

# The Grocer

www.thegrocer.co.uk / January 15 2005

## The sizzle must appeal to sophisticated ladies

**Improved quality and recipes are giving sausages adult appeal, extending them from a family staple into the fine dining arena**

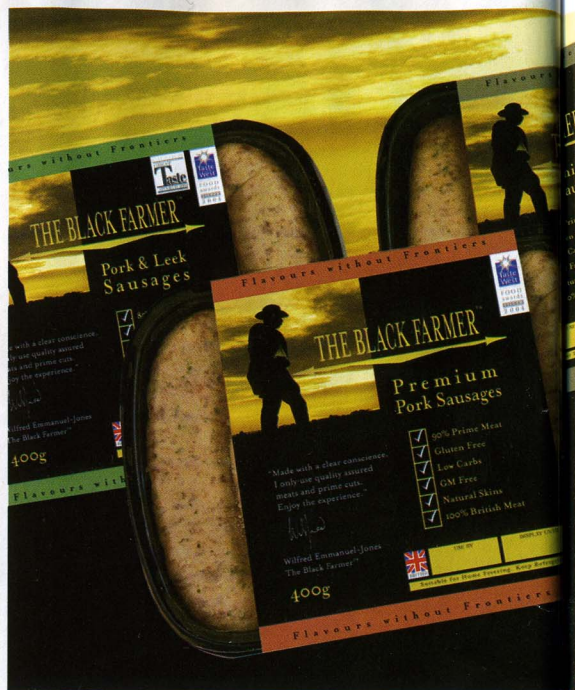
The wider choice of flavours and quality that the premium sausage sector offers consumers is a reflection of the market's growing appeal to adult consumers, according to Chris Lukehurst, marketing manager of the British Pig Executive.

Price is also a key factor in the growth of premium sausages according to Jim Brisby, sales and marketing director at Cranswick Foods, producer of Duchy Originals' offering.

Brisby says: "There is now not much more than £1 per pack between the best and the worst sausages on the market. Therefore price is not a barrier in preventing consumers trading up."

Lukehurst believes that sausages have reached a new level of sophistication. He says: "The quality available has vastly improved and premium sausages are seen as an interesting adult product that can suit a number of different usage occasions. It is perfectly acceptable to include premium sausages as the centrepiece of a dinner party, while they are seen as an interesting and generous product to bring to a barbecue."

Retailers appear to be the real winners with premium sausages. Sainsbury's sausage buyer, Bill Randles, says the market share for own-label premium



**A challenge: The Black Farmer brand (above) is taking on the mainstream, while (right) own labels demonstrate versatility**

sausages is 80% compared with own label's 62% share of the total market.

Brisby believes that many premium brands cannot compete with own-label premium sausages and have, in fact, been driven out of the category.

He says: "Brands have to work harder to compete because the supermarkets are the guardians of their own label and are better placed to implement promotional plans and drive trial."



One brand owner who is determined not to be squeezed out of the category, however, is Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones.

Emmanuel-Jones launched his brand, The Black Farmer, last year, after being "appalled" by the quality of sausages generally available.

The three-strong range of premium sausages, which have a meat content of between 85% and 90%, is on sale in Asda stores in the south west of England

and will be listed in 50 Sainsbury stores from next month.

He says that at a price point of £2.08 for a pack of six, they are only slightly higher priced than many standard offerings with a lower meat content.

Emmanuel-Jones intends to take premium credentials out of the speciality arena and into the mainstream.

"With this range I want to set a challenge to the leading branded producers which, in my opinion, have been producing a substandard product. I hope that The Black Farmer sausages can become a benchmark of what you can do with a sausage."

Whether or not other players in the market respond to this challenge or not, it is clear that with improved standard sausages and more premium products coming on to the market, the quality for all categories of sausage is sure to improve and this can only be good news for sausage lovers.

While premium sausages can only go so far in terms of meat content and quality of product, the next step for producers could be to use the premium sector to reinvigorate the frozen sausage market where sales fell by 5% in value last year, according to TNS.

Andrew Keeble, of Manor Born, believes that the reason for this poor performance is a lack of innovation in the category. He says: "This is an untapped market and one where, without having to change much of what we already do, we will be able to enjoy excellent results as the category grows."

