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The Grocer Guide to...

The Grocer

# World foods & store cupboard



Analysis

# A taste for all seasons

The beauty of world cuisines lies in their versatility and ability to transport the consumer to a different part of the planet. So their popularity, particularly with a younger audience, remains undiminished.

So much of what has happened over the past five years has affected the way UK consumers view eating out and dining in.

With the onset of the Covid pandemic necessitating people to stay at home from March 2020, scratch cooking became increasingly popular, as consumers looked to find ways of making meals varied and interesting. Following this, the cost-of-living crisis and soaring inflation, initiated in late 2021, encouraged consumers to prioritise their spending habits carefully, resulting in fewer visits to restaurants, pubs and other dining establishments, although takeaway meals have retained their popularity following the Covid boom.

Amid all of this, the grocery sector has benefited from an increasing shopper interest in diverse meals and options

to share at home for the Big Night In or to use for at-home social occasions with friends and family. And, while international travel restrictions are now eased, consumers have learned, more than ever, how to indulge in world cuisines in their own kitchens, encouraged by social media guidance, as well as the advent of air fryers, now in more than 9.8m UK homes<sup>1</sup>.

A UK dining trends study earlier this year by Revenue Management<sup>2</sup> revealed that, across all restaurant types, respondents are still reporting fewer visits, with dine-in down -16% between Q1 2022 and Q1 2024 and a perception from respondents that restaurant prices are now higher. Restaurants' difficulties in continuing to attract a stable audience are to grocery's gain and world food suppliers are reaping some of the rewards.

At Tazaki Foods, owner of Japanese brand Yutaka, CEO Ken Furukawa says: "It has been a challenging time for restaurants in recent years: first with the pandemic and now with the cost-of-living challenges hitting households across the country. In June 2024, spend at restaurants fell by -11.5% year-on-year<sup>3</sup>, a slight improvement on May's slump of -15.7%," he notes. "Cost-conscious consumers are having to make difficult decisions around their outgoings, with 52%<sup>4</sup> of those cutting back on non-essential spending, opting to spend less on eating out at restaurants.

"All of this is driving retailers' sales as demand for at-home entertaining and premium meal solutions grows." As an example, he points to the positive performance of the company's Yutaka sushi nori – a core ingredient in



Japanese sushi making, which he says has grown 18% CAGR since 2020.

“Consumers continue to use food as a form of escapism and adventure,” adds Furukawa. “This has led to a 7.7% increase in the UK world food market last year<sup>5</sup>. We expect this figure to grow in coming years, as younger generations discover a fascination for world culture, made possible by the proliferation of global influencers on social media platforms such as TikTok.”

The current tough and challenging economic climate has led to an increase in the number of people seeking to replicate the restaurant experience at home as they find it less expensive than eating out, agrees Debbie King, retail sales & marketing director at Best of Poland. “Stocking a range of authentic and high-quality, great-value world

food products will attract shoppers and help them convert easily into the category by creating and maintaining an interest in those ingredients. World foods are increasingly popular and appeal both to shoppers seeking a taste of home or the authentic products that they have grown up with, and to new consumers keen to experience new flavours from other cultures.”

Aditi Hilgers, head of world foods at General Mills UK, owner of the Old El Paso Mexican food brand, says: “We’re seeing a wider shift in habits to home-centric living, with a +30% net shift globally towards consumers eating at home more and cutting back on out-of-home (OOH) eating<sup>6</sup>, saving on costs and enjoying a more intimate and communal dining experience.

“Of these, there are a whopping 60 billion in-home meal occasions each

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year in the UK<sup>7</sup> – yet currently only 11% of these contain a world food cuisine<sup>8</sup>, with Mexican making up just 2%<sup>9</sup>. However, Mexican food is a fast-growing segment within global tastes and has since risen by 17% YOY<sup>10</sup>. This creates a strong opportunity to introduce new and exciting Mexican-inspired flavours.

“At Old El Paso, our ambition is to make Mexican a top 10 family meal and inspire world food-lovers to explore a vibrant range of Mexican flavours at their dining table more often. Up against the classic British menu staples of Indian and Chinese cuisines, there is a fresh opportunity to drive the occasion for Mexican and embed Fajita Friday firmly within the weekly routine.

“Lastly, we know UK consumers like to discover something new: 52%

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of consumer reported they like to try new products and services<sup>11</sup>. Almost 3 in 5 consumers who say they have a worsened financial situation also say that they are likely to make a one-time impulse purchase ‘when the food or beverage is innovative in flavours/ taste’<sup>12</sup>. Old El Paso is committed to bringing exciting innovation to the category through more authentic-inspired flavours.”

Meanwhile, Upuli Ambawatta, brand manager at Empire Bespoke Foods (EBF) notes that inflation impacts product prices through various avenues, such as rising ingredients costs, increased labour, and higher freight and transport fees. “Consequently food prices have also risen,” she says.

“However, through our long-established relationships with suppliers, we have worked hard to keep price increases to a minimum without compromising product quality. We also run price promotions to provide consumers with incentives, allowing them to continue enjoying their favourite world cuisines even amid challenging economic conditions.”

### Own-label challenge

With the world food category buoyant, it is hardly surprising that UK retailers are also investing in own-label propositions in a bid to satisfy the hunger for restaurant-quality meals.

EBF’s Ambawatta believes the world food category has become “a hotspot for own-label products, which has helped bring shoppers into the category, further fuelling strong growth”, she says. “Beyond traditional own-label strategies, which have been based around value propositions, retailers are also addressing the demand for premium, restaurant-quality meals by offering higher-tier private-label products.”

However, more premium brands are also enjoying a good share of category value, she adds. “Consumers will always have the desire for quality dining experiences, and shifting this from restaurant to home helps [in a situation] where inflation has left less disposable income in people’s pockets. Despite the growth across private-label, retailers still look to established brands to lead in new product development and innovation within the category.”



Best of Poland’s King points out that “one of the key drivers in the success of world food products is authenticity and familiarity with the recipe, the ingredients, the flavours or indeed the brand. Shoppers are seeking increasingly exciting taste adventures and are looking for products which either remind them of their homeland or of dishes that they have enjoyed while travelling, or which bring something new to the table,” she says. “It’s also critical to success that the world foods offering delivers the reassurance of the product’s innate authenticity. Own-label, at present, simply cannot do this and would not fulfil shopper demand

“Similarly, while there is always room for premiumisation in most categories, while shoppers seek best value for money, the products which deliver the best quality, authenticity and choice at the most competitive prices will always be most in demand,” she adds.

### Scratch cooking at home

The significant popularity of cooking from scratch and eating at home during the Covid-19 pandemic, as many sought to recreate the international cuisines they enjoyed while eating out or on vacation, fuelled increased demand for world food products at home, says EBF’s Ambawatta. “This trend has continued even post-pandemic due to high inflation, leading people to reduce dining out and opt for more homemade meals,” she says. “According to Mintel’s 2023 report on world foods, ready meals emerged as a standout category, experiencing 12.7% growth<sup>13</sup>. This surge is attributed to their convenience and energy efficiency as they require minimal effort and energy to prepare.”

With the world foods category championing the current trend towards replicating the restaurant meal experience at home, consumer interest in cooking from scratch continues to grow at a significant pace despite



# Advancing interest in world foods

While the world foods category already encompasses various sub-segments, such as ready meals, meal kits, pastes, sauces and ingredients, each catering to different consumer needs, EBF's Ambawatta says the most progressive sub-category in terms of NPD is meal kits. "Due to their simplicity, meal kits allow for inexperienced cooks to explore a cuisine without having to buy all of the ingredients, so they are the entry point into world foods for most," she says. "Brands are introducing more flavours and new formats through meal kits compared to other sub-categories.

"In this context, we are launching our new range of Asian meal kits (including Japanese, Indian and Korean) under our new brand Master Cook. A selected range of these products will be available at Morrisons starting in August this year. Additionally, we are developing a range of ready-to-eat twin-pack dals under the WeightWatchers licensed brand, set to hit the market in 2025."

World foods allow people to escape a 'boring' mealtime routine, with flavours and colours that evoke a sense of travel at home<sup>i</sup>, says General Mills' Hilgers. "This is particularly seen with younger diners,

as 1 in 3 global Gen Z and Millennial consumers look for unique and different flavours in their food and beverages<sup>ii</sup>, she notes. "This coupled with the influence of OOH, has contributed to a rise in street food flavour trends, with 1 in 2 global consumers seeking street food flavour-inspired products<sup>iii</sup>."

