

Cheese: Inc Impact of COVID-19 - UK - October 2020

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the cheese retail market.
- Launch activity in 2020 and future product development opportunities.
- Factors influencing cheese choice.
- Reasons to pay more for cheese.
- Consumer behaviours and attitudes related to cheese.

That a product is British-made is the number one factor that would encourage consumers to pay more for a cheese. That a third would be willing to pay more for this aspect should embolden cheese manufacturers to make more of the "made in Britain" claim where they can, as well as referencing British milk. With Brexit looming, this provides some reassurance to brands and retailers that consumers are willing to support their local or national economy.

The boost to cheese brought about by the nationwide lockdown is expected to continue to a lesser degree as consumers face further restrictions locally, are encouraged to work from home and are keen to save money. The expected shift towards more homeworking long term will keep up cheese occasions going forward, this providing a boost to the lunchtime and dinner occasions.

That price is a consideration for 68% of cheese buyers and promotions prompt 59% of eaters/buyers to switch between different brands of cheese signals a warning to the cheese market. With the UK entering into a recession in 2020, price is likely to become more of a determining factor as people look to tighten their purse strings. It will also remain imperative for brands to hold their ground to ensure that consumers do not switch away from their brand, through either keeping their own prices affordable or providing added value.

There is marked potential for brands to leverage cheese's image as a satisfying snack, with 73% of UK adults seeing it in this light. Cheesemakers have been attempting to push the snack angle for a number of years, the need to keep it chilled posing a barrier to use in the numerous out-of-home occasions.



"COVID-19 has provided a boost to cheese sales. Its value proposition, shelf life and versatility will have worked in the category's favour during the strict spring lockdown, with the leading cheddar segment and recipe cheese benefiting as people ate at home and cooked from scratch."

– Amy Price, Senior Food & Drink Analyst

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However, the increased working from home now and in the longer term presents more opportunities for snacking on cheese in the home, either block cheese or snacking products, with potential for brands to drive volume sales if they can unlock these occasions.

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