



Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Season 2, Episode #9

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Announcer: Welcome to the Marketing Munchies Podcast series hosted by Dr. Bridget Behe. Each week Bridget and her guests will share information, insights, research-based findings, and her 30 years of experience to help your horticultural business connect better with current and future customers. Now, let's join our host, Dr. Bridget Behe.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Hi, and welcome back to the Marketing Munchies Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Bridget Behe, and, hey, guess who is back? Trey Malone, my cohost. Welcome back, Trey!

Dr. Trey Malone: Oh, thrilled to be here! It is a nice, cold day in Lansing, Michigan.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Well, it is winter right? We are supposed to be used to it. But, I really was excited to hear about your local food identity map, and I will put a link to it in the transcript. Why don't you tell me kind of where the idea for this came from?

Dr. Trey Malone: Sure. For quite a while I have been thinking about local foods, and something that has really stuck out to me is that in a lot of the local foods studies, they treat "local" like it matters the same for every product.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Okay.

Dr. Trey Malone: So, a local tomato in Oklahoma has the same value as a local tomato in California, for example, but I think that there is a large piece of the social identity of any place that is wrapped up in the food that people consume there. The local food of a place is very different for the way they value the local identity. What we did as a part of the Food Demand Survey, which is something that I worked on at Oklahoma State for quite a while, for about 10 months we asked 1,000 U.S. consumers what food they thought of as most representative to their state.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Let us start in Michigan, and if the listeners want to just click on the link and they can kind of look at some of the same things that you and I are looking at. Michigan was known for what?

Dr. Trey Malone: Michigan was a cherry, apple, and beef state. Those are the top three things that Michiganders say is representative of their local food scene. In the map, what we also did, was we compared that to the top cash receipts. The commodity that has produced the most dollar value in each state. The colors represent how well the local food matches the cash receipts.

Dr. Bridget Behe: It looks like Wisconsin won that contest that their residents were able to say they were known for dairy, beef, and corn and that matched up pretty well with what their cash receipts were.

Dr. Trey Malone: Right. Yeah, whereas Michigan did not match at all.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Let us talk about a couple of the quirky ones. What about...what is up with West Virginia?

Dr. Trey Malone: Yeah, that was a weird one! I do not know anything about West Virginia, I have never been to West Virginia...

Dr. Bridget Behe: It is a beautiful state. I have been through it multiple times.

Dr. Trey Malone: So, West Virginia, the number one thing that they thought was representative of their local food identity was pepperoni rolls.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Wow.

Dr. Trey Malone: At first, I thought it was kind of a fluke. I was really surprised by the response, because I do not even know what a pepperoni roll really is. Apparently, after a little digging, we found out that when the Italian immigrants moved into West Virginia to work in the coal mines, in order to preserve their food heritage they would make pepperoni rolls to eat in the mine. To this day, even though the coal mining industry is kind of struggled, people still think of pepperoni rolls as being a part of their food identity.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Well, it looked like the Southeastern corridor did pretty well matching up two of theirs. What was Florida known for?

Dr. Trey Malone: Florida was citrus of course, beef, and chicken. The beef and chicken I was a little surprised by, but citrus was by far and away the thing that people generally identify with Florida.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Then their top receipts were citrus or oranges, can sugar, and then beef again. Yeah, that kind of surprises me that Floridians would identify with the beef.

Dr. Trey Malone: There were a lot of kind of illuminating things, but the exciting piece to me is how diverse the food scene is across the United States. I think, today, a lot of times we envision that everybody is just eating at the same *McDonald's*, but the truth is that there is a very vibrant difference across states. I suppose a lot of people already recognize that. If you have ever been to New Mexico, they eat a lot of green chilies. Chilies are the number one thing that New Mexicans consider.

Now, from an ag. marketing perspective, it also highlights some, I think, key marketing weaknesses in certain industries. The one that really comes to mind is dairy. Even though dairy represents the top cash receipts in quite a few states across the country, there were only I think two states that listed dairy as being part of their collective identity.

Dr. Bridget Behe: I think what you are saying is, there is a real opportunity for the marketers of dairy to try to help build that identity—not really brand identity—but more state identity associated with that key product. We are not all going to become cheese heads from Wisconsin, but that kind of thing really gets some traction with consumers.

Dr. Trey Malone: Absolutely. And another example is in Michigan. You know, Michigan is one of the top blueberry states in the country. We produce I think more blueberries than just about

anybody except Washington, I believe? Blueberries I do not think made the top ten in terms of local food identities.

Dr. Bridget Behe: So, there is a real marketing opportunity for the blueberry growers on the west side of our state to put their stamp on the health benefits and really promote blueberry consumption.

Dr. Trey Malone: Potentially. Those commodities that you would expect to be in the list that actually are not in the list, I think, might want to rethink their approach to local food strategies. Obviously, there are some states that have done it quite well with certain commodities. For example, Idaho with potatoes. You know, Georgia peaches or, like I said, New Mexico chilies, California avocados. But, by and large, there are also other commodity groups that it just does not seem like they have capitalized on local foods as much as they might be able to.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Yeah and in times when sales are going really well, it does not seem as important to do, but that is really the time to figure out how you are going to fund some of those campaigns and develop the campaigns and then, absolutely, measure the impact. I know that a lot of the food marketing campaigns have had a significant impact on the identity and also on the sales.

Dr. Trey Malone: Sure.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Really a neat study—a neat map that came from that project, and we will put a link to that on the transcript, and hopefully we will have some traffic. Maybe we will increase the profile of some of the local foods.

Dr. Trey Malone: That would be great!

Dr. Bridget Behe: It was great having you on the podcast again this week! Look forward to having you back, Trey.

Dr. Trey Malone: Absolutely. Glad to be here.

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/foodidentity>

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Announcer: Thank you for joining us on this week's Marketing Munchies Podcast. For more information or to download the transcript of this podcast, please visit, connect-2-consumer.org. That's C-O-N-N-E-C-T, dash, the number two, dash, C-O-N-S-U-M-E-R, dot, C-O-M.

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