



Results of the 2006 Veg Box Scheme Customer Survey

Conducted by VegBox-Recipes.co.uk

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Note: The results of the survey may be circulated and republished, as long as full credit is given to VegBox-Recipes.co.uk

About The Survey And The Awards

The Veg Box Recipes Veg Box Scheme Awards aimed to recognise the hard work put in by those who run veg box delivery services, as well as encouraging best practise within the industry.



The nominations were open from September to December 2006.

UK veg box scheme customers were able to rate their box scheme on the 5 main areas of quality, flexibility, reliability, service and value for money. They also gave feedback on what their scheme supplier was doing well and what they could improve.

The aims of the survey were:

- To understand what customers expect from their Veg Box Scheme provider
- To find out how well schemes are meeting those expectations
- To identify growing trends in the veg box market

The results of the feedback have been analysed, in conjunction with in-depth interviews, and compiled into this report.

We hope will it be a valuable resource for anyone involved with running a Veg Box or organic food delivery scheme.



The Top 5 Things People Want From Their Veg Box Scheme

Quality is a basic expectation. People expect the fruit and vegetables to be fresh and to last for at least part of the week. Rubbery vegetables, wilting lettuces and rotting fruit are the quickest way to lose your customers.

So what DO they want?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to opt-out of things they don't like – and request more regular delivery of the things they love. 2. To be able to check on a website what they could expect this week. 	Growing Trends
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3. **Notes on any unusual items & weekly recipe suggestions.** Also let them know if any items are fast to perish and need using at the beginning of the week – you'll get less complaints.
4. **Excellent, friendly customer service.** Return calls. Deal with complaints effectively. Keep admin running well, so you don't miss deliveries or leave boxes while they're away.
5. **As much local food as possible.** Certainly no air-freighted produce.

What makes them likely to leave?

1. **Not being able to opt out of stuff they don't like.** This leads to waste, which they feel guilty about, so they give up on their box scheme. Not knowing what to do with what arrives also leads to waste, so recipe suggestions are vital.
2. **Missed deliveries.** This wasn't a common problem, but lack of reliability was a major reason for leaving a box scheme.
3. **Importing too much fruit and veg from abroad.** Customers want variety, but grown as locally as possible.

Other things that got rave reviews:

Make sure you supply food in **reusable boxes** and make as much of your packaging as possible recyclable (e.g. **paper bags, not plastic bags**).

Environmentally-friendly transport – if your delivery vans are LPG or bio-fuel, make sure you shout about it!

They want to get to know you. Newsletters are a great way of doing this and building loyalty. Plus people loved it when their local box scheme organised events such as farm visits or food tastings.

Consider offering other types of produce – e.g. eggs, bread, local cheeses

What About Quality, Service, Flexibility, Variety & Value?

Quality

Almost all schemes got good ratings for quality, which is great news.

The one tip we would give is:

For new customers who may be buying organic for the first time:

It's a good idea to explain that the fruit and vegetables may not be as cosmetically perfect or long-lasting as supermarket produce, but they should taste better!

Service

Service is critical for veg box scheme providers. Customers said that good service will make up for occasional quality problems and mistakes with deliveries. "Good service" included:

Have a quality guarantee.

If something isn't up to scratch, replace it the following week.

If you make a mistake, rectify it and apologise.

Don't "ignore" the customer, hoping the problem will go away – because you'll lose business.

Have a website where people can check in advance what might be in their box that week.

People like to be able to plan ahead.

If you don't have a website, see page 8 for help on this.

Return phone messages and emails promptly.

Being friendly and helpful on the phone is essential, no matter how busy you are.

The other thing that was mentioned by many was that they want to get to know their Veg Box Scheme provider in a way they couldn't with a supermarket.

They enjoy reading newsletters with updates, humorous anecdotes and recipe ideas.

They like to get involved with farm visits and open days.

Basically, they want you to be human in a way a supermarket never could be. This gives you a huge advantage and helps keep your customers loyal.



Flexibility

Feedback covered 2 main areas:

1. **The flexibility to get your veg box delivered to somewhere convenient is important.** Delivering to home, work or convenient local drop-off points was essential.

2. **Allow customers to opt out of receiving stuff they won't use.**

Not being able to do this was a real problem and would cause people to leave a scheme for one that offered this flexibility, even if it was less local.

The schemes that got the highest ratings on flexibility were those that allowed people to change their preferences via the website each week, once they had seen what was likely to be in their box.

While this might not be practical for a small-scale supplier, more schemes are now offering this, so more customers are starting to expect it.

Variety

80% of respondents were very happy with the variety of produce offered by their veg box.

Supplying enough variety can be tough, particularly during the "Hungry Gap", but few customers like having broad beans or parsnips for 5 weeks in a row.

If more variety isn't possible, you could include more recipe suggestions, to stop them getting bored.

Value

Most schemes rated highly on this, with 90% of respondents feeling their veg box is good or excellent value for money.

However, many people see veg boxes as a premium product and believe (rightly or wrongly) that they are more expensive than supermarkets.

So they expect a higher level of service.

See the Service section on page 4 for details of what this means to them.

How Veg Box Recipes Can Help

You Can Use Our Recipes – Free

Our research shows that over 50% of people who give up on their veg box scheme do so because they don't know how to cook the vegetables they receive.

Believe it or not, this includes veggies like broad beans and butternut squash – not just kohlrabi or Romanesco!

Having easy access to recipes is an essential part of enjoying using a Veg Box.

If you are a veg box scheme provider, you can use our recipes free of charge in any free newsletter you distribute to your customers. You can also link to them from your website for free.

All we ask is that you give us credit for the recipe. For example:

This recipe is courtesy of www.vegbox-recipes.co.uk

If used in electronic format, the website address must be a live link.

When you use a recipe, please tell us: recipes@vegbox-recipes.co.uk

- Which recipe(s) you used
- Name of publication
- Date of issue



Got A Favourite Seasonal Recipe?

Send it to us and if we publish it on our site, we'll tell people you invented it and give you a link to your directory entry, to help new customers get in touch.

Email it to: recipes@vegbox-recipes.co.uk



Free Listing In Our Veg Box Scheme Directory

Our research shows that an increasing number of potential customers are using the internet to find their local Veg Box Schemes.

We offer visitors a "Find A Veg Box Scheme" search service. This consistently shows up in the top 5 results on Google searches for veg boxes and our site is getting 50,000 visitors per month.

So it's a great way for new customers to find you.

And getting listed is free

To make sure you're not missing out on potential new customers, please take a moment to check you are listed and that your details are current.

<http://www.vegbox-recipes.co.uk/veg-boxes/find-a-veg-box-scheme.php>

If your listing is out of date, please email: listings@vegbox-recipes.co.uk

If you're not yet listed, please go to:

<http://www.vegbox-recipes.co.uk/register-me.php>