

HOW ABOUT THEM  
**APPLES!**



Contract Testing Inc.





# INTRODUCTION

For many of us, apple juice has been part of our food repertoire from a very young age. Crisp, refreshing, sweet, and healthy – it has a highly palatable flavour profile for young children and adults alike. It is a formidable competitor in the fruit juice category, whether fresh pressed, from concentrate, out of a box or out of a bottle, with breakfast or as a mid-day refresher, apple juice is a long-time classic favorite. And you know what they say about an apple a day... it packs a healthy punch.

We recently ran a check-up of the category, to see whether four mainstream brands of apple juice were in good health... or under the weather.

---

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

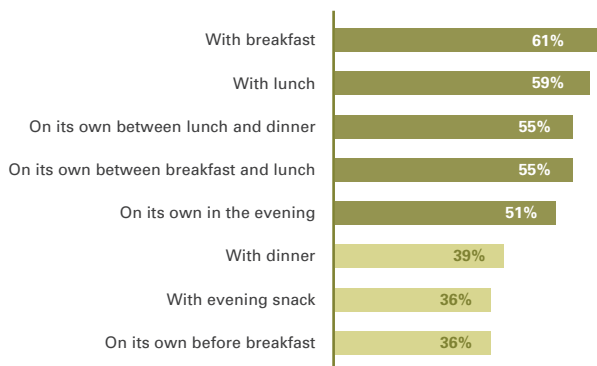
We asked 50 females from the Greater Toronto Area who regularly consume apple juice to take part in a blind evaluation of four national brands of apple juice. Each respondent evaluated 100ml of each sample, served chilled to 4°C (+/- 1°C) in clear plastic cups labeled with a 3 digit code number and presented in varied order.

The samples were rated on a combination of 9-point hedonic scales and 9-point intensity scales.

## THE ‘ANYTIME’ DRINK

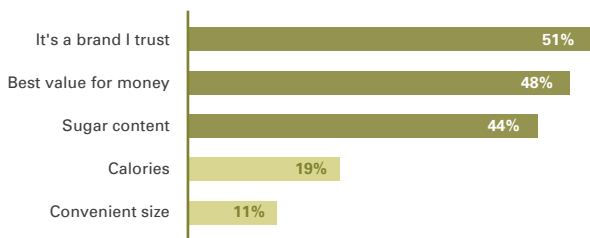
Prior to tasting the apple juice samples, panelists were asked a few usage and attitude questions. While the most popular consumption time for apple juice is as a breakfast accompaniment, we found that that apple juice is a drink that it is commonly consumed at many times throughout the day. (Fig.1)

Figure 1 – Time of Day Consumption



And when asked why they would chose to buy one brand of apple juice over another brand it was Trust in the Brand that was most often mentioned, followed by Value for Money, and Sugar Content. The least motivating benefits were Convenient Size and Calories. (Fig.2)

Figure 2 - Percent chosen as a Top 3 reasons for purchasing one brand of apple juice over another

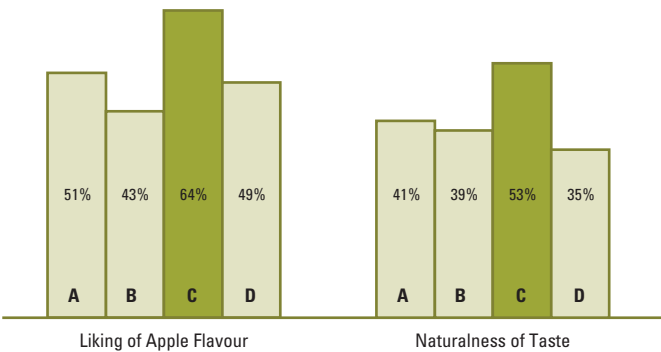


## PRODUCT TRIAL RESULTS

Three of our four contenders were statistically equal on most measures; however, only one truly stood apart as a ‘winner’ on our key measures of Overall Liking, Purchase Intent and Overall Flavour. This top performer, Product C, was a directional stand-out, boasting the top scores on most attributes.

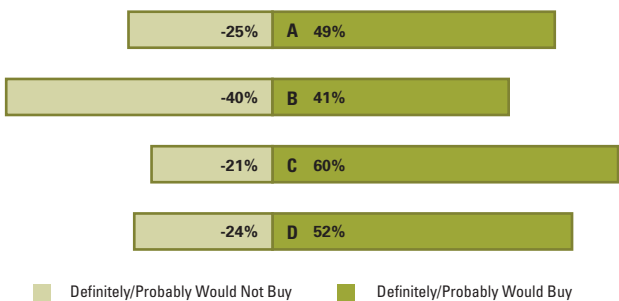
But the qualities which really gave this product the edge were the apple flavour and naturalness of the taste. It seems that this juice did not fall far from the tree – it was the closest to real apple taste than any of the others and this was its biggest advantage (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 - Percent Top 3 Box - Apple Flavour and Naturalness



