NOVEMBER, 1952 RESEARCH BULLETIN 512

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

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PREFERENCES FOR SELF-SERVICE MEAT AMONG HOUSEHOLD CONSUMERS IN METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS

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(Publication authorized October 10, 1952.)

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a study in which the departments of Animal Husbandry, Agricultural Economics and Home Economics in the College of Agriculture of the University of Missouri cooperated. It is a phase of research with self-service meats in which a number of States and the United States Department of Agriculture are also participating.

Special appreciation is due to the following retail firms in metropolitan St. Louis for their cooperation in making possible this research project:

Flotgen Super Markets
The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company
Italiano's Super Markets
Jensen's Food Store
The Kroger Company

Grateful acknowledgment is extended to Mr. Gilbert M. Palen, Editor of *Meat Merchandising,* for assistance in making preliminary arrangements with cooperating stores.

The authors wish to thank Dr. Starley M. Hunter, Chairman, Department of Home Economics, for her interest and guidance in the study.

This bulletin reports on projects Animal Husbandry 165, Home Economics 164, and Agricultural Economics 163, entitled, "Consumer Acceptance of Meat and Meat Products."

ABSTRACT

The growth of self-service pre-packaged meat merchandising in the United States has been phenomenal since World War II. Five years ago there was but one single store in Missouri in which pre-packaged fresh meat could be bought. Today, there are more than 75. The story is much the same throughout the United States with 5400 such stores now operating.

Such a change in merchandising fresh meats from the old "butcher" type of market has brought with it problems of merchandising and mixed attitudes towards the new method on the part of the potential customers. To some extent, also, this change has affected buying habits as to quality, quantity, frequency of purchase, and types of cuts desired.

To determine the trends in this new type meat merchandising, the investigators selected six St. Louis stores; three of them independent and three of them members of chains. In them, during the week of January 29 to February 3, 1951, interviewers questioned 1385 persons who had purchased one or more fresh meat self-service items.

Of the 1385 respondents, 48% preferred purchasing self-service fresh meat, 36% still preferred butcher service, and 14% said they had no preference.

Speed in shopping was the reason given most often for the preference of those who favored the new system. Some liked the opportunity to examine the meat carefully, and others liked the convenience of the package sizes. Among those who preferred the older method, 45% felt they could get the cut of meat they wanted more satisfactorily from their butcher, 20% liked the personal service rendered, and 14% felt the meat he sold was fresher.

While no particular relationship existed between the amount of money spent for meat and the type of merchandising utilized, a slightly greater proportion of those who spent more than $25 a week for meat preferred butcher service. Household size appeared not to affect choice of merchandising methods. Among the group interviewed, 15% of the homemakers (single, married and widowed women) were employed outside their homes. They preferred self-service. There seemed to be little or no difference in preference from the standpoint of the educational level reached by the homemaker.

The survey revealed that there was little, if any, change in the amount of meat purchased under the newer plan, and the majority of

those interviewed felt that the quality of the meat offered for sale was about the same as that offered by butcher service.

It was found that most purchasers preferred steaks cut from one-half inch to an inch in thickness; that steaks, pork chops and cutlets were generally bought by the serving instead of by weight; and that roasts, ground meat, stew meat, lamb and ham were bought by the pound. Four servings of chops were the most common purchase, and most customers bought roasts averaging three pounds. Few of those interviewed stored meats for more than a day or two, and 91% used mechanical refrigerators.

Factors influencing meat selection included attractiveness of package, the amount of product in the display case, and the opportunity to make selections in a wide variety of products. The total price of the package rather than the price per pound had more influence on 53% of those interviewed. Apparently many customers do not understand fresh meat grades. Some think the government inspection label is a grade label. The butcher's recommendation was more important to those who preferred that type of service than was the store's brand to those who preferred self-service. With both types of service the characteristics considered most important in meat selection were (1) the relative amount of fat and lean, (2) the attractive appearance, (3) the color of the lean, and (4) the price.

Purchases of meat increased during the week reaching a peak on Friday when nearly half of those interviewed purchased meat. Customers traveled up to 25 miles to trade at the stores where they were interviewed, although 58% lived within a block or two of a store that sold fresh meat. About half bought their groceries, fruits and vegetables at the store where they were interviewed. Of the shoppers, 83% were homemakers (single, married, and widowed women), and 14% were husbands. Husbands showed a slight preference for butcher type service. Most shoppers had decided upon the kind of meat and the amount they expected to buy before they entered the store, but about one out of four bought more than planned.

Cheese, eggs and fish were most frequently substituted for meats, but more than 80% of those interviewed said that their family budget permitted the purchase of all the meat desired.

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INTRODUCTION

One-hundred percent self-service meats — those packaged in advance of sale and selected by shoppers from open displays — now are available from approximately 5,400 independent and chain stores in this country. Housewives in Missouri can shop at 75 or more self-service stores in various parts of the state. Five years ago, there were only 78 such stores in the nation, and only one in Missouri.

The number of self-service independent stores has not increased as rapidly as those operated by chains. The chains now operate 77% of the total, as compared to 45% five years ago.

The self-service system of merchandising provides a display of pre-packaged fresh meats and meat products in an open-type, refrigerated display case from which the customer can make her selection without assistance from the store personnel. The individual cuts of meat are wrapped and displayed in a transparent film, and are available in various weights or numbers of servings.

Self-service was used to a limited extent as early as 1930. Searching for efficiency in operation, the meat departments adopted from grocery departments some of the self-service ideas that then had been in use for a number of years and which had revolutionized retail grocery merchandising. However, where the grocers could line their shelves with canned and packaged goods from which their customers could choose with little risk of loss from spoilage or deterioration, the meat retailers were faced with especially difficult problems in packaging, lighting and refrigeration and in educating the public to a new system of meat merchandising.

An early but unsuccessful experience with pre-packaged meats was that of the Hudson Bay Company in 1923. The meat was wrapped in cellophane and sold by clerks. Five years later, T. R. Donaldson of Brooklyn introduced selling self-service meats to stores too small to have full meat departments, but this experiment also failed. It was not until about 1940 that successful pre-packaging of meat for customer selection was attained and it was not until after World War II that the development of this latest phase of meat merchandising really found its place.

