

## Digestive Biscuits *Equilíbrio* (Portugal)

---

Product developed in EIT Food RIS Consumer Engagement Labs project

**There is a Norwegian saying: *Cookies are made of butter and love*. Love is all that you need as the Beatles sang but butter is a much more controversial ingredient because of its energy value and saturated fats it contains. Cookies, biscuits, and other small pastries give instant pleasure and comfort; they are easily portable and available far and wide. However, indulging yourself in eating most of the sweet bakery products may be detrimental for your health: they usually contain trans and saturated fats, white sugar, and wheat which is a source of gluten and raise the blood sugar level. If eaten as an innocuous snack, such biscuits may become a significant source of extra-calories in one's diet. Should one resign from the pleasure and convenience of reaching for a small package of biscuits? Of course not, but only when does choose the healthy version of this sweet goody.**

To find out what kind of food products answer the needs of the elderly, the EIT Food project team invited in 2019 seniors in Portugal to participate in a co-creation workshop to develop concepts of new food products. Its participants developed an idea of innovative biscuits that provide the customers with the traditional attractive taste and healthy contents and serve as a convenient snack or part of a meal – not only for seniors but also for other age groups.

### **Innovative food product**

Biscuits are a typical staple in the Portuguese diet. However, typically, such products usually contain ingredients that the elderly should abstain from (wheat, processed fats, sugar). The innovative character of the biscuits manifests itself in the fact that Digestive Biscuits *Equilíbrio* are not a substitute of traditional biscuits but their healthy version that may become a substantial part of the everyday diet of seniors who still want to enjoy the pleasure of eating a biscuit regardless of the diet restrictions they need to follow.

### **Good for health**

The biscuits are produced with the use of rice bran, oats, and wholemeal wheat flour instead of white wheat flour. These ingredients make the biscuits particularly advantageous for consumers' digesting system as rice does not contain gluten and is rich in fibre. They contain sunflower oil instead of the commonly used palm oil which high in saturated fats. Elimination of the palm oil makes the biscuits also more ecologically friendly. The addition of healthy, unprocessed fats and grains make the taste of the biscuits more subtle as the natural flavours are not suppressed by artificial flavourings that are excluded from the products.

### **Preferred by seniors/ Designed by seniors for seniors**

Digestive Biscuits *Equilibrio* respond to the needs of various age groups and people of different lifestyles. Their traditional taste suits both adults and the elderly as well as children. Packaging by a portion of 4 biscuits renders the *Equilibrio* a perfect snack to eat at school, work, or during a trip or walk. The portioning per one serving serves consumers of all age groups. Particularly seniors appreciate the one-size portioning as many of them live now alone or only with their partners. Such packaging prevents the excess food waste and – alongside this – losing money which is essential for seniors who usually have little financial assets at their disposal.

### **Different from existing products**

What makes biscuits *Equilibrio* (eng. *Balance*) different from existing similar products is not visible at first glance and by the first bite – and this is its most important aspect. The traditional taste of biscuits is preserved but the ingredients are much better for consumers health. They do have all that is healthy (sunflower oil, oats, bran, wholemeal flour) while not including all that is detrimental for one's body functioning (saturated fats, white wheat flour, artificial sweeteners and flavourings).

### **Additional information about the project:**

*Bolachas Equilibrio* (eng. *Balance Biscuits*) 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 elderly 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 *Bolachas Equilibrio* (eng. *Balance Biscuits*) was designed in 2019 in Portugal during such co-creation sessions which gathered: senior consumers, representatives of a food retailer – Continente (Sonae MC group), a food producer – Vieira de Castro – Produtos Alimentares S.A., and a startup – Qualiriso, together with INIAV, the National Institute for Agricultural and Veterinary Research, and APDP, the Portuguese association for the protection of diabetics. Following the co-creation process, the actual product was launched by the Portuguese consortium and became available in several Continente supermarkets in 2021.

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