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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Report Highlights:

This month's issue discusses current food trends in the food service sector from companies such as Wendy's, McDonald's, KFC and Tanita. In addition, this month's issue also examines current trends in the sweets and snack industry.

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

General Information:

Current Trends: Fast Food Market

“Wendy’s Reenters Japan with a \$16 Burger!”

Bloomberg: Asia, December 28, 2011

(<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-12-28/wendy-s-adds-15-foie-gras-burgers-in-second-bet-on-japan-fast-food-market>)

Wendy’s is making a comeback to the Japanese market after it left in 2009.



Wendy’s has revamped its business model into a more “high class” hamburger restaurant. This new approach hopes to combine the class of an upper scale sit down restaurant and the convenience of a fast food burger joint into one. Ernest Higa, the chief executive officer of Wendy’s Japan LCC said that, “We think the fast food market here is ready for something different”. He certainly is not lying, as the premium menu hosts a number of pricey items including a \$16.00 USD (¥1,280 JPY) Foie Gras burger. That is something you won’t find in any Wendy’s in the United States. If successful this could be an interesting concept for other

Photo: Foie Gras Burger via Bloomberg

American fast food chains to consider in the very competitive Japanese fast food market.

Note from the Editor:

The burger itself is quite tasty and unique, however, it still faces stiff competition from other rivals in the market such as Mos Burger and Lotteria which also sport premier menu items.

“Big America’ is going for Round Three”

The Huffington Post: Food, January 04, 2012

(<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/04/mcdonalds-big-america-burger>)

McDonalds Japan kicked off its third ‘Big America’ burger series in Japan with the start of 2012. Like past ‘Big America’ campaigns this whole new line up of burgers are meant to represent real ‘All American’ burgers from famous places in the United States. This time the series seems to focus on tourist destinations: The Grand Canyon, The Las Vegas, The Broadway, and The Beverly Hills burger. It is highly unlikely you will ever see burgers like these at McDonald’s in the United States.



Note from the Editor:

I have not personally had a chance to eat the new ‘Grand Canyon Burger’, but I did eat almost all of the burgers from the previous ‘Big America’ series. The burgers themselves are unique and represent something of a novelty that people want to buy. Plus, they are pretty tasty!

“Chicken for Buns? Why not!”

Japan Today: January 23, 2012

(<http://www.japantoday.com/category/food/view/buns-are-fried-chicken-check-out-kfcs-chicken-filet-double>)



KFC Japan is replacing traditional hamburger buns with fried chicken for this upcoming special. This new sandwich is called the “Chicken Fillet Double” and it will go on sale starting February 2, 2012 across Japan. The sandwich will cost \$5.79 USD (¥450 JPY) alone and \$6.43 USD (¥500 JPY) with a drink set. Aside from the fried chicken buns the sandwich also sports two slices of bacon, two slices of cheese and plenty of mayonnaise for what KFC says is under 600 kcal. While this sandwich is new to the Japanese market it is not a new sandwich for

Photo: Chicken Fillet Double Ad via KFC Japan

KFC as it made its first debut in April of 2010 in the United States as a limited edition item. The sandwich was so successful that it has remained on KFC’s menu since the original limited time offer ended. It will be interesting to see how the “Chicken Fillet Double” fares in the Japanese market.

Notes from the Editor:

I ate the “Chicken Filet Double” or the “Double Down” as it is known in the United States a couple of years ago. It is definitely something I would treat myself to every now and then.

“Eat Healthy at Tanita”

Yahoo Japan: News, January 16, 2012

(<http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/hl?a=20120116-00000004-jct-soci>)

Tanita Corporation opened a new type of restaurant concept in downtown Tokyo this week targeting the growing number of health conscious consumers. The company said it decided to launch the Marunouchi Tanita Shokudo after the overwhelming positive response it received from their bestselling book “*Tanita Cafeteria Recipes*”, a cookbook which contains recipes for meals under 500 calories. Tanita based the meals in its restaurant after these recipes. This cafeteria is not only a place where you can eat healthy, but it also has a consulting area where customers can meet with professional dietitians to discuss how to fix their bad eating habits. So far this new dining concept has been a wild success as tickets are sold out before 11 AM with lines going out the door. Tanita may just be on to something here.



