

He's been ramming it home for years, but Captain Birds Eye's 'If it's fresh it's frozen' mantra just hasn't hit home with consumers, who still see frozen as the poor cousin of chilled, says Elaine Watson



Frozen frustration

They say TV advertising doesn't reach the audiences it used to, but if you've flaked out in front of the box more than a couple of times a week in the last few years, there's a pretty good chance you've seen an ad for Birds Eye peas.

The premise of the ads is simple. Frozen means fresh. Because Birds Eye freezes its peas minutes after they are plucked from the field, all the nutrients and flavour stay locked in until you are ready to eat them.

The only problem is that consumers are still struggling with the message. Indeed, if the responses to the latest *Food Manufacture* consumer poll conducted by Harris Interactive are anything to go by, Captain Birds Eye might as well have been banging his head against a brick wall for the last 18 months instead of wasting his time trying to convince the public that it's worth paying a visit to the freezer cabinet.

Not only do a third of the 1,857 adults surveyed believe frozen is not as fresh as chilled, but almost a quarter (23%) believe that frozen is of inferior quality to chilled. Worse still, a fifth believe that there isn't as much innovation in frozen as in other categories.

Before Captain Birds Eye throws in the

towel, however, he should take comfort from the fact that women at least appear to be getting the message even if men don't, with just 24% of female main grocery shoppers believing frozen food is not as fresh as chilled compared to a whopping 40% of male main grocery shoppers. Likewise, only 18% of women believe frozen foods are typically of inferior quality to chilled compared to 28% of men.

This may reflect the fact that men may associate frozen foods with convenience foods like pizzas and snacks rather than frozen veg, where the fresh message is strongest, says Harris Interactive senior researcher Caroline North. "Overall, I think the survey has a fairly positive message, although there is clearly more work to be done to tackle some consumer misconceptions."

Ironically, the one issue over which the industry deserves some flak – availability – barely registers with consumers, with just 8% believing frozen aisles have too many out-of-stocks, and 25% claiming availability in frozen is better than in other categories. **FM**

This nationwide survey of 1,857 adults was conducted on-line by Harris Interactive using the Harris Poll Global Omnibus on January 19-24, 2006. For more details contact Caroline North on 0208 263 5246 or email cnorth@harrisinteractive.com

Which statement best reflects your view of the freshness of frozen foods in supermarkets?

Frozen food is not as fresh as chilled food	32%
Frozen food is as fresh as chilled food	30%
Frozen food is fresher than chilled food	20%
Not sure	18%

Which statement best reflects your view of the quality of frozen foods in supermarkets?

Frozen foods are typically of inferior quality compared to chilled foods	23%
Frozen foods are of similar quality to chilled foods	51%
Frozen foods are typically of superior quality compared to chilled foods	10%
Not sure	16%

Which statement best reflects your view of the value for money of frozen foods in supermarkets?

Frozen food offers better value for money than chilled food	49%
Frozen food offers equal value for money to chilled food	29%
Frozen food does not offer as much value for money as chilled food	7%
Not sure	15%

Which statement best reflects your view of the availability of frozen foods in supermarkets?

Availability of frozen food is worse than it is in other categories	8%
Availability of frozen food is about the same as it is in other categories	56%
Availability of frozen food is better than it is in other categories	25%
Not sure	11%

Which statement best reflects your view of the level of innovation in frozen foods in supermarkets?

There is less innovation in frozen food compared to other categories	20%
There is about the same level of innovation in frozen food as in other categories	44%
There is more innovation in frozen food than in other categories	13%
Not sure	23%