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Japan Food Trends June

2009

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Report Highlights:

There are many innovations brewing in the Japanese food markets. This month's report looks at new packaging, food products, and how food is being marketed to university students.

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

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Editor's Note:

You will find a lot of creativity in this month's issue. One way for some people to get the day started is to have a bowl of curry rice. It makes sense. There are numerous spices and herbs in the curry to kick-start the body. In order to appreciate curry rice you need to learn basic cooking skills. As you know from our previous issue, more people are cooking at home. Well, that seems to be true for college students too and a cooking school is helping out by offering cooking classes for a very reasonable price, plus on campus. After your morning curry rice and fun with cooking you might want to finish the day with a crisp "Mature Cola" or more simply a vodka cola, which might be the next hot new product in Japan.

Bottle Innovation: I LOHAS from Coca-Cola twists for the Environment, CScout Japan website

<http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/bottle-innovation-i-lohas-from-coca-cola-twists-for-the-environment/>

(June 3, 2009)

<http://i-lohas.jp/> (Product page)

It seems a new trend has emerged with plastic bottles in Japan. While bottles are usually designed to be functional and aesthetically appealing, plastic bottles (also called "pet" bottles in Japan) are now being designed to be more environmentally friendly; or at least marketed that way.

Coca-cola jumped on the ecology bandwagon with the introduction of a new water bottle that is marketed as more environmentally friendly -- a clever way for a beverage company to get involved in one of the country's hottest trends. The bottle, which is marketed under the banner of "I LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Stability)", can easily twist into a 12 gram plastic stick – 40% less than other pet bottles – once finished.

From the Editor:

Green is good, but it will be interesting to see if the Japanese consumer will accept these crunchy bottles that easily lose its shape. I believe they're great because they are relatively easy to dispose.

From the Editor:

How much would you pay for one melon? Last year the initial price was \$12,000.

Hammer Falls on Ultra-expensive Food, Daily Yomiuri Online

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20090601TDY03106.htm>

June 1, 2009

Sometimes overpaying at an auction may be a good thing, but this year is a down year.

Each year as a new summer begins, high auction prices known as "goshugi soba", which roughly translates into celebrity prices, are sometimes paid for the first agricultural products of the season. This is primarily done for advertisement purposes in Japan and the products range from tuna to mango. Doing so allows the restaurant to brag about how expensive its ingredients are and opens up news coverage opportunities for the stores. For example,

according to the article cited above, a tuna sold for \$96,000 last January in Tokyo's Tsukiji Market to Hong Kong business man and a fancy sushi restaurant.



Source:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Auction_Tsukiji_fishmarket.jpg

However, while the prices of this summer's first auctioned products were unusually high, they are reported as being less than products auctioned in the beginning of the summer in previous years. For example, Yubari-produced melons sold for \$12,000 each in their initial auction of 2008 but only around \$50 each this year.

The Most Important Meal of the Day: Breakfast Curry, House Foods Co. website

<http://housefoods.jp/company/news/news2018.html> (Japanese)

January 19, 2009

A very popular dish in Japan's lunches and dinners is now getting the spotlight as a breakfast menu. Japanese style curry, which is a little different from the typical Indian style, began to get attention as a breakfast food when a famous athlete said he ate curry for breakfast on game days. This idea quickly caught on and beginning last February Asa-curry products (breakfast curry) began showing up on supermarket shelves.



Source:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/0/00/N518484998_146142_6541.jpg

From the Editor:

It's actually not that bad. I had curry rice for breakfast the day after mom made it for the previous nights' dinner. Perhaps the taste settles because the curry is allowed to sit overnight. You should try it.

Cooking on Campus, Ameblo website

<http://ameblo.jp/fukurou415/entry-10272039575.html> (Japanese)

June 1, 2009

Beginning this June ABC Cooking School will offer cooking classes to students on Keio University's main campus in Yokohama. While these classes are usually offered at \$15 each, they will be offered at a discounted price of \$1 each on campus. Keio University (the alma mater of former Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro) is offering these classes with two ideas in mind: shrinking expenditures and waist sizes. Due to the global recession, the money saving trend of cooking more at home is spreading to students. Moreover, sports directors at Keio University believe cooking at home could keep the student population in better shape.



Keio's Hiyoshi Campus

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Keio_university_kyouseikan.jpg

New Product**Kirin Beer Launches New Alcoholic Beverage for "Mature Cola", Walker plus website**

<http://news.walkerplus.com/2009/0507/10/> (Japanese)

May 7, 2009

Kirin Cola Shock is a crisp and carbonated vodka cola drink that will be launched on July 8. Cola Shock has 1.5 times the usual amount of fizz and has a strong and balanced cola flavor. The target market is the 20-40 year old age group who favor chu-hai (shouchu + fruit liquor) drinks.