

Helping food businesses

REFORMUL
for a healthier future



Sweet taste of success with cloudy lemonade

“It’s given us the confidence, through both the reformulation and the new format that we’ve launched, to go after customers with renewed energy”

**Karen Knowles
co-owner & director**

Bon Accord is a premium soft drink manufacturer that makes small batches of 100% naturally sweetened soft drinks and mixers, packaged in recyclable cans and glass bottles. They are suitable for vegans and 100% caffeine and gluten free, meaning that more people than ever can enjoy their joyfully juicy drinks.

Originally established in 1903, the company is now run by the founder’s great-great granddaughter, Karen Knowles.

Why sugar reduction?

While our existing products are made with real fruit juice and no added sugars or artificial sweeteners, we identified a need to attain HFSS compliance (legislation restricting the promotion of products high in saturated fat, salt or sugar) across our range to secure and expand supermarket and retail listings.

We used the £3,000 from the Reformul8

Challenge Fund 4 to focus on reformulating our cloudy lemonade, swapping the base ingredient to reduce the overall sugar content while maintaining our brand commitment to joyful juiciness.

What we did

Over a nine-month period in 2024, we worked on reformulating our cloudy lemonade so it had less natural sugar. The project gave us the ideal



opportunity to look at other things, such as the colour and the product consistency in reducing fruit drift to the bottom of the bottles.

Our objective was to create a lemonade that tasted better and was more visually appealing, as well as being HFSS-compliant.

Market deep dive: we used some of the funding to really dig into the market. That meant literally buying and tasting pretty much every lemonade out there – from Marks & Spencer’s still lemonade through to Sprite and 7UP. It gave us a fantastic feel for what was out there and what people expected.

Bringing in the experts: we brought in an NPD (new product development) specialist for a couple of days. Their

CASE STUDY

**BON
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SOFT DRINKS

guidance was invaluable in shaping the reformulation, making sure our lemonade kept that “tangy and tart with a zesty zing” Bon Accord signature and blended seamlessly with the rest of our naturally sweetened, full-flavour range.

Tackling consistency: Our drinks are sweetened with fruit juice (and at the time, with organic coconut nectar), and we wanted to stick with that approach. But we had this issue with “fruit drift” – the fruit pulp settling at the bottom. To improve consistency and make the product look better, we decided to turn away from full pulp.

Finding the perfect colour: that meant shifting to a clarified juice. We experimented quite a bit, and it was actually a paler grape juice that gave us the exact clear, bright colour we were aiming for, unlike some of the previous apple and pear juices that made it a bit too vibrant for a lemonade.

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The findings

We were really pleased to achieve the outcome that we set ourselves in the brief:

- Our reformulated cloudy lemonade now has **less than 5g of sugar per 100ml** (just 4.6g naturally occurring sugar from 5.0g carbohydrate), down from 8.2g. Calories also dropped significantly, from 38 to 22 calories per 100ml.
- The product is both **HFSS compliant**, without compromising our brand's promise of no added sugar and no artificial sweeteners.
- There is **improved product consistency** with the new formulation meaning our lemonade looks and tastes exactly the same on day one as it does six months later.

We've got consistent carbonation and flavour throughout the product's shelf life, which was a huge win.

- The **colour of the lemonade** now perfectly aligns with our brand, reinforcing that premium, natural feel we're known for.

The benefits and learning points

This reformulation journey was so important for us, bringing some big commercial advantages and offering valuable lessons:

For us, this wasn't just about making a better product, it was about **staying ahead of the curve**.

We had to go on this reformulation journey because we didn't want to be left behind in the market. It shows how vital it is to adapt to new regulations and what consumers are looking for.

The power of funding: the Reformul8 Challenge Fund was absolutely instrumental. It allowed us to give this project the focus and attention it truly needed.

Sometimes, when there's no dedicated funding, these developments can feel like a "nice to have" rather than essential. Being a smaller, nimble business, we could use that funding and pivot quite quickly.

Beyond simple compliance, the improved product quality and consistency has given us so much more confidence and it's **opened new doors**.

CASE STUDY



Bon Accord co-founders, Karen Knowles and Nathan Burroughs

Combined with our recent move from 275ml glass bottles to 330ml cans, it's let us open up conversations in entirely new sectors, like travel, places we'd never approached before.

We have **newfound confidence for growth**. I honestly think "It's given us the confidence, through both the reformulation and the new format that we've launched, to go after customers with renewed energy."

That self-belief is now driving us to secure new listings and expand our reach.

My advice to others thinking about taking on a similar challenge is to clarify goals. Have a clear idea of your brief and the exact outcomes you want to achieve.

That clarity makes all the difference in getting to a successful end result.