



## Design Business Association Design Effectiveness Awards 2018

Industry Sector

Food & drug retailers

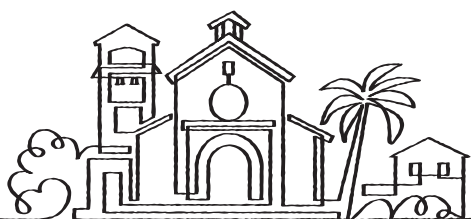
Client company

Waitrose

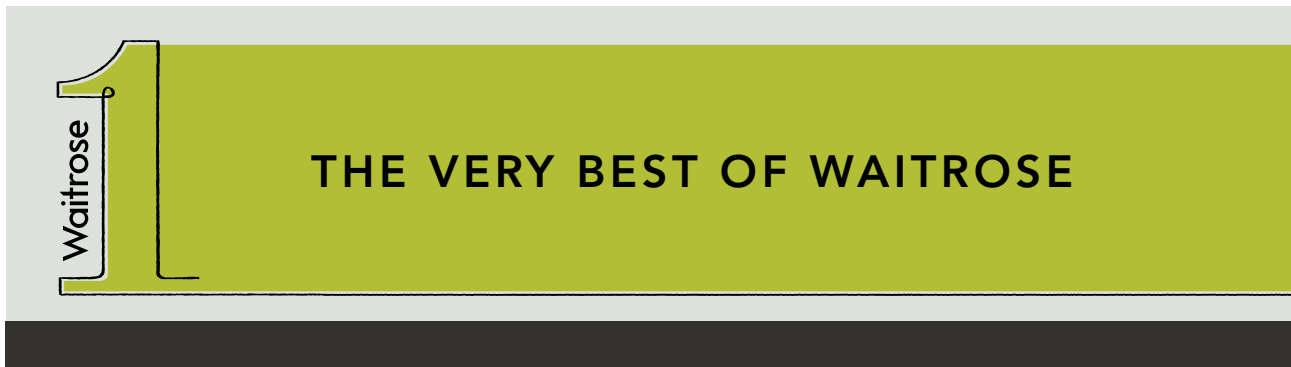
Design consultancy

Waitrose Graphic Design - Packaging & Brand Design Team

30 June 2017



## Executive summary



The **Waitrose 1** brand was created to re-energise the business's top tier – or premium – own brand offer. By creating a beacon for 'best in class' Waitrose aimed to encourage customers to trade up in store and online.

With demand for premium own-brand products growing across the market, competitors from Marks & Spencer to Lidl were increasing their ranges. Waitrose saw an opportunity to increase sales of its top tier own brand products and strengthen its point of difference – that Waitrose "Are experts in food."

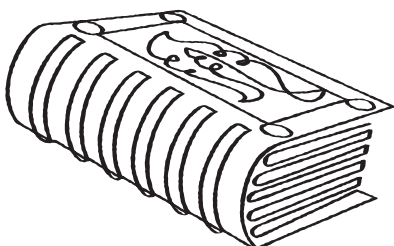
The business took the decision to create a new, unifying branded design to consolidate 'the very best of Waitrose' under a single, clearly signposted name. Launched in store in May 2016, **Waitrose 1** was the biggest own label brand created since **essential Waitrose** in 2009, with a range of around 500 products rising to over 700 lines by the end of its first year.

The design solution for the brand and its packaging bucked the prevailing trend of clichéd gold and silver foil script and predictable, over-saturated food photography commonly seen in the market. Instead, the in-house design team chose to develop a new language for luxury that is beautifully understated – emphasising distinctive taste and quality, product stories and the reassurance of time, care and attention.

This **Waitrose 1** brand has achieved more than expected in its first 12 months:

“As the economy has recovered a bit  
we’ve seen shoppers far more willing to trade up.”

Ashley Anzie, Strategic Insight Director, Kantar Worldpanel\*



\*Quoted in The Telegraph, April 2016

# Project overview

## Outline of project brief

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### Business objectives

- To encourage customers to trade up to top tier at Waitrose
- To increase sales of top tier own brand sales
- To give customers a clear top tier offer with outstanding quality cues

### Marketing and design objectives

- To be single minded and confident with our top tier brand identity
- To improve shopability, awareness and recognition of the top tier offer as a whole
- To create a unique look for top tier own brand that Waitrose can own
- To reinforce the quality message for Waitrose and communicate 'premium' in a fresh and original way

## Scope of the project

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**Waitrose 1** was the biggest own label brand created at Waitrose since **essential Waitrose** in 2009, launching with a range of around 500 products. The new branded design for 'The very best of Waitrose' needed to consolidate the best products from three pre-existing premium ownbrands:

- Menu from Waitrose
- Seriously from Waitrose
- (authentic) from Waitrose

as well as including new products that had been specifically sourced for the launch of the brand.

Over 200 products have been added to the range since it launched in May 2016.

