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By Michael Barker

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Tenderstem's Christmas cheer

Tenderstem is reporting strong demand from home cooks as consumers prepare for a unique covid Christmas



Lacey Bradshaw

Lacey Bradshaw, marketing manager for Tenderstem at Coregeo, discussed the upcoming sales season as part of FPJ's winter veg feature (FPJ, November 2020). Here's the full interview.

Are you seeing increased demand from retailers in the run up to Christmas?

Demand from retailers is high, and we have a number of in-store/exclusive activations planned to ensure great exposure for Tenderstem broccoli in store during this key trading period. As a premium vegetable, Tenderstem broccoli is set to be popular as part of the nation's food shops in the lead-up to Christmas; we expect to see increased demand into December as consumers choose to trade up for those extra-special eating occasions, even with a lack of certainty around how many people will be around the dinner table.

With new lockdown restrictions now in place across the country, our priority is to work closely with both our licensees

and the retailers to ensure we can provide a consistent supply of high-quality produce that consumers have come to expect from the Tenderstem broccoli brand. We are working to ensure the retailers have availability of great-quality Tenderstem broccoli in spite of any hurdles presented by the tightened government restrictions.

Do you expect the reduction in eating out in restaurants to lead to a rise in the volume of crop sold for home consumption over the festive period?

During August, when the Eat Out to Help Out scheme was in full swing, foodservice volume sales of Tenderstem broccoli rose by 27 per cent (month of August vs. July 2020) since our product appears on the menus of popular chain restaurants such as Wagamama and Wahaca as well as a vast number of independents.

With new restrictions in place, we expect to see the vast majority of this foodservice volume transfer over to

retail, as more people go back to scratch cooking, as we saw from March onwards during the first lockdown. This is the focus of our communications campaigns for the remainder of the year, placing an emphasis on providing cooking inspiration and new recipes to try whilst the country spends more time at home.

Will the possibility that families have to meet in smaller groups this year affect consumers' buying habits? What range of SKUs do you have available? What's the outlook for convenience and frozen formats?

We don't envisage the limitations on gathering in large groups to impact our sales for the remainder of the year – as Tenderstem broccoli is so versatile, a pack can be easily used in a few different meals without the consumer having to be concerned about waste in the same way they might with other vegetables.

We are pleased to be able to offer

consumers Frozen Tenderstem broccoli, which is well-placed for those who will be making less frequent trips to the supermarket in the current circumstances. This frozen product offers consumers greater flexibility, allowing them to cook just a few stems while keeping the rest of the pack in optimum condition in the freezer. It retains all the qualities that the UK consumer has come to expect from Tenderstem broccoli - by freezing at the point of harvest, all the nutrients and vitamins present in raw Tenderstem broccoli are retained.

Has Covid, and the fact people are eating at home more and paying more attention to their health, given a long-term boost to consumption and usage of vegetables?

Following the latest figures from Kantar, the Tenderstem broccoli brand is celebrating year-on-year growth in terms of both value and volume.

Overall, the specialist veg category has seen an 8.6 per cent increase

in value from last year, whereas Tenderstem broccoli is up 34 per cent in value for the same period. In terms of volume, the specialist veg category was up 5.2 per cent YOY in volume, with Tenderstem broccoli a huge 42.7 per cent up on volume [52 w/e 6 Sept 2020].

As a vegetable brand, health and nutrition is always on the agenda for our marketing, PR and advertising campaigns, however this has been given more emphasis due to the current climate and what fans of our brand have told us they're looking for. The result of this approach has seen us broker a partnership with cookbook author, NHS GP and founder of The Doctor's Kitchen, Dr Rupy Aujla.

Dr Rupy has created three new recipes to appeal to health-conscious shoppers and to position Tenderstem broccoli as the perfect ingredient to have on hand for quick and nutritious midweek lunches and suppers. Healthy scratch cooking is now at the top of the agenda for many which was the reasoning behind this campaign's positioning;

with the decline of out-of-home dining, there is scope for new recipe ideas for at-home lunches and dinners.

The collaboration sees Dr Rupy appear in a series of videos as a Tenderstem broccoli brand ambassador in which he demonstrates the three new recipes. Each video shows how Tenderstem broccoli can be the star of the dish, creating a nutritious and tasty midweek meal with easy-to-access store cupboard ingredients at a time when grocery shops are likely to become less frequent under the new lockdown.

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