



Ice cream and frozen desserts

With the summer in full swing, there's no better way to cool down than with a scoop of ice cream or by tucking into a refreshing frozen dessert. With so much choice on offer, we find out what products are hot and how businesses can draw in the crowds with their cool offerings.

Despite the fickle nature of the British weather, it seems that the market for ice cream and frozen desserts remains as popular as ever.

With this in mind we speak to some of the leaders in this industry and see what's new in the market in terms of product development.

We also find out how can you make your business stand out from your competitors during the summer months, when demand is at its highest?

Featuring:

Christina Veal, Director, New Forest Ice Cream; **Michele Young**, Director, Coolberry Café; **Scott Duncan**, Sales Director, Carpigiani UK Ltd; **Heather Beattie**, Buffalo Brand Manager, Nisbets Plc; **Guy Cooper**, Managing Director, Mitchell & Cooper; **Rob Blunderfield**, Marketing Manager, Parsley in Time; **Rebecca Manfredi**, Managing Director, Suncream Dairies; **Mike Godwin**, Managing Director, Amore Di Gelato.

What Role does ice cream and frozen desserts play in the quick service restaurant/Food-to-go market?

Whether it's the centre piece of a dessert or as accompaniment to your pudding, ice cream is one item that is likely to feature on nearly all food-to-go and quick service restaurant menus.



And, it seems, the popularity show no signs of waning.

Mike Godwin said: “Recently, we found that 85 per cent of venues questioned, claimed that ice cream was bought by over half of all diners.”

Rob Blunderfield added: “Ice cream and sorbets have always been popular menu choices for all ages in the quick service restaurant and food-to-go market.”

Heather Beattie agreed. She said: “Nothing holds quite the same appeal as delicious ice-creams, sorbets and frozen yogurt, particularly during the summer months.”

Christina Veal said: “In general, and despite our interchangeable weather in this country, the ice cream market in the UK is massive. Just think how many times you choose ice cream to complement a dessert when you are eating out, or how often you treat yourself to an ice cream on a leisurely afternoon stroll.

“There is a serious profit margin to be made from ice cream, whether served in a cone or a coupe. However, to ensure that you reap the rewards, quick service restaurant operators need a menu that will entice.

Guy Cooper added: “The summer months are a key time for any outlet looking to entice customers, and nothing quite says summer like ice creams, sorbets and frozen yoghurts.

“Offering customers a refreshing and unique summertime treat can maximise on frozen dessert sales, and with the home-made trend continuing to rise, investing in innovative desserts can create a unique selling point against the competition.”

However, Rebecca Manfredi advised that businesses should also pay attention to their ice cream and frozen dessert menus at other times of the year and not just in the summertime.





She said: “It’s a myth that ice cream is only popular during the summer months so make sure your ice cream menus are updated, and new flavours introduced, all year round. Offering a selection of tempting ice cream desserts will give you the perfect opportunity to capitalise on your customers’ indulgence factor at the end of a meal whatever the weather.

“The key to increasing revenue is to ensure that ice cream desserts look visually attractive and are described appealingly – and accurately - on the menu, but nothing sells quite like enthusiasm so brief your staff thoroughly on the product and its ingredients, and always encourage them to ‘upsell’ with a range of serving suggestions.”

This was seconded by Christina, who said: “A winning ice cream menu must be exactly that, a menu. Having something tangible that you can place in a customer’s hand with appealing images and detailed descriptions is a fantastic sales tool. Furthermore, having staff that can then sell the dessert or ice cream concept, rather than simply offering it, will again help to encourage customers to indulge at the end of the meal.

“An appealing menu should include something for everyone; from individually wrapped lollies and ice creams for the very youngest, to a wide range of scoops in a coupe or cone for a grab-and-go offering or sensational sundaes that will spark adult conversation around the table, all are necessary, and all will help to increase your takings. Look to upsell here, no one is ever going to choose the smallest portion.”

Michelle Young agreed that ice cream and frozen desserts provided businesses the perfect opportunity to upsell.

She said: “Ice cream and frozen desserts are predominantly ‘impulse purchase’ items, so they are great products to have on your menu as they offer you incremental add-on sales and profit opportunities.

“In general, they are considered affordable treats and as many can be tailored to fit an attractive retail price point, the upsell potential can be leveraged by many foodservice and food retail operators.”





Heather added: “Offering customers something a little different can be the key for outlets to ensure they maximise on ice cream sales during summertime and creating tempting home-made options could offer the solution.”

