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Report Name: Back-to-School - Healthy Bites Happy Kids

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Post: Monterrey ATO

Report Category: Agricultural Trade Office Activities, Dairy and Products, Fresh Fruit, Poultry and Products, Tree Nuts, Raisins

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Report Highlights:

On September 21, ATO Monterrey organized its first Back-to-School: Healthy Bites, Happy Kids event at the U.S. Consul General's Residence, offering parents a welcoming space to learn about nutritious U.S. food products (i.e., apples, cheese, raisins, pulses, blueberries, pears, almonds, peanut butter, tart cherries, sunflower seeds, and eggs) to consider for their children's school lunches. USDA Cooperator representatives showcased to around 90 parents their products' nutritional information, where to buy them in the Mexican market, and how to easily include them in lunchboxes. Additionally, Chef Sebastián Huezo led a cooking demonstration on incorporating these products into healthy, shareable dishes for school parties and sporting events.

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On September 21, the Agricultural Trade Office in Monterrey organized the "Back-to-School: Healthy Bites, Happy Kids" market promotion event. This was ATO Monterrey's first event targeting families with school-aged children, an important consumer demographic in Monterrey. Monterrey hosts a growing wide array of highly reputable private international and American curriculum schools that attract young families from all over Mexico. This event brought together around 90 parents of students from various Monterrey schools to discover how to incorporate U.S. products, specifically apples, cheese, raisins, peanut butter, blueberries, pears, almonds, tart cherries, pulses, sunflower seeds, and eggs, into school lunches, sports practices, birthday celebrations, and other school activities.



Photo 1. Chef Sebastián Huezo demonstrates healthy lunch and snack recipes for parents.

The event was hosted at the residence of U.S. Consul General Melissa Bishop. The relaxed, family-friendly setting invited participants to do more than listen: they tasted, asked questions, and interacted directly with in-country representatives of these U.S. products throughout the afternoon.

USDA Cooperators staffed individual stations where they presented their products, offered samples, and shared ideas for including them in school

lunches, events and extracurricular activities. The event gave cooperators a direct line to their target consumers in Monterrey, while representatives from local retailers, importers, and other ATO Monterrey contacts helped them identify where to find these products in local outlets. This event also provided ATO Monterrey's partners the opportunity to gather firsthand consumer feedback on the showcased products, adding a valuable market intel dimension to the event since this group of parents was very representative of Monterrey's middle- and upper-class households.



Photo 2. U.S. Consul General Melissa Bishop provides opening remarks, welcoming participants to her home for the Back-to-School: Healthy Bites, Happy Kids event.

To encourage active participation, each parent received a passport to prove they had visited every product exhibit. By visiting each USDA cooperator's station and taking part in its promotional activity, attendees received a completion sticker – an icon of each U.S. product being promoted, provided courtesy of ATO's local partner printing company Artegraf. Once they collected all the stickers, participants received a lunchbox filled with those promoted products to inspire the parents to keep packing the same U.S. products for their children's school lunches going forward.

According to several parents, the passport component turned product promotion into an interactive experience and kept attendees engaged from the first station to the last. One found the activity very fitting for Mexican culture and likened it to the excitement generated by the sticker collection craze in Mexico during the 2026 World Cup.

The event also showed parents how to use the products beyond the lunchbox. Chef Sebastián Huezo led a cooking demonstration with practical, healthy recipes for shareable snacks for school social events, sports practices, and classroom celebrations, all easy to recreate at home (See link to recipes below.)

The event was well received and brought U.S. products directly to *regio*[1] consumers, gave USDA Cooperators a space to showcase their benefits and uses, and connected participants with local retail options. It demonstrated how consumer-focused programming can create meaningful links between U.S. suppliers, local retailers, and Mexican consumers, and it offers a model for future family-oriented promotions.

[1] Regio – a local term for people from Monterrey

Healthy Recipes Guide:

Chef Sebastián Huezo created a recipe guide featuring healthy lunch and snack ideas made with U.S. products, including nutritional information for each recipe. Participants and readers can download it here: Healthy Recipes Guide

Feedback from Participants:

"It was very enjoyable and the ideas are very applicable to children's daily lives, not only at school but in general."

"I loved getting to try new products and their quality traits - especially the warmth and agreeableness of their representatives. It was a friendly opportunity to connect with new people and get to know them in this context."

"It was a wonderful event that was as nourishing as it was inspiring. A delicious success!"

"Loved the Cosmic Crisp apples! Great that they were introduced and that we can find them locally. The event was great, we loved the dynamic of involving the local community."

"The food demonstration and products we received were very nice! Hope the consulate has more of these types of events!"

"Thank you for hosting such an awesome event for the community."

"The event was not only fun but very eye opening. I had no idea non-oxidizing Cosmic Crisp apples existed! That is a game changer for my kids' lunch boxes. Raisins and hard-boiled eggs are also a new staple. This event helped open my eyes to new possibilities and recipes I can use these products on. It's safe to say both me and my kids hope I can attend more events like this in the future."

"I loved the Healthy Habits event. The passport activity was super fun, and I really enjoyed learning about and trying different healthy products and snacks from the United States. As a mom, I came away with several ideas and discovered products I'd definitely look for for my kids. As a suggestion for next year, I think it would be great to make the chef's segment a little more interactive. The chef was wonderful, and everything we tasted was delicious, but I would have loved it if he'd taught us how to make the snacks—like a super simple, 2–3-minute recipe that we could recreate at home. It would also be awesome if they gave us the recipe in print or via a QR code. Because I loved the snack… I want to know how to make it at home! I think that would make the experience even more useful and let us take away something we could actually put into practice with our kids."

"I would like to thank the Consul General for the invitation to the Back-to-School event. It was a wonderful gathering where I had the opportunity to discover fantastic U.S. products, such as Cosmic Crisp apples, which are now my absolute favorite. I look forward to future events where

I can be introduced to more great products from the United States. Congratulations on a very successful event!"

"I had the opportunity to attend the Back-to-School event, hosted by the U.S. Consul at her residence, and it was an incredible experience. We got to learn about different brands of fruits, cheeses, and seeds, as well as discover nutritious and practical recipes for our children's lunchboxes. It was very interesting to learn about healthy, high-quality alternatives from the United States that are available here in Mexico—many of which we hadn't heard of before."

"The event was very well organized, with great attention to every detail, excellent security, and a high level of professionalism. And to top it all off, we received a really cool lunchbox that our little ones are sure to enjoy immensely. Thank you so much for the invitation and for creating such a lovely and enriching space for families!"

Special Thanks to Participating Cooperators/Exhibitors:

Washington Apple Commission
USA Poultry and Egg Export Council
Almond Board of California
Pear Bureau Northwest
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council
USA Pulses
California Milk Advisory Board
American Peanut Council
Cherry Marketing Institute
California Raisins
National Sunflower Association

Photo Gallery:















Stickers, Courtesy from Artegraf











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Attachments:

No Attachments.