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Report Highlights:

In this edition of Japan Food Trends, we reported on news and trends in the robust Japanese food and beverage sector.

Japan Food Trends (JFT) communicates Japanese food and lifestyle trends that may help U.S. exporters to generate product and marketing ideas.

General Information:

Healthy Coffee Helps Weight-loss

Japan Today: Apr 10, 2013

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/health/view/new-line-of-coffee-claims-to-shed-fat-in-12-weeks>

Kao Japan has recently released their new product, “Healthya Coffee”. Healthya touts itself as a fat-burning coffee; the nation’s first “health coffee”. After 10 years of development, Kao has developed a bean-roasting method that doubles the amount of chlorogenic acid, a polyphenol claimed to help burn fat. During a twelve-week trial, in which a group of 109 obese men and women drank one can a day, around 50% reported weight loss. As businesspeople are increasingly concerned about weight gain, Healthya Coffee offers a convenient way to boost their metabolism.


<p>Image: http://www.kao.com/jp/healthya/hty_coffee_00.html</p>

Note from the editor:

Japan has seen a rising interest in goods that are both convenient and have health benefits. There are already sodas on the market that claim to assist with weight loss, but Healthya Coffee is the first coffee product. Because workers may spend long hours in sedentary jobs, they are avid coffee drinkers. This new drink offers weight-loss aid with a much-needed caffeine boost.

Female-friendly Instant Noodles

Japan Today: Feb 10, 2013

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/food/view/girly-noodles-is-japan-witnessing-start-of-a-female-oriented-instant-noodle-revolution>



Image:

<http://www.maruchan.co.jp/products/search/2461.html?t=b>

Although instant noodles have long been the domain of students and bachelors, manufacturer Toyo Suisan is reaching out to the ladies. There is high demand for foods that are single-serve and easy to prepare, and more women are joining their male counterparts in a quest for such meals. Hoping to bust the more masculine image of traditional instant noodles, Hanauta cup noodles target women with healthier and more elegant flavors such as Chamomile Salt, and Rosehip Tantanmen, packaged in a floral print streamlined cup. Another manufacturer, Myojo Foods, is launching a similar line of instant cup noodles they hope will appeal to women on the go.

Note from the editor:

These new cup noodles are following current Japanese trends of convenience and health-consciousness. By changing the packaging and flavor of cup noodles, Toyo Suisan proves that it is not just the product, but also the associated image, that is important to Japanese consumers. Japanese women will not be embarrassed or guilty to eat noodles with cute packaging and healthy ingredients.

Salmon Tops Tuna as Sushi Favorite

Japan Today: Apr 4, 2013

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/food/view/japans-top-5-favorite-sushi-toppings>

In a survey of 500 MyNavi News members, salmon was chosen as the number one favorite sushi topping. Those surveyed remarked that salmon easily melded with other flavors, such as onions and mayonnaise, but was also strong enough to stand on its own. Favorites #2 through #4 were chuu toro (medium fatty tuna), negi toro (tuna with green onions), and maguro (lean tuna). Tuna was praised by voters for its flavor and image of “classic sushi”. Bringing up the rear at #5 was ikura (salmon roe), liked for its salty taste.



Image:

<http://flickr.com/photos/87292528@N00/2230269>

Note from the editor:

With many news stories of tuna selling for exorbitant prices (the most recent record being around USD \$1.7million in Jan 2013), it was surprising to find that salmon was the number-one sushi type favored by the survey participants. And although there are many different kinds of sushi, only salmon and tuna made it into the top five. Participants seemed to value not only the flavor, but also the image that sushi portrays. This is a great opportunity for U.S. wild Alaska salmon to take advantage of a “cultural” food.

Drinking Data: Alcohol Preferences by Gender

Rocket News 24: Feb 14, 2013

<http://en.rocketnews24.com/2013/02/14/japans-favorite-alcohol-beer-outranks-japanese-rice-wine-and-shochu>



Image:

http://www.sapporobeer.jp/news_release/0000010269/

In a survey of 20,000 participants recently conducted by Shunkan News, beer once again was at the top of everyone’s favorite drink list. Surprisingly, beer was the #1 favorite of both men and women, gaining about 40% of the male vote and 27% of the female vote. Beer came up #1 for its refreshing quality and easy drinkability - important in a society where many social interactions involve drinking. Most interesting was the preferences between genders. For males, runners up were shochu (a distilled alcohol typically made from barley, sweet potato, or rice) with 17%, and Japanese rice wine with 14.2%. In women’s rankings, fruit liquor, such as umeshu (plum wine) and apricot wine, grabbed the #2 spot with 21.5%, and wine with 15.9%.

Note from the editor:

Drinking is a big part of Japanese social life; whether you’re going out with friends or for a work event, it is likely that alcohol will be involved. Because of this, it is important that alcohol is easy to drink; all of the top three favorite alcohol types, regardless of gender, were noted as being so. The findings of this survey verify current alcohol sales volumes. American craft beers are making great inroads to the market as the Japanese taste for beer broadens.

Burritos Rolling onto the Tokyo Scene

Japan Times: Feb 15, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2013/02/15/food/tokyo-has-california-style-burritos-all-wrapped-up/#.UaxsKOCIAqc>



Image: <http://www.frijoles.jp/menu.html>

The burrito, offering portability packed with flavorful and often healthy ingredients, has made its way to Tokyo. Rainbow Burritos in Shinjuku, a newcomer in November 2012, offers takeaway burritos lovingly crafted from a Mexican grandmother's recipes. The chain Frijoles, which opened in 2009, has branches in the upscale business districts of Akasaka, Roppongi, and Azabu-Juban. Libre Burrito also targets business areas, with locations in Ebisu, Kamiyacho, and Tamagawa. These restaurants offer menus of chicken, beef, or vegetarian option, with other filling options including kinds of beans, rice, and salsa.

Note from the editor:

Has Mexican food finally become popular in Tokyo? These burrito restaurants seem to be successful. In addition, several other places offering Tex-Mex and Mexican fare have started to make their mark. From El Torito (a California-based Tex-Mex chain) in Shinjuku, to the authentic Tepito (complete with mariachi!) in hipster neighborhood of Shimokitazawa, and upscale La Casita in Daikanyama, the joys of hot peppers and slow-cooked meat appear to have made their way into Japanese hearts (and stomachs). Even McDonald's Japan has jumped on the bandwagon, and is currently offering limited "Mexican Festival" burgers with salsa topping.

Summary:

In this edition of Japan Food Trends, we reported on news and trends in the robust Japanese food and beverage sector.

New products have been released that cater to Japanese consumer interests in health and convenience. To target busy professionals, Kao has added a weight-loss aid coffee to their beverage lineup. In the instant noodle market, manufacturers as Toyo Suisan are now offering products with packaging and healthy flavors made to appeal to female tastes.

Japanese consumers are open to trying new products, but they also enjoy familiar tastes. Salmon and tuna were chosen as the top five favorite sushi toppings, with salmon grabbing first place. Beer was voted as the preferred alcoholic beverage of both men and women, which supports current sales volume data.

Mexican-style cuisine is gaining recognition in Tokyo's food scene. Along with sit-down restaurants, there are several places offering takeaway options, such as burritos, in high-traffic locations.