

Are meat substitutes liked better over time? A repeated in-home use test with meat substitutes or meat in meals

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2012.07.002>, How to Cite or Link Using DOI

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Abstract

The overall aim of this study was to explore long-term consumer acceptance of new environmentally sustainable alternatives to meat. We investigated whether meat substitutes, which are relatively new food products, would be better appreciated after repeated consumption. Eighty-nine non-vegetarian participants joined an in-home use test and consumed one type of product with their self-selected hot meal for 20 times during 10 weeks: Quorn (meat-like), tofu (not meat-like) or a meat reference (chicken filet). Initial liking (100-mm line scale) for chicken was higher (81 ± 19) than for Quorn (60 ± 28) and tofu (68 ± 21). On a product group level, boredom occurred with all three products and after 20 exposures there were no significant differences in product liking anymore. However, there were noticeably different individual responses within the three product groups, showing both 'boredom' and 'mere exposure' patterns. Mere exposure occurred significantly more frequent with tofu, with more than half of the participants showing an increased liking over time. We also found that meal patterns were related to boredom: bored persons used more different types of meals, probably to alleviate product boredom. This study demonstrates that liking of meat substitutes can be increased by repeated exposure for a segment of consumers. In addition, it indicates that the meal context should be considered in future in-home repeated exposure studies.