

Templar Research Services

Sample Consumer Report

Breaded Chicken Cutlets

New Product Testing and Diary Study

Given the nature of the work we do is confidential, this sample report has been edited to conceal any real data and findings. References to people, locations, products and brands have been modified.

This document has also been edited for length and only includes key pages. It is not a complete report, and does not include information about methodology, respondent criteria, conclusions and recommendations, or details that might have revealed anything particular to this study.

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Frozen Chicken Cutlets - Purchase Criteria and Usage

Price is top among the criteria cited by these respondents when it comes to buying frozen breaded chicken cutlets. While just over half of all respondents felt this way, a few admitted they were willing to pay more for quality products:

- "Price is nice, but if you don't pay much, it's [sometimes] not worth much."

Ingredients were also important with just over a third of these consumers.

- Aside from chicken itself, the *accompanying* ingredients in a product were an indication to many that one product might be *healthier* than another:
 - "It's what they prioritize [on the ingredient list]: the sodium, the potassium, and the chemicals used to keep it fresh a long time."
- Some respondents felt the fewer additional ingredients in a product, the more "natural" and unprocessed the chicken was, too.
- Others, meanwhile, seemed weary of taste enhancers and trans fats: "[I want] no MSG and no trans fats in what I eat."

Brand name and **brand experience** were also important criteria for these consumers. These instilled a kind of "know what you're getting" confidence in their purchasing behavior. However, these participants were definitely *not* brand loyal:

- "I look for a few brand names I trust, and will pick the one that's least expensive."

The availability of **family-sized packages**, and the **size and number of chicken cutlets** in each box, were also deemed important:

- "I need to know how [many pieces are] in the box. [Showing] the weight on the box is good, but if it's less than five pieces in total, that's not ideal. I have a big family to feed."

Meanwhile, the **packaging itself** and any “appealing” eye-catching pictures on the box and label, also contributed to purchase behavior.

As such, some respondents were keen on seeing the size and shape of the actual cutlets on the packaging, while others wanted the label to suggest “complete meal ideas”:

- “I need to know if the cutlets are large and flat, or if they are long and thin. I’m either serving them with vegetables on the side, or using them in a wrap or for fajitas.”
- “I want the box to suggest ways I can serve chicken cutlets, like having them sliced up in a salad, or smothered in gravy with mashed potatoes on the side. I like having meal ideas when shopping for groceries because I can pick up what I don’t have at home.”

Also mentioned less frequently were quicker **cooking times**, and a preference to see this type of product sold in a **closed-door freezer** rather than a freezer bin.

Product Diary Summary: Product QWP

On average, two adults and two children tried product QWP during the home trial.

The majority of respondents used a conventional or traditional oven to prepare this product, cooking about four pieces at a time. Only a handful of respondents cooked these chicken cutlets in a convection or toaster oven.

These respondents were generally impressed by the size of the cutlets, and their long, strip-like shapes when they first opened the box to cook them:

- "They looked like real chicken breasts cut into thin strips."

While more than half of all respondents indicated they liked the taste of this product, about a third also mentioned they thought the chicken was moist and that the breading was both crispy and crunchy.

The majority of these focus group participants stated they liked this product for its taste, quality and freshness:

- "The chicken was very meaty and flavorful. It was juicy and moist."

Only a couple of respondents in each of the six groups suggested something they disliked about product QWP. A few said it seemed a little greasy, and they disliked the fact it had already been cooked in oil:

- "The oil leaked out of the breading and gave [me] the impression that it was greasier. It didn't taste as light as the [other] product."

Just over half of the respondents in these groups said they would *definitely buy* this product if it were available at their grocery store. One in four claimed they *probably would buy* it, while fewer than one in ten said they would *definitely not buy* it.

Respondents also rated product QWP on a number of attributes in a small quantitative survey. This product received its *highest* ratings for overall quality and moistness, and received its *lowest* ratings for overall appearance, cutlet size, and coating crunchiness. Specifically:

Overall Quality: Close to half (46%) of all respondents thought product QWP's overall quality was *excellent*. Most of the remaining respondents felt the quality was *very good* giving it a top-two box score of 78%.

