

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 8/5/2014

GAIN Report Number: JA 4508

Japan

Post: Tokyo ATO

Great American Barbeque Trade Showcase 2014

Report Categories:

Agricultural Trade Office Activities

CSSF Activity Report

Market Development Reports

Approved By:

Evan Mangino, Acting Director, ATO Japan

Prepared By:

Masayuki (Alex) Otsuka, Marketing Specialist, ATO Tokyo

Report Highlights:

On July 10, ATO Tokyo conducted the second Great American Barbeque (BBQ) Trade Showcase, targeting HRI industry and retail chain buyers. ATO Tokyo recruited 24 cooperators and agents as exhibitors and a total of 140 buyers. Exhibitors reported total, expected sales of \$226,000 USD within the next 12 months. ATO Japan created the “Enjoy BBQ!” concept to highlight the link between American BBQ traditions and U.S. agricultural products, showcasing a variety of U.S. meats, consumer ready products and alcoholic beverages.

General Information:

I. Market Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints:

- BBQ is a popular activity in Japan, but is not explicitly associated with U.S. food products
- Lack of U.S. product awareness by Japanese food buyers and regional retailers
- Lack of coordinated business communication between U.S. exporters & Japanese buyers

Opportunities:

- Enhancement and diversification of Japanese consumers' interest in craft beer and BBQ
- Increasing popularity of American-style restaurants and imported food among the Japanese food industry and consumers
- Japanese market's high receptivity for U.S. high-value-added products
- Creation of new demand for a recovering economy

II. Expected Results and Outcomes

ATO Tokyo conducted the second Great American Barbeque (BBQ) Trade Showcase on July 10, 2014 at the Nikko Hotel in Tokyo. The Showcase was a half-day trade show, including demonstrations of classic U.S. BBQ as well as BBQ pairings with U.S. craft beers. U.S. suppliers held business meetings with Japanese buyers throughout the event.

BBQ is a popular outdoor activity in Japan. However, Japanese and U.S. consumers view BBQ very differently from one another. The majority of Japanese consumers think of BBQ as a quick way to cook thin sliced meats and vegetables, known as "yakniku," or Korean-style kalbi BBQ. There is little knowledge of U.S.-style slow-cooking or smoking, let alone turning an outdoor grilling session into a social event, including U.S. wine or craft beers. Many Japanese think of U.S. BBQ as strictly hamburgers and hotdogs, an image which ATO Tokyo is working to dispel.

And while a number of BBQ and steak restaurants are opening in and around Tokyo, most of these restaurants have not embraced traditional U.S. BBQ techniques that can transform lower-priced cuts like brisket and ribs into succulent morsels of tender goodness. Most of these restaurants focus on traditional steak cuts (rib-eye, tenderloin and strip loin), and so ATO Japan has introduced the "Enjoy BBQ!" concept to enhance the image of U.S. BBQ and broaden the range of products used for BBQ in Japanese HRI establishments. ATO Tokyo has also used the Great American BBQ Trade Showcase to explain how Americans pair consumption of U.S. craft beers, wines, and whiskey with the enjoyably slow process of traditional outdoor BBQ cookery.

The Great American BBQ has also leveraged the growing popularity of beer festivals in Japan. The Oktoberfest concept has gained popularity in recent years as young Japanese consumers have paired their interest in new cuisines with a love for drinking beer outdoors. About a dozen Oktoberfests are

held at special event sites, usually in large public parks, in major cities throughout Japan each year, attracting tens of thousands of Japanese consumers. And while ATO research shows that Japan has begun to import an increasing variety of craft beers, premium wines and whiskies from the United States, these relatively new products still lack high visibility in the Japanese market. Japanese consumers' interest in craft beer is diverse, and ATO Tokyo continues to work with local importers to create opportunities like the Great American BBQ Trade Showcase to introduce Japanese HRI and retail buyers to U.S. craft beers. And as BBQ is well-suited to the consumption not only of U.S. craft beer, but also wine, distilled spirits and non-alcoholic drinks, the Great American BBQ Trade Showcase helped to call attention to a wide variety of U.S. beverage products.

Based on its market research, ATO Tokyo sent invitations to over 600 buyers and executives; over one-third of these invitees were new contacts for the ATO. Each year, across Japan there is a busy schedule of food trade showcases organized by trade show coordinators, food wholesalers, food manufacturers, food retailers, and chain restaurants. However, traditional U.S. BBQ has proved an effective "hook" for attracting high quality food buyers across the HRI and retail sectors. ATO Japan launched the Great American BBQ Trade Showcase as well as the "Enjoy BBQ!" concept and the companion guidebook in 2013. See additional details in GAIN Report [JA3517](#).

III. Actual Results and Outcome

ATO Tokyo recruited 24 cooperators and importers as exhibitors and supporters, including four meat suppliers, four craft beer importers, two quality wine importers and three whiskey suppliers. The trade showcase was held from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm, and attracted over 140 Japanese buyers from HRI and retail sectors. More than one third of the visitors were new contacts for the exhibitors, including three famous camping /campground operators in Japan. The BBQ setting provided an informal atmosphere and promoted friendly conversations between exhibitors and executive buyers.

While typhoon Neoguri drove the event indoors this year (note: the first Great American BBQ Trade Showcase in 2013 took place outdoors on the heels of another sizable typhoon), the venue staff and ATO team pulled together to recreate a relaxed BBQ atmosphere and showcase as much of the BBQ experience as could be created indoors. ATO Tokyo promoted a variety of BBQ-related menu ideas to Japanese buyers U.S. pavilion under the "Enjoy BBQ!" theme. Several chain and hotel restaurants expressed interest in hosting an "Enjoy BBQ!" menu fair featuring a variety of exhibited U.S. food and beverage products.

