



# **Somali Goat Meat Preference Survey**

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## Executive Summary

In October 2004, 137 Somali residents of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area were interviewed regarding their goat meat consumption preferences. The group interviewed can be characterized as relatively young, hard-working, well-educated and solidly middle-class.

Some of the more important findings of this survey are:

- Somali families tend to be large by American standards
- Somali women are the dominant purchasers of goat meat
- Goat meat consumption is very cyclical and is substantially higher during cold-weather months than during the spring and summer.
- Goat meat consumption increases with income, age, and length of residence in the U.S.
- Goat meat is the type of meat most commonly consumed by Somalis with half of the sample reporting that they eat goat meat 7 or more times per week.
- A majority of goat meat (and all other types of meat about which we asked) was purchased in a frozen form but all Somali consumers said they preferred fresh (not frozen) meat.
- Women are significantly more likely to buy fresh (rather than frozen) goat meat than are men.
- The most important impediments to goat meat sales are a lack of fresh meat supply and of information about where this product can be purchased. Lack of information is a particular problem for women.
- By far the most important feature for Somalis in their meat purchase decisions is whether the product has Halal certification. The second most important feature is the availability of fresh goat meat.

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- Demographic Profile of Respondents

During October 2004, two Somali-born enumerators interviewed 137 people of Somali heritage who currently reside in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Half of the respondents were male and were interviewed by a male enumerator and the other half were female and were interviewed by a female. Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents. The Minnesota State Demographic Center estimates that there are 25,000 Somalis in the state.<sup>1</sup> Assuming this population figure is correct, the 137 observations means that we can be 95 percent certain that the estimated values in this report should be within plus or minus 8.5 percent of the true values for the Somali population.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Observations	Under 18	18-24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+
Age	134	0%	7%	59%	24%	10%	1%	0%
	Observations	Under 1 year	1 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 - 15 years	15+ years		
Time in U.S.	136	0%	22%	50%	18%	10%		
	Observations	Self-employed	Employed	Un-employed	Retired			
Employment Status of Adults	136	8%	100%	0%	0%			
	Observations	Rent	Own					
Housing	115	70%	30%					
	Observations	Less High School	High School	Some College	College	Grad School		
Education (self)	134	1%	60%	10%	16%	13%		
Education (spouse)	135	1%	53%	16%	18%	13%		
	Observations	Under \$15,000	\$15 - \$24,999	\$25 - \$49,999	\$50 - \$74,999	\$75,000 +		
Household income	135	0%	7%	60%	33%	0%		

Because Somalis are, for the most part, recent arrivals in this county and are still a relatively small immigrant population in the region, the 2000 Census does not report separate numbers for them. The state of Minnesota publication referenced above indicates that the Somali population is relatively young and growing rapidly because of a high birth rate and continuing immigration. The data summarized in Table 1 are generally consistent with this study. A very high proportion of this sample are relatively

<sup>1</sup> Page 6, "Estimates of Selected Immigrant Populations in Minnesota: 2004, MN State Demographic Center, June 2004, OSD-04-112.

young, with nearly 60 percent falling in the 23 – 34 age category and nearly three-quarters have lived in the U.S. for 10 years or less.

The sample population is also quite industrious. At least one adult in every household interviewed worked for someone else and 11 percent were self-employed. Those interviewed said that there were no adults in the household who were working in the home for no pay, unemployed or retired. Twenty-four percent of the households reported having three or more adults working.

One reason for the high level of employment reported by those interviewed might be the very high level of education they reported for themselves and their spouses. Only 1 percent of the respondents and their spouses lacked a high school diploma and 29 percent (31 percent) of the respondents (their spouses) were reported to have college or graduate degrees. These figures compare very well with figures for the state as a whole. According to the 2000 Census, only 27 percent of all Minnesotan’s 25 years of age or older had undergraduate or graduate degrees.

The vast majority of those interviewed report middle class-levels of household income. More than 90 percent of those interviewed report earning between \$25,000 and \$75,000 dollars per year. Given the relatively large family size, these income levels suggest a group of people who still have some significant financial challenges but who are far from destitute. Nearly one-third of the sample report that they own their home.

## B. Somali family goat eating patterns

The first set of questions asked about the number of people (adults and children) who typically eat with the respondent on most days. As Table 2 indicates, the tables in these households are generally fairly crowded. The average number of people eating is nearly 5.5 people, 2.5 adults and 3 children. Interestingly, only 4 percent of those interviewed indicated that there were no children eating with the family on a regular basis. Again, this is consistent with the Minnesota report, which noted the relatively high birth rate among this population. The other interesting item in Table 2 is that more than one-quarter of all respondents said that 7 or more people eat with them on a typical day.

