



BIRDS EYE CHALLENGES CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF FOOD ADDITIVES

reports Food Production Daily.com

Birds Eye recently published (10/01/2007), the results of a survey aimed at countering common consumer perceptions that frozen food is full of artificial additives. According to the findings of the study, which was commissioned by Birds Eye, UK consumers go to greater lengths to avoid additives in their diet than salt, sugar and genetically modified ingredients.

But the survey, which also compared the levels of additives and preservatives consumed by those who eat chilled ready meals, frozen ready meals and home cooked meals, claims that there is a significant misunderstanding of where additives are found.

"Over three quarters (83 per cent) of people believe that cooking meals from scratch will help avoid them altogether," said the company. "But people who ate home cooked meals consumed an average of 19 additives over a 24 hour period just one less than the average across the study of 20.2."

The survey was evidently commissioned by Birds Eye, the UK's largest maker of frozen foods, in order to counter public perceptions of frozen food as being packed full of artificial additives, and also to highlight the company's own additive-free developments.

"We were concerned to learn that Brits still think that frozen food is full of preservatives when in fact freezing is the most natural way to preserve food," said Birds Eye's Phil Balderamos. "Freezing stops the clock, so we don't need any preservatives, artificial colours or flavours."

In 2004, the company announced that it was removing additives from all its products in the UK in a multi-million pound overhaul. The company has since dropped over 100 artificial ingredients including modified starches and thickeners. For example, Birds Eye beef burgers no longer contain E621 and E223, which are otherwise known as the flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate and the preservative, sodium metabisulphate. The two chemical additives have been replaced by rosemary extract.

The company's strategy of removing additives is clearly designed to appeal to specific consumer concerns about artificial additives. Recent studies have linked some additives to childhood tantrums, and E numbers are increasingly being linked to issues such as obesity and heart disease. However, there remains a degree of debate over this issue.

Bird's Eye is one of the UK's leading ready meal manufacturers and is the largest brand in the frozen food market, which - excluding ice cream - is worth more than £3.7bn.

The recent consumer research was published by the firm and conducted by ICM last November. Over 1,000 UK adults were questioned about their attitudes to additives.

Birds Eye said that the survey findings were supported by independent research on the food intake of 100 people who logged a diary of their diet over 24 hours.

BFFF

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