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2020**



Best Consumer Public Relations Campaign

€20K to €50K



Photo by Jennifer Oppermann.

Campaign

Clonakilty welcomes a new (vegetable) pudding to the family!

Description of Campaign

In September 2019, Clonakilty Food Co., creators of the famous Clonakilty Blackpudding and Whitepudding launched a new vegetable pudding in response to changing consumer trends. The company required an engaging communications campaign that was respectful of the brand's core meat-based product range while targeting a new audience seeking meat-alternative products.

“Gemma Smyth”
COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations Consultant

Gemma Smyth Communications



Client

Clonakilty Food Co.

Background to the Campaign

Clonakilty Food Co (Clonakilty) can trace its heritage to the 1880's when its secret black pudding recipe was first developed in Clonakilty, West Cork. The recipe was passed down through the decades until it reached the Twomey family in the 1970s. From that time the Twomey family expanded the Clonakilty offering to include white pudding, sausages and rashers which are enjoyed the world over.

Prior to this campaign, the brand had preferred to let the quality of the produce 'do the talking' and marketing activity has focused on POS, sampling in-store, consumer events, social media along with digital and radio advertising at key times. The company had not engaged with a large-scale PR campaign to underpin new product launch before, however.

In 2017, Clonakilty opened a state-of-the-art new headquarters in the heart of Clonakilty, after several years operating from outside the town. The vision for this premises was to bring the success of Clonakilty back home, develop an immersive visitors centre; and create a space for new product development to flourish.

In late 2018, the team at Clonakilty were acutely aware of the changing consumer trends towards eating less meat driven by a combination of environmental and health concerns. The product development team began exploring the creation of an alternative meat product and using its unique combination of oats, onions, and spices to develop a unique vegetable pudding.

When considering how the company would launch the product into market, concerns were raised that it could be seen as Clonakilty 'turning its back' on its core meat product range, which was furthest from the truth. The core range remain a key driver of sales for the business and the products the company is most passionate about.

The internal marketing team acknowledged that a comprehensive PR campaign would be required to manage the launch in a way that highlighted the heritage and success of Clonakilty to date and generate talkability not only for the new vegetable pudding but also for its black pudding and white pudding – which are the mainstay of the Clonakilty product portfolio.

Statement of Objectives

1. To retain the history and heritage of the Clonakilty brand without losing its meat-based roots, with the launch of the vegetable-based Clonakilty Veggie Pudding.
KPI: That a minimum of 50% of mentions would refer to the other products in the range.
2. To illustrate to consumers that Clonakilty puddings can be enjoyed in modern meals throughout the day and not solely at breakfast-time.
KPI: Ensure message retention regarding versatility of the product by including key message of suggested usage in all briefing documents and press materials.
3. To secure positive media coverage for Clonakilty Food Co. across a variety of targeted national media outlets across food, business, and lifestyle categories.
KPI: To secure a minimum of 2 x high profile national media placements and 10 x other media mentions which were positive in sentiment.
4. To reinforce the credibility and quality of Clonakilty Food Co. product range at every opportunity.
KPI: Ensure message retention regarding quality of the product by including key messages on previous accolades and awards plus the brand story in all briefing documents and press materials and interviews.
5. To highlight the natural, quality ingredients in the clean-label produce.
KPI: To include full ingredient list and nutritional breakdown where possible.
6. To hit sales targets within first week of launch across agreed retailer listings in Tesco, Dunnes Stores and SuperValu.
KPI: Sell one case (12 units) of Clonakilty Veggie Pudding per store per week within first week of launch and deliver same volumes at a min. for proceeding 6 weeks.
7. Drive engagement during course of the campaign in Clonakilty's social channels, in particular Instagram.
KPI: Increase Instagram followers by 10%.

Programme Planning and Strategy

Following a successful pitch, the team at Gemma Smyth Communications was appointed to work with the internal marketing team in Clonakilty on this project.

Communications Workshop

The development of the consumer communications strategy began with a half-day workshop at the Clonakilty Food Co. HQ with CEO Colette Twomey and representatives from the marketing and sales department.

