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Cold chain mastery is taking
Thomas Foods International
to new heights in the U.S.

Mixed reviews for a
Tex-Mex breakfast option

No más

Photos by Getty



PRODUCT

Red's Turkey Sausage
Burrito

PRICE

\$2.99 per 5-ounce
burrito

PLUS

Hand-held, on-the-go
concept

PROBLEM

Poor microwaved
texture; prep time for
other methods

Handheld foods

that satisfy on-the-go options for breakfast, snacks and mini-meals have been exploding, especially those delivering protein. The website for Red's turkey sausage burrito describes the product as a "breakfast favorite," featuring "a delicious blend of sage-seasoned turkey sausage, cage-free eggs and a mouthwatering trio of white cheddar, pepper jack and mozzarella cheese" that conveniently fills this consumer desire. Let's see if this frozen, single-serve burrito fulfilled our tasters' expectations.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Several regular category users prepared the burrito, along with others ranging in age from mid-20s to late 60s.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND APPEARANCE

Although most tasters had positive first impressions, a few were confused by the packaging and did not realize what the product was. "It doesn't say anything about having eggs in it, until very fine print," one noted. A second wrote, "I thought it was a turkey sausage and bean burrito — not a breakfast burrito." And a third

similarly shared, "I didn't realize this was a breakfast package when I first saw it."

A few of the reviewers were pleased by the ingredient list and presentation of claims. "The protein and calories are front and center, and it states it's turkey raised without antibiotics and uses cage-free eggs," one wrote. A second said, "Simple and clean ingredients — not processed." And a third opined, "I was happy to see the ingredients were all natural."

One taster shared a specific comment about the different cooking methods

available. "I liked that there was a preferred heating method (air fryer)," they stated, "because I get overwhelmed when there are different methods."

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

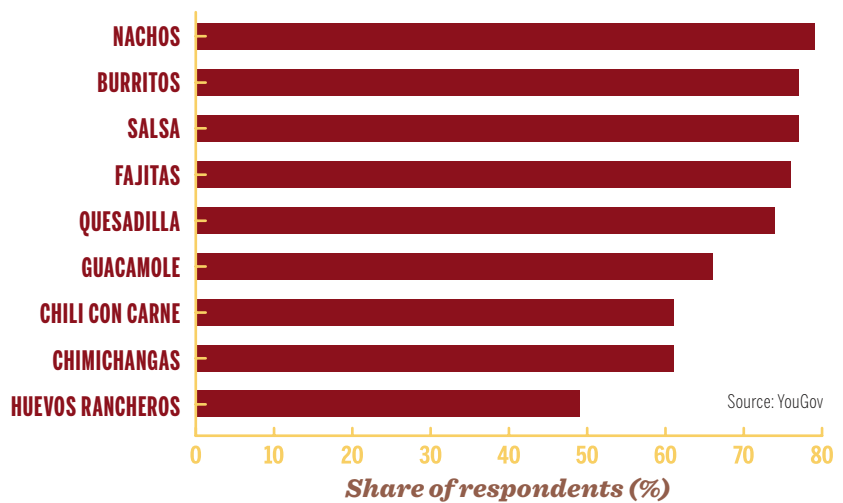
Once reviewers actually opened the package and cooked the burritos, those positive first impressions mostly melted away, particularly regarding the texture among those who microwaved the product.

"My suspicions about microwaving were correct," one wrote. "When I bit into it, a lot of fluid leaked out, like wa-

BURRITOS, POR FAVOR

According to a YouGov survey of American consumers, burritos are the second-most-popular Mexican food, with 77% of respondents sharing a positive opinion; only nachos, at 79%, were more popular. Notably, four of the other popular dishes — fajitas, quesadillas, chili con carne and chimichangas — also traditionally feature meat.

Most popular Mexican dishes in the U.S.



tery cheese. This was not appealing. There were solid pieces of sausage that were pretty good, but the couple little egg bits I found were firm and had a funny texture.”

A second taste-tester said, “I microwaved it but after flipping it all came apart. The tortilla unfolded and the insides leaked out. I had to eat it with a fork and knife. The taste was good, and there was a nice heat to it.”

A third noted that the microwaved texture undermined the grab-and-go appeal. “We microwaved it for convenience, but it’s so wet. There’s no way I can grab this and run out the door — it’s sloppy and has no struc-

tural integrity.” And finally, a fourth taster pithily remarked: “Upon taking it out of the microwave, it’s sad and watery, but smells good.”