The growth of self-service meat merchandising has been modest and especially so in the Midwest. This has been attributed to various factors; low level of consumers acceptance, shortage of packing material and equipment, problems of personnel adjustments incidental to the change-over, and the large capital outlay involved.

PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODS OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study was to obtain information concerning the attitudes of consumers toward self-service meats and the reasons for this preference.

In addition, the investigators sought to determine customer preferences as to different sizes of packages, various cuts, purchasing practices, and factors involved in making a choice. Other related factors were educational level, age and employment of homemakers, size of families, amount spent for food, and the occupation of the head of the household.

The study was limited to six stores in the St. Louis area, three of them independent and three members of chains. In each case self-service meat merchandising was a new venture. Preliminary observation indicated that many consumers were not even aware of this method of buying meat. Therefore, in order to obtain information concerning their preferences it was necessary to seek the opinion of those who had purchased both self-service meats and butcher service meats.

Complete self-service for fresh meats was first available in metropolitan St. Louis in December 1949. This study was conducted from January 29 to February 3, 1951, when a total of 11 stores were selling pre-packaged meats. Major consideration was given to securing data from stores serving patrons representing different socio-economic levels. This was largely determined by the type of neighborhood in which the store was located. Store management cooperation also was a factor in the selection.

All of these stores had begun selling pre-packaged meats in 1950, the earliest in March and the latest in December. The experience of patrons questioned early in 1951 was, therefore, not extensive.

A total of 1385 patrons were interviewed just after they had purchased a pre-packaged fresh meat item in one of the selected stores. Interviewers were stationed near the meat display during regular store hours. Since the number of patrons going through the store varied throughout the day, the interviewers probably obtained information from a greater number of patrons who shopped during the slack period, which varied in the different stores. No attempt was made to obtain a proportionate sample of those who purchased meats in any given period.

During the week in which the interviews were conducted, the St. Louis area had cold and snowy weather, and the streets and roads were icy. This may have resulted in a different pattern of customers and slack periods than under more normal conditions.

RESULTS OF FINDINGS

Preferences Concerning Merchandising Methods

The information sought from the purchasers of pre-packaged meats included (1) preference for one type of retail meat service over the other, (2) relation of meat purchasing choices to characteristics of the household, (3) customer opinions and attitudes toward pre-packaged meat, (4) whether or not the pre-packaged type of meat merchandising met the needs of the customer as to thickness, type of cut, size and weight, (5) the amount purchased at one time and the length of time customers kept meat in storage in home freezers and refrigerators, (6) factors which influenced customer selection of meats, (7) influence of price, grade, and label, and (8) meat characteristics visible in the display case.

It is recognized that satisfying the customer is essential for success in any type of merchandising. The retailing of meat is no exception. When changes from established practice are made, such as the change-over from butcher service to self-service, the customer may outwardly adapt himself to the new technique but may accept the innovation with inward reservations. The first question, therefore, was to determine whether or not the customers really preferred self-service to the more personal service formerly received from their butcher.

Of the 1385 persons interviewed in the St. Louis area during the period mentioned, 48.6% said they preferred to purchase fresh meat from the self-service case, while 36.7% still preferred butcher type service, and 14.7% had no preference (Table 1).

Opportunity to shop more quickly and to examine the meat carefully and the convenience of package size were listed most frequently as reasons for preferring the self-service method. In fact, 70% believed they saved time, 35% shopped by the new plan because they could examine the meat, and 31% liked the convenient package sizes. Another 26% felt that a larger selection of items was available in the self-service markets. Others, in smaller numbers, mentioned better sanitation in the pre-packaged markets and "no talking with the butcher" as reasons for preferring the newer method. The respondents seldom made a distinction between the two methods as to the freshness or the quality of the meat (Table 2).

TABLE 1 -- Preference for Pre-packaged Service as Compared to Butcher Type of Service

Method of Merchandising	All Respondents
	%
Prefer pre-packaged service	48.6
Prefer butcher service.	36.7
No preference	14.7
Total	100.0
Number of respondents.	1,385

TABLE 2 -- Reasons for Buying Self-Service Meat

Reasons	Prefer Pre-package Service	No Preference	Total*
	%	%	%
Can shop quicker	76.5	50.7	70.5
Can examine the meat	38.8	21.2	34.7
Convenient size of packages . .	36.6	12.3	30.9
Larger selection of items	29.6	15.8	26.4
More sanitary	16.0	9.9	14.6
Weight and price are given . . .	16.6	3.9	13.7
No talking with butcher	8.9	28.1	13.4
Meat is fresher	9.4	3.4	8.0
Meat has a higher quality	7.4	2.0	6.2
Only kind sold in this store . . .	2.2	6.4	3.2
Less bone	2.8	1.0	2.4
Other reasons	10.4	3.5	9.0
Number of respondents	673	203	876

* Percentages add to more than 100 because many respondents gave more than one reason.

Among those who felt they still preferred butcher service, 45% felt they could get the cut of meat wanted more easily from their butcher, 20% liked the personal service he gave them, and 14% thought the meat sold in this manner was fresher than the pre-packaged item. Quality of meats, more accurate weights, lack of information on the pre-packaged item, were other reasons given by those who preferred butcher service (Table 3).

Factors Associated with Preference for Merchandising Methods

One of the purposes of the interview was to determine whether preference for one or the other method of merchandising was associated with certain characteristics of the household. There was little

TABLE 3 -- Reasons for Preferring Butcher Service.