With over 8.3m two-person households in the UK<sup>iv</sup>, younger couples and small families are a prime audience for world cuisines, she adds. "Younger consumers typically enjoy a wider range of global tastes, with 50% of 16- to 24-year-olds having seven or more types

of world cuisine at home<sup>v</sup>, so introducing convenient and affordable ways to access new global flavours is key to engaging with their preferred tastes." Old El Paso recently launched Street Vibes, a multi-format range of soft tacos in two street-style flavours, sauces and spice mixes. The brand's first two-person meal kits are available in two Mexican street food flavours: Barbacoa – "a smoky and sweet taste" ideally used with beef mince, and Al Pastor, which "elevates chicken to a whole new level". Both also work with fresh vegetables or plant-based meat alts.

buying patterns changing because of the current economic climate, says Best of Poland's King. "A key factor in the desire to recreate favourite dishes at home is the ever-increasing use of social media to communicate hundreds of global cuisines and recipe ideas in an instant," she notes. "Inspired by these, shoppers are seeking out the more unusual but authentic ingredients – a great opportunity for retailers to extend their world foods offering. Suppliers, too, are recognising this opportunity as can be demonstrated by significant investment in recipe-led point-of-sale material."

As we've seen a shift towards more home-centric living, consumer eating habits are also changing, with +0.4bn more meal occasions consumed in home vs 2019 (and 40% more work from home lunches)<sup>14</sup>, says General Mills' Hilgers. This dine-in trend is set to continue as consumers continue to spend more on at-home meals; 43% of

consumers plan to spend less on OOH entertainment, with less than 20% of evening meals now eaten out<sup>15</sup>."

As friends, couples and families spend more time at home, they are looking to world foods to introduce bold flavours that replicate the OOH experience, break away from the everyday routine, and enjoy vibrant flavours and colours that transport them and allows them to travel through [the concept of] food, adds Hilgers.

"To cut back on spending, 50% of consumers say they buy ready meals or ready-to-cook foods as an alternative to going out for dinner<sup>16</sup> and we see an increased demand for simple and convenient product formats that offer both taste and nutrition<sup>17</sup>," she says. "Mexican cuisine is ideal to meet this demand as it provides consumers the flexibility and choice to enjoy a wider range of exciting flavours at home in their own way – without the added costs of going out or ordering

a takeaway as they may have done previously."

## Trending cuisines

The number of different cuisines beginning to make their mark in the UK market is expanding, with influences such as different street foods leading consumers to seek out new options. However, the traditional favourites still hold considerable sway in the market.

"In observing the world foods aisle at any retailer, it's evident that a significant proportion of products feature Asian cuisines," says EBF's Ambawatta. "Statistics show that Indian and Chinese cuisines continue to be the most popular and widely consumed, followed by Mexican cuisine<sup>18</sup>. However, in recent years, less established cuisines, such as Thai, Japanese and Middle Eastern, have gained increasing traction. This shift is driven by consumers' ongoing desire for new and diverse dining

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experiences.”

She also believes that with the rising popularity of K-pop culture, more Korean brands are making their mark in the world foods market. “Additionally, Caribbean cuisine is gaining traction for its bold flavours,” she says. “Fusion cuisines are also on the rise, with restaurant chains increasingly incorporating these innovative options into their menus.”

Asian cuisines have remained among the most popular world foods due to their rich flavours, diverse ingredients and unique culinary techniques, says Tazaki Foods’ Furukawa. “As of recent trends, Asian cuisines like Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Indian and Korean continue to hold strong appeal globally,” he says. “Their staying power is bolstered by factors such as the rising interest in healthy eating, the growth of Asian populations in the UK, and the global reach of Asian media and pop culture, which includes K-pop, anime and Bollywood.

“Monthly Google searches of ‘sushi recipe’ have increased by 84% over the past nine years<sup>19</sup>, reflecting the growing number of people who are opting to recreate their favourite Japanese restaurant or takeaway dishes in their own home,” he adds. “This is made possible by the ever-rising number of supermarkets and grocery stores now stocking Japanese ingredients, both online and in-store. And Japanese is not the only food booming in popularity; Ocado recently listed 50 new Korean ingredients after noticing that searches for ‘kimchi’ on its site had increased by over 40% in two years<sup>20</sup>.”