This workshop involved identifying key communications objectives and key messages, analysing, and segmenting the target audiences, reviewing the communications channels available and setting KPI's to match the client's vision

of success. Alongside this, a detailed history of the brand to date was recorded for accuracy in reporting and to provide the capacity to tell the brand story effectively. From this, a detailed PR strategy document was compiled and agreed upon. This provided the blueprint for all communications activity carried out from September – December 2019.

Communications Pillars

The strategy focussed on three main pillars and messaging was developed under each of these which would be used throughout the campaign.

Pillar 1: History & Heritage

Celebrating the heritage of this much-loved brand.

The Clonakilty Blackpudding secret recipe was first developed in Clonakilty in the 1880's and remains unchanged.

Colette Twomey, MD of Clonakilty Food Co is the sole custodian of this secret recipe which was passed on to her by her late husband, Ed.

The company has continued to evolve its product offering over the years to build on the success of its original black pudding which was first made almost 150 years ago in Clonakilty West Cork.

The launch of the new vegetable pudding was a natural evolution in the Clonakilty pudding range.

Pillar 2: New product development

A third product in the Clonakilty pudding range – always referencing 3 products.

In response to consumer trends Clonakilty Food Co. has developed the 'Clonakilty Veggie Pudding' which contains the characteristic texture and spicy aroma associated with the celebrated pudding range but in a vegetable only alternative.

The Clonakilty Food Co. welcomes a new vegetable pudding to the family and now offers a trio of pudding products.

The Clonakilty Pudding range offers something to suit all tastes.

The new Veggie Pudding matches the quality and taste that Clonakilty's most loyal customers know and love.

Pillar 3: Not just for breakfast!

Continuing to build awareness of the versatility of Clonakilty Blackpudding and Whitepudding – no longer just for a traditional fry but for meal occasions throughout the day.

The Clonakilty pudding range, which is known for its characteristic oaty texture and spicy flavours, can be added to a host of recipes for meals ideas suitable for brunch, lunch, and dinners.

As the Clonakilty pudding offering has evolved to feature three distinctive products, so too has the way in which people are consuming pudding.

It is no longer just considered a breakfast staple in the 'Traditional Irish Breakfast' but as a delicious addition to a lunch or dinner dish – worthy of inclusion on the menus of restaurants at home and abroad.

Clonakilty puddings feature on the menus of the top restaurants in Ireland and overseas.

The new veggie pudding can be swapped for white pudding in a range of recipes depending on your taste preference.

Communications Approach

To provide ample opportunity to communicate all the messages above, it was decided that the communications campaign would centre around two key activations:

1. Launch of the Veggie Pudding – September 2019

This activity would involve a combination of media relations, influencer marketing, product drop and recipe development to introduce the new product.

2. Launch of ‘The Black and White Cookbook’ – November 2019

While the concept for the cookery book had been devised by Clonakilty, Gemma Smyth Communications advised on several ways in which this opportunity could be maximised to achieve strong communications results. This included:

- Food Historian Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire – In order to provide a news hook for the recipe book and to strengthen the story of the history and heritage of Clonakilty, we recommended that the company engage respected Food Historian Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire to write a foreword for the book and to attend to launch event. We believed that Máirtín would add some gravitas to the book, confirming Clonakilty’s position as one of the original pudding makers in Ireland.
- Chef, Clodagh McKenna – Clonakilty already had a strong relationship with Cork Chef Clodagh McKenna who was approached to develop several recipes for inclusion in the book and to attend the launch. We believed that Clodagh would provide a well-known consumer face for the campaign.
- Foodie Influencers – the broader communications campaign for the launch of the veggie pudding involved working with several food writers and influencers to develop recipe and social media content. It was suggested that several individuals from this group could also contribute to the recipe book and be invited to attend the launch to broaden its appeal to consumers.

Communications Tactics

The following communications tactics were employed:

1. Influencer Marketing

Following extensive research, a selection of male and female Irish Chefs (7), food writers (21) and content creators (4) were engaged to develop a range of recipes to feature the black, veggie and white pudding.