## Strategic thinking that informed the design brief

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- Reinforcing Waitrose's core brand strengths

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on quality and inspiration at the top, middle and bottom of the market. Competition has come not just from supermarkets' own label brands but also from manufacturer brands. As a result,

**Waitrose 1** needed to reassert Waitrose's brand credentials as well as drive sales.

- Customer Insight

Research told Waitrose that its customers were prepared to pay more to enjoy the best products. But they wanted to be able to find them easily and understand what made them special. Waitrose recognised from the outset that provenance and storytelling would be key. Customers also told Waitrose that convenience wasn't enough. They wanted to be delighted by products that were better than they could make at home. In their view the best products were ones that were created with time, care and attention to detail. Clearly the design solution needed to dial up these values to reassure Waitrose customers and justify why they were paying a little more for the very best.



## Project overview (continued)

### Overview of the market

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The market that **Waitrose 1** was entering was growing fast. Britain's economic outlook had improved in 2016 and consumers were keen to treat themselves by trading up. Although demand was growing in the premium category, competition was intense. As well as high-end competitors such as Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's, brands like Morrison's and Lidl were increasing their focus on quality and inspiration.

The challenge for **Waitrose 1** was to cut through this noise in what had become quite a crowded top tier market.

At the same time, Waitrose and its competitors were finding that shoppers were becoming less loyal. Research indicated that many shoppers preferred to cherry-pick their favourite products from different retailers rather than dedicate their entire grocery spend to a single supermarket brand.

Given the choice of premium own label products available across the market, **Waitrose 1** would need to be uncompromisingly good to persuade shoppers to trade up at Waitrose. Our design team set out to create a unique and ownable look for Waitrose top tier that would make it distinct from the competition.

### Project launch date

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The **Waitrose 1** range went live in store and online from 18 May 2016.

### Design budget

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The Waitrose in-house Graphic Design Team created this new design and designed each piece of packaging required (permanent staff with long term freelance support working amongst the team).

The design solution didn't generate any extra packaging costs above what would be usual.



## Outline of design solution

The small, experienced in-house design team is passionate about its own label and the trusted reputation of the Waitrose brand.

As co-owners of the business (Partners in the John Lewis Partnership), everyone is highly motivated to give their utmost care and attention to every project - success really matters to everyone involved and top quality design has always been valued and respected in the company as a key business asset.

To deliver a new top tier design solution for this high quality retailer, the designers were challenged to come up with something really unique and ownable.

The branding and packaging design solution for **Waitrose 1** bucked the prevailing trend of design cliché which was using ostentatious fonts and lavish food photography. Instead, the in-house team chose to develop a new language for luxury that could simply emphasise distinctive taste and quality, product stories and the reassurance of time, care and attention.



Waitrose required a design construct that would be flexible enough to work across all food categories and all product ranges without looking dull and repetitive. The aim was that customers would be able to recognise instantly the new top tier brand without feeling the packaging had become homogenised. The team felt the visual principles of exclusivity were shifting and the predictability of a 'premium' sub brand name using gold, black, a script font and a superlative adjective had become overused. There is a new world of luxury - it is beautifully understated and timeless.

The central idea of the design concept is storytelling. This is achieved through a bespoke drawing created with a single, continuous line that 'becomes' the brand. The number 1 is a secondary element that simply appears as a signature. The illustrations are briefed and crafted individually from an understanding of the essence of the product - what is it that makes this special cheese; this single origin Peruvian dark chocolate; this dry aged Aberdeen Angus beef joint THE VERY BEST OF WAITROSE ?



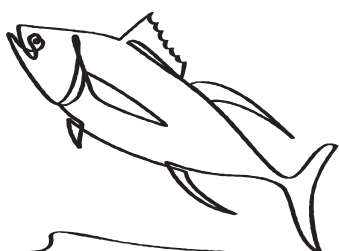
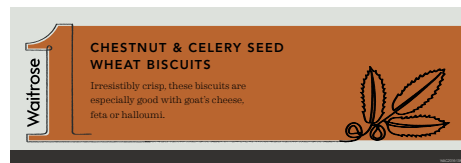
## Outline of design solution (continued)

The pared back style of illustration conveys and celebrates simple, straightforward food excellence. The drawing requires an informed brief plus expertise, time, skill and refinement to get it just right - exactly like the food. The images are often intriguing and surprising but don't compete or detract from the food excellence.

The packaging structures are simple and 'normal' - the design does not rely on extra expense - special materials, quirky shapes, extra finishes etc. The materials and formats have the same 'sustainable' credentials as many of those used for mid tier products in Waitrose. Unlike some other supermarkets Waitrose have not resorted to expensive or quirky packaging structures to communicate the premium message.



As well as creating the brand identity and designing the packaging for all **Waitrose 1** products, the design team had to consider how this would translate onto point of sale and across all the Marketing channels. The simple elements proved to have all the necessary adaptability and visual stand out required.



## Summary of results

**Waitrose 1** has achieved more than expected in its first year.

Not only has it sustained its early sales, but penetration and sales are growing as it continues to inspire Waitrose shoppers to trade up.

## Research resources

- Kantar - in The Telegraph, April 2016
- Group Customer Insight, Waitrose

