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Wild game

A new sausage from **FORCE OF NATURE** brings exotic flavors to the mainstream.

Photo by Getty

PRODUCT

Force of Nature Wild Boar and Beef Sausage Lonestar Blend

PRICE

\$8.99 per 10-oz. package

PLUS

A unique, flavorful, eco-friendly protein mixture

PROBLEM

High price and dense texture

People today are open to new and exciting flavors more than ever before. When we spotted Force of Nature Wild Boar and Beef Sausage, the idea of having an exotic meat in a traditional sausage piqued our interest. Created by “conscious omnivores,” Force of Nature is on a mission “to improve the quality of our environment and our health while answering the call for food raised in a way that aligns with our community’s values.” Their line of regenerative

meats includes traditional beef, pork and chicken products along with bison, elk, venison and wild boar. Tasting Force of Nature’s Wild Boar and Beef Sausage Lonestar Blend enticed our participants to try something familiar, yet new and exciting.

DEMOGRAPHICS

People eating the sausage included adults and a few adventurous high schoolers. Some had previously eaten wild boar and were

familiar with the experience.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

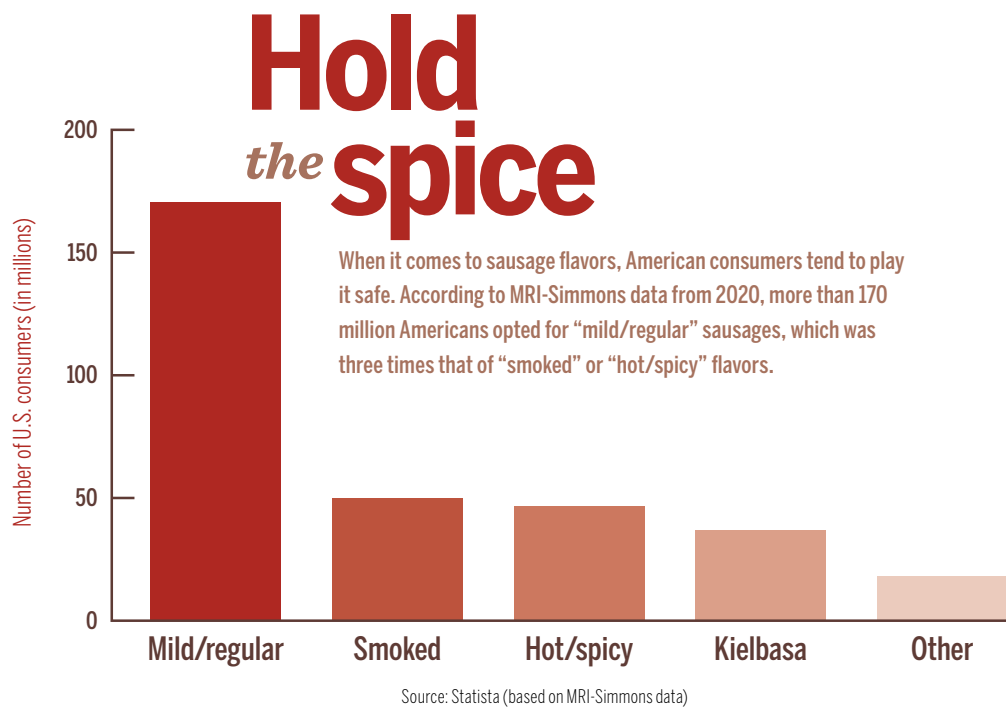
Our tasters differed quite a bit in their first impressions of the Force of Nature Wild Boar and Beef Sausage.

While one taster was “intrigued” with the wild boar, and another thought the boar/beef mix would bring in more consumers, other tasters were put off with the wild nature of the sausage.

“The label highlights ‘100% Wild

Caught/Feral Swine Meat Used,’ which doesn’t sound enticing or appetizing to me,” one taster said. Another stated, “I didn’t love the use of the word ‘feral’ on the package. I equate this to ‘dirty’ so that turned me off.” And a third taster asked a relevant question: “Why is it mixed with beef? Why not just wild boar? Is wild boar too much to tolerate?”

There were, however, two notable champions of the sausage’s unique



flavor profile. “We are both fans of wild boar and have eaten different types of wild boar sausage,” the first taster shared. “So, we were interested in trying this.”

The second taster was even more thoughtful: “I have always wondered why there isn’t a larger-scale effort in harvesting feral swine as a high-quality ‘game’ meat,” the taster said. “I ate wild boar in

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East and Southeast Asia, and it is an absolute delicacy when done right.”

