

Pre-Packaged and Bulk Spinach

survey of Berkeley housewives reveals buying practices and opinions on price and quality of spinach at retail

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Nearly one half of the housewives—47.5%—of the approximately one thousand interviewed in nine grocery stores in Berkeley in the summer of 1952 made a practice of buying fresh spinach at least once a month.

The stores in which the survey was made were large independent stores located in widely separated areas in Berkeley. These stores cater to customers with widely varying incomes and practices in buying.

Of those housewives who bought fresh spinach, 36% bought only bulk spinach and 39% bought only packaged spinach. About 25% bought both bulk and packaged. Of this group over one half bought bulk spinach more frequently than the packaged, 37% bought the packaged more frequently than the bulk, and 7% bought each kind with about equal frequency.

Thus almost 50% of the housewives who bought fresh spinach bought bulk only or bought it more frequently than the packaged spinach. Almost as many—48%—bought the packaged spinach only or bought it more frequently than the bulk.

Housewives who always or most frequently bought packaged spinach placed great emphasis upon ease of cleaning and those who bought bulk placed great emphasis upon quality.

The quality of the bulk spinach constituted almost one half of the reasons given by 161 housewives for always buying bulk spinach. In addition, the ability to choose the quality desired accounted for almost 26% of the reasons for buying bulk only. Thus three fourths of the reasons given for always buying bulk rested upon the interest of the buyers in quality.

The ability to choose the quantity desired was next in importance as a reason for buying bulk spinach only. However, this constituted only 11% of the total reasons given. The fact that the bulk spinach was less expensive than the packaged was mentioned even less frequently and accounted for 6.5% of the reasons given. Only 1% of the reasons rested upon the fact that the buyer bought the bulk because she could not get the packaged spinach.

The 63 housewives who bought both bulk and packaged spinach but who bought the bulk more frequently than the

packaged also gave quality as the major reason for their purchases. Nearly 35% said they bought on the basis of quality. About 5% bought on the basis of price and 2% on the basis of quantity needed. Preferences for the bulk without specifying why they preferred it were indicated by 54%. Of these buyers about three fifths said they bought on the basis of availability and about two fifths said they bought packaged when in a hurry but preferred the bulk spinach.

The inability to choose the quality and quantity desired when buying packaged spinach apparently led about one fifth of the buyers always to purchase bulk instead of packaged spinach. Over 13% of all the buyers said they preferred to buy bulk because they could choose quality desired and 6% said they liked to buy bulk because they could get just the quantity they wanted.

Convenience in buying, refrigerating, and cleaning constituted 80% of the reasons given for buying by the 176 housewives who always bought packaged spinach. The fact that packaged spinach is easier to clean than the bulk accounted for almost 72% of the reasons for buying it exclusively. Actually 90% of these buyers gave this as a reason for buying packaged spinach only.

Only a very few buyers bought packaged spinach because they thought it better quality than the bulk, this constituting less than 4% of the total reasons given for always buying packaged spinach. Slightly over 1% of the buyers thought it was less expensive than the bulk.

Of the 42 buyers who bought the packaged more frequently than the bulk spinach, nearly 64% said they bought on the basis of quality. These included 29% who said they preferred the convenience of the packaged spinach.

Only 5% of these buyers bought on the basis of price. Another 5% bought on the basis of time available, buying packaged when in a hurry.

About 24% of the buyers who purchased packaged more frequently than the bulk said they bought whichever was available.

The practice of some retailers in carrying only packaged spinach apparently led over 10% of the 450 buyers to purchase packaged spinach instead of the bulk.

Almost 4% said they bought packaged spinach because they could not get the bulk and about 7% said they bought whichever was available but preferred the bulk.

When queried directly regarding their opinions as to the relative quality of the two products, 51% of the housewives said they thought that the bulk was better in quality, 21% said they thought the packaged was better, 12% thought they were about equal, and 16% had no opinion regarding quality.

The same attitude was revealed in the reasons for buying one kind or the other. Almost one fourth of all the housewives interviewed—two thirds of those buying the bulk—gave the quality of the bulk as the reason for buying it exclusively. On the other hand only 2% of the buyers—5% of those buying the packaged only—gave quality as a reason for buying the packaged.

About 38% of those who bought both bulk and packaged spinach said they bought whichever was better in quality. Over 50% of these, however, bought bulk more frequently than the packaged.

Apparently the price of neither bulk nor packaged spinach was an important factor in determining which the housewives bought. Altogether only about 5% of the buyers mentioned price as a reason for buying either bulk or packaged spinach. Of the few who mentioned price nearly four fifths bought bulk spinach.

Indifference to price was further indicated by the fact that 43% of the housewives did not have any opinion as to which was cheaper.

Of those who had opinions regarding the relative prices, almost 70% thought that the bulk was cheaper than the packaged. About 16% thought that packaged was cheaper, and 14% thought they were about equal in price.

When asked whether or not they would be willing to pay a premium in price for either bulk or packaged spinach, 28% of the buyers said they would pay a premium for the packaged spinach, 26% would pay a premium for the bulk and 10% said they would pay a premium for which ever was better in quality. Over 30% said they would not pay a premium for either the bulk or packaged.

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