



October 2015

## Final Report

# Eastern United States Consumers' Perceptions of Florida Strawberries – Focus Groups

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## For More Information

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## Executive Summary

Florida Strawberry Growers Association/ Eastern United States Consumers' Perceptions of Florida Strawberries  
October 2015

### Introduction

Florida exports 80% of their strawberries to states east of the Mississippi each year. Due to an increase in imports from Mexico during Florida's winter growing season, the Florida Strawberry Growers Association wanted to determine east coast consumers' awareness and preferences for Florida strawberries to develop marketing and communication campaigns outside of the state of Florida. The Center for Public Issues Education conducted 10 focus groups in five states (Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee) to collect information on consumers' strawberry preferences.

### Findings

- Participants were either buying strawberries on a regular schedule or on impulse in the store.
- Most participants purchased strawberries in grocery stores, but participants in Boston were purchasing them at corner stands and farmers markets.
- Strawberries were being eaten plain as snacks, covered in sugar or cool whip, used as an additive to cereals or shakes, or part of a dessert.
- Participants preferred moderately sized strawberries that were not too dark red and free of white spots or mold.
- Participants wanted strawberries to be sweet, juicy, and have a firm crunch when bitten.
- Strawberries were selected in the store based on price, appearance, and seasonality.
- Most of the participants preferred strawberries grown closer to their state, but Brooklyn participants had not paid attention to this in the past.
- Participants thought Florida strawberries were grown year round or said they did not know when they were grown.
- Overall, participants did not want to purchase imported strawberries. Most of them preferred Florida and local strawberries over California strawberries. Others said it would not matter to them where they were grown, as long as it was in America.
- Brooklyn participants had neutral attitudes toward Florida strawberries, but the other focus groups had positive attitudes toward them.
- Availability and price of the strawberries were the biggest barriers to purchasing Florida strawberries.
- Food miles, supporting Florida farmers and economy, and production practice, like organic strawberries or fair trade, were all incentives to purchase Florida strawberries.
- Participants had mainly seen in store advertisements for strawberries and wanted to see more promotion of Florida strawberries in the winter.
- Most participants preferred strawberry packages to have the Fresh from Florida logo on it, but others were unfamiliar with it.
- Participants said they usually do not read the label when purchasing strawberries.
- "Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long" was the most popular slogan across the focus group; however, some northern participants did not like to see the word "winter" after the harsh weather they had recently experienced.

## Background

The Florida strawberry industry contributes approximately \$300 million dollars to the state's economy annually (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services [FDACS], 2013). Florida has been the number one producer of strawberries in the United States during winter months (Wu, Guan, & Whidden, 2012) and typically exports 80% of its locally grown strawberries to states east of the Mississippi River (Buchanan, 2013). Unfortunately, there has been an influx in imported strawberries from Mexico during Florida's winter growing season (United States Department of Agriculture-Economic Research Service [USDA-ERS], 2013; Wu et al., 2012). This increase in competition has caused Florida's market share of strawberries to decrease (Ohlemeier, 2013). The Florida Strawberry Research and Education Foundation funded this study to better understand how to promote Florida strawberries in out of state markets against rising competition.

This focus group study specifically explored:

- Consumers' shopping habits for strawberries
- Consumers' preference for Florida strawberries;
- Incentives and barriers to purchasing Florida strawberries;
- Consumers' preference for growing location and strawberry labels;
- Consumers' preference for different slogans and advertisements promoting Florida strawberries.

## Methods

Data for this report was collected through 10 focus groups held in five states. The focus group locations were in Boston, Massachusetts; Brooklyn, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbus, Ohio; and Nashville, Tennessee. These states represented the regions where Florida strawberries had been shipped with the exception of Ohio (S. Harrell, personal communication, January 24, 2015). The Ohio focus groups were supposed to be used as control market because Florida strawberries were supposedly not shipped there and Florida strawberry growers wanted to enter the market. However, the participants were familiar with Florida strawberries because they had been sold in the area. Two focus groups were conducted in each of these cities between March and April of 2015, which was during the end of Florida's strawberry season. Participants were recruited through a third party research firm and were offered a monetary incentive. There was a total of 75 participants in this study. Member checking at the conclusion of each focus group was used to ensure credibility of the findings. Detailed descriptions of the findings have been provided in this report to aid in the transferability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The groups were analyzed using a constant comparison method to develop themes which have been identified in this report.

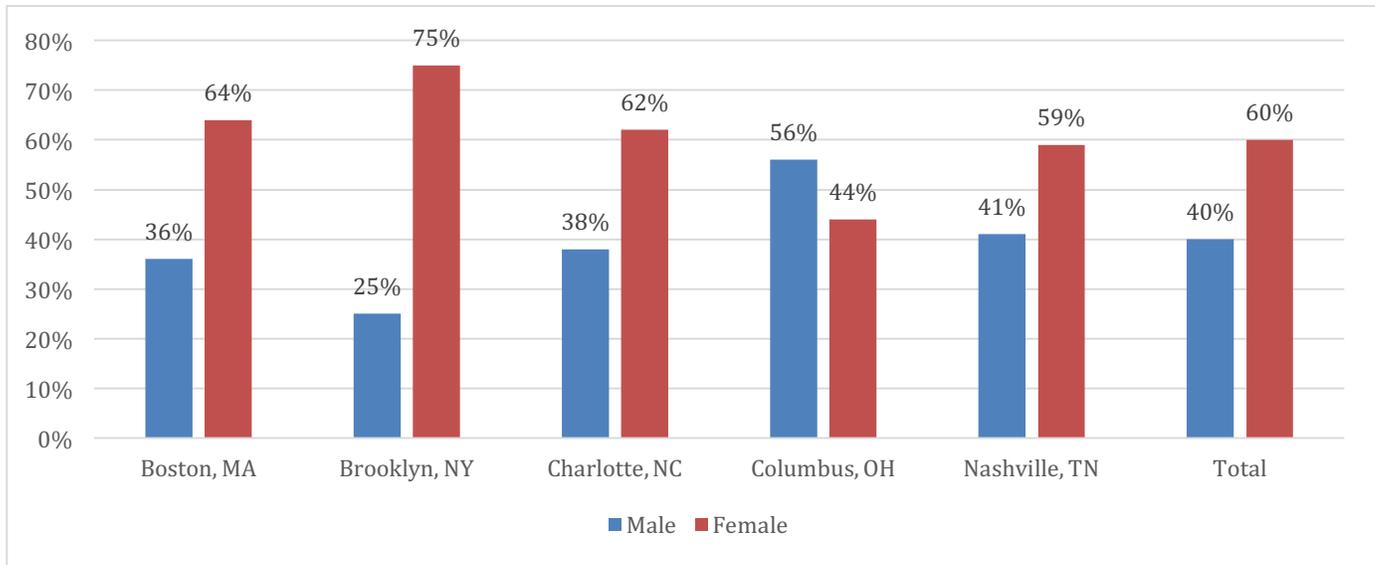
## Description of Participants

There was an average of eight participants in each of the focus groups and 75 total. Fourteen participants attended the two Boston, MA focus groups, 12 in Brooklyn, NY, 16 in Charlotte, NC, 16 in Columbus, OH, and 17 in Nashville, TN. A description of the demographics for each focus group location follows.

### Gender

Overall, the majority of the participants were female (60%,  $n = 51$ ). The only location with more men was in Columbus, OH (56%,  $n = 8$ ). A description of gender in each location can be seen in Figure 1.

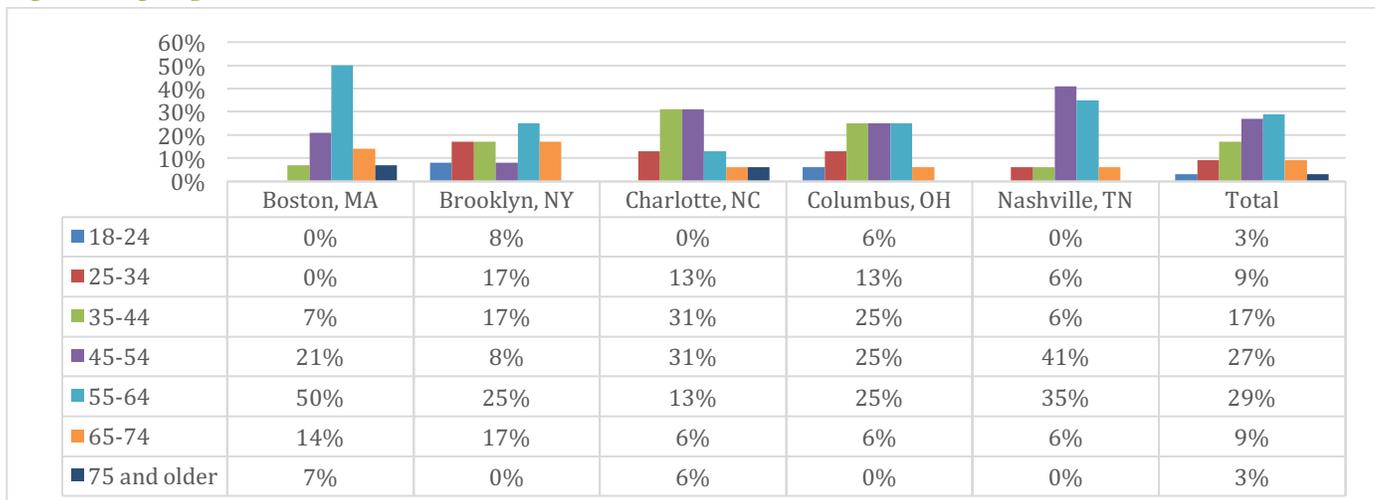
Figure 1. Gender representation



### Age Representation

Figure 2 shows that the majority of the participants were between the ages of 45 and 64 (56%,  $n = 42$ ). There was a larger proportion of participants between the ages of 55 and 64 in the Boston, MA focus groups compared to the other age groups (50%,  $n = 7$ ). Nashville, TN focus groups also had a large proportion of middle-aged participants (45-64, 76%,  $n = 13$ ).

