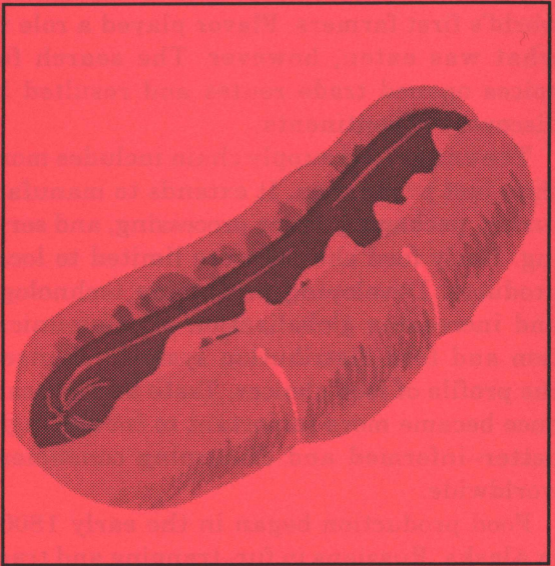


ALASKA HOT DOGS

OUR DOGS ARE TOP DOGS



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TASTE IS IMPORTANT

We are often asked, “What food products can be produced in Alaska?” More often we hear “How do Alaska food products taste and do consumers want to buy them?” Scientists at the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station have been answering that question since 1990. We test the appearance, texture, flavor, and consumer acceptance of Alaska food products.

Production of plants and domestication of animals were most important to the ancient world’s first farmers. Flavor played a role in what was eaten, however. The search for spices opened trade routes and resulted in discovery of continents.

The entire food supply chain includes more than just production. It extends to manufacturing, packaging, home processing, and serving. Early food choices were limited to local products. Developing processing technology and increasing globalization of communication and food distribution systems changed the profile of food choices. Taste and appearance became more important to increasingly better-informed and discerning consumers worldwide.

Food production began in the early 1800s in Alaska. Russians in fur-trapping and trading colonies in the southcentral and southeastern regions were Alaska’s first farmers. Farming continued in the territory and state with assistance from the agricultural experiment stations which celebrated 100 years of research in 1998. Food production was central to settlement and mining. A well-developed transportation system now allows Alaskans a wide variety of food choices, and an equally well-developed communication system informs them about food products. Therefore, local products must not only be priced competitively, they must have a pleasing appearance and distinctive taste.

Alaska Hot Dogs: Our Dogs are Top Dogs

The hot dog has been adopted by people in the United States as their favorite sausage. Mt. McKinley Meat and Sausage Company in Palmer, Alaska, markets a hot-dog/deli-sausage as an all-beef frank under the label 'Palmer Pride'. How does the Palmer Pride frank compare to traditional hot dogs?

Introduction

Sausages, one of the oldest forms of processed food, are a means of using and preserving animal trimmings. The hot dog is a specialized sausage. It originated in Germany where it was named "dachshund" sausage because it looked like the popular badger (dachs) hound (hund). The U.S. hot dog originated at the Polo Grounds in New York. Vendors hawked dachshund sausages in buns while a sports cartoonist sketched a barking dachshund nestled warmly in a bun. He labeled the cartoon "hot dog". Today the hot dog enjoys popularity throughout the world.

Methods

We selected three major hot dog brands to compare to the Palmer Pride all-beef frank. The three brands were manufactured using traditional processes that produce a fine-textured meat, soft skin, hot-dog pink color, and smoky, slightly salty flavor. One brand was at the high end of the price scale, one at the low end, and the third a kosher hot dog. A panel of volunteers participated in blind sensory evaluations. They described their ideal hot dog, ranked the hot dogs in our test, and told us about themselves and their relationship to hot dogs.

Results

Of the 144 participants, 94% consumed hot dogs, most at special events and picnics. Our tasters ideal hot dog was 'hot-dog pink', not pale, and plump. The skin was a bit more soft than chewy though somewhat snappy. The ideal meat was firm. The tasters favored a beefy flavor, somewhat smoky, that was not necessarily salty or sweet.

All participants' responses considered, the Palmer Pride all-beef frank was preferred. Youth and teenagers differed. The 5-12 year age group strongly preferred the traditional hot dog at the high end of the price scale. The teenagers preferred the higher-priced traditional dog, but their preference for the Palmer Pride frank was stronger than that of our younger panelists.

