

Porridge - please sir, we'd like some more

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Today, hot cereals (porridge and oatmeal) are benefiting from a real revival among Britain's health conscious consumers. Between 2003 and 2005, things really started hotting up for these humble oats when value sales increased by a massive 26%. Overall, since the start of the millennium, sales grew by an impressive 81% reaching Â£85 million in 2005. Meanwhile, over the same five year period, volume sales also increased by a healthy 43% with Britons munching their way through 50,000 tonnes of these oaty delights last year alone. Despite the rising popularity of single serve porridge sachets, it is interesting to see that traditional oats have also benefited from the porridge revival. In stark contrast to this, the cold cereal market grew by just 13% and 8% in value and volume terms respectively during this time.

"The popularity of porridge has seen something of a revolution, cooking up a storm not only in the home but also in Britain's cafes and sandwich shops. The success of porridge is almost entirely due to its convenience and its healthy positioning, both of which are key requirements for food in the 21st century. It is amazing to see this simple staple now giving more modern and seemingly more adventurous cereals a real run for their money, which is particularly impressive given the amount of investment ploughed in to new launches in the cereal market," comments Julie Sloan Senior Market Analyst.

Over the next five years, hot cereals is expected to yet again dominate growth, rising considerably in value terms but three times faster in volume than cold cereals in cold terms (23% versus 7%) albeit from a smaller base. Although growing at a slower rate than the previous 5 years, the hot cereal segment will continue full steam ahead.

"Hot cereals have the potential to open up the market to a wider audience. The natural health benefits should outlive its current 'en vogue' status, however, it is important that as the summer months approach, they are not forgotten. In terms of the future, it is too early to say whether this is a temporary phase, with the high-profile Gillian McKeith from the program 'You Are What You Eat' advocating porridge as a low-GI meal option, and even the contestants on the most recent Celebrity Big Brother eating porridge on a daily basis," comments Julie Sloan.

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