Table 2: Number of adults and children normally eating with family

	Adults	Children	Total
Observations	137	137	137
Average	2.46	3.02	5.47
0	0%	4%	0%
1	0%	9%	0%
2	67%	18%	4%
3	21%	28%	9%
4	11%	32%	18%
5	0%	8%	23%
6	1%	1%	19%
7	0%	0%	15%
8+	0%	0%	13%

Women appear to be more commonly responsible for purchasing goat meat. Sixty-three percent of the women interviewed said they were usually responsible for purchasing goat meat and 62 percent of the males interviewed said their spouse was usually responsible for this activity.

Respondents were also asked about the timing of their goat meat purchases through the year. Table 3 summarizes these results and indicates a very distinct pattern. Goat meat consumption appears to be substantially more common in winter months with, essentially all 137 families interviewed report buying goat meat every month from September through March. This drops to slightly more than one-third of the households purchasing goat meat during the summer months. The drop-off in goat meat consumption during the summer is driven by economic factors. Goat meat consumption during the summer is significantly greater in households with higher reported income. For example the percentage of families who don't buy goat meat during June, is 80 percent of those earning between \$15,000 and \$24,999 per year, 67 percent for those earning between \$25,000 and \$49,999, and only 45 percent of those earning \$50,000 to \$74,999.

Table 3: Percentage of households buying goat meat by month

Month	Percent buying goat meat	Month	Percent buying goat meat
January	100%	July	37%
February	100%	August	37%
March	99%	September	91%
April	53%	October	100%
May	42%	November	100%
June	39%	December	100%

The data suggest that the Somali population in the Twin Cities is not willing to travel long distances to purchase goat meat. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) said that they would prefer to purchase goat meat within walking distance of home. They are also unwilling to drive long distances to acquire goat meat; 82 percent said they would be willing to drive no more than 19 minutes from home to purchase it. Availability near metro bus routes was important to only 1 percent of this sample.

C. Comparing goat and other meat consumption

Table 4 indicates that Somalis' have a strong preference for goat meat in their diet with over half indicating more than 7 meals per week utilize goat meat. None of the 137 people interviewed said they consumed it at fewer than 3 meals per week. Relative to other types of meat, Somalis in this sample appear to eat considerably more goat meat than any other type of meat considered.

Table 4: Number of meals per week using different meats

Meat	Observations	Average (1)	None	1-2 Meals	3-4 Meals	5-6 Meals	7 or More
Goat	137	4.49	0%	0%	4%	44%	53%
Lamb	132	3.82	0%	10%	16%	57%	17%
Beef	89	3.24	0%	24%	29%	47%	0%
Chicken	89	2.20	1%	79%	19%	1%	0%

(1) 1 = none, 2 = 1-2 meals, 3 = 3-4 meals, 4 = 5 - 6 meals, 5 = 7+ meals

There are a number of very interesting demographic differences in the frequency of goat meat consumption. All of these differences are highly statistically significant (at the 1 percent level):

- **Male respondents reported a higher rate of consumption than did women.** More than two-thirds of the men indicated that they consumed goat meat at 7 or more meals per week while nearly two-thirds of the women said their weekly consumption was only 5-6 meals per week.
- **The older the respondent, the more frequently is goat meat consumed per week.** Eleven percent of those between 25 and 34 years of age consumed goat meat 7 or more times per week. Comparable figures are 37 percent for those 35 – 44 years, 88 percent for those 45 – 54, and 92 percent for those 55 – 64.
- **The longer the person had lived in the U.S., the more frequent was goat meat consumption per week.** Only 20 percent of those who’ve been here less than 5 years consume goat meat 7 or more times per week, 47 percent of those 6 – 10 years, 84 percent of those 11 – 15 and 92 percent of those who’ve been here for more than 15 years.
- **Homeowners consume goat meat at much higher frequencies than renters.** Forty-three percent of renters consume goat meat 7 or more times per week, homeowners at more than twice this rate (88 percent).
- **As education level of the respondent increased, so did frequency of goat meat consumption.** Forty-three percent of those with a high school diploma consume goat meat 7 or more times per week and this increases continuously to 83 percent of those with graduate degrees.
- **The higher the income level, the more frequent goat meat consumption.** Only 20 percent of those with annual incomes of between \$15,000 and \$24,999 consumed goat meat 7 or more times per week, this increases to 37 percent of those in the \$25,000 - \$49,999 bracket, and 86 percent of those earning up to \$74,999 per year.

In general, these results are extremely positive for suppliers of goat meat. Not only is the Somali population growing quite rapidly in the Twin Cities metropolitan area but it appears that goat meat consumption increases the longer the people are here, the more education they receive and the higher they climb up the economic ladder. Based on this sample, goat meat consumption is not a cultural inheritance that is being lost by Somalis as they become more integrated into the social and economic fabric of this region.

Table 5: Form in which meat is normally purchased and preferred form

Meat Type	Form	Normal	Preferred
Goat	Frozen	69%	0%
	Fresh at market	31%	100%
Lamb	Frozen	71%	0%
	Fresh at market	29%	100%
Beef	Frozen	99%	0%
	Fresh at market	1%	100%
Chicken	Frozen	100%	0%
	Fresh at market	0%	100%

As Table 5 indicates, currently most meat purchased by the Somali population is frozen, ranging from a low of 69 percent of goat meat purchased to 100 percent of chicken. It is also abundantly clear that meat that is fresh at the market is the form in which they would prefer their meat. Interestingly, none of these respondents expressed a strong preference for purchasing live animals, either at the farm or at a market.

