

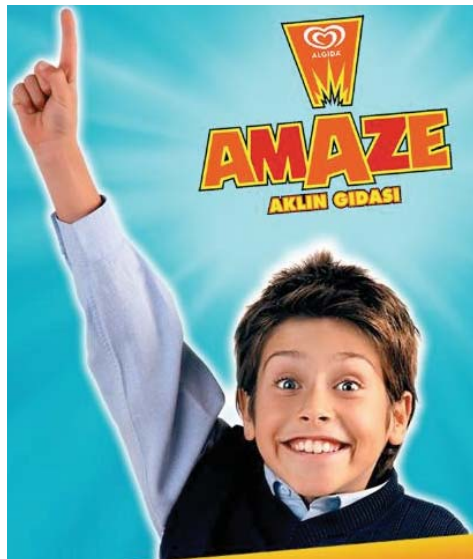
## Unilever unveils first kids' brainfood range

By Paul Vincent

Unilever has debuted Amaze, a brand it describes as the "first specifically designed brainfood for kids" in Turkey. Aimed at school kids aged 5 to 12, the Amaze range is made up of lunchbox snacks and flavoured milk drinks which have been developed by the nutrition and mental development programme Unilever established in 2000. They represent, the company says, the culmination of extensive research by the company into kids' nutritional needs.

But what makes Amaze amazing?

- The brand is the first of its kind. The products are specifically developed to support children's mental development needs. It does not involve the fortification of existing kids' products with functional ingredients and to our knowledge there is no similar product to be found anywhere in Europe or the US.
- Amaze is truly science-based: Unilever says that it conducted a review of over 200 scientific studies on nutrition and mental development in kids before creating Amaze. As a result of this research Amaze products have been designed to deliver 33% of all the key micronutrients that science indicates kids need daily for optimum mental development – such as iron, iodine and B-vitamins – as well as important macronutrients such as protein and omega-3 DHA.
- Unilever emphasises that it has gone to great lengths to formulate Amaze to



ensure the bioavailability of nutrients is increased, an issue which is increasing in importance for all companies with ambitions in the nutrition industry.

Amaze has also been formulated to be as low as possible in ingredients known to be harmful when consumed in excess (trans and saturated fats, sugar and sodium) and therefore conforms to the WHO's dietary guidelines.

Amaze lunchbox nibbles and milk drinks have been on sale nationwide in Turkey since February, through all the grocery channels Unilever has access to in the country. They are priced at €0.38 (\$0.51) and €0.49 (\$0.65) respectively.

"The initial consumer response has been

very positive," Geert van Poppel, Ph.D. and Director of Nutrition for Unilever's new Vitality platforms, told *Kids Nutrition Report*.

"In less than four weeks, the brand attained more than €3 million worth of news coverage in the Turkish media," van Poppel says. "The sales channels are proactively asking to list the products which is a good early sign."

### Amazing Mums; not confusing them

The marketing campaign for Amaze, is fully integrated to cover press advertorials, in-store sampling, TV advertising and direct communication with medical professionals and a website.

"The brand is fundamentally targeting mothers and TV is the main communication medium," explains van Poppel.

"There are also, however, advertorials, a website and TV infomercials to help mothers understand the essentials in kids' nutrition and how the Amaze formula would help them in giving their children a better start. The product launch has generated a great deal of interest among mothers on the Internet."

The communications for Amaze "are designed to reflect the great science behind the product and the specifically designed, unique formula," says Poppel, and what he describes as a "rational voice" is used in TV ads to help mothers understand that their kids' nutritional

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**Yoplait adds Martek's Omega-3 to its kids' yoghurt**



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# No nutty business: Nut-free butters better for allergy-prone kids

According to the Mayo Clinic, peanut allergy affects approximately 1.5 million people in the United States and is responsible for 80% of fatal or near fatal allergic reactions each year. Given these sorts of statistics, and the fact that Americans typically consume 700 million pounds of peanut butter annually, it's not surprising that some astute food manufacturers and entrepreneurs are looking for ways to give this significant portion of the population a substitute for the much desired spread.

