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SURVIVALIST

Dr. Sarah Low provides keen insights on how meat processing facilities can survive in today's challenging market



Wendy's brings a foodservice favorite to the retail space.

Here's the beef

Photo by Getty



PRODUCT

Wendy's Chili with Beans

PRICE

\$4.42 to \$5.49/15-oz. can

PLUS

Good texture, wide number of uses

PROBLEM

High sodium, not flavorful in some pairings

How many of us admit to going through Wendy's drive-thru to succumb to their craveable meals of chili, chili and a Frosty, chili cheese fries, or even the chili and cheese baked potato? That's probably why we were excited when we first spotted Wendy's canned "Chili with Beans" on our grocer's shelf. The 15-ounce can stood out with its white label against a shelf set of brown- and red-labeled canned chili, with its classic Wendy's logo and an illustration of Wendy and her pigtails. Clearly

touting 29g of protein per can, we, and many of our tasters, were excited to taste-test this new product.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Tasters ranged in age from 11 and up, with about half being Wendy's and Wendy's chili fans.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Some of our tasters approached Wendy's chili with optimism. Two appreciated the logo and packaging ("The white caught my eye," one said), while another taster hoped this chili would exceed previous experiences with a

canned product: "My first thought was, 'I hope this is better than another canned chili brand we tried once before. That (other) one looked like dog food and tasted pretty gross.'"

On the appearance side, one taster thought the chili's color and texture was "on par" with what they expected, while another referenced Wendy's famous "Where's the beef?" slogan, and stated, "You could ask the same about this product at this price point."

The product's \$4.42 to \$5.49/can price point was also a concern for a couple tasters, with one

calling it "out of whack" and another jesting that at such a price, Wendy's should offer an "easy open/pull top."

Finally, two tasters conducted a side-by-side comparison between the canned Wendy's chili and the in-store chili. One remarked, "The QSR Chili was watery, while the canned one was thicker and the meat seemed bigger."

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

Wendy's chili earned quite a few supporters among our tasters.

"The overall flavor was very good!" re-

TASTE *test*

ported one taster. “The meat ratio was better than expected, and the chop of the meat wasn’t too fine. The chili itself was an appropriate consistency.”

Other accolades included: The chili being free of most allergens; how well the chili paired with hot dogs; and the chili’s “distinctive taste and spicy note.”

A few tasters noted the chili’s weak flavor, especially when paired

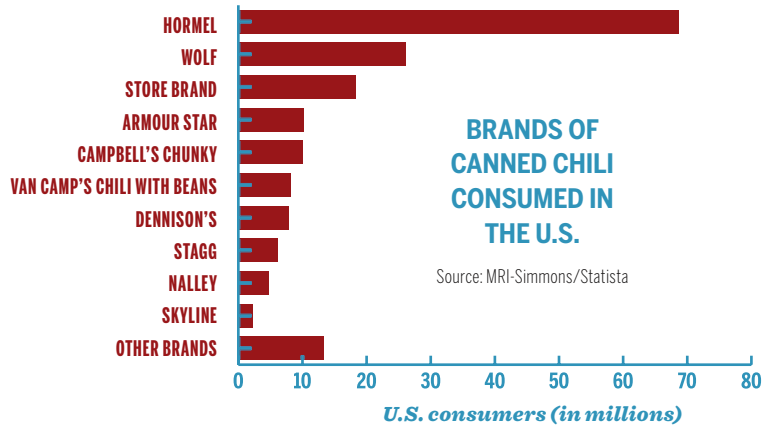
with other bold flavors.

“I ate some straight and also used it on nachos,” one taster shared. “The flavor from the chips overpowered the taste of the chili. When I tasted the chili alone, it was good, though.”

Another taster remarked that the chili “didn’t quite stand up to the stronger hot dog flavor” in their chili dog, while another stated the flavor was “kind of weak — not

ONE CHILI *to rule them all*

According to MRI-Simmons data assembly by Statista, **Hormel is far and away the most popular chili brand in the U.S.**, with nearly 70 million consumers eating it regularly. Hormel’s market share, in fact, is more than the next four brands combined.



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Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2oz (56g) (1 oz)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 20	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1g	2%
Saturated Fat 1g	20%
Cholesterol 15mg	30%
Sodium 20mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 10g	20%
Dietary Fiber 5g	10%

TASTE *test*

The flavor from the chips overpowered the taste of the chili.

When I tasted the chili alone, it was good, though.

hearty” when paired with chips, salsa and Mexican cheese.

Some tasters were true sleuths in comparing Wendy’s canned chili to its restaurant’s offerings. They sampled multiple cans and restaurants before concluding, as one put it, “a batch-to-batch consistency issue with the Wendy’s

canned version.” While some cans yielded chili that was thinner than the restaurant, others provided chili that was not only thicker, but also had “a more substantial bite.”

And finally, a couple tasters were concerned about the chili’s dietary details. “High in sodium, almost appalling,” one remarked.

“They should think about a leaner version.”

The second taster noted that Wendy’s considers one can to be a single serving, versus competitors that sell a can as two servings. “You can claim 29 g of protein, but also 1720 mg of sodium!” they said. “Compared to another brand, they state 16

g of protein and 1080 mg of sodium, but for one cup of chili!”

UPSHOT

Despite some of the earlier reservations, the majority of our tasters were positive in their final assessments, and some even considered new uses for Wendy’s chili.

“While I do enjoy

making homemade chili, this is a yummy, easy option that we all enjoyed. I would purchase this again for \$4.99,” one taster said.

Another taster shared, “My home-made chili is definitely better, but I’d buy this for the kids to make a nacho app. And, this was definitely better than Hormel.”



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TASTE *test*

Other compliments included the “quick and easy” nature of the chili, and that it “would be great for making chili nachos for a party appetizer.” Even those who compared the canned chili to the restaurant version

preferred the “richer” flavor of the canned product.

There were two holdouts, though: One balked at the chili’s high sodium, while another observed, “Premium price. Too much for why and how we use chili.”

CONCLUSION

For those who have a connection with the Wendy’s brand, there was excitement and interest to purchase this canned version and enjoy the restaurant’s classic chili at home. For cost-aware canned chili users,

the Wendy’s product did not warrant the much higher (double some of the main competitors) price point, and will probably never make it into their shopping cart. Although we have a concern about the batch-to-batch

consistency — of both the QSR and canned products — how many will be doing a side-by-side tasting like some of our folks did? And what happens if you get the looser texture in a can of chili, and just paid upwards of \$5 for it?

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.



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