Regarding the form in which goat meat is normally purchased, there are only two significant demographic differences. Men are significantly more likely to report buying frozen goat meat than are women. Indeed, 100 percent of the men report that they normally buy frozen goat meat while two-thirds of the women say they normally buy fresh goat meat. Given that women make more than 60 percent of the goat purchases in this sample, the preferences of women should be carefully considered.

The other significant difference is with respect to education. Those with college or graduate degrees are substantially more likely to buy frozen goat meat than are those with less education.

**D. Meat Purchase Decision Factors**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether a variety of factors make it difficult for them to purchase goat meat. The percentage identifying each of these factors as an impediment are shown in Table 6. By far the most significant difficulties to goat meat purchases are a shortage of fresh (unfrozen) goat meat and information about where to purchase this product. Interestingly, price is not a significant problem for this set of Somalis.

Table 6: Factors Making Goat Meat Purchases Difficult

Impediment	Percent
Lack Available of Fresh Meat	94%
Lack Information	80%
Poor Quality	26%
No Halal processing	12%
No Transportation	11%
Uncomfortable Going Direct to Farm	6%
High Price	1%

Lack of information about where to purchase fresh goat meat is a particularly acute issue for the women in this sample. Ninety-four percent of the women identified a lack of information as an impediment to purchasing goat meat compared to 70 percent of the men. Again, given the centrality of women in goat meat purchases, efforts to improve the flow of information to women about goat meat availability are likely to be very effective.

The final issue about which the respondents were asked dealt with various characteristics of meat, how important each is to Somali consumers, and which features are of greatest importance. These results are summarized in Table 7. With respect to the importance of meat characteristics, the respondents were asked to rank each feature on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being least important and 5 being most important. As you can see, Halal certification is very important to virtually all Somali’s interviewed. Other features

to which this set of consumers attached great importance include: goat meat (4.96), availability of fresh (not frozen) meat (4.93), and having the option to have internal body parts (4.61).

Columns 3 – 5 of Table 7 summarize the features deemed most important by this set of Somali consumers. By a substantial margin, Halal certification is the most important single feature of meat for these Somali consumers. Table 7 indicates that a significant proportion of Somalis also attach great importance to goat meat.

**Table 7: Importance of Meat Features**

	Ave Importance (1)	Number of Observations			Percent Top 3
		Most Important	2nd Most Important	Third Most Important	
Halal Certification	4.99	87	24	1	82%
Fresh (not Frozen)	4.93	5	78	21	76%
Option for Internal Organs	4.61	1	2	48	38%
Able Select Live Animal	4.47	1	13	34	35%
Goat	4.96	29	0	1	22%
Live Animal	4.45	6	5	19	22%
Chicken	2.93	6	5	0	8%
Leanness	3.21	1	6	3	7%
Fat Content	3.16	0	1	8	7%
Price	3.88	0	2	1	2%
Beef	3.80	0	0	0	0%
Lamb	4.01	0	0	0	0%

1. 1 = least to 5 = most

The final column in Table 7 shows the percentage of the sample that identified a characteristic as one of the three most important characteristics. In addition to re-emphasizing the importance of Halal certification, these results support the earlier conclusion that there is substantial demand for fresh (not frozen) meat. The next two items on this list are also quite interesting. The demand for internal organs appears to be substantial. In an earlier question, the respondents were asked if buying live animals (either at a market or on a farm) was their preferred way of buying meat. None of the 137 people interviewed said that this was their preferred option. This result suggests that, while buying fresh meat is their preferred form for day-to-day purchases of meat, there does seem to be interest in buying live animals, perhaps for special occasions.

There were no significant differences in the demographic subgroups (e.g. gender, age, education) and the importance they attach to these characteristics.

## E. Conclusions

The results of this survey are striking for a number of reasons. First, there is a remarkable level of uniformity of responses within this sample. This suggests that key demand features for Somali consumers are very clearly defined. For instance, there is unanimity of opinion that fresh meats are



preferred over frozen product, demand is universal during the winter, and Halal certification is highly valued.

Second, the Somali population appears, to an amazing degree, to have maintained their cultural preference for goat meat. Demand for goat meat, which is very low for the majority population in the U.S., shows signs of increasing as these Somalis have lived for a longer period of time in this country and as their incomes have increased.

Third, the primary impediments to goat meat sales are things that are somewhat more easily addressed (Halal certification and information dissemination) than more fundamental economic barriers (e.g. the perception that the price of goat meat is too high).

Fourth, women appear to be the key to this market since they make the majority of goat meat purchases, have strong preferences for fresh meat, and seem to have the greatest need for additional information about where this product is available.