

# THE USHBC BLUESPAPER

News and Marketing Program Updates from the  
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council  
November 2004

## MARKET RESEARCH FINDINGS HELP GUIDE FUTURE USHBC ACTIVITIES

The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council conducted a series of focus group sessions and a telephone survey earlier this year to gain consumer insight to help direct market promotion activities and to obtain information from the consumer that can be shared with the retailer, food manufacturer and foodservice operator to encourage stocking or use of more blueberries. Research has also provided benchmark data to help measure market development progress, determine changes in blueberry use based on the blueberry "health halo", and to measure the overall awareness and acceptance of the blueberry health message.

Focus group sessions conducted this past April in San Jose, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Dallas preceded the telephone survey. Information gained from these face-to-face sessions with blueberry users and non-users, or infrequent users, helped to fine tune questions for the series of telephone interviews conducted this past June. The telephone survey consisted of 45 questions asked of a nationally representative sample of 970 consumers from throughout the United States. Questions were directed to both blueberry users and non-users for comparative purposes and to gain insight into means to persuade non-users to consider blueberries in their food purchases.

Highlights from the telephone survey are detailed in this issue of *The Bluespaper*. A full copy of the survey report is available to growers and handlers upon request.

### USHBC MARKET RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

#### *Blueberry Purchaser Profile*

- One third of purchasers (those who purchased within the past year) had a college or graduate degree and are professionals. The majority of purchasers (79%) are Caucasian, 31% have at least one child under 17 living with them and almost half have incomes over \$50,000 (only 39.7% of non-purchasers). Women represent 65% of purchasers. Average age of purchasers was 51.4 years compared to 48.8 years for non-purchasers.
- The primary reason for not having purchased blueberries in the past 12 months was because the respondent did not like their taste (41.9%). Only 3.4% cited price as the reason.
- Households more likely to contain blueberry purchasers are located in High Income Suburbs, Upscale Urban, Upscale Towns near Urban Areas, and Affluent/Mid Scale Suburbs. Over 43% of households with blueberry purchasers fell into these categories.

#### *Likelihood of Blueberry Purchase*

- Those with higher educations were more likely to purchase. Respondents in the East were more likely to purchase than those in the West or South.
- Those in the eastern region of the U.S. are more likely to purchase fresh blueberries (80.3%) than those in other parts of the country, particularly the West (51.5%).
- Nearly half of total respondents (44.5%) had not purchased within the past year; over one third (36.9%) had purchased 1 to 6 times in the past year.
- Those in urban areas had a higher frequency of purchase than those in rural areas.

#### *Type of Blueberry Purchased*

- The majority of respondents (82%) who purchased blueberries in the past year had purchased fresh; 32% had purchased frozen; 19% had purchased blueberries as part of another product; 14% had purchased canned; and 3% had purchased dried.

- Those with higher education (graduate degree) are much more likely to purchase fresh than frozen. Those with some high school or less are more likely to purchase frozen than fresh.
- Those aware of health benefits (32.9%) are more likely to have purchased blueberries more recently (previous week) than those not aware (19.1%).
- Shoppers aware of blueberry health benefits are more likely to buy fresh blueberries than products which contain blueberries or frozen blueberries.
- Respondents ranked blueberries #2 behind strawberries in comparing all berries. When compared to strawberries, shoppers would shop for blueberries almost half of the time they shopped for strawberries.

## Price

- Most shoppers (70.4%) paid between \$2.00 and \$3.99 for a pint of fresh blueberries, the average price paid was \$2.95.
- Average prices paid per pint were higher in the West than in any other region (Midwest \$2.77 pint; East \$2.81; South \$2.99; West \$3.44).
- Over half of respondents (54.3%) felt the blueberries they bought at these prices were a "very good value". Only 7.3% thought they were not a good value. Shoppers with a high propensity to purchase blueberries do not consider them to be over priced and are important enough that the value equation is justifiable.
- Though price is an important factor, it is secondary to other attributes such as freshness and quality.

## Blueberry Attributes

- The majority of blueberry shoppers like blueberries because of their taste (87.4%) and over a third (36.4%) like blueberries specifically because of the health benefits.
- Only about one third (35.4%) of interviewees knew about any specific health benefits of blueberries.
- There is a high degree of association between awareness of health benefits and blueberry purchase. Those aware of health benefits were more likely to have purchased blueberries 7 times (on average) as compared to 3 times for those who were not aware.
- The non-purchaser group is less likely to purchase blueberries, despite knowing the health benefits.
- "High in Antioxidants" was specifically named as a health benefit of blueberries by 41.1% of respondents, 23.5% could not name a specific health benefit.
- Respondents between the ages of 46 to 65 (72.8%) were more likely to have heard news and

advertising about blueberry health benefits than those under 45 and over 65.

- Nearly one third of respondents (30.9%) thought there was a difference in types of blueberries while 28% thought there was not, and 32.3% did not know of a difference. Most thought differences were based on size, very few mentioned a difference between "lowbush" and "highbush" blueberries.
- There is a low awareness of artificial blueberries with 63.8% not aware that artificial blueberries are used in some products.
- Over half of respondents (55.2%) would be very likely to purchase products that have a "Made With Real Blueberries" seal.

## USHBC MAGAZINE ADVERTISING SCHEDULE

December 2004-

Woman's Day Magazine

Blueberry Swirl Cheesecake

Partner: Kraft Philadelphia Cream Cheese

## USHBC MEETING SCHEDULE

### 2005 USHBC Spring Meeting

Friday, February 25 and Saturday, February 26, 2005

Holiday Inn SunSpree – 1706 North Lumina Avenue

Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina Phone (910) 256-2231

### 2005 USHBC Fall Meeting

Friday, October 14 and Saturday, October 15, 2005

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel- 187 Monroe NW

Grand Rapids, Michigan Phone (616) 774-2000

### 2006 USHBC Spring Meeting

Friday, March 3 and Saturday, March 4, 2006

Seattle, Washington-Hotel to be Determined

### 2006 USHBC Fall Meeting

Friday, October 6 and Saturday, October 7, 2006

Bar Harbor, Maine- Hotel to be Determined

*The USHBC Bluespaper* is published by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council; 2390 East Bidwell Street, Suite #300; Folsom, California 95630. Phone (916) 983-0111; Fax (916) 983-9022; Web Site: [www.blueberry.org](http://www.blueberry.org), or [www.ushbc.org](http://www.ushbc.org)

The USHBC has adopted a diversity outreach plan to attempt to achieve a diverse representation on the Council. USHBC programs and meetings are open to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family status. It is USHBC policy that membership on the Council and its committees reflect the diversity of individuals served by its programs. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USHBC office at (916) 983-0111. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD).