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the support it needs to thrive.



Seafood Segments in the Retail Market

This Market Insight factsheet provides a full picture of the seafood segments in the United Kingdom's (UK) retail market.

20/11/2023 Suzi Pegg-Darlison (20-minute read)

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Factsheet overview

This Market Insight factsheet provides a full picture of the seafood segments in the UK retail market using data to 7th October 2023.

Consumer shopping preferences are constantly changing with various factors playing a role in purchasing decisions. Understanding this and having insights into the seafood market and its role in the retail sector, can help to run a successful seafood business.

This factsheet provides the latest seafood data and insights in the UK retail market. Current trends in the industry and the seafood market will be presented, but the aim of this factsheet is to focus on the different ways in which seafood is made available to consumers in the retail market, the seafood segments.

Top takeaways

Although seafood is experiencing 3.6% value growth versus the same period last year, this is price driven, as volume sales were down 4.2%.

- Mixed weather, inflation, and comparisons to an exceptional summer in 2022 adversely affected retail with total sales growth slowing.
- There are ten different seafood segments, natural, prepared, sushi, meals, cakes, breaded, sauce, batter, dusted and fingers.
- Natural and prepared make up two thirds of all seafood value sales in the UK retail sector.
- Fingers, the cheapest seafood product type, is the only segment to experience value and volume growth compared to the same period last year.
- Batter, Cakes, Meals, Sauce, Natural, Breaded and Dusted were all in price driven growth.
- Prepared, and Sushi experienced value and volume declines.

Trends in the UK retail market

Mixed weather, inflation, and comparisons to an exceptional summer in 2022, affected retail sales. Total till growth slowed once again to a new low in 2023 to +7.2 in August down from +8.9% in July and the peak of +12.4% in June.

Comfort foods

Summer 2023 was a stark contrast to 2022, with autumnal weather replacing last year's heatwaves. As such, sales in August slumped across the industry. Appetite to spend was lost as the autumnal weather took over keeping shoppers indoors. This triggered shopper demand for convenient, warming, and comforting food options, which included ambient snacks, soups, and the Sunday roast. With less demand for alfresco dining and food to go, shoppers focussed on saving money spending more in the Discounters +16.9% and the Value Retailers +13.5%.

Weakened consumer optimism

Inflation, although slowing, is not slowing fast enough, leading to another rise in interest rates. With household incomes already squeezed and the weather doing little to lift spirits it's difficult for retailers and manufacturers to drive fast-moving consumer (FMCG) value growth. As such, shoppers have cut back on spend and opted for cheaper food variants with ambient and frozen having some of the strongest growths of the sub-categories.

Consumer Confidence had improved 5 points to -25 in August and 9 points to -21 in September, as consumers showed renewed resilience and optimism compared to July's lows of -30. However, as we have transitioned into Autumn ahead of the festive season, Consumer Confidence has tumbled once again to -30. Such volatility highlights the current tough economic conditions. The cost-of-living crisis, and a decrease in disposable income, continues to cause much pressure for many consumers.

Market opportunities

Encouraging more trips has become a winning strategy to drive performance in an environment where shoppers are determined to buy less and save more. As such attracting new shoppers is key to driving incremental visits.

Total seafood market

378,450 tonnes of seafood were sold in the UK retail market worth over £4.2bn in the last 52 weeks, ending 7th October 2023. Although seafood is experiencing 3.6% value growth versus the same period last year, this is price driven, as volume sales were down 4.2%.

Mirroring the total retail market, the frozen sector continues to experience value (+6.3%) and volume (+1.8%) growth despite increase in prices (+4.4%) with chilled and ambient loosing volume sales but remaining in price driven value growth.

Seafood Inflation has been steadily building over the past twelve months increasing the price of an already expensive product. However, currently at 8.1%, seafood inflation remains below the 12.2% average for food.

