



Health Promotion Evaluation Unit

# 2010 Smoke Free Perth Royal Show: Vendor Survey

School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health

**Brief Report:**  
**November 2010**

## Background

When deciding what food to sell at community fairs and festivals, vendor owners will often decide on a menu that sells well, is easily prepared, has a high profit margin and has little competition (Fitzgerald 2006). Consideration is typically given to the patron profile, whether it be children, adults, those who are after iconic fair foods or those who are after a healthier option.

To investigate the extent to which the foods available at the Smoke Free Perth Royal Show reflected the food preferences of Show patrons, two studies were conducted during the 2009 Smoke Free Perth Royal Show. Results from the first study indicated that the majority of patrons surveyed believed the food options available at the Show to be generally unhealthy and supported plans for more healthy food outlets. Patrons also indicated that if healthy foods were equivalently costed to less healthy choices, most would choose a healthy option (Ferguson 2010). The second study observed patron food purchasing habits during lunch periods at the Show and found that overwhelmingly the food purchased were of a high energy density, although it was unclear as to whether the limited number of healthy options available was of influence, whether healthy options were not promoted in a manner that was appealing, or if this pattern reflected patron food preference (Ferguson 2010).

In order to encourage greater supply and promotion of healthier food at the Show, an understanding of the food related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of the food vendor owners at the Show is important. The aim of this study was to measure Vendor owner perceptions towards the foods they promote and supply to patrons at the Show. In particular, vendor attitudes and beliefs about the food purchasing desires of patrons at the Show and the level of vendor support for providing greater promotion and supply of healthier food options at the Show.

## Method

Prior to the commencement of the Show, an information sheet and consent form was posted to food vendor owners (n=30) inviting them to participate in the study. A total of 17 owners agreed to be interviewed.

A 20 minute interviewer administered survey was conducted over the course of the Show week (25th September – 2nd October) at a time nominated by vendor owners at recruitment. A descriptive analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS for Windows (Version 17).

## Key Findings

- Owners that operated multiple vendors and those that operated only one vendor were equally represented in the study (53% and 47% respectively). One quarter of owners (24%) reported 'hot chips' as their most popular product sold (Table 1).

Table 1: Vendor Characteristics		
	N (17)	%
<b>Number of vendors operating</b>		
Single vendor owner	8	47.1
Multiple vendor owner	9	52.9
<b>Number of years operating</b>		
One-five	10	58.7
Six-ten	2	11.8
Eleven or more	5	29.5
<b>Operate at other community events</b>		
Yes	14	82.4
No	3	17.6
<b>Product sold the most</b>		
Hot chips	4	23.5
Chicken kebab	2	11.8
Coffee	2	11.8
Dagwood dog	1	5.9
Ice cream	1	5.9
Churros	1	5.9
Hamburger	1	5.9
Pizza	1	5.9
Rice and noodles	1	5.9
Stuffed potato	1	5.9
Orange juice	1	5.9
Crush juices	1	5.9

## Vendor perceptions of patron food preferences

- As shown in Table 2, the majority of vendors believed that the foods currently available at the Show were an accurate reflection of what patrons would want when they come to the Show (76%). Vendors were quoted as saying:

*'Yes, lots of people looking for junk, some people looking for healthy food'*

*'People want chips and burgers, although changing now, people are seeking out an alternative'*

*'The RAS make a genuine effort to include new and different things'*

*'Important to keep healthy options but also important to keep others, that is what the show was built on'*

*'But could be more options like salad rolls'*

- A minority of vendors did not think the foods were an accurate reflection of what patrons would want when they come to the Show (12%). Vendors were quoted as stating:

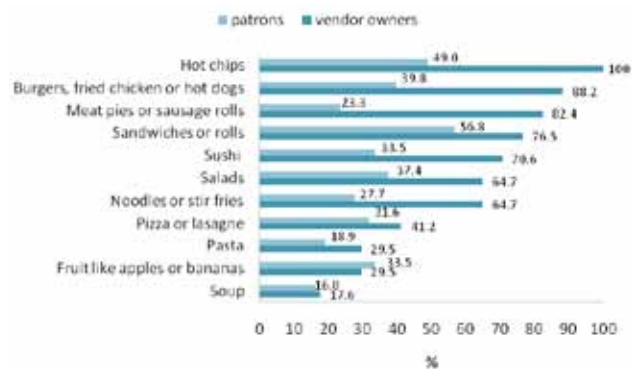
*'Have seen a few more healthier options this year but price is a big factor'*

