

# THE CHAMPIONS

OF INNOVATION

# 2016

READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

*By Adrienne Zimmer, Managing Editor*

It's our pleasure to introduce the nine products that have been voted 2016 Products of the Year by more than 800 readers.





Each year *Automatic Merchandiser* asks readers to vote for their favorite, most-requested and/or best-selling products in the vending, micro market and office coffee service industry. Items submitted to the competition range from the newest vending machine technology that can create efficiencies to consumers' favorite new snacks and beverages.

This year more than 800 readers – double the number from 2015 – cast their vote online in a four-week period for their favorite new products in nine categories. The 2016 Readers' Choice Product of the Year Award winners are consistent with market trends for nutritious, flavorful snacks and beverages; forward-thinking technology; and a premium coffee experience.

### Better-for-you innovation soars

Products dubbed healthy and/or better-for-you had an outstanding presence in this year's awards. In the salted snack category, **Mars Chocolate North America** took home a win with their **goodnessknows® snack squares** crafted with whole nuts, real fruits, toasted oats and dark chocolate; meanwhile the **SnackWell's brand Mini Chocolate Chip Cookie Bites** – made from whole grain and free from high fructose corn syrup – was voted a fan-favorite in the cookie category. **Coca-Cola** took home gold in the cold beverage category with its **vitaminwater® refresh** (tropical mango flavored + other natural flavors) and **vitaminwater vital-t** (lemon iced tea flavored + other natural flavors), consistent with Mintel's findings that innovation in flavor led to record-high U.S. bottled water sales in 2015.

**Mars Chocolate North America** grabbed its second award with its win in the candy category with **M&M'S® Crispy Candies** that not only satisfy the consumer sweet tooth but also do so at under 200 calories per serving.

This year Packaged Facts reported that convenience is also a major selling point for food and beverage packaging. **Flowers Foods** brings consumers a conveniently packaged sweet treat with its **Mrs. Freshley's Icers** which was crowned the winner in the pastry category.

Oftentimes best-selling products and product trends seen in retail are leaders in vending, too. The sandwich reigns supreme on restaurant menus across restaurant sectors and that trend followed true into the vending and micro market industry as well this year as **AdvancePierre Foods** continued its winning streak in the food category, with its Pierre Signatures Sandwich line.

AdvancePierre Foods  
Pierre Signatures  
Sandwich line  
**Food**



The winner in the technology category comes from the entrepreneurial **Gimme** team, an industry newcomer, with their introduction of the **Gimme System**, a combination hardware/software solution that turns traditional vending machines into data-producing, “smart” machines.

This year readers’ votes reflected a move towards a high-quality, premium coffee experience with the win of **MARS DRINKS™ ALTERRA® Donut Shop Dark** in the hot beverage category and **Coffea Technologies’ NEXT22 Super Automatic Bean to Cup Coffee Brewing System** in the equipment category.

Gimme System  
**Technology**



**The coffee experience consumers crave** ✓

In 2015, OCS operators reported record-breaking revenues in most of the U.S., driven partly by consumer demand for a more sophisticated, premium coffee experience. The NEXT22 Super Automatic Bean to Cup Coffee Brewing System by Coffea Technologies was voted best new product in the equipment category and is focused on bringing that gourmet coffee experience to the consumer.

The NEXT22 allows users, with the touch of a button, to be served SCAA Gold Cup Standard beverages, from lattes to cappuccinos to a traditional cup of coffee. The machine shows its sophistication inside and out. The machine features personalized messages on a 10-inch video screen, uses a small footprint and has a cashless option. Internally the brewer can create a single cup or a 60 ounce carafe, customized to the user’s needs and featuring its patented Vacuum Extraction method to produce a truly 21<sup>st</sup> century coffee experience.

Coffea Technologies  
NEXT22 Super  
Automatic Bean to Cup  
Coffee Brewing System  
**Equipment** ✓



The overall flavor and taste of coffee is just as important as how it is brewed. The winner in the hot beverage category, MARS DRINKS™ ALTERRA® Donut Shop Dark,

MARS DRINKS™  
ALTERRA® Donut  
Shop Dark  
**Hot Beverage**