Reasons Given	Prefer Butcher Service	No Preference	Total*
	%	%	%
Get cut of meat wanted	38.7	62.6	45.5
Personal service of butcher . .	17.3	27.6	20.2
Meat is fresher	14.5	12.8	14.0
Quality of meat is better	9.8	6.9	9.0
Weight more accurate.	5.9	2.5	4.9
Lack of information on package.	3.7	3.4	3.6
Store conveniently located . . .	1.6	3.4	2.1
Can get quantity desired.	1.2	4.4	2.1
Can examine meat.	2.0	2.0	2.0
More sanitary	2.5	--	2.0
Other	5.0	2.5	3.9
Number of respondents	509	203	712

* Percentage adds to more than 100 because many respondents gave more than one reason.

TABLE 4 -- Dollars Spent for Food Each Week by all Respondents.

Dollars Spent For Food Per Week	Merchandising Preference			
	Pre-pack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Less than 10.	1.5	1.2	.5	1.2
10 - 14.	11.7	5.9	9.3	9.2
15 - 19.	23.0	17.7	22.7	21.0
20 - 24.	21.8	18.9	17.7	20.1
25 - 29.	13.1	15.7	15.8	14.4
30 - 34.	7.1	10.0	8.4	8.4
35 - 39.	3.0	3.5	2.0	3.0
40 - 49.	2.4	3.7	2.0	2.8
50 and over	1.5	3.8	3.4	2.8
Not given	14.9	19.6	18.2	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1,385

indication that either the amount of money spent for food or the percentage of that amount spent for meat had any significant relationship to the preferences expressed for meat merchandising methods. However, a slightly greater proportion of those interviewed who spent more than $25 weekly for food preferred butcher service and those who spent less preferred pre-packaged service (Tables 4 and 5).

The size of the household did not appear to be associated with preference for either method of merchandising. The number of persons in the households in the sample ranged from 1 to 10, the average being 3.3. This is the same as the average size household reported for the St. Louis metropolitan area by the Bureau of the Census in 1950 (Tables 6 and 7).

TABLE 5 -- Percentage of Weekly Food Expenditure Paid for Meat According to Preferences in Method of Merchandising.

Percentage	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preferences. Pre-pack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
29 or less	12.9	10.2	12.3	11.8
30 - 34	14.4	14.7	16.3	14.8
35 - 39	8.4	5.5	4.4	6.7
40 - 44	14.4	14.5	12.8	14.2
45 - 49	6.7	8.3	4.4	6.9
50 - 54	14.1	13.9	13.8	14.0
55 and over	5.6	4.0	4.5	4.9
Not given	23.5	28.9	31.5	26.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1,385

TABLE 6 -- Number of Persons in Household.

Number in Household	Merchandising Preference Pre-pack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
1	2.1	2.8	1.5	2.2
2	30.9	31.0	24.6	30.0
3	30.0	27.9	28.1	29.0
4	24.8	19.8	23.1	22.7
5	7.0	11.8	11.8	9.5
6	4.3	4.7	7.4	4.9
7 - 10	.9	2.0	3.5	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1,385

TABLE 7 -- Size of Households Having no Children Under 16 Years of Age.

Household Size	Merchandising Preference Pre-pack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
1	5.8	7.7	4.6	6.4
2	82.7	79.6	80.0	81.1
3	7.0	8.3	13.9	8.4
4	3.7	3.9	--	3.3
5	.8	.5	1.5	.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	242	181	65	488

Occupation listed by the family wage earner apparently had no relationship to the type of meat merchandising favored by the customer. Only 15% of the homemakers questioned (including single, married and widowed women) were employed outside their homes; yet

TABLE 8 -- Households Classified According to Occupation of Head of Household.

Occupation of Head of Household	Merchandising Preference: Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Heads of Household
	%	%	%	%
Unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled	26.2	25.2	22.2	25.2
Clerical and sales	22.4	19.6	17.2	20.6
Professional occupation	16.2	17.9	20.7	17.5
Management and official	13.8	15.1	18.2	14.9
Service occupation	8.9	7.1	9.9	8.4
Retired or not employed	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.8
Homemaker	3.3	4.5	2.0	3.5
Other	3.4	1.7	3.9	4.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1,385

TABLE 9 -- Households Classified According to Occupation of Women *

Occupation of Women	Merchandising Preference: Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Women
	%	%	%	%
Homemaker	83.2	85.8	85.7	84.5
Clerical and sales	7.7	6.3	7.4	7.1
Professional occupation	3.1	1.6	1.5	2.3
Unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled	2.5	2.0	1.5	2.2
Service occupation	2.2	2.2	1.5	2.1
Other	.7	1.5	1.9	1.3
No women in these households	.4	.4	.5	.4
Not given	.2	.2	--	.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1,385

* Includes wives, widows and single women.

among this group a preference for pre-packaged meats was indicated (Tables 8 and 9).

The educational level attained by the women apparently did not affect preferences for either method. Of the group interviewed, 21% had attended grammar school, 43% high school, and 33% college. Women under 30 years of age appeared to prefer pre-packaged meat service, but those between 30 and 40 years old seemed to have no preference. Women older than that tended to prefer the butcher type of service.

Attitudes Toward Self-Service Meat

A series of questions designed to secure information on customers' attitudes toward self-service meat was formulated. It should be pointed out that those interviewed did not necessarily approve of self-service meat merchandising, even though they purchased their food in this type of market. They may have had inaccurate information about self-service meats, and their purchase of meats through this type of market might have been due to other factors, such as convenience of location or speedier service.

Nearly 85% of the 673 respondents queried on this phase stated that they purchased no more meat for their families through self-service than when using the butcher service. Ten percent said they were using more meat. This apparent increase could have been caused by factors other than the change in method of merchandising. About 3% of those queried reported smaller meat purchases, and a few said they did not know whether they were buying more or less meat under the self-service system (Table 10).