- Those awarding an *excellent* overall quality rating credited QWP's freshness and quality, its size, and taste.

Overall Appearance: This did not appear to be a particular strength for product QWP, with only a minority (13%) rating its appearance as *excellent* overall. However, nearly half (42%) of these consumers thought it had a *very good* appearance.

- Those who rated its appearance as *excellent* said they liked the "golden color" of the chicken cutlets, and their long, strip-like shape.
- Product QWP's appearance was rated a little (+6%) better than product JPL.

Cutlet Size: Only one in four respondents (25%) thought the size of the cutlets was *excellent*, and complimented their "good, long size". Product QWP's top-two box rating for this attribute was 52%.

- Those who were less enthused by its size suggested the cutlets were longer than they were wide, and were thus "less meaty".

Cutlet Shape: Shape ratings were generally positive, with more respondents (44%) rating this product as *excellent* than *very good* (20%).

- Those who awarded *excellent* ratings felt QWP's "very long" and "strip-like" shape made it more appealing to children, and convenient for adding it to salads and sandwiches.
- Respondents clearly preferred (+18%) the thinner, strip-like shape of product QWP, compared to the flat steak-like shape of product JPL.

Overall Taste: Not quite half (41%) of all respondents thought this product had an *excellent* overall taste. Meanwhile, close to a third (28%) of these participants thought the overall taste was *very good*.

- Those who felt the taste was *excellent* said the chicken was fresh. They simply liked its taste and suggested it was well seasoned.
- Product QWP had a slight edge (+6%) in this area, as some respondents found product JPL somewhat salty.

Coating Taste: QWP's coating was one of the lower-rated attribute, with almost a third (28%) rating it as *excellent* and just over a third (33%) saying it was *very good*.

- Respondents who felt this product had an *excellent* coating taste said it suited their taste buds more, and suggested it was a little less salty than product JPL.
- Both products scored poorly in this area, with product QWP receiving only a very slight advantage (+1%).

Coating Crunchiness: QWP's crunchiness was not particularly highly rated, with about a third (30%) rating it as *excellent*. It achieved a 54% on its top-two box score.

Chicken Quality: Quality perceptions were particularly strong for the chicken in product QWP, with more than half (53%) of all respondents rating it *excellent* in this regard, and another 20% as *very good*.

- Those who said the quality was *excellent* felt the chicken was fresher, tender, and tasted more like "real" chicken.
- Product QWP had a slight edge (+5%) in this category over product JPL.

Chicken Taste: The chicken's taste was also highly regarded, with just under half (42%) rating it *excellent* and another third (31%) as *very good*.

Moistness: Moistness was a particular strength for product QWP with over half (58%) of these respondents rating it as *excellent*, and 24% saying it was *very good*.

- Juicy, tender and moist were the words used most often by those rating QWP's as *excellent* for this attribute.
- Product QWP had a very slim edge (+2%) over product JPL in this area.

Product Diary Summary: Product JPL

On average, two adults and two children also tried this product during the home trial.

Once again, the majority of respondents used a conventional or traditional oven to prepare this product, cooking four pieces on average. However, it appears that fewer respondents used a toaster oven for this product than for product QWP.

While respondents were generally impressed by the larger, wider size of these cutlets, they felt their appearance was somewhat standard, reminding them of “schnitzels” and the breaded chicken breasts they’ve ordered in restaurants.

However, this was not always a negative, as some respondents felt this product’s appearance was more in line with their expectations.

While nearly half of these respondents indicated they liked the taste of product JPL, just over a quarter also mentioned they liked the crispiness and crunchiness of its breading:

- "It was really good. The batter was crispy, and I liked that the chicken was still moist inside."

These respondents often cited crispiness as this product’s main *strength*. A few also mentioned they liked the taste of the chicken itself:

- “[It] wasn’t dry and did not have a processed food aftertaste. [The] batter was very crispy, too.”

