

## Fresh Meat Trends: Latest Research Reveals Consumer Preferences for On-Pack Labeling

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-By Meg Major



Today's consumers need all the help they can get to decide what's for dinner. When selecting their center-of-the-plate protein, the majority of consumers restrict themselves to the cuts they're most familiar with, leaving a variety of cuts yet to be discovered. As a result, they're getting bored preparing the same meals with the same meat cuts over and over again. To add a little spice to ordinary family meals, consumers are asking for more ideas and information placed directly on meat packages.

This was one of the key findings from the second "Protein Labeling Study II 2009," a research study by the National Pork Board, the Beef Checkoff Program and Yerecic Label conducted to identify current consumer information needs while shopping the meat case, explore consumer recipe use, and test a variety of on-pack labels for general appeal and functionality. The results of the study also give consumer feedback regarding the effectiveness of new labeling programs using the most current merchandising and technology applications.

According to the study, consumers prefer information directly on meat packages so they don't have to match recipes to cuts of meat or poultry. Additionally, brochures can get lost en route from the store to home, and in-store signage information isn't helpful while preparing a meal in the kitchen.

Consumers say recipes, basic cooking directions and a cooking chart are helpful when found directly on meat packages. It also helps when on-pack labels include additional information such as serving suggestions, a photo of the finished dish and various meal options to fit different personal preferences.

"Many consumers resist buying unfamiliar cuts because they don't know how to prepare them," explained Art Yerecic, president of Yerecic Label. "It is important for retailers to give customers the information they need to try new cuts and successfully prepare them."

As consumer shopping habits evolve, Yerecic continued: "Our goal is to better understand the information consumers need when purchasing fresh meat and poultry. Providing on-pack information that helps consumers purchase and prepare fresh meats will lead to increased demand at retail."

The study also probed consumers about new technology label programs, such as traceability and mobile marketing, although research revealed these labels are a little ahead of their time. While consumers expressed an interest in knowing where their meat and poultry come from, the study found that additional understanding of the benefits of item traceability are needed. Regarding mobile marketing, consumers said if it saves money, they may make the effort to use their phones to obtain savings.

More information on the study is available at

<http://www.yereciclabeled.com/uploads/ProteinLabelingStudyII-ExecutiveSummary-Web.pdf>.

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