Customers considered that from the standpoint of the amount of fat, bone, and condition of the meat the prepackaged meat was equal if not slightly superior to the butcher service method. Half of them said

TABLE 10 -- Replies Given by Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat Service to the Question "Since You Have Been Buying Pre-packaged Meat Has Your Family Been Eating More, Less, or About the Same Amount?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
About the same	84.7
More	10.3
Less	2.8
Not given	2.2
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

TABLE 11 -- Replies Given by Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat Service to the Question "How Does the Amount of Bone in Pre-packaged Meat Compare With the Amount of Bone in the Same Kind of Meat Bought From a Butcher?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
Same	50.2
Less	35.8
More	2.7
Not given	11.3
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

TABLE 12 -- Replies Given by Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat to the Question "How Does the Amount of Fat in Pre-packaged Meat Compare With the Amount of Fat in the Same Kind of Meat Bought From a Butcher?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
Same	53.0
Less	37.0
More	2.5
Not given	7.5
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

that there was about the same amount of fat with either type of merchandising. In more specific terms, 35% felt there was less bone in the self-service package than in the meat bought from the butcher, and 37% thought the amount of fat was less in the pre-packaged meats (Tables 11 and 12).

TABLE 13 -- Replies Given by Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat Service to the Question, "Have You Felt That the Quality (and Condition) of the Pre-packaged Meat You Buy is Better, Same or Worse Than Meat Bought at a Butcher Service Counter?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
Same	63.1
Better	33.0
Worse	1.8
Not given	2.1
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

TABLE 14 -- Thickness of Steak Desired by Respondents.

Replies	All Respondents
	%
1/2 inch	28.9
3/4 inch	25.8
1 inch	27.2
1 - 1/4 inches	5.0
1 - 1/2 inches	5.3
1 - 3/4 inches	2.2
Not given	5.6
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	1385

Similarly, 63% of the group felt that the quality and condition of the meat was about the same, regardless of the type of service and 33% considered the quality to be better in the pre-packaged markets, with only a few dissenting (Table 13).

Customer's Reaction to Self-Service Meats with Reference to Thickness, Number of Portions in Package, and Other Factors

One of the complaints from customers of self-service meat markets is that there is not an adequate selection in the various cuts of the desired thicknesses; others had found it difficult to purchase a package that gave the desired number of servings for their particular families.

In order to obtain information on this point, customers were asked how thick they preferred their steaks cut and the reasons for this preference. It was found that steaks cut one half inch in thickness were most desired, and that very few wished them thicker than one inch (Table 14).

The chief reasons given for the preferred thickness was that it was best suited to the method of preparation used by the person inter-

TABLE 15 -- Reasons Why Respondents Like Steaks Cut a Given Thickness.

	Thickness in Inches					
Replies Given	1/2	3/4	1	1 1/4	1 1/2	1 3/4
Method of Preparation						
Suits Way Prepared	9.0	5.0	6.6	4.4	5.5	3.2
Use Dry Heat Cooking (broil, fry)	8.6	15.1	20.5	21.7	20.5	6.5
Use Moist Heat Cooking (Swiss)	0.2	0.3	--	--	--	--
Total	17.8	20.4	27.1	26.1	26.0	9.7
Degree of Doneness						
Prefer it Rare	0.8	1.4	7.7	10.2	23.3	29.0
Prefer it Medium	0.2	0.6	2.1	--	--	--
Prefer it Well Done	14.0	9.2	1.6	2.9	--	--
Total	15.0	11.2	11.4	13.1	23.3	29.0
Palatability						
Better Flavor	5.3	8.4	13.0	15.9	13.7	12.9
More Juicy	4.3	13.4	15.9	15.9	16.4	9.7
More Tender	3.7	4.2	2.4	2.9	2.7	9.7
Total	13.3	26.0	31.3	34.7	32.8	32.3
Other Reasons						
Cooks quickly	13.0	6.7	2.9	1.4	1.4	--
Thick as Can be Afforded	12.3	5.6	3.4	2.9	2.7	--
Individual Preference	6.3	10.1	5.9	11.5	8.2	16.1
Other	1.1	2.9	3.1	3.1	1.5	--
Not Given	21.2	17.1	14.9	7.2	4.1	12.9
Grand Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

viewed. The method of preparation also was clearly governed by the individual preference for the degree of doneness and it in turn was related to various palatability factors such as flavor, tenderness and juiciness of the steak when ready for the table. Those who liked their steaks well done preferred a thinner steak. Those who preferred the one-half inch steak thought it had a better flavor, was more juicy, and generally more tender than thicker steaks. Others mentioned that a half-inch steak cooked more quickly while others said it was as thick a steak as they could afford. Respondents who favored the thicker steaks gave varied reasons, but most of them centered around palatability. Most preferred a steak at least one-half inch thick, but not thicker than one inch. Table 15 indicates the varying preferences of those interviewed.

Another problem in self-service meat is the size of the cut, or the number of units in a package. This is especially a problem in the case of such cuts as pork chops, cutlets, minute steaks, and other items which are sold on a portion basis, though priced by weight. A customer having a family of five could, for instance, ask the butcher for five pork chops of uniform thickness, and thus serve one to each member of the family. If she shopped at a self-service meat counter, she might not find them packaged in the correct size units and perhaps not too uniform in size or appearance. Since customers have certain habit patterns, a portion of the interview was devoted to an attempt to determine which cuts of meat consumers bought according to weight, and which they purchased according to servings or portions.

Large cuts of meat, such as roast, are customarily bought according to weight. Portion-size pieces most frequently bought by the number of servings were pork chops, steak and cutlets. Roast and ground meats were purchased principally by weight. It should be pointed out in the case of steak that round steak can be conveniently purchased by the pound for any size portion but this is not true of club and T-bone steak.

Of the 929 respondents who commonly purchased pork chops, 23% said they purchased four servings at a time. The range in the number of chops desired was from one to nine. The number desired in the pre-packaged units varied from two to six.

Roasts were purchased by 822 of those interviewed. Of this number, 39% said they bought about three pounds at a time, but roasts of two and four pounds also were frequently mentioned. Fewer than 13% purchased roast weighing five pounds or more.

Of the 523 persons who bought steak, 61% stated they bought steaks by number of servings, while the others said they bought steaks

TABLE 16 -- Distribution of Respondents Who Mentioned Cuts Purchased by the Number of Servings or the Number of Pounds.

