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SURVEY OF PORK PRODUCTS AVAILABLE TO CONSUMERS

S. Hollinger and J. A. Unruh

Summary

A survey was conducted to investigate the variety and price per pound of pork products available to consumers. The survey was conducted in the largest store of each of the three leading supermarket chains in Manhattan, KS. The 217.3 pork products per store (642 total) were categorized into fresh pork, smoked/cured pork, sausages, lunch meats, and pastry/pork combinations, which represented 7.4, 13.9, 32.5, 20.4, and 24.4% of the pork products surveyed, respectively. Retail cuts from the loin were the most numerous and highest priced in the fresh pork category. Retail cuts from the ham and belly (bacon) were the most numerous, but cuts from the loin were the highest priced in the smoked/cured pork category. Sausages included more product variety than any other category. Lunch meat, like sausages, varied greatly in percentage of pork as a meat ingredient. They had the greatest variation in price. Ham lunch meat averaged 129% more in price than the bologna and loaf varieties. Pastry/pork combination products had the highest price and constituted the second most numerous category. Pizza was the most numerous subcategory of pastry/pork combinations. Currently, consumers are able to choose from a wide variety of pork products with variations in value (price).

(Key Words: Pork, Retail, Product Variety, Price.)

Introduction

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) has proposed a major goal of mak-

ing pork the meat of choice (edible lean basis) in the U.S. by the year 2000. To accomplish this goal, NPPC is placing emphasis on 1) improving efficiencies and reducing costs of production; 2) improving quality and consistency of the consumer product; and 3) improving consumers' understanding of the quality, safety, and nutritional benefits of today's pork.

The National Live Stock and Meat Board Market Research Group concluded in 1992 that the four factors driving the public in determining what they eat, how they eat it, where they eat it, and when they eat it are variety, convenience, health, and price. Therefore, the object of the following survey was to establish a benchmark as to the variety and price of pork products available to consumers at a local level.

Procedures

In September 1996, we surveyed all major pork products at the largest store of each of the three major supermarket chains in Manhattan, KS. For each pork product, the product name, manufacturing company, product specifications, average weight, and price were recorded. Products were divided into five major categories of fresh pork, smoked/cured pork, sausages, lunch meat, and pastry/pork combinations. Categories were subdivided further into like-product groups. Within each category and subcategory product group, the average number of products available per store, product weight, and price per lb as well as their corresponding low, high, and standard deviations were summarized.

Results and Discussion

Numerous pork products were found in each of the three Manhattan, Kansas supermarkets surveyed. The 217.3 pork products per store (642 total) had an average weight of 16.94 oz and cost \$3.27 per pound.

The fresh pork category was the least numerous, had the highest average weight, the lowest price per pound, and the lowest standard deviation for price. Fresh pork has the fewest further manufacturing inputs of the categories listed. Retail cuts from the loin were the most numerous in this category and demanded the highest average price per pound. As a partial result, most loin products are merchandised fresh. Fresh pork cuts from the ham (fresh leg) and belly were sparse, indicating the popularity of adding value and further processing into ham and bacon.

The smoked/cured pork category was the second least numerous, with bacon and ham comprising 89% of this category. Average weight was similar to the fresh pork category, but was more variable as indicated by a larger standard deviation. In general, further processing increased the value of the fresh pork products. Again, retail cuts from the loin demanded the highest price per pound. Of all the products surveyed, smoked and cured loin retail cuts were the highest priced.

Sausages included more products than any other category, with smoked/processed sausages and franks comprising 67%. Smoked/processed sausages included a wide variety of selection, including popular varieties such as Italian, Polish, kielbasa, bratwurst, summer, hard salami, and pepperoni sausages. Franks had varying percentages

of pork included in their formulation. In general, less expensive franks had higher percentages of chicken and turkey, whereas higher priced franks had higher percentages of pork and beef. Sausage production appears to be an effective method of increasing the value of lower-valued pork cuts and trimmings.

The lunch meat category had the lowest standard deviation for weight and highest standard deviation for price. This narrow weight range resulted from products packaged at primarily 6, 8, 12, or 16 ounces. The high variation in price resulted from varied meats and other ingredients used in their formulation. The higher quality ham lunch meats were consistently higher priced than the bologna and loaf subcategories. Similar to the sausages, the varying percentages of pork and other meat ingredients influenced price. In general, lunch meats with a higher percentage of pork meat had higher prices.

