



Poll Shows What Will Entice New Yorkers to Roadside Markets

The Empire State Poll is conducted by Cornell University's Survey Research Institute each year to identify trends in residents' attitudes and views on various subjects. With input from the New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, the 2006 Empire State Poll included the following question.

In order for farmers to effectively serve their customers, they need to understand the value of various farm market enterprises to their customers. In addition to locally grown farm products, which ONE of the following would entice you to patronize local roadside farm markets?

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| 1. On-farm bakery | 7. Pick-your-own |
| 2. Processed foods | 8. Farm tours |
| 3. Fresh cut flowers | 9. Agritourism |
| 4. Ice cream | 10. Farm winery |
| 5. Birthday parties | 11. Gift shop |
| 6. Corporate parties | |

The results of the poll were based on 800 randomly sampled residents of New York (400 from metropolitan New York City and 400 from Upstate).¹ Table 1 shows the results of the question asked in 2006.

Table 1. Ranking of Roadside Stand Enticements

Enticement	Number	Percent
Pick-your-own	217	29.2%
On-farm bakery	118	15.9
Fresh cut flowers	74	10.0
None of the above	71	9.6
Farm winery	57	7.7
Farm tours	47	6.3
Gift shop	46	6.2
Ice cream	40	5.4
Processed foods	33	4.4
Agritourism	21	2.8
Birthday parties	12	1.6
Corporate parties	7	0.9
Total	743	100.0%

¹ While the data is representative of New York state as a whole, care must be taken in applying it in lower-populated rural areas. Another weakness of the question is that due to limitations to the length of the questions, we did not define words like "agritourism," "processed foods," or "corporate parties." This may have resulted in the lower interest rates that were reported.

The results show that the top three enticements in the list include pick-your-own (29.2%), on-farm bakery (15.9%), and fresh cut flowers (10%). It should be noted that establishing one of these top three does not guarantee enhanced profitability, and thoughtful business planning will be required regardless of what you choose to establish. Alternatively, just because a sideline profit center may be in lower demand for New York State overall according to this data, doesn't mean it can't be profitable in your area.

Further analysis of the data collected in the Empire State Poll helps us understand the markets for each type of enticement. Table 2 displays the demographic characteristics of the respondents who chose each enticement. For example, the data suggests that those who would be enticed by an on-farm-bakery are wealthier and more educated (as a group) than those who would be enticed by the addition of ice cream to the farm stand. Likewise, it appears that young professionals would be attracted to farm markets with the addition of a winery, while older consumers reported interest in processed foods and farm tours.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Market for Each Enticement

Enticement	Percent	Demographic Factor				
		Household income level	Education level	# Children <12 in household	Age	Female Interest
Pick-your-own	29.21	4.6	3.7	0.6	47.9	0
On-farm bakery	15.88	5.1	4.2	0.4	47.5	0
Fresh cut flowers	9.96	4.8	3.9	0.4	47.8	+
Farm winery	7.67	5.2	4.0	0.4	42.0	-
Farm tours	6.33	4.4	3.4	0.4	49.2	-
Gift shop	6.19	4.1	3.6	0.4	48.6	+
Ice cream	5.38	4.1	3.2	0.5	44.7	+
Processed foods	4.44	4.0	3.4	0.4	49.4	0
Agritourism	2.83	4.4	3.9	0.4	44.1	0
Mean		4.6	3.8	0.5	47.6	

NOTES:

Household income and education levels in the table correspond to nine household income categories (from "less than \$10,000" to "more than \$200,000 per year") and seven educational categories (from "less than high school" to "doctoral degree"); the higher the level in the table the higher the mean household income or education level reached.

The numbers in bold are at or above the mean for all respondents in the survey.

Female interest level: "+" = females reported greater interest than males; "-" = females reported less interest than males; "0" = no difference in interest than males.

Birthday and corporate parties were dropped from this analysis because there were too few to provide statistically valid data.

These results can help you choose which profit center(s) might work best in your market area, or help you better target existing products and services. For example, if you are already attracting young families or local folks, then the data suggests that adding ice cream could be a good fit. If your business is located in a higher-income, higher-educated market (such as on the outskirts of a college town or near a high-tech park), then you might consider a bakery or fresh cut flowers. These higher-income and educated "elites" who are interested in a bakery might want artisan breads and pastries (like scones). They also want information about the ingredients, the production process, and the source of the

farmer's inspiration for making these baked goods. These discriminating consumers enjoy trying new things and respond to more sophisticated messages about wholesome nutrition, flavor, and the "taste of place." Browsing the Web can tell you more about what these types of customer want.

Use this info to think about your promotional messages. While many people enjoy ice cream, the "core market" (majority of customers), according to our data, is families with children. The harried parent stopping for ice cream doesn't spend a lot of time reading about the product, so the advertising, signage, point-of-sale material, menu, etc., need to be fun, but also fairly simple and direct. If you are a roadside stand operator, chances are that you are going to buy a soft ice cream setup from a distributor who supplies the ingredients and services the equipment. But this doesn't mean you couldn't have a brochure with details on the finer art of making ice cream, especially if you choose to make hard ice cream with farm fresh milk.

In sum, you should consider the demographics of residents in your trade area (typically the area less than a half-hour driving time from your market). Knowing if you have a large number of young professionals, families, or elites can improve your chances of choosing successful enticements and promotions. Nothing you do can guarantee profit, but from a risk management point of view, such thoughtful analysis can increase your chances of success.