

Entrant company name: **Weber Shandwick**

Entry title: **Knorrplay is the new foreplay**

Category: **Integrated Campaign**

BRIEF, OBJECTIVES AND BUDGET

Knorr's story is one of culinary passion. Since the launch of its iconic stock cube in 1912, the company has continued innovating and transforming the home kitchen. The problem? Knorr had a perception issue in the UK: seen as something your gran might use, hardly cool or cutting-edge.

Faced with cultural irrelevance among the under-35 crowd and getting smoked by convenience-focused food, Knorr tasked Weber Shandwick with shaking off its dusty image and reconnecting with a younger audience.

Our objectives were ambitious:

- Drive measurable consumer interaction through sign-ups and campaign participation.
- Achieve significant organic reach through earned-first storytelling, going beyond traditional food-industry norms to tap pop culture conversations.
- Achieve significant social reach, interactions and shares.
- Reinvent Knorr's image as fresh, fun, and relevant among under-35s to improve consideration and preference.
- Exceed prior campaign metrics for audience interaction and communications opt-ins.

Budget: £100,000

THE IDEA, RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Research revealed 10% of Brits would be unable to cook a single meal from scratch without a recipe. The problem is even greater among 18–35-year-olds who favour convenience and are more fluent in scrolling delivery apps than dicing vegetables.

Raised on Deliveroo and dating apps, Gen Z and younger Millennials saw the kitchen — and Knorr — as outdated. But the research also revealed a truth worth stirring: shared tasks, nurturing behaviour and sensual activity trigger oxytocin, the bonding hormone linked to sexual desire.

With these results and Knorr's passion in mind, we set out to create an activation that felt authentic to both the brand and the audience.

Prior to engaging Weber Shandwick, Knorr had started repositioning around connection,

with ‘date night’ campaigns. That gave us the green light to move Knorr out of the friend-zone towards a braver, more culturally current expression of intimacy.

STRATEGY, CREATIVITY, AND INNOVATION

To achieve our aims, we leaned into a core insight backed by brain science: cooking together isn’t just a practical task. It’s less a chore and more... foreplay. Shared experiences are proven triggers for oxytocin, the bonding hormone known for sparking desire. Armed with this bit of brain science, we were ready to slide Knorr into the nation's DMs... and its cooking pots.

British culture’s awkwardness around intimacy — and its obsession with watching it — provided an opening. Younger Brits consume dating shows like Love Island in droves, where flirtation and chemistry dominate the narrative.

Knorr would meet our audience in this zeitgeist, recasting cooking as the ultimate aphrodisiac through a culturally attuned, provocative, and scientifically grounded idea.

So, we packaged that science as a cheeky limited edition “aphrodisiac” stock pot — and let couples put it to the test.

Knorr is a brand normally found in stews, not sex shops. But for Valentine's Day, Knorr launched Knorrplay - a limited-edition “aphrodisiac” stock pot via adult retailer, Ann Summers. Same old veg stock. New, provocative purpose: proving that cooking together can trigger oxytocin, the hormone linked to sexual desire.

DELIVERY/IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS

Possibly the only time a bouillon belonged next to bondage gear. Seen not in supermarkets, but in adult stores — between whips, lingerie and lube — and intended for influencer reviews in both the kitchen and the bedroom. Knorrplay offered a bold reframe of cooking — and of Knorr itself.

Delivering Knorrplay blended earned media, influencer storytelling, retail PR and direct sampling. The Weber Shandwick team leaned into cultural disruption, strategically launching around the most romantic day of the year — Valentine’s Day.

Here's how Knorrplay came to life:

- **Product:** The limited-edition aphrodisiac stock pot flaunted sensual packaging and was boldly positioned as a functional-yet-provocative Valentine’s accessory.
- **Influencer:** Knorrplay was sent to a curated group of 10 UK-based real-life couples, including four Instagram creators with large followings. No script, just one ask - cook together, test the “aphrodisiac” and see what happens. We captured the moment and revealed the twist at the end: it wasn’t a love potion. The magic came from cooking together, resulting in intimate, creator-led content that felt native to social and drove real engagement.
- **Partnership:** To generate buzz, Knorrplay launched through Ann Summers with a

sampling pop-up at their flagship London store, while surprise samples were included in mail orders, arriving alongside adult toys.

- **Earned:** A stat-led hook (32% of Brits cook on Valentine’s Day to spark intimacy) lent credibility, sparked curiosity in lifestyle, tabloid, and relationship press, and firmly positioned Knorr in culture. Media placements amplified the risqué nature of the partnership.
- **Content:** Couples were filmed testing Knorrplay during intimate cooking sessions, highlighting the oxytocin-boosting magic of shared experiences.
- **Experiential:** In-store activations and surprise sampling at Ann Summers’ flagship store intertwined Knorrplay with the shopping experience.
- **Digital:** A Knorrplay online hub extended the activation, offering free packs to the public.

MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION, AND IMPACT

Knorrplay transformed a humble stock pot into a cultural moment, achieving results far beyond expectations. Ultimately, Knorr re-entered kitchens – and bedrooms. Not bad for a brand last seen at the back of the cupboard.

- **Demand:** Ann Summers samples ran out within hours (1,000 units). Over 18,000 people signed up to receive an “aphrodisiac” stock pot via the Knorrplay microsite in just three weeks. Crucially, more than 10,000 opted in for future brand comms, signalling fresh relevance for Knorr among younger audiences. Offline, there were 300+ real-life engagements at the Ann Summers pop-up, while surprise samples made their way into mail orders.
- **Engagement:** Influencer content reached 7.1 million accounts, for context that's more than triple Love Island’s peak UK audience, surpassing the original KPI by tenfold and generating 21,000+ positive interactions.
- **Media:** The campaign earned 55 pieces of UK-wide media coverage, reaching 41.5 million people. Lifestyle, tabloid, and relationship media embraced the story, positioning Knorr in the cultural spotlight.
- **Perception:** Among under-35s, the campaign measurably repositioned Knorr as a bold, fun, and relevant brand.

The idea was provocative, yet grounded. Unexpected, yet relatable. It blended neuroscience, cultural insight, and humour to create a disruptive, buzz-worthy activation that felt authentic to both the brand and the audience.

Few brands could pull off selling bouillons in a sex shop. Knorr didn’t just pull it off - it turned it into a moment that resonated across kitchens, bedrooms, and beyond.