Peanut avoidance is the biggest food-allergy impetus in the US for two reasons: the medical stakes are unusually high for kids who are allergic to this particular food. And, as a staple of the American diet, peanuts appear everywhere and in everything, especially peanut butter.

So, products that provide alternatives to peanut butter are finding growing success, establishing themselves quickly in a marketplace that has been highly sensitised to peanut allergies over the last several years.

"There are lots of bona fide reasons for eating our product, but the driving issue for us right now is the peanut-allergy issue," says Curtis Roettig, vice president of sales and marketing for SoyNut Butter Co., a Glenview, Ill.-based startup.

Peanuts account for two-thirds of all snack nuts consumed in the US, and Americans consume more than 600 million pounds of peanuts and 700 million pounds of peanut butter each year, according to the National Peanut Board. Long relied upon as a good source of protein by those who can't or don't want to eat meat, they have considerable other nutritional credentials as well: a one-ounce serving of peanuts is a good source of vitamin E, magnesium, niacin, manganese, phosphorus and copper. Peanuts are also a good source of fibre. And they don't contain bad fats.

The fact that peanuts aren't actually "nuts" at all, but legumes like beans and lentils, obviously hasn't affected their popularity.

But something else has: an estimated 1.5 million Americans, including about 600,000 children, experience allergic reactions to peanuts ranging from hives to nausea to sometimes-fatal anaphylactic shock. The number of children with peanut allergies has skyrocketed, doubling from 1997 to 2002, according to a study in the *Journal of Allergy*

and *Clinical Immunology*. That's why, with most of the annual 150 food-allergy deaths blamed on peanuts, defensive measures against peanuts are proliferating.

It's a bit of a mystery why peanut allergies appear to be proliferating at such a rate. One explanation is that physicians are simply more adept at spotting them. Another is that the modern environment may, in a sense, be too clean: if the human immune system were exposed to more allergens, a peanut might not send it into overdrive. The peanut industry is funding development of therapies and possibly even a vaccine to prevent or reduce the severity of peanut reactions.

But in the meantime, peanut allergies have become a big deal in America in a typically American way. That is, handfuls of parents around the country learned their kids were averse to peanuts and believed that schools weren't doing enough to protect their little ones. So they became agitators and activists in their communities. News media picked up on the developing story nationwide. And now, many schools have created peanut-free zones or have gone totally "peanut free."

This, of course, has created a bonanza for companies who produce peanut-butter alternatives. For one thing, parents of affected kids tend to be frequent and loyal customers of products their kids like and that deliver them some of the satisfaction of peanut butter – without the risk. Parents also tend to be sticklers about whether peanut products of any kind are made at the same plants that produce the peanut-butter alternatives, because it takes so little of a peanut substance to set off severe reactions in some kids.

"It's a small population but a great population," says Eileen Moriarty, president and founder of Simple Food, an Amesbury, Mass., startup that produces "soy nut" butter. "We get phone calls from people who just

thank us profusely."

And these companies are encountering a market that isn't limited only to the kids who have actual peanut allergies but also includes the families and friends of these kids, who forswear peanut butter because they don't want to endanger their friends' health. It also includes the parents of thousands of students in the school districts that ban peanut products mainly to protect themselves from legal liability.

"When a school sends home a letter saying that your child can no longer bring peanut butter into this school, then how many kids with peanut allergies does that affect?" says Roettig. "One or two. But it also affects the whole school. Or when a doctor says to a pregnant or nursing woman that she can't have peanuts or peanut butter, few of those women are directly affected – but that advice affects them all out of their concern for their newborn child. The market for our product goes up exponentially, and along the way we also start picking up people who say, 'This stuff is wonderful.'"

Of course, it's always possible that the next development in the science of food allergies could mess up that picture.

