

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: June 11, 2024

Report Number: UK2024-0025

Report Name: Red White and Chew Finding US Food and Drink the UK

Country: United Kingdom

Post: London

Report Category: Export Accomplishments - Other, Export Accomplishments - Market Access, Retail Foods, Market Development Reports

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Report Highlights:

Between February and May 2024, FAS London conducted an extensive survey of UK national food retailers, discount grocery retailers, department store food halls, and independent specialty stores to assess the availability of U.S. food and drink products. While supermarkets generally maintained a selection of U.S. grocery items, the presence of these products in department stores and independent stores had dwindled significantly over the last five years. As a result, U.S. food and beverage companies seeking to expand their presence in the UK market may consider focusing on developing stronger relationships with importers and distributors serving the major supermarket chains, while also exploring alternative distribution channels such as online retailers.

Overview:

United Kingdom (UK) supermarkets are constantly evolving, with new trends emerging on a regular basis. In recent years, there has been a growing focus on healthy eating, sustainability, and convenience. As a result, supermarkets are stocking more fresh produce, organic products, and plant-based alternatives. There has also been a reduction in the use of single-use plastics and offering more sustainable packaging options. Supermarkets have also been investing in technology to make shopping more convenient for customers, including online purchasing for in-store pickup, home delivery, and mobile apps that allow customers to scan items while shopping and pay for them at the self-checkout counter without additional scanning. These trends are likely to continue in the coming years, as supermarkets strive to meet the changing needs of their customers.

Between February and May 2024, FAS London conducted retail store visits to a cross section of supermarkets, discount grocery retailers, department store food halls, and high-end independent stores. Stores visited included a cross-section of the UK's retailers such as [Tesco](#), [Sainsburys](#), [Asda](#), [Morrisons](#), [Whole Foods](#), [Costco](#), [Lidl](#), [Harrods](#), [Harvey Nichols Food Hall](#), [Fortnum and Mason](#), [Selfridges](#), [Panzers](#), [Partridges](#), [General Store](#), and [Gladwells](#).

Supermarket Chain Stores ([Tesco](#), [Sainsburys](#), [Asda](#), [Morrisons](#))

The chain stores all had a reasonable selection of U.S. grocery products spread throughout the store. The products were similar in all stores with the main product lines being wine, spirits, craft beer, sauces, soft drinks, canned fish, confectionery, and dried fruit & nuts. Previously, some stores such as Tesco had a dedicated USA section within their World Food aisle, stocking a wide selection of popular U.S. grocery items, however, this has been removed resulting in the products being delisted.

Additionally, Post observed that several iconic U.S. brands are now produced either in the UK or the EU. This is a testament to the success and popularity of the brands and American cuisine. The production of U.S. food products in the UK not only satisfies the cravings of American expatriates but reflects the globalization of the food industry. Examples of these include Newman's Own, Old Bay Seasoning, Cardini's, Hellmann's, and Franks Red Hot sauce.

UK labelling laws require food labels to stipulate the country of origin, providing consumers with information about the provenance of their food. This information empowers shoppers to make informed choices about the geographical location of the products they purchase. It also supports local businesses and farmers by highlighting the origin of domestically produced foods. However, it was noted that many products, including most supermarket private-label products state "Product of Non-EU Agriculture", meaning there is no way of telling where the product is from. This gives supermarkets the flexibility to purchase ingredients from different countries depending on the season, availability, and price of the ingredients.

From the stores we visited, Whole Foods Market and Costco had the largest selection and variety of U.S.-origin products being sold. This is not surprising as both are U.S.-owned retailers, with many of the companies also supplying U.S. stores.

Department Store Food Halls ([Harrods](#), [Harvey Nichols Food Hall](#), [Fortnum and Mason](#), [Selfridges](#))

High-end department store food halls were once a good entry point for U.S. companies exporting high-end specialty items to the UK. Previously, these stores were a good place to test the market before expanding into the major supermarket retailers. With the strength of Buy British campaigns, these stores now concentrate on stocking private-label products, most of which are of British origin. The once large, impressive Harvey Nichols food hall now consists of a small, limited product space. Space once occupied by the food hall has been replaced by various fresh food eateries. Likewise, Harrods stocks mostly private-label UK- and EU-origin products. The store does have an extensive wines and spirits section with a wide selection from the United States, as does the high-end retailer Fortnum and Mason. Several years ago, Selfridges had a broad selection of high-end specialty food items. Post's visit identified only two U.S.-origin products, which included popcorn and pickles.

Independent Delicatessens ([Panzers](#), [Partridges](#), [General Store](#), and [Gladwells](#)).

There are many independent delicatessens and retail outlets throughout London, often showcasing local delicacies from different countries. While some stores, like Partridges and Panzers, boast a wide selection of U.S. groceries, the majority of independent food stores offered a meager selection of imported American products, if any at all. This scarcity was a stark contrast to the larger chain supermarkets, where more American brands are found.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the availability of U.S. grocery products in the UK varies significantly across different retail channels. While many U.S. products and U.S.-branded products are available in UK supermarket chains, their presence in department store food halls and independent food stores is notably lower. However, online retailers, such as [Ocado](#) and [Amazon](#) have emerged as an important growth area for expanding U.S. products into the UK market, with the most extensive and accessible selection of U.S. food and drink items. This shift towards online distribution underscores the growing role of e-commerce in catering to consumer demand for international products, offering a convenient and comprehensive platform for consumers to access a diverse range of U.S. grocery offerings.

Attachments:

No Attachments.