Best of Poland’s King acknowledges that Asian food remains undeniably popular, but says other factors are also influencing the world foods category. “The popularity of global cuisines is largely driven by people’s desire to recreate their favourite dishes from ‘home’ or those that they enjoyed while travelling; social media is also responsible for sparking people’s interest in great-tasting (and good-looking) food,” she says. “Population migration is also a key factor. Due to the increased number of Eastern European people now living in the UK, there is growing demand for ‘homeland’ cuisine. Best of Poland is bringing the best-selling and leading Polish brands to the UK market across ambient and frozen food and drink sectors.”



General Mills’ Hilgers observes that, with more than half of consumers stating they are de-prioritising eating out or takeaways<sup>21</sup>, world foods can capitalise on more people cooking at home. “Consumers are increasingly seeing the value of connection, prioritising shared mealtimes with friends and family,” she says. “This is reflected by a 6% net increase in mealtimes with others rather than eating alone<sup>22</sup>. Mexican dishes create fun and joyful shared moments, encouraging more playfulness than British eating habits; 49% of world cuisine eaters agree that it is more appealing to eat a leisure occasion meal consisting of lots of different dishes than one main dish<sup>23</sup>.”

### Provenance to the fore

“Provenance is critical within world foods,” says Best of Poland’s King. “Shoppers want to buy the products from their homeland that they’re familiar with and they want the reassurance of a tried and trusted brand to be able to recreate the dishes that they know and love. Authentic ingredients are key to creating authentic flavours.”

“Authenticity is the most appealing quality in world cuisine<sup>24</sup>,” agrees EBF’s Ambawatta. “Products made from fresh, natural ingredients are perceived to deliver the most authentic flavours, and these factors are crucial in providing the best-quality products to consumers.” EBF sources its



ingredients from hand-picked suppliers with whom it has had long-standing relationships, she says. “We strive to avoid artificial ingredients, including colours, flavourings and preservatives, to preserve the authentic flavours and textures of the cuisine.”

### Looking ahead

A growing emphasis on health and wellness will continue to be one of the main influences on consumer purchasing when it comes to world foods and store cupboard ingredients, says Tazaki Foods’ Furukawa. “Consumers are seeking foods that offer health benefits, such as high protein, low sugar and healthy fats. “Gut health, in particular, has

become a major point of discussion over the past few years: monthly searches for ‘how to improve gut health’ have skyrocketed by 1,812% since 2019 and are predicted to grow by a further 13% by June 2025<sup>25</sup>,” he says. “This is playing out on the shop floor, with Waitrose reporting that interest in fermented condiments grew considerably in 2023. Sales of rice vinegar rose by 13%, while a surge in demand for miso resulted in a series of new umami-based recipes being added to its website, including miso pork noodles and grilled corn with miso butter and nori salt.”

The rise of specific dietary preferences and restrictions, such as vegan, gluten-free, keto, and paleo diets, will also drive consumers towards world foods that can meet these needs, he adds. “For instance, Mediterranean cuisine is often favoured for its heart-healthy ingredients, while Japanese cuisine is valued for its balance and use of fresh seafood and vegetables.

“Lastly, a desire for culinary exploration and authentic food experiences will lead more people to seek out authentic ingredients and traditional cooking methods. Consumers are looking for genuine experiences that stay true to the origins of the cuisine. This includes using specific spices, traditional cooking methods, and sourcing ingredients from their native regions.”

Best of Poland’s King maintains that authenticity will continue to be the No.1 driver within world foods; the trend for recreating the restaurant experience at home is here to stay for the foreseeable future. “Value for money will also be critical, especially in a harsh economic climate,” she adds.

Grocery inflation is now less than one-fifth of what it was a year ago, yet 23% of households are still struggling to meet their needs<sup>26</sup>, says EBF’s Ambawatta. “Notably 29% of grocery spending was on promotional items<sup>27</sup>, highlighting the demand for value-for-money options,” she says. “Consequently, retailers are increasingly seeking affordable alternatives and branded offerings face significant competition from value options provided by own-labels.”

