

Lotus stir-fry scores high in consumer panels

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Lotus, an aquatic perennial vegetable native to many subtropical and temperate zones, is cultivated extensively throughout Asia. Lotus rhizomes, stems, flowers, seeds, and young leaves are in great demand, and are considered a dietary vegetable staple in many Asian cultures because of their high content of protein, amino acids, dietary fiber, carbohydrates, vitamins, carotenoids, and macro/micronutrients. A new report in *HortTechnology* found there may be a niche market for locally grown lotus among American consumers.

Deacue Fields and Togo Traore, corresponding authors of the report, explained that lotus rhizomes are used extensively in culinary preparations such as soups, salads, desserts, and stir-fried food in China, Japan, India, Vietnam, and Australia. "Although lotus is indigenous in many areas in Alabama and the United States, the prospect of cultivating lotus commercially presents several questions concerning its sustainability as a specialty vegetable crop in Alabama and the United States," Traore and Fields noted.

To find out more about American's perceptions, a research team evaluated consumer preference for three different preparations of fresh lotus rhizomes and value-added products (stir-fry, baked chips, and salad) through consumer taste panels at Auburn University's Department of Nutrition Dietetics and Hospitality Management and a locally owned restaurant. Prior to the taste panels, only 30% of the participants had some knowledge about the lotus rhizome and its health benefits and preparations.

When asked to provide preference ratings, participants said they enjoyed lotus stir-fry the most, followed by baked lotus chips and lotus salad. "About 77% of the participants stated they really like stir-fry, compared with 52% for baked lotus chips and 47% for lotus salad," the authors noted. Results suggested that participant's choice of lotus preparation was correlated with gender, age, income, education level, shopping habits, and meal purchased. The researchers say the results indicate "potential demand" for fresh lotus rhizomes, particularly among individuals who are health conscious and who are the primary household shoppers.

"Findings of this case study will assist in analyzing consumer behavior and development of sustainable niche markets for locally cultivated fresh or and development of sustainable niche markets for locally cultivated fresh edible [lotus](#) rhizomes," the authors said.

More information: ASHS *HortTechnology*:
[horttech.ashspublications.org/ ... nt/26/5/657.abstract](https://horttech.ashspublications.org/...nt/26/5/657.abstract)

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