotics is **relatively easy** at this stage of the game.

grams to 5 grams of chicory root inulin per serving may be needed to impart a prebiotic effect, depending on the source and molecular structure.

Stealth support

And therein lies the rub. "High levels of some prebiotics cause digestive distress in sensitive individuals," Landau cautioned.

Perhaps that's why Carneiro-Wakefield considers ingredient advances that permit smaller effective doses "one of the biggest breakthroughs in prebiotic fibers."

A case in point, she said, is NutriLeads' Benicaros — also known as cRG-I, or rhamnogalacturonan-I — a prebiotic fiber upcycled from carrot pomace that has shown to support the microbiome while strengthening the immune system at daily servings as small as 300 mg.

"Its fermentation requires collaboration — cross-feeding — among a specialized consortia of gut bacteria," Carneiro-Wakefield explained. She added that the ingredient "selectively targets beneficial microorganisms prevalent in most people, leading to consistent, positive gut-health effects in every type of gut." Additionally, according to the company, the ingredient has little to no impact on taste, texture or aroma and — no minor matter — produces less gas.

Probiotic conundrum

The lesson: Prebiotics keep getting more attractive, especially for bakery brands. But probiotics are hardly falling behind. In fact, Binachon declared, "Recent research and innovations are paving the way for probiotics to be incorporated into baked goods, aligning with the growing trend of health-conscious consumers seeking better-for-you options."

The classic challenge with probiotics in bakery has involved ensuring the bacteria's survival. After all, the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) officially defines probiotics as *live* microorganisms that confer health benefits at sufficient levels.

"Key aspects of this definition," Binachon said, "include ensuring that probiotic bacteria remain alive during administration and that they can survive until they reach their site of action — the intestinal tract."

But because most strains are not heat stable (with many actually requiring steady refrigeration) oven temperatures and ambient supermarket storage made their inclusion in bakery a nonstarter.





With interest in gut health high, there's **never been a better time** to experiment with including pre-, pro-, post- and synbiotics in bakery.

Providing protection

Suppliers are using several strategies to break that barrier.

Lallemand, for example, developed its Probiocap microencapsulation procedure to shield such strains as *L. helveticus* Rosell-52, *L. rhamnosus* Rosell-11, *B. longum* Rosell-175 and *L. helveticus* LAFTI L10 from processing threats like compression, excessive heat and high acidity. According to Binachon, it "opens up exciting opportunities for incorporating probiotics into various food categories."

Suppliers are also identifying strains that form their own protective endospores under harsh conditions, which then reactivate as vegetative cells once the storm passes.

"Thanks to this natural defense mechanism," Binachon explained, "spore-forming probiotics can survive thermal shocks, high pressure, pH variations, gastric acidity during digestion and long-term storage." Lallemand's lineup includes several spore formers backed by internal and published studies.

Postbiotic opportunity

While much of the biotic-boosted bakery discussion revolves around probiotics and prebiotics, the category also provides a prime proving ground for postbiotics. ISAPP's formal definition of this emerging class of ingredients is "intact, inanimate microbial cells, fragments and structures thereof (cell walls, membranes, pili, etc.) or microbial metabolites and end products like organic acids, peptides, enzymes, vitamins and bacteriocins – any or all of which confer a health benefit on the host."

Their key appeal in bakery boils down to stability. As Binachon explained, "Postbiotics



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Onego Bio produces bio-identical egg white protein without chickens – article

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are safe, stable and compatible with various ingredients, requiring no refrigeration for convenient room-temperature storage. And as they're already inactivated, they don't 'fear' heat and can seamlessly integrate into better-for-you baked goods, snacks and confectionery."

Sourdough success

Sara de Pelsmaeker, Ph.D., group health and well-being director at Puratos, considers sourdough the perfect platform for the use of postbiotic compounds.

Natural fermentation of the dough by lactic acid bacteria — many probiotic — produces the tang that gives the bread its name; and although those bacteria perish during baking, they leave behind what de Pelsmaeker described as "beneficial constituents of the microbiota." In other words, postbiotics.