Consumers will also be looking for new flavours and new formats, she observes. “Younger consumers aged 16-34 exhibit the widest culinary

repertoire, driving future growth in the [world foods] category. These consumers consume at least seven different world cuisines within a three-month period<sup>28</sup>, demonstrating their desire to incorporate new and diverse flavours into their meals. This trend underscores the importance of innovation and variety in meeting the expectations of this demographic.”

Finally, as the category becomes increasingly competitive, marketing plays a crucial role in shaping customers’ buying decisions, adds Ambawatta. “Propositions must be aligned with consumer needs, and brands must strategically use limited media space to effectively influence buyers’ choices and stand out in a crowded market.”

General Mills’ Hilgers highlights the increasing popularity of world cuisines and the need for suppliers to make them easy to cook. “Thirty-four per cent of world cuisine consumers in the UK say that emerging world cuisines have replaced the more established ones in their regular meal choices<sup>29</sup>, as new and exciting world cuisines become available in a convenient and affordable format that doesn’t sacrifice on quality,” she says.

“Quick and easy-to-prepare, our Mexican-inspired cuisine makes cooking exciting world flavours at home accessible. Scratch cooking is at a five-year low, with 20% of evening meals scratch-cooked and average main meal preparation time sitting at just 25 minutes<sup>30</sup>,” she adds. “This goes to show the size of the opportunity for meal kits and how they can meet a growing demand for at-home cooking.”

### Sources

- <sup>1</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/32y88uk8>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/bdfstwnn>
- <sup>3-4</sup> Barclay’s UK Consumer Spending Report
- <sup>5</sup> Mintel, UK World Cuisines Market Report 2023
- <sup>6</sup> Innova, Lifestyle & Attitudes Survey 2023
- <sup>7-9</sup> Kantar, Usage 52wk IH & Carry Out meals & snacking occasions EU/UK, UK data 52 w/e 24.12.23, food only, excludes drinks
- <sup>10</sup> NielsenIQ, 2023, Mid-year European consumer outlook
- <sup>11</sup> Euromonitor, Consumer Life-styles, May 2023, AU/FR/UK
- <sup>12</sup> Innova Trends Survey 2022 (average of Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Spain, UK, US)
- <sup>13</sup> See 3
- <sup>14</sup> Kantar, U&A
- <sup>15</sup> See 10
- <sup>16</sup> See 3
- <sup>17</sup> FMCG Gurus, Top 10 Trends for 2024
- <sup>18</sup> Kantar Profiles/Mintel, March 2023, n= 2000 internet users aged 16+
- <sup>19</sup> Google search data provided by Tazaki Foods
- <sup>20</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/2keebh5b>
- <sup>21</sup> IGD, What’s driving the UK eating out market?
- <sup>22</sup> Innova, Global Consumer Trend Opportunities for 2024
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- <sup>25</sup> Gut health search data provided by Tazaki Foods
- <sup>26-27</sup> Kantar, Brand Strategy Unpacked webinar, April 2024
- <sup>28</sup> See 18
- <sup>29</sup> See 3
- <sup>30</sup> Kantar, GB SOTN 2023

### Interest in world foods

- <sup>i</sup> See 3
- <sup>ii</sup> Innova, Top Trends in Flavours for 2024
- <sup>iv</sup> ONS, Families and Households in the UK 2022
- <sup>v</sup> See 3

Best of Poland

# Bringing authentic Polish taste

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- Dawtona**  
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- Black Energy**  
 – No.1 energy drinks brand<sup>4</sup>
- 4Move**  
 – isotonic & vitamin sports drinks
- Fruugo**  
 – natural caffeine energy drinks
- Ngine**  
 – energy drinks
- Spolem Kielecki**  
 – ‘cult’ mayonnaise brand
- Hortex**  
 – drinks and No.1 frozen vegetable brands<sup>5</sup>
- Muszynianka**  
 – mineralised water
- Gellwe**  
 – cake mixes
- Polskie Młyn Flour**  
 – brand from the largest mill in Poland

World cuisines are increasingly popular, and appeal to shoppers seeking authentic products they have grown up with as well as to new consumers keen to experience new flavours from other cultures.

