

## Harnessing the Power of Antioxidants: It's Gone Way Beyond Orange Juice

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Once upon a time (perhaps two years ago), most of the talk about antioxidants had to do with orange juice, and most specifically with vitamins A, C, and E. Scores of orange juices in the United States alone were fortified with A, C, and E vitamins. Today, however, we see antioxidant fortification appearing across a wide range of products and with a broad range of claims.

When we saw the first antioxidant fortification, the focus was quite general—more about getting your complete multi-vitamin dosage in your orange juice,



rather than about specific benefits. What we are seeing today is a much stronger focus on the specific benefits of fortification.

That may seem like a small difference, but the impact on the marketplace has been enormous. No single ingredient or additive can offset a disease or enhance a specific area of health. Rather, a wide range of ingredients or components can provide the benefit. Today, consumers can choose from a wide range of actual ingredients to provide benefits for immunity, heart health, “energy,” and more.

As a rule, consumers rarely seek out specific ingredients (unless it is to seek out the absence of those ingredients), but rather they seek out the benefits that the products can provide.

That's good news for antioxidants. The benefits of antioxidant vitamins include reducing cardiovascular disease, enhancing immunity, and cancer prevention via free radical scavenging.

### Where is Most of the Activity in the United States?

In looking at new product introductions with antioxidant claims, it is clear that manufacturers are focusing on these ingredients more and more. Beverages, of course, lead the market for products containing antioxidants, which is not a surprise. Trends such as the popularity of green tea, pomegranate, acai, and other so-called “super foods” make a strong appearance in the beverage category.

However, a look at Table I shows significant growth in a number of other categories as well. The pet food category often seems to test out concepts of fortification before they appear in human food and beverages. For example, significant numbers of pet food products contain glucosamine and chondroitin, key ingredients for joint health. The human food and beverage market has been much slower to catch on to this trend, and others, too.

In terms of grain-based products, the snacks category is one of the most active for antioxidant fortification. Breakfast

cereals and bakery products have also shown growth, but that growth has been at much smaller numbers than snacks.

It should be noted that new product activity outside the United States follows a similar path, with beverages being the most active users of antioxidant fortification. However, more bakery and break-



fast cereal products outside the United States have antioxidant fortification, especially in Europe.

### Key Products Span the Globe

Grain-based products that contain anti-oxidants appear in a wide range of categories across a number of countries. In many cases, the benefits of the antioxidants are not strongly conveyed, but rather are often combined with other ingredients or positioned for more general health benefits. For example, in the United

Table I. New products with antioxidant fortification, United States, 2003–2006<sup>a</sup>

	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Beverages	115	275	251	376	1,017
Dairy	11	42	55	104	212
Snacks	15	42	76	78	211
Confectionary	30	31	27	73	161
Pet food	17	19	38	58	132
Desserts & ice cream	5	6	31	44	86
Fruits & vegetables	5	21	26	33	85
Sauces & seasonings	8	12	15	11	46
All others	9	25	53	59	146
Total	215	473	572	836	2096

<sup>a</sup> Search included mention of “antioxidant,” plus vitamins A, C, and E fortification as a key claim. Source: Mintel GNPD.



States, Trader Joe's offers a whole grain instant oatmeal with a "heart healthy" claim. The company says the oatmeal contains flax seeds to provide omega-3, antioxidants, and dietary fiber. It also contains plant sterol esters to help reduce cholesterol. And, lastly, it contains inulin, claimed to help promote digestive health. In essence, this cereal does just about everything in a single food.

In the United Kingdom, Multiple Marketing launched a line of snack bars called Something Xtra. The bars contain a wide range of added vitamins (A, E, C, B6, B12, thiamine, niacin, folic acid, and biotin), plus inulin for digestive health. The fiber content helps keep the glycemic index (GI) low, the company says, helping to maintain a longer feeling of fullness.

Other products make specific claims regarding their antioxidant content or the inclusion of other ingredients. Perhaps the one that makes the strongest antioxidant-specific claim is Kellogg's Smart Start Antioxidants Cereal. It contains A, C, and E, plus beta carotene, and contains a large panel on the back of the box explaining antioxidants and their benefits. The main claim is that of enhancing immunity.

In beverages, one of the newest ingredients to be used with a high natural antioxidant content is the acai berry. In the United States, Liberty Imports offers

an unusual product called Acai Extreme Superfood with Granola. This is a frozen fruit snack that contains acai and comes with a packet of granola to sprinkle over the top. The company claims that acai contains 30 times more antioxidants than red wine grapes.

Lastly, we rarely see any food and beverage products positioned specifically to older consumers, unless they are designed to treat or affect specific con-

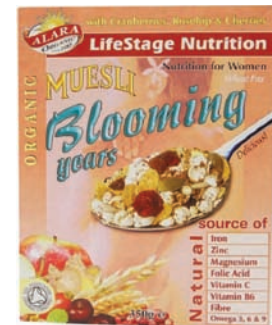


ditions. In the United Kingdom, however, Alara Wholefoods has introduced Alara Organic Blooming Years Muesli Cereal, positioned specifically to women "of a certain age." A list on the front of the box indicates it is a natural source of a variety of ingredients, including vitamin C and omega-3. The company also has varieties called Growing Years (for children) and Prime Years (for ageing consumers).

### What's Ahead for Antioxidants?

Across all categories, we can expect to see more new food product introductions that contain antioxidant fortification and more products that promote the natural antioxidant content of foods (think superfoods). Beverages will continue to be the proving ground for these types of products, but we will see activity in a number of other categories.

In terms of grain-based categories, perhaps the greatest opportunity for promoting antioxidant fortification lies in using a combination of the antioxidants' benefits and claims to promote the product—such as promoting heart health via a variety of ingredients (including antioxidants) or a strengthened immune system (via probiotics and antioxidants).



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