

Prepared Meals - China - July 2013

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“The continued rises in average incomes, increasing numbers of middle-class consumers and changing lifestyles have made prepared meals increasingly popular. The category faces fierce competition from the diverse range of foods available in foodservice, while supply chain issues remain a barrier in some geographical areas.”

– Eileen Ngieng – Senior Research Analyst

In this report we answer the key questions:

- What is the current state of the ready meals market, and how is the market expected to develop in the near future? What are the key market drivers and restraints?
- What influences consumer behaviour and attitudes towards prepared meals, and what are the key factors affecting their product choice?
- What areas offer future potential for product development in prepared meals?

The majority of urban users buy prepared meals when they do not have time to cook. While products tend to be positioned on a convenience platform, claims such as microwavable, time/speed and ease of use are not being fully explored. Chilled prepared meals are gaining popularity especially in convenience stores, the strong convenience proposition expected to fuel growth in the segment.

That only 11% of users currently see prepared meals as healthy highlights the need for the market to improve its image in this area. Meanwhile nearly two in three consumers who eat prepared meals are interested in meals offering health benefits, suggesting a platform for operators for driving growth, helped by recent initiatives to standardise nutrition labelling.

The growth of the middle class is also fuelling demand for premium prepared meals, with naturalness resonating widely as a quality indicator. The introduction of exotic prepared meals such as Western, Japanese, Korea and Southeast Asian recipes could resonate in the market, as a large minority of users see prepared meals as a good way to try a new dish.

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