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Research Series No. 33

MARKETING

**A Study of the Consumption of Various Crayfish Dishes Among
Non-Natives of South Louisiana**

by

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Office of
Institutional Research

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A STUDY OF THE CONSUMPTION OF VARIOUS GRAYFISH DISHES
AMONG NON-NATIVES OF SOUTH LOUISIANA

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A STUDY OF THE CONSUMPTION OF VARIOUS
CRAYFISH DISHES AMONG NON-NATIVES
OF SOUTH LOUISIANA

The purpose of this study is to determine the specific crayfish dish(es) consumed in the largest quantities by non-natives of south Louisiana. Achievement of this purpose will hopefully contribute to the successful test marketing and eventual introduction of crayfish dishes outside south Louisiana by indicating the dish(es) most likely to have the greatest appeal to persons outside south Louisiana. Also, the structure of the channel of distribution for crayfish will be influenced by the crayfish dish(es) introduced into new markets since boiled crayfish are prepared from live crayfish and other dishes may be prepared from peeled crayfish tails which may use more economical shipping and storage facilities.

Methodology

In order to achieve the purpose of this study a telephone panel of fifty-six women was constructed so as to contain only women who had moved to Lafayette, Louisiana from outside south Louisiana between August and December of 1973. Initial screening of the panel insured that panel members had never lived in south Louisiana before moving to Lafayette and that the households represented in the panel, insofar as possible, had the characteristics of early adopters and heavy

consumers discovered in earlier research by this author.¹ The previous study indicated that early adopters of crayfish tended to be families with incomes over \$12,500/yr., whose household head is 30 years old or over, and whose household head is employed in a "white collar" position. Also, families with children tended to be heavy consumers of crayfish.

In the present study only 29% of the households represented by the panel members had all of the above characteristics of early adopters and heavy consumers of crayfish. However, 68% of the households had incomes over \$12,500/yr., 69% had a head of household who was 30 or over, 92% of the household heads were in "white collar" positions, and 69% of the families had dependent children living in the home.

Additional data were collected by telephoning panel members at two to three week intervals from March 1 to May 15. On each call the panel member was asked whether or not she or her husband had eaten crayfish since the previous call. If she answered in the affirmative she was asked to answer each of the following questions:

1. What was the approximate date?
2. Where were they eaten? (e.g., at home, a friends home, a specific restaurant).
3. With whom did you eat them? (e.g., just family, husband, friends, business associates).
4. What was the occasion? (e.g., no occasion, birthday, anniversary, out of town company).
5. What dish did your husband have?
6. What dish did you have?

¹"An Estimate of Market Potential for South Louisiana Crayfish," Thomas F. Griffin, III, Ph.D., University of Southwestern Louisiana Research Series, No. 31, July, 1974, pp. 13-15.

To encourage participation in the panel, panel members were advised that at the conclusion of the study they would receive free recipes and that one panel member would be selected at random to receive a dinner for two at a local restaurant.

Results

For the purpose of this study a "crayfish meal" is defined as one individual eating crayfish. Thus, if a panel member reports she and her husband ate crayfish, then two crayfish meals (one for the panel member and one for her husband) are included in the following analyses even if they were together at home. On this basis a total of 207 crayfish meals were reported by the panel. The panel members reported an average of approximately 2 meals (one for herself and one for her husband) every five weeks.

A slight majority of the meals reported were eaten in commercial establishments (restaurants and cafeterias) as opposed to homes. As illustrated in figure 1 commercial establishments accounted for 116 meals, 56% of the total, while home consumption accounted for the remaining 91 meals, 44% of the total.

Crayfish dinners, a dinner with a combination of crayfish dishes prepared primarily from peeled crayfish tails, accounted for 42 (36%) of the 116 meals consumed in commercial establishments. Etouffé was second with 32 meals (28%), boiled crayfish was third with 18 meals (16%), and fried crayfish tails was fourth with 15 meals (13%). The remaining 7% of consumption was accounted for by crayfish bisque, 5 meals; crayfish jambalaya, 2 meals; and crayfish gumbo, 2 meals.

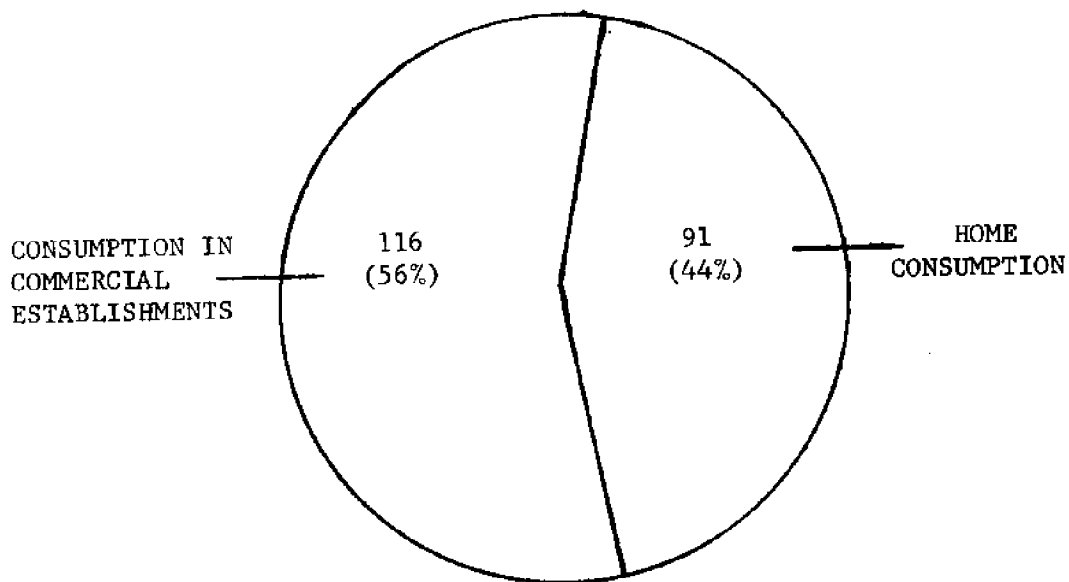


Fig. 1.--Representation of 207 reported meals showing numbers of meals (and per cent) consumed in commercial establishments and homes.

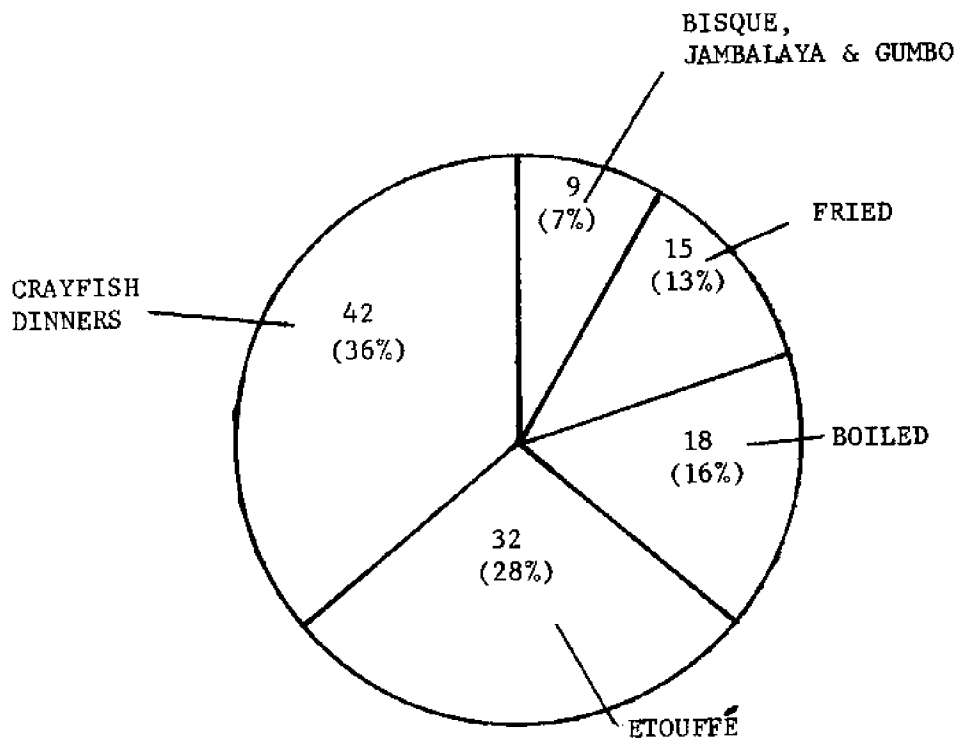


Fig. 2.--Representation of 116 meals consumed in commercial establishments showing number of meals (and per cent) of each crayfish dish.