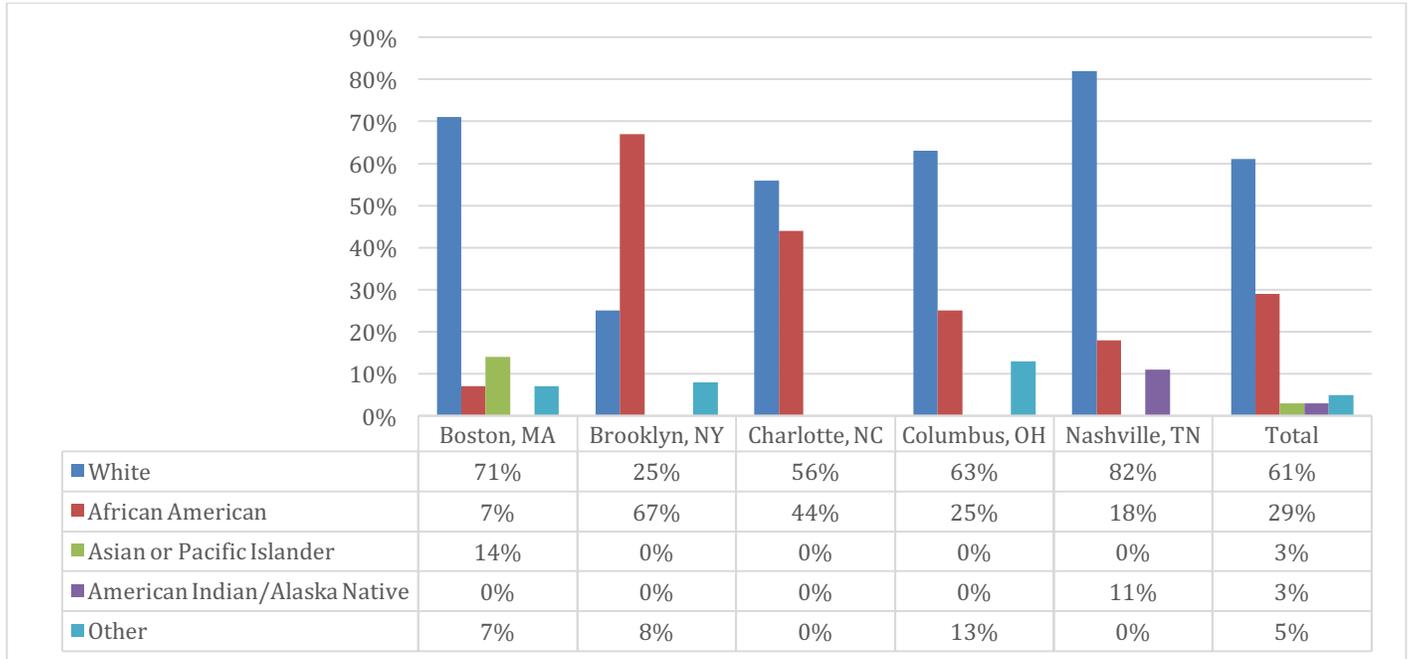
Figure 2. Age representation



### Race/Ethnicity Representation

The majority of participants were White (61%,  $n = 46$ ), followed by African-American (29%,  $n = 22$ ; Figure 3). Brooklyn, NY was the only focus group location with the highest proportion of participants reporting their race as African American (67%,  $n = 8$ ). Only one participant ( $n = 1$ ) in the Columbus, OH location and one in the Boston, MA location reported having a Hispanic ethnicity (6% and 7% respectively)..

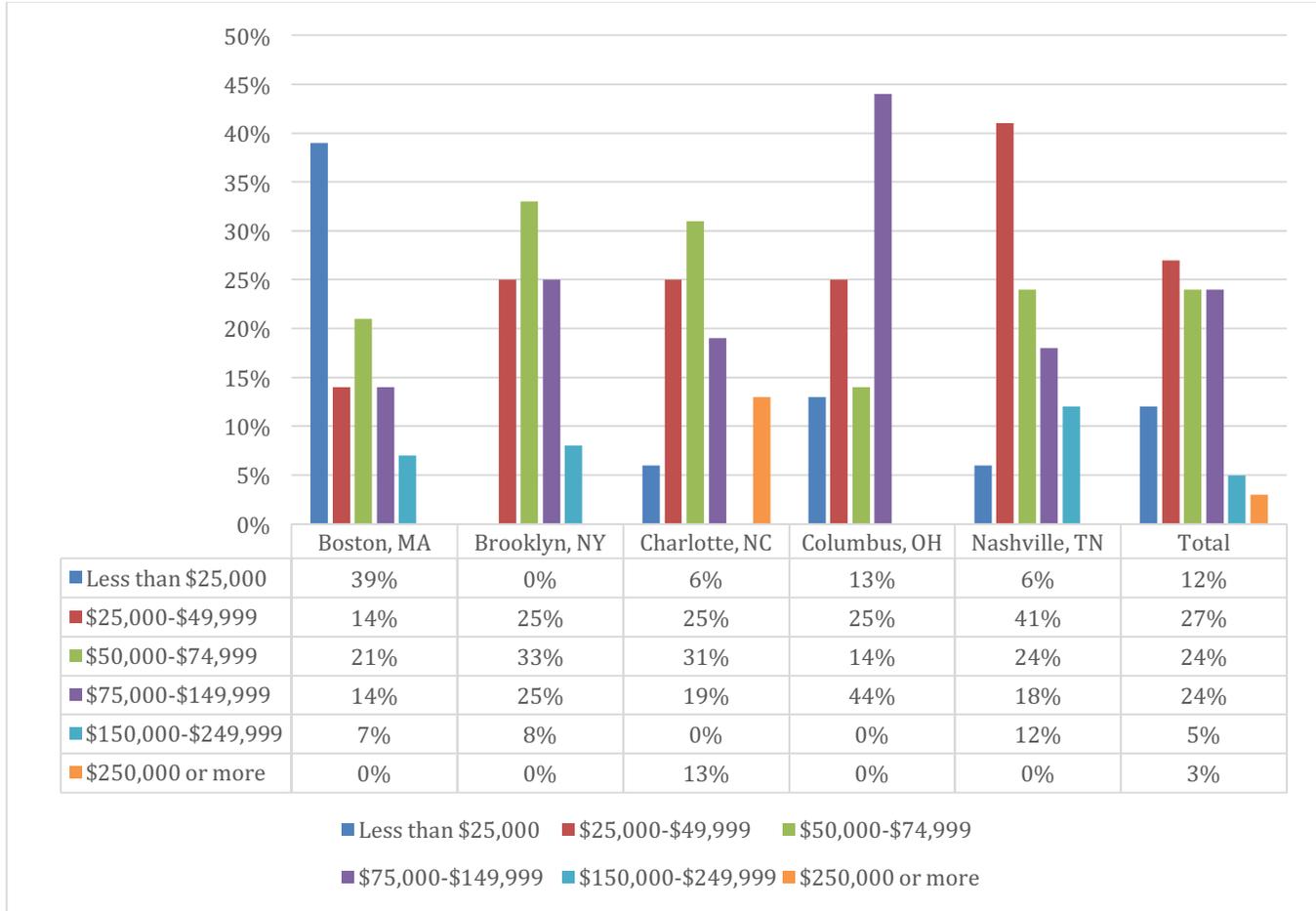
Figure 3. Racial representation



## Income Representation

The majority of the participants' family income before taxes was between \$25,000 and \$74,999 (51%,  $n = 38$ ; Figure 4). The Boston, MA focus groups had the highest proportion of participants earning less than \$25,000 a year (39%,  $n = 5$ ). The Columbus, OH focus groups earned the most out of all the locations; 44% ( $n = 7$ ) earned between \$75,000 and \$149,999 annually.

Figure 4. Income representation



## Results

### Shopping for Strawberries

The focus groups began by asking participants to describe their shopping trips for strawberries. The frequency at which strawberries were purchased, where they were purchased, what the strawberries were used for, and how the strawberries were selected were the main topic areas discussed.

#### Frequency

Participants were asked to describe how often they purchased strawberries. Participants in each location indicated that they either purchased strawberries regularly or on an impulse while in the store. The following quotes illustrate these findings.

