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World's Largest Food Service Show Impresses Chinese Buyers

Report Categories:

Dairy and Products
Livestock and Products
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Report Highlights:

ATO Shenyang led 10 buyers from the Northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang and the Western province of Sichuan to attend the National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago from May 18 to 23, 2017.

ATO Shenyang led 10 buyers from the Northeastern Chinese provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang and the Western province of Sichuan to attend the National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago from May 18 to 23, 2017. This was the largest trade mission ever hosted by ATO Shenyang since its founding in 2011.

The delegation experienced the largest annual foodservice event in the world. Buyers showed strong interest in ready-to-eat dairy products, small-packaged snack foods such as chitlins, cacao nibs and flavored nuts, roasted meats, especially beef, and canned sauces and Italian foods for restaurant preparation. The delegation also visited SYSCO, the largest foodservice distribution network in the world. This was the first time that most of the members of eight company delegation had ever travelled overseas, much less to the United States. Two of the buyers were so impressed by the mission's organization; they decided to join the California Wine Reverse Trade Mission taking place the following week.

Chinese food consumption patterns are definitely changing – and this is good news. Northeast China Western-style restaurant chains are undergoing a boom and traditional U.S. foods, such as steak, ribs, cheese, and wine are becoming premium. The Chinese want to see and be seen enjoying U.S. foods. Unlike years past when Northeastern Chinese were shopping only for price and volume, today's buyers are looking for quality, variety, and food packaged ready for use in chain-style eateries. Northeast restaurant chains are looking to expand and they are looking to sell something other than pizza, fried chicken, and sausages.

U.S. producers and exporters should note that Northeastern Chinese want to consume premium U.S. foods differently than Americans would. Diners in restaurants prefer their American beef steak, pork ribs, and Alaskan King Crab served Chinese style and that means presentation more like a summer picnic than an elaborate meal at a French restaurant. Instead of a single main entrée for each individual at the table, it would be 3-4 entrees shared among 6 diners with 6 or so small plates of side dishes.

American exporters should be aware that Chinese homes and restaurants do not have ovens. Chinese kitchens by and large only use woks and steamers. Thus, ingredients or mixtures that could be prepared in a wok will sell better than those that can't.

U.S. ingredients and sauces are more often than not unfamiliar to the Chinese. A restaurant is looking for fool-proof prep ingredients, such as the crush tomatoes, sauce and paste used to make spaghetti. Similarly, consumers are much more likely to buy a product if there are simple directions on the label. Directions for use, such as “a few drops in a stir fry” or “use 15 grams in a stew” can have a big impact. Such simple recipes help consumers feel confident to experiment and try a product, especially if it one s/he has never been used before.

It also should be noted that Northeast Chinese tend to dine very quickly as the emphasis is to eat the food while it is still hot and fresh and save the talking – and toasting – for afterwards. With that in mind, All of the Chinese fell in love with IPA and similar micro-brews. The northeasterners enjoyed its slightly higher alcohol content, deeper flavor, and bright finish. They especially enjoyed them paired with seafood and Mexican food. Chinese domestic beer tends to be very light and they enjoyed the more full-bodied, higher-alcohol American beers. That said, the dark beers, such as stout were not well received.

The ATO Director introduced the delegation to U.S. Mexican food and the buyers fell in love. They were surprised by the wide varieties of corn products (tortilla chips, steamed tortillas, fried tortillas, corn flour breadings) used to prepare the dishes and enjoyed the taste and mouth feel of this rich corn-based cuisine. The delegation enjoyed the varied textures and tastes of Mexican peppers, be it salsa, pico de gallo, cheese stuffed rellenos, or fajita-style grilled New Mexican green peppers. Chorizo – either beef or pork – the Northeasterners enjoyed its spicy flavor and that fact that it could be used as a garnish or filling to accompany scrambled eggs or other meats and tortillas. The Northeasterners also pork carnitas enjoyed its complex mole seasoning and sweet, caramelized flavor.

