

Jerusalem artichoke puree with sweet potato and walnuts (Bulgaria)

Product developed in EIT Food RIS Consumer Engagement Labs project

Sealed in a glass jar vegetables and nuts remind of warm summer days all year round? Generational knowledge and creativity meet in the Bulgarian savoury puree co-created by silver consumers. A combination of Jerusalem artichoke, sweet potato, and walnut offers the new product in which exciting flavours meet the best qualities of locally grown ingredients.

To find out what kind of food products answer the needs of the older consumers, the EIT Food project team invited older adults in Bulgaria to participate in co-creation workshops. The participants developed an idea of an innovative vegetable-based product that helps older customers stay healthy and enjoy their food.

Innovative food product

Even though vegetable purees and ready-made soups are widely available on the market, the newly introduced puree challenges its competitors. The Jerusalem artichoke puree with sweet potato and walnuts (bg. *Пюре от гулия със сладък картоф и орех*) breaks with bland and mushy purees and creams, instead offering a product truly innovative on several levels. First of all, it has an exciting taste, obtained by adding walnuts and spices such as turmeric and ginger, both known for their anti-inflammatory and antioxidant qualities, adding a spicy twist to the formula. Secondly, its consistency is designed to answer to the particular preferences of 65+ consumers. Walnuts, applauded by older consumers for their flavour but usually avoided due to chewing difficulties, were blended to facilitate consumption. On the other hand, tiny cubes of Jerusalem artichoke offer a crunchy, yet easy to bite sensation, enhancing the experiences of consumers bored with plain purees. Furthermore, contrary to already available similar products, the newly introduced puree is highly condensed and contains only a minimum amount of water. This limits the weight and size of the jar, facilitating purchases and transportation by customers. It also allows consumers to experiment and decide on the final use of the product, according to the individual creativity and preferences.

Good for health

The Jerusalem artichoke puree with sweet potato and walnuts answers the market need for ready-to-eat and easy-to-prepare healthy products. Its main ingredient – the Jerusalem artichoke is a great source of nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. It is well known for its cholesterol and blood pressure control qualities, improves the immune system and contributes to dental health. The Jerusalem artichoke can also support digestive system, and all these benefits make it a highly desirable ingredient for older consumers. Walnuts are not only flavourful but are also rich sources of proteins.

Preferred by older adults / Designed by older adults for older adults

Older consumers are expecting products that will be healthy but also easy to prepare without sacrificing the possibility of expressing creativity and having fun in the kitchen. That is why the Bulgarian vegetable puree can be used in a variety of ways. It can be consumed on its own as a dip or a spread heated and consumed as a side dish or treated as a base for creamy soups, stews or other dishes. Thanks to the blended walnuts and bite-sized artichokes, the product is savoury without sacrificing the need of the older consumers for a more crunchy texture, while also respecting specific dental preferences.

The ingredients will almost entirely be locally grown, coming from small farms practicing sustainable/regenerative agriculture, securing the best quality of the final product, and responding to the consumer's environmental concerns. The packaging is designed in a way that responds to silver consumers'

preferences – the puree comes in small, reusable glass jars, making it easy to store at home and limiting the risk of food waste, especially in one-person households.

Different from existing products

Jerusalem artichoke-based puree responds to the consumers' desire for healthy and ready-to-eat vegetable purees and soup bases but at the same time provides them with a new combination of flavours, previously unavailable on the market. Instead of the well-known pumpkin or beetroot purees, it offers a new savoury combination of Jerusalem artichoke, sweet potatoes, and walnuts, spiced up by ginger and turmeric. Contrary to other ready-made soups and purees, the Jerusalem artichoke-based puree is all about convenience and creativity. It can be used in multiple ways, allowing consumers to experiment in the kitchen and use one product to prepare different meals on an everyday basis. Also, the puree is a lot less processed than, for example, instant soups, providing consumers with easy to prepare yet nutritious meals.

Additional information about the project:

Jerusalem artichoke puree with sweet potato and walnut (bg. *Пюре от гулия със сладък картоф и орех*) is a product designed during the co-creation workshops, held as part of the EIT Food RIS Consumer Engagement Labs project. The project is coordinated by the University of Warsaw and financed by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), under the Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe, the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. The project's main aim is to address the needs of older consumers in the food and beverage market by applying novel methodology which engages consumers, stimulates their creativity, and fosters the acceptance of new products. The product concept was designed in 2020 in Bulgaria during co-creation sessions which gathered older consumers, scientists from the University of Food Technologies, Plovdiv and the representatives of food producer Venets.T Ltd. (*Венец.ТООД*). Following the co-creation process, the innovative product was developed and introduced to the market in 2021.

Find out more about the project at: <http://timo.wz.uw.edu.pl/cel>