Puratos is actually diving deep into sourdough's digestive benefits. One product of the company's exploration is Sapore Baiota, a dried sourdough that ferments the part of the wheat grain with the most fiber: the bran.

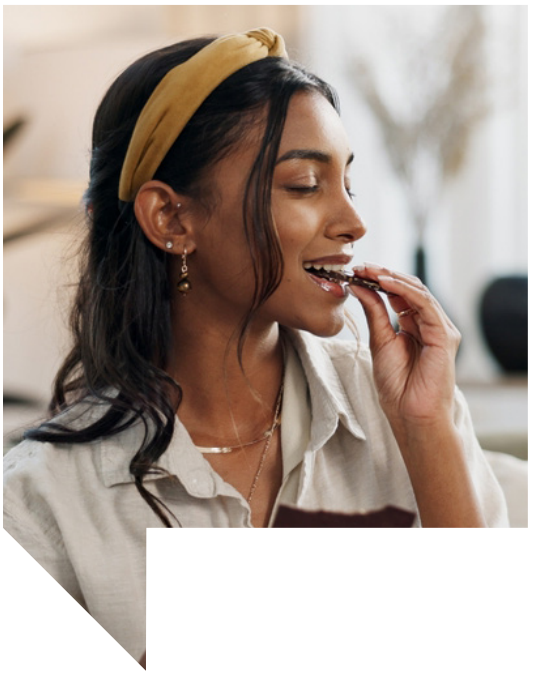
"This produces a dried Sapore wheat-bran sourdough with the traditional taste that consumers love and a fiber content that, on average, is almost four times that of wholemeal flour," de Pelsmaeker claimed. "With such a high percentage of wheat bran fibers, Sapore Baiota has the potential to meet the EU's and U.S.' legislation for 'gut-friendly' positioning in bakery products."

That should please any bakery brand. As de Pelsmaeker put it, "With interest in gut health high, there's never been a better time to experiment with including pre-, pro-, post- and synbiotics in bakery." ■





Kimberly J. Decker is a Bay Area food writer who has worked in product development for the frozen sector and written about food, nutrition and the culinary arts. Reach her at kim@decker.net.



Plant-based indulgence:

Nondairy milks get cozy with chocolate

by Nick Collias

Dialing in on sensory attributes like taste, appearance and texture of a food product is never an easy process. But snacks present unique challenges, especially since no hard lines dictate what a snack is, where it's eaten or when it will be consumed. In the absence of a "mealtime," snack testing often needs to be more creative to be effective.

Askinosie Chocolate, on its website, refers to its vegan, dairy-free Coconut Milk Chocolate product as "the bar you've all been waiting for." According to co-owner Lawren Askinosie, it's no exaggeration.

For 17 years, the brand has been one of the leading names in small-batch, handcrafted chocolate, known for creating bars that push against traditional chocolate categories — goat milk chocolate, for example. In recent years, the customer drum beat grew louder for something that had the creaminess of milk but was vegan.

"We heard from people daily," Askinosie said. "And we are now excited that that's one of our top-selling bars — it's really popular for us at retailers like Whole Foods."

Askinosie isn't the only confectioner entertaining the request. Chocolate producers are increasingly under pressure to provide dairy-free options for both sustainability and nutritional reasons, leading them to explore alternative milks — and learning to love them nearly as much as dairy.

Oat milk and coconut milk are two of the leading alternatives redefining "milk" chocolate. Manufacturers should consider the strengths as well as challenges of each ingredient.

Oat milk chocolate

Texture and mouthfeel: When looking to create a plant-based milk chocolate for the chocolate ingredient supplier Luker Chocolate, Daniela Quintero Fernandez said the product development team she leads tried every option out there: every nut milk, seeds and grains, even lentils and legumes. But the option that provided the best one-for-one swap for dairy was clear. It was oat.



