

Media information

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**FOOD UNION CAPTURES FLAVOUR ZEITGEIST ACROSS EUROPEAN MARKETS**

*Research investment by Food Union continues to result in creative ice-cream flavour development that resonates with customer preferences*

From the meaning of signature ingredients like cornflower and flax, to the scent and taste of roasted caramelized almonds, it’s careful attention to the details that makes Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) power brands of the ice cream and dairy-based premium snacks produced by Food Union. Based heavily on the research and development findings seeded in consumers’ evolving interests, Food Union continues to translate insight and experimentation into bestselling and trendsetting flavours that command share of fridge and wallet.

“Our R&D specialists continue to develop unique understanding of local flavour preferences, and they’re developing products that possess the unique cravings of consumers in each of the nine key countries we currently serve,” said **Normunds Staņēvičs, CEO of Food Union, Europe.** “Our focus is on acquiring, building, and maturing brands with roots in local food traditions. Our teams are delivering something that is both tasty and distinctive. That kind of deep local knowledge is essential in our ongoing quest to create ice cream flavours and snack products that surprise and delight new and returning customers. This market-by-market strategy helps us to connect better with new customers across Europe, as well.”

Food Union understands that to build a strong global consumer-based business – and to build customer loyalty in its diverse regions – each of its various national enterprises need to draw on individual local tastes, cuisine, history, and traditions.

“Our research and development teams know that they can’t take for granted customer loyalty; they need to analyze what is happening today, and the way in which invisible elements of local culture affect changing consumer tastes and behaviors. Blending these approaches to R&D means understanding how to distinguish new taste sensations and enduring preferences from those that prove to be passing fads. This work is critical to building a brand that achieves real longevity,” said **Staņēvičs.**

The group’s success in doing precisely that with its FMCG power brands is the reason that Food Union continues to successfully outpace their peers with greater market share and dominance.

**Understanding the Meaning of Flavours**

In Belarus, Food Union researchers knew that the country’s inhabitants viewed the cornflower as a meaningful symbol of happiness and longevity. In its quest to identify local traditions and indigenous flavors, Food Unions’ Belarus based Ingman Ice Cream found ways to build a product based on that long-held cultural belief.

The result was an exciting new novelty product for Beliy Polus brand. Every scoop of the signature blue ice cream reflects the vivid color of the cornflower itself and appeals not just to consumers’ eyes and tastebuds, but to their hearts and imaginations. This visually striking ice cream’s ingredients include both cornflower and flaxseeds, and it is served in a wafer cup made from rye. It has been a runaway success with consumers in Belarus.

**Stirring Up Nostalgia**

In many markets, consumers who pamper themselves by choosing to snack on premium-quality treats are also taking a trip down memory lane. Many Food Union brands generate nostalgia as comfort foods and are increasingly recognized by consumers as premium products worthy of indulgence. Recognizing this market of consumers who seek specific treats with great memories, Food Union understood that the ability of its divisions to capture nostalgia was a competitive differentiator based on specific flavors key to building a great brand.

For several generations of Lithuanians, for instance, the taste of childhood confectionery or cotton candy elicits warm, comforting feelings, Mr. Mayorov noted. These are flavours that parents want to pass on to their own children together with cherished memories and experiences. As a result, Food Union’s Lithuanian business, Premia KPC, has seen consumer interest soar in products based on cow candy (specific type of caramel) and cotton candy flavours.

Taste and flavour preference is also linked to the memory of specific scents. Visitors to the Estonian capital of Tallinn often remark on the comforting scent of roasted, caramelized almonds that wafts through the streets. For locals, picking up a cone of these almonds from street vendors is a favorite snack option. So it’s logical that the same consumers flock to the vanilla-based ice cream by Premia TKH and Olde Hansa Restaurant that features pieces of baked spiced almonds.”

Latvia offers another example of this memory-driven taste preference, in the shape of Ekselence’s ice cream with blackcurrant sauce, pieces of brownie and milk chocolate. The finishing touch comes in the form of a dash of Riga Black Balsam, a liquor made of 24 natural ingredients (including 17 botanicals) ranging from valerian, wormwood, and ginger to gentian and Peruvian balsamic oil. The dash of bitterness provided by this Latvian heritage brand helps transform these flavours into something truly unique and distinctive—something that can only be found in Latvia.

Several Baltic states share a love of ice creams flavoured or glazed with local fruits and berries, including the familiar raspberry, blueberry, and blackcurrant. But it’s rare for consumers to find ice cream products made from gooseberry, rhubarb, and quince. In Estonia, Premia has blended local traditions and southern European classics to launch an orange ice cream featuring almond paste and cowberry jam.

“This kind of innovative approach to product development leads Food Union to emphasize products that are distinctive and yet the type that consumers are compelled to seek out,” said **Staņēvičs.** “Our goal is to provide leadership with innovative products in all of the markets in which we are present, drawing on our in-depth research and insights to devise ice cream and other dairy snacks that resonate with consumers, and that go well beyond the global ‘plain vanilla’. The result is joy on the part of our customers – and a leading market presence for Food Union brands.”

**ABOUT FOOD UNION**

Food Union is currently the leading ice cream producer in the Baltics and Denmark, and the group holds a strong market position in Norway, Romania, Russia and Belarus. A leading, innovative consumer goods company, Food Union develops local brands and delivers delightful products in the premium snacking, ice-cream and dairy categories in Europe, Belarus, Russia, China, and Pacific Asia.

Food Union Group is a dynamic player in the European dairy sector. They paved the way by developing and focusing on the acquisition of leading national brands across Europe. The Group is made up of two of the largest dairy and ice-cream companies inLatvia – *Rīgas piena kombināts* and *Valmieras pien*s. The Group also includes companies such as: Estonia’s and Lithuania’s largest ice cream makers *Premia TKH* and *Premia KPC,* the leading Danish ice cream producer *Premier Is* and Danish doorstep-delivery ice cream company *Hjem I*s, Norway’s ice cream company *IsbjørnIs* and doorstep-delivery ice cream company *Den Norske Isbilen*, Romanian ice cream maker *Alpin57Lu*x, ice cream company *Ingman Ice Cream* in Belarus, and ice cream company *Khladokombinat No. 1* in Russia.

The leading dairy group is backed by Hong Kong-based investment company [Meridian Capital Limited](https://meridiancapitallimited.com/), and one of Asia’s largest private capital firms, [PAG](https://www.pag.com/en/). They became Food Union shareholders in 2015 and 2018 in order to finance the construction of two dairy plants in China and facilitate the company’s dynamic expansion to this market.

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