

Food Safety and Health Study Research Results 2007

The National Watermelon Promotion Board conducted a study to determine the extent to which consumers are concerned about the food safety of fruits and vegetables they purchase (especially watermelons), by measuring the awareness of watermelon's health properties, specifically its lycopene content, as well as its usage habits after purchase before consumption. Also, he NWPB learned the consumer's reaction to the new watermelon health claims approved by the USDA.¹



Top-Line Results

Safety

About three-quarters of the sample are either extremely or very concerned about the safety of the fresh produce in the United States (75%)

- About three-fifths of the watermelon purchasers are “just concerned” about the safety of the watermelon they buy compared to other fresh produce (62%)
- The perception that the watermelon rind is a protective barrier is one of the reasons for being less concerned (48%)
- And the fact that you don't eat the rind (32%)
- As well as a feeling that the inner fruit doesn't get contaminated and not affected by chemicals/germs (25%)
- Other specific consumer attitudes toward watermelon safety revolve around that they “haven't heard about any watermelon safety problems/issues” (17%)
- “You can wash the rind/outside of the watermelon” (13%)
- “Watermelon is easy to grow without pesticides/chemicals” (11%)

At least three-fifths of the purchasers know to wash it their watermelon with water/rinse it before it is eaten (62%)

- Better than half reportedly always wash it or wash it most of the time (53%)
- Nearly all of the watermelon purchasers refrigerate the fruit after it is in their home (95%)
- As well as consumer it within a week (99%)

Nearly all of the respondents indicated that watermelon is a healthy food (95%)

- A large percentage of the consumers can play back specific health benefits associated with watermelon (45%)
- While those aware of any, spontaneously credit it for:
 - “being hydrating/full of water” (38%)
 - “containing vitamins/is a good source of vitamins” (34%)

¹ A total of 509 online interviews were completed during September 2007 among a national sample of respondents who are the primary grocery shoppers of their household.

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- “containing Vitamin C” (26%)
- “being a good source of fiber” (19%)
- “being low in calories” (13%)
- “containing antioxidants” (9%)
- Specifically “lycopene” (9%)
- When asked where they learned about these health benefits
 - 4 in 10 indicated magazines and newspapers (40%)
 - Friends/family (24%)
 - The Internet (21%)
 - Books (18%)
 - Television (13%)
- (94%) of consumers buy watermelon because “it’s refreshing”
- (89%) of consumers buy watermelon because “my family likes it”
- It is also rated high for being “low in fat” (88%)
- Notably, considered to be “a safe food to eat” elicits higher scores than:
 - “contains lots of vitamins” (59%)
 - “being considered versatile” (67%)
 - “filling” (68%)
 - “a good value” (73%)
 - “healthy and nutritious” (76%)
 - “low in calories” (79%)
- Aside from:
 - “being too expensive” (59%)
 - “not ripe” (56%)
 - “not in season” (51%)
- The primary deterrents are:
 - “it was dented/damaged” (48%)
 - “too big” (45%)
 - “looked spoiled” (44%)
- Pesticide or safety issues rated quite low:
 - “it has pesticides and herbicides” (7%)
 - “it has residue or pathogens” (5%)