In addition, the commercial establishments were arbitrarily divided into three descriptively labeled categories: "cafeterias", "family seafood restaurants", and "better restaurants". This revealed that "better restaurants" accounted for 55 of the 116 meals (or 47%) served in commercial establishments. As illustrated in figure 3, "family seafood restaurants" accounted for 47 meals (41%) and "cafeterias" accounted for 14 meals (12%).

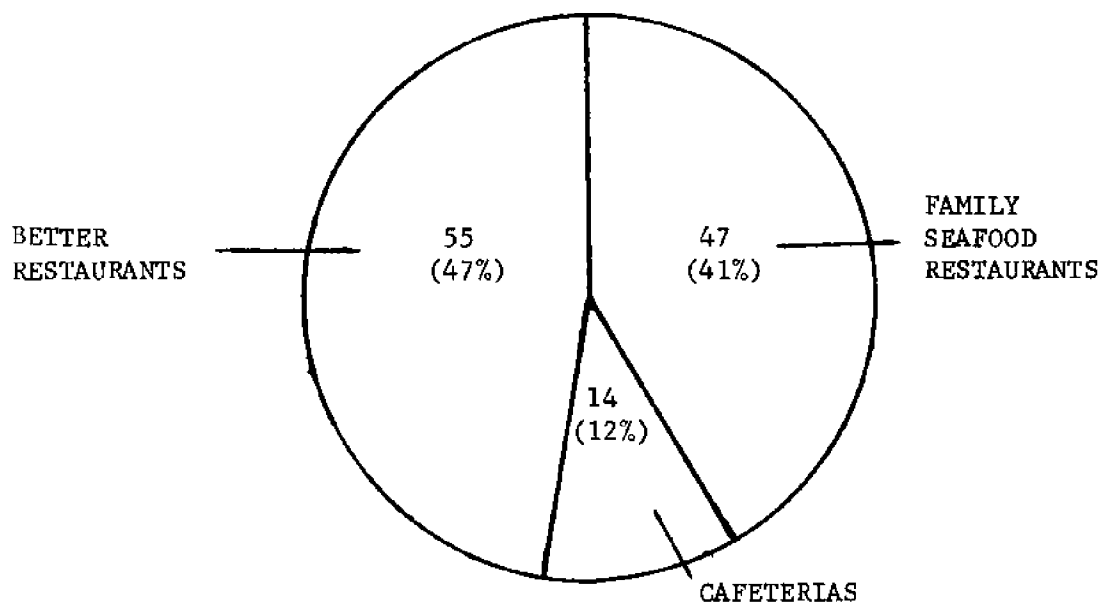


Fig. 3.--Representation of 116 meals consumed in commercial establishments showing number of meals (and per cent) for each type of establishment.

Further analyses revealed that the various types of commercial establishments served different amounts of the various dishes under investigation. The most striking example of this was the finding that all 14 meals consumed in "cafeterias" were etouffé. This amounted to 44% of all etouffe consumed in commercial establishments. It is hypothesized that "cafeterias" specialize in etouffé because it is the only popular crayfish dish that could be kept ready for serving in the customary cafeteria style. Also, the large volume of etouffe sold is accounted for in part by the low cafeteria prices for the dish. "Family seafood restaurants" and "better restaurants" each served 9 meals of etouffé to the panel or 28% each. This is illustrated in figure 4 below.

