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Molto Bene!

Aldi's Italian sausage ravioli a hit with most tasters

Photo by Getty



PRODUCT

Priano Italian Sausage Ravioli

PRICE

\$5.35/18-ounce bag
(about 5 servings)

PLUS

Taste, texture,
appearance

PROBLEM

Portion sizes, quality
after freezing

Priano, Aldi's

private-label brand for Italian goods, recently expanded its signature offerings with a refrigerated ravioli that caught our eye, literally, with its see-through window. Priano Italian Sausage Ravioli boasts that it is “A traditional blend of Italian sausage and cheeses in a thinly rolled pasta.” The “artisan crafted” pasta is available in two flavors: Italian sausage and mushroom. Let’s see what our tasters thought about this “Inspired by Italy,” meat-filled pasta.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Several families participated in this in-home tasting along with a few solo diners. Most were Aldi shoppers, although not all.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND APPEARANCE

At first glance, the packaging and overall appearance of the Priano Italian Sausage Ravioli received thumbs-up reviews. “I liked the packaging. It was clean and had an Italian look to it,” one wrote. “The instructions were very easy to spot and follow, same with the nutrition info. Also

liked that it’s a resealable bag.” A second taster said, “We liked the clear window on the bag so we could see the shape of the ravioli and how much the bag was filled.”

The appearance of the product itself was similarly encouraging to most shoppers. “I have never seen such large pieces of sausage in a pasta filling in my life!” one wrote. “I recently tried a similar national brand, and they were literal specks.” Another agreed: “Good-sized ravioli. I could smell a hint of sausage when opening the package.”

The ingredients were another point of praise for reviewers. “We looked at the ingredient list right away, and surprisingly for a packaged pre-made product it has all-natural, decent ingredients,” one wrote. “Nothing weird or crazy, especially for being sausage. And we were surprised that the sodium was not super high.”

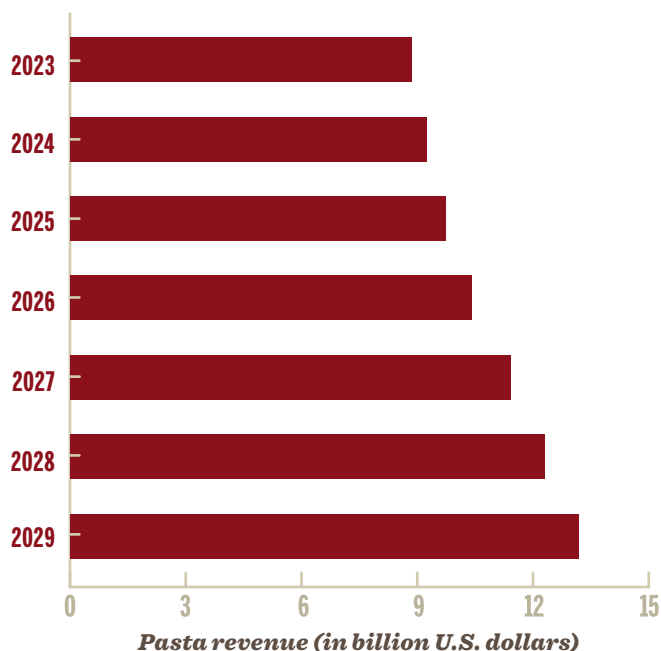
The freshness of the product also impressed. “I appreciate that these are refrigerated and not frozen,” a reviewer said, “and more impressed that they are perfectly

Pasta CRESCENTE

Even amidst the uncertainty surrounding certain food categories, considerable optimism remains in the pasta segment.

According to Statista, pasta sales are expected to grow 42% through 2029 and reach a market size of \$13.18 billion.

Statista Market Insights



shaped and not stuck together!" And another pointed out: "The package includes a 'Use by/ Freeze By' date, which is good."

Only one reviewer had an even slightly negative reaction to the packaging. "The sausage doesn't look like Italian sausage on the package," they said. "It looks like a cartoony hot dog. That made me a little skeptical."

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

The product's eating experience drew mostly rave reviews from tasters, with a smattering of exceptions. The texture and physical integrity of the product impressed several of

the reviewers. "They were perfectly al dente," one wrote.

"Each ravioli kept its shape and didn't open and lose any filling."

A second opined, "The ravioli were a nice yellow, and were very delicious. Great quality and more than enough serving size (for two)." And a third taster said, "Can't believe that none broke while cooking!"

