

Sandwiches

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Sandwiches: No longer left on the shelf

For so long the humble lunchtime sandwich was just limp lettuce and a cheese slice between two pieces of dry white bread. No surprise then that sarnies have for some time been facing rising competition from their more glamorous counterparts - salads, soups and sushi. But according to latest research from MINTEL the great British butty is biting back.

Between 2002 and 2006 average year on year growth in sandwich sales was a soggy 3.5%, but over the last year alone (2006 - 2007) growth has been a much more appealing 9%, almost three times that of previous years.

"The sandwich market has turned itself around. Having successfully tapped into the trend for healthy eating, it is now clearly reaping the rewards. With the likes of superfood and wheat-free varieties now available, sandwiches increasingly appeal to the rising number of Brits looking for naturally good and wholesome food," explains Vivianne Ihekweazu, senior market analyst at MINTEL.

"There is also a greater variety of fillings to choose from, allowing Brits to be more adventurous and go for sandwiches such as Middle Eastern falafel or Oriental style chicken, a far cry from the traditional cheese and ham variety," she adds.

This year Brits will spend no less than Â£4.1 billion on sarnies, up from just Â£3.3 billion in 2002. What is more, MINTEL forecasts that the sandwich market will continue to grow over the next five years, with sales set to break through the Â£5 billion mark by 2012.

Green eggs and ham, anyone?

Consumers are becoming more ethically minded and are concerned with both the environment and with animal welfare. Bringing these principles into sandwiches will be key if the market is to enjoy continued success.

"Consumers are looking for high quality free-range meat and eggs, as well as packaging that won't harm the environment. But taking this one step further by considering the carbon footprint of a product, or its local sourcing credentials may satisfy Britain's burgeoning sense of ethical responsibility and create a unique selling point," comments Vivianne Ihekweazu.

Meal deals are the future

Looking to the future - where can the sandwich go from here? To encourage more people to buy sandwiches, shops should start to offer more combination lunches, with a small sandwich and mug of soup or side salad meal deal. Also, heating up sandwiches in a toast bag offers a warming option as the Winter months come in.

The sandwich has long been associated with lunchtime, but with longer working hours we could see more and more people eating sandwiches as a stopgap while working late at the office and before meeting friends for a drink. "Eat me, keep me deals", where you buy one sandwich to eat straight away and another to keep and eat later, would make the most of this trend.

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