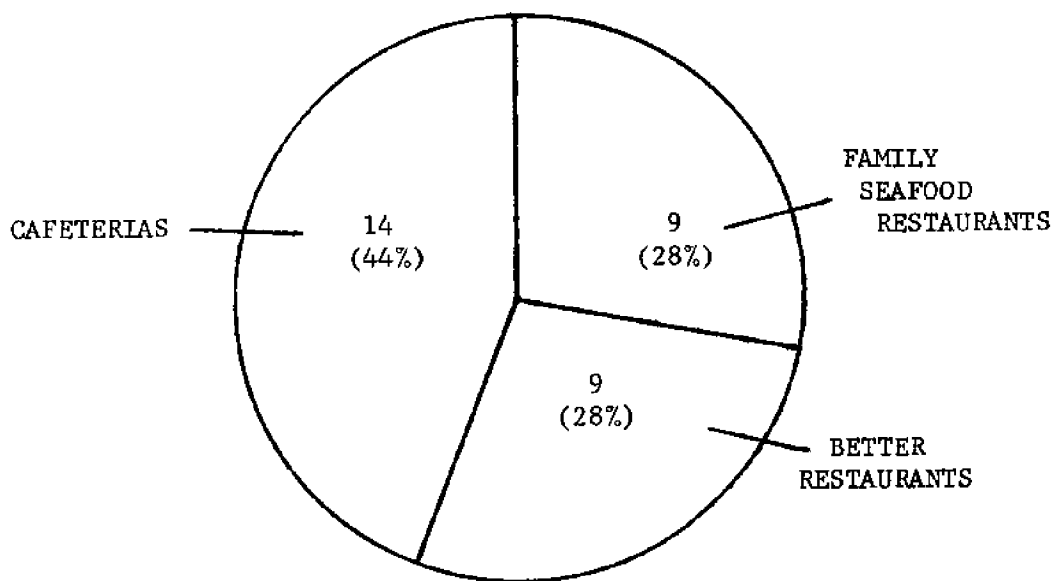


Fig. 4.--Representation of 32 meals of etouffé served in commercial establishments showing number of meals (and per cent) for each type of establishment.

In addition, 84 meals of dishes other than etouffé were consumed by the panel in "family seafood restaurants" and "better restaurants." Although better restaurants served only 55% of these meals, they served 100% of the jambalaya and gumbo, 80% of the bisque and 62% of the crayfish dinners. "Family seafood restaurants" accounted for only 45% of the meals, but had 67% of the boiled crayfish and 60% of the fried crayfish tails. These differences between "family seafood restaurants" and "better restaurants" are illustrated in figure 5 below.

<u>Name of Dish</u>	<u>Type of Establishment</u>	<u>Number of Meals</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Bar Diagram</u>
Dinners	Better	26	62	
	Family	<u>16</u>	<u>38</u>	
	totals	42	100	
Boiled	Better	6	33	
	Family	<u>12</u>	<u>67</u>	
	totals	18	100	
Fried	Better	6	40	
	Family	<u>9</u>	<u>60</u>	
	totals	15	100	
Bisque	Better	4	80	
	Family	<u>1</u>	<u>20</u>	
	totals	5	100	
Jambalaya and Gumbo	Better	4	100	
	Family	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	
	totals	4	100	

Fig. 5.--Representation of 84 meals of dishes other than etouffé served in commercial establishments showing number of meals (and per cent) of each dish served in "Better" and "Family" seafood restaurants.

Boiled crayfish and crayfish etouffé accounted for virtually all of the 91 meals consumed in "homes". "Homes" includes both the homes of panel members and homes in which they were guests. Of the 91 meals consumed in homes, 60 meals (66%) were boiled crayfish, 27 meals (30%) were crayfish etouffé, 2 meals (2%) were crayfish gumbo and 2 meals (2%) were fried crayfish tails.

However, a vastly different picture emerges if we consider only the 35 meals (39%) panel members prepared in their own homes. Of the 35 meals prepared by the panel members 20 (57%) were etouffé, 13 (37%) were boiled crayfish and 2 (6%) were fried crayfish tails. Thus, when only the meals prepared by the panel members are considered, almost two thirds (63%) of the meals are prepared from peeled crayfish tails. This is illustrated in figure 6 below.

