

FROZEN LOBSTER

Generally, imports of frozen lobster products to France are on the decline. This is due to changing preferences in the festive products selected by the supermarkets each year. For a number of years, the popularity of "popsicle" lobster increased significantly because it could be sold as "lobster" at a fairly low price. As the product became more common, it also became less beneficial for the supermarkets to put it on sale, especially since the product itself is rather disappointing. The slack should be taken up by other more sophisticated lobster products. Among the frozen products, a distinction is drawn between popsicle lobster and popsicle pack lobster (lobster cooked in brine, whole frozen) and the other frozen products.

FROZEN POPSICLE LOBSTER

Competing products: frozen rock lobster and frozen gambas, frozen rock lobster tails. Competing suppliers: none (Canada is the only source). The most common weights are 200, 225 and 250 grams for supermarkets, and also 300 g and 400 g for specialty shops. A reasonable estimate would be that between 80% and 90% of these popsicles are sold in supermarkets, which buy direct or through an importer. The two main periods of consumption are the year-end holiday (Christmas) and Easter. Ten-unit masters (cartons) are a common form of product presentation. These lobsters are sold in containerload lots.

Despite promotions and a relatively low price (the supermarkets usually take no margin on it), this odd-looking product is still not very well known. Exporters should be aware that many competing products (rock lobsters from Cuba, large gambas) are heavily advertised through various media, including television. A rock lobster is larger (400 grams) and yields more meat (200 grams), while a popsicle lobster weighing 200 or 250 grams yields 60 to 70 grams of meat, which is very disappointing when it appears on the plate. Canadian lobster promotion campaigns are organized by the supermarkets and are based on price, not on quality or on recipes for their preparation. When it comes to price, the Canadians control the market. From the standpoint of quality, we think it will be necessary to explain the difference in quality between the different fishing seasons and that only the spring catch should be sold as popsicles.

OTHER FROZEN PRODUCTS

Whole I.Q.F. lobster, frozen lobster (claws, tails) and lobster meat.

INDIVIDUALLY QUICK-FROZEN (IQF) LOBSTER

Competing products: frozen rock lobster, frozen rock lobster tails. Competing suppliers: none (Canada is the only source). The product has only recently become available in France. An attractive market seems to be opening up in the restaurant sector and in some supermarket chains. Only one problem persists: breakage of the claws or parts of the shell during transportation (carcasses are not protected). IQF lobster is imported by wholesales or firms that specialize in supplying the restaurant sector.

OTHER LOBSTER PRODUCTS

We have noted the appearance of new products such as portion control frozen half lobsters and fresh, cooked half-split lobster (imported live from Canada and cooked by a French firm). The more conventional products such as frozen lobster meat, frozen lobster tails and tomalley (frozen or canned) are relatively still unknown. These products could find an outlet in France, though tests carried out with canned lobster meat proved inconclusive, since the French prefer to eat lobster in the shell.