But in the meantime, here's how Roettig's soy-butter company and five others are capitalising through alternative products on the opportunities provided by the North American peanut-allergy epidemic:

**NoNuts Golden Peabutter:** At first, Mountain Meadows Food Processing was trying to come up with a new kind of hummus to take advantage of the type of peas grown mainly in Alberta. "But in the process, we ended up with a product that looks and smells and tastes like peanut butter," says Norm Carruthers, president of the Legal, Alberta-based concern.

# ALLERGY CASE STUDY: PEANUTS

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That was four years ago. And soon, Mountain Meadows was manufacturing and distributing NoNuts in mainstream supermarkets across Canada. Two years ago, it entered the US market and is aiming for a big push south of the border this year. "We wanted to make sure that we could fulfill our commitments in Canada before we expand," Carruthers says.

Sales have been growing at about 10% a year, and NoNuts Golden Peabutter already is nearly a \$1-million product. It retails for a suggested C\$5.99 (\$5.16/€3.88) for a 510g jar, more than double the typical price for peanut butter. It's also available in commercial sizes for school-lunch programmes. And besides mimicking peanut butter pretty well in direct applications, Carruthers says, NoNuts also serves as a peanut-butter-like ingredient in baked goods. Mountain Meadows also has developed a flour out of the peas that works well as a substitute for gluten in gluten-free foods, he notes.



Great for a picnic! NoNuts Golden Peabutter retails in a 510g jar and sells for more than double the typical price for peanut butter. NoNuts can also be used in baked goods as a replacement for peanut butter.

**SunButter:** Like Mountain Meadows, SunGold Foods is taking advantage of locally grown crops to make hay out of the burgeoning demand for peanut-butter substitutes. The Fargo, N.D.-based company is smack in the middle of sunflower territory. And while it has been supplying commodity seeds to Frito-Lay and other processors for more than two decades, it was just four years ago that SunGold developed SunButter.

SunButter came out of a research project

that was funded by the US Agriculture Department, and by 2003 it was appearing in Cub Stores supermarkets in nearby Minneapolis. From there, SunGold has built distribution steadily around the country through retailers ranging from Whole Foods to Wegmans. Kroger and Target are among the newest major retailers. Overall product sales are several million dollars a year at this point, and SunButter's sales are doubling every year.

SunButter retails for a suggested \$3.99 to \$4.99 (€3.00 to €3.75) for a one-pound jar. "About half the people who taste it say right away, 'Wow, this is really good!'" says Dan Holland, vice president of marketing. "Another 40% say it tastes just like peanut butter. And some people allergic to peanut butter are so scared that they won't even taste SunButter."

The relative healthfulness of sunflower oil is well known to Frito-Lay and other mainstream snack processors who keep switching to it. Sunflower oil has less saturated fat than any other common oil – one-third less than peanut butter – Holland says, "and way more vitamin E than anything else in the store." SunButter has double the fibre of peanut butter. And it contains iron as well as trace minerals such as copper, magnesium and zinc "which are pretty important and pretty hard to find in the normal Western diet," he says.

**Simple Soynut Butter:** Eileen



Spread's the word! Eileen Moriarty's Simple Soynut Butter comes in five organic varieties. According to the entrepreneur, the soybeans used in her peanut-butter alternatives taste very nutty when roasted.

Moriarty started her first soy-nut butter company more than a decade ago because it seemed like a good company for her, as a vegetarian, to start up. In the face of competition that quickly arose from bigger companies, she sold it off.

But after several years of working for other companies in the organic-food industry, early last year Moriarty decided to scratch her entrepreneurial itch once more – and with the same product. By that point, of course, rising demand for peanut-butter alternatives had emerged clearly in her favour.

Using sunflower seeds grown in the fields of Fargo, North Dakota, SunGold Foods produces SunButter, a spread that not only acts as a substitute for peanut butter but also provides the added fibre common to sunflower oils.

Simple Soynut Butter comes in five all-organic varieties: No Sugar-No Salt, Cinnamon Sugar, Seasalted, Slightly Sweet, and Chocolate. It retails for a suggested \$4.99 (€3.75) for a nine-ounce jar, and Moriarty's little enterprise so far has managed to place it in Whole Foods stores in the Northeast, Wild Oats Markets nationwide and progressive supermarket chains including Hannaford Bros. and Ukrops.