The other cooking options worked somewhat better, reviewers said, although they were not as quick. “I prepared one in the microwave and one in the toaster oven and they were totally different eating experiences,” one wrote. “The microwaved burrito was floppy and wet, and could not be picked up. It was rubbery to cut and there was too much wet tortilla.”

Another wrote, “The oven burrito took 12 minutes (plus time to heat up the oven), which is okay if

having for lunch or a snack, but too long in the morning. And, it still had to be defrosted in the microwave for 1 minute.”

After cooking in the oven, the taster noted, “I could hold it! It was firm, crisp and golden brown. Tastes like a good breakfast sausage with a little kick to it.”

A third had a positive reaction to the recommended air fryer method: “I can see why this is the preferred method. It takes a bit longer, but it was well worth it.” They continued, “The air fryer made the burrito crispy and flaky, and it held up better when I picked it up. I enjoyed the crispy bite with the flavorful better-for-you sausage

inside.” But another taster said the air fryer method isn’t for those who want a true grab-and-go option. “It was a pain to wait 18 minutes. I wouldn’t spend 18 minutes for a little burrito for one,” they shared.

Other reviews were mixed to negative for a variety of reasons. “The green chili note was the most appealing part,” one wrote. “The sausage chunks were really tiny, and it was not apparent that there were three cheeses, so kind of a miss there. Given the calories, it wasn’t very fulfilling, and thus, I would want to eat more.”

“I opted for the air fryer, but the bottom of the burrito started leaking cheese,” a sec-

ond said. “It’s a decent size for a quick snack or meal and the taste was pretty good, but it was a lot of tortilla. I would have liked more turkey sausage and vegetables.”

And others variously opined, “Needs more of everything inside,” “If I ate just one, I’d still be hungry, but it’s 340 calories!” and, “It’s 17g protein, which is great, but the tortilla ratio is off, so I’m getting more carbs than protein.”

UPSHOT

A slight majority of the tasters would buy the burrito again, a few of whom gave it an unqualified positive review. “I really enjoyed this as an afternoon snack, and am intrigued to

TASTE *test*

3 *When I bit into it, a lot of fluid leaked out, like watery cheese. This was not appealing.*

try different flavors,” one taster said. “I expected this to not be great or healthy, but there was no weird flavor.” Another wrote: “It’s a nice size and the perfect amount for a quick breakfast.” And a third opined, “The price is reasonable for something to grab and go. Gets you nourished for the morning.”

A few who would buy it did not, nonetheless, sound in love. “I would think about buying it again as a snack, because it has 17g protein,” one wrote. “But 340 calories is not great.” A second said, “I’d eat it again, but probably wouldn’t go out of my way to buy it. Also, the size for 340 calories is a bit small.” And a

third shared, “I enjoyed the microwaved one because I like the gooey. But I can’t eat it fast and carry it; I have to sit down and put it on a plate because it’s so watery.”

Several others would not buy it again. “I gave one to my husband and received a quick ‘no’ after he had taken a couple bites,” one shared. “He said

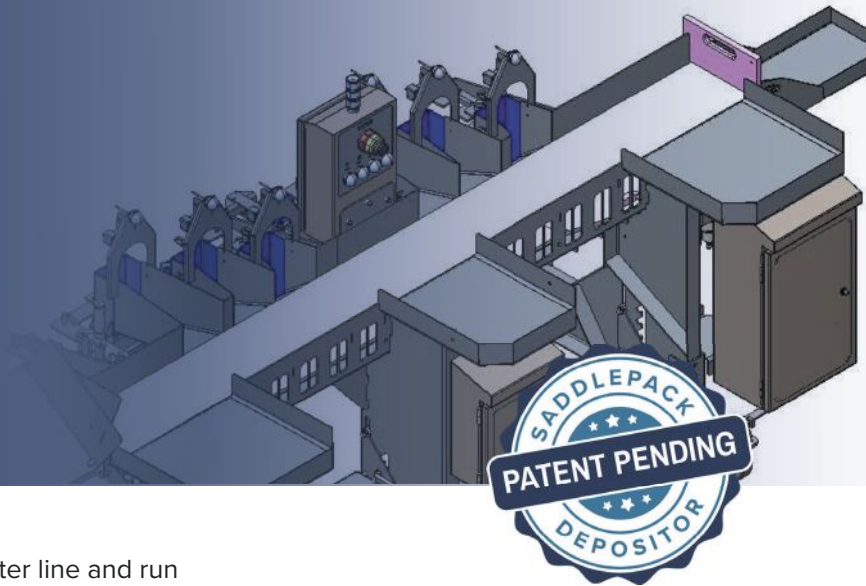
it was grossing him out.” A second said, “It seems like more of a hassle than it is convenient. The 18 minutes in the air fryer is too long, but that’s what’s needed to hold or carry this for a quick, convenient breakfast.” And a third wrote, “I like breakfast burritos. I don’t eat them often, but this was just not fulfilling.”

