The science of premium™
Global food companies are increasingly looking to Asia as a means of establishing new market opportunities for their products.

To assist New Zealand companies, Plant & Food Research has undertaken exploratory research to better understand Chinese consumers. This research is the first step in building a platform of understanding with which to grow from — identifying the multiple factors that add to meal enjoyment, as well as understanding the key health and well-being beliefs and values of Asian consumers.

Insights were gained through in-home visits, face-to-face focus groups and market research online communities (MROC) involving women 25 to 55 years old who live with and without children across a broad geographic area of China.

The consumer insight themes explored in the study included:

→ The importance and interaction of flavour, freshness, naturalness, healthiness and food safety on Chinese consumers’ choices of food
→ Meal occasions and the types of foods and beverages consumed
→ Food-related habits and behaviours, and the beliefs and attitudes that inform them
→ Key influences on shopping habits
5 FACTORS INFLUENCING FRESH FOOD CHOICES IN CHINA

**INSIGHT 1**
Consumers see ‘fresh and natural’ as the key to health and food safety. Consumers evaluate freshness by looking at the color, smell and feel—preferably in a wet market, defining freshness as vegetables freshly picked in the morning, pork freshly killed on the day, and poultry or seafood alive when purchased. Many consumers avoid any strong odors, especially synthetic ones that may be due to chemical treatments. Consumers also avoid using modern enzymes in food products that aren’t strong smelling. At the same time, non-reprocessed products are seen as good farming methods.

**INSIGHT 2**
Consumers will go the extra mile for freshness. Freshness is a very important criterion for consumers when choosing ingredients for their main meal, especially for vegetables. They believe healthier products are fresher and more nutritious. Many consumers insist on buying fresh food ingredients from a wet market, where the freshness is guaranteed because there are safety checks, but the wet market is fresher than supermarkets if they can’t find the cut of meat or seafood they need. Consumers prefer products that are distributed by the trustworthy third parties.

**INSIGHT 3**
FRESHNESS
The whole family gets together to have dinner, a very lively environment. Besides, there is longer time in the evening so I can cook a few more dishes to share.

**INSIGHT 4**
Consumers have preferred ways of shopping for specific products. A few brands or types of meat are generally preferred. For example, for pork, consumers prefer tradition meat products such as fresher pork or salted pork. For seafood, fresh seafood is usually preferred. For vegetables, the best choice is to buy from a specialty market.

**INSIGHT 5**
Food in the supermarket is more quality- guaranteed because there are safety checks, but the wet market is fresher.

**FRESH FOOD CHOICES IN CHINA**

When people eat, the most important thing is definitely health. If you are not healthy, how do you work and study?

For me healthy means fresh food ingredients, safe food and a balanced diet.

I usually go to the wet market in the morning because the food is fresh and therefore nutritious.

The whole family gets together to have dinner, a very lively environment. Besides, there is longer time in the evening so I can cook a few more dishes to share.

I buy shrimp from a special wet market. I think the seafood there is fresh.
This brochure is a snapshot of our work examining Chinese fresh food habits, attitudes, behaviour and beliefs. We’re adding to our knowledge on the Chinese consumer all the time, with an ongoing research effort by our own Consumer & Product Insights Group and the best partners in market and consumer research. If you’d like more detail and to access this or other Plant & Food Research-led studies on Asian consumers, please get in touch.

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