



LDWAYS
PRESERVATION TRUST

The food issues think tank – promoting healthy, traditional and sustainable food choices

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Don't Tell Consumers They Are Eating Fiber And They Just Might! *Blood Sugar Claims Could Be Next Big Thing*

September 27, 2005, CHICAGO – For years, we've all known that fiber is an important part of a healthy diet and is associated with decreased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and a number of cancers. Yet, Americans still only get about half of the recommended targets of 28 grams (women) and 35 grams (men) of dietary fiber per day, largely because they were turned off by early-stage products that didn't deliver on taste.

According to research released at a food trends conference here organized by Oldways Preservation Trust and Hi-maize® 5-in-1 Fiber™, the surprising secret to motivating consumers to increase their fiber intakes is communicating the multiple benefits of the fiber related to energy management, weight management and digestive health in favorite foods like bread, cereal and pasta.

"Today's big news is that while consumers may be hesitant about fiber, they do like the health benefits associated with it: feeling full after a meal, learning how to balance energy following a meal, and the colonic benefits that help prevent against colon cancer and other diseases," said K. Dun Gifford, President of Boston-based Oldways Preservation Trust, a non-profit food issues think tank. "Since everyone urges Americans to get more fiber into their diet, it's our view that food processors need to find names for it that will attract consumers to buy it and eat it."

The research, conducted by HealthFocus International on behalf of National Starch Food Innovation, was presented today by Linda Gilbert, president of the St. Petersburg, FL research group at the *Making Fiber Irresistible: Resistant Starch is a Natural* Conference at the Chicago Marriott O'Hare Hotel. The conference gathered together over 100 leading food manufacturers and health professionals to address how a naturally occurring class of fiber – resistant starch – is addressing America's growing fiber gap and solving related technical challenges.

One of three classes of fiber, natural resistant starch escapes digestion in the small intestine and is digested in the lower intestine; where it is strongly associated with a number of health and wellness benefits. Resistant starch is found naturally in cooked and cooled potatoes, rice and pasta, under-ripe bananas, beans, and also in staples like bread, cereal and pasta in a natural ingredient called Hi-maize 5-in-1 Fiber.

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Surprisingly, research indicates that one area of especially high interest for all age groups is impact on blood sugar. As consumers learn more about how blood sugar levels affect mood, weight, energy level, mental alertness and hunger, this becomes a key opportunity for additional education and product development.

“At National Starch Food Innovation, we predict blood sugar claims will be a major consumer trend over the next several years,” said Rhonda Witwer, Business Development Manager, Nutrition, at National Starch Food Innovation. “The significant scientific data published on Hi-maize 5-in-1 Fiber will allow food companies to make a ‘helps maintain healthy blood sugar levels’ structure/function claim on their products.”

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Research Results:

Fiber’s Disease-Related Benefits Are Well Known

- More than three-quarters (79%) of respondents agreed that it is important to eat fiber to reduce their risk of obesity, cancer or heart disease.

Consumers Are Trying to Address Their Fiber Gap

- 53% of shoppers report that they are trying to eat more high fiber foods to reduce their risk of disease. This behavior is more likely to occur among older and better educated shoppers and those without children.
- More than one-third (38%) of shoppers are on a high fiber diet. This equals the number of shoppers who report that they are on a low fat diet.
- However, in response to the question, “How often do you choose foods/beverages because they are high in fiber?”
 - Only 28% said always or usually
 - 42% said sometimes
 - 29% said rarely or never

Benefits Interest American Shoppers More Than Fiber Itself

The benefits of specific fibers greatly appeal to consumers as shown by the number of American shoppers who want more information on the following:

- Foods that boost the immune system (75%)
- Foods that enhance health (72%)
- Foods that reduce risk of disease (70%)
- Fibers that reduce hunger and help control your appetite (69%)
- Foods that help with digestion (64%)
- Foods with impact on blood sugar levels (60%)
- Carbohydrates that give my children more manageable energy (64% among households with children)

“Helps Maintain Healthy Blood Sugar Levels” May Be Next Big Claim

- Surprisingly, more than two-thirds (66%) of shoppers said the label claim “Helps to maintain healthy blood sugar levels” was important to them even though they’ve never seen this information on food labels. Awareness of blood sugar level management was so low in 2002 that a previous study did not include the claim.
- More than half of shoppers with less than a college education (51%) ranked “helps to maintain healthy blood sugar levels” as an extremely or very important label claim, even though they’ve never seen this information on food labels.

- “Blood sugar” is more consumer-friendly than “glycemic”: only 24% of shoppers reported that “Glycemic Index” is a strong or moderate influence on their choice of foods.

Healthy Blood Sugar Levels Rival Healthy Cholesterol Levels

- Healthy blood sugar levels rank near maintaining healthy cholesterol levels (39% vs. 43% for cholesterol) as an extremely or very important claim to consumers. High fiber came in just below at 38% and whole grain above at 45%.

High Awareness of Blood Sugar/Energy

- More than half (53%) of consumers said they had heard or read about blood sugar/energy “a lot” or “some.”

Appealing To A Younger Fiber Audience

More than any other age group, shoppers ages 30-39 years are particularly interested in blood sugar levels.

- 67% want to learn more about foods with low impact on blood sugar levels, compared with 60% of total shoppers.
- More than half in this age group want to learn more about foods that help manage their blood sugar levels (61%).
- 57% strongly believe/believe that eating foods that have a low impact on blood sugar levels help to balance your energy in the hours following a meal, again higher than any other age group.

Appealing Beyond Traditional Fiber Fans

White bread shoppers are more interested in maintaining healthy blood sugar levels than in whole grain or fiber.

- More than one-third (37%) of frequent white bread shoppers are more interested in a “helps to maintain healthy blood sugar levels” label claim than one that says “whole grain” (31%) or “high fiber” (30%).

*Proprietary research conducted for National Starch Food Innovation by HealthFocus International (St. Petersburg, FL) in August, September, and October 2004 with 3,583 Households. The sampling error for the study is +/- 1.6%.

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