Percentage of Respondents who Bought Cuts Listed									
Number of Servings	Pork Chops	Roasts	Steak	Ground Meat	No. of Pounds	Pork Chops	Roasts	Steak	Ground Meat
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1	5.9	0.1	11.1	0.7	1	2.9	3.2	21.4	56.2
2	13.5	0.2	15.5	2.2	2	1.1	19.0	8.4	21.8
3	15.9	--	9.4	1.0	3	1.0	39.2	3.8	4.8
4	23.0	0.2	11.8	1.0	4	0.3	20.1	1.5	1.9
5	11.1	0.2	3.8	0.5	5	--	9.1	0.2	0.5
6	12.8	0.1	3.4	0.2	6	--	2.4	--	0.2
7	2.7	--	0.8	--	7	--	0.5	--	--
8	4.2	--	1.0	0.5	8	--	0.5	0.2	--
9	2.8	0.1	0.6	1.2	9	--	0.6	0.2	--
Not Given	2.3	0.5	4.0	1.9	Not Given	0.5	3.9	2.9	5.3
Total	94.2	1.4	61.4	9.2	Total	5.8	98.5	38.6	90.7

TABLE 17 -- Place of Meat Storage.

Place of Storage	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference: Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Mechanical refrigerator	92.4	89.0	92.1	91.1 *
Home freezer	13.4	14.5	15.8	14.2
Ice refrigerator	1.5	2.4	--	1.6
Locker plant	.4	1.0	.5	.6
Not given.	.4	1.2	.5	.7
Number of respondents .	673	509	203	1385

* Percentages add to more than 100 because some respondents mentioned more than one reason.

by weight. Those who bought steak according to the number of servings usually purchased from one to four at a time, and 21% of the respondents bought steak one pound at a time.

Of the 413 who said they bought ground meat, 91% said they bought it by weight, and 56% said they usually bought one pound at a time. Of the 194 persons interviewed, about half said they bought all of their meat by the pound and about half bought only by servings. Those who bought by servings usually purchased two to four at a time. Ham, stew, lamb, spare ribs, variety meats and pork butts were usually bought by the pound (Table 16).

Since the number of servings desired at one time by most of the customers is nearly the same as the number of persons in the household (Table 6), the data suggest that the families did not store much meat. This is further substantiated by the fact that only 205 respondents — 14% of the group — used frozen storage facilities of any kind for meat. As to the type of storage, 91% held their meat in mechanical refrigerators, 1% held their meat in an ice refrigerator, and 14% stored their meat in a home freezer (Table 17).

Of those storing meat in home freezers and locker plants, 73% bought their meat at retail, 12% at wholesale, and 10% bought their meat already frozen (Table 18).

TABLE 18 -- Sources of Meat Stored in Home Freezers and Locker Plants.

Sources of Meat	Households Having Frozen Meat
	%
Bought at retail	73.2
Bought at wholesale	12.7
Bought already frozen	10.2
Bought from a farmer	7.8
Raised it	3.9
Other	4.4
Number of respondents	205

FACTORS INFLUENCING MEAT SELECTION

What new problems are involved in the purchase of the pre-packaged fresh meat items? In the first place, the merchandising experience of both the retailer and the customer is limited. The merchant is faced with the problem of presenting his product attractively, cutting it to the proper size and shape, and labelling it so that the customer can identify the meat desired without further questioning. The customer has generally only a very limited knowledge of meat quality and must depend on the store's reputation and the "way the meat looks" as a guide in making a purchase.

Formerly, the butcher's advice was frequently sought, and general-

TABLE 19 -- Replies Given by Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat Service to the Question, "When You Look at Pre-packaged Meat, Do You Want to see All, Part, None, or No Preference?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
All	70.3
Part	22.4
No preference	5.9
None	.3
Not given	1.1
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

ly followed. In the modern self-service market, there is no friendly butcher to explain the various cuts and answer the questions of the customer. While it is true that in most self-service stores one may secure the services of an attendant by a signal buzzer or other devices, most customers are seldom willing to seek such assistance. Thus, it is necessary for the customer to place greater reliance upon her own judgment as to which package of meat will be most satisfactory for her table. Of those who preferred pre-packaged meat 97% said they examined more than one package of meat before deciding upon their purchase (Table 19). Moreover, 70% of the customers interviewed wanted to be able to see all of the meat in the package, while an additional 22% wanted to see at least a portion of it (Table 20).

TABLE 20 -- Replies Given by Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat Service to the Question, "Do You Prefer to Buy When the Display Counter has a Large Supply of Meat in it or a Small Supply?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
Large supply	85.3
Small supply	5.6
Not given	9.1
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

The interviews revealed that customers preferred to select their meats from a display case well filled with meat. Only 15% expressed little or no concern as to the amount available from which to make a selection (Table 21).

Customers concerned themselves with quality, quantity, and price, as they inspected the various packages. The interviewers did not probe the respondents as to what was meant by the term "quality." Such expressions as "liked to compare quality," "to get the best quality," and "to determine which price is best," were the usual statements.

The concept of quantity was clearly expressed by those interviewed, some of them saying they were "looking for a certain amount," others remarking that they were "looking for the right size," and still others said the meat packages were "too small for my family" or that they were "trying to find a package that suits my family's needs."

Questions regarding costs were answered succinctly. Such answers as "having to watch the budget," "want to get to see the price range," were typical.

Other replies as to why respondents looked at more than one package of meat centered about specific characteristics of the meat

TABLE 21 -- Reasons why Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat Service Examined More Than One Package in the Display Case.