However, about three in four respondents suggested the breading on these cutlets was too thick. Some were also concerned about its fat content, and wondered if any trans fats were used:

- “When I looked at the list of ingredients, I was a little shocked to see that there was fat added to the coating.”

Only one in four of these respondents claimed they would *definitely buy* product JPL if it were available at their grocery store.

After trying product JPL, respondents rated it on a number of attributes. This product received its *highest* ratings for coating crunchiness and overall quality. It received its *lowest* ratings for shape, overall appearance, and coating taste. Specifically:

Overall Quality: Overall quality was a strong point for product JPL, with just over a third (36%) of respondents saying it was *excellent*, and almost half (48%) indicating it was *very good*.

- Those who said it was *excellent* were enthused by its taste and its crispiness.
- This product had a slight edge (+6%) over product QWP for this attribute.

Overall Appearance: Just over a quarter (26%) felt this product's appearance was *excellent* overall, while less than a quarter rated it as *very good* (23%).

- Respondents in Chicago appeared more accepting of its appearance than consumers in New York who preferred QWP's strip-like shape.
- Those rating product JPL's overall appearance as *excellent* liked its large size and "traditional" flat shape.

Cutlet Size: One in three (33%) group participants felt the size of the cutlets in product JPL was *excellent*, while just under half (46%) said it was *very good*.

- Chicago respondents were more complimentary of its size than the New York participants.
- Those who rated its size as *excellent* said the portions were "generous" and each cutlet could be "a meal in itself."
- JPL's top-two box score for this attribute soared above (+27%) the rating earned by product QWP.

Cutlet Shape: The shape of these cutlets provided product JPL with one of its lowest scores, with just over one in four (26%) awarding it an *excellent* rating, and less than a quarter (20%) saying it was *very good*.

- Those who liked the shape said the cutlets were easy to plate and had a nice appearance, but might be inconvenient for salads or wraps because they first had to be cut into smaller pieces.

Overall Taste: Just over one in three respondents (35%) thought this product had an *excellent* taste overall, while 28% said it tasted *very good*.

Coating Taste: The taste of JPL's breading was not one of its strong points with close to three in ten rating it *excellent* (29%), and just under a third (31%) saying it was *very good*.

- While some of these respondents thought the coating was "mild" and tasted good, many more suggested it was "much too salty".

Coating Crunchiness: Crunchiness was a definite strength for product JPL. More than half (55%) of these respondents thought it had *excellent* crunchiness, while 32% said it was *very good*.

- These respondents simply felt the coating used on product JPL was "very, very crunchy" and crispy.
- This attribute received JPL's highest rating and was well above (+33%) the top-two box score earned by product QWP.

Chicken Quality: Quality was another strong area for product JPL, with over a third (35%) of respondents giving it an *excellent* score, and another third (33%) saying it was *very good*.

- Those who rated the quality of the chicken as *excellent* said they liked its taste, thought it had a nice texture, and found it to be "juicy".

Chicken Taste: Just over one in three (35%) respondents felt the taste of the chicken in this product was *excellent*. It earned a 74% in its top-two box score.

- Those who said the chicken's taste was *excellent* found it to be "fresh" and "well seasoned", but added that they scraped off some of its "salty coating".
- This product was practically tied with product QWP in this area, beating it by the slightest of margins (1%).

Moistness: Overall, just over a third (36%) of all respondents thought this chicken cutlet's moistness was *excellent*. Top-two box ratings were also respectably high at 80%.

- Those who rated JPL's moistness as *excellent* said it was firm, yet moist, and described it as "quite succulent".

Reactions to Warehouse Pack Packaging

A little over half of these consumers referred to Warehouse Pack packaging as “Family Packs”. They also used the terms “Economy Packs” and “Value Packs” to describe this kind of packaging.

