

Grikola – buckwheat granola (Lithuania)

Product developed in EIT Food RIS Consumer Engagement Labs project

Buckwheat for breakfast? Doesn't sound too exciting, right? Read about the new *Grikola* and boost your morning routine. Now, you can enjoy a healthy meal from locally grown superfood (that's right, I'm still talking about buckwheat), which is crunchy and easy to chew and has no added sugar!

In order to give silver consumers what they really need and want, we have invited older adults in Lithuania to take part in the co-creating workshops, where together with the representatives of food suppliers, food producers and startups they came up with the idea of a healthy and crunchy snack that will satisfy not only tastes but also eyes. Designed according to preferences of older consumers, it has proven to be a perfect alternative for all age groups.

Innovative food product

Quick visit to the shop will show the abundance of granola products already available on the market shelves. Then why bother trying yet another product? First of all, *Grikola* can be used in multiple ways: as granola, as flakes or like a crust. Also, existing products are all based on wheat, with limited nutritional value and high content of gluten, making it difficult to digest and often causing allergies. *Grikola*, made of organic buckwheat contains a higher amount of nutrients and fibre. Moreover, *Grikola* is gluten free and allergen free, ensuring that it's suitable for everyone.

Healthy food is great for our bodies, but can also be extremely boring. Wouldn't it be better to have some fun and pleasure when preparing healthy snacks? Therefore, *Grikola* will come in different colours made from natural products e.g. vegetable, fruit and berries powders. Fruit, vegetable and berries pieces and powders will be freeze dried, ensuring that all nutritious properties will be saved.

While talking to our consumers we have realized that they enjoy the crunchiness of food, but oftentimes they find favourite crumbly products too hard to chew. *Grikola*, using innovative technology will give the sensation of crunchiness without having to worry about teeth.

On top of that, *Grikola* aims at promoting local foods and advocates for limiting carbon footprint and a more environmentally conscious diet.

Good for health

Buckwheat is a European superfood. It is a whole grain, a good source of fibre, and rich in minerals and various plant compounds, especially rutin (rutoside). Many studies recorded it's high antioxidant activity, anti-inflammatory and other functional properties. As a result, buckwheat consumption is linked to several health benefits, including improved blood sugar control and heart health, thus helping to prevent cardiovascular diseases. It is known for its promoting weight loss proprieties. Buckwheat is gluten-free, so it is a perfect alternative for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerances. All of these qualities make it a perfect dietary choice for all age groups, but especially for older consumers due to its high fibre content. Research shows that significant positive correlations can be observed between dietary fibre intake and copper, magnesium, selenium, potassium, iron and zinc intakes. This means that eating more grain products, vegetables and fruits which will increase dietary fibre intake, may also

improve the mineral intakes of older adults. Vegetables added to *Grikola* instead of fruits or other sweet additives, will supplement the nutritional value of the product.

What is also important, in contrast to already available ready-made granola/crust products, is that *Grikola* contains significantly less sugar and has only low glycaemic index ingredients, making a stable sugar levels diet easier to follow. Of course, *Grikola* contains no allergens, artificial colouring or preservatives.

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

During the co-creation workshop several priorities became clear when designing the new product for mature consumers. It had to be healthy, natural, simple yet playful, convenient both in terms of use and eating, and affordable.

That is how *Grikola* was born. Made of buckwheat, full of fibre and microelements, containing only few key ingredients, without any unnecessary additives.

Our consumers mentioned that food suggested for them is usually boring or dull looking and doesn't inspire to play and experiment. Therefore, *Grikola* is not only designed as a multipurpose product, which can be used in multiple ways and recipes, it is also appealing and makes food look really good on the plate. Buckwheat grains are coloured by carrot powder, beetroot powder and other natural colorants like blackcurrant powder. So no more plain looking food.

Recent research showed that nearly one third of the older consumers reported difficulties with chewing. But it doesn't mean they have lost their desire to enjoy crunchy food. At this point modern technology stepped in offering innovatively treated buckwheat, making it easy to chew and still crumbly.

Different from existing products

Grikola is a creative buckwheat product - it can be used as a crust with soups, salads and fruits, or as flakes to prepare porridge, or granola to mix with curd and yogurt. No matter how you will decide to use it, it will boost your meal with fibres and other nutrients. One product offers a variety of possibilities to use in the kitchen. It is made of buckwheat, European superfood, so your meal is locally grown and manufactured. *Grikola* comes with vegetables and no extra sugars were added. Delicate sweetness to balance the flavour comes from date paste and rice syrup - both natural and known for low GI, making it easier to adhere to a low sugar diet. Special technology used to prepare *Grikola* makes it simultaneously easy to chew without compromising on crumbly sensation.

Additional information about the project:

Grikola 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, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, as part of EIT Regional Innovation Scheme. The project's main aim is to address the needs of older consumers in the food and beverages market by applying novel methodology which engages consumers, stimulates creativity and fosters the acceptance of new products. The concept of *Grikola* was designed in 2019 in Lithuania during such co-creation sessions which gathered: consumers, representatives of food retailers - JSC "Palink, food producers -

Ekofrisa UAB, and startups - UAB INNOFOODS. Following the co-creation process, the actual product was developed and introduced to the market by the Lithuanian consortium in 2020.

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