CONCLUSION

Bottom line, kudos to Red’s for this concept: a hand-held turkey sausage burrito was certainly of interest. But many glaring remarks surfaced, starting with the confusing positioning. The package doesn’t state it’s a breakfast burrito, yet the Red’s website describes

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TASTE *test*

it as a “breakfast favorite.” Many stumbled on the breakfast possibility because they read “cage-free eggs” on the package. Was this an assumption on Red’s part? Is this a missed opportunity?

The other notable theme from reviewers is that the final eating experience depended on the method of preparation. As expected, most of our tasters microwaved this burrito and were massively disappoint-

ed with the result. This supposedly portable item could not be held after microwaving, and a good majority of the filling leaked out, leaving a wet, gummy tortilla.

Air fryer and oven prep certainly pro-

vided a much better execution, especially visually and texturally, but most would not wait more than 15 minutes — definitely not in the morning — as they scramble for an on-the-go breakfast solution. The

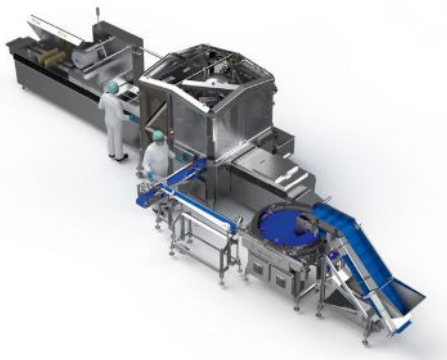
price was considered okay. But consumers have plenty of choices in terms of how and where to source breakfast foods. Will they opt for Red’s turkey sausage burrito for breakfast? A snack? A mini-meal?

by **Jacqueline Beckley, The Understanding & Insight Group, and Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, U&I Collaboration LLC**

Food product development and consumer research veterans, Jacqueline Beckley, Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, join Meetingplace Magazine as regular contributors to MeetingTaste, a consumer sampling of new products featured in our monthly Taste Test column. Here’s how the program works: The meat item is distributed to consumers, including the core demographic, for preparation in their own houses. No instructions are provided to the consumer, other than to write their overall impressions of the product, as well as to evaluate the flavor, texture, packaging and ease of use. Beckley, Cesario and Vahalik look for common threads by using Getting It!®, a system developed to listen to consumers about products. The sample of people is not intended to be a ‘taste test’ in a controlled setting, nor is it intended to simulate a focus group. Others are doing both. Rather, the intent is to interpret the response of the people who might purchase a product like this and use it, simply based on their encounters with the product in their individual, unique home environment. That is how U&I has been developing cutting-edge product and people understanding since 1999.



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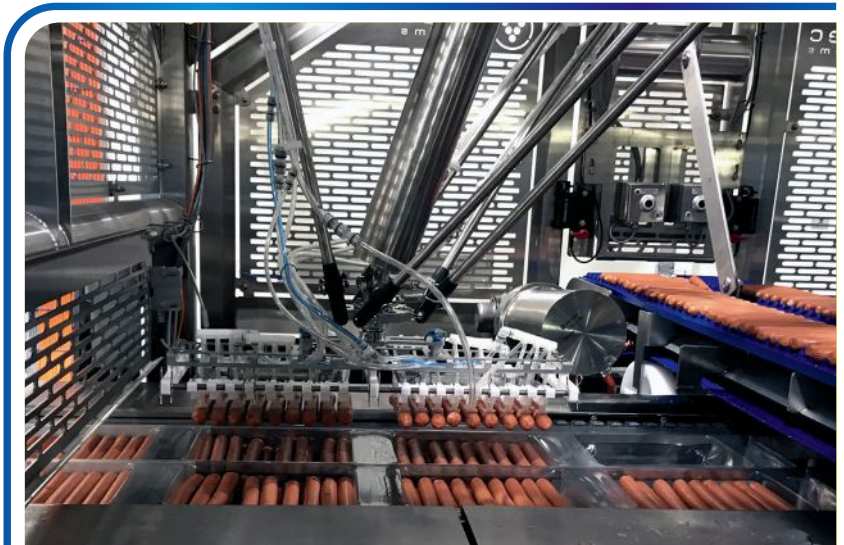
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