#### *Boston, MA*

- Nancy~ “In season, I’d probably say every two weeks.”
- Sue~ “When I go to the grocery store, if I see them on sale or if I have a desire for them, I just buy them...If I have a desire for them, I buy them.”

#### *Brooklyn, NY*

- Janine~ “I would say almost every trip to the market. So, that would be like every other week.”

#### *Charlotte, NC*

- Anna~ “I don’t make a special trip, especially now they’re available it seems like year round that I buy them, if they look pretty.”
- Parker~ “I’m strictly need based. If I need them, I get them.”

#### *Columbus, OH*

- Billy~ “I don’t buy regularly, I buy them kind of just occasionally when the mood strikes.”

#### *Nashville, TN*

- Nicole~ “Every time I go [I buy them]. Even if I have some at home because you can only get them certain times of the year.”

#### Where to Buy

There were differences between the geographic locations regarding where the participants purchased strawberries.

#### *Boston, MA*

The Boston participants indicated purchasing strawberries from farmer’s markets and grocery stores the majority of the time

- Angie~ “I think it depends where I’m driving. If I happen to come across a farm stand, I might buy them.”
- Kelly ~ “One of the places that I like the most for sweet strawberries is Whole Foods. They have really good ones too.”

#### *Brooklyn, NY*

In Brooklyn, the participants indicated less access to grocery stores. Other than street vendors, the participants purchased food from Whole Foods and Costco.

- Andrew~ “Grocery stores, fruit markets, street vendors, I’ll get them anywhere I see them if they look red.”
- Janine~ “Well, in my neighborhood, produce selection isn’t the best so I normally venture out a little further to either Whole Foods or Fairway in Brooklyn.”
- Ralph~ “Yeah, I get them a number of different places. If Costco has them and the price is good, I’ll get a big thing [of them] at Costco.”

### *Charlotte, NC*

Participants in Charlotte reported purchasing strawberries from a variety of stores such as Costco, Whole Food, Harris Teeter, and Fresh Market.

- Pam~ “For me either Costco, Harris Teeter or the Fresh Market.”

### *Columbus, OH*

Columbus participants preferred to purchase strawberries from grocery stores such as Kroger’s, Meijer, and Giant Eagle.

- Mike~ “I think Kroger’s has a better selection than Walmart does, surprisingly. The ones we normally get from Kroger’s are usually better, but that’s where we tend to go to anyways”

### *Nashville, TN*

In Nashville, participants were purchasing strawberries from Whole Foods, Publix, Walmart, and Food Lion.

- Katie~ “When I go the store I always go to Kroger since Kroger’s is basically the only store that’s here outside of Piggly Wiggly.”

### *Strawberry use*

Participants were asked how they typically used and prepared strawberries for eating. There was a variety of answers across the focus group locations, but the participants consistently reported eating the strawberries plain, adding sugar or cool whip to eat as a snack, or using the strawberries as an additive to a dessert or breakfast.

### *Boston, MA*

- Margaret~ “So, whether it’s on granola or cereal or oatmeal [we add strawberries to it]...and we also put them in our salads and they often can go into desserts. We make our own ice cream and berries are a food group for us.”
- Mindy~ “I eat them as a snack. They’re healthy and low in calories, high in Vitamin C, fiber, all that good stuff and in the summer I make strawberry shortcake.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

- Claudia~ “I eat mine raw, just right straight [out of the container].”

### *Charlotte, NC*

- David~ “The majority of the time, I use strawberries in my shakes I drink in the morning. In summer time I just eat them raw but during rest of the year I drink a breakfast shake so I put strawberries and other fruit in there and mix them all up.”

### *Columbus, OH*

- Clark~ “I have been to parties where they actually have taken a fondue pot with chocolate and strawberries.”

### *Nashville, TN*

- Olivia~ “I put a little sugar with them so it makes kind of a syrup, goes good with pound cakes, goes good on other fruit that maybe isn't so sweet, so it kind of helps it out a little bit.”
- Chuck~ “[I use them as] dinner sides for my kid.”

### *Appearance*

When the participants were asked to describe what a perfect strawberry should look like, they talked about the color, size, and texture. The preferences varied person to person, but most participants agreed that the strawberries should smell fresh, be free of mold, and not have any white on it.

### *Boston, MA*

- Levi~ “Not a really big strawberry that almost look like an apple, that's something that I wouldn't buy.”
- Angie~ “Like a nice red, not an orang-ey red, but a nice red.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

- Janine~ “I think it should be smaller to medium in size, not too large because then I'm like, whoa, not buying those strawberries. Then also, not crazy red, but a vibrant red. Like too vibrant, but not like extremely like blood red, that's weird. And I guess no signs of bruising and no signs of that white mold fur that grows on strawberries as well. And that to me that's ideal.”
- Sarah~ “All of them don't have to look like they're on steroids. But I do, you know, I do want to see a few big ones that you can bite into and the juice just explodes.”

### *Charlotte, NC*

- Pam~ “Yeah, I think any barriers to me would be ones that would keep me from buying any strawberries, no matter where they're from. If they look like they're not ripe or if they look like they're past their freshness [I don't buy them].”
- Mark~ “Do they smell like a strawberry and are they not huge and not small, just the right size?”
- Parker~ “And then, this is kind of unrelated to the actual strawberries, but the size of the container I think is big for me. Like I say I travel a lot, I'm always gone. So, some people like the big containers [be]cause they know they're going to use them. I'd like to see maybe the big and the smaller one because I'm never going to use the big one in the time that I'm going to have to throw it out, so I would prefer the option of a smaller container.”

### *Columbus, OH*

- Billy~ “Yes. It's nice and shiny and red, there's no dents and bruises, not a lot of white, you know, with a green top.”
- Meredith~ “I actually like them a little bit smaller. I like the ones where like you can just cut the top of the strawberry and pop the whole thing in your mouth as opposed to cutting it.”

### *Nashville, TN*

- Nicole~ “Not dried out and brown on the edges. Needs to be nice and green and fluffy.”
- Olivia~ “And I notice on the mutant strawberries, sometimes there's like a gathering of seeds at the end and it's extra crunchy.”

## Taste

Participants were asked to describe how the perfect strawberry should taste. Sweet, juicy, tart, firm, and happiness were common ways to describe the taste of a strawberry.

### *Boston, MA*

- Nancy~ “Distinct strawberry taste as opposed to bland.”
- Liz~ “Sweet and sour.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

- Rachel~ “And juicy. Dripping down your chin.”(laughter)

### *Charlotte, NC*

- Becky~ “Sweet, definitely. Like it doesn't need sugar. You say don't put sugar on it, like it doesn't need it. [Be]cause good strawberries don't need sugar.”
- Parker~ “There's gotta be that texture. It's gotta almost crunch, I feel like.”

### *Columbus, OH*

- Mike~ “[They taste] like happiness.”
- Meredith~ “Sweet, just a little bit firm.”

### *Nashville, TN*

- Nicole~ “Sweet, juicy, soft, not mushy, firm.”
- Katie~ “It depends on what you are using them for.”

## Selection

Participants were asked how they selected strawberries in the supermarket. All five focus groups discussed price, appearance, and seasonality of the strawberries in relation to how they selected the strawberries. Some participants felt price was the most important thing to consider while others felt that if they wanted the strawberries enough, they would pay extra. Participants also indicated that they looked at the price of strawberries compared to other fruit, like raspberries and blueberries, when making purchasing decisions. They also considered the freshness and size of the strawberries, and most of the participants purchased the strawberries year round, but purchased more in the summer. Seasonality was not the most important consideration for the participants; however, the Nashville participants reported considering the season more often than the other locations.

### *Boston, MA*

#### Price

- Levi~ “I look at price.”
- Kenneth~ “For me, yeah, you gotta get cheap and good at the same time.”

#### Appearance

- Sue~ “I make sure mine don't have no rotten spots on it and they're all beautiful.”
- Elizabeth~ “I don't like the really big ones, you know, the big ones they use for dipping in chocolate? They don't have that much flavor. The smaller ones seem to have more flavor.”

### Seasonality

- Mindy~ “There’s a blank area in those winter months where the berries just don’t look that appealing to me in the stores so I tend to wait until they start to look better.”
- Angie~ “I think they’re less expensive [when they are] in season.”

### Brooklyn, NY

#### Price

- Janine~ “Cost affects the matter most. I will go with the cheaper or the fresher bunch.”
- Sarah~ “You work every day and I can treat myself to some strawberries even if they’re a little over priced, I’m going to get them if I really want them.”

#### Appearance

- Andrew~ “If they’re red it seems to me they’re a little fresher and obviously you don’t want mold or any fungus or anything on them.”
- Claudia~ “I like my strawberries to be quite a good size.”

### Seasonality

- Tiffany~ “Let’s see. Strawberries, I buy strawberries in the summer. That’s basically when I buy strawberries. You really can’t find them much other times.”
- Janine~ “They’re always available as far as I can see in New York. In the summer time they are more plentiful.”
- Rachel~ “I buy them all year round as well.”

