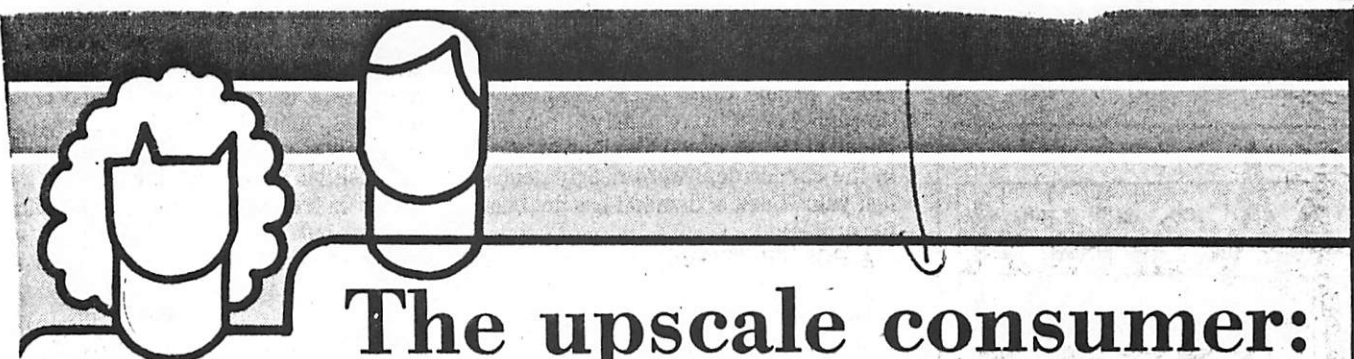


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The upscale consumer:

Survey shows that higher income changes shopping, eating habits

By CHARLES B. ADAMS

KANSAS CITY — Almost one-fourth of fresh produce consumers have unique and specific characteristics that set them apart from other customers. Knowing these characteristics will help retailers better understand a portion of their customers and aid them with advertising, merchandising and carrying a variety of produce.

This finding comes from the 1985 "Profile Of The Fresh Consumer," *The Packer's* second annual comprehensive study of the nation's consumers. Through Market Facts Inc., a Chicago-based research firm, Vance

Research Services mailed a survey to 2,000 consumers representing a cross section of the American public. More than 1,400, or 70 percent, responded to the survey. These respondents are the individuals who do the food shopping for their households.

Information from the survey was segmented and analyzed. One segment contained information about those consumers representing households with incomes of \$30,000 or more per year. These consumers are known as "upscale," and accounted for almost 26 percent of the total survey.

On a national basis, consumers re-

presenting households with incomes of \$30,000 or more per year account for 32 percent of the population, according to the Bureau of Census.

From the survey, the following lifestyle characteristics of upscale consumers are:

- They or another household member are less likely to have been on a diet restricting their intake of calories, sugar, salt or cholesterol within the past 12 months.
- If they or a household member have been on a diet within the past 12 months, they were most likely to have

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Upscale

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been on a calorie-restricted diet.

- They are more concerned about the nutritional value of the foods they eat than they were a year ago.
 - They own more modern appliances, such as food processors, woks, steamers and yogurt makers.
 - They use these modern appliances at least once per month.
 - They broil, steam, microwave or stir-fry foods at least once per month, which represents a higher percentage than lower-income groups.
 - They use more written recipes from cookbooks, newspapers, magazines or any other source. They also use these recipes more often.
 - A higher percentage say they are "extremely interested" in cooking.
 - They clip more recipes from newspapers.
 - They try more specialty produce items more often (six or more times per year) than lower-income groups.
 - A higher percentage of these upscale consumers own more cookbooks (10 or more) than other income groups.
- These life-style dimensions are best understood when they are put into perspective with preference and purchasing information about fresh fruits and vegetables. *The Packer's* survey contained a report on fresh fruit and another on fresh vegetables.

Fresh fruit

Upscale consumers are regular purchasers of fresh fruit, particularly specialty fruit items, according to the survey. And even if upscale produce consumers have not purchased a particular specialty item, they more often had seen or heard of the item.

FOR INSTANCE, more than 22 percent of the upscale customers had purchased plantains, while almost 10 percent of the customers in the \$15,000-19,900 had purchased them.

