



schouten specialist in
plant-based protein

Consumer Insights >> meat substitutes

Q1 2025 - The role of taste

In this update:

- The impact of taste on Dutch consumers' decision-making process when choosing meat substitutes.
- The definition and perception of 'taste.'
- The impact of a negative experience on consumers' intention to repurchase.
- The critical role and complexity of taste in the development of meat substitutes.



What do Dutch people consider when buying a meat substitute?



The Netherlands is known for its progressiveness in the field of meat substitutes. Per capita, the Dutch consume the most meat substitutes in Europe.

[Many retailers have set ambitious goals to sell more plant-based products.](#)

However, the retail market for meat substitutes has not grown further recently.

The definition and perception of 'taste'

- Taste refers to the **sensory experience perceived by the tongue when certain substances interact with taste receptors** in the mouth.
- There are **five widely recognized basic tastes**: sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami (savory). Some researchers also propose a sixth taste: fatty.
- Taste is not only about the basic taste sensations but **also involves texture, aroma, temperature, and mouthfeel**, creating a holistic flavor experience.
- Taste is **subjective and shaped** by cultural influences, individual preferences, and exposure to certain foods.
- Taste **helps humans identify foods that are safe and nutritious** (e.g., sweetness indicates energy-rich foods) and avoid potentially harmful substances (e.g., bitterness may signal toxins).
- Taste **preferences can change over time**, influenced by repeated exposure, age, and dietary habits.





Taste is the most decisive reason for respondents to choose a meat substitute or to not repurchase

Source: **Markteffect**
Research is Everything

- Question: Suppose you bought and ate a meat substitute, and you didn't like it. To what extent would you be willing to buy another meat substitute in the future?*

Only 3 out of 10 say:

Yes, I want to try another one



And 7 out of 10 say:

'I don't know' or 'No'.



Disappointing taste has contributed to stagnation in category growth

"Copying the taste of meat is extremely complicated and it's obviously difficult to convince adults to buy something again if they didn't like it the first time."

[Source](#)



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Taste-take aways

- ✓ **Invest in innovation** to further improve the taste of products, ensuring a positive consumer experience that encourages repeat purchases.
- ✓ **Replicate familiar flavors:** Mimic meat's umami flavor to make plant-based options more recognizable.
- ✓ **Improve texture:** Create meat alternatives with the same 'bite' and juiciness as real meat.
- ✓ When choosing to create non-meat analogues, choose **recognizable and mild flavours** and minimize bitterness.
- ✓ **Balance sustainability, health, and taste** by using ingredients that are both sustainable and health-conscious, without compromising on flavor.





Our *next Consumer insights* >> Meat Substitutes will be about *the role of price*.
Don't miss out!



Questions? Please feel free to contact me

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