Conclusions

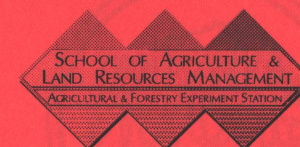
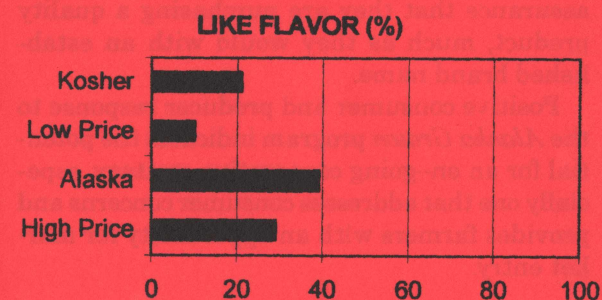
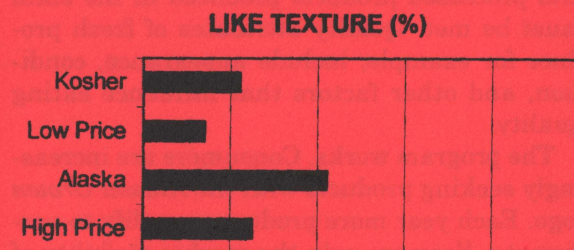
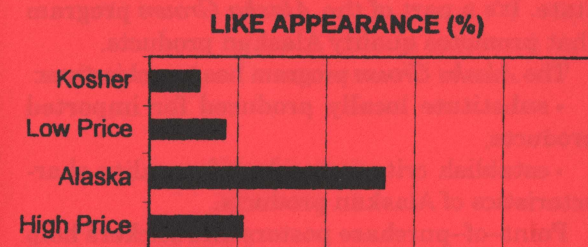
The Palmer Pride all-beef frank is a sausage for adults and for some teenagers with more sophisticated tastes. It is a deli-type sausage, though certainly can be consumed as a hot dog. Consumers were favorable in their evaluation of this sausage. It should be made available in specialty outlets and delicatessen sections of supermarkets. The Palmer Pride all-beef sausage is indeed a top dog.

For more detailed information about Alaska hot dogs or any of the products we have tested please contact:

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Alaska hot dogs' appearance, texture and flavor were favored by panelists.



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THE 'ALASKA GROWN' PROGRAM

The colorful and easy to identify *Alaska Grown* logo was first used in 1986. It is frequently seen in advertisements, retail markets, food shows and farmers' markets around the state. It's a part of the *Alaska Grown* program that promotes quality Alaskan products.

The *Alaska Grown* program has two objectives:

- substitute locally produced for imported products;
- establish criteria to identify quality characteristics of Alaskan products.

Point-of-purchase posters and stickers help identify products that carry the *Alaska Grown* label. Specific quality characteristics of fresh and processed products produced in the state must be met. Quality attributes of fresh produce for example, include appearance, condition, and other factors that influence eating quality.

The program works. Consumers are increasingly seeking products with the *Alaska Grown* logo. Each year more producers qualify to participate. Farmers gain the market visibility of the *Alaska Grown* logo. Consumers have the assurance that they are purchasing a quality product, much as they would with an established brand name.

Positive consumer and producer response to the *Alaska Grown* program indicates the potential for an on-going cooperative strategy, especially one that addresses consumer concerns and provides farmers with an opportunity for market entry.



Look for *Alaska Grown* when you shop!

SENSORY TESTING

The Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station does not have controlled–environment sensory laboratories. However, our producer and consumer clients want information about the taste and acceptability of Alaska products. We devised a scientifically valid procedure to satisfy their requests.

There are a number of ways to determine appearance, taste, texture, and consumer acceptability of food products. We chose to use untrained panels and focus groups. The demographics of our panels closely match those of Alaska's population. We do most of the chemical analyses we need in our laboratories.

You can find our scientists in university classrooms. Sensory panels are excellent tools to teach consumer marketing principles. We also conduct taste testing at fairs and community events in Fairbanks and the Anchorage area.

Alaska growers and producers supply the products we test. Recently we began testing vegetables from the Georgeson Botanical Garden.

Our scientists prepare market research reports from information supplied by panelists. Students may also provide market strategies and logos. Sensory panelists might describe a similar product to the one they are testing, or provide information on their shopping habits, views on organic products, the *Alaska Grown* program, and healthy eating habits.

Producers and processors can use the information we provide to promote special attributes of the products we test, confident in the knowledge that their claims are supported by scientifically valid research. Consumers can be assured that market claims are accurate when they purchase Alaska products we have tested.



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Visit the Georgeson Botanical Garden through their web site at: www.lter.uaf.edu/~salrm/GBG_WWW/GBG.htm

AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

The federal Hatch Act of 1887 authorized establishment of agricultural experiment stations in the U.S. and its territories to provide science-based research information to farmers. There are agricultural experiment stations in each of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Guam. All are part of the land-grant college system. The Morrill Act established the land-grant colleges in 1862. While the experiment stations perform agricultural research, the land-grant colleges provide education in the science and economics of agriculture.

The first experiment station in Alaska was established in Sitka in 1898. Subsequent stations were opened at Kodiak, Kenai, Rampart, Copper Center, Fairbanks, and Matanuska. The latter two remain. None were originally part of the Alaska land-grant college system. The Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines was established by the Morrill Act in 1922. It became the University of Alaska in 1935. The Fairbanks and Matanuska stations now form the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station of the University of Alaska Fairbanks which also includes the Palmer Research Center.

Early experiment station researchers developed adapted cultivars of grains, grasses, potatoes, and berries and introduced many vegetable cultivars appropriate to Alaska. Animal and poultry management was also important. This work continues as does research in soils and revegetation, forest ecology and management, and rural and economic development. Change has been constant as the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station continues to bring state-of-the-art research information to its clientele.