Reasons Given	Respondents Who Gave Their Reasons
	%
To get best quality.	28.5
To find the desired quantity	20.1
Price	15.3
Considering meat characteristics.	13.1
Lean meat (6.4%)	
Fat content (2.6%)	
Freshness (2.0%)	
Bone content (1.2%)	
Color (.6%)	
Thickness of piece (.3%)	
Get what I want	5.5
Appearance	4.9
To get cut desired.	3.2
Other reasons	3.9
No reason	5.8
Number of respondents	653

TABLE 22 -- Replies of Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat Service to the Question, "Are You More Influenced by Price per Pound or Price per Package when Buying Pre-packaged Meat?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
Total price of package.	53.0
Price per pound	41.0
Both	5.8
Not given.	.2
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

itself. Some mentioned they wanted lean meat. Others mentioned the fat content, apparent freshness, amount of bone, the color of the meat, and the thickness of the piece. Others stated they preferred to "shop around" "to get what I want". Just what each respondent meant by the statement was not clear, but a few explained that sometimes they were not sure what they wanted, so they looked until some item attracted their fancy. About 5% were in this category. Another possible reason for their indecision was that they had not decided upon a specific cut or kind of meat before coming to the store.

Only 4% of the respondents said appearance was the reason for looking at more than one package in the display case. Most of them replied that the package they selected "looked better than the others," (or some similar remark). In other words, apparently the customers were making comparisons within a complex composition of their own desires, experiences and values, about which they did not or could not adequately express themselves.

"Securing the cut desired" was the reason some respondents gave for looking at more than one package. Variety of cuts available played some part in inducing wider comparisons, but there were not enough replies of some types to classify under a single heading. Some habitually shopped by looking at all the meat in a display counter before selecting the package they preferred. Others said, "just like to see what is available," or "to meet requirements for special diets" (Table 21).

TABLE 23 -- Replies of Respondents who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat to the Question, "Does it Make any Difference to You if Price per Pound is not Given?"

Replies	Respondents Who Preferred Pre-packaged Meat
	%
Yes	53.2
No	33.2
Not given	13.5
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	673

Influence of Price per Pound or Package on Choice

Most persons interviewed said the total price of the package was the greatest factor in choice, but 53% said they were influenced by the price per pound (Tables 22 and 23). Those more concerned about the total package cost also wanted to know the price per pound (Table 24). Reasons given by those who wanted the price per pound stated clearly on the package were rather general and ambiguous. "I just

TABLE 24 -- Reasons why Respondents Desired Having the Price per Pound Given on the Package.

Replies	Respondents Who Desired Price Per Pound on Package
	%
Just like to know price per pound	25.1
Know what she is getting	19.6
Price comparison	18.1
Quality in proportion to money spent	5.0
Weight comparison	5.0
Afraid of being cheated	3.1
Wish to know which cuts cost more	2.0
Other	1.7
Not given	20.4
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	358

want to know," said 25%. Apparently these persons could not define their use of the price per pound as a factor. Another 15% said "then I know what I'm getting." Apparently this was the respondent's way of saying that the price per pound was her common denominator for such factors as quality and weight in helping her to make up her mind as to the ultimate choice. Somewhat vaguely, 18% replied "price comparison." Others more specific in their response used price per pound as a basis for (1) comparing quality in proportion to the money spent, (2) comparing of weights, and a means of keeping within their budgets limitations, (3) checking on the accuracy of the total price, and (4) comparing cost per pound (Table 24).

One in each three customers said they believed pricing by the pound was unimportant, and were concerned only about the total cost. Some bought according to the quantity in the package, and a few said they paid no attention to the price or cost of their meat (Table 25).

TABLE 25 -- Reasons why Respondents Said "Total Price Only" on Package was Sufficient.

Replies	Respondents Who Wanted Only Total Price on Package
	%
Only total cost is important	25.0
Buys by size or weight of package	9.4
Pays no attention to price or cost	6.7
Price comparison	3.5
Weight given so can figure price per pound	3.1
Other	4.1
Not given	48.2
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	224

Grades and Labels Affecting Purchasers' Choices

Although some stores post the grade of meat handled in the store, it is probable that few consumers actually have any appreciable knowledge about graded meat. Little fresh meat at the retail level carries the government grade designation. This vagueness or lack of information on grades probably accounts for the low rate of response when shoppers were asked what grades and labels they considered when buying fresh meat (Table 26). Since 28% indicated their choices were based on government grades, it appears that grade is a factor in meat selection. It is likely that some of the consumers thought the government inspection label on the meat was a grade designation, for it was mentioned by 20% of those interviewed. The packer's brand or label, and the butchers' recommendation were each mentioned by 11% of the

TABLE 26 -- Grades and Labels Considered by Respondents When Buying Fresh Meat.

	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference			
Grades and Labels	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Government grade.	27.6	29.7	24.1	27.9*
Store label or brand	24.1	16.1	18.2	20.3
Packer label or brand . . .	13.1	9.4	10.8	11.4
Butcher's recommendation	5.5	17.1	15.3	11.2
Use my own judgment . . .	9.8	11.2	12.3	10.7
All grades and labels . . .	.6	.6	1.0	.6
Not given‡	30.2	27.7	24.6	28.4
Number of respondents . .	673	509	203	1385

* Percentages add to more than 100 because many respondents mentioned more than one grade or label.

‡ The large percentage of "not given" was due to the apparent inability of many respondents to express themselves in terms of grades and labels or brands.

respondents. The butcher's recommendation was more important to respondents who preferred that type of meat merchandising or who had no preference (Table 26).

Characteristics Considered in Meat Selection

Importance of the amount of fat in proportion to lean was stressed by 74% of the customers interviewed. Next in order were (2) attractiveness, (3) color of the lean meat, (4) and price. Regardless of the

TABLE 27 -- Factors Considered by Respondents in Choosing Meat.

	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference			
Factors Given	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Amount of fat and lean. . .	78.9	69.9	71.4	74.5
Attractive appearance. . .	56.6	53.2	55.7	55.2
Color of lean.	44.9	39.3	46.3	43.0
Price	34.2	27.7	28.6	31.0
Amount of bone	32.2	24.4	33.5	29.5
Color of fat	23.6	22.0	30.5	24.0
Grade	17.4	16.1	10.8	16.0
Color of bone	14.4	9.8	20.7	13.6
Reputation of store	12.6	13.2	14.8	13.1
Brand	9.8	7.7	9.4	9.0
Reputation of butcher . . .	3.0	13.7	8.4	7.7
Name of cut	3.6	6.5	1.0	4.4
Freshness	3.7	3.7	2.0	3.5
Quantity in package	4.0	2.2	4.0	3.3
Texture	1.8	3.3	1.5	2.3
Number of respondents . .	673	509	203	1385

preference between the two meat merchandising methods, these four factors held the same relative importance. This is shown by the fact that 55% chose meat on the basis of its attractive appearance, 43% mentioned the importance of the color of the lean meat, 31% were concerned with price, and 29% mentioned the amount of bone. Other factors frequently mentioned were color of the fat, grade of the meat, color of the bone, and the reputation of the store (Table 27). Shoppers frequently mentioned more than one factor.