What products can businesses add to their menu to make sure they are keeping up with consumer trends?

When it comes to flavours, the general consensus is that it is important businesses continue to offer the ‘old favourites’, while also catering for the more adventurous.

Christina said: “With regards to flavours, it is important that you include the three most popular; strawberry, vanilla and chocolate, but a winning ice cream offering should also feature at least seven or eight other options to entice the more adventurous.”

Christina says New Forest Ice Cream aims to cater for this market with its Lotus Caramelised Biscoff, Jaffa Cake, Salted Caramel, Oriental Ginger, Liquorice and Gin & Pink Grapefruit ice creams.

Heather backed up the view that people were looking for something a little different. She said: “While traditional flavours such as vanilla, strawberry and chocolate will always be popular, consumer tastes are becoming increasingly sophisticated with the market seeing a real appetite for new and innovative flavour combinations.”

However, Rebecca revealed that consumers were yearning for flavours from the past.

She said: “This summer we see the ice cream sector returning to the favourite flavours of yesterday with consumers becoming nostalgic for the tastes that conjure up memories of happy times at home and on holiday.

“Indicators for 2016 are already pointing towards an increased demand for familiar flavours with a modern twist.





“Nostalgia is very much the mood of the moment, with many consumers now rejecting the more unusual and gimmicky flavours in favour of those that remind them of days gone by. Authentic flavours are definitely back in fashion but quality, provenance and value for money are equally important.”

Mike added: “Ever since the Mr Whippy era, many Brits have had a soft spot for the soft scoop, however, with premium ice-cream sales increasing by 17% in recent years, luxury ice cream is now worth an estimated £443m. It is now, that quick service operators need to capitalise upon this ever expanding and changing sector to boost sales.”

Michele was keen to highlight the growing popularity of frozen yogurt.

She said: “There has been a notable increase in purchase and consumption of frozen yoghurt desserts, due somewhat to an overall increased awareness of and desire for healthier eating.

“People feel the need to eat more ‘better for you’ foods, and yoghurt in general is one of those products known to offer various digestive and health benefits.

“The general retail frozen yoghurt market is now estimated to be worth over £13m in the UK, having tripled in the last 3 years, thanks to the growth in retail sales and overall awareness of frozen yoghurt and this increased consumer demand for healthier products.”

Guy said that businesses can stand out by making their ice cream themselves. He said: “The ability to create a range of tasty and fresh dessert offerings can make a huge difference for outlets looking to take full advantage of the summer months.

“Producing these offerings in-house also allows operators to provide for specific dietary requirements, such as dairy-free offerings.

“For those operators looking to provide a wider range of ice cream offerings, providing fun and tasty summer treats can make an outlet stand out.”





Heather agreed. She said: “Making ice cream in-house gives operators the freedom to create new and exciting flavours.

“It also gives customers a real point of difference and can really enhance the perceived value of an outlet’s menu; whilst also justifying a higher price point.

“Creating an ice cream flavour of the week can be a great idea to help boost sales during peak summer months and having the freedom to create their own new flavours gives outlets a real opportunity to get creative by offering something quirky and unique – how about chilli and chocolate or popcorn flavour perhaps?”

Scott Duncan added: “Offering a quality selection of homemade ice cream will help your establishment stand out from those who buy in ready-made alternatives.

“Outlets looking for a unique selling point to increase sales during the competitive summer months should also consider offering milkshakes as well as soft serve ice cream on their menus.

“When first introduced to menus, offering a special ‘shake of the day’ or week at a special reduced price can help to raise awareness of the introduction of milk shakes as well as help to boost sales.

“As milk shakes are often considered to be additional purchases by customers, one way outlets could overcome this is to offer shakes with other snacks as part of a special-priced meal deal comprising of a sandwich or baguette and milkshake.”

How important are ice cream and frozen desserts to the quick service restaurant /food-to-go market and why?

When it comes to the importance of ice creams and frozen desserts to the food-to-go and quick service restaurants, our industry experts were quick to highlight how the sweet treats can tempt diners to spend a little bit more.

Mike said: “According to food research analysts, Mintel, the UK’s ice cream, sorbet and frozen yogurt market has grown by 19% in the past five years. Combine this with the fact that diners are starting to spend more on desserts, the ice cream and dessert category represents an excellent opportunity for operators to drive sales this summer.”