Convenience, “not running out”, and “good value for the money” were the main reasons these respondents purchased “Warehouse Pack” products for their families:

- “You cook what you need and put the rest in the freezer.”
- “There's always some left if people are still hungry, or you want to have something quick for lunch the next day.”

Most respondents claimed to buy “Warehouse Packs” regularly. Those who did *not* buy them very often said they had smaller families, or were just being a little more health conscious:

- “I limit my consumption of these kinds of foods because they’re usually fatty.”

Reactions to New Warehouse Pack Concepts

Respondents were given a chance to comment on a number of concepts for new product/package ideas. Here is how these concepts fared:

Concept G1: a bigger box that contains twice as many “strip style” cutlets than the QWP box you tested:

- Just over half of these respondents liked this idea because they felt such a box could be used for multiple meals. That said, they expected such packaging to be less expensive than a regular “warehouse pack” because it would be a “bulk buy”.
- Many of the consumers who did *not* like this concept felt the boxes they were currently buying were big enough and could hold a few extra pieces of chicken without making the box any bigger. Others feared that too many pieces in a box might result in wasted food due to “freezer burn”.

Concept H1: a box of the same size (by weight), but the cutlets are smaller than average so you get more in a box:

- Very few of these focus group participants were keen on this idea.
- The majority opposing it did not see any benefits to using smaller serving sizes, as they would just use more at every meal:
 - “This would make no difference to me because I would just use three or four pieces for each person instead of one or two.”

Concept H2: a smaller box containing the cutlets, but there would be fewer in each box:

- This was the least popular idea of those discussed, even among the single respondents who did not have a large family to feed.
- None of the consumers in these groups suggested the envisioned potential benefits of this concept, namely easier storage or lower pricing. Instead, they focused on the fact that a smaller box would not be enough to feed their family.
- They were also worried that a smaller box would cost more in the long run, compared to the “bulk discount” they received on larger boxes.

Concept I1: a re-sealable bag in place of a box that would contain the same number of “strip style” cutlets you tested in box QWP:

- This was by far the most popular concept, with just over two-thirds of all respondents saying they liked it a lot.
- Many felt such a bag would create “easier storage”, and fit in their freezer better.
- They also thought it would keep the product fresher while preventing “freezer burn”, and might be even be more environmentally friendly than cardboard boxes because such bags could be washed and re-used.
- Those who disliked this idea said they might change their mind if the bag was opaque and showed a picture of what the cooked product might look like.
- Meanwhile, the few consumers who were totally opposed to this concept said a box was needed to “protect” the product’s contents from breakage during handling. They felt other shoppers might mishandle the bags and this would result in product damage, accidental defrosting, and the erosion of the breading as bags got banged about.

Possible Changes to Warehouse Pack Products

Respondents were also given a chance to suggest the changes they would like to see made to the packaging of frozen breaded chicken products. Here is what they said:

- Just over a third of all respondents said the main change they would like to see is a *re-sealable bag within the box*, in place of the bag that's already there. Several consumers admitted that they usually remove the product from its original packaging, and stored everything in a freezer bag of their own:
 - "Often times the box is too big for my freezer, so I have to transfer everything to a freezer-proof bag that will keep the cutlets safe from freezer burn."
 - "A re-sealable bag would offer easier storage and keep the food fresher than the bags you normally find in these boxes. They are way too thin."
- A little over a quarter of these consumers also wanted more chicken added to the boxes they normally buy now. They suggested there was enough room to fit in about five or ten more cutlets:
 - "There is so much wasted space in these boxes. I never understood why they don't stack them side-by-side the way they do with frozen hash browns."
- Several respondents also felt a window in the boxes might be a plus. This would allow them to see what the actual product looked like while still in the store.
- A few of the New York participants suggested the addition of dipping sauces to its contents, or at least recipes for dips printed on the side panels.
- Other suggested packaging improvements included: showing the cooking time in larger writing and making the cooking instructions a little bigger; adding recipes and meal ideas to the box; and making the boxes easier to fold/take apart so they could be easily recycled.