### Charlotte, NC

#### Price

- Christi~ “It’s mostly price generated for me. If they’re the right price, I’m going to get them frequently.”
- Parker~ “Price. Given generally identical fruits, price is going to be a huge factor.”
- Steve~ I’m going to be the one that doesn’t necessarily go with the flow. I have fresh fruit in the house all the time. So it’s whatever’s in season, and if I have to pay a little bit more, I may not like it, but I do it because I always have fresh fruit.”

#### Appearance

- Andy~ “For myself, when I shop for them, I normally will smell the package and I have been known to pass them by if they do not have much fragrance to them. And I will always turn the package over and sometimes they will have a little green tip on them or whatever and I’ll pass them by if they’re like that, [be]cause it tells me they were probably picked too early.”

### Seasonality

- Pam~ “They’re, in the summer, I’m buying them more frequently, and I buy strawberries that are grown more regionally. You know, North Carolina, South Carolina strawberries. And then in the winter, I’m buying them less frequently and they’re usually the ones that are [from] Florida, usually I think.”

### Columbus, OH

#### Price

- Megan~” I notice the price, but will buy sometimes regardless of pricing because they’re very useful in our household.”

- Meredith~ “And it’s not so much necessarily just the price of the strawberries, but like the price of the strawberries in comparison to maybe the other fruits that are around. So, like, if raspberries are on sale, I’ll buy raspberries. If blueberries are on sale, I’ll buy blueberries. If strawberries are on sale, I’ll buy strawberries.”

#### Appearance

- Mike~ “And that’s one thing I normally tend to do, is look at the color. I always feel like the darker they are, the sweeter they end up being for some reason. Like you said, if they’re too white, they got more of a like acidic taste to them, they’re sour more. So I always try to look [and] see how colorful they are, how big they are and whether or not they got bruises on them or anything like that.”

#### Seasonality

- Ron~ “[Strawberries are] a summer time fruit that I eat a lot, so that’s when I purchase, in the summer time and compared to the prices of like Kroger or Giant Eagle, at a fruit market, it’s going to be much cheaper.”
- Phyllis~ “For me, I don’t think it’s a season thing for me. If I go in the store and I see good strawberries laying there, that’s when I get them.”
- Craig~ “I mean, the summer is going to be probably a better time than the winter but, I mean, if I found something that looked good in January, and the price was right, I would get it.”

### Nashville, TN

#### Price

- Robert~ “One of the first things I think about is price. What kind of a deal can I get?”

#### Appearance

- Sarah~ “And I like to get them pretty much, you know, just as ripe as possible and check for mold. I’m like x-ray vision for mold.”

#### Seasonality

- Ricky~ “I’m mainly an in-season strawberry person and in Portland, Tennessee, it’s about forty miles from here, and they grow a lot of strawberries and you can pick them yourself up there. And they’re really fresh. And when I do buy them out of season I tend to do the same, look for not mushy and not white, but very seldom do I eat them out of season.”
- Howard~ “Yeah, I would say seasonal. We have a tendency to buy them more in the summer than the winter.”

### Growing Location

Each focus group was asked if they considered the growing location of strawberries when shopping for them. Participants in different locations did not report the same level of importance associated with growing location.

### Boston, MA

Participants in Boston agreed that the growing location was important to them. Many participants described that they would prefer to purchase strawberries grown in the New England area and that they had a general preference to purchase strawberries grown closer to where they lived.

- Elizabeth~ “If I can get them grown in New England, in the summer... that would be my first choice.”
- Kelly~ “Well, to me it’s very important because the closer that you get the strawberries, they’re going to be more fresh, more sweet.”

- David ~ “I look for US grown stuff, but [between] California and Florida, it wouldn’t really make a difference to me.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

The participants in Brooklyn said that growing location was not on their mind when shopping for strawberries. Since they often purchased the fruit from street vendors, they said they usually could not even find a growing location if they wanted to.

- Janine~ “In all [truthfulness], I don’t actually look specifically for where they were grown or where they’re from when I buy them. I just really look at the freshness of the strawberries themselves and the price point.”
- Sarah~ “I usually don’t look at where they’re grown. I’ll look at how fresh they look and the coloring.”
- Tiffany~ “Well, that’s the problem with buying on the street, you don’t know where they’re coming from most of the time. (agreement heard) You get these little tiny labels on the fruit that they stick on.”

### *Charlotte, NC*

Participants in Charlotte reported that they preferred to purchase domestically grown strawberries, but they were not always thinking about the growing location when shopping.

- Parker~ “I prefer US [grown] just because in my head something from another country takes longer to ship here and I know our health standards are a little bit stricter than most of these Central American, South American, wherever countries. But, again, if it’s not jumping out and if not a significant way to see that, then [I probably would not consider it].”

### *Columbus, OH*

In Columbus, the participants said that they were not always considering the growing location when looking for strawberries, and that other characteristics, like freshness, were more important.

- Cynthia~ “I was going to say, I don’t even look to see where they came from.”
- Tiffany~ “I’d prefer if it was done in America, but if they’re fresher from somewhere else, then [I would purchase from that location].”

### *Nashville, TN*

The participants in Nashville had stronger feelings than the other focus groups toward the growing location of strawberries and reported it as being highly important.

- Sarah~ “Just that’s pretty much number one to me, is the where they come from.”
- Jo~ “Yeah, I definitely thought about [it] from a mental aspect, want to buy as close to local as I can.”
- Bill~ “I think there’s a drastic difference in the fruit the closer it is to you.”

## **Strawberry Season**

To assess the participants’ awareness of both Florida strawberries and the ones grown in their local areas, the participants were asked to describe the growing season of their local strawberries and Florida strawberries. With the exception of Brooklyn, participants were mostly able to identify their local growing season. Participants believed Florida strawberries were either grown all year, in the summer months, or simply did not know the answer. Nashville participants were able to correctly identify the growing season as winter for Florida strawberries.

### *Boston, MA*

#### Local

The participants were able to correctly identify the growing season of Massachusetts' strawberries as June and July.

#### Florida

- Ely~ "I don't know when."
- Elizabeth~ "I would say all year round."
- Ben~ "Probably all year round."

### *Brooklyn, NY*

#### Local

- Holly~ "I have no idea."
- Tiffany~ "I don't either."
- Rachel~ "I'm thinking about round about now as I mention, maybe May...May[or]June."

#### Florida

- Claudia~ "February. That's when I was [in Florida]."
- Tiffany~ "I don't know, I don't know."
- Rachel~ "Well, [with] the decent weather [there]...say I could be safe in saying nine months out of the year."

### *Charlotte, NC*

#### Local

- Lilly~ "Around April or 1st of May, I would think."
- David~ "They plant them about March and like she said, April and May."

#### Florida

- Christi~ "All year."
- Lilly~ "I'd say summer time."
- Steve~ "I think the Strawberry Festival is in February."

### *Columbus, OH*

Was not asked about Florida's growing season since strawberries are not traditionally sold in Ohio.

#### Local

- Nancy~ "I believe that it's from like the maybe the first or second week in June till maybe the first part of July. It's very short, it's not very long."
- Jim~ "June to probably August. No, maybe even through September." (agreement heard)

### *Nashville, TN*

#### Local

- Ricky~ "I know they start selling them in the spring."
- Jo~ "Yeah. Typically it is around Mother's Day which is normally around the..."
- Chuck~ "Last of May, first of June. It's really about a two week season." (agreement heard)

## Florida

- Nicole~ “Isn’t it February through June/July, before it gets too hot? But it starts in February which is you guys’ early spring.”
- Nancy~ “I just thought it’s longer than here, but I have no idea. It’s not in the winter.”
- Nicole~ “When it starts to get a little warmer and not blazing hot. You all got a longer growing season.”

## Strawberry Preference

The participants were asked to describe their preferences for strawberries depending on different growing locations. A description of each locations preferences is below since there were some regional differences.

### *Boston, MA*

Participants in Boston were suspicious of imported strawberries due to a perceived lack of regulations. Some indicated a preference for locally grown strawberries, but most did not seem to care. A few participants were not inclined to purchase California strawberries due to taste and appearance, and others simply preferred Florida over California strawberries. However, a number of participants reported they likely could not tell the difference between the products.

## Imported

- Ben~ “I’m kind of suspicious about other countries.”
- Angie~ “Yeah, I mean, only because of, you know, like pesticides and things like that. The US watches [those kinds of things] or I would hope that they do, you know, the USDA, or whatever.”

## Local

- Margaret~ “I do like them local, because then you can pick them when they’re absolutely ripe and you’re gonna eat them within the day or two.”

## California

- Mindy~ “I’m just opinionated about these things. But I just find the California strawberries too large and watery and flavorless.”
- Margaret~ “Well, since they’re [California strawberries] sitting in my refrigerator I guess I’ll have to concede that I’m okay with it.” (laughter)

## Florida

- David~ “It’s, like I said, I buy them on impulse, I get them when they’re on sale and I couldn’t really tell you the difference between California strawberries and Florida strawberries...although I’ll be making a note of it now.” (laughter)
- Angie~ “I think I would probably prefer Florida as opposed to California.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

Participants in Brooklyn had relatively neutral preferences toward the growing location of strawberries compared to the other focus group locations. Preference for imported strawberries was dependent on the country of origin, and the participants assumed the California strawberries would be more expensive. Most of the participants could not recall eating Florida strawberries in the past but those that did, had a strong preference toward them.

