

The Grocer

Focus On: Barbecue by Gavin Cleaver (Gavin.Cleaver@thegrocer.co.uk)

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The Story

Brits had to rethink their barbecue plans during last year's washout summer. As a nation we fired up the barbecue on 22.4% fewer occasions in the three months to mid-August. What's more, there's been a sharp contraction in the appearance of barbecue meats such as bangers and burgers on the nation's grills. What's caused this? How have brands, retailers and manufacturers responded to the damp barbecue season? What's in store for this season?

Key themes:

Meat and fish: This feature will pay attention to how the meats we're choosing to cook on the barbie is changing and why. The appearance of all the main meats on the barbecue menu has declined in the past year. Why? Is this down to health scares? Why are fish and veg in strong growth?

Retailer ranges: Of particular interest will be retailers' development of specific ranges of meat for barbecuing (i.e. marinated meats and cuts designed for the barbies) and how they are looking to promote them during the barbecue season. How are branded sausage, burger and other meat products looking to make the most of the barbecue season?

Sides: Of course barbecue's not only about meat. This feature will also explore which kinds of food Brits are choosing to serve up with their barbecued bangers and burgers and why. What's in growth? What's in decline? Which factors are driving this change?

Sauces: The barbecue season is of growing importance to sauce brands, large and small. How are players looking to cash in at this time of year, in terms of tactics such as featured space and price promotions, link deals, NPD, above the line advertising in store activity and so on? In recent years a host of US brands have launched barbecue sauces, rubs and marinades to cash in on the low & slow trend. How are they doing? What's next?

Promotions: This feature will pay close attention to how retailers and brands seek to promote their products in the barbecue season. How important are gondola end chillers for meats and what price promotions (two packs for a fiver, etc) are most popular? How are sauce brands, bagged salad players, disposable barbecue suppliers, etc making sure they get a prime place in store when it matters? Are brands using link deals to get inside the barbecue shopping basket?

Trends: A couple of years ago we reported on how the US 'low & slow' style of barbecuing was gaining traction in the UK with barbecue festivals springing up across the country and a host of US brands looking to cash in on the trend in the retailers. Is it still in full swing? What other trends are affecting the barbecue market? With Brazil in the limelight at the moment thanks to the World Cup and the coming Olympics, are British barbies about to go Brazilian? What about other exotic cuisines?

Innovation: This will be key to this feature. We will be investigating how new product development has shaped the category over the past year and what is in store for shoppers in 2016. We will be profiling four of the most interesting meat launches and four of the most interesting accompaniment launches in separate innovation panels.

The weather: This feature will explore in detail how much of an impact the weather has had on the market over the past year and what players are doing to make the market less reliant on the weather for growth.

Barbecue equipment: This feature will also explore how barbecue equipment brands are looking to do more business in the grocery channel and how sales are doing in the supermarkets. We're looking to talk to everyone from big branded barbecue players to disposable barbecue and charcoal suppliers.

Brand profile: In a separate box out we're looking to profile one exciting brand, large or small, that's looking to change the way Britain barbecues. It could be a pioneer of the US low & slow movement or any other cuisines here in the UK, a rub, marinade or sauce brand or even a barbecue equipment supplier. Get in touch if you want to be involved!

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers' strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What's next for the category?