Seafood segments

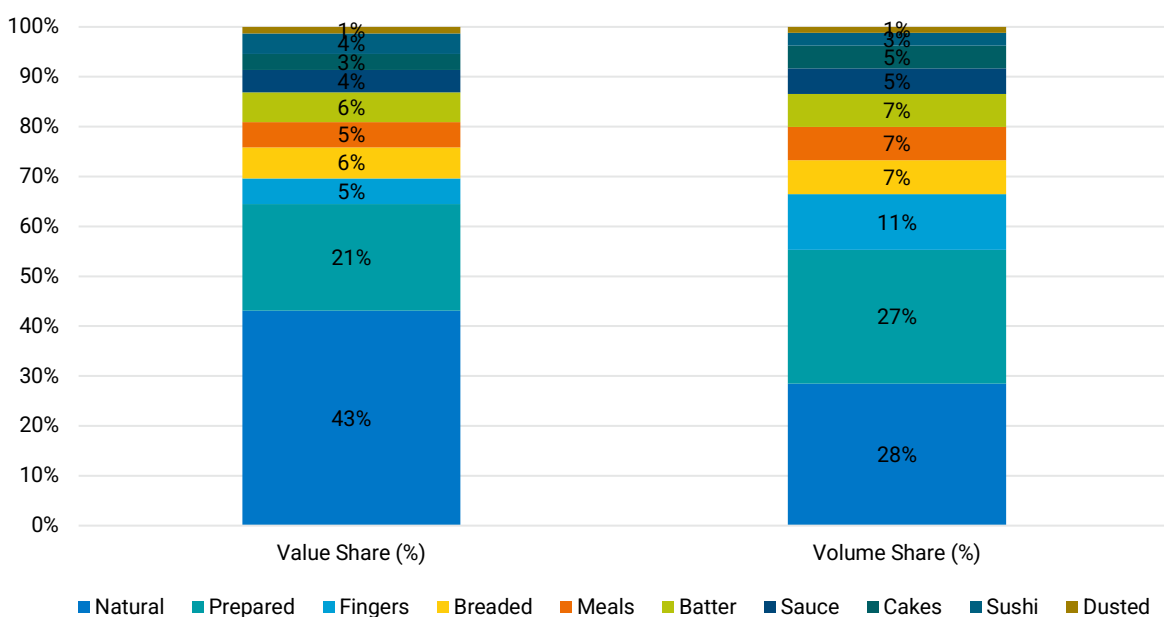
Seafood is sold in several ways which are categorised in the retail market and known as segments. There are ten different seafood segments, natural, prepared, sushi, meals, cakes, breaded, sauce, batter, dusted and fingers.

Segment share of retail sales

Two thirds of all seafood value sales in retail are from natural and prepared seafood. Natural has the largest value share of all the segments with 43% and prepared taking 21%. Being a typically more expensive product, this is price led value share for natural with the segment having just 28% of all seafood volume sales. The reverse is the case for prepared seafood with volume share at 27% higher than the value share of the segment, however this is a product that averages half the price of natural seafood.

Combined the other eight segments make up to under a half of all value and volume sales as illustrated below in chart 1.

Chart 1. Segment value and volume share (%) of UK total seafood



Retail sales of seafood segments

The cost-of-living crisis has driven shoppers to trade down into cheaper products to reduce household spend. This behaviour has been seen in the performance of seafood segments, with fingers, the cheapest seafood product type, being the only segment to experience value and volume growth with price declines.

Most of the other segments were in price driven growth (Batter, Cakes, Meals, Sauce, Natural, Breaded and Dusted) with Prepared and Sushi experiencing value and volume decline as illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1. Value, volume, and price of seafood segments in UK retail with growth (%)

