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Consumer perception of a non-traditional market on *sous-vide* dishes.

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Abstract

Current lifestyle, which seeks to optimize time, has led the industry to offer elaborated meals with minimal consumer involvement. The industry has been forced to offer new alternatives to produce novel products. One technique already known in the realm of haute cuisine and restaurants is *sous vide* cooking. Although there are ready-to-heat products prepared with *sous vide* cooking in some markets, they have not been disseminated worldwide. In this paper the perception of Uruguayan consumers of a product with *sous vide* cooking was explored. Six Focus Groups (n = 40) were used to explore the generic knowledge of the participants on the different convenience foods and the objective product (*sous vide* cooking), complemented by the projective technique of completing text in a figure. A relative ignorance of the cooking technique by the consumer – and therefore of its advantages – was determined, with a negative opinion towards keeping/containing food in a bag and a distrust in terms of/distrust regarding the possible use of additives. The *sous vide* product was associated with a superior or premium quality. In this study, useful information was obtained regarding the introduction of a *sous vide* cooking product into the market.

Keywords: *sous vide* cooking; consumer perception; focus group

1.1 Introduction

The Western lifestyle has led consumers to the search for "solutions" when it comes to eating, mainly due to lack of time. This has created a space in the food market that the industry has been able to satisfy with the development of "meal solutions" (Costa et al., 2001). These products are referred to globally as "convenience food" and are designed to save time, energy and to transfer culinary skills to the consumer (Costa et al., 2007). In this category, various products have been developed to meet different needs, according to convenience, such as ready-to-eat, ready-to-heat, ready-to-end-cook and ready-to-cook. Recently, convenience food has been classified according to the degree of processing, but it is unclear what level of processing is necessary for a consumer to define what is convenience food for them (Knauer, 2016).

Despite the need to spend more time outside the kitchen, when choosing food consumers are not willing to sacrifice taste or pleasure in place of other advantages, such as speed or price (Costa et al., 2001; Vidal et al., 2013). In this context, gastronomy and the industry have incorporated new methodologies,

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