

New Biscuit Generation:

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70% of young Brits have appetite for traditional biscuits

While stereotypical images may evoke scenes of granny's biscuit tin being passed around with a classic biscuit selection and younger consumers dropping the newest and most innovative biscuits into their shopping baskets - latest research from Mintel reveals a rather different picture.

It appears younger consumers (16 to 24 year-olds) have the biggest appetite for traditional British biscuits* such as Bourbon and Custard Cream - with six in ten (60%) of them disagreeing that traditional biscuits are boring, compared to 55% of their older counterparts (55+).

And it's not for lack of choice that consumers are turning to classic biscuits - as innovation in the UK biscuit market has never been higher. Indeed, launches more than doubled in the UK between 2007 and 2011, rising to over 300 in the past 12 months. Furthermore, it is mainly younger consumers seeking solace in a biccie as the majority (70%) of 16-24 year-olds would opt for biscuits as an indulgent treat, compared to 62% of the 55+. Mature consumers, however, are far more likely to keep the time-honoured tradition of dunking alive - only 46% of younger consumers (16-24) enjoy a biscuit with a hot drink as opposed to 63% of the over 45s.

Alex Beckett, senior food and drink analyst at Mintel, said:

"The youth of Britain is growing up immersed in digital media, text-speak and cutting-edge gadgetry but this doesn't mean they don't appreciate a good old-fashioned Custard Cream. They may lack TV support or big-name brands, but the humble Bourbon, Malted Milk and Custard Cream are cherished by teens and students. Maybe the lack of try-hard advertising appeals to them - or maybe these biscuits are just better value than the increasingly chocolate-laden new launches. Either way, the youth of austerity Britain has respect for our biscuit heritage."

An increasing number of Brits can't keep their hands from the cookie jar - with 86% of Brits in 2011 eating sweet biscuits compared to 83% in 2010. Today, 15% of Brits confess to eating sweet biscuits once a day or more and nearly half (47%) admit they like to treat themselves with foods that are not good for them. And when it comes to eating occasions, it seems biscuits are seen as a good way to help productivity, with nearly two in five (38%) Brits munching on them at work or college or university, rising to 58% users in full-time education.

HALF OF WOMEN FEEL GUILTY ABOUT EATING BISCUITS

But despite Britain's biscuit love - there is one thing casting a shadow across the popularity of the biscuit - the guilt factor. Overall, nearly two fifths (36%) of British biscuit eaters say they feel guilty about eating biscuits, a figure that rises to almost half (46%) of all women. A strong demand for healthier biscuit options is also reflected in the fact that 40% of consumers admit they would eat more if they were lower in sugar.

"Women have rather a conflicted relationship with biscuits. They are more likely than men to indulge in them as a treat, but are then far more likely to feel guilty about it. Unfortunately, the healthy biscuits that are on the market are tarnished with a bland reputation, making that chocolate biscuit all the more tempting," Alex continues.

Indeed, healthy issues can represent the battleground for the biscuit industry, as two in five (40%) consumers believe that there aren't enough of these available - but at the same time almost half (48%) of consumers think low-fat and healthy biscuits taste bland. In 2011, no additives or preservatives was the most used health claim for new products, accounting for a quarter (25%) of new product launches in the sweet biscuit sector in the UK.

And it is Scottish consumers who eat the most sweet biscuits, with 20% of consumers in that region eating them once a day or more. They are closely followed by those in the North of England with 19%, 16% in Wales, Yorkshire and Humberside, 15% in the South West, 14% in the South East and Anglia, 13% in the East and West Midlands. While 12% of Londoners and those in the North West have biscuits every day.

In terms of value, total retail value sales climbed by a sweet 26% since 2006 to reach Â£1.4 billion in 2011. And it appears the sector has unwrapped success for the future too, as Mintel expects it to grow a further 21% to reach Â£1.7 billion by 2016.

But it is the appeal of everyday biscuits, or plain biscuits, such as digestives, that have boosted the fortunes of the market, with sales value up 14% in just one year (2010-11), with children's biscuits also doing well with sales value up 8% over the same period to reach a market value of Â£143 million in 2011. Conversely biscuit bundle packs have suffered, with value sales down 14% over the past year to a value of Â£6 million in 2011. Chocolate biscuit bars and special biscuit treats also suffered over the past year with declines of 10% (a market value of Â£174 million in 2011) and 3% (a market

value of £133 million in 2011) respectively over the period.

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Source: Mintel Oxygen Reports

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