

Should You Market Chevron, Cabrito or Goat Meat?

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For those of us that have eaten goat meat all of our lives, it probably does not matter what it is called. When I was a young child, we had barbecued "goat" at our annual 4th of July family reunion. Later, as a resident of South Texas and frequent visitor to Mexico, I ate Cabrito. Now, at goat producers' meetings and conferences, we dine on chevon roast and other delicacies. Are we just getting "uppity?" Are we in danger of confusing consumers and spoiling the market for good old goat meat? This is the question addressed in this paper. The objective is to share evidence gathered in several marketing studies on the importance of product names so that the goat industry's marketing efforts can be enhanced.

The Importance of Names

When is the last time you saw an old western or war movie starring Marion Michael Morrison? Well, Marion was better known as The Duke, John Wayne. Do you remember the old "I Love Lucy" show starring Dianne Belmont and Desi Arnaz? How about "Little House on the Prairie," starring Michael Orowitz? How about the old-time western hero Leonard Slye, his sweetheart Frances Octavia Smith and his horse Trigger? Perhaps you know them as Roy Rogers, Dale Evans and Trigger. Nathan Birnbaum is nearly 100 years old and he is still chasing young women and smoking cigars. Have you seen him on TV lately? He goes by the name George Burns.

Marketers in the entertainment industry were among the first to realize that names are important in creating images that sell. Automakers now spend vast sums of money on research to evaluate car names, hoping to avoid another flop like the Edsel. Campbell Soup Company market tested a new spaghetti sauce called "Campbell's Very Own Special Sauce." It failed because consumers thought the sauce was soupy or watery. Campbells reintroduced the same product as "Prego" and it became very successful. A few years ago, the Florida Agricultural Market Research Center (FAMRC) at the University of Florida studied consumers' perceptions of the grape names "scuppernon" and "muscadines." Among consumers unfamiliar with muscadine grapes, both names conveyed very poor, negative images. If names create such negative images in consumers' minds, it makes it very difficult to get them to try unfamiliar products.

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Several years ago, the FAMRC conducted several studies which evaluated the general

public's perceptions of goats and goat meat. One study used consumer focus groups to analyze prevailing attitudes toward goat meat. A second large-scale consumer study compared organoleptic qualities of barbecued goat and beef and also analyzed respondents' images of goats and goat meat. A third study explored images of goat meat held by restaurant managers. All of these studies have important implications for producers and marketers of goat meat.

Consumer Focus Groups

Two focus group interviews were conducted, one in Jacksonville and one in Tampa. Attitudes of participants towards goat and goat meat varied widely within both groups. Some expressed shock that people ate goat meat, comparing goats to horses and pets like dogs and cats. Several participants associated goats with nursery rhymes, cartoon characters, and petting zoos.

In both focus groups, participants suggested changing the name goat to something that would connote a meat product rather than the animal itself. People in each group cited "veal" as an example of a product that has wide appeal but one they thought would suffer reduced demand if it were labeled "baby calf." Another example cited was "pig meat" and pork. Today, even "pork" has taken on negative connotations, and the pork industry is attempting to reposition it as the "other white meat," hoping to ride on the coattails of the poultry industry's phenomenal success. Other focus group participants said they would not eat goat meat because goats ate junk and trash. Negative comments were also made by older ex-servicemen that claimed to have been served horrible tasting goat meat (probably mutton) by the army during World War II. Still other negative statements were made about goats and goat meat "stinking."

On the positive side, many participants expressed positive attitudes toward goat meat. Goats' milk was generally reviewed as being nutritious and healthful, and this association carried over to the meat. Goat meat was also thought to be lean, high in protein and low in cholesterol. Interestingly, when asked what type of restaurant would be likely to serve goat meat, trendy, upscale places with relatively affluent young patrons frequently surfaced.

In summary, the focus groups identified extremely mixed consumer reactions to goat meat. These results were then used in designing a questionnaire that was administered during a large-scale consumer survey.