	Value Sales ('000)			Volume Sales ('000)			Price per Kg with year-on-year growth (%)		
	Moving Annual Totals with year-on-year growth (%)			Moving Annual Totals with year-on-year growth (%)					
	Year Ago	This Year	Growth (%)	Year Ago	This Year	Growth (%)	Year Ago	This Year	Growth (%)
Seafood	£4,073,559	£4,218,974	3.6	394,917	378,450	-4.2	£10.31	£11.15	8.1
Natural	£1,771,332	£1,818,376	1.4	117,878	107,824	-8.5	£15.03	£16.86	12.2
Prepared	£898,515	£902,773	-0.9	107,723	101,435	-5.8	£8.34	£8.90	6.7
Fingers	£194,494	£216,093	11.2	34,410	42,378	23.2	£5.65	£5.10	-9.8
Meals	£205,420	£211,736	4.3	27,938	25,316	-9.4	£7.35	£8.36	13.7
Breaded	£256,839	£263,464	1.0	28,276	25,585	-9.5	£9.08	£10.30	13.4
Batter	£218,611	£253,861	14.9	25,210	24,950	-1.0	£8.67	£10.17	17.3
Sauce	£179,936	£187,807	3.8	20,955	19,528	-6.8	£8.59	£9.62	12.0
Cakes	£125,047	£136,736	8.3	17,643	17,306	-1.9	£7.09	£7.90	11.5
Sushi	£170,723	£171,446	-0.5	10,224	9,747	-4.7	£16.70	£17.59	5.3
Dusted	£52,642	£56,681	4.1	4,658	4,380	-6.0	£11.30	£12.94	14.5

Natural

Natural seafood is defined as fish or shellfish that has not had anything added or done to it, other than that required for basic processing. It can be raw or cooked or smoked, whole, fillets, headed, gutted fish, or shucked and peeled shellfish.

Retail sales of natural seafood

107,824 tonnes of natural seafood were sold in the UK retail market worth over £1.8bn in the last 52 weeks, ending 7th October 2023. Natural seafood is experiencing 1.4% value growth versus the same period last year, but this is price driven, as volume sales were down 8.5%. Average price per Kg is £16.86 up 12.2%.

Natural seafood sales by sector

Of the natural seafood sales 82% (0.0pp) of value and 70% (-1.0pp) of volume comes from the chilled sector and 18% (0.0pp) of value and 30% (+1.0pp) of volume comes from the frozen sector.

Top natural species

The top 3 species in the natural segment by volume, taking a combined 58% of the total natural volume sales are:

1. Total Salmon: 42,187 tonnes (-9.0%) | £906m (+6.3%)
2. Warm Water Prawns: 13,535 tonnes (-10.5%) | £262m (-0.1%)
3. Mackerel: 7,332 tonnes (+4.6%) | £41m (+5.7%)

Natural seafood shopper

The typical natural shopper is female, over 65, more affluent, retired and from a 2-person household with no children.

Prepared

Prepared seafood is defined as fish or shellfish that has other ingredients or has been processed in any way different to the other segments. For example, packaged in brine, water, oil, marinade, or that has been smoked, treated, prepared, topped, crusted, stuffed, or served with a relish but is not a meal.

Retail sales of prepared seafood

101,435 tonnes of prepared seafood were sold in the UK retail market worth over £902m in the last 52 weeks, ending 7th October 2023. Prepared seafood is experiencing value (-0.9%) and volume (-5.8%) declines versus the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £8.90 up 6.7%.

Prepared seafood sales by sector

Of the prepared seafood sales, 56% (+1.0pp) of value and 71% (+1.0pp) of volume comes from the ambient sector. 39% (+1.0pp) of value and 25% (-1.0pp) of volume comes from the chilled sector and 5% (0.0pp) of value and 4% (1.0pp) of volume comes from the frozen sector.

Top prepared species

The top 3 species in the prepared segment by volume, taking a combined 77% of the total prepared volume sales are:

1. Tuna: 56,659 tonnes (-5.6%) | £364m (+2.3%)
2. Total Salmon: 11,792 tonnes (-10.5%) | £227m (-4.2%)
3. Crabstick: 9,269 tonnes (-4.5%) | £40m (+5.8%)

Prepared seafood shopper

The typical prepared shopper is female, over 65, more affluent, retired and from a 2-person household with no children.