Event co-sponsor, A&F, which imports "Weber" brand BBQ grills, "Lodge" outdoor cookware and a variety of outdoor goods from the U.S., brought two BBQ kettles, three camp ovens and a dozen skillets to conduct traditional U.S. BBQ cooking demonstrations. In addition, the executive chef of Nikko Hotel Tokyo equipped two grilling tables in the banquet room for cooking U.S. beef, pork ribs, whole game hens/chicken legs and seafood; New England lobsters and Alaskan cod, while cooking and serving four different styles of U.S. BBQ sauces. He also equipped two big charcoal grills for cooking U.S. beef steaks and chops on the restaurant terrace during the BBQ tradeshow. After the weather had calmed down a bit, ATO facilitated a 30 minute-long outdoor cooking seminar for those brave

enough to venture out onto the terrace.

In conjunction with ATO Japan's "Enjoy Fruits!" concept (see details in GAIN report [JA3514](#)), ATO also coordinated a U.S. fruits corner featuring three fruit exhibitors: National Watermelon Promotion Board, Hawaii Papaya Industry Association (HPIA) and Sunkist (California lemons and oranges). These fruits fit together well with the traditional U.S. BBQ concept, and an ATO-prepared fruit art display stimulated buyers' attention and encouraged them to use more U.S. fruits. In addition to building greater interest in the ATO-supported reverse trade mission that HPIA offers to Japanese buyers each year, the Great American BBQ Trade Showcase enticed the Procurement Director of a large-scale hotel group to use Hawaiian Rainbow papaya as the key ingredient in a cooking contest which the hotel group offers to 300 company chefs every year.

In questionnaires distributed after the Showcase, importers of processed meats, wines and bourbons reported approximately \$226,000 USD of projected 12-month sales, an increase of almost 50 percent over the 2013 Great American BBQ Trade Showcase.













List of Exhibitors

Organization/Company Name	Products	State
U.S. Meat Export Federation	U.S. beef and pork	Various
U.S. Rice Federation	U.S. rice	CA
Hawaii Papaya Industry Association	Rainbow (GM) Papaya	HI
National Watermelon Promotion Board (Yamano & Associates)	Watermelon	CA
Organic Foods Life Company, (U.S. Grains Council)	Sorghum products	Various
Tozai Sangyo Co., Ltd.	Meat products	Various
Yamate Lobster Company	Lobster	ME, MA
Yuwa Co.,: Kona Beer	Craft beer	HI
Mitsui Food Co.,: Primo, Anchor	Craft beer	CA, HI
Nippon Beer Co.,: Brooklyn Lager, Samuel Adams, Aloha	Craft beer	NY, MA, NI
Suntory Shurui-Hanbai Co., Ltd.	Bourbon: Jim Beam, Maker's Mark	KY
Dept Planning Company	Wine	CA
Premium Beverages Company	Whiskey	KS
Lamb Weston, ConAgra Foods	Fried potatoes, onion	WA
Japan Green Tea Co., Ltd.	Crazy salt, dry fruits, organic chocolate	NJ, CA
DFC Company	Cheese cakes, frozen berries	CA, NJ
Jimbo Company	Pork Jerky, fruits bar	OR
A&F Company	BBQ grill and cookware, Cliff energy bar	OR, IL, TN

List of Sample providers

Organization/Company Name	Products	State
Sunkist Pacific	Lemon	CA
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institution	Alaskan seafood	AL
U.S. Poultry and Egg Export Council	Chicken & Egg products	Various
Molson Coors	Craft beer	CO
Asahi Beer	Wine & Jack Daniels	CA, TN
Ushiwaka Shoji Company	Beef	Various

Snap shots:

		
Opening ceremony – remarks by ATO Japan Director, Steve Shnitzler	Outdoor BBQ demonstration with Rainbow Bridge in the background	U.S. beef steak charcoal grilling demonstration and tasting
		
A U.S. craft beer importer, brought attractive neon signs	U.S. Meat Export Federation provided information and promotional support	Kansas Clean Distilled craft whiskey importer offered cocktail tastings
		
U.S.A. Rice Federation demonstrated rice salad preparation	Exhibition of U.S. made BBQ grills and skillets imported by A&F Company	Cooking demonstration using U.S. made cookware and U.S. chicken
		
A 60 lbs. U.S. live lobster from New England was displayed at the booth of U.S. seafood importer Yamate	Attractive “Enjoy Fruits!” display built from Hawaiian GM papaya and California lemons and watermelons	An exhibitor of allergen-free foods holding business meetings with executive buyers

IV. Follow-up Evaluation

The feedback we received from the Great American Barbeque Trade Showcase exhibitors was resoundingly positive. Exhibitors noted the quality of the buyers attending, the unique “Enjoy BBQ!” concept and the reasonable cost of participating in the event. Exhibitors held over 300 meetings during the 5-hour trade show. Asked if they would like to participate in the same type of trade show again, 100 percent said, “yes.”

Because of the Category 5 typhoon, which incidentally triggered a mini-polar vortex across portions of North America over the following weeks, the showcase had fewer visitors than expected. If administrative hurdles can be overcome, ATO Tokyo plans to hold the next BBQ showcase in May 2015, before the start of the rainy and typhoon seasons.

V. Cost/Revenue

ATO Tokyo’s total cost for the event was about \$15,000, which included the fees for the hotel space and services, an agent to prepare and manage the BBQ Trade Showcase, signboards and printed materials. The Hotel Nikko Tokyo provided considerable contributions in the form of discounts for use of the space and services, including last-minute weather-related accommodations. The Great American BBQ Trade Showcase was funded by USDA Japan’s 2014 Country Strategy Support Fund (CSSF) budget.