

Category focus Chiller cabinet products

could be doing to improve their yogurt and chilled pot dessert sales simply by selecting the right range and applying basic merchandising principles. And they could also be generating incremental sales through promoting yogurts and single-pot desserts as part of a meal deal offering."

In terms of market performance, McDonough says: "Chilled yogurt and pot desserts sales as a whole are up by 5.4%, adding £107m in value and taking annual sales of the category above the £2bn-a-year threshold. "Total yogurt sales have increased by 7.6%, pot desserts by 3.4%, children's yogurts are up by 4% and even functional yogurt drinks, which were in decline at this point last year, grew by 1.2%, so every major sector within the category is now back in growth on an annual basis and the performance of the Müller brand portfolio has accounted for 30% of this upturn,"

Retailer view

Ramesh Shingadia, who runs a Londis store in Southwater, West Sussex, says: "We originally used the Partners for Growth advice on our spreads and margarines category last year.

"We re-merchandised the section using the planograms and we saw a phenomenal jump in sales – a 40% increase in sales within that category. Following that success we have applied the same principles and planograms to other categories within the store with similar success. It has been absolutely wonderful for our bottom-line figures."



he adds.

Key Müller brands have all grown ahead of these sector performances over the past 12 months, with Müller Corner sales up by 7.7%; Müllerlight up by 19.2%; Müller Rice increasing by 21.9% – almost seven times the chilled pot dessert sector, and Little Stars growing by 20.2% – over five times the children's sector increase of 4%.

Fresh soup market

Fresh soup is becoming increasingly popular as consumers move towards healthier, more premium, products.

The market leader in the £138m chilled soup sector is New Covent Garden and this year it has launched two new styles – Carrot & Coconut and Watercress & Crème Fraîche. It has also reintroduced three summer-only variants – Pea & Mint, Gazpacho and Summer Vegetable – all retailing at £1.99.

The move follows New Covent Garden soup reaching its highest-ever level of household penetration, with 1.2 million new households buying the brand last winter.

Group marketing director Nigel Parrott says the summer range will introduce new consumers, particularly those who enjoy alfresco dining, to the brand.

"While fresh soup sales will always peak in the winter months, the launch of a summer range gives the New Covent Garden brand all-year-round appeal, enabling consumers to enjoy our soups hot or cold, indoors or outdoors." Parrott says the summer soups will enable more retailers to use New Covent Garden as a "beacon brand" in the chiller cabinet, attracting new consumers to the fixture.

The activity comes as market-leading New Covent Garden continues to outperform the fresh

Merchandising tips

Müller UK suggests retailers review three key areas to ensure they are maximising chilled yogurt and pot dessert sales:

- Core range – focus on the best-selling brands and ensure that sufficient facings are given to those with the highest rates of sale. The top-sellers should always be available. If there are frequent gaps/out-of-stocks in the chiller, the space allocation needs to be reviewed and facings increased for those brands that are selling out
- Use POS materials to highlight promotional activity – used effectively these can drive footfall from passing trade and generate impulse purchases at point-of-sale
- Consider offering meal deals that include yogurts and pot desserts as part of any breakfast, lunch or evening meal deal offering, as well as a healthy, any-time-of-day snack

soup market, with sales of the £61m brand up 14.4% on last year, according to data from Nielsen.

Partners for growth

Trading conditions have never been more challenging and independent retailers need all the help they can get. With that in mind, it's worth looking at the impartial advice Unilever offers through its Partners for Growth initiative.

A recent survey showed that, when following Partners for Growth category advice, 62% of retailers said their sales had improved. Using the category-specific advice, convenience retailers saw growth of on average 33% in household, 30% in laundry, 29% in pot snacks and 25% in spreads. Other categories have also seen growth of up to 22%.

Stephen Moodie, Unilever's customer director for the convenience sector, says:

"The results of this survey demonstrate to us that we are right to continue supporting the convenience sector with the Partners for Growth programme. This is a great tool for convenience retailers when considering the layout of their fixture and range of products to be stocked. Such has been the success in the UK that we are now rolling it out to Ireland and will be looking to see similar impact there."

The survey indicated that, of those aware of Partners for Growth, 64% of convenience retailers followed the advice and quoted an average sales uplift of 12-33%. Most retailers surveyed implemented the planograms suggested by Partners for Growth and, as with 2007, spreads was the most popular. Household, laundry, pot snacks and ice cream also proved popular. **IRN**

Top convenience pack sizes by sector

Butter (44% of the market)

1. Lurpak Spreadable 250g (17%)
2. Lurpak Spreadable 500g (14%)
3. Anchor Butter 250g (9%)
4. Lurpak Butter 250g (7%)

Buttery spreads (27%)

1. Utterly Buttery 500g (37%)
2. Clover 500g (24%)
3. I Can't Believe it's not Butter 500g (20%)
4. I Can't Believe it's not Butter 250g (5%)
5. Clover 250g (4%)

Health (24%)

1. Flora 500g (33%)
2. Flora Light 500g (30%)
3. Flora Original 250g (19%)
4. Flora Buttery 500g (8%)
5. Flora Light 250g (5%)

Baking (3%)

1. Stork SB 500g (58%)
2. Stork tub 250g (19%)
3. Stork packet 250g (12%)
4. Summer Country Soft Margarine 200g (4%)
5. Stork tub 1,000g (2%)

Partners for Growth also recommends that retailers experiment with higher-value products, such as cholesterol-lowering spreads and spreadable butters. These are usually well supported and can generate additional consumer interest and sales.

It is also important that retailers use their knowledge of their own customers, as research shows that specific lines and own-label products can perform better in certain regions. For example, shoppers' tastes in butter can vary between the north and the south of England.

Source: Partners for Growth