

Asian veggie store demos make buyers hungry

COOKING demonstrations of Asian vegetables are becoming popular in stores and bridging the marketing “missing link”.

According to NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) project leader Dr Jenny Ekman, the response from consumers to in-store demonstrations and a series of recipe cards has been “incredible”.

Some the lines of Asian vegetables recently sold out at one store, where 150 people attended a demonstration.

Dr Ekman said that the main reason many people haven't previously bought Asian vegetables is that they didn't know what they were or how to cook them.

That began to change last year when NSW DPI, supported by Ausveg, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and Horticulture Australia, developed a standardised system of names for 14 of the most common Asian vegetable lines.

These names are now being used in retail stores and central markets.

Dr Ekman said that one of the problems was that Asian vegetables were sometimes known by three or four different names.

“For example, kang kong is also called ong choy, water spinach and even swamp cabbage.

“This was confusing for everyone in the supply chain, from grower to retailer to consumer,” she said.

A range of recipe cards has been created in collaboration with Ayam, a major manufacturer of Asian style sauces.

A cooking video and point of sale materials based on the cards have also been produced.

Harris Farm Market produce stores around Sydney are now hosting cooking demonstrations of the recipes shown on the cards.

In selected stores, TVs will be installed showing the cooking video. Featuring NSW DPI technical officer David Daniels as guest chef, the video demonstrates the recipes shown on the cards.

The “buyout” success occurred at Penrith, where more than 150 people queued to sample the simple vegetable dishes and ask questions - a big change from normally slow sales of Asian vegetables.

Dr Ekman said people tasting for the first time enjoyed the flavours of the Ayam sauces when they were combined with the vegetables, and said they never knew the vegetables were so tasty.

As well as listening to store manager and consumer comments and feedback, sales data from each of the host stores will be analysed to see which method has the greatest effect on Asian vegetable purchases.

Contact: Jenny Ekman, Gosford, (02) 4348 1942,
jenny.ekman@dpi.nsw.gov.au