


Autumn set for ‘world's first’ low-GI bread, sugar, noodle launches

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Low-GI bread, sugar and noodles, and salt with 40% less sodium content, are all poised to blast onto the market this year, thanks to a Malaysian-Australian company that specialises in developing “groundbreaking” ingredients.

Over the last year, Holiata CollTech has courted a number of headlines in quick succession, from news that it would launch the world's first clean-label low-GI white bread ingredient to the filing of a patent for a natural sugar with a low-GI reading.

This carb-cutting quest is now entering its final phase prior to launch, according to Rajen Manicka, Holiata's chairman and chief executive.

High-GI foods easily convert to sugar, which causes spikes in blood-sugar levels that can lead to heart disease, diabetes and obesity. This is an issue of global concern, though Asia, with its carb-based staples prompting lightning growth in lifestyle diseases across the continent, stands to benefit considerably from low-GI ingredients.

Having recently signed an agreement with a major Asian food chain, Dr Rajen expects a bread containing the company's GI Lite ingredient to launch in the next four months.



Rajen Manicka

"It's undergoing its final GI testing and we expect a finished consumer product to be on the shelves some time in August. It will be the first of its kind worldwide," he claims. "We think it is a major initiative; it will be a groundbreaking effort."

He also expects a low-GI sugar to launch in the third quarter of this year. It has been developed in collaboration with Nobel prize nominee Daryl Thompson, one of the world's most eminent authorities on carbohydrates.

"We worked with Daryl and we incorporated some of his ideas into what we are doing, and are now looking at the creation of the evolution of a low-GI sugar."

"The interest for this is even greater than for the bread. It can be melted, baked and caramelised for use in all cooking applications. When consumed, it reduces the rate that glucose is digested throughout the body," he adds.

Another product that will appeal in particular to Southeast Asia, low-GI noodles, is also on the horizon. Dr Rajen says it is currently being development in partnership with one of North America's biggest noodle manufacturers, and he expects demand to be fierce in Asia.

"It looks very good and tastes very well. It's undergoing low-GI testing and will also be available in the third or fourth quarter this year."

"We are certain that there will be many noodle players, mostly in Asia, interested in it. These are specifically the fast, instant noodle manufacturers. They have a large lock on the customer base, and more importantly there is so much concern about health and diabetes. This product would help make the noodle market a little more healthy."

That Holista, which was previously best known for being the only company to produce ovine collagen using patented extraction methods, has seen its direction swing to a focus on low-GI foods is *"just a sign of the times,"* he continues.

"Consumers want options; they want sweet but at the same time they don't want the issues around sugar. Regulators are now jumping onto the story; they even want to bring in sugar taxes."

With obesity is at an all-time high, moreover, awareness has grown to the point that concern over sugar is now one the biggest single preoccupations among consumers when they assess food labels. When put together, these factors suggest that Holista has moved to the right place at the right time, part of a small pack of competitors in low-GI ingredients.

Low-GI, though, is not the only area of focus for the company, which has also developed a salt prototype that Dr Rajen says will reduce sodium content by 40%.

"It's all-natural and basically replaces sodium with potassium, which is more desirable. Normally this would result in a bitter taste—potassium is very metallic-tasting—but our patent allows us to mask this flavour and increase the potassium content," he explains, adding that he expects the prototype will be ready in the next 12 weeks.

But for the time being, low-GI products are providing the thrust for Holista's commercial efforts, as its biotech development readies to translate to consumer sales.

"Be they drink manufacturers, or noodle makers or people who take sweetened bread, we will be able to offer them a product that has a lower GI score," he concludes.