**Freshness Consumer Topic Guide**

**What matters to people about food? Does ‘freshness’ – in any guise – appear in what they say and, if so, in relation to what/when/for whom?** (e.g. particular types of goods, occasions or people)

Cost Taste Appearance

Value Safety Sustainability

Quality ‘Healthfulness’ Waste (avoidance)

Willingness of entire household to eat same things

**In addition to the above, what *properties* do people look for in different types of food? (fruit & vegetables; meat, fish & poultry; baked goods; dairy etc)**

Ready to eat (‘ripeness’ of fruit; ‘freshness’ of bread)

Something that will store in fridge, cupboard, on worktop or other ambient space (under-ripeness in fruit; long dates on meat, fish & poultry, dairy – and even on raw veg/fruit)

Something that can be frozen ‘fresh’ at home

Frozen items that claim to be ‘fresh frozen’

**What sensory engagements are utilised in determining the ‘freshness’ of something? And how is it assessed (and monitored – technology, knowledge, time etc)?**

Appearance (including colour)

Firmness (e.g. fish)/softness (variation across range of baked goods = in many biscuits this would reflect staleness)

Sound (crunch?) Texture Smell

Taste Dates labelling

**Which types of goods require what combination of assessments? How can these vary within food categories? (e.g. example of baked goods)** Ask for examples from different categories or, failing that, ask them about specific types of goods and – if possible – to show us during kitchen tours/cupboard/fridge rummages.

**Moments at which freshness might be at stake *(my vision is to ‘interview’ people while carrying out kitchen tour, fridge/cupboard rummages, which might also coincide with getting ready to go shopping, an actual shop, returning from, or preparing to cook something)*:**

Planning shopping and possibly disposing of food (making the list – looking at what’s in fridge/cupboards etc).

Doing the shopping (size and frequency of shopping, choice of when and where to shop for particular types of foods – bakery, butcher, fishmonger, grocer, market, supermarket).

Unpacking the shopping (and disposal of food to make room for new purchases).

Cooking

Bin emptying day, sorting of fridges/freezers

How do people assess whether leftovers are still ‘fresh’ enough to eat (not/safe, too old, no longer aesthetically or gustamologically appealing).

**Strategies and practices for ‘preserving’ freshness**

**How are concerns about freshness implicated in people’s shopping practices?** Do they do a ‘big shop’ (perhaps freezing items such as bread, meat, fish & poultry, milk), or do they do top up shopping specifically for these types of items, and salad, veg, fruit?

**What are the challenges of ensuring that things keeping (different types of) food fresh for consumption, and how are these traded off against other factors, including cost, quality, waste, safety, health and what other household members are prepared to eat?** I’ve worked with some HHs where the kids won’t eat anything that is ‘leftover’, within date, if fruit is bruised, brown bananas.

**Explore where and how to store particular types of goods and specific products, what tips and tricks do they suggest, and where do they get these ideas from?** – e.g. salad/veg drawers in fridge; veg stored in cool, dark cupboards, cellars etc; bread bin/fridge; freezing of bread and baked goods; freezing of meat/fish/poultry. Salting/curing of fish (Portugal).

E.g. don’t put bananas in fridge; bananas being used to accelerate ripening of other fruit; adding a potato to apples; wrapping avocadoes in newspaper etc.

**To what extent does freshness/preserving freshness become conflated with avoiding things going off/becoming less fresh/going to waste?**

**Does something have to be sold to where it is produced/found in order to be fresh (or more likely to be so)?** What consumer imaginaries are mobilised concerning certifications of ‘Britishness’ and the Red Tractor label etc? How do they view buying items which are out of season in the UK, which have been grown elsewhere, picked unripe and stored for ripening for long periods elsewhere? Where does this leave things like fish for people who live nowhere near the coast, or people in cities…?

**How do people imagine that things not produced ‘locally’ or sold immediately after harvest/slaughter/being caught have their freshness maintained?** Are things like preserving sprays, refrigeration and extended storage things that they think about?

**How are preserving processes (salting, freezing, smoking etc) conceptualised in relation to freshness? What do these do: stall the process of decomposition, enabling goods to have freshness maintained, suspended, resumed…?**

**Are there items/situations for which ‘freshness’ isn’t ‘best’?**

Stale bread best for breadcrumbs

28-day aged beef

Sashimi

Canned tomatoes (good for health and for particular kinds of cancer instead of fresh tomatoes)

**Cultural (and other) differences within households (and implications for waste in particular)** – as well as tastes and preferences: e.g. KL participants Hakan and Leah – he is Turkish Cypriot and spoke of and valued eating lamb killed earlier in the day. She is White British and thinks meat tastes better when it’s been hanging around for a bit.

**Why do they think that retailers ‘sell’ the freshness of particular foods, and what do they think retailers are referring to?** (e.g. naturalness, no preservatives, minimal processing)

**What is implied in ‘freshness’?**

Safety Quality Goodness Taste Naturalness

Wholesomeness Absence of adulteration, ‘processing’, travel

Specific questions about children and pets… this can be explored in this question and possibly during the go along shopping lists (**What is bought to pets,** etc.)

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