Large Scale Consumer Survey

Six-hundred consumers, split equally between Jacksonville and Tampa, Florida, were asked to evaluate unidentified samples of goat meat and beef. They were asked to rate a number of product characteristics. For some product attributes, goat meat was preferred over the beef, and for others, beef was preferred. However, examination of "overall appeal" ratings showed that 42 percent of the respondents preferred the goat sample, 38 percent preferred the beef, and 20 percent were indifferent between the two. While the overall appeal ratings were not statistically different for the two products, the test demonstrated that goat meat, properly prepared, compares favorably with beef.

Immediately after the blind taste test, consumers were asked several questions designed to explore images they associated with goat meat. They were asked to describe the social status of "a person who eats goat." Only 12 percent said goat eaters would be likely to be from high or upper middle classes. However, over half said they would be from low or lower-middle classes. This perception was even more pronounced among those that had never eaten goat meat before: nearly 60 percent felt that consumers of goat meat were likely to be from low or lower middle classes (Table 1).

Table 1.--Consumers' Associations of "Goat" with Social Class

Class	Total Sample	Ate Goat Before	
		Yes	No
		(-----percent-----)	
High	2.0	3.4	1.6
Upper Middle	10.4	8.9	11.2
Middle	36.3	51.4	30.7
Lower Middle	27.8	21.2	29.5
Low	<u>23.5</u>	<u>15.1</u>	<u>27.0</u>
	Total	100.0	100.0

Next, the 600 respondents were asked to associate consumers of "chevon and cabrito" with social class. Nearly one-fourth thought "cabrito" would be eaten by the high and upper-middle classes, but nearly half thought "chevon" would be eaten by these groups (Table 2). These results show strong negative associations for goat meat, a somewhat positive reaction to cabrito, and a very positive response to chevon.

Table 2.--Consumers' Association of Selected Goat Product Names With Social Class

Class	Chevon	Cabrito	Goat
	(-----percent-----)		
High	13.7	7.0	2.0
Upper Middle	33.6	17.0	10.4
Middle	40.7	55.3	36.3
Lower Middle	7.8	15.6	27.8
Low	4.2	5.1	23.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

All 600 respondents were also asked for associations which would describe restaurants selling goat meat. For the most part, associations were positive, with the majority of all respondents describing restaurants selling goat meat as clean, well maintained, in a nice part of town and having tasteful decor. However significantly fewer of the respondents that had never eaten goat meat had positive descriptions of restaurants selling goat meat. For example, 87 percent of those having eaten goat described such restaurants as "clean," compared with only 75 percent of those that had not eaten goat (Table 3).

Table 3.--Consumers perceptions of restaurants selling goat meat

Description	Total Sample	Ate Goat Before	
		Yes	No
(-----percent-----)			
Clean	78.1	87.3	74.9
Well-maintained	72.3	82.7	68.7
Nice Part of Town	69.5	79.3	65.8
Tasteful Decor	64.8	73.3	61.2

Restaurant Manager Survey

In a statewide survey of restaurants designed to explore the market potential for goat meat, managers were asked which of three names (goat meat, chevon and cabrito) would have the greatest appeal to their customers. Less than one-fifth selected "goat meat." The remaining managers were

nearly equally divided between chevon and cabrito (Table 4). Both chevon and cabrito were preferred by a 2:1 majority of restaurant managers.

Table 4.--Restaurant managers' preferred names for goat meat.

Name	Number	Percent
Goat meat	19	18.3
Chevon	42	40.3
Cabrito	43	41.4
Total	104	100.0

CONCLUSIONS

We as agriculturists can learn much about marketing from the entertainment industry and packaged goods marketers. Names conjure up images, both good and bad. Good images help sell products, and bad images make it difficult to promote and sell products. In our society, goat is not widely consumed; in our sample of 600 mall patrons, only 25 percent had ever eaten goat. Unfortunately, goats are frequently perceived as being smelly and obstinate, with voracious appetites for trash. There are many of these negative images associated with the name "goat," and these negative perceptions can undoubtedly reduce consumers' willingness to try and buy the product.

In conclusion, should you market chevon, cabrito, or goat meat? If you are satisfied to limit your market to people familiar with goat, "goat meat" is fine. However, if you want to build a larger market by appealing to the masses that have never tried this delicacy, your chances of success will be increased by calling it chevon, cabrito, or some other exotic sounding name. Remember, outside of the brotherhood of current goat meat consumers, goat is a four-letter word!