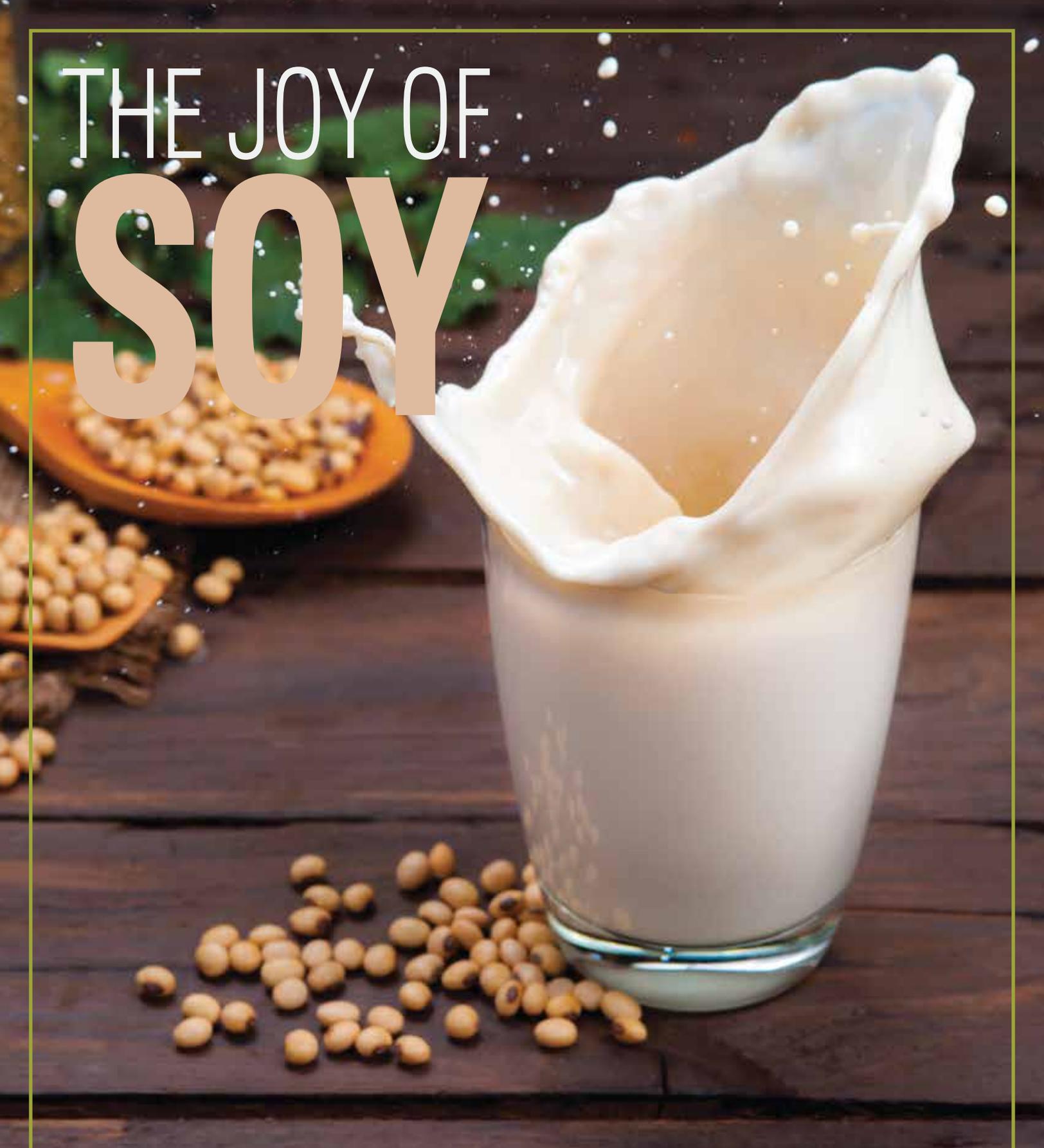


THE JOY OF SOY



Contract Testing Inc.



