

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

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Global Agricultural Information Network

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**Approved By:**

Steve Shnitzler, Director, ATO Japan

**Prepared By:**

Tommy Aoki, Senior Marketing Specialist Miko Arai, Intern

Jeff Huang, Intern

**Report Highlights:**

Being different is good, and even in Japan, indulging sometimes is in demand. This issue highlights food trends from Burger King and Domino's, and two new coffee concepts.

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

### **General Information:**

Welcome to the June issue of Japan Food Trends. Just as a reminder, we post this newsletter to USDA's GAIN system as well as our own business website [www.us-ato.jp](http://www.us-ato.jp). This website broadcasts food trends as well as reports that ATO Japan produces throughout the year that will help U.S. exporters market product in Japan. It also provides U.S. product and company information in Japanese to the Japanese food industry. If you send us your information we'll try our best to upload your information to [www.us-ato.jp](http://www.us-ato.jp). Information should be sent to [sumio.aoki@fas.usda.gov](mailto:sumio.aoki@fas.usda.gov).

In 2011, there have been new foods appearing in Japan that have experienced a variety of changes. The trends discussed in this issue focus on both current developments and differences between Japanese and American food culture that may help you when exporting or looking to export to Japan.

### **The Japanese Fast Food Market**

#### **“Meat Monster Hits Tokyo- Is America Next?”**

*LifeInc.Today.Com*, April 11, 2011 ([http://lifeinc.today.com/\\_news/2011/04/11/6452818-meat-monster-hits-tokyo-is-america-next](http://lifeinc.today.com/_news/2011/04/11/6452818-meat-monster-hits-tokyo-is-america-next))



Although the Japanese are known for eating “healthy foods” and stereotypically do not indulge in fast food as much as Americans, Burger King seems to disagree. They are marketing their new “Meat Monster” burger, which is comprised of two beef patties, a grilled chicken breast, bacon, and two slices of cheese along with the usual lettuce, tomato, and onions (BK needs a jingle to go with it). The burger is massive and the calorie count is not far behind. Perhaps, the Japanese are not so reluctant to eat high calorie fast food after all? While the general trend in Japan is toward healthier food choices, there is still a lot of room for new and novelty foods.

#### **From the Editor:**

Personally, my body doesn't need this burger. It is true that Japanese love to eat and love to experiment. They like to indulge too.

#### **“Dominos Pizza x One Piece”**

*gaijinpot.com*, May 30, 2011

<http://injapan.gaijinpot.com/2011/05/30/dominos-pizza-x-one-piece/>



Domino's Pizza is promoting their products by featuring "One Piece", the largest and most popular manga and anime series that has been a hit in Japan for the last 2 years. They are offering a special campaign called "One Piece Special Set"; by ordering the American-Special flavored pizza in either medium or large size, you will get a discount price of ¥1399 (\$17.50) and ¥2099 (\$26.25) respectively. The set also comes with a limited edition "One Piece Chopper bag", an appealing item for fans of the series. The campaign is scheduled to run until the middle of June. This use of the anime sub-culture that is so prominent in Japan is undoubtedly a wise strategy to attract consumers from all age groups, since the fandom of this anime series ranges from children to adults.

**From the Editor:**

This is a great example of the importance of linking popular culture to marketing in Japan.

***The Japanese Like "Strange" Flavors***

**"How Sweet it Isn't: With New 'Pepsi Dry', Bitter is Better",**

*Inventorspot.com*, April 29, 2011

[http://inventorspot.com/articles/how\\_sweet\\_it\\_isnt\\_new\\_pepsi\\_dry\\_bitter\\_better](http://inventorspot.com/articles/how_sweet_it_isnt_new_pepsi_dry_bitter_better)



The Japanese supermarkets, convenience stores, and vending machines are often filled with drinks that have “normal” flavors. However, PepsiCo often likes to release different and uncommon flavored sodas. In 2010, Pepsi BAOBAB hit the market, together with other drinks such as Azuki (Red Bean), Shiso (Perilla), Ice Cucumber, Blue Hawaii and Mont Blanc flavors. However, for this year, PepsiCo turned around from its wilder flavors and came up with its new product called “Pepsi Dry”. The product offers only half the sweetness of regular Pepsi and it is labeled as “bitter cola”. Pepsi Japan tries to bring back a similar flavor from the original source of cola drinks, Kola nut - which is known for its bittersweet taste and natural high caffeine content. The Japanese market seems to accept and enjoy creative flavors, but maybe this is the beginning for them to go back to its simpler flavor.