PURCHASING PRACTICES

A portion of the study was devoted to an attempt to determine what outside influences might have a bearing upon the purchase of meats in a pre-packaged service. Were the customers coming to the store because of (1) convenience, (2) a new innovation, or (3) custom? Had the customers decided before entering the store what kind or cut of fresh meat, or the amount, they planned to purchase? Did they purchase other items in place of meat if their budget did not permit them to buy all the meat they wanted?

Days Preferred by Consumers

The interviewers found that meat buying increases gradually throughout the week until a peak is reached on Friday. They found that 48% of the respondents purchased meat on Friday, 32% on Saturday, and 21% on Thursday. Only 12% said their meat purchases were made without any particular pattern of regularity as to the day of the week (Table 28).

TABLE 28 -- Days of the Week When Meat is Usually Purchased.

Days of Week	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference: Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Sunday	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4
Monday	14.6	12.0	13.3	13.4
Tuesday	15.7	16.9	18.2	16.5
Wednesday	17.8	16.3	16.3	17.0
Thursday	22.9	21.2	18.2	21.6
Friday	46.7	49.1	54.2	48.7
Saturday	33.9	34.0	26.1	32.8
Every two weeks	1.5	2.6	2.5	2.0
Every day	2.5	5.1	3.0	3.5
Anytime	11.7	12.8	15.3	12.6
Every other day	.4	.4	.5	.4
Not given	.7	.4	1.0	.6
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1385

Distance Traveled to the Store

Some customers lived as far away as 25 or more miles from the store at which they purchased fresh pre-packaged meats. Others lived only one or two blocks from the store. The distance patrons lived from the nearest store that sold meat ranged from less than two blocks to 20 miles. A total of 58% of the respondents lived within two blocks or less of a store that sold fresh meat (Table 30), but only 17% reported that they lived two blocks or less from the store where the interview took place (Table 29). Fifty-nine percent said pre-packaged fresh meat was not available at the store nearest them handling fresh meat (Table 31).

TABLE 29 -- Distance 1385 Respondents Lived From Store Where Interview Took Place.

Number of Blocks	All Respondents	Number of Miles	All Respondents
	%		%
2 or less	17.3	2 or less	28.1
3	7.4	3	5.6
4	8.1	4	2.1
5	4.8	5	3.3
6	4.4	6	1.5
7 - 9	5.8	7 - 9	1.4
10 - 14	4.4	10 - 14	2.1
15 - 19	.9	15 - 19	.9
20 - 24	.6	20 - 24	.4
25 and over	.2	25 and over	.5
Not given	.1		
Total	54.0		45.9
Number of respondents			1385

TABLE 30 -- Distances 1385 Respondents Lived From Nearest Store That Sold Meat.

Number of Blocks	All Respondents	Number of Miles	All Respondents
	%		%
2 or less	58.9	2 or less	12.4
3	11.0	3	.6
4	5.0	4	.2
5	2.5	5	.4
6	2.4	6	.2
7 - 9	1.2	7 - 9	--
10 - 14	.8	10 - 14	.2
15 - 19	--	15 - 19	.1
20 - 24	.1	20 - 24	--
		Not given	3.9
Total	81.9		18.0
Number of respondents			1385

TABLE 31 -- Replies of Respondents to the Question Asking Whether or Not Pre-packaged Fresh Meat Was Sold at the Store Nearest Them Which Retailed Meat.

Replies	All Respondents
	%
No	59.7
Yes	31.6
Don't know	2.0
Not given	6.7
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	1385

Place of Purchase

Nearly half — 48% — of those interviewed purchased all their meat at the store where the interview took place; 51%, all their fruits and vegetables; and 52% all other grocery items (Table 32).

Who Does the Shopping?

In the area selected, 83% were homemakers, and 14% were husbands (Table 33). The number of husbands might be high because of the inclement weather during the survey. On the other hand, the term "homemakers" included single women and widows. Husbands showed a slight preference for butcher service (Table 34).

When Do Purchasers Decide What To Buy? and How Much Is Bought?

Sixty-one per cent of the respondents said they had decided upon the kind of meat they intended to buy before they came to the store that day (Table 35).

While a major portion of those interviewed had already made up their minds as to the type of meat they had intended to buy, a large number of them — 46% — had not decided on the quantity. The others said they bought as they had planned. While 25% bought more than they had planned before entering the store, only a few bought less (Table 36). Why the customers bought more or less than previously planned was not easy to determine (Table 37). Those who bought more explained their purchase by saying "it looked so good," "attractively packaged" or "it had eye appeal." Of the respondents, 12% said they bought more than planned because they saw something they liked or because they saw what they considered a bargain, 10% said they wanted a good supply on hand, and 8% said they were planning to store the meat for future use. Several persons said they had a deep freeze or freezing compartment in their refrigerator, and one woman said she planned to "put this up". A few shoppers bought more because they could not get the size package originally desired or because they

TABLE 32 -- Relative Amounts of Commodities Purchased in Stores Where Interviews Took Place.