"Of everything we tried, it was the one that had the least effect on the chocolate," Fernandez recalled. "You get no grittiness, and the sensation

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Something that happens with our clients is that they ask, **'Am I really eating something plant-based?'**

in the mouth was the most milk-like. Something that happens with our clients is that they ask, 'Am I really eating something plant-based?'"

Shelf life and stability: Fernandez said the increased carbohydrate content of oat milk ends up making for a stable product that works across multiple formats. "When you're making ganache or fillings, stability is really important," she emphasized. "And often the shelf life is less because they traditionally use cream or butter. With oat milk chocolate, we get the feedback that ganaches are more stable, and they last longer."

Tempering and production: Chocolate makers say the process of stabilizing or "tempering" plant-based chocolate is often the biggest puzzle in the production process. But with oat, the answer was hiding in plain sight.

At first we thought, "Oh my God ... How are we going to temper this?" Fernandez recalled. "Then we realized that since it did not have another fat in it, it should work just like dark chocolate. And that's what happened. It behaves like dark chocolate, but with the beauty and taste of milk."

Works with other ingredients: Fernandez said she initially expected nut-based milks like almond or cashew would pair better with chocolate confections that also contained nuts. But oat is actually a better dance partner than nut milks. "It's a cleaner canvas that allows you to play more," she suggested. "If you want to add almonds or put any different things in it, it's easier because it's more like a milk chocolate."

Coconut milk chocolate

Versatility: George Domurot, CEO of the small-batch chocolate maker Ranger Chocolate in Portland, Oregon, said he initially started experimenting with coconut milk as a dairy substitute. But after adding it to two bars, a creamy Thai bar and a fruit and coconut-leaning Caribbean bar, he found that coconut



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Food ingredients North America Theater: Top food industry trends – video

Products that support foundational wellness, brain health, digestive health and immunity were just some of the top trends experts identified during a 2023 session at the Food ingredients North America show in Las Vegas.


Chocolate

Coconut was capable of bringing a range of flavors and textures all its own.

was capable of bringing a range of flavors and textures all its own.

"What's great about coconut is that there are two ways you can do it," Domurot explained. "You can do it coconut-forward, so you actually are thinking 'coconut' when you consume it. Or you do it more subtly, so you're just getting that creaminess."

Works with other ingredients: Askinosie's first coconut chocolate bar was a special-release white chocolate bar featuring sweet potato and cranberry sauce, harkening to fall and winter holiday menus.

Surprisingly, she said, the coconut played nicely with these decidedly un-tropical ingredients. "It allowed the other flavors to really come through," she noted. "It doesn't have as prominent a milk flavor as some of the other alternatives we've played with, but still brings the mouthfeel and creaminess we're looking for."

Shelf life and stability: Askinosie said she's found coconut bars to have a similar shelf life to those using dairy, but that they do pose some unique challenges when it comes to transport and storage. Coconut fat "has a different melting point, and it makes a slightly fattier bar," she stated. "So we have to be extra diligent when we're shipping those chocolate bars and make sure that everything is optimized for heat resistance, especially when we're shipping throughout the summer."

Tempering and production: Askinosie and Domurot both said tempering a coconut-based bar is challenging, especially when producing at a larger scale. With the addition of a single ingredient, you might spoil a batch and have to start again at square one. The only solution, they said, was to keep trying — over and over again.

"It's tricky," Domurot said. "There's a lot of balancing and experimentation you have to do to kind of bring the chocolate into submission." But none of these challenges, he said, have made him doubt the viability of coconut as an ingredient.

"It's worth it, because it's so good." he said. "We're definitely on the coconut train now." ■





Nick Collias is a writer and editor with more than a decade of experience working in the health and fitness industry. From 2016 to 2021, he was the host of the Bodybuilding.com podcast, interviewing elite athletes and training thought-leaders on a wide range of exercise, nutrition and lifestyle topics. Additionally, he has worked for the last 20 years as a longform print and online journalist, as well as a book author, ghostwriter and editor.



Vegan baked goods 'rise' to the challenge

by Melissa Kvidahl Reilly

Plant-based foods, even "buttery" treats like cakes and cookies, are gaining popularity in the mainstream market.