#### Imported

- Ralph~ “It depends on the country... I’m okay with Chile ‘cause I think we get a lot of stuff from Chile and most of it’s pretty good and it’s, you know, the flip seasons. But, you know, other than Chile, if you just picked a random place then I’d be more concerned, you know.”

#### Local

- Rachel~ “I would be open to having strawberries from maybe upstate or out east in Long Island. Preferably organic strawberries and I imagine in those places the strawberries might be grown in a greenhouse or something, especially if the weather is cold.”

#### California

- Claudia~ “We’re going to have food prices off the chart I think, with California in such a mess.”

#### Florida

- Claudia ~ “That’s another thing about the Plant City strawberry, they’re not as large as the California [strawberry], but by the same token, the Californian I feel has less flavor, less sweetness sometimes.”

#### *Charlotte, NC*

The participants in Charlotte agreed that they would not purchase strawberries from countries like Mexico because they believed the standards were different. They also expressed wanting to purchase locally to support the local economy. Most of the participants preferred Florida over California strawberries, but some had not noticed any differences.

#### Imported

- Andy~ “And for me, I would possibly not even buy them if they were from Mexico.”
- David~ “I prefer not to, for the simple fact I know our standards are different than anybody else’s.”

#### Local

- David~ “I just prefer to buy locally because I would rather keep the money in the area and help the farmers that’s growing it themselves because my grandfather and my uncle used to be farmers.”
- Becky~ “I mean, I’d rather support our state if there’s any difference in taste or, given the choice.”

#### California

- Steve~ “I don’t think California strawberries are as good as the Florida strawberries.”
- Pam~ “I would purchase them if there weren’t other ones available that were grown closer to North Carolina.”

#### Florida

- Darrell~ “I think Florida grows great fruit, as far as oranges and everything that comes from Florida usually is pretty good. [Be]cause like the school [I work at] orders Florida oranges and grapefruits and stuff like that, and it seems to be pretty safe and it also tastes good.”
- Andy~ “But if you had the two choices, I would definitely be willing to pay more for Florida over Mexico because I know that the US standards, you know, I feel like they’re a lot better than Mexico’s, you know, and quality control and that sort of thing.”
- Lilly~ “I don’t think I’ve ever noticed really any difference [between California and Florida].”

### *Columbus, OH*

In Charlotte, the participants mostly preferred to purchase domestic strawberries, but some did say they were not opposed to helping a country like Mexico economically by purchasing their strawberries. They did not have strong feelings toward local strawberries, but thought purchasing them would support the local economy. The participants also did not have strong attitudes toward Florida or California strawberries, but some did oppose anything from California.

#### Imported

- Bob~ “If I buy from Mexico I might be helping some poor little kid, who has a little garden to make some money. So, there’s some poor people down there and if they can start making a little bit of money, I’m not opposed to it.”
- Mike~ “The way I look at it is, America’s economy is doing bad enough on it’s own (agreement heard) without us spending our money somewhere else, I mean, there’s no need for us to.”
- Tiffany~ “Mexico has a lot of water issues too, so, what are they watering their fruits and vegetables with?”

#### Local

- Tom~ “That’d be cool. Support your local grower, you know, makes you feel more connected with the people that are actually on the farm and to you buying them in a market.” (agreement heard)
- Billy~ “I wouldn’t go out of my way to look for it, but I would feel good supporting local growers.”

#### California

- Ron~ “As long as the price is good and strawberries are fresh, you know, it doesn’t matter.”
- Bob~ “I oppose anything California. I mean, just for kicks. I mean, if I really wanted strawberries and that’s the only one, I’d do it.”

#### Florida

- Craig~ “It’s not what I typically think of [when I think about] Florida. When I think of fruit I kind of think more of citrus type fruits. So, I might wonder is this something new that they’re growing strawberries in Florida or have they been doing this for fifty years and I’m just kind of unaware of it?”

### *Nashville, TN*

The Nashville participants also preferred domestic strawberries due to regulations and shipping distance. The participants had strong preferences toward local strawberries due to their freshness, and did not care for California strawberries. They believed the California strawberries had some kind of wax coating on them and did not taste as good as Florida strawberries.

#### Imported

- Nancy~ “I don’t think they regulate what pesticides can be used outside of the country like they do here. A little bit more lax, so that’s concerning.”
- Chuck~ “Product notwithstanding, the farther away they have to ship it the more likely it’s going to be fuzzy when I see it.”

#### Local

- Brenda interrupts~ “Local is always best.”
- Nancy~ “Seems like to me the fresher they are...like if I know they’ve come from Portland, they don’t stay fresh very long. But I think that’s a good thing [because] that means there hasn’t been a lot of stuff put on them to preserve them, so...”

## California

- Nicole~ “California strawberries, for some reason, like you said, they’re beautiful but they’re not juicy, they don’t have the flavor, hollow on the inside.”
- Olivia~ “If I have to I will [buy California strawberries].”
- Nicole~ “Don’t they also spray a sheen over them in California? They spray a sheen over them to make them look waxy and pretty.”

## Florida

- Brenda~ “I found that Plant City strawberries are awfully good. So, when I see Plant City I usually make sure I get to that produce section several times that week.”
- Ricky~ “If you’re standing there and one says made in Mexico and the other one Florida, Plant City, you’re naturally going to take Florida.”
- Jo~ “Yeah, I think they’re a little bit sweeter and there’s a price difference. Florida strawberries, particularly this time of year, don’t know why, are always going to be a little less expensive.”

## Attitudes toward Florida Strawberries

Throughout the focus groups, participants were asked to express their general attitudes toward Florida strawberries and identify benefits to purchasing those products. Attitudes varies across states and was often dependent on the participants’ familiarity with Florida strawberries. A description of each focus group has been provided.

### *Boston, MA*

Boston participants had a difficult time identifying any kind of benefit to purchasing Florida strawberries. The participants that did identify attributes like flavor as a benefit, had visited Florida before and were familiar with the strawberries.

- Sue~ “I don’t see any benefit of Florida strawberries, no.”
- Elizabeth~ “I think they’re sweeter than the California ones. I just do.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

Participants in Brooklyn were not familiar with Florida strawberries, and since they did not consider growing location when purchasing, they did not have strong feelings toward the fruit. However, after discussion regarding Florida’s growing season and economic impact, most of the participants said that they would buy strawberries from Florida.

- Sarah~ “I would buy the Florida ones now it’s been brought to my attention.”

### *Charlotte, NC*

The Charlotte participants had positive attitudes associated with Florida strawberries. They believed they would be cheaper and sweeter than other strawberries.

- David~ “Since they are grown mostly in the winter, they shouldn’t be that expensive.”
- Ashley~ “I for some reason when I think of Florida I think of the happy place and the fruit should be happy and sweet. I just think it should be sweet I guess because they have more months of sunshine. Maybe it’s a psychological thing.”

### *Columbus, OH*

Since Florida strawberries had not typically been sold in Ohio, the participants were not directly asked about their attitudes toward them. Participants’ attitudes did come up though. Many participants indicated they had positive attitudes

toward Florida compared to California, but others said that characteristics like price and appearance were more important.

- Mike ~ “When you think of Florida, Florida just gives me a happy thought, you know, just Florida in general, has a good image, it seems positive. When I think California, I think [of gang members] ...”
- Megan~ “If I’m given the pack...two packages and they’re both American grown, one’s California, one’s Florida, and the prices are comparable, all bets are off because I’m looking at the color of the berries, the firmness of the berries, the freshness of the berries.”

#### Willingness to ask

In only Columbus, participants were asked how willing they were to request Florida strawberries to be sold in their local stores. Some participants said they would be willing to ask their local stores, while others said the request would probably not influence the store’s decision to carry Florida strawberries.

- Ron~ “Yeah, that would be the number one question. “Excuse me, why don’t they sell in Ohio?”
- Clark~ “The easiest way to do is just to talk to the grocery manager, the supermarket manager. (agreement heard). Even though they don’t make final decisions on purchasing, and I’m speaking from retail experience, they do have the ability to influence what the buyers in their home offices do.”
- Bob~ “But somehow me talking to the stock boy in produce saying, “Hey why don’t you get some Florida strawberries?” I’m like, why am I wasting my time?”

#### Nashville, TN

Participants in Nashville had strong positive attitudes toward Florida strawberries. Similar to other states, price and appearance were more important than growing location when comparing Florida to California strawberries.

- Howard~ “Sometimes Florida strawberries can be a delicacy and our palates appreciate the delicacy.”
- Robert~ “Overall, I have a favorable impression. I would certainly buy them over anything from Mexico or Guatemala or wherever. If I had a choice between California and Florida, it would probably come down to cost and the appearance of the product.”

### Barriers and Incentives to Purchase Florida Strawberries

The participants were asked to describe benefits and barriers related to purchasing Florida strawberries. They were also asked to explain what would encourage them to purchase Florida over California or Mexico strawberries. The characteristics that were brought up in the discussion were availability, price, food miles, supporting local farmers, and production.

