

Top Findings of the Power of Meat 2021

1. **The pandemic showed us just how popular meat and poultry still are.**
With consumers cooking at home during the pandemic, meat department dollars increased 19.2% and volume 11.0%. This was due to more meat trips and greater spending per trip, while household penetration remained high, at 98.4% (IRI).
2. **The pandemic brought more home-cooked meals with meat, with the shopper's eye turning to convenience and variety.**
An important silver lining of the pandemic is greater meat preparation knowledge, which is likely to benefit the retail meat industry for years, if not generations, to come. But the initial cooking enthusiasm is making way for a quest for variety and convenience. Value-added meat/poultry sales grew based on greater household engagement and increased frequency of use.
3. **More than three-quarters of shoppers changed something about their meat purchases during the pandemic.**
Driven by lunch and dinner, 43% of shoppers bought more meat and poultry, greatly impacted by the work-from-home trend. Additionally, four in 10 shoppers bought differently, whether different types (42%), cuts (40%) or brands (45%).
4. **Online meat shopping increased during the pandemic.**
While supermarkets easily remained the biggest outlet for meat, 56% of shoppers purchased groceries online in 2020. Up from 19%, 31% of shoppers ordered meat online in 2020, and those that ordered meat did so more often.
5. **Consumers look for meat sales/deals more often, but fewer sales were made on promotion during the pandemic.**
More shoppers looked for promotions across stores (68%) or at their primary store (78%) as they shifted to buying in bigger quantities to freeze and use over time. The digital circular gained big, but in-store signage remained the most popular way to research meat specials.
6. **Consumers' perception of case-ready reaches a study high 81% favorability.**
Shoppers have a positive impression of case-ready with 26% believing it is better than meat that is cut/packaged in-store and 55% believe it is equally good.
7. **Better-for-you gains appeal as shoppers focus on health and nutrition.**
Food has become more than just fuel and shoppers look for meat/poultry items they believe are better-for-me/their family. Many (71%) are putting effort into choosing nutritious and healthful meat and poultry choices. High interest in these areas expresses itself in vastly different protein choices, including purchasing claims-based meat, blends, alternatives and eating a little less of it.
8. **Environmental sustainability is a rising platform driving dollars across categories, including meat/poultry.**
Many (49%) consider sustainability factors when making meat purchases including better for the planet (34%), the worker/rancher (29%) and the animal (27%). Sixty percent of shoppers try to do their part for the environment and 43% believe that ranchers take steps to protect the planet. The 37% share of consumers who are unsure about environmental measures taken signal an important education opportunity for the meat retailing industry.
9. **Animal welfare remained important during the pandemic and is a multi-faceted concept in the eyes of the consumer.**
Fifty-five percent of shoppers say having information about how and where the animal was raised and processed is important. Consumers' definition of animal welfare involves many aspects of animal living, feeding and care conditions, including how animals are handled during slaughter (60%), access to outdoors (60%) and the amount of living space (58%). More people believe the meat they buy came from humanely-treated animals (44%) but 40% are simply unsure.
10. **Plant-based meat alternatives grew 83.9% but remain just 0.6% of combined meat/alternative dollar sales.**
At \$475 million, refrigerated plant-based meat alternatives experienced robust growth. Just shy of 10% of households bought alternatives in 2020, but 40% did so only once. (IRI) Vegetable/meat blends, such as mushroom burgers, have greater appeal, and can be a bridge between continued meat consumption and providing benefits people look for in plant-forward eating.

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