

Alt-Meat®

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Plant-based **PARENTHOOD**

Alt-meat's most enthusiastic customers are growing up and having families of their own.

What does that mean for their protein choices?



IMPOSSIBLE CHICKEN NUGGETS MADE FROM PLANTS IMPRESSED OUR PANEL — MEAT-EATERS AND NON-MEAT-EATERS ALIKE. NOW, ABOUT THAT INGREDIENT LIST ...

Bull's eye

Nearly every day, we hear about new plant-based, alt-meat products on grocery shelves. We are repeatedly surprised at the shelf space devoted to this category. Impossible Chicken Nuggets Made from Plants' bright teal package stood out on one of our shopping trips with its image of crispy, "meaty" nuggets on the front, so we chose it for the first item we taste tested for *Alt-Meat*.

DEMOGRAPHICS

We had a variety of participants, including some trying to cut back on meat, a few who have eaten alt-meat products for years, the "curious," self-described flexitarians, a vegetarian and a vegan. Ages ranged from 2 years old and up.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The packaging made a positive first

impression with most tasters: "I liked that these nuggets were compared with traditional nuggets right on the front (in terms of protein, fat, etc.)," said one. Another noted the utility of the resealable bag, "as one would be expected to serve these in portions."

Another taster shared a common refrain: "I usually stay away from products with soy protein isolate (which this has). I prefer foods not made in a processed manner. Yet, I feel like these nuggets are way healthier than some other alt-meat products."

A grateful parent remarked, "If I was trying to hide the fact they were meatless from my kids, this bag does it."

Labelling has been at the center of legal challenges at the state level, so it was notable that one of our consumers said, "The packaging is fun and bright. Very clear that the nuggets are plant-based."

Another taster was less impressed with the long ingredient list: "This has anything but a 'clean' label," they said. "A very, very long ingredient statement and very disappointing."

APPEARANCE

Several testers felt the plant-based nuggets looked and smelled like conventional chicken nuggets, which they felt was a positive: "I found the appearance was very similar to what a chicken nugget would look like," said one, with another stating, "They have that 'frozen chicken nugget' smell, which is quite impressive for a plant-based product."

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

Taste and texture are where many plant-based alt-meats run into trouble. Not Impossible's nuggets: "They tasted just like I remember chicken nuggets tasting

Taste Test

PRODUCT:
Impossible Chicken Nuggets
Made from Plants



PRICE:
\$7.99/13.5 oz.

NUTRITION

PER SERVING (5 PIECES):

Calories 240, Total Fat 12g, Saturated Fat 1.5g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 480mg, Total Carbohydrate 19g, Protein 13g.

before I went vegetarian about eight years ago,” was one observation. Our vegan tester had a similar experience, saying, “This tastes just how I remember chicken nuggets used to taste.”

Another point of view: “The texture is somewhere between a fish stick and a regular nugget. It’s not overly breaded.

I’m searching for an aftertaste like most plant-based foods have, and I’m just not finding it, [which is] good.”

Several of our testers had fun making dishes with the nuggets. Said one, “I paired them with a sweet chili sauce for dipping. They are absolutely amazing!”

Said another, “I make a chicken

parm casserole, so I modified the recipe to use these nuggets. It was good. My husband tried a bite and said he would eat it.”

Even without recipes, testers reported a good experience. “I followed instructions for the microwave and thought they were really good!” a taster

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“They tasted **just like I remember chicken nuggets tasting** before I went vegetarian about eight years ago.”

said. “I hate when nuggets are rubbery; these were not.”

Another explained, “The outer texture is so crunchy, it’s almost like these nuggets are panko-breaded. Far superior in texture and flavor to some brands of (mechanically-separated) frozen nuggets.” One enterprising taster set

up their own side-by-side plant-based taste test: “I tried the new faux chicken nuggets from a well-known chicken fast food chain and these were much better.”

THE UPSHOT

Impossible Foods seems to have secured several repeat customers. Our

vegetarian taster shared, “It was a perfect quick meal. It’s really nice as a vegetarian to have options for some of the foods I sometimes miss.” Another taster stated, “Sometimes, I just like something simple to quickly make myself. This is definitely something I would reach for.”



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Taste Test

These nuggets help families bridge the gap between different diets. “I would buy them for my (vegetarian) daughter,” said a parent. “We have tried many ‘fake’ nuggets, and these are our favorite.” Said another, “I’m a (huge) meat eater, and I can’t tell it’s not made of chicken. I’m confident no one (picky children included) will complain should I put them on the table.”

Although plant-based alt-meat makers don’t claim their products are healthier than conventional meat, one taster on a weight loss journey said: “I recently started Weight Watchers, and I’m able to eat more of these for less points than a chicken nugget. Seeing how this tastes exactly like chicken, and overall is very good, it makes it easy to decide to buy when I need more.”

And while alt-meats are higher-priced than their conventional counterparts, that wasn’t a problem for

this group. “I know [the price is] more than a bag of nuggets, but it’s not a difference that would stop me from buying,” said one.

CONCLUSION

Enticing people to try something new is often simply a matter of putting a twist on the familiar. That’s what Impossible has done, and it’s tasty. The only snag is how out of sync the ingredient list is with the health halo of plant-based. We had a few plant-based shoppers opt not to participate in this Taste Test because of the “off-putting” — to them — ingredients. We hope plant-protein makers will continue to simplify their processing to better align with why many consumers buy these products in the first place. Meanwhile, Impossible Foods has done a terrific job with its nuggets and we expect them to see healthy sales growth.

by Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, U&I Collaboration LLC

Food product development and consumer research veterans, Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, join Alt-Meat magazine as regular contributors to our regular “Taste Test” column. Here’s how the program works: The alternative meat item is distributed to consumers, including the core demographic, for preparation in their own houses. No instructions are provided to the consumer, other than to write their overall impressions of the product, as well as to evaluate the flavor, texture, packaging and ease of use. Cesario and Vahalik look for common threads by using Getting It!®, a system developed to listen to consumers about products. The sample of people is not intended to be a “taste test” in a controlled setting, nor is it intended to simulate a focus group. Others are doing both. Rather, the intent is to interpret the response of the people who might purchase a product like this and use it, simply based on their encounters with the product in their individual, unique home environment. That is how U&I has been developing cutting-edge product and people understanding since 1999.