APPEARANCE

Our tasters shared a number of valuable observations about the product’s appearance.

One remarked that the package was “very clean,” which equated it with other hot dogs and sausages on the market, and noted the “clear heating instructions.” But

a separate taster disagreed with that sentiment.

“Given that we haven’t ever cooked a blend like this, the prep directions we far too narrow,” the taster said. “Heat on grill or pan on low to medium heat until you reach desired level of browning’ — ok, it says they are ‘fully cooked,’ so am I really just ‘warm-ing’ them? So, no microwave?”

Regarding the sausages themselves, a taster remarked, “The sausages are nicely paprika-colored, speckled with ground black pepper. They look appetizing and even better after being browned in a pan.”

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

Consistent with their first impressions, our tasters were divided over the flavors and textures of the Force of Na-

ture Wild Boar and Beef Sausage.

One taster, for instance, was emphatic in their distaste, explaining that “After the first bite, we did not eat any more.

The most dominant flavor was salt. It was overwhelming. It was hard to determine what the sausage was made from. ... We were hoping for more of that characteristic ‘wild boar’ flavor.”

Other tasters

“It has the right amount of spice. **IT’S BETTER THAN A HOT DOG;** it’s more exotic.”



“After the first bite, we did not eat any more. **THE MOST DOMINANT FLAVOR WAS SALT.** It was overwhelming.”

zeroed in on the sausage's texture. One remarked, “I want the grind to be a little larger,” another stated, “The meat was too finely ground and mealy/grainy; I didn't like the mouthfeel,” and a third shared, “I'm used to pork sausage so this taste and texture threw me off; this was not as moist and was denser than pork sausage.”

Despite such vocal objections, a sizable share of tasters did truly enjoy the product.

“It's mighty good,” one taster said. “It's juicy, not dry, but not too juicy either.” Another taster remarked on the “right amount of spice,” which made it “better than a hot dog; it's more exotic.”

Other descriptions included “quite juicy and flavorful, not

gamey,” “a good blend of meats,” “they were delicious,” and “so good plain that you didn't even need [condiments].”

And interestingly, some tasters arrived at the opposite conclusions about the sausage's texture. One equated them with a conventional pork sausage, while another stated, “Even though they're made without casing, they have a nice snap, and aren't mushy.”

UPSHOT

Even though our tasters disagreed about the taste, texture and appearance of the product, a majority did declare they would not purchase the sausages again.

The reasons behind that majority differed. One taster, for in-

stance, was “disappointed in the flavor profile,” and “would not purchase this product,” while another was scared off by the price: “At this price [of \$8.99 for four sausages], it's too high in today's market. We would serve to guests for something unique, but not an everyday product.”

Even tasters who appreciated Force of Nature's mission were unsure of a repeat purchase.

“I like that they are helping the feral hog problems and doing something with the meat, but not enough to buy this over the sausage I prefer,” one taster shared. Another stated, “I thought these were good, but not sure if I would buy them over more traditional sausages. I'd certainly

eat them again if I was offered these.”

There were some converts among our tasters, though. One stated, “Our family really enjoyed them, and would definitely purchase in the future,” while another shared, “I'm sold on enjoying this product while being part of a solution to the South's feral swine problem. I really like the depth feral swine meat brings to a typical beef sausage.”

Finally, a third taster shared, “For the positive environmental impact it is trying to make (making use of feral swine!), I would consider purchasing online if I can't find in stores.”

CONCLUSION

Some of our tasters were intrigued to expe-

rience Force of Nature Wild Boar and Beef Sausage, especially for the novelty of eating wild boar. People who had previously eaten wild boar were more appreciative of the product's flavor and the brand's mission. We heard an array of comments on the packaging language that referred to “feral swine.” Some saw it as a negative, and others — who were familiar with the problem the product was solving — had a positive point of view. The Wild Boar and Beef Sausage seems to have a niche appeal, attracting adventurous eaters and a community whose values more clearly align with the company. The uninformed might find this too expensive, regardless of the mission.

by **Jacqueline Beckley, The Understanding & Insight Group, and Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, U&I Collaboration LLC.**

Food product development and consumer research veterans, Jacqueline Beckley, Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, join Meatingplace Magazine as regular contributors to MeatingTaste, a consumer sampling of new products featured in our monthly Taste Test column. Here's how the program works: The 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. Beckley, 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.