Photo: New Tanita Restaurant via Yahoo Japan

Note from the Editor:

The popularity of this restaurant shows that there is a large market in Japan for healthy foods, especially amongst the elderly population or the “Silver Market”. Japan is aging fast and the need for professional healthcare to include dieticians is in demand. This combined with a healthy lunch may just be the right combination for good business.

Current Trends: Sweet and Snack Industry

“Candy from Spain makes its way to Tokyo”

Japan Trends: January 19, 2012

(<http://www.japantrends.com/hidden-tokyo-papbubble-caramel-artisans/>)

Papabubble, the artisan candy shop first founded in Barcelona in 2004,



now has a branch in Tokyo, Japan. Papabubble has a wide variety of brightly colored candies with fun whimsical designs and a very nice interior design. These are all the right ingredients to attract Japanese customers. The Tokyo Papabubble has become more popular among Japanese customers because of the wacky Japanese-style candy designs, including candy sushi and giant caramel toothbrushes. Storefronts do not only sell handmade candy but they also entertain customers. With Willy Wonka type magic shows, the kitchen is open for customers to watch the candy making process close up.

Photo: Papabubble Caramel Artisans via Japan Trends

Note from the Editor:

This store is definitely worth a visit to eat tasty sweets and watch how they are made.

“Japan and its Weird and Wonderful Pocket-Money Delights”

CNN: Asia, December 26, 2011

(<http://www.cnn.com/tokyo/eat/snack-nation-japans-obsession-weird-and-wonderful-pocket-money-delights>)

Japanese often pride themselves on the seasonality of the products that they purchase. Convenience Stores in Japan sell seasonal goods and products that have a specific consumer target. They usually test new products for a time span as short as two weeks. If the product does not perform well in that period, then it is off the shelves. This is the main reason why some snacks that you have tried a day ago may not be available tomorrow.

A Few of Japan’s Weird/Wonderful Delights

Have you ever heard of “Clam Chowder and Tuna Mayonnaise Doritos” in the United States or anywhere else for that matter? You probably haven’t, because these strange chips were only sold in the Japanese market by Frito-Lay’s gourmets. Consumer feedback for this snack was pretty good; as it was generally hailed as a pretty tasty snack. Let’s see what Doritos has in store for us next.



Photo via CNN

What about Glamatic Gum? Glamatic Gum is a Lotte product that has sparkling packaging with writing in a fashionable font. This gum clearly shows that the target consumers are young girls/women who are fond of fashionable looking goods. This gum is still in the convenience stores and it sells for approximately ¥100 JPY (\$1.30 USD) per pack.

Notes from the Editor:

When it comes to food, the Japanese put equal focus on the ‘look’ and the ‘taste’. The experience of eating includes smell, taste, and appearance, which is considered an important kind of art in their lifestyle. Decorations and colors of the dish are usually aligned with the season.

Summary:

For this month’s issue, we reported the new trends in the food service and sweets and snack industries in Japan. Wendy’s comeback in Japan is successfully gaining attention from Japanese consumers as well as McDonald’s “Big America” campaign and KFC’s upcoming “Double Chicken Filet”. Tanita Restaurant and Papabubble Caramel are both new to the Japanese market but they seem to be starting off well. Tanita serves healthy food and also offers costumers consultation with a dietician for some health advice. Papabubble Caramel has an open kitchen for their customers to watch the actual candy making process which is very appealing to Japanese costumers. Last but not least, Japanese snack companies continue to flood the market with “weird and wonderful” pocket money delights that consumers just can’t seem to get enough of.