

INNOVA MARKET INSIGHTS

Baobab – a Fruit with a Future?

Baobab is making increasing inroads into non-traditional markets with growing use as an ingredient in a range of food and drink products. The Baobab tree, also known as the 'upside down tree' and the 'tree of life' is abundant in the southern African bush. The indigenous peoples have eaten its fruit over centuries for its nutritional benefits. It is now being positioned within the so-called 'superfruits' category, focusing on its antioxidant (particularly vitamin C), calcium, iron and potassium contents.

Approval for its use in powdered form in the EU in 2008 was followed by GRAS (Generally Recognised As Safe) status being awarded in the USA in 2009. Publicity surrounding the Football World Cup in South Africa boosted interest in African foods and encouraged their further development through 2010.

The **Innova Database** recorded only seven product launches using baobab as an ingredient prior to September 2009. Little more than one year later over 20 further introductions had been recorded in a range of countries, led by its native South Africa, but also including the USA, the UK, France, Finland and Japan. These products ranged from fruit drinks, through yoghurts and jams to chocolate and energy bars, as well as supplements with a weight control positioning.

In South Africa, the retailer Woolworths has helped to drive the market forward, introducing a range of own brands, starting with African Fruit Burst Sparkling Baobab Flavoured Grape Drink in 2009. This was followed with a range of drinking and spoonable yoghurts featuring baobab as a flavour, both alone and in combination with other fruits and flavourings, in 2010. Other South African launches recorded on **Innova** included juice drinks featuring baobab in blends with other fruits such as marula and aloe, as well as energy bars.

In many of the launches from other countries recorded on the **Innova Database** in 2010, baobab is also used in a blend with other fruits, rather than on its own. These varied from other exotics and superfruits to more standard juices such as apple and orange. The products featuring in Bauer's Afrika Edition exotic fruit yoghurts for the World Cup, for example, included a Maracuja-Baobab (passion fruit-baobab) variant along with three other ethnic-style flavour blends. Hartwall's ED Special F/X Light energy drink featured a baobab-rambutan flavour combination.

Perhaps the most significant and highly-publicised launch in 2010 was the limited edition cola from PepsiCo in Japan. Introduced under the Pepsi Baobab name in May, it brought the use of baobab into the mainstream and attracted a large amount of media attention. The bottle design was dedicated to the Football World Cup and featured a baobab tree's silhouette against an African sunset.

Even without the additional focus on the Football World Cup, launches have tended to focus on the African heritage of the fruit often using terminology such as 'the taste of Africa' or 'African heritage'. UK launches have included a range of baobab jams and spreads and a baobab lemonade from Yozuna. Switzerland has seen Chocolat Stella's Organic Dark Chocolate made with 60% cocoa plus baobab. French introductions have included a Baobab Nectar drink from Moriba and a Baobar range of baobab fruit bars in Apple and Cherry flavours.

"While the Football World Cup in South Africa may be over" concludes

LuAnn Williams, Head of Research at Innova Market Insights

"Interest in African foods seems set to continue and this should help drive interest in the use of baobab as an ingredient, while growing awareness of the fruit and its exotic image and health benefits is likely to combine with growing availability to perhaps bring about a more mainstream positioning over the next few years".

For further information on the **Innova Database**, the representative for Australia and New Zealand is Glen Wells (Glen.Wells@innova-food.com.au).