

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Japan

**Post:** Tokyo ATO

### Asian Chefs Gear up for Culinary March Madness

**Report Categories:**

Agricultural Trade Office Activities

Beverages

Citrus

Dairy and Products

Dried Fruit

Fishery Products

Food Processing Ingredients

Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional

Livestock and Products

Potatoes and Potato Products

Poultry and Products

Raisins

Retail Foods

Tree Nuts

Vegetables

Wine

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**Report Highlights:**

The inaugural United Tastes of America Chef Challenge is rolling out across Asia, reaching out to four metropolitan cities- Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taipei. The winning teams from each city will be eligible for the final tournament at the Taipei International Food Show's USA Pavilion this June. ATO Tokyo's chef competition began in December 2012 and the Tokyo Finals will be on March 1, 2013.

### General Information:

The inaugural United Tastes of America Chef Challenge is rolling out across Asia, exciting many culinary talents. It involves four metropolitan cities- Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taipei, with preliminary competitions occurring all this March. The winning teams from each city will be eligible for the final tournament at the Taipei International Food Show's USA Pavilion this June. The launch of the regional chef challenge underscores the significance of the Asia market for U.S. agricultural exports. The participating markets of this competition hold a significant market share (32%) of 2012 U.S. agricultural exports.



ATO Tokyo's chef competition began in December 2012. Applications were sent to restaurants, hotels, chef associations, and existing business partners of ATO Tokyo. The deadline to submit a full course recipe including an appetizer, salad, a main dish and a dessert was December 31. 10 teams were selected on January 23, 2013.



Popular hotels, such as Prince Hotel Karuizawa and Hotel Okura, were selected, as well as independent restaurants, such as Kenzo Estate Winery and the deli-style hamburger restaurant, Baker Bounce.

The 10 best restaurants visited the competition stadium, Seishin Gakuen Culinary School, on February 15 to check on food ingredients and kitchen facilities only to come back on Sunday, February 17 for the actual cook-off. "The atmosphere in the kitchen was pretty tense even before the competition. The chefs were collecting and measuring ingredients and final checks were made of the knives, utensils and cooking equipment. Three minutes before cooking time, one team couldn't locate their beef sirloin (everyone helped and located it just in time).

It was 10:30 am and the chefs lit the ovens, cut the vegetables, and started marinating ingredients. All the chefs' movements, sounds of 10 kitchens, and then the eventual aromas everywhere were became a

perfect combination.



One of the highlights was the salads.



Kenzo Estate Winery  
Neo Caesar Salad with Alaskan King Crab



Hotel Okura Orchid Lounge  
The Caesar 2013

These salads look delicious in the photos but they were even better when we tasted them.



Team Union Café



Team Baker Bounce

On Sunday, February 17, five teams were chosen to compete in the Tokyo finals that will be held on March 1, 2013 at the Hattori Nutrition and Culinary School. The ingredients that all five teams are required to use will be disclosed only one day before the finals. “Black box” competitions require experience, creativity and technique. We’ll see who wins the berth to compete in Taipei and we look forward to competing against the winners from Taipei, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. May the best team win!