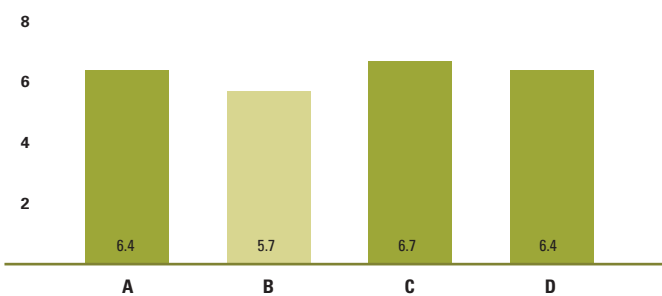
One of the four products, Product B did not perform well – failing to achieve all of our standards for good health. Purchase intent was dismally low with 40% of respondents saying they would probably or definitely not purchase it (Fig. 4).

Figure 4 – Purchase Intent



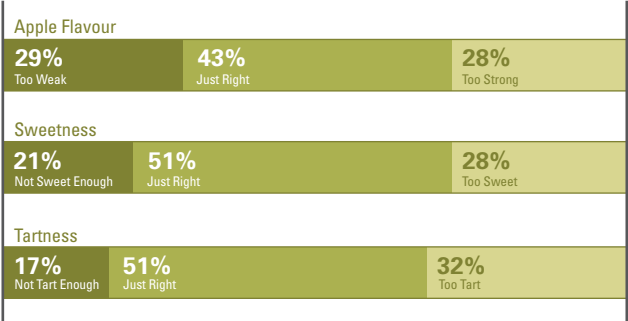
The symptoms of poor performance were present in both the flavour and textural aspects of the product, but the most concerning issue for this underperformer was the flavour profile. With a mean score of 5.7, the Overall Flavour was rated significantly lower than the other three juices (Fig 5).

Figure 5 – Mean Scores - Overall Flavour Liking



However, diagnosing the specific problem with the flavour of Product B was not that simple. Respondents were divided on many questions about the flavour – some thought it was too tart and not sweet enough, while for others it was too sweet and not tart enough. Some thought it had too strong an apple flavour, while for others the apple taste was too weak (Fig. 6).

Figure 6 – Flavour JAR Attributes for Product B



While everyone was not aligned on the exact nature of the flavour problem, many also said that it was artificial tasting. In fact, the most commonly used descriptors for this product were ‘Artificial’ and ‘Tart’, while the top performing product C, was most likely to be described with the much more favourable descriptors of ‘Refreshing’ and ‘Delicious’ (Table 1).

Table 1- Product Descriptors

Percentage of Respondents describing the product as:	Product C The Most Liked Brand	Product B The Least Liked Brand
Artificial	32%	40%
Tart	25%	40%
Refreshing	55%	39%
Delicious	45%	29%



## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Apple juice may seem like a simple flavour profile to get right. ...it should be sweet, refreshing, and taste very much like an apple. But in a category with strong consumer familiarity the stakes can be high if you get it wrong. Consumers have greater acuity with simple flavour profiles and foods that are part of the mainstream food culture. The taste of an apple is lodged in our psyches – similar to other sensory memories such as the smell of a baking pie, or the feel of sand in our toes at the beach. They are unique, identifiable, and difficult to replicate.

Whether your product strategy is to be a low cost leader or premium priced, taste profiles still must align with expectations – and sacrificing the quality and authenticity of taste may be a prescription for disaster.

For questions about this research, or how you can leverage consumer taste buds in your business, contact Andrew Scholes at [andrew.scholes@contracttesting.com](mailto:andrew.scholes@contracttesting.com).

*Contract Testing Inc. is an industry leader in sensory evaluation and consumer product testing. We are the only sensory evaluation and consumer product research company with corporately managed test sites in both Canada and the United States. With 30 years of experience, we are innovators in testing with consumers across all major food, beverage and household and personal care categories.*



Contract Testing Inc.

### CONTACT:

119 West Drive  
Brampton, ON L6T 2J6  
6760 Jimmy Carter Blvd. Suite 110  
Atlanta, GA 30071

Phone: 905 456 0783  
Fax: 905 456 1172  
Email: [info@contracttesting.com](mailto:info@contracttesting.com)  
[www.contracttesting.com](http://www.contracttesting.com)

### TEST SITE LOCATIONS:

Grand Rapids, Michigan	Toronto, Ontario
Detroit, Michigan	Calgary, Alberta
Atlanta, Georgia	Halifax, Nova Scotia
Columbus, Ohio	Montreal, Quebec
Milford, Connecticut	Vancouver, British Columbia
Phoenix, Arizona	

© 2015 Contract Testing Inc. All Rights Reserved.