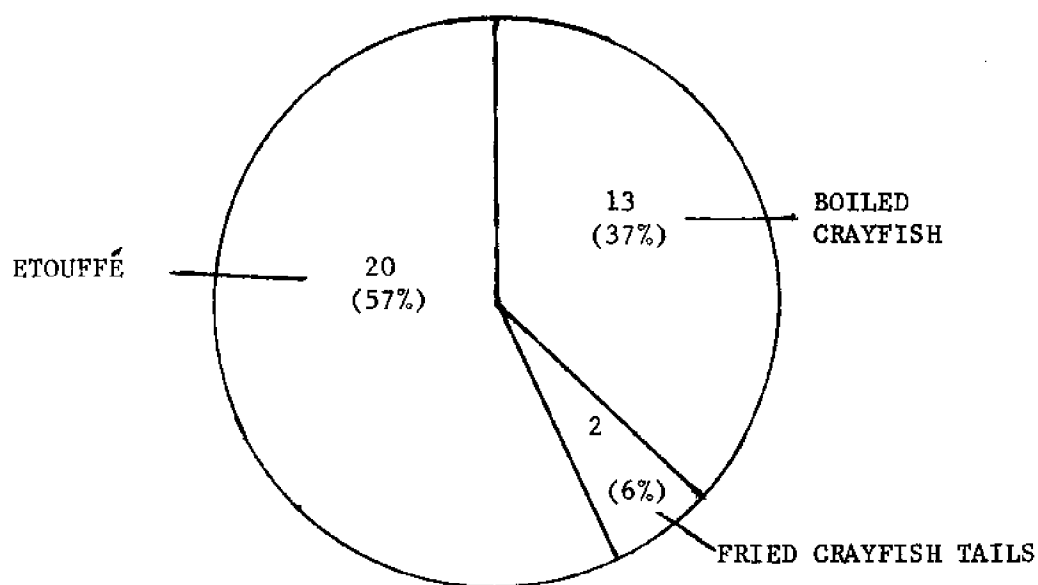


Fig. 6.--Representation of 35 meals consumed in the homes of panel members showing number of meals (and per cent) for each crayfish dish.

Crayfish are typically boiled outside in large pots in south Louisiana. Panel members, like other new residents to south Louisiana, may not have the necessary pots and burners for boiling crayfish. This may be one reason the panel members served proportionately more etouffé and less boiled crayfish in their own homes than was served to them in homes in which they were guests.

Discussion

The focus of this study has been the development of information that will contribute to the successful test marketing and introduction of crayfish products in new markets outside south Louisiana. Crayfish can be marketed in the form of peeled crayfish tails (or various dishes prepared from peeled tails) and live (or boiled) whole crayfish. Also crayfish can be marketed through various types of retail middlemen including seafood markets, supermarkets, restaurants, and cafeterias. However, the successful introduction of crayfish in new markets depends heavily on concentrating the initial marketing efforts on only those crayfish products and retail outlets that represent the best opportunities for initial success rather than attempting to pursue every possible method of marketing crayfish.

The opportunities for marketing crayfish that offer the highest likelihood of success are those opportunities which offer consumers the products they prefer most and offer retailers the greatest incentive to stock and sell the product. Obviously no marketing plan can be successful if consumers do not like the product. But even if consumers like the product, they may be unable to purchase it if

retailers do not choose to add the product to their existing product lines. Many retailers will be unwilling to add crayfish products unless the products will be a source of additional profits. In order to generate additional profits crayfish products must add to the retailers sales without adding significantly to his costs. Retail middlemen will also be hesitant to make large initial investments in equipment necessary for storing and preparing a product that has not proven itself in their market.

The present study revealed that 56% of the crayfish consumption by the sample was in restaurants and cafeterias. Thus, other things being equal, crayfish could potentially add more to the sales of restaurants and cafeterias than to the sales of other types of retail outlets. Also, distribution of crayfish through restaurants and cafeterias is consistent with the belief that many non-residents of south Louisiana would be unwilling to prepare a dish they had never eaten or seen prepared.

Retail costs must be considered before any recommendation can be made about the best way of marketing crayfish in a new market. Figure 2 revealed that only 16% of the meals eaten in restaurants and cafeterias were prepared from live crayfish. As the remainder of the dishes were prepared from peeled crayfish tails, it is apparent that peeled tails have a higher potential for generating retail sales in restaurants and cafeterias than live crayfish. Also, peeled crayfish tails would probably add less to retail cost than live crayfish since they are less perishable and require substantially less storage space

for the same number of meals.

Restaurants could serve crayfish etouffé, fried crayfish tails and crayfish gumbo both individually and combined to form a crayfish dinner. These dishes prepared from peeled tails would account for 75% of all crayfish consumption in restaurants. Restaurant consumption of these dishes was 37% of all demand for crayfish.

The findings of the study suggest that in general it would be best to market crayfish outside south Louisiana in the form of peeled crayfish tails sold primarily to restaurants. However, individual markets should be studied in order to determine if this general recommendation is valid in the specific new market under consideration. This study was conducted with the hope of generating hypotheses about crayfish consumption that could be subjected to verification by test market. It was never intended to be the last word on the consumption of crayfish in other areas of the United States.