Fingers

Fingers are defined as fish or shellfish that are described as fingers.

Retail sales of fingers

42,378 tonnes of fingers were sold in the UK retail market worth over £216m. The cheapest of all the seafood segments, fingers are the only segment to be in value (+11.2%) and volume (23.2%) growth compared to the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £5.10 down 9.8%.

Fingers are the only seafood segment to be experiencing price declines. This will be a consequence of a higher inflation comparatively versus 2022 and due to shoppers trading down to 'other' species of fingers that has over a 38% lower average price than other popular finger species such as cod, haddock and pollock.

Fingers sales by sector

Of all the fingers sales, 95% (0.0pp) of value and 98% (+1.0pp) of volume comes from the frozen sector with just 5% (0.0pp) of value and 2% (-1.0pp) of volume coming from the chilled sector.

Top fingers species

The top 3 species in the fingers segment by volume, taking a combined 97% of the total fingers volume sales are:

1. Pollock: 17,379 tonnes (+8.6%) | £100m (+19.3%)
2. Other*: 13,259 tonnes (+313%) | £14m (+114%)
3. Cod: 10,506 tonnes (-23.8%) | £90m (-1.9%)

*Other is used to define species that are not names during the coding process and therefore fall under "other".

Fingers shopper

The typical finger shopper is female, between 35 - 44 years old, is less affluent, working part-time and from a larger 5+ person household with children in new and maturing families.

Meals

Meals are defined as fish or shellfish which are described as meals and/or contain a carbohydrate such as potato, pasta, or rice. It excludes all meals which contain a mixture of meat and seafood protein.

Retail sales of meals

25,316 tonnes of seafood meals were sold in the UK retail market worth over £211m. Seafood meals are experiencing value growth (4.3%), but this is price driven, with volume sales down 9.4%, compared to the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £8.36 up 13.7%.

Meal's sales by sector

79% (-1.0pp) of value and 70% (+1.0%) of volume meal sales comes from the chilled sector with 21% (+1.0pp) of value and 30% (-1.0%) of volume from the frozen sector.

Top meals species

The top 3 species in the meal segment by volume, taking a combined 63% of the total seafood meals volume sales are:

1. Mixed Seafood: 6,710 tonnes (-10.5%) | £73m (-2.8%)
2. Warm Water Prawns: 4,701 tonnes (-8.3%) | £38m (+2.6%)
3. Pollock: 4,498 tonnes (-4.2%) | £26m (+20.0%)

Meal's shopper

The typical meal shopper is male, over 65, more affluent, retired, from a single household with no children.

Breaded

Breaded seafood is defined as fish or shellfish which is coated in breadcrumbs, breaded, crumb. If the breaded product is a cake or finger, they take priority and will be categorised in the cake/finger segments.

Retail sales of breaded seafood

25,585 tonnes of breaded seafood are sold in the UK retail market worth over £263m. Breaded seafood is experiencing value growth (1.0%), but this is price driven, with volume sales down 9.5%, versus the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £10.30 up 13.4%.

Breaded seafood sales by sector

Of the breaded seafood sales, 59% (-2.0pp) of value and 62% (-2.0%) of volume comes from the frozen sector and 41% (+2.0pp) of value and 38% (+2.0%) of volume comes from the chilled sector. Average price per Kg is £10.30 is up 13.4%.

Top breaded species

The top 3 species in the breaded segment by volume, taking a combined 67% of the total breaded volume sales are:

1. Cod: 7,902 tonnes (-17.0%) | £83m (-1.0%)
2. Scampi: 5,139 tonnes (-12.3%) | £62m (-2.5%)
3. Pollock: 4,023 tonnes (+14.8%) | £29m (+25.6%)

Breaded seafood shopper

The typical breaded shopper is male, over 65, is less affluent, retired and from a 2-person household with no children.

Batter

Batter is defined as fish or shellfish which is described as coated in batter, battered, or tempura. If the battered product is a cake or finger, they take priority and will be categorised in the cake/finger segments.

