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“Veggie Fingers would enlarge basket of products”

Tell us more about the development of McCain Foods India.

McCain Foods, one of the world’s largest producers of frozen French fries and appetisers, offers a wide range of innovative and profitable menu solutions for every segment of the food service business.

McCain Foods is among the world’s leading producers of frozen French fries and appetisers (and suppliers to institutional customers).

In an e-mail interaction with LIBIN CHACKO KURIAN, the company’s managing director, VIKAS MITTAL, threw light on the frozen food revolution in India, the company’s consolidation in the market and its offerings. *Excerpts:*

- McCain French Fries;
- McCain Masala Fries;

- McCain Burger Patties;
- McCain Rosti Rounds;

- McCain Savoury Wedges;
- McCain Smiles;

- McCain Veggie Nuggets;
- McCain Chilli Garlic Potato Pops;
- McCain 3-Minute Idli;
- McCain Veggie Fingers;
- McCain Aloo Tikki;
- McCain Potato Cheese Shotz, and
- McCain Chilli Pepper and Cheese Bites (Dynabites)

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We entered the Indian market way back in 1998. Since then, we have come a long way, expanding the frozen food market in the process. As of today, Indian customers are getting familiar with frozen foods. We have customised our products to appeal to local Indian taste-buds.

We have done extensive research to grow the best-quality ingredients for our products. We offer a wide variety of vegetarian products to our customers – from French Fries to potato specialties and cheese appetisers.

How are the products of McCain Foods India different from those offered by the company in other countries?

Besides offering some of our best international products (such as French fries and Smiles), we also have a wide range of products specially for Indian consumers.

These include Aloo Tikki, Smiles, Chilli Garlic Potato Pops, Veggie Fingers and Veggie Nuggets. These have been localised to suit Indian taste-buds.

McCain Foods India offers a completely vegetarian range to institutional customers, such as hotels, restaurants and caterers (HORECA).

Internationally, we have a wide range of products, which includes frozen pizzas and vegetables, besides a host of snacks.

McCain Foods also offers a range of non-vegetarian products in some of its international markets.

Could you throw some light on the localised product range of the company?

The complete range of McCain products available in India is as follows:

"Frozen foods category in India is still at nascent stage"

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McCain Veggie range is growing fast and registering a good growth.

The addition of Veggie Fingers to our portfolio would further enlarge McCain's basket of products available to food service providers, while enhancing the ultimate consumer taste and experience.

Which products of McCain Foods India have the highest demand?

McCain is renowned for French Fries, but a host of products in our range are used by leading hotels, restaurants and caterers.

farmers using the best agronomy practices.

These are selected at the peak of their nutrition and flavour, quickly pre-cooked and frozen to guarantee the highest food quality for the customers and consumer.

We use advanced individual quick freezing (IQF) technology for food preservation, which helps lock freshness and nutrition.

This process increases the shelf life of perishable foods by subjecting them to temperatures of -18 degree to inhibit the oxidative, enzymatic and microbial changes which are responsible for the changes in the

the peak of their ripeness.

Increasingly, institutional customers, quick service restaurants (QSR) and restaurant chains have understood the concept and are adopting frozen food, as it offers consistency of taste and texture and freshness, along with added benefits of convenience and low wastage.

How do you see the growth of the frozen food snack market in India?

The frozen foods category in India is still at a nascent stage. This market is evolving gradually, and is very crucial for us.

The Indian customer is grad-



Being global leaders, we decided to first understand their needs and then address them.

We realised that the Indian

customers have certain misconceptions about frozen foods.

The fact that freezing is a natural method of food preservation

These include Burger Patties, Nuggets and Savoury Wedges.

We offer a plethora of menu options for all food service customers across segments.

What makes your products unique from your competitors?

We are the market leaders and focus on quality right from the agronomy stage, thereby growing high-quality potatoes.

This leads to the wide variety of high-quality products that we offer.

What are the basic ingredients used to make your products? How nutritious are your products?

McCain strives to provide products that are better for you and fun to eat.

We also use quality potatoes that are grown by dedicated

flavour and colour of food.

We use 100 per cent vegetable oils in our formulations.

These oils are neither hydrogenated nor partially hydrogenated, resulting into products that are trans-fat-free.

What is the frozen food revolution in India and its significance?

The frozen food revolution in India began with shelled peas and cut vegetables. Food service customers, such as chefs and restaurant owners, always have constraints of time, and have to maintain consistency in their service. Frozen foods supports to quite an extent in this endeavour.

Freezing is the most natural form of preservation. McCain frozen foods are made from the best of ingredients plucked at

usually getting familiar with frozen foods.

For institutional customers, we offer solutions which they can not only use as a part of their menu creations, but also save their time, energy and effort, leading to an increase in efficiency and profits.

McCain therefore, envisions scope for significant growth.

What are the challenges faced by the frozen food market in India? What steps are being taken to overcome these?

Frozen food penetration in any country is fully dependent on the infrastructure and cold chain facilities.

It has always been a challenge to introduce this category and convince institutional customers to choose frozen ingredients over fresh ones.

food and beverage market was heavily influenced by uncertain weather conditions which affected the quality and availability of basic food ingredients.

To overcome this, we offered frozen foods as quick solutions which promises round-the-year availability, consistent product quality and reduced overhead costs for operator (perfect portions, high piece count and no wastage).

It is also a complex market scenario, considering that each outlet must have a freezer and 24-hour electricity supply.

We have worked closely with third-party cold chain operators to implement the latest infrastructural technologies and cold chain refrigerated transportation, so as to increase the reach of our products.

without the use of any preservatives or chemicals, and that it locks freshness and maintains the nutritive value of food is not known to most customers.

What are the prevalent trends in the frozen market, and what trends do you foresee the sector witnessing in the company?

Due to the convenience offered by this category of foods more and more institutional customers are adopting them.

Not just that, consistency of taste and texture is of reasonable importance for hotel and fast food chains too.

With such factors as change of labour, the consistency, taste and texture of food goes for a toss. McCain Foods endeavours to address such problems.

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Could you throw light on the initiatives of McCain Foods India to connect with its customers?

McCain has always endeavoured to offer the very best to its customers.

In order to promote the products and connect with the customers, McCain undertakes such activities as organising HoReCa meets, burger festivals, and one-on-one sampling for institutional customers.

Education and experience go hand-in-hand. We ensure the complete approach. We educate the customers about frozen foods, along with their benefits and urge them to try our products.

Frozen food is a new category for the Indian audience, and they are slowly getting familiar with it. Our research has shown

Frozen foods have certainly made substantial penetration (though there is still a lot of scope).

This can be seen from the fact that McCain has diversified from potato specialties to vegetable snacks.

What kind of support is McCain Foods India extending to the industry?

McCain Foods provides with a well thought-out range of 100 per cent vegetarian products assorted for each segment that can be customised according to the needs of various establishments.

From a room service order to scrumptious finger foods at pubs and bars, McCain menu solutions have a plethora of menu options for all food service customers across segments.