“Provenance is critical within world foods,” says Best of Poland managing director James Sheppard. “Shoppers want the reassurance of a tried and trusted brand to recreate the dishes they know and love from home or that they enjoyed while travelling. Authentic ingredients are key to creating authentic flavours.”

**World food expertise**

Best of Poland, a BRC-accredited UK importer and distributor for Polish branded food and drink category leaders, aims to deliver significant branded volume sales within retail, convenience, foodservice, wholesale, and discounters via a team of world food experts, explains Sheppard.

The company has partnered with many well-known and trusted No.1 branded Polish food and drink brands, including Dawtona vegetables and pickles, Black Energy drink, 4Move isotonic sports drink, Muszynianka water, Kielecki ‘cult’ mayonnaise, Hortex fruit juices and frozen fruit and vegetables, to name but a few.

“Polish ambient food and drink sales within the top four major retailers are nearly £100m per annum<sup>1</sup> and growing



“Provenance is critical within world foods. Shoppers want the reassurance of a tried and trusted brand to recreate the dishes they know and love from home or enjoyed while travelling”

faster than the total world foods category in terms of volume sales<sup>2</sup>, ensuring these ranges are a ‘must stock’ line in stores to meet the needs of their shoppers,” reveals Sheppard.

Population migration is also a key factor. Due to the increased number of Eastern European people now living in the UK, there is growing demand for ‘homeland’ cuisine. Best of Poland is bringing the best-selling and leading Polish brands to the UK market across ambient and frozen food and drink sectors.

“Our mission is clear,” he adds. “We aim to be the centre of excellence for Polish food and drink brands in the UK via a ‘one-stop shop’ strategic supplier partnership. Essentially, our brands can tap into a range of experts, contacts and advice in one place. We see a continued increase in shopper demand for authentic East European world food ranges, enjoyed by Polish, British, Ukrainian and Romanian communities across the UK. We continue to work with other household brands and look forward to building our product range portfolio this year.

“Our shopper activation plans include promotions, on-shelf activity, point of sale and direct-to-consumer engagement plans, as well as online and social media marketing with the parent Polish business.”



Source

<sup>1,2</sup> NielsenIQ, Top 4 UK retailers, 52 w/e 23.11.23  
<sup>3</sup> AC Nielsen, Sales Value, Total Market, YTD July 2023  
<sup>4</sup> AC Nielsen, Energy drinks market, 2023  
<sup>5</sup> Nielsen FFV total Poland, value data, February 2022





# BRINGING THE AUTHENTIC TASTE OF POLAND TO THE UK

World cuisines are increasingly popular and appealing both to shoppers seeking the authentic products they have grown up with, and to new consumers keen to experience new flavours from other cultures.



- Best of Poland is committed to delivering high quality products at great value and competitive prices
- Partnering with leading Polish #1 brands
- Due to the increased number of Eastern European people now living in the UK, there is growing demand for 'homeland' cuisine
- Polish ambient Food and drink sales growing faster than total World Foods Category in terms of volume sales

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# Focus on world foods growth

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↙ The increasing popularity of Asian and global cuisines has created significant opportunities in the world foods market, says Upuli Ambawatta, brand manager at Empire Bespoke Foods (EBF). “This trend allows us to introduce new flavours and innovative formats, meeting the evolving tastes of our customers,” she says. “In response, EBF is thrilled to unveil our new Asian range under the Master Cook brand, featuring meal kits, noodles and different condiments.

“Our range includes an assortment of Japanese, Indian and Korean meal kits, Japanese dry noodles, ramen broth, kimchi, and a variety of soy sauces,” she adds. “Our company, has long-standing relationships with Asian suppliers renowned for their quality products. So, the majority of our offerings are made in Asia, using authentic recipes and the finest ingredients.”

EBF is committed to delivering the most authentic and highest-quality products to its customers, notes Ambawatta. “This is reflected in our role as the sole grocery retail distributor for the S&B brand in the UK. S&B, renowned for being the first company to successfully manufacture curry powder in Japan and for inventing tube wasabi, is a leader in its field. Our expanded S&B range includes new offerings such as ready-to-eat curry sauces, miso soups and popular Japanese seasonings.”

The company’s Master Cook brand has now been listed in Morrisons, while the S&B range is available in all the major retailers except Asda.