Moriarty likes to focus on the quality and attributes of her product rather than the fact that it is not peanut butter. "We focus on the recipe and on making it taste delicious," she says. "There are perceptions that soy can taste seedy and kind of funny and not palatable. But without adding any unnatural flavourings, we've made this taste very nutty. When you roast our soybean, it can taste very good."

At the same time, however, Moriarty acknowledges that her most passionate customers are those who are grateful that Simple is not peanut butter. "Most of my phone calls are from people who are allergic, probably 75% of them," she says.

And now she's going to begin shipping her products to the UK as well. "That's an indication of how well customers are responding to our products, because my understanding is that nut butters don't typically sell well in the UK," Moriarty says.

**SoyNut Butter:** Roettig and his two other partners launched SoyNut Butter Co. about a decade ago because they perceived growing demand for the product per se. "We had no knowledge or understanding of the peanut-allergy issue at all," he notes. "But by a pure fluke we started making our product in a peanut- and nut-free facility. Soon after that, we started getting phone calls asking if our products were made in a peanut-free plant."

Now, the company emphasises on the label of its products that they are made in a nut-free facility, touts the fact on its website and plays it up in sales calls with foodservice customers, who have become an important component of sales over the last year and a half. SoyNut Butter is sold at retail in many chains ranging from Whole Foods to Kroger supermarkets to Target supercenters.

The suggested price for the 15oz retail jar of SoyNut Butter ranges from \$4.00 (€3.00) to \$5.50 (€4.14). Sales are growing smartly,



NSpired Natural Foods underscore their nut-butter credentials by marketing peanut butter along with other nut-butter products under their MaraNatha brand.

Roettig says, and the company already does several million dollars a year in sales.

"If presented the right way," he says, "kids will accept it as peanut butter and will treat it as peanut butter. That allows them to take it into any peanut-free zone and for their parents to continue enjoying the convenience, known acceptability and nutritional value of peanut butter – in a slightly different form."

But like his competitors, Roettig wants to emphasise the attributes of SoyNut Butter as a product standing on its own, not necessarily just in place of peanut butter. "It's got half the saturated fat of peanut butter, much better protein, and all the health benefits of soy," he says.

Yet, he says that it remains difficult for SoyNut Butter to retain its position in some supermarkets. "There are virtually no direct competitors to us, but there are all kinds of competitors in terms of shelf space and recognition," Roettig explains. "Even a new style that is introduced by a big peanut-butter company can knock us off a shelf."

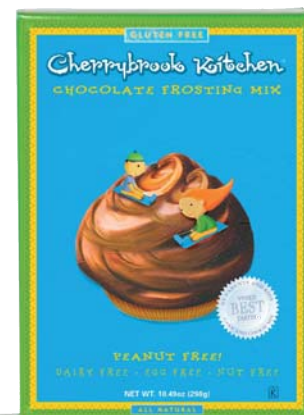
**MaraNatha:** Some companies underscore their nut-butter credentials by marketing peanut butter along

with other nut-butter products. NSpired Natural Foods, based in San Leandro, Calif., is one such company, selling almond, cashew and macadamia butters, as well as peanut butter, under the MaraNatha brand.

"We're trying to concentrate more on the health benefits of our products themselves, and with the strong interest recently in the nutrition in almonds, we're seeing a resurgence of interest," says Amy Rosen, a spokeswoman.

**Cherrybrook Kitchen:** This Burlington, Mass.-based company sells gourmet baking mixes in Original and Gluten-Free varieties. Original is specifically free of peanuts, dairy, eggs and nuts, removing practically all of the common food-allergy considerations from purchase.

Sales have grown more than 400% in the last year alone, according to the company. "I created these recipes as a result of developing adult-onset food allergies myself," says founder Patsy Rosenberg.



As a result of developing adult on-set allergies, Patsy Rosenberg set up Cherrybrook Kitchen, a company producing "gourmet" nut-, egg-, dairy- and peanut-free cake mixes.

