



Taura Natural Ingredients uses a unique URC (Ultra Rapid Concentration) process to deliver fruit pieces, flakes and pastes in a bake-stable, low water activity format. URC products are made from a rapid concentration process that enables the concentration of fruit purees to less than 10% moisture in 60 seconds. The fast process time ensures URC fruit pieces, flakes and pastes retain their natural flavour, colour and goodness, for superior performance and durability in a range of commercial applications. The URC process also has remarkable success with vegetable products, and opens the door to a range of innovative savoury snack product developments as the healthy snack market evolves. Amy Wright, Global Marketing Manager at Taura spoke to *The World of Food Ingredients* about the natural trend and new developments at the company.

Where do you see the natural trend going in 2009?

Natural products are rising in popularity as the shift toward healthy lifestyles drives consumer markets. With consumers becoming increasingly aware of the nutritional components of the food they eat, manufacturers are adapting quickly to a trend towards natural origins, flavours and whole foods. In confectionery and nutritional snacks we are seeing a rapid increase in the use of real fruit and vegetable ingredients, in particular, the use of fruit puree and juice as a natural sugar replacer. Fruit has many benefits and is widely perceived as a good for you and a great tasting source of nutrition and sweetness. Increasingly we see the trend towards using 100% whole fruit as manufacturers look to add nutrition and natural goodness to their snack and confectionery products. In the manufacture of sweet and fruit based snack products its functional properties serve as an excellent source of natural sugars, fibres, vitamins, minerals and flavours.

What are you developing on this platform?

The complete nutrition provided by 100% fruit origin products enables manufacturers to create innovative and naturally good-for-you products that deliver a serving of whole fruit nutrition that taste great with the every important, on-the-go convenience. Our most recent development is the URC JusFruit range of pieces and pastes which contains no added sugar and up to six times its own weight in real fruit. Available in an extensive range of popular and super fruit varieties, URC JusFruit has been designed as a natural sugar replacer and a way to add real fruit nutrition to a range of manufactured confectionery and snack products.



What new application areas are opening up for your process?

URC products were originally designed to deliver real fruit in a bake-stable, low water activity format for cereals and baked goods. Our current focus is on expanding the application of products such as URC JusFruit into 100% fruit snacks and real fruit confectionery. For example; URC JusFruit pastes function as a building block for fruit based snacks and confectionery, and can be fortified with vitamins, minerals and other functional ingredients such as omega 3s for added health benefits and enhanced market position. URC fruit flakes can be eaten straight from the packet for instant enjoyment and a serving of real fruit nutrition. This product is now on supermarket shelves in the UK, France, Australia and New Zealand.



Which type of fruits do you feel hold the most future potential for using URC?

Consumer trends tend to vary from the tried and true favourites to an insatiable desire for the new and exotic. Fortunately one of the unique advantages of the URC process technology is its flexibility and adaptability to most fruit and vegetable variants. We have achieved particular success in traditionally difficult to work berry fruits such as strawberry, cherry and raspberry; as well as the ever increasing range of super fruits such as acai, pomegranate and kiwifruit. We've even developed fruit and vegetable combinations to deliver a portion of fruit and one half serving of vegetable. Our core business is still very much focused on the popular fruits such as apple, apricot and orange, but our ability to innovate with flavour blends, botanical extracts and functional ingredients ensures the future potential for URC.

What are your predictions for fruit as an alternative healthy snack? Do you still expect growth despite the financial crisis?

Fruit snacking is well positioned for its perceived health benefits and positive nutrition, and the sector will continue to grow and evolve as process technology advances and efficiencies are improved. The appeal of fruit and vegetable snacking will also continue despite the financial crisis as parents seek to find nutritional fruit products for themselves and their families. Perhaps of greatest concern during the credit crisis is manufacturers' tendency to mislabel and dumb down nutritional fruit snacks by adding sugar and other ingredients to reduce cost. Consumers are becoming increasingly sceptical of claims such as 'contains 90% fruit' when this relates to fruit prior to concentration, and where added sugar can often be as high as 40%. To be a true 'fruit snack' the product will contain approx 600g of fruit per 100g or 95-98% concentrated fruit. However, real growth will also come down to the ability of food manufacturers to innovate, and create product solutions to the increasingly complex customer demands.