

Vibrant, natural, on-trend: GNT's vision for colour in bakery & snacks

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At IBIE 2025, GNT is set to inspire the bakery and snack industry by showcasing its EXBERRY colours through vibrant concha cookie concepts. Derived entirely from fruits, vegetables, and plants, these clean-label colouring solutions are designed to meet the growing demand for natural alternatives to synthetics while delivering bold, eye-catching appeal. As consumers increasingly seek products that balance indulgence with transparency and health-conscious choices, GNT is helping manufacturers reimagine classics with fresh twists, overcome formulation challenges, and tap into emerging colour trends. In this interview, Alice Lee, Technical Marketing Manager GNT, discusses the inspiration behind its showcase, the science and innovation driving EXBERRY, and how the company is positioning its plant-based colours to meet evolving market demands.

What inspired GNT to showcase EXBERRY® colours through concha cookie concepts at IBIE 2025, and how do these creations reflect current consumer trends in bakery and snacks?

The sugar cookies are inspired by Mexican concha bread and show how colour can be used to help modernise classic baked goods with new twists. The vibrancy of the shell topping was intentional because we wanted to demonstrate that colours made from fruit, vegetables and plants can deliver really bold visual appeal.

How do EXBERRY colours, derived from fruits, vegetables, and plants, differ in performance and appeal compared to traditional synthetic dyes in bakery applications?

With synthetics, it's relatively simple to achieve consistent, vibrant shades across different applications. With plant-based colours, it's more challenging. The natural pigments in the fruits, vegetables and plants are influenced by factors like the pH of the base product, heating requirements and light exposure. That means you have to identify the best raw materials for the individual application and you may need to tweak recipes. With the right approach, plant-based colours can deliver very bright and stable shades, but it requires a lot of knowledge and it's important to work with an experienced colour supplier.

What are some of the key formulation challenges when using plant-based colours in baked goods, and how does GNT support manufacturers in overcoming them?

This will always depend on the target shade and the application type. For example, a lot of our red and pink colours contain anthocyanin pigments, which are very bright in acidic products but start to shift blue and become less stable at higher pH levels. In some cases, it might make sense to adjust the pH of the base product. In a cake, for example, you may be able to use different leavening systems that have the bake performance of a traditional baking powder but at a significantly lower pH.

We also offer beetroot concentrates, which aren't influenced by pH but are sensitive to heat. One strategy for managing heat sensitivity in cakes is colour overage, which means the pre-baked batter or dough will have more colour than after baking, so you can formulate a usage rate to your desired colour of the after-bake appearance.

We'll always look at the project requirements and work out which raw material or blend of raw materials will provide the best results. We work closely with our customers right through the product development process, including colour matching, recipe adjustments, stability testing, regulatory matters and more.

Are you observing a stronger demand for clean-label, plant-based colours in the North American bakery and snack market? What factors are driving this shift?

There's definitely a growing demand for natural colouring solutions. Ultra-processed foods have been under the spotlight for several years, and synthetic dyes have had a huge amount of media coverage in the US following the Red 3 ban announcement and other regulatory developments. With plant-based colours, manufacturers can use simple label declarations like "fruit and vegetable juice for colour" in the US, so it gives consumers instant reassurance that they're natural and safe.

From your perspective, what are the biggest colour trends shaping the bakery and snack industry today, and how is GNT positioning EXBERRY® to meet these demands?

There's a big trend for comforting, nostalgic flavours, and manufacturers can provide fresh twists with playful formats and striking colours. For example, we've developed a peanut butter and jelly macaron concept with purple swirls. It combines two childhood favourites to create a fun, nostalgic treat that marries flavour with visual excitement. The bold colour is important because it draws eyes and drives trial.

Beyond bakery and snacks, what other categories or innovations do you see as promising opportunities for EXBERRY colours in the near future?

Historically, EXBERRY colours have mostly been used in confectionery, beverages and dairy, but we can provide solutions for all types of food and drink. One of our recent innovations is a clean-label paprika oil that delivers very intense orange shades. It can be used in fat-based applications like buttercreams, fat fillings, compound coatings, chocolate, snack coatings and seasonings and we also have a water-dispersible option that's suitable for use in confectionery, dairy and much more.

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