“The world foods category has 95% household penetration,” reveals Ambawatta. “To drive category growth, we should focus on encouraging infrequent world food shoppers to



“Our new Asian range under the Master Cook brand focuses on providing convenience and value to consumers, empowering them to confidently explore bold Asian flavours without spending excessive time or effort in the kitchen”

explore and purchase more often. So, precise merchandising, strategic media use and timely price promotions as well as NPD are key to attracting customers. We are planning to invest significantly in the above mentioned areas to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of our brands.”

Meeting market needs

Developing a product range also begins with understanding market trends and competitor movements, so EBF employs two primary approaches, explains Ambawatta. “First, through market research and observations, we identify gaps in the category and emerging trends, developing products to address these. Expanding our S&B range to include Japanese seasonings, ready-made curry sauces and miso soup varieties as well as the launch of the Master Cook range are examples of such initiatives. Secondly, in areas where a single brand dominates, we provide a good alternative solution as a challenger brand, giving shoppers more choices to select from.

“Ultimately, our ambition is category growth,” she concludes. “Via both approaches, we aim to expand our range with new products and inspire occasional shoppers to explore and engage with the category more frequently.”



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General Mills – Old El Paso

# Maximising Mexican cuisine

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Old El Paso

Consumers are increasingly shifting their habits to home-centric living as it becomes harder to swallow the costs of eating out. This has seen a +30% net shift globally in choosing the dining room table over an out of home meal<sup>1</sup>. “However, families, couples and friends are still hungry to recreate the vibrant, social buzz of world cuisines at home as they would enjoy in a restaurant, so consumers are seeking out bold flavours from the world food aisle to allow them to travel through food<sup>2</sup>,” says Aditi Hilgers, head of world foods at General Mills UK.

As the UK’s No.1 Mexican brand<sup>3</sup>, Old El Paso is always looking for new ways to elevate the at-home dining experience, offering delicious meal solutions that are easy to prepare and customisable to the whole family’s tastes, she says.

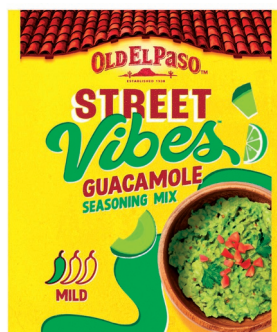
**Breaking the ‘norm’**

92% of Brits eat world cuisines at home<sup>4</sup>, but for a meal to become a family favourite, it must be tasty, good value and easy to make<sup>5</sup>. Interest in Mexican flavours continues to grow, with the segment up 17% YOY within global tastes<sup>6</sup>, presenting a fresh opportunity to tap into the latest trends and transport consumers with a popular world cuisine that breaks up the weekday mealtime ‘norms’.

“Old El Paso meal kits are a perfect solution to this as both a cost-effective and simple way to serve up tasty, weekly meals that can be enjoyed by the entire family,” says Hilgers. “Mexican is a highly impulsive cuisine, with 68% buying ‘because I feel like it’<sup>7</sup>, and it is a powerful driver for overall basket spend with accompanying purchases of fresh vegetables and choice of protein. Therefore, it is key to drive visibility of the cuisine and bring in new shoppers through innovation, ensuring it is easy and fun to shop.”

**Takes two to taco**

There are over 8.3m two-person households in the UK<sup>8</sup>, making younger couples and small families a prime audience for exciting, at-home meal experiences. “To meet this demand,



“Interest in Mexican flavours continues to grow, with the segment up 17% YOY within global tastes<sup>6</sup>”

Old El Paso launched Street Vibes, a delicious new multi-format range of soft taco street-food flavours, kits, sauces and spice mixes that transport duos to the bustling streets of Mexican street food markets with its vibrant flavours,” notes Hilgers. Backed by a 360-degree marketing campaign, including a high-impact through-the-line campaign and in-store activity, it encourages consumers to explore Mexican cuisine, driving new growth into the category.

“The new range is available in two of the most popular Mexican street food flavours: Barbacoa, which offers a distinctive smoky and sweet taste sensation; and Al Pastor, for a spicy yet fruity kick,” she adds. “Shoppers can further elevate the meal with a guacamole spice mix – the perfect blend of spices to liven up the avocado-based dip – or opt for a standalone soft taco pack offering the same superior Old El Paso taste, preservative-free.”