INTRODUCTION

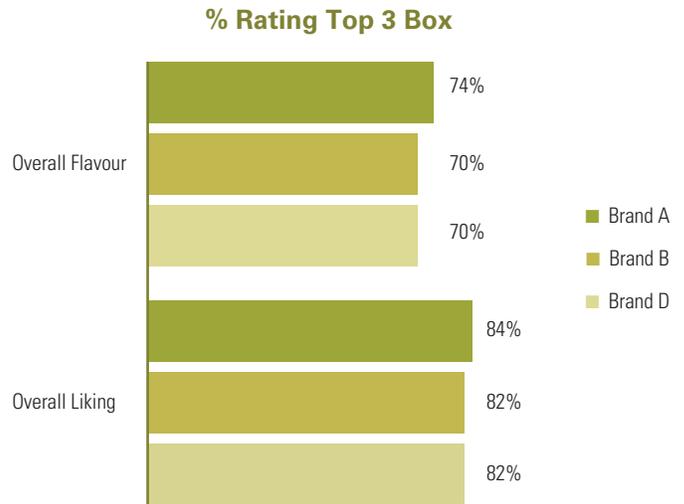
For those who are lactose intolerant, vegan, or simply looking for non-dairy options, finding tasty alternatives to cow's milk has never been easier. The grocery dairy case has been growing exponentially with non-dairy beverage options, and soy has been leading the way in this explosive food trend. Compared with other non-dairy alternatives, soy trumps all for its high protein, amino acids, and potassium. It's an excellent source of B-vitamins and iron, and can be fortified to provide the same levels of calcium as cow's milk. For these reasons, soy is in fact the only milk alternative that has an official place in Canada's Food Guide.

Despite its recent explosion of popularity in North American food culture, the oldest references to soy milk were actually found on ancient Chinese murals. It's said to have made its way into Europe as early as the mid-17th century, and to North American soil by 1896. Soy milk is made from a blend of oil, water and soybeans and has a slightly beany, chalky taste and generally a thicker, richer and creamier texture than nut or seed-based beverages.

So given the steady rise in consumer interest, and the continued expansion of brands into this space, this study takes a closer look at the taste profiles of four brands of soy beverages to see if any make us jump for joy.

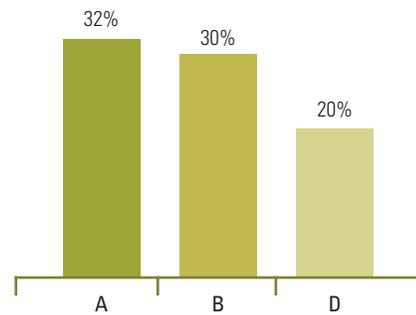


Figures 1 – Top 3 Box ratings for Overall Liking and Overall Flavour



Although all three had likeable flavour profiles, there was one notable shortcoming consistent with all three brands and that was sweetness.

Figure 2 - Percent who said the Soy Milk was Not Sweet Enough



These top performing brands also had positive ratings for their Overall Texture and Mouthfeel. However, Brand A was superior to all the others for Creaminess, with 80% of our testers rating it 'just right'.

JOYLESS SOY

Contrary to its three tasty counterparts, one brand of soy beverage did not reach soaring heights. In fact, the performance of this brand would make it hardly worthy of shelf space in our estimation. Over one third of our testers rated this brand below five on the nine point scales of Overall Liking, Overall Flavour, and Overall Sweetness (Table 1) and more than 70% said it scored below their 'ideal' for a soy milk beverage (Fig. 3) – a few big red flags by our standards.

Table 1 - Brand C - % of Ratings below 5

Percentage Rating Brand C below '5' on 9-pt scale	
Product Overall	32%
Overall Flavour	34%
Overall Sweetness	40%

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Test participants included 50 females, between the ages of 25 and 54 from the Greater Toronto Area, who were regular users of soy beverage. They tasted and evaluated four 'original' flavoured brands of soy beverage, including three National brands and one Private label, all having similar nutritional values.