#### Availability

Participants in all the focus groups identified availability as the number one barrier to purchasing Florida strawberries. If the strawberries were not sold in their store, they felt there was nothing they could do. Additionally, the participants believed that they could not always identify the Florida strawberries from the choices at the store.

#### Boston, MA

- Kelly~ “What about if where you shop they don’t have [Florida strawberries]?”
- David~ “It doesn’t really matter, you know. I mean, when I go to the store, there’s only strawberries. It doesn’t say they’re from Mexico or Florida or California and you have to look for [the growing location].”

**Brooklyn, NY**

- Tiffany~ “I don’t know if they’re around or not. So, that’s a barrier. I don’t know if they’re here or not.”
- Holly~ “And it also depends on if, you know, where you shop has them.”

**Charlotte, NC**

- Parker~ “I think you’re at the mercy of the store, whatever the store carries. If they’re not there, they’re not there. Again, I’m not going to more than one grocery store.”

**Columbus, OH**

- Carmen ~ “If [the stores] ever maybe run out [of Florida strawberries], they sold them so fast that [they were out of stock].”

**Nashville, TN**

- Howard~ “The availability of them because in some areas they’re not available. It depends on location, and the buyer, and the supermarket.”

**Price**

Price was important to the participants. Across the different focus group locations, participants indicated they looked for certain attributes when purchasing strawberries, but price was typically what influenced their final purchasing decision.

**Boston, MA**

- Kenneth~ “For me, you gotta get cheap and good at the same time.”

**Brooklyn, NY**

- Tiffany~ “I would buy California [strawberries] if they were on sale. If they were on sale, I would buy them.”

**Charlotte, NC**

- Becky~ “I mean I’m not going to price shop. I just won’t buy [strawberries] if they’re outrageously expensive.”

**Columbus, OH**

- Craig~ “I know if I see strawberries on sale for like a dollar ninety-nine a pound, I’ll like look through fifty boxes to buy one, ‘cause I’m not leaving till I buy at least one. Because for that money, it don’t have to be perfect.”

**Nashville, TN**

- Melissa~ “Oh, I mean, if it’s just a small difference in price I’d rather go with the one that looked better, then I know, you know, that’s more red and looks like it’d be better on the inside. But typically [our strawberries] are always the same price, regardless of where they came from.”
- Katie~ “Well, it all depends on how bad I want it. If it’s in the winter, I will pay a little bit more [be]cause usually the price[will] go up in the winter.”

**Food Miles**

Food miles described the distance that Florida strawberries would travel to reach supermarkets in the focus group locations. For most participants, this was a major incentive to purchasing Florida strawberries because they were perceived as cheaper and fresher for travelling fewer miles. However, some participants did not consider the miles traveled as important as other participants. Others indicated the growing location was not always labeled, which made considering food miles difficult for them.

### *Boston, MA*

- Linda~ “And that’s a pretty quick trip from Florida to Massachusetts.” (agreement heard)
- Margaret~ “I mean, recognizing that Florida is much closer to us than California.”
- Nancy~ “If they’re produced closer then they don’t have to pick them as far in advance.”
- Ben~ “[Food miles] really doesn’t [affect my purchase].”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

- Andrew~ “I think if it’s traveling less distance too, it’s appealing.”
- Holly~ “Other than distance, I can’t think of any other benefits. Only because I haven’t really noticed where they come from.”

### *Charlotte, NC*

- Darrell~ “And probably they’re pretty fresh ‘cause they don’t have to travel so far.”
- Christi~ “If I were given the option now, I will choose something that’s grown closer. ...I’ve never seen it advertised in the store where I really get these options of Mexico, California, Florida, you know, I’ve never seen it advertised that way where I can make these selections on the different types of strawberries I want, but going forward now, I will pay attention to things like that.”

### *Columbus, OH*

- Megan~ “When I think of food, and I think that it’s been shipped for two thousand miles or a thousand miles or something, it’s giving up the vitamin supplements because how does that food possibly retain [them]? So, I guess nutrition attracts me [to Florida strawberries].”
- Meredith~ “I think it’s not something that I consciously think about.”

### *Nashville, TN*

- Sarah~ “Well, they ought to be better priced because less travel time, too. Or you would expect anyway.”
- Robert~ “It isn’t really a factor for me because in many cases you can look at fruit and you can tell if it’s fresh or [not].”

### **Supporting Local Farmers/Economy**

Many of the participants also discussed how purchasing Florida strawberries would positively affect farmers and the economy. There were mixed feelings about how much support was actually offered by purchasing Florida strawberries. Some participants felt that it was important to support the family farmers in Florida and contribute to the economy on the east coast. However, a number of participants said they would not even consider these factors when purchasing strawberries.

### *Boston, MA*

The majority of the Boston participants agreed that supporting Florida’s farmers and economy was not an incentive to purchase Florida strawberries, but others disagreed.

- Levi~ “I’d be more apt to buy a strawberry from a farmer’s market ... because I care about [the farmer’s] livelihood.”
- Margaret ~ “I’m very motivated to know that there isn’t just a few little people getting rich off of Florida strawberries.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

Participants in Brooklyn had positive perceptions of how Florida strawberry purchases supported farmers and the economy, which impacted their purchasing decisions.

- Sarah~ “I would feel good knowing that I’m helping boost the United States economy.”
- Janine~ “That’s something I’ve not really considered when I’ve bought strawberries, but I understand that my [purchasing], you know, within the United States [it] is important to the economy.”

### *Charlotte, NC*

Charlotte participants’ held favorable attitudes in supporting Florida’s farmers and economy.

- David~ “You trust that the people that produce them and grew them and everything has went by the standards that the government has set. And also you trust that the people that are picking them or working there, you’re helping the economy of Florida and this country.”
- Ashley~ “Because you know what? If we don’t buy from farmers, then they’re going to have to close down the farms and then we’ll have to buy everything from overseas. That means the price of everything [is] going to be tripled.”

### *Columbus, OH*

Supporting Florida farmers did not affect the purchasing decision of Columbus participants, but they did like the idea of supporting the American economy.

- Jim~ “That’s kind of intrinsic in that whole buy American, USA thing though.”
- Meredith~ “I don’t think about strawberry production being a major driver in the US economy. Now if you’re talking about Florida economy [then is probably is].”

### *Nashville, TN*

The Nashville participants did not think the industry had a large impact on America’s economy. However, these participants did favor the idea of supporting Florida farmers.

- Kevin~ “I agree. If I thought the strawberries were made by somebody who cared about the product and cared about the land it was grown on, then that would have some support.”
- Chuck~ “Yeah, I think in the overall economy of the United States, the strawberry market, regardless of Florida, is negligible. However, if you’re in Florida and you’re growing strawberries, it’s everything to you. (agreement heard) I think it’s very personal then.”

### **Production**

Production also came up in many of the focus group discussions. Production was viewed as both a barrier and incentive. Incentives related to production would be if the strawberries were produced organically or using fair trade practices. Some participants disagreed with the political climate of California and Mexico, and indicated they would not purchase strawberries grown in those locations due to the way the government was managing the production. Production never was discussed in the Columbus, Ohio focus groups.

### *Boston, MA*

Participants in Boston discussed the political reason for why they would not purchase certain strawberries.

- Tina~ “I have a political [attitude], but I think California’s about to probably tax people more for water which is a result of the governments not managing it’s water situation. And as a result of that, they’re now floating the idea that the rest of us will get taxed for water, that our prices are gonna go up. So I’d be inclined to avoid anything from California.”

### *Brooklyn, NY*

The participants in Brooklyn preferred purchasing organically grown strawberries.

- Cindy~ “I think I’d prefer if it was organic. If it says organic, I’d go towards that first. I wouldn’t care where it came from if it just said that.”
- Janine~ “Well, if the Florida strawberries are organic versus the Mexico strawberries, then I would definitely go for the organic just because I read that it’s one of the dirty dozen fruits and you should eat organic.”

### *Charlotte, NC*

In Charlotte, the participants were concerned with fair trade and organically grown strawberries.

- Meredith~ “Well, I just read that [strawberries are] one of the most number one things that you should always buy organic, so I’m going to switch to organic.”
- Marco~ “You know, I definitely like to hear positive news about fair trade. As far as the actual pickers and folks that are on the ground floor [are treated fairly].”

### *Columbus, OH*

Production was not discussed in Columbus.

### *Nashville, TN*

A production concern in Nashville that was not discussed in other groups was how to clean strawberries before consuming, but they were still concerned with ethical production.

- Robert~ “We know that the produce is ethically harvest[ed], [so we buy from Florida].
- Kevin~ “I don’t know if this is interesting, one of the reasons I don’t really buy berries [be]cause I don’t really know how to wash them, they seem awkward to wash. So I get something that I can peel so I don’t really know, should I clean them one at a time?”

## **Promotions**

Different types of promotions for Florida strawberries were discussed throughout the focus groups.

