



Q&A Almonds



with
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Market Insights

Almond Innovation: Discover the latest in Global New Product Introductions

Every year, the Almond Board of California (ABC) partners with Innova Market Insights to compile the Global New Products Report. This report looks at any product newly launched that includes almonds as an ingredient and captures all the work that companies do to develop, launch and market the new products. According to Lu Ann Williams, Director of Innovation at Innova Market Insights, there is consistent growth of new product innovations utilizing almonds every year. One key insight is that almond introductions are growing at a faster rate than total nut introductions — 12.6 percent growth versus 8.2 percent, respectively. That's a significant increase in 2019 over the previous year.

ABC sat down with Williams to discuss the latest data around almonds and highlight the various ways that global consumer demand drives demand and innovation for almonds across product categories.



ABC: As far as category growth is concerned, what findings stood out to you?

WILLIAMS: One of the biggest insights in this year's report is that some of the fastest growth we see is in specialty-nutrition categories, like medical nutrition and infant and baby nutrition. And to give you actual numbers, almonds were up 75 percent in the clinical-nutrition category.

And while this isn't the biggest growth in terms of penetration, what I find interesting is that the health-and-wellness trend we've been talking about for 10 to 15 years now is shifting towards real food with real ingredients and a much more natural appearance than medical nutrition foods have been historically.

Almonds' growth in these specialty categories also tells me that not only do consumers see them as safe and appealing; almonds simply perform better in these products than do other hero ingredients that might be more limiting.

ABC: What does this report tell us about almond introductions around the world?

WILLIAMS: According to the Global New Products Report, since 2006, almonds continue to be the number one nut used globally in new product introductions.

To me, almonds are classically American—the California almond we all know and love. But interestingly, Europe was the leading region in total almond introductions in top categories at 44 percent.

If we look at confectionery, half the almond use in new product launches is in Europe, 20 percent is in Asia-Pacific and the rest is split among North America, at number three, and then Latin America and Middle East-Africa.

Globally a third of the almond snack introductions we saw were in Europe, a third in Asia-Pacific and again, the rest split among the other three regions—North America, Latin America and Middle East-Africa.

In bakery, bars, dairy and cereals, more than 40 percent of almond product launches took place in Europe, with a 23 percent growth in the bar category. A quarter go to Asia, and North America is in third place.

So what does this tell us? When I first moved to Europe 30 years ago, I remember only finding almonds in the baking aisle. Now almonds can be found on every shelf, in the refrigerated section, in the freezer—all over Europe. And I think this report reflects almonds' universal appeal and versatility, and how the world has embraced them and continues to. We're now seeing the fastest growth in new almond introductions in Asia.

ABC: *Why do you think almonds consistently do so well?*

WILLIAMS: Almonds are among the few ingredients that fit well into no-additives or preservatives claims, into content claims for protein, fiber, and any kind of plant-based product. Their flavor is very adaptable—it can go into sweet products or savory. Almonds are so versatile and really fit with everything. And there aren't a lot of ingredients that can do that. I think that partly explains why we see them being so successful.

ABC: *Can you share more insights into new products utilizing emerging forms like almond milk, butter and flour?*

WILLIAMS: The popularity of almond forms is another revelation. Almonds are so versatile, you can find them being used as a base for a cracker, an inclusion in a snack mix or a topping on a snack bar. For example, we increasingly see chocolate bars that have almond butter as a filling. Almond flour is being used in gluten-free products across the board. And we see almonds utilized as the base for plant-based yogurts, ice creams and other dairy alternatives. The Dairy category had a 19 percent increase in almond introductions last year and took the place of the Cereals category among the top five key categories for almonds.

And these forms bring texture appeal that really stands out, too – from smooth almond milk to creamy almond butter. All the different almond forms available amplify the versatility of almonds as an ingredient since you can use multiple forms in one product to create the ultimate texture and mouthfeel consumers are looking for.

ABC: *What are the popular texture claims you're seeing used with almond products?*

WILLIAMS: First, we know that consumers are very interested in texture. If you think about where almonds were 25 years ago, you think: "crunchy." And crunchy isn't out yet—in bars, it's the number one texture claim thanks to whole and diced almonds used as an inclusion.

But now, if you look at confectionery and bakery, the top textural attribute almonds bring is creamy, through almond butter, or soft, with almond flour. If you look at snacks, almonds' number-one textural attribute is crispy, achieved with a sliced or slivered almond.

So, you can really offer a wide variety of textures just by changing the almond form or even shape of the almond form you're using. And you still maintain all of the whole-food, clean-label nutrition that comes with using almonds as the hero ingredient.

ABC: *What does it say about the Almond Board's role in almonds' new-product success?*

WILLIAMS: It should give readers a lot of confidence in the organization. The ABC goes to a lot of effort to hunt through these numbers for the truth about where almonds are going.

But it also reflects the benefits and hard work that the ABC has done, whether that's with health studies, sustainability initiatives or horticultural research. The Almond Board invests a lot in science and technology, ensuring there's a healthy infrastructure and ecosystem for almonds. All that's reflected in the numbers. And this report has a lot of numbers.