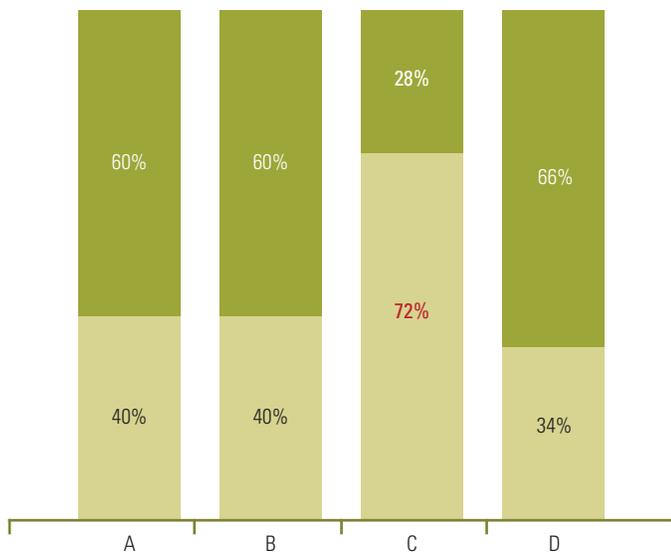
Each participant received a 100 ml portion of each sample in a 7oz. cup labeled with a 3 digit code number served one at a time in varied order. Participants were first asked to evaluate the appearance and aroma, followed by a series of liking and 'just about right' questions on specific sensory attributes.



JOYOUS SOY

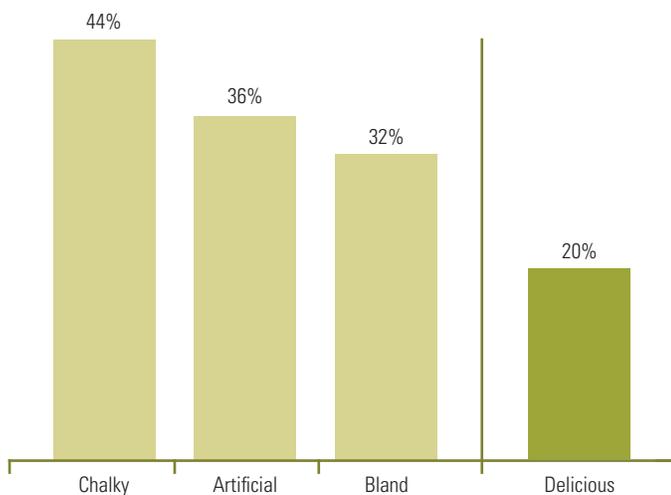
Three brands performed similarly well, with no significant differences on the key measures of Overall Liking, Overall Flavour, and Purchase Intent. In fact, definite and probable purchase intent exceeded 65% for all three brands, and at least 70% of participants rated Brands A, B, & D in the top three boxes for Overall Liking and Overall Flavour as measured on a 9-point hedonic scale (Fig 1).

Figure 3 - % rating 'Less than Ideal'



And simply put, Brand C just tasted bad. The flavour profile was much too strong, but not in a good way. Many described it as chalky, artificial, and bland – while few described this flavour profile as ‘delicious’ (Fig 4). It also came with a not-so-nice lingering aftertaste – just in case you didn’t get enough of the poor flavour the first time. And while the flavour profile was the real turn-off for this brand, texturally it lacked creaminess. There was just no redeeming attributes for this brand, which ultimately translated into a very serious lack of purchase interest.

Figure 4 - Qualitative Descriptors for Product C



ODE TO SOY

Prior to tasting, we asked our soy beverage consumers about their current purchase behaviour, revealing that the large majority have not assumed any real brand loyalty in this category yet. Most of our testers were users in this category because of the health benefits, and many believe that all brands of soy beverage have similar nutritional benefits, so they tend to look for the brands that are on sale.

But as the consumer shift to non-dairy alternatives continues, continued product development in these categories will further raise the bar of sensory performance. And as products improve, consumer familiarity will also be advancing – consumers will become more accustomed to the soy flavour profile and increasingly aware of what constitutes great-tasting soy milk.

Our test exposed one brand in this dairy alternative category with a sensory profile that is not meeting the standards of its rivals, and in this young and growing category, runs the risk of alienating new consumers who will walk away from soy milk on their first try. Maintaining and elevating the sensory standards in the category will be beneficial to all – and help to spread the joy ...of soy.



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