



Formulating with curcumin: How brands can stand out

by Algin Guingao

Consumer interest in curcumin for its nutritional support has increased, along with a growing interest in turmeric, in which curcumin can be found as a biologically active polyphenolic compound.

A simple internet search shows consumers the star of the show is actually curcumin, because this polyphenol has key health benefits, including anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties [Foods. 2017;6(10):92].

During the pandemic, the rise of interest in antioxidants and the need for a healthy immune system encouraged people to explore improved health choices for themselves. So, similar to elderberries, curcumin was a breakthrough ingredient in the last few years and continues to spark interest for those making health-conscious choices. Curcumin is particularly popular as a standalone product and continues to be a common ingredient in many dietary supplements. In some households, it has always been a staple in their cuisine, but has now become a more common ingredient of supplementation with daily vitamins.

Creating standout curcumin products

In formulation and product development with curcumin, contract manufacturers typically receive interest from brands in product categories, such as anti-inflammatory and antioxidant supplements—more specifically to target arthritis, joint support, digestive health and gut health. Once a particular target is identified, contract manufacturers and their product development teams can help brands source ingredients for the specific needs of their clients, whether it is a generic raw material or a specific trademark.

Creating another curcumin product in an already populated market can be overwhelming, but knowledgeable contract manufacturers can provide full-service support from ideation to delivering the finished product with a goal of helping brands stand out in the space. Some of the ways manufacturers can assist brands in gaining an edge is to ensure they're offering the most potent versions of curcumin, as well as to provide research and studies to support their product's claims, if needed.

A willingness to work directly with vendors to connect brands with ample amounts of information and assist them through the entire process is also important in a relationship with a brand and their

manufacturer. If brands are unsure of what trademarks and studies are available, an experienced manufacturer can also take formulation a step further by researching a range of possibilities to offer the best options available to help the brand's product rise above the competition.

Key considerations for curcumin formulation

Key considerations when developing products with curcumin include knowing that it is not easily absorbed into one's bloodstream. A common solution to the lack of absorption is the addition of black pepper into the formula at a small dosage of about 5 mg to 20 mg per serving. Black pepper contains the compound piperine, which can enhance the absorption of curcumin because it can allow it to pass through the intestinal wall into one's bloodstream [Asian Pac J Trop Biomed. 2013;3(4):253-266].

Another key consideration in formulating with curcumin is being mindful of the potencies of the product, which can be overlooked in many formulations. When formulating, it is extremely important to review the specification of the raw material because it is essential to use turmeric that contains high amounts of curcumin so that a product is as effective as it claims to be.

In terms of product supply for brands seeking to develop curcumin-based products, fortunately the availability of curcumin has not been as impacted by the supply chain as some other nutraceutical materials. The increased demand for turmeric products has been accommodated well during this pandemic, and it continues to shine as a great ingredient to maintain a healthy system.

However, it is important to note that there are several environmental and logistical factors that can easily change the availability of curcumin such as harvest, climate change, and transportation issues. But good contract manufacturers take the time to work closely with their vendors to get the most accurate lead times and stock availability to satisfy clients and to help mitigate any supply risks that may occur.

Curcumin product trends

Curcumin products are commonly developed in capsule form, but the industry is seeing a growing trend of its use in powder and ready-to-drink (RTD) formats. In powder form, curcumin is more widely seen in lattes, creamers, or superfood blends. These can sometimes be harsher in taste, so the dosage may not be as efficacious as when taking it in capsule format, but additional flavors can be added to enhance the taste experience.

Some brands that carry curcumin in capsule form are now expanding their lines by producing instant sachets for on-the-go drinking by adding them into a water bottle. This is a very popular option, and many brands have been marketing turmeric and highlighting the use of curcumin through this format.

Curcumin in its bright yellow and orange color is visually appealing and not your average ingredient and continues to have many benefits. Overall, curcumin has become a popular everyday choice for consumers and we believe it will continue to be relevant in the nutraceutical space for a long time to come. ✨



Algin Guingao is a product development supervisor at Lief Labs, where she works closely with sales and R&D to complete formulation and ideation for Lief's clients. Guingao holds a bachelor's degree in food science and administration. Based in Valencia, California, Lief Labs is a premier formulation and product development innovator and manufacturer of dietary supplements.