Interestingly, Mexican dishes included 4 different types of Mexican white cheese and they were all consumed with gusto. The waitress had to be sent back for more! Speaking of cheese, the Northeastern Chinese now enjoy ready-to-eat soft cheese. While the sharper, more intense, and dryer cheeses are still foreign to them, everyone enjoyed the milder and softer cheeses that are cooked as a topping or filling, such as in eggs, enchiladas, chile relleno, garlic bread, or pizza.

Pickles, especially if they are slivered (rather than sliced into rounds) were an unexpected hit. The Northeastern Chinese eat them along with rice, corn, or millet porridge for breakfast and they like them as a soup garnish or as a tangy side dish to accompany roasted meats. American bread and butter pickles were the most popular with our visitors.

And as much as they are a mainstay of American cuisine, the Northeastern Chinese are not interested in sweets, be it cake, pie, pastries, or even ice cream. Similarly, sweet beverages and sweet cocktails were not appetizing to our delegation

Hot Products! This list comes observing the reactions and interest showed by our delegation.

- Canned sauces, especially Italian
- Hashes, chilies, stews and similar canned ready-to-eat meat dishes
- Chitlins, both plain and spicy
- Flavored peanuts (honey or savory)
- U.S. beef
- Chorizo, beef or pork
- Mexican roast pork or carnitas
- Spanish and other fancy hams/antipasti
- Ready-to-eat dairy products
- Sriracha sauce
- Sliced pickles
- Cacao nibs
- Black Cod
- Alaskan King Crab
- Foods for eldercare
- Foods for infants and toddlers
- IPA, ales and similar micro-brews

- Red wine (Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah, and Merlot)
- White Wine (Sauvignon Blanc and similar fruit-forward wines)

For further reading on exporting agricultural and food products to Northeast China, please see:

This is Northeast China|Market Development Reports|Shenyang|China - Peoples Republic of|1/18/2017

Home to winter sports, ski resorts, and ancient Manchurian towns, Dongbei or Northeastern China is home to 110 million people. With a down-home friendliness resonant of the U.S. Midwest, Dongbei's denizens are the largest buyer of U.S. soybeans and are China's largest consumers of beef and lamb. Dongbei companies, processors and distributors are looking for U.S. products. Dongbei importers are seeking consumer-ready products such as red wine, sports beverages, and chocolate. Processors and ...

[This is Northeast China Shenyang China - Peoples Republic of 12-30-2016](#)

For further reading on exporting agricultural and food products to China in general, please see:

FAIRS Export Certificate Report|Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Certification|Beijing|China - Peoples Republic of|2/24/2017

This report lists major export certificates required by the Chinese government for imports of food and agricultural products. Major changes in 2016 include China's implementation of new registration requirements on grains and oilseeds (AQSIQ Decree 177) and live seafood (AQSIQ Decree 183). China also introduced registration requirements for infant formula recipes (CFDA Decree 26), health foods (CFDA Decree 22), and foods for special medical purposes (CFDA Decree 24). In addition, in 2016, Chi...

[Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Certification Beijing China - Peoples Republic of 2-3-2017](#)

FAIRS Country Report|Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Narrative|Beijing|China - Peoples Republic of|2/24/2017

During 2016, China continued issuing numerous new regulations, rules and measures to reflect the requirements introduced by the 2015 Food Safety Law. Most notably, China launched new registration systems, including registration for grains and oilseeds (AQSIQ Decree 177), registration for live seafood (AQSIQ Decree 183), registration for infant formula recipes (CFDA Decree 26), and foods for special medical purposes (CFDA Decree 24). Food producers at home and abroad continue to examine requi...

[Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Narrative Beijing China - Peoples Republic of 2-3-2017](#)

2016 Exporter Guide to China|Exporter Guide|Beijing ATO|China - Peoples Republic of|1/13/2017

This report is meant to provide practical tips to U.S. agricultural, forest and fishery companies on how to conduct business in China. The report includes local business practices and a general review of consumer preferences, food standards and regulations, and import and inspection procedures. The report also provides best prospects, with a focus on high-value, consumer-oriented goods.

[Exporter Guide Beijing ATO China - Peoples Republic of 12-30-2016](#)

Please also check out our website at: www.usda.china.org

If you are interested in reaching out to importers and distributors in Northeast China, please contact:

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