

Britain gets fruity with smoothies

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Having resolved to have a healthy 2007 after the excesses of the festive season, many of you may well be reaching for a smoothie to kick start the new regime. And it seems that you won't be alone, as latest research from MINTEL finds that over the past five years the smoothies market has enjoyed a real burst of energy, with sales growing by no less than 523% to reach Â£134 million in 2006. Helped by the introduction of larger 1-litre cartons, there has also been significant growth in volume sales, with Brits knocking back 34 million litres of smoothies last year - enough to fill almost 14 Olympic size pools, up from just 6.3 million litres in 2001.

Over the coming five years, volume sales are set to see greater increases than value sales as new entrants into the market are likely to lead to a fall in the average price of a smoothie. Volumes will almost treble between 2006 and 2011, up 186% to almost 100 million litres, while value sales will rise 76% over the same period.

"Smoothies have been the true drinks success story of the 21st century and are clearly no longer a niche market. Healthy eating, and in particular the 5 a day fruit and vegetable campaign, has been the driving force behind continuing rates of exceptional growth. With UK consumers becoming increasingly health-conscious and in light of growing concerns about obesity in adults and children, the smoothie market is set to see significant future growth," comments Vivianne Ihekweazu, senior market analyst at MINTEL.

Fruit and functional smoothies squeeze dairy varieties out

Standard fruit smoothies make up the core of the market, accounting for an 80% share of value in 2006, and 86% of total smoothie volume sales. But it is functional smoothies which have been the true shining star of the market. Sales of these smoothies, which have added ingredients such as ginseng, echinacea and other natural products have achieved by far the greatest growth, having risen by a massive 2,350% between 2001 and 2006. Although they remain a much smaller sector, taking just an 11% value share, sales reached almost Â£15 million last year.

Meanwhile, sales of dairy smoothies have shown below-average growth, as fruit products have held more appeal for consumers looking to achieve their 5-a-day fruit requirement. Although sales of dairy smoothies have more than doubled (106% growth) over the same five year period to reach around Â£11 million in 2006, market share has started to fall.

Young Brits are smooth operators

Despite the huge growth in the market, less than a third (31%) of the adult population currently buy smoothies. The young 15-19 and 25-34 age groups are the most likely to reach for a smoothie, perhaps due to their busy on the go lifestyle or even as a hangover cure. Smoothies are most popular in London and the South as they may be more widely available in urban areas, but as availability widens, consumption should also increase in line with this.

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