Favorable Taste Ratings for Several Pawpaw Products

Susan B. Templeton,¹ Martha Marlette,¹ Kirk W. Pomper,² and Snake C. Jones²

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SUMMARY. Marketed as a fresh fruit, the pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) has a short shelf life, only 2-3 days at room temperature and up to 3 weeks with refrigeration. There is commercial processing potential for pawpaw pulp in juices, ice cream, yogurt, baked goods, and other products. Consumer acceptability of such products needs to be investigated. One hundred and five attendees of the 2nd Annual Pawpaw Field Day at Kentucky State University (KSU), Frankfort, Ky., participated in a tasting of pawpaw products; 56% of tasters were male; 76% were over 40 years of age; 72% of tasters had eaten pawpaw previously. Each item was rated on a scale from 1 = liked it extremely to 7 = disliked it extremely. Pawpaw ice cream was the best-received item (55% of tasters liked it extremely), followed by pawpaw cake with lemon icing, liked extremely by 45%. The pawpaw/grape juice drink was liked extremely by 31% of participants. Three alternative recipes for pawpaw butter were presented; the plain pawpaw butter was liked extremely by 26% of tasters; pawpaw butter prepared with lemon and grape juice was liked extremely by 11%, while the version prepared with orange and lemon was liked extremely by only 8%. Two versions of pawpaw custard were presented. The custard prepared from ripe, mild-flavored fruit was liked extremely by 42% of tasters, while the custard prepared from mixed under-ripe, over-ripe and bruised fruit was liked extremely by only 16%. Ratings by persons unfamiliar with pawpaw flavor were significantly lower ($P < 0.05$) only for the two pawpaw custards; tasters age 40 years or younger gave significantly higher ratings for pawpaw ice cream ($P < 0.05$) and significantly lower ratings for both pawpaw custards (select, $P < 0.05$ and mix, $P < 0.01$) and the pawpaw/grape juice drink ($P < 0.05$).

The pawpaw is the largest fruit native to the United States (Darrow, 1975; Pomper et al., 1999). Pawpaw is a nutritionally superior fruit, being higher in some vitamins, minerals, and amino acids than in apple (*Malus sylvestris* var. *domestica*), grape (*Vitis* spp.), and peach (*Prunus persica*) (Jones and Layne, 1997; Peterson et al., 1982). In some cultivars, there is a skin color change from green to green-yellow (e.g., 'PA-Golden #1') when the fruit ripens. Flesh color of ripe fruit ranges from creamy white through bright yellow to shades of orange. The flavor of ripe pawpaw fruit resembles a combination of banana (*Musa ×paradisica*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), and pineapple (*Ananas comosus*); however, flavor varies among cultivars, with some fruit displaying more complex flavor profiles. Ripe pawpaw fruit soften and have a powerful aroma (McGrath and Karahadian, 1994; Shiota, 1991). The flavor of a pawpaw fruit can intensify as it over-ripens, as with banana, resulting in pulp that is excellent for use in cooking. Usually the shelf life of a tree-ripened fruit stored at room temperature is 2 to 3 d, but with refrigeration [4°C (39.2°F)], fruit can be held up to 3 weeks while maintaining good eating quality (Layne, 1996).

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¹Human Nutrition Research, Atwood Research Facility, Kentucky State University, Frankfort, KY 40601. To whom reprint requests should be addressed.

²Horticulture Program, Atwood Research Facility, Kentucky State University, Frankfort, KY 40601-2355.

Table 1. Percentage of individuals responding on a scale of 1 to 7^z after tasting various products flavored with pawpaw.

Item	N ^y	Responses (%)						
		Liked it extremely		Neither liked nor disliked			Disliked it extremely	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pawpaw ice cream	98	55.1	28.6	13.3	3.1	---	---	---
Pawpaw cake with lemon icing	95	45.3	28.4	20.0	4.2	2.1	---	---
Pawpaw custard from ripe fruit	95	42.1	33.7	13.7	6.3	2.1	---	2.1
Grape/pawpaw juice	103	31.1	33.0	20.4	10.7	3.9	---	1.0
Plain pawpaw butter	97	25.8	39.2	24.7	8.2	2.1	---	---
Pawpaw custard from mixed ripeness fruit	93	16.1	43.0	26.9	5.4	6.5	---	2.2
Pawpaw butter with lemon and grape juice	100	11.0	36.0	37.0	10.0	4.0	1.0	1.0
Pawpaw butter with orange and lemon	97	8.2	25.8	30.9	18.6	9.3	6.2	1.0

^zTaste was rated from 1 to 7, with 1 = liked extremely and 7 = disliked extremely.