According to proprietary SPINS data, sales of baked goods labeled vegan reached about $450 million in the past year alone, indicating appeal beyond the 1% of Americans who identify as vegan. But to truly win over the mainstream consumer, plant-based options must be able to compete with non-vegan goodies in taste and texture.

Executives from three plant-based bakery brands — Karma Nuts, Mightylicious (which is also gluten-free) and Partake Foods — talked with us about challenges, innovation and the future of vegan bakery.



SupplySide Food & Beverage Journal: What was a major technical challenge you overcame when creating plant-based baked goods?



Denise Woodard, founder and CEO, Partake Foods: Butter and eggs are traditional ingredients when baking indulgent snacks. However, it's important to us that Partake be as inclusive as possible. To us, that means delicious cookies, grahams and vanilla wafers that are free of the top nine allergens (including eggs and milk). So, we've leaned into plant-based ingredients that, when they work together thoughtfully, replicate that experience. It's not been without trial and error,

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though. We've probably been through hundreds of formulations at this point, and we're continuing to keep our eyes on alternatives that meet our high-quality standards and support our mission of inclusivity.



Carolyn Haeler, founder and owner, Mightylicious: Rice flour, the most frequently used flour in gluten-free baking, is manufactured for cooking — not baking — and other flours, such as sorghum, garbanzo bean and amaranth flours, simply put, don't taste good. They often have chalky or gritty textures and strange/bitter/earthy aftertastes. They are wonderful for cooking, but far too overpowering for the delicate flavor profile of a cookie or cake.

This is where determination and innovation were married. I went directly to the mill to get rice flour that would work for baking, and created a flour blend that looks, tastes and behaves like wheat flour. The result is a cookie that is delicious, indulgent and better for you.



SupplySide Food & Beverage Journal: Which plant-based fats do you rely on in your recipes?



Ganesh Nair, founder, Karma Nuts: We used the goodness of cashew flour to replace that buttery, decadent taste associated with non-plant-based cookies because we absolutely love cashews here at Karma Nuts, and cashews are naturally rich in those flavors that we wanted to emulate. Cashews are also a good source of six key vitamins and minerals and allow our cookies to deliver 3 grams of plant-based protein per serving. We are also using dates and coconut oil to bind the dough together, creating a delicious, soft and chewy cookie without using any animal products.



Haeler: We rely on sustainably sourced palm oil. Palm oil is really the only fat outside of butter that is solid at room temperature and neutral in flavor. It can be a good substitute for butter or margarine in vegan baking because of its creamy texture, neutral flavor and ability to improve baked goods' texture and moisture. Palm oil can also improve the volume of baked goods, help support good layering in puff pastries and croissants, and create tender and flaky textures. Plus, it has a longer shelf life than other vegetable oils, so it can be stored for longer without going rancid.



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NEXTY Awards 2024: Coconut yogurt and plant-based salmon win big at spirited celebration – article

The most recent NEXTY Awards featured winners like The Coconut Cult and Konscious Foods. Scott Miller detailed the awards that recognize creativity and integrity in the food and beverage industry.

SupplySide Food & Beverage Journal: How can vegan bakery brands continue to improve?

Nair: A lot of brands are bringing vegan options to the market that are "me too" – a vegan option of the conventional product that is currently on the market. While that can be successful, we think there is much greater power in developing products that use the natural goodness of vegan ingredients to create the best possible snack. A good example of this is Dr. Praeger's veggie burgers. They are vegan, not because of frankenfood ingredients, but because of how they naturally formulated their recipe. And as an incredibly popular frozen brand, we think there is something to be learned here.

Woodard: I can't speak for other brands, because everyone should make the best decisions for their business, but what we are focusing on is keeping our eye on emerging technology and trends and reformulating as needed, maintaining relationships with reputable suppliers producing the highest quality ingredients, and listening to consumer feedback to ensure we're creating products they love. ■

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> – SPINS





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