Retail sales of battered seafood

24,950 tonnes of battered seafood are sold in the UK retail market worth over £253m. Battered seafood is experiencing value growth (14.9%), but this is price driven, with volume sales down 1.0%, compared to the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £10.17 up 17.3%, the largest price increase of all the segments.

Battered seafood sales by sector

Of the battered seafood sales, 78% (-2.0pp) of value and 85% (-2.0pp) of volume comes from the frozen sector and 22% (+2.0pp) of value and 15% (+2.0%) of volume comes from the chilled sector.

Top battered species

The top 3 species in the batter segment by volume, taking a combined 70% of the total batter volume sales are:

1. Cod: 9,720 tonnes (-4.0%) | £101m (+11.7%)
2. Pollock: 4,591 tonnes (+8.1%) | £36m (+26.8%)
3. Haddock: 3,047 tonnes (-13.9%) | £35m (+4.1%)

Battered seafood shopper

The typical battered seafood shopper is female, over 65, is less affluent, retired and from a 2-person household with no children.

Sauce

Sauce is defined as fish or shellfish which is in a sauce or that has a separate sauce, dressing or dip (can be a sachet) but has no other additions for example lettuce. Batter, Breaded, Cakes, Dusted and Fingers take priority. For example, if the product is battered seafood in a lemon sauce the product would be categorised in the battered segment.

Retail sales of sauce

19,528 tonnes of seafood in sauce are sold in the UK retail market worth over £187m. Sauce is experiencing value growth (3.8%), but this is price driven, with volume sales down 6.8%, compared to the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £9.62 up 12.0%.

Sauce sales by sector

Of the seafood in sauce sales, 56% (-1.0pp) of value and 43% (-2.0pp) of volume comes from the chilled sector. 27% (0.0pp) of value and 40% (-1.0pp) of volume comes from the ambient sector and 17% of value (+1.0pp) and volume (+2.0pp) are frozen sauce sales.

Top sauce species

The top 3 species in the sauce segment by volume, taking a combined 48% of the total seafood in sauce volume sales are:

1. Mackerel: 4,002 tonnes (-11.5%) | £30m (+2.4%)
2. Cold Water Prawns: 2,757 tonnes (-2.7%) | £45m (+6.3%)
3. Mussels: 2,690 tonnes (-3.9%) | £14m (+7.3%)

Sauce shopper

The typical sauce shopper is male, over 65, is more affluent, retired and from a 2-person household with no children.

Cakes

Seafood cakes are defined as fish or shellfish which are described as cakes.

Retail sales of cakes

17,306 tonnes of cakes are sold in the UK retail market worth over £136m. Cakes are experiencing value growth (8.3%), but this is price driven, with volume sales down 1.9%, compared to the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £7.90 up 11.5%.

Cakes sales by sector

83% (-1.0pp) of value and 77% (+1.0%) of volume cake sales comes from the chilled sector with 17% (-1.0pp) of value and 23% (-1.0%) of volume from the frozen sector.

Top cakes species

The top 3 selling species in the cake segment by volume, taking a combined 77% of the total cake volume sales are:

1. Cod: 6,779 tonnes (+14.0%) | £48m (+26.7%)
2. Haddock: 3,982 tonnes (-20.7%) | £35m (-8.4%)
3. Salmon: 2,624 tonnes (-6.1%) | £22m (+3.6%)

Cakes shopper

The typical cakes shopper is male, over 65, is more affluent, retired and from a 2-person household with no children.

Sushi

Sushi is defined as fish or shellfish which is described as sushi or sashimi.

Retail sales of sushi

9,747 tonnes of sushi are sold in the UK retail market worth over £171m. Sushi is experiencing value (-0.5%) and volume (-4.7%) declines despite growing in average price, when compared to the same period last year. The most expensive seafood segment, average price per Kg for sushi is £17.59 up 5.3%.

Sushi sales by sector

100% of the sushi sales in UK retail come from the chilled sector.