### **Label Choice**

Participants were given a booklet with four different images of strawberry packages. The packages were identical with the exception of the growing location on the label. One package was from California, one from Mexico, and two from Florida. One of the Florida labels had an additional image of the Fresh from Florida logo. The participants were asked to imagine that they were in a grocery store and select which package they would purchase. These packages can be seen in Appendix A. The images of the packages were presented in different orders, so symbols were added to the bottom corner of the photograph to help the participants specify which package they were referring to. The Fresh from Florida package had square, the package without Fresh from Florida had a diamond, the California strawberries has triangle, and the Mexico strawberries had a circle.

Some participants did not notice the labels and made their decision based on the appearance of the strawberries (which were identical), others did notice the different labels, and some participants said that price of the strawberries was what would determine their final decision.

### *Boston, MA*

The Boston participants had mixed attitudes toward the different packages. They initially did not notice any differences in the packages, but said they would prefer the American grown strawberries once they noticed the different labels. Some participants liked the Fresh from Florida logo, but others thought it made the label too cluttered or simply did not know what it meant. Price also came up, but not as much as the other groups. Some participants said they would not care what the label said, and would only look at the appearance of the fruit.

#### Label

- Nancy~ “I would go for the, first of all, USA. And then, I notice there’s California, Florida, another Florida, I’m not sure why, and then Mexico. But I would go with USA.”
- Margaret~ “I would probably not purchase any of these because none of these are organic.”
- Sue~ “What does that mean? What does that white sunshine thing mean (referring to Fresh from Florida logo)?”
- Tina~ “I’d go with Florida without the extra logo because I think it’s kind of cluttered.”
- Nancy~ “Yeah, I think the logo is kind of cute.”

#### Strawberries

- Ben~ “They all look the same to me.” (laughter)
- Sue~ “I’m going by what I see. I buy my fruit by what I see. I don’t buy by what name or what country. I buy it by what I see. (agreement heard) What I feel like looks delicious.”

#### Price

- Levi~ “How much do they cost a piece?” (laughs)

### *Brooklyn, NY*

In Brooklyn, the participants said the Fresh from Florida logo was appealing, and they would select that package if they were actually paying attention when shopping. However, the logo was too small, which it difficult for some participants to see. Other participants said they would make their purchases based off of only the appearance, and some even thought they saw differences in the sizes of the strawberries. Price did not come up in the discussion.

#### Label

- Rachel~ “The square with the sunshine symbol that says fresh Florida does seem more appealing.”
- Holly~ “To be honest, I would probably just grab the strawberries as soon as I get in the supermarket especially since they’re usually first when you get into the supermarket. But if I had to pick one, I’d pick the square just because it has a logo and that would stand out to me. And if I was paying attention to the label, I definitely wouldn’t pick the one from Mexico ‘cause I try to get fruits from domestic [locations].”
- Andrew~ “I agree. I’m a sucker for a logo and it calls out fresh and Florida, I think that’s nice.”
- Sarah~ “The packaging as well. I didn’t see it, even with my glasses on I really didn’t notice the sun, the sunshine until it was mentioned. I think it could be a little bigger, too.”

### Strawberries

- Sarah~ “They look bigger. I don’t know if it’s the way the picture’s taken. They look [bigger] which make[s] it a more appetizing appeal. I just looked at not so much where they were from, but how they looked.”
- Claudia~ “I see so little difference.”

### Charlotte, NC

Participants in Charlotte favored the Fresh from Florida logo, but said they would likely not notice it when shopping. Price was a large determining factor in this state with participants saying they would buy whichever strawberries were priced the best.

### Label

- Lilly~ “I would pick the square or the diamond. They come from the same place I just think that the square is more pleasing to the eyes because it has the little sunshine with the water underneath that says Fresh Florida. And if I’m in a hurry, I wouldn’t have my glasses on I probably wouldn’t have seen either one of them.” (laughter)
- Andy~ Well, I have to say on that one that I think that makes the label a little more attractive, has the ‘Fresh from Florida’ on there.”

### Strawberries

- Parker~ “They’re all the same.”
- Becky~ “I mean, now I know what to look for, but before I’d come here [to this group], I would buy any of them.”
- Pam~ “They’re a little deeper red, so they look like they’re a little bit more ripe to me.”

### Price

- Ashley ~”I don’t pick any of them. It doesn’t matter to me where the fruit are from as long as the price is right and they, you know, they look good.”
- Parker~ “I’m going to be the materialistic one. [I will pick] which ever one honestly is the better price.”

### Columbus, OH

The Columbus participants all agreed they would not purchase the strawberries from Mexico but did not have strong attitudes other than that. Some said they would prefer the Fresh from Florida logo, but others said they would not notice a difference. Price was not discussed.

### Label

- Meredith~ “If you’re talking about in terms of packaging, I find that the square picture package is the most appealing to me, in terms of the little label.”
- Jim~ “Yeah, I’m not sure I’d even notice the label in the differences.”

### Strawberries

- Nancy~ “I was just going to say, I’d probably buy them all, they look okay to me and they’re all small.”

### Nashville, TN

Similar to Columbus, Nashville participants did not bring up price and would not have selected Mexico strawberries. Some of the participants like the Fresh from Florida logo, but others were not familiar with it. Participants also reported not even noticing the differences in the labels and only looking for the freshness of the strawberries.

### Label

- Katie~ “I would buy the ones from Plant City, Florida. Because it’s got the big sun sitting there looking at me and it looks like navel oranges. (laughter) And it represents Florida.”
- Nancy~ “If I didn’t know that the sun meant anything, I would probably [buy them] as long as it’s grown in the USA, it wouldn’t necessarily make a difference to the one I would pick. Does that make sense? [Be]cause I’m not familiar with that symbol.”

### Strawberries

- Chuck~ “Quite honestly if I’m not looking at the label, I’m looking at the freshness of the berries and as long as that satisfies me, I don’t notice the label at all. But here, where we have a picture of the same berries, now I was forced to look at the label and make a decision on that.”

### Advertisements

Participants were asked to describe and current advertisements they had seen for strawberries, along with the type of advertisements they would prefer to see.

#### *Boston, MA*

The Boston participants had only noticed in store advertisements or flyers for strawberries, but did not pay attention to them when the local strawberries were out of season. They suggested more promotions for Florida strawberries during the winter months and providing samples to encourage sales.

#### Current Advertisements

- Mindy~ “Just the store flyers, which sort of surprises me that they’re not promoted more through different avenues.”
- Sue~ “I didn’t really take notice of [the advertisement] because [strawberries were] out of season. You know, if a fruit or a vegetable’s out of season, even if you see it in print, you have a tendency to ignore it.”

#### Preferred Advertisements

- Ben~ “Yeah, a nice colorful commercial in the winter. That would remind me.”
- Levi~ “I go back to the doughnut shop [concept] again. If you had free samples there right, or you had like a book where it says...here’s what you can make with strawberries, more people will buy strawberries, if you had a sample.”
- Angie~ “I think just promoting it more for the winter months, too. [Be]cause I don’t think we tend to think of strawberries, up here, for winter.”

#### *Brooklyn, NY*

The Brooklyn participants could not recall specific advertisements for strawberries, but did like it when store promoted the fruit with a complimentary item like cool whip. The participants suggested point of purchase advertisements and radio commercials to promote Florida strawberries.

#### Current Advertisements

- Claudia~ “I don’t really see [advertisements], nope.”
- Ralph~ “Oh, one thing I’ve seen display wise that Fairway does that’s always tempted me ... Sometimes on top of the dairy section where they have the whipped cream there’s a couple boxes of strawberries and you could just get the idea to make a little [dessert].”

### Preferred Advertisements

- Tiffany~ “Right. In the produce departments they should put, you know, signs that say, you know, Florida, you know, strawberries, in season now.”
- Holly~ “Definitely the big sign that says like, ‘Now in season’.”

### Charlotte, NC

Charlotte participants could only recall seeing strawberry advertisements in the store and suggested emphasizing Florida's winter growing season in promotions, especially in the store. Another suggestion was promoting Florida strawberries at winter sporting events.

### Current Advertisements

- Becky~ “At Harris Teeter they'll have stands separate from the other produce stands that will say above them, like grown locally or within ten miles or whatever.”
- Parker~ “In stores are the only place I see them [advertisements].”

### Preferred Advertisements

- Marco~ “I wasn't really aware of the growing season in Florida and all that, and I think that that's something they could be more publicized.”
- Pam~ “Yeah. I tend to make more of my decisions when I'm in the store, and I see what's there and what looks fresh and, you know, and ripe. So, probably just in the store [advertisements].”
- David~ “One of the bigger things in the winter time is, if you are a sports person like I am, you see oranges at commercials during football games, why can't you see strawberries?”

### Columbus, OH

Participants in Columbus recalled seeing advertisements in store and also on the strawberry packaging for the growing location. These participants preferred that Florida strawberries use the “Fresh from Florida” logo on their package to promote themselves in the winter. They also suggested the package have a QR code which could be scanned and provide additional information on the strawberries.

### Current Advertisements

- Nancy~ “All the stores do put up signage though, that says where their products are coming from. Like I know that in Kroger's a lot of times, they'll have the big stand up sign that says, you know, fresh strawberries (agreement heard) from, you know, Florida.”
- Craig~ “I always seem to remember it being on packages when I was looking. (agreement heard) Yeah, I mean, I remember more California than Florida, but I always sort of would take a peek and it generally says the town, I mean, sometimes it's a little farm town somewhere, but I usually remember seeing it on the label.”