**From the Editor:**

Unique flavors are surely a hit in the Japanese culture, but I wonder if this can also be a trend for other countries. Also, if a drink or flavor is associated with “health”, then the marketing opportunities grow.

**“Kirin Launches Alcohol-spiked Canned Coffee Drink”**

*trendsupdates.com*, Jan. 18, 2011

<http://trendsupdates.com/kirin-launches-alcohol-spiked-canned-coffee-drink/>



The Japanese brewery company, Kirin, launched their limited edition drink called “Yoru Café (Night Café)” on January 19. The product looks no different from the many canned coffee drinks available; however it has a recognizable taste of alcohol. It is available in two flavors; the ‘tea liquor’ and the ‘café latte liquor,’ at a price of ¥148 (\$1.85) for a 190 ml compact size. It is made from original coffee beans, caramel syrup, tea leaves, milk and whiskey. In addition, the alcohol content is only 4-percent, which provides the comforting taste of coffee and tea intact, but with an alcoholic kick. Another benefit is that it does not leave you with a hangover the next day.

**From the Editor:**

With the booming trend of low-alcohol drinks and growing popularity of coffee with younger drinking-age consumers, this product may see a prominent future.

*Concept Stores*

**“Starbucks b-side By Hiroshi Fujiwara”**

*japantrends.com*, March 31, 2011

(<http://www.japantrends.com/starbucks-concept-store/>)



Starbucks opened up their new concept store called “b-side Starbucks” in the Tokyo fashion district of Omotesando. The store is designed by the Japanese designer Hiroshi Fujiwara, who is considered “The Godfather of Harajuku”, the famous street in Tokyo where young people dress up as their favorite anime characters. The place is surrounded by trees and large glass windows that promote natural lighting into the shop, creating a cozy atmosphere. The designs and furniture of the store are uniquely different from its other branches, and encourage themes of ‘nature’ and ‘relaxation’. The most eye catching features of the store are the large sliding doors and the stylishly designed furniture in the b-side

area; there is also a selection of design and fashion books on the shelves for customers to read during their stay. As for future plans, the store is planning to sell mugs and goods only available in their shop, as well as host a number of live events.

**From the Editor:**

The selection of design and fashion books in the store, plus becoming a stage for live events are really a nice and new concepts for a café. Nature and relaxation in Tokyo? More is better.

**“Hidden Tokyo: Ometesando Koffee”**

*japanrends.com*, April 19, 2011

<http://www.japanrends.com/hidden-tokyo-omotesando-koffee/>



Contrary to the modern atmosphere present in the fashion district of Ometesando, a new concept store coffee shop, mixed with a Japanese traditional theme, clear and clean fits snugly on a quiet backstreet. The shop itself is an old Japanese wooden house with a small courtyard, which creates a feeling of tranquility.

Inside of a traditional style Japanese room stood a square steel frame, where a stylishly designed logo also hangs, and its counter is featured in a boxed-shape structure. The minimalistic concept of the shop makes it different from the other coffee chains that pepper Japan. Its square design idea was based on a kiosk box store. The shop offers meticulously brewed coffee and its original sweets that match well with coffee as well as different beverages on site. Also for people with distinct passion for coffee, they offer great and simple, innovative ideas such as coffee filters printed with the shop information and a small square dish made out of coffee bean waste.

**From the Editor:**

The fusion of new designs and traditional themes like this shop is a good sign for the anticipation of more innovative works coming from Tokyo. More relaxation in Tokyo.

## Summary:

For this month's issue, we reported new trends in the Japanese restaurant business and beverage market. In the Japanese restaurant business, American chains such as Burger King and Domino Pizza are successfully gaining attention. The Japanese beverage market is always filled with unique and seasonal flavors. Also, the trend of creating a concept store is another idea that we can expect to continue but with perhaps more fusion.