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New Research Finds Potato Buyers Are Shopping for Inspiration
Potato Shopper Study Highlights Opportunities for Retailers

Denver, CO, October 24, 2011 – According to the findings of a new study released by the United States Potato Board (USPB), fresh potatoes are more of a planned purchase than ever. But at the same time, this research paints the picture of a potato shopper as someone who is more prone to getting meal ideas and inspirations while shopping – and this is precisely the point where the retailer’s potato table often disappoints.

The USPB and their research agency, Sterling Rice Group of Boulder, Colorado, fielded a landmark study of potato shoppers in late summer 2011. This study sought to understand how, when, and where the core consumer shops for potatoes, identifying the shopping trip types when potatoes are most likely included and assessing & prioritizing the factors that influence potato purchase decisions (before and during the shopping experience) in the retailer’s produce section and beyond. The research encompassed both an extensive online quantitative study of 1,900 primary food shoppers ages 20-69, as well as more comprehensive longitudinal online ethnographies with a smaller group of participants.

“Our research found conclusively that the greatest opportunity retailers have for increasing potato sales is to give their shoppers more suggestions and information about using potatoes once they get back home” said Kathleen Triou, the USPB’s Vice President of Domestic Marketing. “Today more than 9 out of 10 potato purchases are planned – a significant increase from research that we had conducted only the year before – meaning that retailers should be focusing more on ways to get potatoes on the shopping list rather than trying to create an impulse sale in the store.”

Earlier studies by the USPB had discovered that the core consumer for fresh potatoes enjoys serving them to their families, and would be willing to serve them more often if given new ideas and recipes for preparing them. The latest study took this one step further, finding that these consumers are more likely to enjoy shopping and admit to wandering the aisles looking for ideas and meal inspirations.

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“Yet our study found that this is exactly where most retailers are missing the opportunity” added Don Ladhoff, the USPB’s Retail Program Consultant. “When potato shoppers were asked to evaluate the potato table relative to other sections of the produce department, they awarded it high marks for organization and ease of shopping – but gave out the lowest scores for providing information, making them think about buying something different or giving them new ideas of how to prepare potatoes.” So at the critical moment of truth – when a shopper who wants to serve potatoes more often and tends to get her meal ideas from shopping is standing in front of the potato display – the retailer often settles for organization over inspiration, and does little to spur the incremental consumption that in turn will drive increased potato purchases.

The USPB’s research also reinforced why attracting potato purchasers is so important to a retailer. The study found that when shoppers are buying potatoes, they reported spending an additional 10 minutes in the store on average versus shopping trips without a potato purchase (47 min. vs. 37 min.), and picking up twice as many items (33 vs. 17). Potato shoppers also averaged 6 additional shopping trips every year, and described spending over \$1500 more on groceries.

The USPB has produced a short [video](#) highlighting the key findings from this comprehensive research into potato shoppers. Retailers who would like more information on the study’s findings or want to learn how the USPB can help them capitalize on the implications should contact Don Ladhoff at 415-215-2448 or don@freshsmartsolutions.com.

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About the United States Potato Board

The United States Potato Board was established in 1971 by a group of potato growers to promote the benefits of eating potatoes. Recognized as an innovator in the produce marketing industry, the USPB adopted a new campaign in 2007. “Potatoes... Goodness Unearthed®” showcases the appeal of naturally nutrient-rich potatoes, also known as America’s favorite vegetable. Based in Denver, Colo., the USPB represents more than 4,000 potato growers and handlers across the country. To unearth more goodness about the USPB and its programs, visit www.potatoretailer.com.