

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Japan Food Trends July 2013

Report Categories:

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Report Highlights:

This month's issue discusses current food trends in the health food industry, promotional/marketing tools and pancakes.

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

General Information:

Veggie Smoothie

Veggie Smoothies in Focus, mynavi news May 31, 2013

<http://news.mynavi.jp/news/2013/05/31/011/index.html>



Japanese consumers are sensitive about their health, and they are interested in healthy foods, especially vegetables. There are many ways to enjoy vegetables and a popular method in Japan is “Veggie Smoothies”.

Takii, a famous seed company, conducted a survey about “Veggie Smoothies” which included 406 women ages 20 to 40 years old. Here are the results:

- 64.8 % of the respondents answered that they had heard of “Veggie Smoothies”
- 86 % have never made a “Veggie Smoothie”
- 55 % of them who have never made a “Veggie Smoothie” said they would like to make one in the future
- 85 % and 78 % expect a “Veggie Smoothie” to have a positive effect on health improvement and skin health respectively
- 64 % answered that they felt body changes, such as relief of constipation and better skin condition after a “Veggie Smoothie”

From the Editor

Japanese consumers have high expectations of the effects of vegetables. They believe it is better to consume more vegetables, but are unsure about trying new methods. Introducing recipes, especially featuring American vegetables, may become popular among Japanese consumers, especially women.

Pancakes

Pancake Galore, mynavi news, May 22, 2013 <http://news.mynavi.jp/news/2013/05/22/184/index.html>



No one expected that the pancake boom would last this long. The pancake restaurant called Egg'n'Things opened in 2010 and customers still have to wait in line to get a table. Bills, which opened even earlier in 2008, also has guests lined up. In May, a unique pancake restaurant, Shibuya JAM Dining, opened in Tokyo.

Shibuya JAM Dining has two types of pancakes. One is a “Dessert pancake”, which is baked with meringue. The other is a “Oshokuji (dinner) pancake, which is firm and springy and comes with shrimp cutlets, roast beef, or hamburger steaks.

In Japan, pancakes are normally preferred by women, but Shibuya JAM Dining targets men as well. Oshokuji pancakes can be enjoyed with wine and beer. Customers can add toppings such as burdock ice cream, avocado dip, and maple syrup.

From the Editor

The pancake boom has lasted for a long time and many restaurants offer unique and original pancakes. Pancakes are well-known as an American food in Japan, so why don't you bring your original pancakes to Japan?

Public Relations

Mascots and Characters Work in Japan, Blogos April 29, 2013 <http://blogos.com/article/61251/>



In May 2013, the Japanese Department Stores Association sponsored the Gotochi Characters Election event. Gotochi characters are unique characters created by local business councils and companies to revitalize cities and introduce their towns and companies. There are about 600 characters existing in Japan today. “Kumamon” is one of the most popular characters in Japan.

“Kumamon” refers to “Kumamoto mon” which means Kumamoto people. (Kumamoto is a Japanese prefecture located in the Kyushu region.) He shows up at events and introduces Kumamoto products and attractions. His work keeps him constantly on the run. He even has his own products such as stuffed toys and stationary. Also, “Kumamon” is a copyright-free character, so those who own a business in Kumamoto or sell Kumamoto products can use him on their packages and labels. Since “Kumamon” is a well-known character in Japan, it helps Kumamoto businesses to promote their products throughout Japan.

From the Editor

Character mascots are a popular marketing tool. If you are thinking about running a business in Japan, creating an original character might help your promotional efforts.

Health Foods

Functional Beverages in Japan

Rikunabi, March 18, 2013

http://journal.rikunabi.com/trend/column/trend_vol165.html?utm_source=antenna

Nikkei Trendy web, March 27, 2013

<http://trendy.nikkeibp.co.jp/article/pickup/20130327/1048345/?rt=nocnt>

Biz ID, March 27, 2013

<http://bizmakoto.jp/bizid/articles/1303/27/news089.html>



Many Japanese consumers are worried about their health and tend to purchase health foods which have a FOSHU label. FOSHU stands for Food for Specified Health Uses. As of April 11th, 2013, 1052 products have FOSHU approval.

Kirin Beverage released the first FOSHU cola called “Kirin Mets Cola” in 2012. Kirin advertises that drinking this cola with a meal will help the body absorb less fat. Suntory Beverage & Food Limited has released a similar FOSHU cola called “Pepsi Special”. The functionality of “Pepsi Special” is the same as “Kirin Mets Cola”.

Recently, Kao released the first FOSHU canned coffee called “Healthia Coffee”. It reportedly activates the fat combustion in the body. Unlike the FOSHU cola drinks mentioned above, “Healthia Coffee” does not have to be consumed while eating food. People can drink Healthia at anytime anywhere and still get similar results. In Japan, business men ages 30 to 40 years old tend to buy canned coffees. For them, “Healthia Coffee” is easy to consume and also benefits their health.

From the Editor

It is difficult to obtain the FOSHU approval, but beneficial for health products with a proven efficacy. Consumers are interested in health foods and pay attention to FOSHU labels when they are shopping. The demand for health foods is increasing and the health food market in Japan is becoming more active.