### Preferred Advertisements

- Megan~ “I like the silly little sun [Fresh from Florida logo], because it's easy to [see], it's bright, it's cheerful, and it's a very simple logo. It would catch my eye.”
- Tom~ “They could have it on the packaging possibly or if they have one of those [QR] code things you can use on your phone and then it gives you a rundown of information if you choose it. That way an individual has the choice of whether they want to be ignorant or not. That's the American way, right?”

### *Nashville, TN*

Nashville participants could not recall seeing any specific advertisements for strawberries, but reported using the labels or in store advertising to find the growing location. The participants said that in-store advertising would be most effective in promoting Florida strawberries in the winter, especially if the advertisement said “In Season.”

#### Current Advertisements

- Charlotte~ “[The growing location is] on the label on the top of the clam shell. Sometimes the produce person will write Florida on the sign that they hand write. And then sometimes in the flyer it will say Florida strawberries, specifically.”
- Kevin~ “I can’t think of anything.”

#### Preferred Advertisements

- Ricky~ “Put a clear sticker on label on each [clam shell] where you can see through the label to the strawberries and just an outline of the letters, plants grown in Plant City, Florida.”
- Nicole~ “And the word ‘in season’ is also a big thing for me because I want to know that it wasn’t sitting in a greenhouse somewhere.”
- Charlotte~ “Well, I think I’m unique in the room in that when the commercials come on the radio, I push the button to a station with a song and I fast forward through the commercials on the television. So, the only reason that I know that something is in season or something is now highlighted in some way, is the circular from the store.”

### *Slogans*

The participants were given a list of slogans promoting Florida strawberries and were asked which ones they like the most and the least. Participants were also asked to describe where they would want to see the slogan along with visuals to accompany it. The slogans were as follows:

- Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long
- Florida Fresh & Fabulous. In season now!
- In season now! Florida strawberries all winter long!
- Scrumptious Florida strawberries, In season now
- Florida strawberries. Now in season.

### *Boston, MA*

The Boston participants liked a variety of different slogans. Some preferred “Florida strawberries a taste of summer all winter long”, but others thought that winter was too dreary to include. There were also contradicting opinions on “Florida fresh and fabulous, in season now.” The participants wanted to see the slogans at point of purchase, on subways, interactive billboards, and on TV. These participants were interested in seeing happy workers in the advertisements. Another suggestion involved Santa promoting the fruit around Christmas time.

- Mindy~ “I like ‘Florida fresh and fabulous, in season now.’ Now, and that’s January, you know, that could be December and onward.”
- Kelly~ “I like the first one. ‘Florida strawberry a taste of summer all winter long.’”
- Angie~ “I just like ‘Florida strawberries, now in season.’ Right to the point. [Be]cause if they say, ‘in season’ then I tend to think that they’re fresh and they’re coming right now.”

- Jim~ “The one that says, ‘Florida fresh and fabulous,’ I think fabulous is a little hyperbolic, you know, it’s too much of a, you know, hey...come on. The one that we chose, just right to the point, you know, and is effective for me.”
- Elizabeth~ “And the second favorite is ‘Florida strawberries, now in season.’ I don’t want anything with the word winter in it. It’s just dreary, you know? It kind of pulls you down.”

#### Location

- Sue~ “On TV.”
- Margaret~ “I mean, I’m gonna be in the produce section and that is what’s gonna catch me. I’m not gonna watch TV and then think, I need to go get strawberries.”
- Kelly~ “Facebook.”
- Levi~ “How about the subway? You know, when you’re riding the ‘T,’ those billboards.”
- Angie~ “All those new interactive billboards. Have you seen those? You know, I mean, they put everything else on there.”

#### Visuals

- Margaret~ “Well, paid workers who are very healthy and are not...”
- Sue~ ‘Where [the workers are] not taken advantage of, they’re not being used and abused.’
- Mindy~ “At Christmas time, Florida could do a whole campaign on TV of Santa dropping strawberries, you know, into the northern states. (laughter) ‘In season now’.”

#### Brooklyn, NY

Brooklyn participants also liked “Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long” and “Florida strawberries. Now in season.” Participants in this location also indicated an aversion to the word winter, but some liked to be reminded of summertime. The participants wanted the slogans used at the point of purchase with pictures of strawberries, sunshine, and the outline of Florida.

- Sarah~ “My favorite is ‘Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long.’ You can’t have the summer in the winter, but it’s making you think you can get just a little bit of it.”
- Andrew~ “I like the ‘Now in season.’ ‘Now in season.’ We know it’s winter.” (laughter)

#### Location

- Janine~ “I don’t know if I would actually read all those words on the packaging. I’d just like a sign saying, ‘Oh these strawberries are from...’”
- Rachel~ “I agree with that. That it would not necessarily be on the package itself, but a sign above the strawberries.”

#### Visuals

- Holly~ “Some fresh strawberries. I think, maybe also the outline of Florida would help.”
- Rachel~ “Large strawberry with a sunshine next to it.”

#### Charlotte, NC

Charlotte participants preferred “Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long” and “Florida strawberries. Now in season.” They said that they did not like the slogan that used the word “scrumptious.” These participants also wanted

point of purchase advertisements along with email promotions. The images they suggested were strawberries along with beach umbrellas and chairs.

- Christi~ “I like ‘Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long.’”
- Pam~ “And I like the ‘Florida strawberries, now in season’ because it’s very simple and to the point.”
- Marco~ “I definitely don’t like ‘scrumptious, Florida.’ Something about scrumptious just does not jump out at me, but I like the ‘a taste of summer all winter long’ as well.”

#### Location

- Steve~ “I’d like to get an email on my phone because that hits me.”
- Ashley~ “They could also put it on a display as soon as you walk through the door to make certain [you see it].”

#### Visuals

- Pam~ “Yeah, I think just nice pictures of beautiful ripe strawberries and maybe some sunshine thrown in.”
- Lilly~ “I keep seeing beach chair and umbrellas.” (laughter)

#### *Columbus, OH*

The participants in Ohio discussed how severe their last winter was, but they preferred “Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long” because it reminded them of summer. They suggested the slogan be used on the side of buses or in movie theaters. This group suggested a number of images with the slogan including a walking, talking strawberry and a snowy landscape turning into whip cream to dip strawberries in.

- Nancy~ “I like the ‘Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long.’ (agreement heard) Yeah, and I think that the reason I like that is because I definitely am not a winter person at all. (agreement heard and laughter) And so just that summer, the thought of summer just caught my eye.”
- Jim~ I’d say, ‘A taste of summer all winter long.’ (agreement heard) And I’d say specifically because here, especially last couple of years, the winter has been brutal. So, just the romantic idea of summer, you know, being six months out and that kind of thing, is what it is.”

#### Location

- Jim~ “A box truck. Side of a bus is similar.”
- Clark~ “But they’ve gone to more food advertising in movie theaters. It’s starting to get really, really big now because you’ve got a captive audience. The big screen. Can you imagine the thirty-foot-high strawberry?”

#### Visuals

- Tom~ “A walking strawberry, like happy. He’s walking from Florida and his next steps on Ohio. You know, ‘I’m here for you’”
- Tom~ “You could have the winter background, have somebody inside with a strawberry looking outside so sad then it turns into whipped cream and they’re dipping their strawberry in whipped cream that used to be snow and eating it. Winter strawberry, coming to your local Kroger’s.”
- Meredith~ “I would rather just see the strawberries. Like I would like to see like, you know, maybe a sun in the background and I just want to see the real pretty red strawberries. Like, show me what I’m going to get if I go to the store and get those strawberries.”

### *Nashville, TN*

Participants in Nashville preferred “Florida strawberries, a taste of summer all winter long” and “Florida Fresh & Fabulous. In season now!” Some participants said it would not matter to them, as long as all of the slogans said “Florida.” They suggested placing the slogans on billboards, but not placing them on packages because it would obstruct their view of the fruit. They suggested using the Fresh from Florida logo and promoting Florida strawberries at state fairs on banners.

- Katie~ “‘Florida fresh and fabulous’. It just seems airy and clean and fresh and funny.”
- Brenda~ “I don’t really think it matters to me. They all say Florida. I mean, you know, I think it’d be best if I was in advertising if I would bold out, ‘Florida,’ so it stood out.”
- Bill~ “‘Florida strawberries all winter long.’ Because it just tells me that I can buy Florida strawberries all winter long. All I need to know.”

### Location

- Katie~ “They could have them on the billboards, you know, like usually when you’re driving past and you look up and you see the Florida, that sort of pulls you into the store, makes you sort of think about it.”
- Brenda~ “Not necessarily on the packaging, because then I can’t see for mold.”

### Visuals

- Robert~ “I like the image of the sunshine [Fresh from Florida logo] that was on that original packaging. It makes me think in-season.” (agreement heard)
- Ricky~ “How about at the state fairs and put up banners and have a little taste testing there and it’s where people could eat strawberry cake or whatever made with strawberries.”

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## Appendix A- Packages



