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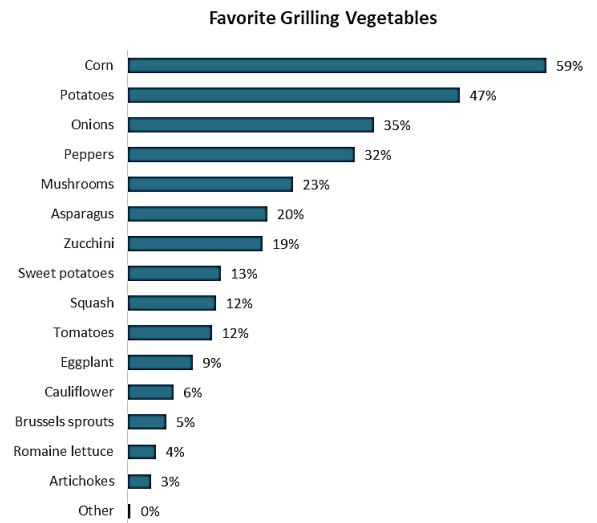
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Most consumers grill a variety of produce, preferences vary by demographic
Retailers and suppliers can target to drive sales

Idaho Falls, ID (5.22.18) – With warmer weather finally prevalent throughout the U.S., grilling season is upon us.

Grilling is a preferred way to prepare vegetables for the majority, as 74% of those surveyed by Category Partners (CP), in its recent grilled vegetable survey, claimed to do so. For the grilling population, the top vegetables to throw on the fire are: corn (59%), potatoes (47%), onions (35%), peppers (32%) and mushrooms (23%).

What varies is preference by region, age, household (HH) income and HH size, as CP polled 1,000 consumers throughout the US, aged 25-65+ (further demographic information below*). For example, the following consumer subsets were most likely to name the below as their favorites:



- **Northeastern (77%) and Southern (74%) regions grill the most**
 - Southern grillers – corn (65%) and onions (40%)
 - Northeastern grillers – zucchini (27%)/squash (16%) and eggplant (14%)
 - Midwestern grillers – potatoes (49%) and mushrooms (26%)
 - Western grillers – peppers (34%) and asparagus (25%)
- **Ages 25-44 grill the most (78%)**
 - Ten percent of grillers, aged 25-34, named romaine lettuce as a favorite, vs. more than 25% of grillers, aged 45+, who cited mushrooms
- **Larger HH, especially those with children, are more likely to grill vegetables; 82+% with five or more people, vs. 72% with two people and 64% with one person**
- **HH income below \$49,999 – corn, potatoes and onions**
- **HH income above \$100,000 – asparagus, eggplant and Brussels sprouts**

“As consumers continue seeking healthy options, grilling is a great-tasting, easy way to add vegetables to their meals,” said Cara Ammon, CP’s director of research. “Consumers, especially younger consumers, are moving beyond their favorites, adding more and more vegetables – such as sweet potatoes, romaine lettuce, artichokes and eggplant – to their grills.”

RETAILERS

During peak grilling season (typically May-August) – synonymous with local vegetables – retail produce teams have an opportunity to utilize data, such as CP's, to engage shoppers with targeted and dynamic merchandising and marketing programs; with the intent of driving impulse, incremental and cross-departmental purchases. Many retailers value the relationship between solid merchandising and sales, of which assorting properly and in the right place, based upon timing and need, is essential. For shoppers, this translates to inspiration, ease and larger baskets.

Consider the below tactics to drive in store and online sales/marketing programs:

Assortment – applying shopper data to respond with the right grilling vegetables and meaningful varieties/attributes (i.e., conventional and organic) within. Order for in stocks and, based upon shopper needs, provide options among bulk, packaged, fresh cut and bundles or kits.

Merchandising and promotions – highlighting color and increasing display size (aligned with store volume), and ensure these top veggies are facing traffic flow; consider grouping. Merchandise according to stringent quality control, especially with seasonal and local produce (i.e., temperature control, rotation/culling, avoid stacking and know when to discard). Also:

- Promote within produce on a secondary display – individually or bundled – or within meat, seafood or deli/to go (especially more shelf-stable vegetables, like corn, potatoes/sweet potatoes and onions)
- Consider merchandising with complementary items, such as marinades/dressings, spices/herbs and appetizer-style foods (premade dips, value-add veg, chips/crackers, cheeses, etc.) or side dishes (premade salads/salad kits, slaw, beans, etc.).

“Summertime and grilling are two major sales drivers for corn, but with corn being such a staple, we need to motivate shoppers to buy more,” said John Castro, director, category development & research for Oviedo, FL-based Duda Farm Fresh Foods. *“This can be accomplished through merchandising alternate-growth SKUs, like tray-pack corn, crossed and secondary displays, placement in alternate in-store channels (meal deals, convenience section) and information regarding creative recipes for preparing grilled corn, its health benefits or the farmer’s story.”*

“Meal inspiration” – bundling these items or highlighting in “grilling meal kits” – spanning traditional and non-traditional meals (see below) – in both large quantities, catering to HH size, and small quantities, catering to the “on-the-go” eating nature of summertime. Feature bulk, packaged or fresh cut, where effective.

Promotional marketing – through in store and digital/mobile messaging, emphasizing the local, convenient and healthful factors (i.e., often fewer ingredients and less utensils in grilling preparation) and sharing non-traditional grilling recipes, such as the below. Demoing non-traditional recipes and featuring in culinary classes, where possible, may strengthen impulse sales:

Grilled asparagus and shiitake tacos | grilled sweet potato nachos | grilled zucchini, ricotta and pine nut pizza | grilled chicken wings with shishito peppers and herbs | soba noodle salad with pesto and grilled eggplant | honey-lime tilapia and corn foil pack | creamy cucumber and grilled potato salad | blackened Cajun-spiced grilled onions.

SUPPLIERS

To partner with retailers in executing on the above assortment, merchandising and promotional tactics, suppliers can:

- Deliver retailers promotional pricing, especially when products are flush, either individually or bundled
- Source locally, where possible
- Provide targeted promotional marketing/messaging support
- Support in store, related to product, quality control, merchandising and/or sampling.

**HH income between <\$25,000 and >\$200,000, HH size between one and 10 people, encompassing various ethnicities and nearly evenly split between female/male*

About Category Partners – a nationally recognized resource, among food companies and retailers, for delivering actionable business/consumer insights, marketing/sales plans and technology/data solutions. Category Partners is grower/shipper owned and headquartered in Idaho Falls, ID, with nationwide offices in Laguna Hills, Calif., Denver, Chicago and Atlanta.