Pastry/pork combination products had the highest price per pound and constituted the second most numerous category. In recent years, food companies have focused on the development of these consumer-friendly, convenience-oriented products. Within this category, pizza products were the most numerous, but had the lowest price per pound. The pastry/pork category seems to be the most innovative and will be an area of future growth.

Pork products appear popular and are targeted toward many different consumer niches. They appeal to a diverse consumer population by having selections that focus on variety, convenience, health, and price.

Table 1. Characteristics of Pork Products Surveyed from Supermarkets in Manhattan, KS^a

Item	Number of Items per Store			Item Weight, oz				Item Price per lb			
	Mean	Low	High	Mean	SD	Low	High	Mean	SD	Low	High
Fresh pork	16.0	14	20	30.87	19.14	9.12	79.52	2.75	1.09	1.39	5.29
Ham	.7	0	1	39.84	42.54	9.76	69.92	2.69	.42	2.39	2.99
Loin	.9	6	12	25.90	16.03	9.12	58.88	3.38	1.02	1.99	5.29
Boston butt	3.0	2	4	42.65	25.63	12.96	79.52	1.82	.44	1.39	2.79
Spareribs	2.7	1	4	43.38	16.97	15.36	70.4	2.82	.53	2.19	3.50
Belly	.7	0	1	13.44	4.53	10.24	16.64	2.11	.40	1.83	2.39
Smoked/cured	30.3	16	39	30.53	30.85	3.5	152	3.38	1.63	1.14	9.57
Ham	12.3	5	16	44.80	35.26	12	152	2.98	.99	1.29	4.99
Loin	2.3	1	3	8.21	45.67	3.5	20.64	7.61	1.87	3.99	9.57
Picnic shoulder	1.0	0	2	108.96	32.42	73.6	137.28	1.32	.27	1.14	1.63
Bacon	14.7	9	20	16.73	4.16	12	32	3.18	.95	1.57	6.44
Sausage	70.7	30	100	14.77	5.25	2.5	18.72	2.84	1.27	.99	7.98
Links/patties	7.0	2	14	9.30	2.79	5.2	14	3.65	1.13	1.96	5.51
Bulk	12.3	6	18	15.49	1.61	10.4	18.72	2.64	.68	1.29	3.83
Smoked/processed	30.3	8	42	15.83	7.12	2.5	48	3.11	1.38	.99	7.68
Franks (hot dogs)	17	10	21	15.14	1.61	10	16	2.06	.84	1.13	3.99
Pate/braunschweiger	4.0	1	6	12.00	4.18	8	16	3.20	1.87	1.50	7.98
Lunch meat	44.3	26	62	10.82	4.31	2.5	16	3.44	1.81	1.07	7.26
Bologna	11.7	8	14	13.71	3.50	6	16	2.13	1.03	1.19	5.47
Ham	20.3	9	32	8.12	3.96	2.5	16	4.97	1.26	2.61	7.26
Loaf (variety)	12.3	9	16	12.54	2.64	8	16	2.17	1.06	1.07	4.38
Pastry/pork combinations	53.0	33	97	12.19	7.89	3	36	3.82	1.30	1.98	8.05
Pockets/pouches/rolls	8.0	4	15	9.64	4.68	7	31	4.18	.66	3.20	4.98
Pizza, small ≤13 oz	13.0	3	27	8.97	2.36	3	12.5	3.42	1.32	2.20	5.44
Pizza, large >13 oz	15.3	4	32	22.38	5.87	14.9	36	2.79	.45	1.95	3.53
Breakfast combinations	12.3	5	20	6.51	3.85	3	24	4.74	.98	2.88	8.05
Lunch combinations	4.3	1	9	6.63	2.99	4.5	14.2	5.39	1.45	2.82	7.10
Other	3	2	4	24.53	7.33	14.08	33.28	1.90	1.14	.49	3.50
Total	217.3	119	318	16.94	15.76	2.5	152	3.27	1.50	.49	9.97

^aValues were obtained from three supermarkets in September, 1996.