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Barry Callebaut optimises dairy-free milk chocolate alternative

By Jane Byrne , 07-Sep-2010 Post a comment

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A hike in demand for lactose free products prompted leading industrial chocolate supplier Barry Callebaut to reformulate a 100 per cent dairy free alternative to milk chocolate.

The Swiss supplier has been researching and developing lactose-free chocolate for several years and said that now it has optimised its blend of rice powder, inulin and natural flavourings added to cocoa liquor and sugar to develop a cocoa based confectionery product that is really similar in sensory attributes to milk chocolate.

"Through modifying the dosages and the processing techniques we have produced a lactose free chocolate with a good flavour profile that is certain to appeal to a broad consumer base," said Merigka de Brouwer, innovation manager at Barry Callebaut.

She said that the chocolate's 100 per cent dairy free claim is ensured as the processor uses a contaminant free, dedicated line for its production.

"The milk chocolate alternative can be used for a broad range of products including inclusions, toffee centres, solid bars or hollow figures," de Brouwer told ConfectioneryNews.com.

And the lactose-free confectionery scored well with a consumer panel, with the testers determining that on appearance and taste characteristics, there was little difference with it and a milk based chocolate, comments the innovation manager.

Barry Callebaut said that it teamed up with chocolate manufacturer Celtic Chocolates to develop and bring the product to market, with the Irish confectioner launching a new range on the UK market, called Choices, which incorporates the cocoa innovation.

The supplier added that unlike other vegetable substitutes for milk powder, rice has several advantages as a basis for a lactose-free confectionery in that it has a neutral taste, is cholesterol-free, easily digestible and also has a pure, natural image.

Lactose intolerance is the inability to digest lactose, the sugar found in milk and dairy products. Incidence tends to vary geographically, as it is linked to the genetic ability to produce the enzyme lactase.

The lactose-free market has been gaining ground as food manufacturers have recognised the potential for delivering a greater range of products for consumers who suffer from allergies and intolerances.

According to Euromonitor International, the retail value of the global market for food intolerance products including diabetic, gluten-free, lactose-free food and other special milk formula products was €6.2bn in 2009.

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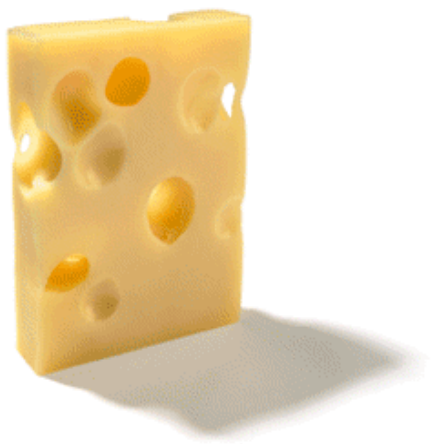

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