Top sushi species

The top 3 species in the sushi segment by volume, taking a combined 91% of the total sushi volume sales are:

1. Total Salmon: 4,069 tonnes (+24.0%) | £77m (+19.2%)
2. Mixed Seafood: 3,825 tonnes (-26.4%) | £63m (-17.9%)
3. Other*: 994 tonnes (+16.1%) | £17m (+15.6%)

*Other is used to define species that are not names during the coding process and therefore fall under "other".

Sushi shopper

The typical sushi shopper is female, between 35 – 44 years old, is more affluent, working full-time and from a larger 5+ person household with children in establishing families.

Dusted

Dusted is defined as fish or shellfish which is described as dusted or lightly coated, for example seasoned in flour.

Retail sales of dusted seafood

4,380 tonnes of dusted seafood are sold in the UK retail market worth over £57m. Dusted is experiencing value growth (4.1%), but this is price driven, with volume sales down 6.0%, compared to the same period last year. Average price per Kg is £12.94 up 14.5%.

Dusted seafood sales by sector

Of the dusted seafood sales, 51% (-1.0pp) of value and 47% (+2.0pp) of volume comes from the chilled sector and 49% (+1.0pp) of value and 53% (-2.0%) of volume comes from the frozen sector.

Top dusted species

The top 3 species in the dusted segment by volume, taking a combined 71% of the total dusted volume sales are:

1. Basa: 1,405 tonnes (-25.4%) | £15m (+11.0%)
2. Sole: 933 tonnes (+27.7%) | £12m (+27.3%)

3. Cod: 754 tonnes (-3.6%) | £11m (+11.6%)

Dusted seafood shopper

The typical dusted shopper is both male and female, over 65, is more affluent, retired and from a 2-person household with no children.

Summary

Natural and prepared seafood are the most popular way consumers enjoy seafood in the UK retail market, but they are moving into cheaper segments such as fingers.

There are many ways that consumers can enjoy seafood in the retail market. Although the most popular are natural and prepared products, the cost-of-living crisis is moving shoppers into cheaper segments such as fingers.

Similar trends are expected to remain for the foreseeable future as shoppers continue to prioritise price over quality. 'Price' will remain a key priority for many, as budgets remain squeezed by high energy and housing costs.

Attracting new shoppers into the seafood market will prove beneficial for incremental sales.

If you want to know more about seafood in the retail market or if you are interested to learn about the foodservice industry you can view our full range of market insight factsheets, covering different sectors of the seafood industry that are made publicly available via the Seafish website - <https://www.seafish.org/insight-and-research/>. The most recent retail factsheets include [Seafood Consumption](#), and [Chilled Seafood in Multiple Retail](#), [Frozen Seafood in Multiple Retail](#) and [Ambient Seafood in Multiple Retail](#).

Sources

Data sources: (%) values represent changes from the previous year unless otherwise stated.

Resources used in the production of this factsheet can be viewed below.

NielsenIQ (NIQ) data to 52 week ending 7th October 2023:

- ScanTrack – UK EPOS from key retailers (including composite data from discounters Aldi, Lidl and Northern Ireland) excludes seafood sandwiches.
- HomeScan – GB (including discounters) consumer panel of 15,000 households excludes seafood sandwiches.

Additional data and insights used to produce this factsheet:

- GFK, October 2023, UK Consumer Confidence
- NielsenIQ, August 2023, NIQ Total Till Executive Summary
- NielsenIQ, August 2023, NIQ Context Report
- ONS, October 2023, Cost of living insights: Food
- Seafish, July 2023, Seafood in multiple retail (2023 update)
- Seafish, September 2023, Monthly Data Report
- Seafish, September 2023, NIQ Context Report

Are you interested in the data behind the insights? Individuals working for seafood businesses can register for the Market Insight Portal on [Seafish.org](https://www.seafish.org) and access the [Retail](#), [Foodservice](#), and [Trade](#) data and reports directly. [Click here to register today.](#)

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