

Taste that makes consumers think of fresh, natural and home-cooked food matters most

International survey data reveal that fresh-tasting, natural, home-cooked tastes are driving consumer demand around the world and not just in mature markets. In markets as diverse as Nigeria, Brazil, Poland and China authentic and natural-tasting food is the consumer's favorite. At the same time manufacturers must rise to the complex challenge of meeting these taste expectations without sacrificing convenience and understandable labeling.

- In a recent DSM survey focused on urban consumers' taste preferences, attitudes and behaviors, data revealed that more than half (55%) believe a 'fresh or natural' flavor is what makes food taste delicious, followed by 'tastes as if it was made at home'.
- This was felt most strongly by urban consumers living in China (72%); while their counterparts in Brazil said they first and foremost wanted food that 'tastes as if it were made at home' (67%).
- These cravings for fresh, natural or home-made tastes is one of the more important challenges for food producers in the face of consumer behavior, as nearly two-thirds (64%) of urban consumers report they are using the same amount of *OR* more processed food at home than they were 3 years ago.

What makes food taste delicious to you?
By Country

	Total	Nigeria	China	US	Poland	Brazil
Fresh or natural	55%	59%	72%	56%	47%	39%
Tastes as if was made at home	44%	29%	27%	54%	45%	67%
Intensity of taste	39%	15%	28%	55%	54%	46%
Specific meaty flavor	38%	31%	39%	44%	41%	38%
Specific vegetable flavor	27%	15%	36%	28%	29%	24%
Specific other flavor	13%	12%	16%	19%	11%	6%

Insight: Unlike most food trends, consumers' demand for fresh- and natural-tasting foods seems to be a global truth and shows no sign of going out of fashion. On the contrary, as people continue to become more informed about where food comes from, how it is manufactured and what it contains, we can stop thinking of fresh, natural and home-cooked flavors as a trend and start recognizing them as the status quo. Reinforcing this point, Mintel recently reported that: "As consumers continue to seek simplicity and purity in food and drink ingredients lists, the drive for natural food formulations will endure in the global food and drink industry."¹

¹ Available at: <http://www.mintel.com/press-centre/food-and-drink/new-research-from-mintel-and-leatherhead-food-research-reveals-natural-colours-overtake-artificial-synthetic-colours-for-the-first-time>. Accessed September 11th, 2013.

Sales of naturally-focused foods have enjoyed huge growth over the last 4 years. In the USA alone sales of food using 'natural' as a claim topped \$36 billion in 2012, with 'preservative-free' foods the next largest segment reaching almost \$17 billion.²

Coen van Oorschot, Business Line Manager Process Flavours, from DSM Food Specialties agrees: *"Delivering natural and authentic-tasting food consistently and affordably is only the starting point of differentiation; it is one of the key challenges faced by the industry today."*

Labels matter for savvy shoppers seeking authentic tastes and home-cooked flavors

- Urban consumers will actively seek out food that meets their taste and health requirements.
- Those who check labels are more likely to believe that a fresh and natural flavor is what makes food delicious when compared to those who don't check labels (60% versus 44%).
- Of those who check labels, nearly half (46%) are looking for information about additives. In China this figure is 76% and in Poland it is 53%.
- In fact, Food 2020 data reveal that about two-thirds (62%) of global consumers 'want to be able to recognize all of the ingredients on a food label', and half (51%) want everything they need to know about the product – from source, to processing and supplier – to be on the labels of the products they buy.³

Checking the ingredients labels By Taste Preference

	Fresh or natural	Tastes as if was made at home	Intensity of taste	Specific meaty flavor	Specific vegetable flavor	Specific other flavor
Read labels regularly	60%	43%	37%	39%	30%	14%
Do not read labels regularly	44%	48%	44%	38%	20%	10%

Insight: Labels listing strings of additives, be it E-numbers or complicated names we do not recognize as coming from our kitchen cupboards, are at odds with consumers' desire for authentic, natural foods that remind them of home cooking. It's more important than ever for manufacturers to deliver great tasting foods with understandable ingredient labels. The new generation of flavor solutions gives manufacturers the ability to deliver that natural taste consistently while giving the consumers the reassurance that what they taste is what they get: if they taste garlic then that's exactly what they see on the label. As awareness of specific elements of food and their role in allergies and intolerances grows, this need for clean labeling will continue to gain importance. Consistency of food labeling is also important. Despite the tremendous success of natural foods, research from Datamonitor suggests that consumers are not exactly clear what the term 'natural' really means.² This shows that there is room for further discussion and debate on how the food industry can create cohesion and clarity around easy-to-understand labeling.

Keep it simple, but make it taste great...

- Survey data about what drives repeat purchases of processed or pre-prepared foods highlight the complexity of the challenge faced by manufacturers.

² The Natural and Clean Label Market Opportunity. Datamonitor Consumer. Available at: <http://bit.ly/14LvSIT>. Accessed September 11th, 2013.

³ Ketchum's Global Food & Nutrition Practice, Food 2020 <http://www.ketchum.com/food-2020>

- Two-thirds (65%) of urban consumers cite 'easy to use and prepare' as the top reason they buy pre-prepared food for the second time; half (50%) say a 'very good taste' is their reason for repeat purchase.
- Only one third (33%) of total survey respondents said that price is a factor in deciding to buy a processed or pre-prepared food again, and just a quarter (25%) gave healthiness as a reason.
- Urban Americans are the most demanding when it comes to their processed and pre-prepared food purchase preferences: a very good taste (65%), easy to use and prepare (61%) and an economical price (47%) are all significant factors in their repurchase decisions.

What makes you buy a pre-prepared food for a second time?
By Country

	Total	Nigeria	China	US	Poland	Brazil
Easy to use and prepare	65%	66%	67%	61%	56%	75%
Very good taste	50%	31%	62%	65%	56%	36%
Tastes like home cooked	27%	21%	19%	34%	36%	24%
Household members like it	26%	9%	40%	38%	25%	19%
Economical price	33%	19%	38%	47%	28%	31%
Healthy	25%	23%	36%	35%	15%	16%

Insight: Consumers want fresh-tasting, authentic natural foods that are easy to buy, store and cook. This means delivering that key taste in combination with optimum shelf life for us to still consider it natural, one-step cooking processes and packaging that makes life easy for the user. The consumer wants to taste real fried onions and freshly roast chicken in a dish that can be stored in the fridge for four days and microwaved in minutes. The complexity of this challenge means that traditional approaches to creating taste are no longer meeting expectations and the most innovative manufacturers are seeking ways to build and layer authentic taste profiles without compromising convenience.

Coen van Oorschot underscores this point: *"We firmly believe that food ingredient innovation will enable the development of products that combine home-made tasting food that reminds us of our grandma's cooking, with understandable labels and convenience, giving us the best of both worlds."*

Survey overview

In May 2013, DSM conducted an international perception survey around food and taste of 5000 18-45 year olds (50:50; men: women; living in key urban areas) from emerging markets Brazil, China, Nigeria and Poland as well as the USA. This is the second in a series of global insight reports set to be published by DSM to explore people's perceptions of savory tastes in these diverse and emerging global markets.