Taking just 20 minutes to prepare and capturing the fun and flavourful world of street tacos, Street Vibes makes Mexican accessible to everyone on any night of the week. “There’s real magic in these recipes – the perfect choice for any duo looking to turn up the vibes at the dinner table.”



Source

<sup>1</sup> Innova, Lifestyle & Attitudes Survey 2023  
<sup>2</sup> Kantar, FR Aisle Study research 2023  
<sup>3</sup> NIQ, L52W Grocery Mults, w/e 08.06.24  
<sup>4</sup> Mintel, World Cuisines Report UK 2023  
<sup>5</sup> Hall & Partners – Bringing to Life the Segmentation Demand Spaces  
<sup>6</sup> NielsenIQ, 2023 Mid-year European consumer outlook  
<sup>7</sup> Shopper intelligence UK, Sept 2023  
<sup>8</sup> ONS 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/4km4xrd8>



# MAKE SOME NOISE WITH MEXICAN SALES

## WITH OLD EL PASO'S LEADING RANGE<sup>1</sup>

- Old El Paso is the #1 World Foods brand, with 56% share of Mexican<sup>1</sup>
- Drive total basket spend with complementary purchases of dairy, meat & fresh produce with every Mexican meal<sup>2</sup>
- Stock the full Old El Paso range of sides and sauces to drive your category sales, with Old El Paso accompaniments up 8.7%<sup>3</sup>



## Tazaki Foods

# Growing appetite for sushi

### DETAILS

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### KEY BRANDS

**Yutaka**

Forget fish and chips. Sushi is the UK's new national dish, according to Japanese ingredient brand Yutaka.

"The appetite for sushi among UK consumers has grown exponentially since it was first introduced to Britain back in the 1970s," explains Na Wang, head of marketing at Tazaki Foods, brand owner of Yutaka. "So much so that, last year, Tesco reported sushi had overtaken the smoked salmon sandwich<sup>1</sup> to become its most popular premium lunchtime main."

And it's not just meal deal sarnies that should be scared, she says. "Retailers are now giving far more prominence to Japanese ingredients in-store and online as they seek to meet the surging demand of those looking to recreate the magic of their favourite sushi restaurant in their own kitchen," she reveals.

Yutaka reports that UK retail sales for its sushi nori – a core ingredient in Japanese sushi making – have grown 18% CAGR since 2020<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, the brand's Koshi Sushi Rice 5kg has become the No.1 best-seller on Amazon in the white rice category<sup>3</sup>.

### Catapulted into homes

"The proliferation of Japanese restaurants across the UK over the past few decades has helped to catapult sushi into the British mainstream," says Wang. "People love the theatre of Japanese cuisine and its focus on fresh, seasonal ingredients. It has something to offer everyone, whether you're pescatarian, vegetarian or gluten-free."

"Now, we're seeing an increasing number of people trying their hand at sushi-making at home. It started on a large scale during the pandemic when restaurant doors were closed, and it



“Last year, Tesco reported that sushi had overtaken the smoked salmon sandwich<sup>1</sup> to become its most popular lunchtime main”

hasn't slowed down since. There was previously a misconception that sushi is tricky to make. When people get around to giving it a go, they learn it's actually really easy and fun."

A recent study of 1,013 UK consumers by Yutaka<sup>4</sup> found that almost 1 in 3 (30%) had never tried making sushi at home but would like to. To encourage more people to get more adventurous in the kitchen, Yutaka recently teamed up with well-known foodies to launch a competition on its social media platforms, inviting people to submit pictures of their own sushi portraits. The winner received a sushi-making masterclass for up to four people, while 25 people were also chosen at random to receive a £30 Yutaka gift card.

"We had so many great entries that it was almost impossible to choose a winner", says Wang. "We loved seeing how creative people got in their kitchen, with many involving their kids and partners!"

### Source

- <https://tinyurl.com/4bbfsvf3>
- Internal company data
- <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Best-Sellers-White-Rice/zgbs/grocery/6860993031>
- Yutaka commissioned research supported by Research Without Barriers from 3-6 June 2024, n=1,013 adults from across the UK



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Suitable for vegetarians  
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