*'Times have changed; lots of new stuff could be here'*

**Table 2: Vendor perceptions of whether or not the foods available were an accurate reflection of what patrons want when they come to the Show**

	N (17)	%
Yes	13	76.5
No	2	11.8
Don't know	2	11.8

- Vendor perceptions of whether patrons would want to purchase certain food products at the Show were generally higher compared with the 2009 patron reported food preferences (Ferguson 2010) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Vendor perceptions of patron food preferences and 2009 patron reported food preferences**

- All vendors (100%) believed that patrons would want to purchase hot chips at the Royal Show, although only one half of patrons surveyed indicated they would want to buy them.
- The majority (82%) of vendors thought patrons would want meat pies/sausage rolls whilst at the Show, whereas only one quarter (23%) of patrons indicated them as a preference (Figure 1).

## Vendor attitudes towards food and signage at the Show

- As shown in Table 3, the majority of vendors (71%) perceived there to be a balanced mix of healthy and unhealthy options at the show, with vendors stating

*'Good mix, people eating all sorts, everyone's happy'*

*'Always room for more options'*

*'People are happy to see healthy options here but choose unhealthy'*

*'If you look for healthy food its there, it is more in your face than in the past'*

- The large majority of vendors (88%) agreed with The Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) increasing the number of healthy options at the Show, although a clear trend indicated the desire for changes within the current vendors in operation as opposed to introducing new vendors (Table 3).

*'Need to substitute options, people already here should be changing, not additional vendors'*

*'Would love to see more healthy options, a change in culture'*

*'Would like to be involved'*

*'That's a good idea'*

- Two fifths of vendors (41%) supported a reduction in signage that promotes unhealthy food options, although concerns were expressed as to how owners would promote their products (Table 3).

*'Do they have the power to do that? I bring my own signage and put it up'*

*'But may not work, caterers pay to come here, cant then tell them they can't advertise'*

- As shown in Table 3, one third of vendors did not support or had no feelings either way towards a reduction in signage that promotes unhealthy food options.

*'Not good for vendors, customers want it'*

*'All part of the show – fun'*

*'Up to vendors to promote own products'*

*'Signage may not make much difference, its the culture'*

Table 3: Vendor perceptions of the foods available at the Show		
	N (17)	%
<b>Overall perception of foods available at the show</b>		
Healthy	-	-
A balanced mix of healthy and unhealthy	12	70.6
Unhealthy	5	29.4
<b>Level of agreement towards the RAS increasing the number of healthy food options</b>		
Agree	15	88.2
Disagree	-	-
No feelings either way	2	11.8
<b>Level of support for the RAS decreasing the amount of signage promoting unhealthy food</b>		
Support	7	41.2
Not support	5	29.4
No feelings either way	5	29.4

## Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that vendors felt the current food options they provide were an accurate reflection of what patrons would want to buy when they come to the Show. However, vendors tended to overestimate the unhealthy food products patrons would prefer to buy whilst at the Show compared with patron reported food preferences. This suggests that the current food options available may not be an accurate reflection of what patrons would buy and perhaps foods offered by vendors could be altered to better reflect patron preferences. The results suggest that vendors felt there was a balanced mix of healthy and unhealthy options available. However, vendors agreed with the Royal Agricultural Society increasing the number of healthy options at the Show with many mentioning a desire to alter options within current vendors as opposed to introducing new vendors.

Finally, vendors expressed mixed levels of support for decreasing signage promoting unhealthy foods and questioned how vendors would promote their products.

## References

Fitzgerald B. *Food Booth: The Complete Guide to Starting and Operating a Food Concession*. 2nd edition, 2006. Carnival Press, Oregon.

Ferguson R, Mills C, Rosenberg M and Wood L. 2009 *Smoke Free Perth Royal Show: Smoking & Nutrition Intercept Survey*. Health Promotion Evaluation Unit, School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health, The University of Western Australia, Perth, 2010.

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WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
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### Health Promotion Evaluation Unit

School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health  
The University of Western Australia  
M408, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley WA 6009

Tel +61 8 6488 5608

Fax +61 8 6488 1039

Email [hpeu@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:hpeu@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

Web [www.sseh.uwa.edu.au/about/research/hpeu](http://www.sseh.uwa.edu.au/about/research/hpeu)

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