

Panel rates generics below name brands

Are name-brand items better than the no-brand generics? A majority of the participants in this newspaper's recent informal brand-name/no-brand comparison say the name brands are better.

In fact, the only item which was rated better than a comparable name brand was a jar of no-brand peanut butter.

This newspaper supplied 10 volunteers with a set of unlabeled products, one being a leading name brand and the other a no-brand generic. The volunteers were instructed to use the products at home or in the office and decide which they liked best. The items were simply labeled "Brand A" or "Brand B."

Of the 10 products selected for comparison, six were food products and four were non-food items. The items were bought at Farmer Jack or Meijer Thrifty Acres.

After one week with the products, nine of the 10 volunteers reported they liked the brand-name items better.

Doris Kelley, a secretary, received two jars of applesauce. Kelley shared the applesauce with her fellow employees and the unanimous selection was "Brand A" — the brand name.

Kelley and her colleagues were comparing a 58-cent, 25-ounce jar of no-brand applesauce with a 69-cent, 25-ounce jar of Fruit Valley applesauce.

"I like Brand A (Fruit Valley). Everyone agreed it was the best — no question about it. It had better taste, texture and appearance. Brand B (the no-brand) was watery, dull and bland-looking," Kelley said.

Likewise, Darlene Owens was given two jars of pickles, which she shared with her colleagues. After careful consideration, they selected the name brand. Being compared was a 58-cent, 32-ounce jar of no-brand kosher dill pickles and a \$1.55, 32-ounce jar of Vlasic kosher dills.

"Brand A (Vlasic) was best. They were more crunchy and better tasting. Brand B (the no-brand) was soggy, and it didn't taste very much like a pickle," Owens said.

A home economics teacher, Anne Wales, was given two cans of corn. She selected the name brand.

Being compared was a 38-cent, 16.5-ounce can of no-brand corn and a 49-cent, 17-ounce can of Libby's corn.

"I selected Brand B (Libby's) because of the taste and texture. It wasn't the color because Brand A (the no-brand) was better colored. Also the size of the kernel on A was better," Wales said.

"There was definitely a difference," she said.

Another home economics teacher, Mary Reef, was given two bottles of ketchup, which she shared with her class. She selected the name brand while the class was split half and half.

Being compared was a 44-cent, 14-ounce bottle of no-brand tomato ketchup and a 79-cent, 14-ounce bottle of Heinz tomato ketchup.

"Brand B (Heinz) was sweeter and had a nicer flavor," Reef said.

Accounting employee Chris Ward was given two jars of peanut butter which she shared with her family. They preferred the no-brand over the brand name.

Being compared was a 97-cent, 16-ounce jar of no-brand peanut butter and a \$1.88, 16-ounce jar of Velvet peanut butter.

"We selected Brand B (the no-brand) because of the taste as well as the consistency," Ward said.

The sixth food product was given to a deputy city clerk, Pat Williams. She was given two sets of saltine crackers, which she shared with her fellow workers.

Being compared was a 49-cent, 16-ounce box of no-brand saltine crackers and a 99-cent, 16-ounce box of Nabisco saltine crackers.

"I couldn't tell you which was better because both were stale," Williams said. However, one of her colleagues selected Brand B (Nabisco), because they were "crisper and a little crispier."

A purchasing agent, Carol Burnstead, was given two bottles of hair shampoo. She found the name-brand shampoo to be a bit better.

Being compared was a 89-cent, 16-fluid-ounce bottle of no-brand herbal scented shampoo and a \$1.37, 15-fluid-ounce bottle of Clairol Herbal Essence shampoo.

"The only difference between the two shampoos was that Brand A (Clairol) smelled better. Other than that, they are pretty comparable," Burnstead said.

A deputy township clerk, Shirley Rumberger, was given two stacks of paper napkins which she took home. Rumberger and her husband preferred the brand-name napkins.

"We liked the Brand A (Scott) napkins. They were stronger, lasted better, and we liked them better. I probably wouldn't buy the other brand anyway," Rumberger said.

A school personnel secretary, Jenny Wellman, was given two bottles of mouthwash. She took the bottles home for the comparison, and her family agreed the brand-name was better.

Being compared was a \$1.59, 32-fluid-ounce bottle of no-brand green mouth wash and a \$2.05, 24-fluid-ounce bottle of Scope mouthwash.

"We all used it, and we decided Brand B (Scope) was best. One thing was the taste, and the shape of the bottle is handy. B lasted longer — the refreshing feeling in your mouth — and A (the no-brand) was terrible tasting," Wellman said.

The last non-food item was given to a school receptionist, Roberta Dombey. Dombey received two rolls of paper towel, which she compared at home. Her choice was the name brand.

Being compared was a 49-cent, 85-square-foot roll of no-brand paper towels and a \$1.05, 77-square-foot roll of Bounty paper towels.

"The absorption was about equal, but when you would go to separate it, Brand A (the no-brand) would just fall apart in your hands. Brand B (Bounty) would separate me easily," Dombey said.

"The roughness of Brand A was horrible. Even my husband (Don) said, 'I wouldn't buy that Brand A for anything,'" Dombey said.

(Contributing to this story were staff writers Ariene Funke, Dennis O'Connor, and Gary M. Cates. The story was written by Cates.)

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