^yThe number of valid responses from individuals for each item.

Table 2. Taste ratings for products flavored with pawpaw by all participants, by age classifications, and by previous pawpaw consumption.

	All participants	Rating ^z			
		Age (years)		Tasted pawpaw before	
		≤40 n = 22	≥41 n = 71	Yes n = 69	No n = 27
Pawpaw ice cream	1.65 ± 0.82	1.30 ± 0.57	1.72 ± 0.84*	1.66 ± 0.80	1.50 ± 0.63
Pawpaw cake with lemon icing	1.91 ± 1.02	1.86 ± 1.28	1.94 ± 0.93	1.79 ± 0.85	2.24 ± 1.29
Pawpaw custard from ripe fruit	1.94 ± 1.19	2.38 ± 1.77	1.75 ± 0.89*	1.80 ± 0.92	2.50 ± 1.66*
Plain pawpaw butter	2.18 ± 0.99	2.19 ± 1.21	2.20 ± 0.93	2.24 ± 1.05	2.16 ± 0.89
Grape/pawpaw juice	2.28 ± 1.25	2.77 ± 1.60	2.13 ± 1.11*	2.22 ± 1.17	2.41 ± 1.41
Pawpaw custard from mixed ripeness fruit	2.47 ± 1.22	3.15 ± 1.73	2.27 ± 0.97**	2.33 ± 1.04	3.09 ± 1.65*
Pawpaw butter with lemon and grape juice	2.70 ± 1.11	3.05 ± 1.53	2.57 ± 0.90	2.74 ± 1.23	2.64 ± 0.74
Pawpaw butter with orange and lemon	3.19 ± 1.35	3.34 ± 1.52	3.14 ± 1.25	3.22 ± 1.28	3.32 ± 1.57

^zRating: 1 = liked it extremely to 7 = disliked it extremely; (± standard deviation).

**Significantly different from column directly on the left at $P < 0.05$ or 0.01 .

followed by pawpaw butter prepared with lemon and grape juice; the version prepared with orange and lemon was least liked. Table 2 presents rating scores for each item (mean ± SD) for all participants, by two age classifications, and by previous consumption of pawpaw products. Comparisons of mean ratings by gender showed no significant differences, and are not reported here. Pawpaw ice cream received slightly but significantly greater acceptance by participants age 40 years or younger, while both pawpaw custards and the grape/pawpaw juice drink were significantly more accepted by participants over 40 years. Both pawpaw custards received significantly less acceptance from those who had not eaten pawpaw previously. While it might be expected that a relationship existed between age and previous pawpaw consumption, analysis of the response data showed no significant interaction. The mean age of those who had tasted pawpaw previously was 49 years; for those who had not tasted pawpaw before the mean age was 48 years. Seventy-three percent of participants age 40 years or younger

had tasted pawpaws previously and 73% of participants over 40 years had previously tasted pawpaws.

Discussion

Familiarity often influences children's food preferences, and nutritional beliefs and health attitudes can impact food choices made by adults. Regardless of age, however, taste is the primary influence on food choices made by consumers (Drewnowski, 1997). Overall, these tasters reported favorable response to the pawpaw products tested. Their acceptance of these processed fruit products indicates a broader outlet exists for pawpaw beyond fresh fruit and the local market.

While it might be suspected that individuals attending a pawpaw field day were pre-disposed to give favorable evaluations on pawpaw products, our analysis of responses found previous consumption of pawpaw actually had limited impact on the ratings given to most products. Only for the two pawpaw custards did tasters who had not previously consumed pawpaws give

significantly lower ratings. Because the custard had a strong pawpaw flavor, these lower ratings suggest that unfamiliarity negatively affected acceptance. Tasters may also have found the over-ripe fruit flavor unappealing. One approach to determining this influence would be to hold repeat tastings to learn if rating scores improve with exposure. A second limitation of this study was the lack of diversity among tasters. Additional taste tests should be conducted with target audiences to determine how ethnicity and age influence acceptance. Data was not collected on the ethnic background of participants; however, the attendees were predominately Caucasian. These findings suggested that age influenced acceptance, however, the subjects were primarily adults. As the field day was held on a weekday during the school year, only two children were in attendance. When evaluating acceptance of food items, participants are usually asked to rate items on several organoleptic traits: appearance, texture, flavor, etc. (Beany and Stoffella, 1998; Pelletier, 2000). Because of the limited time allowed

and numerous items presented, the rating form for this tasting measured only overall acceptance. Future tastings could focus on fewer items, incorporate the evaluation of various taste factors, and use trained tasters to ensure reliable responses.

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