

OMAFRA Ontario Food Branding Research: Findings Summary

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs examined the opportunities and challenges in the branding of Ontario grown, produced or processed foods at both the retail and foodservice level through extensive research held in 2006.

Specific objectives of the research included:

- To better understand how Ontario consumers select food and the role point of origin plays in the purchase decision.
- To identify factors that are important in choosing among specific categories of food and to understand why this factor is important to consumers.
- To identify the key elements of a brand proposition that will enhance Ontario food products and to identify the specific food categories that this proposition can be used.

Research Results Overview

- Consumers/diners rarely shop/order food with point of origin as one of the key criteria for selecting food.
- The most important criteria across most food groups are freshness, price, that the safety of the food is guaranteed, and nutritional aspects of the food.
- But, there is a clear latent interest in buying Ontario food. What is lacking, at present, is the motivation.
- Further, consumers have a number of reasons for wanting to buy Ontario food, including the greater freshness, to assist the economy/farmers/farm communities.
- There also appears to be some opportunities for ordering Ontario identified food on restaurant menus in fine and vacation dining establishments, especially in tourist areas where trying locally produced food may have appeal.

In-Store Research Results Overview

- Single most important consideration is freshness, with 73% of shoppers ranking as number one, followed by guaranteed safety (60%) and price (43%).
- Reasons for buying Ontario produced or processed foods include:
 - Support for Ontario farmers (63%)
 - Support economy and businesses (63%)
 - Freshness of the food (49%)
- Foodland Ontario logo recognized by 84% of respondents in quantitative survey.

- Foodland Ontario identified as the best in-store brand for any retail promotion .

In-Restaurant Research Results Overview

Most important consideration when selection a menu item:

- Price/Value (27%)
- Taste/Flavour (21%)
- Quality of Food/Freshness/Cleanliness (17%)

- When dining out 25% demonstrated a preference for local foods; however, when on vacation the preference for local foods increased to 64%.

- In fine/vacation dining, Ontario identifiers on menu (Ontario, regional or farm specific) did show positive impacts with consumers.

- Typically, consumers were more likely to select items when they were identified as from Ontario.

- The number one reason for interest in Ontario references on menu was freshness of food (33%).