A broad demographic was selected to engage Gen X, Millennial, young family, and a highbrow foodie contingent.

13 were native to Cork or living in the county.

Some collaborators chosen were expatriates – this tactic was implemented as a testament to the widespread appeal of the products and the Clonakilty brand outside of Ireland.

Each of the contributors developed a range of recipes which were posted to their followers on social media and a selection were also used in the cookbook.

2. Media Relations

Advance Exclusive Interview

To set the scene for the launch of the Veggie Pudding an advance exclusive ‘Sunday Interview’ was secured for MD Colette Twomey with Gillian Nelis in the Sunday Business Post. This long form interview provided an opportunity to outline the history of the Clonakilty Food Co and the correct positioning and messaging around the launch of the veggie pudding.

Product Drop

A product drop was arranged to go to targeted media outlets with a handwritten note introducing the full range. Any vegetarian or vegan media targets received the new veggie pudding only, but all other targets received the full range.

Press Release & Recipe Syndication

Press releases announcing details of the product and book launch were issued to media along with a selection of recipes featuring the veggie pudding and from the cookbook.

Interview pitching

Both Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire and Chef Clodagh McKenna were pitched for interview to various media outlets to coincide with the book launch.

Christmas Gift Guides

The new cookbook which was launched in November was pitched for inclusion in several Christmas gift guides.

3. Events

National Ploughing Championships – Clonakilty run a stand at the event every year and as it closely followed the launch of the veggie pudding, they were sampling Veggie Pudding along with their core range throughout the 3-day festival. As a result, media opportunities on site were explored to bring further attention to the launch which resulted in a live taste test on Newstalk's Moncrieff Show.

Book Launch – a book launch event was arranged in The Woollen Mills in Dublin (who feature Clonakilty Blackpudding on their menu). This was attended by media, influencers and those who contributed to the book. A press release and social pictures were syndicated from the event and an interview took place on the morning of the event with Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire and Colette Twomey on Today with Sean O'Rourke on RTÉ Radio 1. Event attendees also posted extensively on social media from the launch.

Measurement

KPI 1: That a minimum of 50% of mentions of the new veggie pudding would refer to the other products in the range.

Result: 88% of media mentions referred to other puddings in range and 65% of collaborators developed recipes for both veggie and meat puddings.

KPI 2: Ensure message retention regarding versatility of the product.

Result: 36 original recipes were created for meals at brunch, lunch, dinner, and canapes which were shared across each collaborator's own social media channels (combined reach of 686,100), in the cookbook and media outlets.

KPI 3: To secure a minimum of 2 x high profile national media placements and 10 x other positive media mentions.

Result:

2x National broadcast interviews: RTÉ 1 'Today with Sean O'Rourke' and Newstalk FM Moncrieff live @ National Ploughing Champs.

2x National Broadcast live on-air positive samplings including RTÉ Radio 1 The Ray D'Arcy Show with Chef Neven Maguire and Newstalk FM Moncrieff live.

16 x print articles including Sunday Independent interview with Clodagh McKenna and Sunday Business Post interview with Colette Twomey.

15 x online news articles.

9 x Cork specific media placements.

KPI 4: To reinforce the credibility, quality, and heritage of the Clonakilty Food Co. product range at every opportunity.

Result: 96% of media mentions had a positive sentiment with 91% of these mentions using descriptors such as 'famous', 'award-winning' and 'amazing.'

KPI 5: To include full ingredient list and nutritional breakdown where possible.

Result: 79% of clippings and 100% of collaborators social content listed full product ingredients.

KPI 6: Sell one case (12 units) of Clonakilty Veggie Pudding per store in Tesco, Dunnes Stores and SuperValu per week within first week of launch and deliver same volumes at a min. for proceeding 6 weeks.

Result: One case per store rate surpassed within the first week of launch delivering an additional 50% worth of sales in each store on average within in the first week and the proceeding weeks.

KPI 7: Increase Instagram followers by 10%.

Result: Instagram followers on Clonakilty's profile increased by 15%.

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