Relative Amounts Purchased	Commodities Purchased			
	Meat			
	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference			All Respondents
	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	
	%	%	%	%
All	56.5	39.5	41.9	48.1
Most	27.0	18.7	26.6	23.9
Some	15.0	35.0	28.1	24.3
None	1.0	6.7	1.5	3.2
Not given. . .	.4	.2	2.0	.6
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1385
	Fruits and Vegetables			
Relative Amounts Purchased	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference			All Respondents
	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	
	%	%	%	%
All	54.2	48.7	46.3	51.0
Most	28.1	23.4	25.6	26.0
Some	15.0	23.8	24.1	19.6
None	2.4	3.5	2.0	2.7
Not given. . .	.3	.6	2.0	.7
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1385
	Other Groceries			
Relative Amounts Purchased	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference			All Respondents
	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	
	%	%	%	%
All	56.2	50.5	45.3	52.5
Most	27.6	24.2	27.1	26.3
Some	14.6	22.2	24.1	18.8
None	1.3	2.6	1.0	1.7
Not given. . .	.3	.6	2.5	.7
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1385

realized they had not planned for enough or had unexpected company.

Among those who did not buy as much as they had planned, the chief reason seemed to be that "they did not see what they wanted." Next in order of importance was "lack of money" and "could not get the size package desired." Other reasons included such remarks as "changed my mind," " lack of time," and "forgot the list." Still other answers were given (Table 38).

Foods Used Instead of Meat

Cheese, eggs and fish were most frequently used as substitutes for meat by those whose budgets did not permit them to buy all the meat they wanted. Cereals and vegetables were also mentioned (Table 39). Substitutes for meat did not appear to be related to merchandising preferences. More than 80% of those interviewed said they were able to buy all the meat their family wanted and stay within the family budget (Table 40).

TABLE 33 -- Replies to Question, "Who Usually Does the Grocery and Meat Shopping in Your Family?"

Replies	Respondents Who Prefer Prepack Service
	%
Homemaker	83.3
Husband	14.2
Other	2.1
Not given	.4
Total	100.0
Number of respondents	1385

TABLE 34 -- All Respondents Classified According to Their Relationship to Head of Household and According to Their Preference on Meat Merchandising Service.

Relationship to Household	Prefer Pre-package Service	Prefer Butcher Service	No Preference	Total
	%	%	%	%
Homemaker	78.8	75.4	78.8	77.5
Husband	17.7	21.0	19.2	19.1
Daughter	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.7
Son	1.3	1.4	.5	1.2
Others	.4	.4	--	.4
Not given	--	.2	--	.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	673	509	203	1385

TABLE 35 -- Replies of Respondents to the Question, "Had You Decided What Kind of Meat You Were Going to Buy Before You Entered This Store Today?"

Replies	Prefer Prepack Service	Prefer Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Yes.	60.8	60.5	65.0	61.3
No	38.5	38.7	34.5	38.0
Not given.	.7	.8	.5	.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents .	673	509	203	1385

TABLE 36 -- Replies of Respondents to the Question, "Did You Buy More or Less Meat Than You Planned?"

Replies	Prefer Prepack Service	Prefer Butcher Service	No Preference	Total
	%	%	%	%
Same amount	54.1	55.4	54.2	54.5
More.	28.5	22.2	22.2	25.3
Less	4.5	6.7	8.8	6.0
Did not plan	1.3	.6	1.5	1.1
Not given.	11.6	15.1	13.3	13.1
Total.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents . .	673	509	203	1385

TABLE 37 -- Reasons Why Respondents Bought More Meat Than They Had Planned.

Reasons	Respondents Who Bought More Meat Than They Planned Classified as to Merchandising Preferences.			
	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Appearance	22.4	18.6	22.2	21.1
Saw something she liked. .	11.5	15.9	8.9	12.6
Saw a bargain	10.4	14.2	13.3	12.0
Like a good supply on hand	8.3	11.5	17.8	10.7
Decided to store some. . .	10.4	5.3	6.7	8.3
Weather bad	6.8	8.8	6.7	7.4
Thought of additional needs	6.8	3.5	4.4	5.4
Couldn't get size wanted. .	2.1	8.8	2.2	4.3
Unexpected company . . .	4.2	1.8	2.2	3.1
Other	8.8	3.6	8.9	7.1
Not given.	8.3	8.0	6.7	8.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents . .	192	113	45	350

TABLE 38 -- Reasons why Respondents Bought Less Meat Than They Had Planned.

Reasons	Respondents Who Bought Less Meat Than They Had Planned Classified as to Merchandising Preferences.			
	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Did not see what was wanted	30.0	29.4	38.9	31.7
Not enough money	16.7	14.7	11.1	14.6
Could not get size package desired.	10.0	17.6	5.6	12.2
Had meat on hand	3.3	5.9	5.6	4.9
Avoiding left overs	--	5.9	11.1	4.9
Riding bus today so can't carry it home	3.3	2.9	--	2.4
All I needed	6.7	--	--	2.4
Other	6.7	11.8	11.1	9.8
Not given.	23.3	11.8	16.7	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents . . .	30	34	18	82

TABLE 39 -- Foods Used in Place of Meat--Listed by Respondents who Stated Their Food Budgets Did Not Permit Them to Buy All the Meat Their Families Wanted.

Foods Used in Place of Meat	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preference			
	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	All Respondents
	%	%	%	%
Cheese	47.6	41.6	46.9	45.8
Eggs	40.5	46.1	42.9	43.2
Fish	34.1	38.2	44.9	37.9
Cereals	13.5	20.2	16.3	16.3
Vegetables	8.7	11.2	18.4	11.4
Soups and salads	7.1	3.4	8.2	6.1
Stew and casserole	6.3	2.2	6.1	5.3
Chicken	3.2	4.5	4.1	3.8
Milk	1.6	1.1	--	1.1
Game	--	1.1	2.0	.8
Number of respondents . .	126	89	49	264

TABLE 40 -- Replies to the Question, "Does Your Family Budget Permit You To Buy All the Meat Your Family Wants?"

Replies	Respondents Classified According to Merchandising Preferences.			All Respondents
	Prepack Service	Butcher Service	No Preference	
	%	%	%	%
Yes.	80.1	81.7	75.9	80.1
No	18.7	17.5	24.1	19.1
Not given.	1.2	.8	--	.8
Total	100.0	1100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents . .	673	509	203	1385