

T-BONE OR HAMBURGER?

You'll Be Surprised at What Turned Up In This Survey On Consumer Preference for Beef

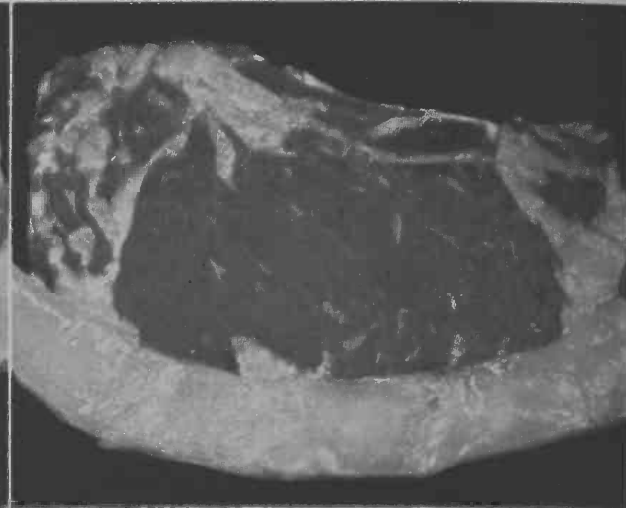
by Raymond E. Seltzer
Department of Agricultural Economics



Cut 1



Cut 2



Cut 3

SET C

American agriculture is becoming increasingly "promotion conscious." On every hand we see advertisements and radio and television commercials urging us to "eat beef—keep slim," "drink three glasses of milk," and so on.

Agricultural commodity groups are spending large sums of money in attempts to increase consumer demand for their products. If these commodities are to move into consumption in competition with each other, they must be tailored to meet the preferences of the ultimate consumer—in most cases the housewife.

Ask the Homemaker

To better understand these consumer preferences, 491 households in Phoenix were interviewed.

The interviews revealed that beef is, by far, the favorite meat of Phoenix consumers. When asked to indicate their preference, regardless of price, from a list of various common meats, poultry, and fish, 426 or 86.8 percent said beef. Chicken was second in popularity (6.3 percent) and pork (both fresh and cured) ran third (2.5 percent). The remaining 4.4 percent of the consumers preferred other meats, poultry and fish.

Never Mind the Cost

Consumers were asked to name their favorite cut of beef when price was not a consideration. T-bone steak was the cut most frequently preferred (by 18 percent of all interviewed). Round steak was next in preference, with 12 percent and sirloin steak followed with 11 per-

THE "VITAL" STATISTICS

As an indication of those quality factors considered by consumers, three sets of color photographs were prepared showing variations in beef quality factors. These sets were shown to each homemaker and, irrespective of price, she was asked to select that cut, from the three shown in each set, which she would prefer for her family. She was also asked to explain why she picked the cut of her choice.

SET A (COVER) shows variations in marbling. When shown these pictures, 23% of the consumers selected cut 1 (highly marbled); 18%, cut 2 (moderately marbled); 59%, cut 3 (slightly marbled).

SET B (COVER) shows variations in grade. From these pictures 31% picked cut 1 (U.S. Choice); 41%, cut 2 (U.S. Good); 26%, cut 3 (U.S. Commercial).

SET C (THIS PAGE) shows variations in color of fat. Here 63% of the consumers picked cut 1 (white fat); 26%, cut 2 (creamy fat); 11%, cut 3 (yellow fat).

cent. Favorites among the roasts were: chuck roast (5 percent), prime rib roast (4 percent) and rump roast (3 percent).

From Steak to Bones

Slightly more than 10 percent of the consumers interviewed (50 out of 491) said that ground beef or hamburger was their favorite beef item. A total of 32 different beef items were mentioned as favorites, ranging from filet mignon steak to soup bones. Questions were also asked concerning second and third preferences.

Ground beef and hamburger together accounted for 41 percent of the total of the third choices named.

Consumers' preferences seem to be conditioned by what they can afford. Although the preference question was specifically asked when price was not to be considered, it was found that low-income families seemed to prefer the cheaper cuts. For example, only 27 percent of those families having incomes of less than \$3000 listed the more expensive steaks as their first preference, while these steaks were preferred by 49 percent of those families earning \$6000 per year.

Grades? What Grades?

Another section of the study dealt with consumers' knowledge of federal (U.S. D.A.) beef grades. Only 16.5 percent of those interviewed were able to name as many as three of these grades; 16.5 percent could name two; and 16 percent could name one. The remaining 50 percent of the consumers were unacquainted with U.S.D.A. beef grades.

What Would You Say?

Consumers were asked to name those factors which they considered most important in selecting desirable beef. Leanness was most frequently mentioned, accounting for 25 percent of the 1158 answers given to this question. Color of lean was next (20 percent), and freshness was third (13 percent). The remaining 42 percent of the answers included such factors as color of fat, amount of bone, juicy appearance, firmness, texture, etc.