Almost 10 percent of upscale customers had tried tomatillos, compared to just more than 7 percent of customers from households with \$10,000-14,900 incomes. More than 21.5 percent of the upscale consumers had not tried tomatillos, though they had seen or heard of them, compared to 13.5 percent of the \$10,000-14,900 group.

Breadfruit also exemplifies this point. More than 8 percent of upscale consumers had tried breadfruit. Almost 5 percent of consumers in the \$15,000-19,900 bracket had tried this item. However, more than 45 percent of the upscale consumers had heard of or seen breadfruit, compared to about 30 percent of the lower-income group.

What this indicates to retailers is that their upscale customers are more knowledgeable about specialty fruit items. Because a comparatively higher percentage of these consumers had more often seen or heard of an item but not tried it, retailers could offer samples or special promotions to

prompt upscale customers to purchase specialties.

Also, the survey indicated that upscale customers have more cookbooks and modern appliances. If retailers offer cooking and preparation tips, as well as recipes, they perhaps could increase their sales of specialties.

Buying habits

Income	No. of specialty items of tried
less than \$10,000	34%
\$10,000-14,900	46%
\$15,000-19,900	36%
\$20,000-29,900	38%
\$30,000-over	55%

Source: Vance Research Services

IN TERMS OF staple fruit items, such as apples, oranges and bananas, upscale consumers generally purchase the same kinds of fresh fruit as the lower-income groups, though a higher percentage of them purchase some items more frequently. In addition, upscale customers tend to purchase more fresh fruit items weekly than the other income groups.

For instance, 56 percent of upscale customers eat four or more kinds of fresh fruit in a typical week. They eat these items either at home or take

them with them to eat elsewhere, according to the survey.

Comparatively, 48 percent of the consumers in the \$10,000-14,900 group and 49 percent in the \$15,000-19,900 salary ranges eat four or more fresh fruit items each week.

However, almost 66 percent of the upscale consumers said their households were eating about the same amount of fresh fruit. Only about 56 percent of the consumers in the \$15,000-19,900 range said the same. More than 40 percent of consumers in this category said they were eating more fresh fruit, compared to 33 percent of the upscale consumers.

THOUGH SIMILAR to other consumer income brackets in their fresh fruit purchases, a higher percentage of upscale consumers have purchased Rome Beauty and Granny Smith apples, blackberries, kiwifruit, mangos and papaya than the other income groups.

Fresh vegetables

When it comes to fresh vegetables, the upscale customers are more similar to the other income brackets than they were with fresh fruits. More than 72 percent of upscale customers said they were eating about the same amount of fresh vegetables as they were 12 months earlier. Comparatively, 61 to 65 percent of the other income groups reported that they were eating the same amount of produce.

However, from a list of the 30 most common vegetable items, more upscale consumers reported they had purchased radishes, sweet potatoes,

mushrooms, squash, spinach, asparagus, brussels sprouts, garlic, leaf lettuce, eggplant, alfalfa sprouts, artichokes, escarole, Belgian endive and tofu at some time.

Most of the items they said they had purchased were lower in the list, which indicates that upscale consumers tend to be more familiar with the less common items.

In addition, the upscale consumers reported they bought more fresh vegetable items from the list of the 30 most popular items within the past 12 months than the other income groups. More than 70 percent of the upscale customers said they bought 17 to 30 of the items, compared to about 42 percent of the less-than-\$10,000 group, 50 percent of the \$10,000-14,900 group, 53 percent of the \$15,000-19,900 group, and 56.5 percent of the \$20,000-29,900 group.

UPSCALE CONSUMERS also differ from the lower-income groups in terms of fresh vegetable preparation. A higher percentage of upscale consumers eat more raw broccoli, cabbage, carrots and spinach than do the other income groups, who tend to cook these items.

As was the case with fresh fruits, more upscale consumers have tried or at least know of specialty vegetable items. A higher percentage of upscale customers reported they had tried or seen the following specialty items: celery root, chayote, fava beans, horseradish, kohlrabi, leeks, parsnips, rapini, sapote, Sno peas and yucca root.