# Multi-cultural sizzle



**The industry has an outspoken new player. Simon Mowbray meets the man they call 'The Black Farmer'**



**T**o say that Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones has had a varied career would be an understatement. Born in Jamaica, the 47-year-old businessman has, at various stages of his life, been in the army, a careworker, chef, TV producer and a marketing and PR executive with his own company.

He's also one of Britain's most novel additions to the food industry, having spent the first four years of his life in the Jamaican bush.

This son of a Pentecostal minister who spent the rest of his childhood in a terraced house in inner-city Birmingham has realised a life-long dream – to become a Devon farmer and launch his own food brand. And he's loving every minute of it.

As we meet at Exeter train station, it is immediately clear Emmanuel-Jones is going in for the gentleman's branch of farming as he rolls up in his Volvo 4x4 and jumps out wearing designer jeans, a smart open-necked shirt and jacket.

On the 45-minute journey to his West Kitcham Farmhouse in St Giles on the Heath, near the Cornish border, he sets out his credentials as a potential business heavyweight by sharing his no-nonsense views on how the food and drink industry should shake itself up. They include the view that Tesco should give up a third of its car parks to local producers once a month, that big corporations like Unilever should throw money at small independent "nursery" companies ("small producers are

**“These supermarket guys on the front line are shrinking markets. It's so short-sighted”**

the only ones showing any real innovation”) and how a recent claim by Trevor Phillips, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, that ethnic minorities are made to feel unwelcome in the countryside is “bollocks”.

The man locals affectionately refer to as 'The Black Farmer' appeared on the Devonshire horizon seven years ago after the success of his London-based marketing and PR agency enabled him to buy his current country residence (the father of three also owns a family home in Battersea, south west London).

Not content merely to turn the dilapidated farmhouse, which stands in 30 acres of land, into a weekend retreat, he set about making it a going concern, re-introducing sheep and cattle and employing a farm manager.

Now the working farm is the basis for his own food brand, The Black Farmer, which he recently launched with a three-strong range of sausages that have secured listing in 18 Asda stores in the south west. The £2.29 premium sizzlers, made from local pork, including

Emmanuel-Jones' own stock, have already been honoured by the Taste of the West judges and in the prestigious Taste Awards. Emmanuel-Jones has also brought out a range of premium dipping and cooking sauces, under the same banner, that are doing the rounds on the upmarket delicatessen circuit.

Despite this initial success, Emmanuel-Jones still has things to get off his chest as he fires up the farmhouse stove to fry some of his prize-winning sausages. One bugbear, for example, has been dealing with the multiples – and all of them except Asda have annoyed him at one point or another.

“A lot of people in the food industry are lazy,” opines Emmanuel-Jones. “Buyers, for example, are always looking for the quick fix. If I present what I think is a great product and then Wall's goes in with a multi-million pound budget, the buyer goes for the option that grows his bottom line more quickly.

“These supermarket guys on the front line are actually shrinking markets as categories get down to three or four big players. It's so short-sighted.”

Another source of annoyance has been the multiples' claims to support local producers and the cumbersome way that they operate. He says Waitrose's claims to help local brands are over-egged (“they've hardly got any stores down here anyway”), while Tesco, with whom he is currently in talks, is not let off the hook, either: “I saw the manager at our local Tesco in Launceston three times, but she wasn't interested because everything has to go through head office. There should be a system where stores can trial locally produced goods. The multiples claim to offer choice but it's often nonsense.”

Big brand owners also come in for criticism. Advertising, he says, is “lazy” and too readily jumps on the latest bandwagon or reality TV craze.

Emmanuel-Jones is coming at this with a credible amount of knowledge. As a TV producer, he spent the best part of a decade at the BBC working on an array of programmes and, latterly, set up Commsplus, a marketing and PR agency he runs with his wife Michaela, the clients of which have included some of the most innovative new brands of the last decade, including Loyd Grossman, Kettle Chips and Cobra Beer.

“All those brands had an instinct that they were bringing something new to the market that people would want. Great brands are about instinct, not research. Some of the greatest brands would never have survived if they had been researched.

“Can you imagine someone like Unilever or Premier Foods coming up with the idea for a Black Farmer brand? There would be terror in the boardroom in an industry that is full of white, middle-class manufacturers.”

Despite this last statement, he insists that he is not playing the race card with his brand, but is celebrating Britain's multi-cultural heritage. “I want this to be a national, multi-cultural brand. It is about great-tasting food that has been brought to market by someone who happens to be black.”