

# European ice cream market stays cool despite a cold economy

By [Source: Mintel Global Market Navigator](#)

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LONDON, UK: As the UK experiences a return to sunshine after a wet August and the idea of having an ice cream grows ever more appealing, new research from Mintel Global Market Navigator (GMN) reveals that Germans are the biggest ice cream lovers in Europe, with Germany spending an average of £19 (about R210) per head on the treat each year.



Mintel's research on ice cream sales in the five major European markets (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) shows that the nearest competitor to German love of ice cream is France with £14 (about R154) per head, with Italy and UK (£13 [about R143] per head) reflecting similar tastes. And it seems warm weather does not automatically equate with ice cream purchase, as Spain comes in at fifth place with £10 (about R110) per head. The research shows combined value of the five markets stood at around £4.6 billion (about R50.6 billion) in 2009 - up from £4.1 billion (about R41 billion) in 2008.

## Further growth expected

Indeed, it seems perceptions of ice cream as an 'affordable luxury' has outweighed thriftiness and health considerations in the recent economic difficulties of the past year. In the UK, premium ice cream has proved hugely successful and now accounts for just under a quarter of value sales. Overall, in the UK, value sales stood at £799 million (about R8.8 billion) in 2009 - up from £743 million (about R8.2 billion) in 2008 - recovering from a decline heightened by a succession of cool, wet summers. The value of ice cream in the UK is predicted to grow even further by 2012 to a massive £814 million (about R9 billion).

Ana Lourenco, Global Market Navigator analyst at Mintel, said: "While Germany appears to have the biggest ice cream lovers, the overall European increase in value despite recession highlights consumer demand. The idea of ice cream as a 'permissible treat' has been taken on board by manufacturers, who have focused on more premium and 'indulgent' lines in the past year, helping drive market value forwards. Because ice cream is regarded as an occasional treat - over half of ice cream eaters indulge at most once a month - it has been relatively unaffected by a marked trend in general towards healthier eating. Low-fat ice cream is almost a contradiction in terms, since a creamy taste is a major reason for eating it. Therefore, the strongest 'health' trend in global NPD has been towards ice cream free from additives and preservatives, rather than lower in calories."

## Not restricted to Europe

The premiumisation trend for ice cream does not just stop in Europe. Mintel's Global New Products Database (GNPD) finds that on a global scale, premium lines accounted for 9% of global ice cream product launches in the past six months, compared to economy new product launches which accounted for 4%. Yet while ice cream is increasingly being seen as an affordable indulgence, consumers still express an interest in healthier products. Manufacturers have answered, with 13% of all global product launches in the past six months touting a "no additives/preservatives" claim.

But it seems Europe still leads the way with regional love of ice cream, as Europe remained the most active region with 42% of ice cream launches over the same period, closely followed by North America with 26% and Asia Pacific (22%) accounting for over a fifth of the market.

However, when it comes to flavour, it seems that consumer taste for chocolate transcends nations and cultures. Chocolate was the most popular flavour for ice cream launches in 2009 across the five European countries. Indeed, over a third (32%) of the total ice cream products launched in the UK in 2009 were chocolate flavour, compared with 31% in Spain, 22% in Italy, 17% in Germany and 16% in France.

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