Taste was another selling point for most. One reviewer said, "The natural yellowish color of the pasta looks rich, like egg pasta. The pasta itself is very tender. Very often, frozen ravioli pasta is tough with barely any filling, but these eat like a homemade ravioli!"

And another wrote: "I really liked it; it felt upscale, especially eaten with a pesto oil sauce. It had good Italian sausage flavor, and I liked the thickness of the dough and the bite."

Not everyone enjoyed the eating experience as much, though. "Overall, I thought the taste was okay," one wrote. "I'm not the biggest fan of sausage, but thought these were good with the pasta."

And a second reviewer said, "I thought it was mediocre. The front of package showed pieces of sausage, and there were bits at best."

A third taster found them less flavorful than they'd

hoped — but their son didn't agree:

"I was hoping the sausage would pack more of a punch. The cheese flavor also wasn't very strong. My son enjoyed it since the sausage wasn't too spicy."

Another taster advised fellow consumers to eat them before the freeze-by date. "The first time I tried these they had not been frozen. The cheese was creamy; the sausage was juicy, and the pasta was delicate. 10/10. Tried it again from frozen and the cheese was not as creamy, the sausage was a little rubbery and the pasta felt heavy and dense. But no worse than any other frozen filled

pasta. 6/10."

The portion size received more mixed reviews. "The bag indicates that there are five servings," one wrote. "While this certainly may be true for some families, with my husband and son being big eaters, a bag and a half was the right amount for us." Another said, "The bag was just enough for the two of us for dinner. ... It was delicious! Thin-rolled pasta that is easily cut with a fork."

A third shared, "We were all impressed with the amount of sausage in each ravioli and thought it was perfectly seasoned. The cheese was plentiful and had a nice creamy texture."

They were perfectly al dente — each ravioli kept its shape and didn't open and lose any filling.

UPSHOT

The majority of those surveyed would buy the Priano Italian Sausage Ravioli product again, and at worst, the others had mixed things to say. “\$5.35 is an excellent price for a bag, and I will definitely be looking for these again on my next trip to Aldi,” one wrote. A

second taster shared, “It was probably the tastiest meat ravioli we ever tried. Thumbs up here.” And a third said: “We would definitely buy again. We liked that it was fresh, yet we could throw it in the freezer, and it was a quick cook.”

A few had some reservations about the fresh vs. frozen

equation, but were nonetheless sold. “The portion size was fairly generous for two adults,” said one taster, “and for the price I would definitely buy them again, despite the short-ish shelf life.” Another wrote: “I really don't want to have to freeze them as the experience from chilled was

far superior. So, I will have to buy them with a plan to use them up before the Use/Freeze date.” A third was undeterred on that latter point: “I'm definitely keeping a bag in the freezer for a last-minute dinner idea.”

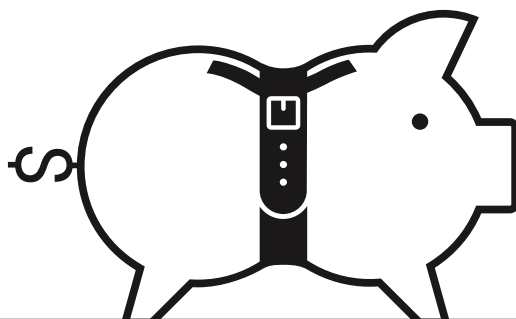
Others were more lukewarm. “I'm not sure if I would buy these personally,” on

reviewer wrote, “but would certainly eat them if they were at an event!” Another said, “I will probably buy for the kids to get a little more meat/protein into their diet. ... I would rather have something I enjoy more for dinner.” And a third wrote, “We had very mixed opinions. My wife thought

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it was very well priced and would buy; I would not and asked, 'Where's the meat?'"

CONCLUSION

Priano Italian Sausage Ravioli received some very positive

reviews from our tasters. Highlights were the quality of the ravioli and the sausage/pasta taste after boiling. The lack of overt spiciness was appreciated by the group — it made the

product more family friendly. The positiveness of the responses makes sense, as people are looking for convenient options without sacrificing taste or hurting their wallets. Aldi did a

fine job at offering a meat-focused pasta product at an accessible price point that simply delivered on most of our tasters' expectations. There are differences of opinion on how many

edible portions are in the package, but even if there are two servings instead of five, folks thought the price point plus quality was good. Perhaps Aldi will release additional Priano's flavors.

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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